

The Beginnings

It was during the 1950s that the movement for Emerald Societies took hold with the formation of the NYPD Emerald Society (Police Department, City of New York) on March 16, 1953, NYCD Emerald Society (Correction Department, City of New York) on November 17, 1955, FDNY Emerald Society (Fire Department, City of New York) on March 17, 1956. The movement led to the formation of Emerald Societies in New York City and across the country.

The founders of the respective Emerald Societies, mindful of the fact that the average Irish Organization is composed of Irish people from every walk of life, decided that the idea of occupational groups under the name of "Emerald Society" would provide a means of enabling Irish people by birth or ancestry, to meet their "Brother and Sister Emeralds" in the same agency, trade, or profession. More importantly, it would be a new approach for people of Irish heritage to continue perpetuating their history, customs, traditions, and accomplishments.

History of the Grand Council

It's often been said that the Irish stand together only during the Gospel in Church. That rule applied to Emerald Societies too. At one point, three Grand Councils existed, and an Emerald Society would leave one Grand Council and switch to another at the slightest notice.

The Grand Council of Irish Societies Inc was founded on June 29, 1956, in New York City, and William J. McGowan (NYPD ES) was elected as the first President. By 1958 the Council had 65,000 members in all Emerald Societies and Irish American societies in Federal, State, and City civil service. The meetings were held at the Irish Institute of New York, 326 West 48 street NY, NY. In 1968 the Grand Council of Irish Societies Inc changed its name to The National Grand Council of Irish Emerald Societies Inc.

The Grand Council of Emerald Societies Inc was incorporated on May 29, 1958, and the Grand Council of Police Emerald Societies was formed in the 1970s.

In the early 1970s, the Grand Council was down to two groups. The Grand Council of Emerald Societies, headed by William J. McGowan (NYPD ES), had several Police Emerald Societies and The National Grand Council of Irish Emerald Societies, led by John P. Clark (NYCD ES), had Emerald Societies in the public service and private sector.

In the Spring of 1974, Frank Cull, legendary Irish Echo columnist "Round the Emerald Green," was approached to mediate a merger and was named Pro-Temp. Attorney Thomas McCarthy set out to settle differences in constitutions, by-laws, treasuries, and other legal matters. Thomas Reilly of the PAPD ES suggested the delegate body overwhelmingly accepted the name, Grand Council of United Emerald Societies (emphasizing "United"), and Paul Cinder of the MABSTOA ES designed the logo.

A constitution-formation committee was named, and the group consisted of Pat Heslin (PAPD ES), Ed Hazel (DSNY ES), Jack Clark (NYCD ES), and Matt Walsh (NYC TAPD ES). In

History of the Emerald Society

December of 1974, the first elections were held at the Irish Institute in Manhattan, and Jack Clark (NYCD ES) was elected the first President with his term of office to commence on January 1, 1975. The Grand Council of United Emerald Societies (GCUES) became a reality.

Historical Emerald Moments in Time

The NYPD Emerald Society was organized on March 16, 1953. The first president was Henry Fitzgerald.

The NYCD Emerald Society was organized on November 17, 1955. The first president was James Mulvey.

The FDNY Emerald Society was organized on March 17, 1956. The first president was Eugene O'Kane.

The New York City Department of Sanitation Irish American Association (IAA) was organized in 1938. The organization's first president was William Nally Sr. The IAA officially changed its name to the DSNY Emerald Society in 1985.

The Postal Employees Sons of Erin (affiliated with the American Fraternity of Sons Erin), Inc was organized on June 7, 1939. The Postal Employees Sons of Erin changed their name to the Emerald Society of the New York Post Office, Inc on February 27, 1957.

The New York City Transit Authority Emerald Society comprises Subway engineers, conductors, tradespeople, and support staff organized in 1961. The first president of the organization was Gregory Perrin.

The Parade Delegates elected GCUES President James "Barney" Ferguson (NYPD ES) as the Grand Marshal of the 1978 New York City Saint Patrick's Day Parade.

The Emerald Society of the Federal Law Enforcement Agencies (ESFLEA) was organized in New York City in 1995 by USINS Inspectors with common interests, heritage, and desire to improve their professional agency. Rebuffed by their agency, the ESFLEA founders decided to expand the scope of their fraternal and social organization nationally by including all federal law enforcement agencies. Federal law enforcement officers such as Special Agents, Police Officers, and Customs and Border Protection officers of Irish/Gaelic descent are eligible to join.

The National Conference of Law Enforcement Emerald Societies Inc (NCLEES) was organized in 1995 by native New Yorker Patrick J. O'Brien (PES Washington DC), who served as its first president. The main objective of the National Conference of Law Enforcement Emerald Societies is to unite all public safety Emerald Societies to develop fraternalism amongst its members, preserve the Irish culture, promote the contributions of our ancestors, and recognize the accomplishments of Irish Americans in Law Enforcement and other public safety professions.

Fifteen of the GCUES-affiliated organizations are members of the NCLEES.

GCUES Today

Reorganized in 1975, the Grand Council has over 20,000 members, serves as the political umbrella group of 25 Affiliated Emerald Societies, and is the governing body selecting the Aide to Grand Marshal representing the Emerald Societies in the New York Saint Patrick's Day Parade.

The Grand Council has Affiliates in California, New York, New Jersey, Massachusetts, and Washington DC. The affiliated organizations serve in front-line professions such as Law Enforcement, Fire Service, EMS, Education, Waste Management, Mass Transit, and Public Utilities.

The Grand Council meets on the first Wednesday of the month at a different location in NYC, Westchester, and Long Island. The Grand Council does not meet in July and August.

If you are interested in starting an Emerald Society or your Emerald Society wants to affiliate, please email us at info@gcues.org.

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History of the Emerald Society