

The Concatenated Order of Hoo-Hoo

Sometimes frustrations, like waiting for a delayed train, can result in fruitful chance meetings and interesting conversations. This happened back in 1892 when five lumbermen, who had to wait seven hours for a late train in Gurdon, Arkansas, had a chance meeting that resulted in the formation of an unusual organization symbolized by a strange black cat statue poised near the Gurdon Depot.

These lumbermen, from cities across the Midwest, sat atop a lumber pile and discussed the challenges of travel and the broad range of pursuits within the lumber industry. They agreed that the lumber industry needed a fraternal organization to promote unity and fellowship, and also decided that it should be unconventional and unregimented, in contrast to many fraternal organizations of the day. Their brainstorming yielded an unusual name: the Concatenated Order of Hoo-Hoo!

Officer titles reflected their spirit of fun, inspired by a Lewis Carroll book. The chief executive officer would be called the Snark of the Universe, leading a team composed of a Supreme Hoo-Hoo, a Scrivenoter, Bojum, Jabborwock and others. The group chose as its mascot a black cat with its tail curved into the number nine.

You might think that such a silly-sounding organization would be fleeting, but in fact, the organization thrived! With its one aim, “to foster the health, happiness, and long life of its members,” and annual dues set at \$9.99, the Hoo-Hoos eventually had to raise the limit on total number of members from 9,999 to 99,999. At the height of its popularity the organization had 13,000 members and changed its name to the International Order of Hoo-Hoo. U.S. Presidents Theodore Roosevelt and Warren G. Harding were both “concatenated” as members.

The International Order of Hoo-Hoo still stands as the oldest industrial fraternal organization in the United States, holding international conferences as well as domestic meetings. As the lumber industry has declined, membership in 2004 had dropped to 3500 members. The organization today is headquartered in Gurdon, where the grand idea was born. You never know what good things might happen due to a late train.

Source(s):

Hoo Hoo International. (2010). The International Concatenated Order of Hoo-Hoo. Retrieved February 5, 2011 from <http://www.hoo-hoo.org/>.

The Encyclopedia of Arkansas History and Culture. (2010). Concatenated Order of Hoo-Hoo. <http://www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net/encyclopedia/entry-detail.aspx?entryID=1199&type=Category&item=Organizations+and+Civic+Leaders> .

Author(s):

Written by Susan G. Scott, Lecturer in the Department of Recreation, Park and Tourism Sciences at Texas A&M University, as part of a National Park Service Trails and Rails project funded by Amtrak, 2011.