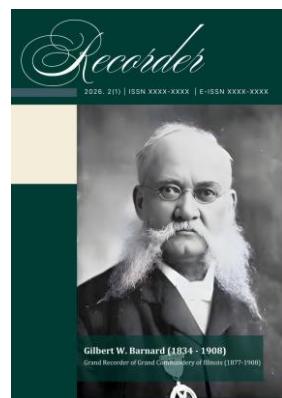




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## In Memory of Sir Knight Gilbert W. Barnard (1834–1908), Grand Recorder of the Grand Commandery of Illinois (based on periodical press materials of 1908)

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### Abstract

This article is dedicated to the memory of Sir Knight Gilbert W. Barnard (1834–1908), who served as Grand Recorder of the Grand Commandery of Illinois from 1877 to 1908. The source base of the study consists of collections of documents related to the activities of the Grand Commandery of Illinois, as well as periodical press materials devoted to the death of Gilbert Wordsworth Barnard. In the conclusion, the author argues that the research conducted makes it possible not only to reconstruct the main stages of the biography of Sir Knight Gilbert Wordsworth Barnard (1834–1908), but also to determine his real significance in the history of the Grand Commandery of Illinois and American Templar Freemasonry in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. An analysis of the sources shows that Barnard was not merely a long-serving administrator in the position of Grand Recorder, but a key figure who ensured institutional stability, continuity of traditions, and the effective functioning of the higher Masonic structures of the State of Illinois. The scale of his activity is confirmed both by numerous official references in the proceedings of annual conclaves and by the considerable attention paid to his death in the periodical and specialized Masonic press. Of particular importance are obituaries and memorial texts, which make it possible to identify the perception of Barnard by his contemporaries as a moral authority, an expert in matters of Masonic law, and a guardian of ritual and organizational tradition. The number of degrees he held, the offices he occupied, and his extensive committee work testify to his exceptional involvement in the life of the Order. Thus, the death of Gilbert W. Barnard in 1908 became not only a personal loss for his closest associates, but also a significant event for the entire Masonic community of Illinois. The material presented demonstrates that the study of figures of this magnitude allows for a deeper understanding of the mechanisms of functioning of Masonic institutions and the role of individual personalities in their sustainable development.

**Keywords:** Sir Knight Gilbert W. Barnard (1834–1908), Grand Recorder, Grand Commandery of Illinois, Knights Templar, June 19, 1908, memorial publications.

### Introduction

On June 19, 1908, the Grand Commandery of Illinois suffered a great loss: on that day, Grand Recorder Sir Knight Gilbert Wordsworth Barnard, who had held this position since 1877, passed away<sup>1</sup>. Gilbert W. Barnard was born on June 1, 1834, in Palmyra, Wayne County, New York. He received the third Masonic degree in Garden City Lodge No. 141 in 1864, followed by the Royal Arch in Corinthian Chapter No. 69 in 1866 and the degrees of Royal and Select Masters in Siloam Council No. 53 in 1871<sup>2</sup>.

On May 13, 1870, he was knighted in St. Bernard Commandery No. 35<sup>3</sup>. As early as 1871, he was elected to the officer position of Prelate<sup>4</sup>, and he remained in the same office in 1872<sup>5</sup>. In 1873, he was elected to the

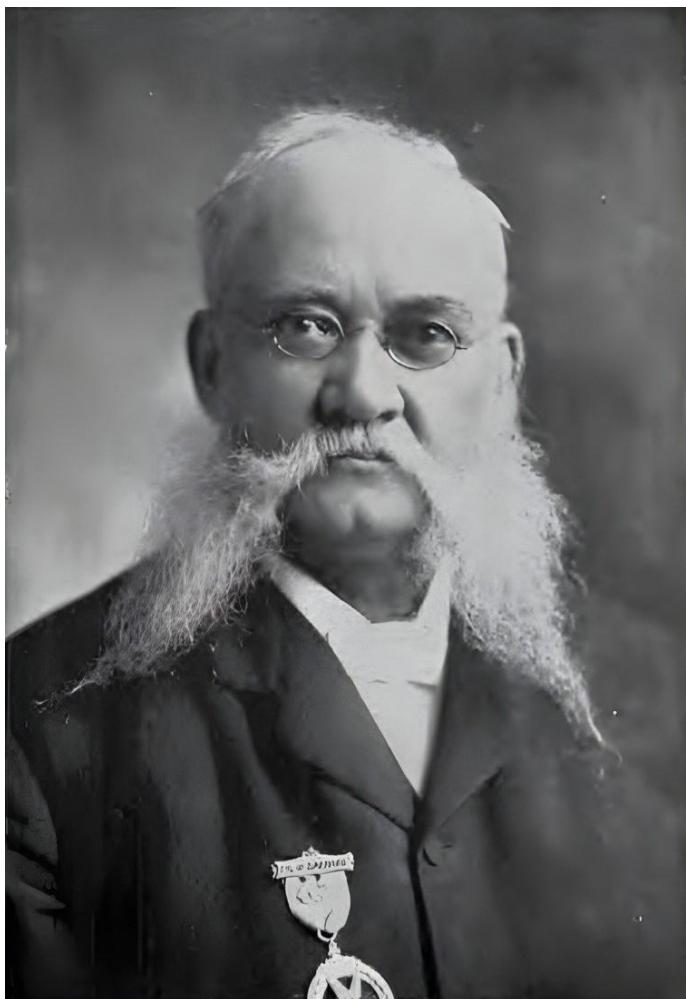
<sup>1</sup> Fifty-Second Annual Conclave the Grand Commandery of Knights Templar of Illinois. Bloomington, Ill.: Pantagraph Printing and Stationery Company, 1908. P. 134.

<sup>2</sup> Fifty-Second Annual Conclave the Grand Commandery of Knights Templar of Illinois. Bloomington, Ill.: Pantagraph Printing and Stationery Company, 1908. P. 59.

<sup>3</sup> Proceedings of the Thirteenth Annual Conclave, of the Grand Commandery of Knights Templar of the State of Illinois. Chicago: Horton and Leonard, steam book and job printers, 1870. P. 125.

<sup>4</sup> Fifteenth Annual Conclave of the Grand Commandery of Knights Templar of the State of Illinois. Chicago: Horton and Leonard, printers, 1871. P. 142.

third of the highest officer positions, Captain General<sup>1</sup>. At the same time, he was elected to his first officer position in the Grand Commandery of Illinois, that of Grand Standard Bearer<sup>2</sup>. In 1874, he was elected to the second-highest officer position, Generalissimo<sup>3</sup>, and in 1875 he became Eminent Commander of St. Bernard Commandery No. 35<sup>4</sup>. From 1876, he held the title of Past Commander. Subsequently, he served on various committees, including the Committee on Finance and Accounts<sup>5</sup>. In 1877, he was elected to the office of Grand Recorder (Fig. 1)<sup>6</sup>. From that time until his death, he remained in this position<sup>7</sup>. He died on June 19, 1908, in Chicago, Cook County, Illinois.



**Fig. 1.** Sir Knight Gilbert W. Barnard (1834–1908). Late 19th century.

### Materials

The source base of the study consists of collections of documents related to the activities of the Grand Commandery of Illinois and materials from the periodical press devoted to the death of Gilbert Wordsworth Barnard.

<sup>5</sup> Sixteenth Annual Conclave of the Grand Commandery of Knights Templar of the State of Illinois. Chicago: Knight and Leonard, printers, 1872. P. 114.

<sup>1</sup> Seventeenth Annual Conclave of the Grand Commandery of Knights Templar of the State of Illinois. Chicago: Knight and Leonard, printers, 1873. P. 135.

<sup>2</sup> Seventeenth Annual Conclave of the Grand Commandery of Knights Templar of the State of Illinois. Chicago: Knight and Leonard, printers, 1873. P. 35.

<sup>3</sup> Eighteenth Annual Conclave of the Grand Commandery of Knights Templar of the State of Illinois. Chicago: Knight and Leonard, printers, 1874. P. 27.

<sup>4</sup> Nineteenth Annual Conclave of the Grand Commandery of Knights Templar of the State of Illinois. Chicago: Knight and Leonard, printers, 1875. P. 47.

<sup>5</sup> Twentieth Annual Conclave of the Grand Commandery of Knights Templar of the State of Illinois. Chicago: Knight and Leonard, printers, 1876. P. 8.

<sup>6</sup> Twenty-first Annual Conclave of the Grand Commandery of Knights Templar of the State of Illinois. Chicago: Hazlitt and Reed, printers, 1877. P. 40.

<sup>7</sup> Fifty-Second Annual Conclave the Grand Commandery of Knights Templar of Illinois. Bloomington, Ill.: Pantagraph Printing and Stationery Company, 1908. P. 134.

Among the first group of sources, particular mention should be made of the numerous *Proceedings of the Annual Conclave of the Grand Commandery of Knights Templar of the State of Illinois*. The study makes use of the *Proceedings* for the years 1870–1877 and 1908.

The second group of sources includes numerous newspaper publications: *Waukegan Daily Sun*, *Fremont Tribune*, *The Evening Journal*, *The Times-Democrat*, *Omaha Daily Bee*, *Chattanooga News*, *Bonners Ferry Herald*, and *Troy Weekly News*, published between June 19 and June 27, 1908.

## Results

One of the first newspapers to report this sad news was the New York paper *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, which published the notice “Gilbert W. Barnard” on June 19, 1908. The notice is quoted in full below:

“Chicago, June 19—Gilbert Wadsworth Barnard, well known to the Masonic fraternity of Chicago and the United States, died at his residence here early to-day, after a lingering illness of several months. ‘Gil’ W. Barnard, as he was known, held more active Masonic offices and had more degrees than any other member of his order, so far as is known. His degrees numbered more than three hundred, a large proportion being conferred by collateral orders.

During the last few years of his life Mr. Barnard devoted himself to directing the work of the Masonic bodies of Illinois. He was the active working force in ten big state bodies, writing reports and directing all the details of the work. Mr. Barnard was an oracle on matters of precedent and interpretation of Masonic laws. All disputes that could not be settled elsewhere came to him for final judgment.

His connection with Masonry began in 1864. Mr. Barnard was born in Palmyra, N. Y., in 1834<sup>1</sup>.

The same publication appeared on the same day in the *Chattanooga News*<sup>2</sup>.

On June 20, the notice “Gilbert W. Barnard Dead” was disseminated in the mass media and published in *The Evening Journal* and *The Times-Democrat*<sup>3</sup>. Three days later, this notice was reprinted in the *Fremont Tribune* on June 23, 1908<sup>4</sup>. In addition, on June 20 the *Omaha Daily Bee* published a brief notice entitled “Gilbert W. Barnard.”<sup>5</sup>

On June 22, the *Waukegan Daily Sun* reported on the funeral in an article entitled “Gilbert Barnard Buried.”<sup>6</sup>

A more detailed obituary appeared only on June 26, 1908, in the *Troy Weekly News* under the title “Mason of Many Degrees Dies.” This publication is quoted in full below:

“Gilbert Wadsworth Barnard, well known to the Masonic fraternity of Chicago and the United States, died at his residence in Chicago recently. Heart disease was the cause of his death.

‘Gil’ W. Barnard, as he was known to his friends, held more active Masonic offices and had more degrees than any other member of his order, so far as is known. His degrees numbered more than 300, a large proportion being conferred by collateral orders.

During the last few years of his life Mr. Barnard devoted himself to directing the work of the Masonic bodies of Illinois. He was the active working force in 10 big state bodies, writing reports and directing the details of the work”<sup>7</sup>.

On June 27, 1908, this publication was reprinted in the *Bonners Ferry Herald*<sup>8</sup>.

However, the greatest attention to the death of the distinguished Mason was paid in the Masonic press, particularly in the materials of the Annual Conclave of 1908. In these materials, the name of the deceased is mentioned 80 times.

His name was first mentioned in connection with the issuance of Order No. 3, which reported that, due to the illness of Gilbert W. Barnard, Sir Knight Chester S. Gurney was appointed to the position of Grand Recorder effective June 3, 1908<sup>9</sup>. Subsequently, the death of Gilbert W. Barnard was officially announced.

In the section *Memorials*, materials describing the circumstances of the funeral were published:

“June 19, 1908, our dearly beloved Grand Recorder, Gilbert Wordsworth Barnard, was called from labor to refreshment; from his many years of toil in our Order, to his well-earned rest.

On Friday morning, June 19, 1908, our dear old friend, brother and counselor, after a long and most exceptional life of usefulness, passed away. Em. Sir Knight Barnard ‘wrapped the drapery of his couch around him and lay down to pleasant dreams.’

‘We shall meet, but we shall miss him.’

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<sup>1</sup> Gilbert W. Barnard. *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle*. June 19, 1908.

<sup>2</sup> Gilbert Wordsworth Barnard. *Chattanooga News*. June 19, 1908.

<sup>3</sup> Gilbert W. Barnard Dead. *The Times-Democrat*. June 20, 1908.

<sup>4</sup> Gilbert W. Barnard Dead. *Fremont Tribune*. June 23, 1908.

<sup>5</sup> Gilbert W. Barnard. *Omaha Daily Bee*. June 20, 1908.

<sup>6</sup> Gilbert Barnard Buried. *Waukegan Daily Sun*. June 22, 1908.

<sup>7</sup> Mason of Many Degrees Dies. *Troy Weekly News*. June 26, 1908.

<sup>8</sup> Mason of Many Degrees Dies. *Bonners Ferry Herald*. June 27, 1908.

<sup>9</sup> Fifty-Second Annual Conclave the Grand Commandery of Knights Templar of Illinois. Bloomington, Ill.: Pantagraph Printing and Stationery Company, 1908. P. 15.

The subordinate Commanderies were notified by wire of Sir Knight Barnard's death, and the attendance at the funeral was very large. The following Commanderies attended: Apollo, Joliet, Chicago, St. Bernard, Montjoie, Siloam, Evanston, Englewood, Columbia, St. Elmo, and Mizpah, making a total present of nearly one thousand Sir Knights. The escort was in charge of our most efficient Grand Generalissimo, and every detail was most carefully carried out.

Following the battalion of Templars, a very large representation from Oriental Consistory, officers of the Grand Chapter, Grand Lodge, and innumerable friends came in carriages<sup>1</sup>.

This was followed by an extensive obituary:

"ILLINOIS. Sir Knight Gilbert Wordsworth Barnard. Past Commander of St. Bernard Commandery No. 35, and Grand Recorder of the Grand Commandery of Knights Templar of Illinois. 'The curfew tolls the knell of parting day.' The poet's words suggest the meditative and the retrospective, and to us who knew not only well, but intimately and affectionately, the attractive personality, the warm cordiality, and enduring friendliness of the noble dead, the parting of the way is drear. Had not the gracious Barnard received the honors of Knighthood, the character and bearing of the true Templar would have been personified in the nobility and fearlessness that were inborn in that strongest and gentlest of men. Many of his contemporary fraters, and their number is legion, will always recall with tender recollections the urbanity and quaint humor of dear old 'Gil,' as he so liked to be called, and it may truly be said that no Nestor of any age was more revered, none whose opinion on questions relating to any detail of the Craft was more respected, and whose advice was more faithfully followed. How many who are now listening will easily call to mind the unalterable patience and the kindliness of spirit that governed his every word and action. 'None knew him but to love him, none named him but to praise,' is interwoven in the wreath of recollection of that true and lovable Knight whose memory we honor and whose love we mourn. If ever the saying, 'Men, not Masonry alone, adorns the Order,' had special significance, it is when the character of the departed one is remembered; for the life of any institution, ancient or modern, is dependent on the strength and noble traits of the individuals who compose it, and in truth our deeply lamented frater was in our Order a strong tower; a Father in Israel has fallen, and we do well to grieve. His office was a haven of rest and refuge for those who sought help or advice, and his genial good nature was like a benediction to all who came into his presence. To us as Christian Knights, the life of 'Gil' stands as a pillar of light, for he practiced knightly virtues in every act of each day of his life..."<sup>2</sup>.

In addition, a personal memorial page (Fig. 2) and a photograph (Fig. 1) were published.

This was followed by numerous mentions of his name in the lists of the officer corps of the Grand Commandery of Illinois<sup>3</sup>. He was also listed among the deceased knights of St. Bernard Commandery No. 35, of which he had been a member since 1870, for nearly forty years<sup>4</sup>. In addition, his name appeared in correspondence with other Grand Commanderies of the Grand Encampment of Knights Templar of the United States<sup>5</sup>.

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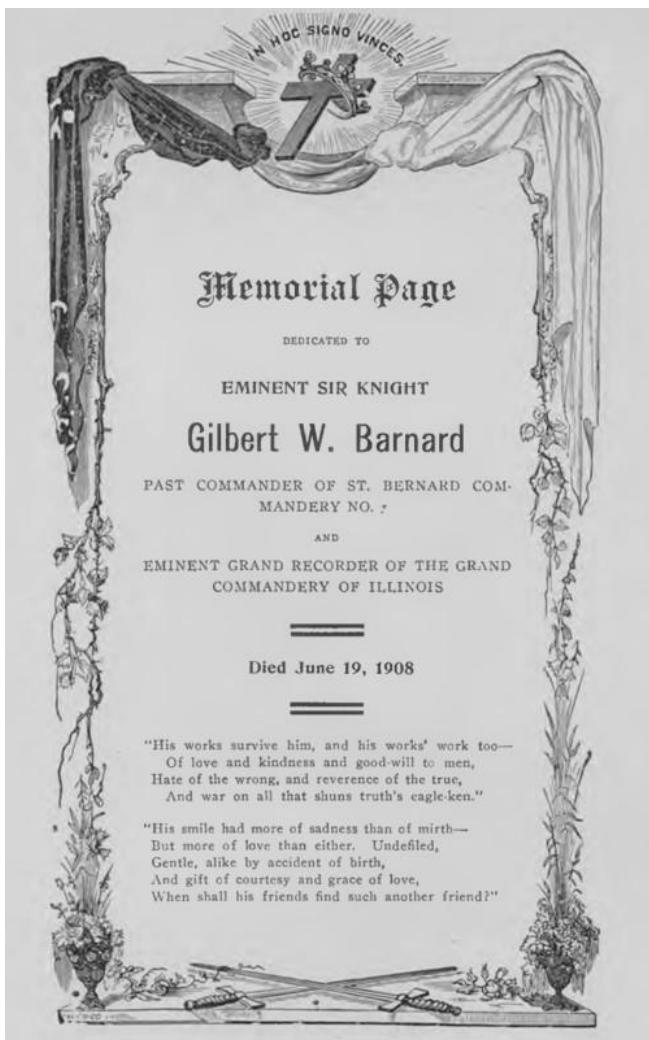
<sup>1</sup> Fifty-Second Annual Conclave the Grand Commandery of Knights Templar of Illinois. Bloomington, Ill.: Pantagraph Printing and Stationery Company, 1908. P. 32.

<sup>2</sup> Fifty-Second Annual Conclave the Grand Commandery of Knights Templar of Illinois. Bloomington, Ill.: Pantagraph Printing and Stationery Company, 1908. P. 58-60.

<sup>3</sup> Fifty-Second Annual Conclave the Grand Commandery of Knights Templar of Illinois. Bloomington, Ill.: Pantagraph Printing and Stationery Company, 1908. P. 134.

<sup>4</sup> Fifty-Second Annual Conclave the Grand Commandery of Knights Templar of Illinois. Bloomington, Ill.: Pantagraph Printing and Stationery Company, 1908. P. 153.

<sup>5</sup> Fifty-Second Annual Conclave the Grand Commandery of Knights Templar of Illinois. Bloomington, Ill.: Pantagraph Printing and Stationery Company, 1908. P. 85-88.



**Fig. 2.** Memorial page dedicated to Gilbert W. Barnard<sup>1</sup>.

### Conclusion

The research conducted makes it possible to reconstruct not only the main stages of the biography of Sir Knight Gilbert Wordsworth Barnard (1834–1908), but also to determine his real significance in the history of the Grand Commandery of Illinois and American Templar Freemasonry of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. An analysis of the sources demonstrates that Barnard was not merely an administrator who held the office of Grand Recorder for an extended period, but a key figure who ensured institutional stability, continuity of traditions, and the effective functioning of the higher Masonic structures of the State of Illinois. The scale of his activity is confirmed both by numerous official references in the materials of annual conclaves and by the attention devoted to his death in the periodical and specialized Masonic press.

Of particular importance are obituaries and memorial texts, which make it possible to identify how Barnard was perceived by his contemporaries—as a moral authority, an expert in matters of Masonic law, and a guardian of ritual and organizational tradition. The number of degrees he held, the offices he occupied, and his extensive committee work testify to his exceptional involvement in the life of the Order. Thus, the death of Gilbert W. Barnard in 1908 became not only a personal loss for his closest associates, but also a significant event for the entire Masonic community of Illinois. The material presented demonstrates that the study of figures of this magnitude allows for a deeper understanding of the mechanisms underlying the functioning of Masonic institutions and the role of individual personalities in their sustainable development.

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<sup>1</sup> Fifty-Second Annual Conclave the Grand Commandery of Knights Templar of Illinois. Bloomington, Ill.: Pantagraph Printing and Stationery Company, 1908. P. 118.

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