

District of Columbia Supplement

Sir Knight Robb Mitchell

Right Eminent Grand Commander

Editor: Carter L. Diggs Jr., EPC, Grand Sentinel

When you are a Recorder for a Commandery, you frequently get random missives come over the transom from both Sir Knights and members of the public who find your email address on the internet. Many are from ancestors of Sir Knights seeking information on their Knights Templar membership, sometimes with photos of swords with their names etched on the blade. One of the most interesting recent communications was from a Brother Mason who was cleaning out the house of his late father-in-law, a prominent Maryland York Rite Mason. Among his belongings, the son-in-law had found a large, elaborately framed, hand-calligraphies certificate of appreciation dating from 1888. Apparently, St. Alban Commandery No. 47, stationed in Philadelphia, had made a pilgrimage—presumably by train—to pay official visits to commanderies in Pittsburgh, Luray, Harper’s Ferry, and finally, Washington over a five-day span in May of that year. The certificate reads:

**RESOLVED: That the THANKS of the Commandery are due
And are hereby tendered to Washington Commandery No. 1
Washington, DC for Their faithful care and generous and
unbounded hospitality during our stay in the Capitol City
On May 25th and 26th, 1888**

The son-in-law has no idea how the certificate came into the possession of his late father-in-law, who has no known affiliation with Washington Commandery. But he thought it important to try to return the artifact to the Commandery, and we made arrangements to meet.

Receiving the certificate prompted me to try to research whether there is any reference to the pilgrimage in the annals of the Commandery. What was revealed is that such pilgrimages were not uncommon during that time—both traveling ourselves and hosting delegations from other commanderies from other states. The centennial histories of both Washington Commandery No. 1 and Columbia Commandery No. 2, published in 1925 and 1963, respectively, are replete with chronological listings of all the times that District commanderies hosted other commanderies as the Nation’s capital was a popular destination. A quick survey reveals receiving pilgrimages from commanderies stationed in Maryland, Virginia, Pennsylvania, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and even Illinois. As one of the most distinguished D.C. Masons of his era—Past Grand Master J. Claude Keiper—wrote as Recorder of Washington

Commandery in the 1925 chronicle: “In later records of the Commandery, I find the notices of visits received and visits made to sister commanderies so frequent that time were wanting to do justice to them. Richmond, Baltimore, Philadelphia, Williamsport, Put-In-Bay, Hartford—what memories of pleasure do these names recall!”

The centennial history of Columbia Commandery devotes an entire section to pilgrimages noting:

“This delightful custom, begun at that early day, was continued for many years, the Commandery making one or more fraternal visits each year to other jurisdictions and, in reciprocation, it extended invitations and frequently entertained delegations, from commanderies for our pleasure and to the end that, probably, no other Commandery ever became better known throughout the United States than Columbia, No. 2. This practice in past years became one of the most pleasant features of our Commandery life, and it is to be regretted that in recent years the custom of making reciprocal fraternal visits has been to a great extent discontinued.”

Despite the concluding expression of regret, Columbia does continue to visit its sister Commandery—Mary Commandery No. 36 of Philadelphia. Most notably, a delegation attended the commemorative celebration of Mary Commandery’s 150th anniversary held on the Battleship BB-62—the “New Jersey”—in 2019. Perhaps it is time for the constituent commanderies of the District of Columbia to commit to reinvigorating “this delightful custom” of hosting and engaging in pilgrimages.

In the Service of Christ,

JK Craig Lasher

**Right Eminent Past Grand Commander
Grand Commandery of Knights Templar
of the District of Columbia**

[Send any queries to gcktdc@gmail.com](mailto:gcktdc@gmail.com)

A Knights Templar Funeral Service will be held for our dear departed Frater, Right Eminent Kenneth David Fuller on Saturday, October 2, 2021 at 11 a.m. in the D.C. Scottish Rite auditorium. Your attendance is earnestly requested and appreciated. Please save the date. Further details will be forthcoming as the event approaches.