

OHIO SUPPLEMENT



SK Robert C. Hager, KCT
Right Eminent Grand Commander
May 2020



My Dear Brothers and Fraters,

I hope that you are all doing well. The Ohio supplements which you see here every month are written a month or more before you read them. When I received the April issue of the Knight Templar magazine, it was amazing to me how much had changed and become obsolete since I wrote the article that appeared in that month's supplement! Meetings and inspections, the East Coast Easter Observance and the Grand Master's classes had all been cancelled.

The pandemic which our nation is going through brings challenges and changes every day. I thought it might be instructive to peruse the Grand Commandery proceedings from about 100 years ago, when we dealt with a surprisingly similar situation – the Spanish flu epidemic.

The Grand Conclave of 1918, scheduled to be held in Akron on October 16 and 17 was postponed "on account of the prevailing epidemic," just five days prior to the session! Grand Commander William B. Baldwin, a member of Akron #25 issued a telegraphic order on October 11 – "Orders of State Board of Health forbidding all conventions and indoor gatherings, account influenza, compel indefinite postponement of annual conclave...Please see that all members of your Commandery likely to attend are informed..."

The Conclave was eventually held November 21-22. A subsequent order stated that there would be "no social or other entertainments provided such as had been contemplated", including "the usual Grand Parade." Consequently, "the Conclave was comparatively a quiet one."

Michael Louis Finnell, a member of Reed #6, was elected Grand Commander in 1918. His term was cut short when he died of illness on March 6, 1919 at the age of 59. He did not visit one Commandery during his term as REGC. Ohio also lost a Past Grand Commander in January of

that year, Ralph R. Rickly from Mt. Vernon #1, at the age of 67.

The 1919 Proceedings state that Christmas observances that year were fewer than normal "due to community bans on public meetings due to influenza." Still, that did not prevent Commanderies from "making their usual Christmas offerings or visiting sick members and dispensing cheer and happiness to those in need." Contributions totaling \$4,100 were distributed to the Red Cross, Salvation Army, Soldiers and Sailors Relief Fund, Ohio Masonic Home, widows and orphans of deceased members.

In 1918, 750 of our members served in the Armed Forces in World War I. Grand Commander Baldwin requested all Commanderies to send their names and branch of service, but due to poor or incomplete responses from the Commanderies, the names were not included in the Proceedings.

In spite of world war and epidemic disease, membership still saw net gains, increasing by 1,477 in 1918 and 1,753 in 1919. However, with the end of the war and the epidemic in 1920, membership saw its greatest increase ever in 1920, with a net gain of 3,121 to a total of 26,066 members. There were 3,486 knightings in Ohio in 1919-1920!

Despite world war and epidemic disease, Templary survived.

I do not know what further challenges we will confront, but Templary will continue to survive and it will thrive in our time, with the faith, charity and dedication of all of us.

I wish you all health, safety and prosperity.

Courteously and fraternally,

Robert C. Hager

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Grand Commander

