



IDAHO KNIGHTLY NEWS

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Editor's Note

If you would like to submit an article to the Idaho Knightly News, please email it to me as a Microsoft Word document. Keep it between 1 page and 1.5 pages.

Upcoming Events:

Northwest Dept. Conference..... Oct 16-17

Christmas Day..... Dec 25

Useful Links

Knights Templar Magazine:

<https://issuu.com/knightstemplar?ps=24>

Templar Education Portal:

<https://templared.org/>

Membership Booklets:

<https://usagekt.org/booklet/>

Online Grand Encampment Resources:

<https://usagekt.org/resources/>

Constitution of the Grand Encampment:

<https://usagekt.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/2022-GEKT-CS.pdf>

Formation of the Grand Encampment

By Barry E. Newell

The history of Masonic Templary in America predates the founding of the United States itself. While forms of Masonic knighthood appeared in Scotland and Ireland during the 18th century, the earliest documented conferral of the Order of the Temple in North America occurred in Boston on August 28, 1769. On that date, the records of St. Andrew's Royal Arch Chapter record that Captain William Davis, a Past Master, received the degrees of Excellent, Super Excellent, Royal Arch, and Knight Templar. He was followed by two men whose names would become closely associated with the American Revolution: Paul Revere, knighted on December 11, 1769, and General Joseph Warren, who received the Order on May 14, 1770.

During these earliest years, American Templary possessed no national governing authority. Knights and small bodies operated independently, drawing upon Masonic traditions brought from Britain and Ireland and developing their own practices in the colonies. The oldest Encampment for which

records survive was active in Charleston, SC, by 1780, and perhaps earlier. Other Encampments gradually appeared along the Atlantic seaboard. Even after American independence, however, fewer than 500 Knights were known throughout the new nation, and no common organization united them.

By the 1790s, American Templary was expanding, and calls for greater organization began to emerge. In 1797, Thomas Smith Webb recorded a Grand Encampment and subordinate Encampments in Philadelphia, along with Templar bodies in Harrisburg, Carlisle, Stillwater, and New York City. Templary continued to spread during the opening years of the 19th century. Knights Templar of New London, CT, participated in memorial ceremonies for George Washington in 1800; an Encampment of Knights of the Red Cross was organized in Boston in 1801; and an Encampment of Knights Templar was established at Providence, RI, in 1802. Additional Encampments soon appeared throughout New England, the Mid-Atlantic, and the South.

As the number of Encampments increased, so too did the desire for a national governing body capable of bringing American Templary into a common system. Four Sir Knights became particularly important to this effort: Thomas Smith Webb, Henry Fowle, John Snow, and Thomas Lowndes. Their objective was to establish a supreme organization that could unite the Knights Templar of the United States under a common Constitution and government. Webb emerged as the leading figure in this movement but deliberately declined the highest office, believing that another

prominent Mason could lend greater prestige to the new organization.

The decisive moment came in 1816. After an unsuccessful attempt to organize in Philadelphia, representatives of 8 Councils and Encampments of Knights Templar and the Appendant Orders assembled in New York City on June 20–21, 1816. There they adopted a Constitution and established the General Grand Encampment of Knights Templar of the United States (as it was then called), creating for the first time a national sovereign authority for American Templary. DeWitt Clinton, former United States Senator and then Mayor of New York City, was elected the first General Grand Master.

Thus, from the recorded knighting of William Davis in Boston in 1769 to the organization of the General Grand Encampment in 1816, American Templary evolved from scattered groups of Masonic Knights into a unified national institution, today called the Grand Encampment of Knights Templar, U.S.A.



Figure 1: Logo of the 200th anniversary