

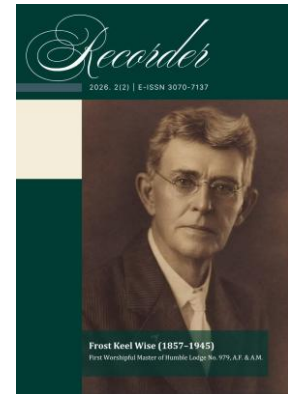
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Grand Commandery of Pennsylvania of the Knights Templar: Commanderies, Location, and Period of Formation

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Abstract

This study examines the history of the formation of commanderies of the Masonic Order of Knights Templar within the Grand Commandery of Pennsylvania, with particular attention given to their names and numbering, geographical locations, and periods of establishment.

The research is based on the annual reports of the Grand Commandery of Pennsylvania covering the period from 1860 to 1983, which reflect official documentation on the activities of the Grand Commandery and its subordinate commanderies.

The author concludes that the majority of commanderies were established in the second half of the nineteenth century, when the overwhelming number of commanderies were created, and that by 1928 the organization had reached an almost complete structure—99 commanderies (or 99%).

A dependence of the rate of commandery formation on broader historical factors has been identified: the Civil War and the First World War led to a temporary suspension in the expansion of the commandery network. A geographical analysis demonstrates a relatively even distribution of commanderies across the state, with a concentration in major cities such as Philadelphia and Pittsburgh.

Particular significance is attached to the achievement of 100 commanderies, reflecting a high level of organizational maturity and influence of the Grand Commandery of Pennsylvania. The results confirm the importance of official reports as a key source for studying the institutional history of Masonic structures.

Keywords: Freemasonry, York Rite, Grand Commandery of Pennsylvania, commanderies, catalog.

1. Introduction

In the history of the American Masonic Order of Knights Templar, there remain a significant number of insufficiently studied aspects, one of which is the lack of publicly accessible catalogs of commanderies. In this study, we aim to present, in a cataloged format, a single Grand Commandery of the Order—namely, the Grand Commandery of Pennsylvania, which at its peak comprised 100 commanderies within the state.

2. Materials and Methods

The materials for this study consist of the annual reports of the Grand Commandery of Pennsylvania for the period from 1860 to 1983. These documents reflect official records of the activities of the Grand Commandery and the commanderies under its jurisdiction. In addition, selected Proceedings of other Grand Commanderies, such as those of Wisconsin ([Proceedings of the Grand Commandery of Wisconsin..., 1860](#)), as well as materials from the triennial conclaves of the Grand Encampment of the United States (e.g., the [46th Triennial Conclave..., 1955](#)), were utilized.

Methodologically, the study is based on the principles of historicism and objectivity. The historical-chronological method played a key role, allowing for the examination of the development of the Grand Commandery of Pennsylvania in chronological sequence. The historical-statistical method, in turn, made it possible to identify characteristic patterns in the formation of commanderies within the state.

3. Discussion

The historiography of the subject under study is, unfortunately, not extensive. Nevertheless, the first scholarly attempt to address the history of the Knights Templar in Pennsylvania dates back to 1867, when

Alfred Creigh published *History of the Knights Templar of the State of Pennsylvania from February 14th, A.D. 1794 to November 13th, A.D. 1866* (Creigh, 1867). In this work, the author sought to examine the history of Templar Masonry in the state from the earliest recorded presence of the Order.

A century later, in 1965, a collective of authors from York Commandery No. 21 prepared a history of their commandery to commemorate its centennial ([History of York Commandery..., 1965](#)).

No other studies specifically devoted to the history of this Grand Commandery have been identified.

4. Results

The first Knights Templar commandery established in Pennsylvania was created in the early period of the Order, prior to the establishment of the General Grand Encampment of the United States in 1816. This first commandery was St. John Commandery (then St. John Encampment), founded in 1814. It is likely that in the first half of the nineteenth century this commandery temporarily ceased its activity, and by the mid-nineteenth century it was assigned the number 4.

By 1853, there were already seven commanderies in Pennsylvania, which was more than sufficient to establish its own Grand Commandery. On April 12, 1854, the Grand Commandery of Pennsylvania was instituted, becoming the tenth Grand Commandery of Knights Templar in the United States ([46th Triennial Conclave..., 1955: 18](#)).

By 1860, the Grand Commandery of Pennsylvania comprised 20 commanderies, and by 1983 their number had reached a historical maximum of 100. For better visualization, the data on the commanderies have been compiled into Table 1, which includes information on their names and numbering, locations, and dates of establishment. It should be noted that exact dates of establishment are known only for commanderies numbered 1 through 16; beginning with No. 17, such data were not found in the reports, and therefore the year of first mention has been used as the date.

Table 1. List of commanderies within the Grand Commandery of Pennsylvania as of 1983 ([Proceeding of the Grand Commandery of Wisconsin..., 1860: 40](#); [Proceeding of the Grand Commandery of Pennsylvania..., 1858: 57](#); [Proceeding of the Grand Commandery of Pennsylvania..., 1860: 47](#); [Proceeding of the Grand Commandery of Pennsylvania..., 1865: 44](#); [Proceeding of the Grand Commandery of Pennsylvania..., 1866: 68-69](#); [Proceeding of the Grand Commandery of Pennsylvania..., 1867: 86-87](#); [Proceeding of the Grand Commandery of Pennsylvania..., 1868: 83-84](#); [Proceeding of the Grand Commandery of Pennsylvania..., 1869: 79-80](#); [Proceeding of the Grand Commandery of Pennsylvania..., 1870: 61-62](#); [Proceeding of the Grand Commandery of Pennsylvania..., 1871: 120](#); [Proceeding of the Grand Commandery of Pennsylvania..., 1872: 106-107](#); [Proceeding of the Grand Commandery of Pennsylvania..., 1874: 134-135](#); [Proceeding of the Grand Commandery of Pennsylvania..., 1876: 202-203](#); [Proceeding of the Grand Commandery of Pennsylvania..., 1878: 142](#); [Proceeding of the Grand Commandery of Pennsylvania..., 1881: 152](#); [Proceeding of the Grand Commandery of Pennsylvania..., 1883: 104](#); [Proceeding of the Grand Commandery of Pennsylvania..., 1884: 160](#); [Proceeding of the Grand Commandery of Pennsylvania..., 1885: 102](#); [Proceeding of the Grand Commandery of Pennsylvania..., 1886: 130](#); [Proceeding of the Grand Commandery of Pennsylvania..., 1889: 176](#); [Proceeding of the Grand Commandery of Pennsylvania..., 1890: 123](#); [Proceeding of the Grand Commandery of Pennsylvania..., 1892: 209](#); [Proceeding of the Grand Commandery of Pennsylvania..., 1895: 167](#); [Proceeding of the Grand Commandery of Pennsylvania..., 1897: 214](#); [Proceeding of the Grand Commandery of Pennsylvania..., 1899: 230](#); [Proceeding of the Grand Commandery of Pennsylvania..., 1900: 222](#); [Proceeding of the Grand Commandery of Pennsylvania..., 1903: 263](#); [Proceeding of the Grand Commandery of Pennsylvania..., 1904: 273](#); [Proceeding of the Grand Commandery of Pennsylvania..., 1905: 281](#); [Proceeding of the Grand Commandery of Pennsylvania..., 1906: 284](#); [Proceeding of the Grand Commandery of Pennsylvania..., 1907: 229](#); [Proceeding of the Grand Commandery of Pennsylvania..., 1910: 281](#); [Proceeding of the Grand Commandery of Pennsylvania..., 1913: 293](#); [Proceeding of the Grand Commandery of Pennsylvania..., 1914: 281](#); [Proceeding of the Grand Commandery of Pennsylvania..., 1921: 267](#); [Proceeding of the Grand Commandery of Pennsylvania..., 1922: 281](#); [Proceeding of the Grand Commandery of Pennsylvania..., 1923: 271](#); [Proceeding of the Grand Commandery of Pennsylvania..., 1924: 317](#); [Proceeding of the Grand Commandery of Pennsylvania..., 1925: 407](#); [Proceeding of the Grand Commandery of Pennsylvania..., 1928: 321](#); [Proceeding of the Grand Commandery of Pennsylvania..., 1948: 159-161](#); [Proceeding of the Grand Commandery of Pennsylvania..., 1983: 60](#))

Name	location	Chartered
Pittsburg Commandery No. 1	Pittsburg	1847
Jacques de Molay Commandery No. 2	Washington	1849
Philadelphia Commandery No. 3	Philadelphia	1849
St. John Commandery No. 4	Philadelphia	1814
Hubbard Commandery No. 5	Waynesburg	1851
Union Commandery No. 6	Philadelphia	1851
St. Omer's Commandery No. 7	Uniontown	1853
St. John's Commandery No. 8	Carlisle	1854

De Molay Commandery No. 9	Reading	1855
Mountain Commandery No. 10	Altoma	1855
Parke Commandery No. 11	Harrisburg	1856
Crusade Commandery No. 12	Bloomsburg	1856
Columbian Commandery No. 13	Lancaster	1856
Palestine Commandery No. 14	Carbondale	1856
Jerusalem Commandery No. 15	Pottstown	1856
Towanda Commandery No. 16	Towanda	1857
Couer de Lion Commandery No. 17	Scranton	1858
Kedron Commandery No. 18	Greensburg	1860
Hugh de Payens Commandery No. 19	Easton	1860
Allen Commandery No. 20	Allentown	1860
York Commandery No. 21	York	1865
Baldwin II Commandery No. 22	Williamsport	1866
Packer Commandery No. 23	Mauch Chunk	1867
Hermit Commandery No. 24	Lebanon	1867
Northwestern Commandery No. 25	Meadville	1867
Lewistown Commandery No. 26	Lewistown	1867
St. Andrew's Commandery No. 27	Susquehanna	1867
Tyagaghton Commandery No. 28	Wellsboro'	1867
Kadosh Commandery No. 29	Philadelphia	1867
Mount Olivet Commandery No. 30	Erie	1868
Ivanhoe Commandery No. 31	Mahanoy City	1868
Hutchinson Commandery No. 32	Norristown	1868
Constans Commandery No. 33	Bellefonte	1868
Cyrene Commandery No. 34	Columbia	1869
Allegheny Commandery No. 35	Pittsburg	1869
Mary Commandery No. 36	Philadelphia	1869
Calvary Commandery No. 37	Danville	1870 ¹
Rose Croix Commandery No. 38	Titusville	1871
Prince of Peace Commandery No. 39	Ashland	1871
Knapp Commandery No. 40	Ridgway	1871
Constantine Commandery No. 41	Pottsville	1871
Reading Commandery No. 42	Reading	1871
Talbot Commandery No. 43	Oil City	1872
Franklin Commandery No. 44	Franklin	1872
Dieu Le Veut Commandery No. 45	Wilkes-Barre	1872
Hospitaller Commandery No. 46	Lock Haven	1872
St. Alban Commandery No. 47	Philadelphia	1872
Tancred Commandery No. 48	Pittsburg	1874
Uniontown Commandery No. 49	Uniontown	1874
Rebecca Commandery No. 50	Sharon	1874
Clarence Commandery No. 51	Corry	1874
DeBouillon Commandery No. 52	Coatesville	1875
Corinthian "Chasseur" Commandery No. 53	Philadelphia	1875
Kensington Commandery No. 54	Philadelphia	1875
Centennial Commandery No. 55	Coatesville	1876
Continental Commandery No. 56	Chambersburg	1876
Wyoming Valley Commandery No. 57	Pittston	1878
Trinity Commandery No. 58	Bradford	1881
Ascalon Commandery No. 59	Pittsburg	1881
Temple Commandery No. 60	Tunkhannock	1883
Oriental Commandery No. 61	Johnstown	1884
Lawrence Commandery No. 62	New Castle	1884
Warren Commandery No. 63	Warren	1885
Canton Commandery N. 64	Canton	1886
Huntington Commandery No. 65	Huntington	1889
Chester Commandery No. 66	Chester	1889

¹ Constituted of August 4, 1870.

Mt. Calvary Commandery No. 67	Greenville	1890
Melita Commandery No. 68	Scranton	1890
Potter Commandery No. 69	Coudersport	1890
Pennsylvania Commandery No. 70	Philadelphia	1891
Nativity Commandery No. 71	Pottstown	1892
Duquesne Commandery No. 72	Pittsburg	1892
Mt. Vernon Commandery No. 73	Hazleton	1892
Moshannon Commandery No. 74	Philipsburg	1892
Gethsemane Commandery No. 75	York	1895
St. Andrew's Commandery No. 76	Susquehanna	1895
Shamokin Commandery No. 77	Shamokin	1897
Chartiers Commandery No. 78	Carnegie	1899
Gettysburg Commandery No. 79	Gettysburg	1900
McKean Commandery No. 80	Charleroi	1903
Samuel S. Yohe Commandery No. 81	Stroudsburg	1904
Germantown Commandery No. 82	Philadelphia	1904
Bethany Commandery No. 83	Dubois	1905
Beaver Valley Commandery No. 84	Beaver Falls	1906
Mt. Hermon Commandery No. 85	Sunbury	1907
McKeesport Commandery No. 86	McKeesport	1907
Lorraine Commandery No. 87	Butler	1910
Brandywine Commandery No. 88	West Chester	1913
Savona Commandery No. 89	Honesdale	1914
Bethlehem Commandery No. 90	Bethlehem	1914
Lincoln Commandery No. 91	Wilkesburg	1921
Frankford Commandery No. 92	Philadelphia	1922
Cyprus Commandery No. 93	Oxford	1923
Beauseant Commandery No. 94	Allentown	1923
Damascus Commandery No. 95	Lansdale	1924
Mizpah Commandery No. 96	Doylestown	1924
Ascension Commandery No. 97	Ardmore	1925
Bethel Commandery No. 98	Hanover	1925
Nazarene Commandery No. 99	Montrose	1928
Holyrood Commandery No. 100	Kittanning	1983

An analysis of the data presented in Table 1 demonstrates that up to and including 1850, only four commanderies existed within the jurisdiction; by 1860, their number had increased to 20, by 1870 to 37, by 1880 to 57, by 1890 to 69, by 1900 to 79, by 1910 to 87, by 1920 to 90, and by 1930 to 99 commanderies. The final, 100th commandery was established in 1983. Thus, nearly 80% of all commanderies in the state were created by 1900. Over the following 28 years, an additional 20 commanderies were formed, bringing the total to 99% of all commanderies, and more than 50 years later, the final, 100th commandery was established.

It should be noted, however, that by the 1920s—when the Masonic Order of Knights Templar reached its peak in influence and membership—not all commanderies continued to exist. For example, DeBouillon Commandery No. 52 is mentioned only in the proceedings of the 1875 conclave, the year of its establishment. It was subsequently dissolved, and its number was not reassigned.

During its most active phase of growth in the second half of the nineteenth century, this process was interrupted only by the Civil War. The last commandery prior to the war was established in 1860, and the next only in 1865, the year the war ended. Thus, the development of the Order was temporarily suspended during the conflict. A similar pattern can be observed during the First World War: the last commandery was established in 1914, and the next only in 1921.

As for the geographical distribution, commanderies were established in nearly all major towns and cities across the state, with multiple commanderies founded in larger urban centers. For instance, a total of 11 commanderies were established in Philadelphia and 5 in Pittsburgh.

Finally, it is important to emphasize that the existence of 100 commanderies within a single Grand Commandery represents one of the most remarkable achievements in the history of the American Knights Templar. A greater number of commanderies was established only within the Grand Commandery of Texas.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, it should be emphasized that the majority of commanderies were established in the second half of the nineteenth century, when the overwhelming number of commanderies were created. By 1928, the organizational structure had reached near completion, totaling 99 commanderies (or 99%).

A clear dependence of the rate of commandery formation on broader historical factors has been identified: both the Civil War and the First World War led to temporary interruptions in the expansion of the commandery network. Geographical analysis demonstrates a relatively even distribution of commanderies across the state, with a concentration in major cities such as Philadelphia and Pittsburgh.

Particular significance is attached to the achievement of 100 commanderies, reflecting a high level of organizational maturity and influence of the Grand Commandery of Pennsylvania. The results confirm the importance of official reports as a key source for the study of the institutional history of Masonic structures.

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