



# IDAHO KNIGHTLY NEWS

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## Editor's Note

If anyone would like to submit an article for the Idaho Knightly News, please email me your article using Microsoft Word. Keep it between 1 page and 1.5 pages.

## Upcoming Events:

Grand York Rite of Colorado ..... Sep 4-6  
Grand York Rite of Wyoming ..... Sep 11-14  
Grand Lodge of Idaho ..... Sep 17-20  
Northwest York Rite Conf. .... Oct 17-18

## Teutonic Knights

By Barry E. Newell

A lesser-known chivalric order established during the Crusades was the *Orden der Brüder vom Deutschen Haus St. Mariens in Jerusalem*, or the *Order of Brothers of the German House of Saint Mary in Jerusalem*, more commonly known as the Teutonic Knights. Unlike the Templars and Hospitallers, this medieval order, primarily

composed of German nobles, has little to no place in modern Masonic chivalric traditions as far as can be determined. Founded with similar duties (assisting Christian pilgrims in the Holy Land and maintaining hospitals), the Teutonic Knights remained comparatively small and less prominent in the broader narrative of Crusader knighthoods.

Noblemen would serve as either Knights or Priests (though nobility was not required for priests), while those of common lineage would compose the infantry or work as bookkeepers or in the hospitals (this third class was often referred to as serving brothers). The knights took vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience. Life as a knight was communal; they owned nothing personally and, in keeping with their vows, the armor they wore in battle was plain and simple. The uniform of the knights was a white surcoat with a black cross (often a cross pattée) upon the left shoulder. The squires also wore these colors, marking them as members of the Teutonic Order. The motto of the Order was 'Helfen, Wehren, Heilen,' meaning 'Help, Defend, Heal.'

## Hierarchy

The members of the order assembled to form the "Generalkapitel," or General Chapter, which was often used to elect the new Grand Master, met annually and were usually only attended by the higher officers. For the elections, the Großkomtur of the late Hochmeister set the date and location of the elections, and once assembled, he nominated a knight to serve as the first elector. If approved, the first elector then nominated a second elector. This process continued until eight knights, one priest, and four members of common lineage were selected. This committee would meet privately, where the first elector would make nominations for Hochmeister, and only a majority vote would result in a new Hochmeister. The decision would be taken before the Generalkapitel, where priests would escort the new Hochmeister to the altar to take the oath of office, all the while singing the hymn "Te deum laudamus."

The order was led by the "Hochmeister" or Grand Master, who was still considered "first among equals" and who served for life or resignation. This position had to be chosen from the knight class only, which meant that the Hochmeister was of noble birth. Until 1525, this position was elected by the Generalkapitel and, until 1466, was also the Sovereign Prince of Prussia.

Appointed by the Hochmeister, the Großgebietiger were high officers who filled the following offices:

The Großkomtur, who was the deputy of the Hochmeister and had supervision over the clergy, was sometimes referred to as Preceptor

The Treßler or Treasurer

The Spitler, who was responsible for all hospital affairs

The Trapier, who was responsible for dressing and armament

The Marschall, who was the chief of military affairs

There were also a variety of special offices that worked for the Hochmeister. The Kanzler, or Chancellor, of the Hochmeister and the Deutschmeister. The Chancellor took care of the keys and seals and was the recording clerk of the Generalkapitel. The order was given the right to mint its own currency in 1246, and the production was overseen by the Münzmeister, or master of the mint, of Thorn. The Pfundmeister, or customs master, of Danzig. The Generalprokurator represented the order at the Holy See. The Großschäffer was a trading representative with special authority.

The Teutonic Knights were divided into three national chapters: Prussia, Livland, and the territory of the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation. Each national chapter was led by a Landmeister whose position was elected by the regional chapters. After 1309, the Landmeister of Prussia was also the Hochmeister. The Landmeister of the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation was also known as the Deutschmeister, and after Prussia and Livland were lost, became the Hochmeister. With the order spread throughout the Holy Roman Empire, there was also a regional structure, with supervision being left to a Bailiwick. The administrative unit at the local level was known as a Kommende and was ruled by a Komtur (Commander).