

**ARIZONA  
SUPPLEMENT**

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**Knights Templar – Grand Masters  
(An Historical Perspective)**

The Historical Knights Templar and the Grand Masters that led the Order began over 902 years ago and have left a rich account of their exploits and deeds. Our Masonic Knights Templar thought enough of them to create a valiant and magnanimous Order which has lasted longer than the original (196 years compared to 204 years of the Grand Encampment). In the next 12 months I will attempt to give a history of each of the 23 Grand Masters of the Historical Knights Templar, from Hugues de Payens (1118-1136) to Jacques de Molay (1292-1314). Some have a great deal written about them and some have almost nothing.

Some 400 years after the death of de Molay and the dissolution of the Knights Templar, the fraternal order of Freemasonry began to emerge in northern Europe. The Masons developed an elaborate mythos about their Order, and some claimed heritage from entities in history, ranging from the mystique of the Templars to the builders of Solomon's Temple. The stories of the Templars' secret initiation ceremonies also proved a tempting source for Masonic writers who were creating new works of pseudo-history. As described by modern historian Malcolm Barber in *The New Knighthood*: "It was during the 1760s that German masons introduced a specific Templar connection, claiming that the Order, through its occupation of the Temple of Solomon, had been the repository of secret wisdom and magical powers, which James of Molay had handed down to his successor before his execution and of which the eighteenth-century Freemasons were the direct heirs."

The modern Masonic Knights Templar (Grand Encampment) is an international philanthropic and chivalric order affiliated with Freemasonry, and begun in Ireland perhaps as long ago as 1780. Unlike the initial degrees conferred in a Masonic Lodge, which only require a belief in a Supreme Being regardless of religious affiliation, the Knights Templar is one of several additional Masonic Orders in which membership is open only to Freemasons who profess a belief in the Christian religion. The full title of this Order is The United Religious, Military and Masonic Orders of the Temple and of St John of Jerusalem, Palestine, Rhodes

and Malta.

The story of de Molay's brave defiance of his inquisitors has been incorporated in various forms into Masonic lore; most notably in the form of a youth group for young men aged 12 to 21, sponsored by Freemasonry, and named after the last Grand Master of the Knights Templar. DeMolay International, also known as "The Order of DeMolay," was founded in Kansas City in 1919 by Freemason Frank S. Land. Similar to what happens in Freemasonry, new members are ceremoniously initiated using "degrees" that are part of the Order's secret ritual, authored, in the case of the Order of DeMolay's ritual, by Frank A. Marshall at founder Land's request in 1919. The first, and less dramatic, of the two degrees is called "the Initiatory Degree", wherein initiates are escorted around the meeting room and instructed in the precepts and Seven Cardinal Virtues of the Order. The second of the two degrees, known as "the DeMolay Degree," which, along with the Initiatory Degree, members and observers are sworn to keep secret, dramatically recreates the trial, "before a Commission in its Council Chamber," of the historic characters named in the ritual as "Jacques DeMolay and his three preceptors, Geoffroi de Charney, Godfrey de Goneville, and Hughes de Peralde." The DeMolay Degree, in which players dress in robes and other period costume, and appear on a dimly-lit stage whereupon they dramatically deliver memorized lines prescribed in the ritual, is described therein as depicting "the tragic climax in the career of Jacques DeMolay, the hero and martyr who is the exemplar of our Order." The stage instructions include that "the foremost point to be remembered is to portray Jacques DeMolay as the hero and to select an interpretation for the DeMolay Degree which will enhance the lessons of fidelity and toleration." The drama concludes with the commission condemning the four to life imprisonment; however, according to the ritual, "so incensed was the king at the noble defiance and defense of DeMolay and Geoffroi de Charney that he overrode the Commission's verdict and hurried DeMolay and de Charney to the stake on an island near the Cathedral, where they were barbarously burned."

Our Knights Templar ritual is most impressive with its three orders: Order of the Red Cross, the Mediterranean Pass and Order of Malta, and Order of the Temple. Many important lessons are contained in this ritual. It is an all-day event and well worth the time and effort.

*.Note: All references and sources in these articles can be found when researching the subject matter. All credit should be given to the various scholars and authors.*

Courteously,  
Russell R. Sayre  
Grand Commander 2020-21