

History of District Ludovit Stur

The history of District Ludovit Stur dates back to 1907. Lodges of Slovak Gymnastic Union Sokol were dispersed across a vast area of the United States. The relationships between the 115 existing lodges in SGUS were good, but each Sokol unit labored independently in trying to succeed. It was finally at the Convention of 1907 that SGUS decided to create “Districts” to govern and control on a more regionalized level. The organization was divided into nine districts. Lodges from Illinois, Wisconsin, Indiana, Michigan and Missouri were organized into District VIII, “Ludevit Stur”.

The charter meeting of District Ludevit Stur was held on September 1, 1907 at the Slovak National Hall “Tatra” at 756 Jefferson St. in Chicago. Only three lodges with nine delegates attended this first meeting: Lodge 39- Chicago, Lodge 96-Cudahy, WI, and Lodge 122-Kenosha, WI. Independent Sokol units were allowed to join the district as well and over the years, Sokol Slavia, Sokol Nitriansky and others joined District L. Stur.

The first District Commander and temporary chairman was Bro. Anton Petr from Chicago. Affiliated were six active lodges with 228 members. District membership increased greatly over its first twenty years in existence and it became one of the most active districts in the entire country.

The first District Slet was held in 1909 at Pilsen Park in Chicago with 72 gymnasts competing and 104 participants in the program. A grand parade was held prior to the slet program beginning at the Tatra Hall and proceeding to Pilsen Park. The slet arena was filled to capacity that day. It was reported as the largest single event in all of SGUS in 1909.

In 1940, the District bought the Sokol Camp at Potter’s Lake, WI. In the 35 years of its existence, the camp was the center of many different district activities. The annual District Slet and Competitions were held there every year as well as Instructors Schools, clinics and winter carnivals. The camp was sold in 1974 because of a lack of help from membership in maintaining it and for financial reasons.

As the number of active lodges decreased in the 70’s and 80’s, District L. Stur still remained active in sponsoring teams to attend national slets and other activities as well as running its own fundraisers. Lodge 306 Chicago remains the stalwart of district activity. Lodges 39 and 40W also have shown some signs of life in recent years in sending participants to District and National Slets. Most recently, District L. Stur helped finance the bus for Lodge 306 to travel to the Sokol USA Sokolfest in Pittsburgh in June 2007.