

WHEN TEMPLARY WAS ON PARADE

By

Sir Knight Walter P. Benesch

There was a time in the history of the Grand Encampment when Knight Templars went all out during the Triennial Conclaves. Many a post card was created celebrating the various Triennials and showing some of the activities associated with the conclaves. A few of these post-cards came to me as President of the George Washington Masonic Stamp Club from two club members from England back in 2002 in gratitude for receiving the Degree of Philately.



But first a quick review of some history of the Grand Encampment. This will help us understand the history and development of the Conclaves which issued these early post cards.

The Grand Encampment in the United States was established in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, on May 19, 1797, the subordinate Encampments being under the Grand Lodge

of Pennsylvania. On February 16, 1814, delegates from Encampments in New York, Maryland, and Delaware reconstructed a second Grand Encampment. On May 6, 1805, in Providence, Rhode Island, a convention of two Encampments and a Council of the Red Cross was held. The next year this latter body formed the "Grand Encampment" and adopted the name "United States Grand Encampment of Knights Templar and Appendant Orders." On June 21, 1816, eight bodies met in New York and emerged with the title "General Grand Encampment of Knights Templar and Appendant Orders for the United States of America." An attempt was made to combine the two groups without success for many years. On September 15, 1856 a new constitution was adopted and changed the name to the Grand Encampment of Knights Templar of the United States of America which is the current name. It was decided that the Grand Encampment would have Triennial Conclaves, a tradition which continues today.

By the end of the 19th Century and the beginning of the knight templar



1900s, Templary was approaching its zenith in terms of numbers and national recognition. Triennial Conclaves and even state Annual Conclaves were becoming major events. Many issued special post cards picturing the occasions. The post cards, besides being collector items, indicate the growing influence and wealth of the Commanderies and the Grand Encampment.

By the turn of the 20th Century, the annual conclaves of specific Grand Commanderies were producing their own post cards. The post card shown here was from the 53rd Annual Conclave for the Knights Templar of Pennsylvania which was held in Pittsburg, May 21st through 23st, 1906. It shows two Sir Knights at sword salute with a jewel between them. What is most interesting is that the card was designed, produced, and issued by the United Cigar Stores Company which at that time was a major tobacco supplier. This then served two purposes, as a commemorative post card of the Annual Conclave and as a major advertisement for the United Cigar Stores. The implication is that the Knight Templars and their conclaves were now becoming more popular and well attended and that private companies were sponsoring some of



the post cards and other activities of the Conclaves.

The earliest of the Triennial post cards in the collection is this card celebrating the 9th Triennial in Denver during the summer of 1892. The artist was Robert D. Hall of Canon City Commandery in Colorado. It appears that Sir Knight Hall made these cards while he was attending the Triennial meeting in Denver. He delivered them to Most Eminent Grand Master Hugh McCurdy from Michigan. From the design, we can deduce that the old triangular apron with the skull and cross bones was still in use. Also, note the faint mountains in the background representing the Colorado Rockies which served as a backdrop to the Triennial.

Welcome to State Street, but of Albany, New York, not Chicago, Illinois. This is a post card of the New York Annual Conclave held on September 4, 1906. Note the size of the parade. Although there may be ONLY several hundred Knight Templars in the parade, when combined with the spectators along the parade route, the total number was likely in the thousands. You can see the spacing between the various Commanderies of Sir Knights as they march down the street.

The next year, the Grand Encampment of the Knights Templar held its Triennial Conclave in Saratoga Springs, New York. Henry W. Rudd of Rhode Island was elected the Grand Master. Not pictured here but part of the collection is





a beautiful color post card of the parade down the main street of Saratoga Springs. It is unique that it is taken from a photo and then hand colored to produce the actual post card. Another post card from the same Triennial shows a Knight on horseback with sword raised, galloping past a set of

pillars with "In Hoc Signo Vinces" embossed on an arch. Each of the main pillars is topped with a sculpture knight in armor; the one on the right holding a Beauceant and the pennant of the Grand Encampment. Above the arch is an embossed Knight Templar Cross outlined in gold. The embossing of the post card would have significantly increased the cost to produce but it was part of a trend of embossed cards popular around the turn of the new century. Another color post card of the same general period has the Knight Templar Cross in black and gold with the crown and red Templar Cross. A very elaborate "K. T." is under the cross. The dimensions of the Cross is 1 ½" x 2". The card was made in Germany, "for the Reichner Brothers, Publishers, Boston, Mass." This is another example of the prestige and influence of the Knight Templars during that period.



One of the most impressive sets of post cards came from the 31st Triennial Conclave. It was held in Chicago, August 6th through 13th, 1910. One color post card from the 31st Triennial Conclave in Chicago shows the Marshall Field & Company store in downtown Chicago decked out in banners and Templar Crosses. Most of the banners were on the third

floor windows but some extended from the seventh floor almost down to the street. The main banner was directly over the main entrance and was about 100 feet in height. Remember that Marshall Field's occupied a whole Chicago block. Just imagine a black, white, and red horizontal banner with Templar Crosses on the white around the whole building between the 2nd and 3rd floor in addition to the suspended emblems of the Grand Encampment.



This Knight Templar Emblem was made in the establishment of C. D. Peacock, Chicago's largest retail jeweler, and is on exhibition during Conclave week in their store at the corner of State and Adams streets. It is also in 7x11 1/2 inches; it contains 744 diamonds, selected from their new stock, ranging in weight from 2 1/2 carats down, with a total weight of over 225 carats, and is valued at over \$50,000.00.

C. D. PEACOCK Established 1857 Jeweler State and Adams Sts. Chicago

724 page illustrated catalog of goods in our store mailed on request

The post card on the left pictures the jewel made for the Triennial. On the back of the post card is the personal note:

"The Masonic Conclave was a success. All the Commandery won high praise in sword drill."

The words on the post card speak for themselves. "This Knight Templar Emblem was made in the establishment of C. D. Peacock, Chicago's largest retail Jeweler, and is on exhibition during Conclave week in their store at the corner of State and Adams streets. Its size is 7x11 1/2 inches; it contains 744 diamonds, selected from their new stock, ranging in weight from 2 1/2 carats down, with a total weight of over 225 carats, and is valued at over \$50,000.00." Remember the \$50,000.00 was in 1910 dollars. It would be hard to estimate the value of this jewel in today's market. It would be a unique collector's item and worthy of a museum.

The Chicago Triennial Conclave did have a more affordable jewel produced. It was not quite as elaborate or jewel encrusted as the one above, but it was impressive. The jewel was reproduced as part of a "welcome" sign in Grant Park off Jackson Blvd. The sign was 133 feet in height. There were 4,500 electric lights integrated into the sign so that during the Triennial it could be seen night and day. At the time, it was the tallest electric sign in the world with 20,000 feet of wire and 5,000 feet of steel cable supporting it. There were four post cards produced showing the jewel; two of the welcome sign.

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