

Presented to Nebraska College, MSRICF on January 26, 2006.
By Roger Miner, VII°

Of Knights Templar, Grand Lodge of England, Grand Lodge of Massachusetts, Saint Andrew's Chapter Royal Arch Masons.

The official name of the Knights Templars (Templiers) was the "Order of the Poor Knights of Christ", formed in Jerusalem in 1118 to protect the pilgrims visiting Palestine at the end of the First Crusade of 1096.

The order of the Knights Templars was created a few years after the [Knights Hospitalers](#), in roughly the same place and for similar reasons. The Templars rose to higher glory and power, ended in a more spectacular fashion, and their remains were passed on to the Hospitalers.

The Templars were called the Knights of the Red Cross, with their symbol of a red cross on a white field. In 1128, when the Order was confirmed by Pope Honorius II, the Knights received the white vestment as a symbol of the purity of their life. In 1146 Pope Eugenius added "the red cross with two bars", so the many illustrations we see of the double-barred cross are no doubt appropriate.

Although similar to the goals of the Hospitalers, French knights Godfrey de Saint Omer and Huguens des Payens (Hugh) created the Knights Templars specifically as a military order, with no pretensions of charity or aid to the sick.

The Templars gained a reputation as great warriors in battles defending the Holy Land. But Jerusalem fell to the Muslims in 1187, and the Templars retreated, first to Antioch, then to Acre (the port city of Akko). The Knights Templars were based in Acre for a century; in 1291, Acre fell to the Muslims, with Grand Master William de Beaujue dying in the battle. The surviving Templars were the last to leave, departing to Caesarea, and then to Cyprus

Members joining the Knights Templars took oaths of poverty, and donated all their cash, valuables and property to the Order. Between these extensive "gifts," treasures from battles, and massive grants from the Pope, the Templars amassed a true fortune.

THE TEMPLARS' DOWNFALL

The enormous wealth and power of the Knights Templars aroused both greed and envy. With their huge reserves of cash and their banking system, France's King Philip the Fair had gone to the Templars for loans to finance his wars. The Knights of Provence website, (<http://www.beyond.fr/history/knights.html>) "Beyond History" section, gives different accounts, some where the Templars refused Philip IV's request for money, and some where the King wanted to avoid repaying the loans he already had from them.



www.masonic.benemerito.net/msricf

On Friday the 13th in the year 1307, the month of October [thanks, Jonathan Curtis], all of the Templars in France were rounded up and imprisoned - "Friday the 13th" has been an unlucky day since that event. (The First Friday the 13th)

The Templars were charged with Satanism and many other "unnatural" acts and practices. Many of the charges may have been complete fabrications, but some could have been distortions of secret rites of the Templars. There were torture-encouraged confessions in the style of the Spanish Inquisition, and many were found guilty for refusing to "confess".

Many of the Templars in France were terminally punished, á la Joan of Arc, including the Grand Master, Jacques de Molay, who was burnt at the stake in 1314, near Paris' Notre Dame Cathedral.

Disbanding the Order

At the beginning of the purge, Philip the Fair began coercing the Popes to excommunicate the Templars. He attempted to have Pope Boniface VIII kidnapped. The king was excommunicated, but Boniface died as a result of the kidnapping attempt. Pope Benedict XI lifted the excommunication of King Philip, but it was his successor, Pope Clement V, who finally went along with the King and, in 1312, had the Templars disbanded worldwide. It was Pope Clement V who established the [Popes in Avignon](#)

The now-ownerless wealth and property of the Templars was officially assigned to the [Knights Hospitalers](#). But, in France, King Philip had confiscated all of the Templars possessions at the beginning, in 1307, and didn't pass on much of it to the Hospitalers. In England, King Edward II seized the Templars lands and possessions, including the Temple in London, and didn't pass on anything to the Hospitalers.

Beyond the End

Following the declared end of the Templars in 1312, the Order continued in secret, with Jean-Marc Larmenius the first Grand Master of the now-secret organization, and the Order continued with an uninterrupted line of Grand Masters. In 1705, a convention of Templars at Versailles elected Philip, Duke of Orleans, as Grand Master. This Philip (le Régent) became Regent of France in 1715. With a combined Regent and Grand Master, the Order of the Temple was renewed and legitimized as a Secular Military Order of Chivalry. Following the death of le Régent in December, 1723, Grand Masters continued, through the three Princes of Bourbon (until 1776), the Duke de Cosse Brissac (until his execution during the [French Revolution](#) in 1782), and Radix de Chevillon. In the early 19th century, the Order expanded, with over 20 Convents in France and Pories set up across Europe.

The Split of Knights Templar from the Military Side to the Masonic Side

This from the Grand Lodge of Massachusetts:ⁱ

The Grand Lodge of England dates its beginning with four Lodges in London, meeting for the first time together, at the Goose and Gridiron Alehouse on the 24th of June, 1717. It was an unusual event in that hitherto the Lodges tended to remain by themselves. They



www.masonic.benemerito.net/msricf

were composed mainly, if not entirely of gentlemen, the lower stratum of society that stood between the nobility and the laboring classes. They tended to be exclusive and preferred to keep their Lodges that way. Eventually, however, certain farseeing members perceived the inherent weakness in such a course as depriving the Lodges of numerical strength and public acceptance, things that were necessary in those troublesome times. The members met in taverns, coffee houses, or even in private homes, as choice dictated. There were no rules to guide them. The operative workmen's Lodges had few to give to the gentlemen's Lodges and those Lodges chose to remain independent, one of another.

A century earlier, England had seen that Spain was reaping a rich harvest of treasure from Mexico and Latin America and sent expeditions to explore the lands further north. In time, colonies were established in Virginia and New England. Men of wealth and position found opportunities in these settlements. There was a village on a peninsula in a fine, sheltered harbor that the settlers called Boston, after the town in Lincolnshire, whence many of them came. Even that early in the 17th century, many gentlemen had joined one or another of those new Lodges. Not only in New England but in the colonies to the south, there were reports of Masons meeting from time to time. Boston had grown in size and importance by the second decade of the eighteenth century and an undocumented report of Masonic meetings being held in King's Chapel, in 1720, has come down to us. Written reference to such meetings is found in Volume III of Foote's Annals of King's Chapel: The first meetings of the Masonic Order were probably held here in 1720. Masons did not keep records very well in those days, but the reports support the belief that many of the well-to-do gentlemen in Boston were Masons.

One of those was Henry Price, a prosperous merchant tailor who had left London for Boston in 1723. The evidence indicates that he had been made a Mason in London. Word had reached Boston of the new Masonic system, the Grand Lodge and its benefits. It was also known that according to a regulation promulgated by the Grand Lodge of England in 1721 no Lodge could be considered regular without a Warrant from the Grand Master of Masons in England. In the winter of 1732, Price announced that he was about to take ship for London and it was agreed among the Masons in Boston that he should try to obtain from the Grand Master of Masons in England the authority to constitute them into a regular Lodge. Price did far better than that. When he returned in April, he carried a deputation from the Grand Master, The Right Honorable and Right Worshipful Anthony Lord Viscount Montague, appointing him "Provincial Grand Master of New England and Dominions and Territories thereunto belonging," giving him the authority to constitute and charter Lodges in New England. A year later his authority was extended to all of North America.

Upon his return to Boston in the summer of 1733, Right Worshipful Brother Price on July 30, 1733 met with the Masons of Boston who had previously been meeting as a Lodge at the Bunch of Grapes Tavern on King Street (now State Street). He immediately proceeded to organize his Grand Lodge appointing as his Deputy Grand Master, Andrew Belched, son of the Colony's Governor, Jonathan Belched, who was also a Mason, and as his Grand Wardens, pro tempore, Thomas Kennedy and John Quann. As soon as the Provincial



Grand Lodge (historically referred to as Saint John's Grand Lodge) was formally organized, the Provincial Grand Master ordered his commission or deputation to be read and entertained a petition from eighteen qualified Brothers praying that they might be constituted into a regular Lodge by virtue of his authority from the Grand Lodge of England. (The original petition, dated July 30, 1733 is preserved in the archives of the Grand Lodge of Massachusetts.) After granting the petition of the Boston Brethren, Price with appropriate ceremony duly constituted what was eventually known as First Lodge, self-styled in 1741 as "The Mother Lodge of America", now Saint John's Lodge of Boston and the oldest regularly and duly constituted Lodge in the Western Hemisphere.

Thus on the thirtieth day of July, Anno Domini 1733, was founded not only the first regularly constituted Lodge in the western world, but also the third oldest Grand Lodge in the world, being preceded by the Grand Lodge of England, constituted in 1717, and the Grand Lodge of Ireland, constituted in 1725. First Lodge is, of course, the first Lodge in America to appear on the English official engraved list, being No. 126 on the 1734 list, and the Grand Lodge of England has given the Grand Lodge of Massachusetts the precedence of 1733.

A year later, in August of 1734, Henry Price's authority was extended over all North America by the Earl of Crauford, then Grand Master of England. Within the year, Price exercised this broadened authority by entertaining a petition from Worshipful Brother Benjamin Franklin and other Brethren of Philadelphia who had been meeting "according to the old customs" for a "Constitution to hold a Lodge", and sending to Philadelphia a Deputation "appointing the Right Worshipful Mr. Franklin first Master". In the original minutes of First Lodge, Franklin is recorded as present at the Communications of First Lodge on May 25 and June 8 of 1743.

The members of First Lodge considered themselves members of the gentlemen class, as did those transplanted members of the gentlemen's Lodges in London. They were business men, owners of manufacturing plants, shipbuilders, merchants, physicians, writers, all well-to-do men who considered themselves a cut above those who performed manual labor. Thus it was that workingmen who applied for membership in the Boston Lodges were unsuccessful.

As a result, in 1752 a new Lodge was formed of Masons who met and worked at the Green Dragon Tavern "according to the Old Customs". By a peculiar circumstance, the same thing was happening in England at the same time and for the same reasons. Irish workmen who had joined Lodges in Ireland but were working in London had visited Lodges there and although admitted as regular Masons had a right to be, were received with such lack of cordiality that they formed Lodges of their own. These Lodges created their own Grand Lodge, in 1752, claiming adherence to traditional practices of Freemasonry more ancient than those of the London Grand Lodge. This was a ridiculous assertion, the first of many, but none arose to dispute it. Laurance Dermott, their Grand Secretary, claimed that the London group had departed from the ancient landmarks and dubbed them "Moderns" while he claimed that his own group adhered to all the "Antient" Landmarks of the Order.



The names persisted and have been used ever since as convenient terms to distinguish the two Grand Lodges. The Ancients won considerable support and sympathy from the Grand Lodges of Ireland and Scotland. The new Boston Lodge applied to the Grand Lodge of Scotland for a Charter. Lord Aberdour, the Grand Master, granted the Charter on November 30, 1756, Saint Andrew's Day, specifying in the Charter that the Lodge be styled "Saint Andrew's Lodge", now our Lodge of Saint Andrew.ⁱⁱ

Likely due to the hazards of the sea, previously mentioned, the Charter finally arrived in Boston in 1760 and in the first communication under the Charter, a young silversmith named Paul Revere was made a Mason. The more immediate result was the reaction of Saint John's Grand Lodge. Up to this time, that un-chartered Lodge was beneath their notice but now, with a Charter from Scotland's Grand Lodge, it suddenly became an infringement on their territory. They claimed irregularities existed in the new Lodge, withheld recognition, and showed hostility at every opportunity.

In order to gain equal rank with Saint John's Grand Lodge, Saint Andrew's Lodge turned to three military Lodges stationed in Boston, one chartered by Scotland, one by the Antients, and one by the Irish Grand Lodge. With these, the Lodge formally petitioned the Grand Master of Scotland to appoint a Provincial Grand Master of their own. The petition was granted by the Earl of Dalhousie, Grand Master of Masons in Scotland, May 30, 1769, naming "Most Worshipful Joseph Warren, Esq., to be Grand Master of Masons in Boston, New England and within One Hundred Miles of same." On Saint John the Evangelist's Day, December 27, 1769, Doctor Warren was formally installed as the Grand Master of his Provincial Grand Lodge, historically known as the Massachusetts Grand Lodge.

The earliest written record available in America mentioning the Knights Templar is to be found in the records of St. Andrew's Royal Arch Chapter. (Called a Royal Arch lodge at that time.) On 28 August, 1769, William Davis was « Accepted and Accordingly made by receiving the four steps - That of Excellent, Super Excellent, Royal Arch, and Knight Templar. »

A careful look must be taken at the known history of the growth and development of the Chivalric Orders of Masonic knighthood if any sense is to be made of the connection between the Templars and Freemasonry. The earliest recorded Masonic Knights Templar organizations were in Scotland and Ireland in the mid 1700s. They seem to have formed after a speech made by Michael Ramsay of Scotland in France purporting that the Knighthood of the Crusades had Masonic influence. No-one is absolutely certain as to the exact dates involved, but in America the series of events are easier to follow.

St. Andrew's Royal Arch Chapter must have been formed before this date, but very little documentation exists. Originally it was believed that the British Army Lodges working in Boston (Glittering Star n° 322 organized under the Grand Lodge of Ireland and British Army Lodge n° 58 organized under the Grand Lodge of England) brought Royal Arch Masonry with them. However, in the records of Saint Andrew's Lodge there is a copy of a letter dated 29 October 1762, sent to the Grand Lodge of Scotland requesting a Charter for



a Royal Arch Lodge. We may conclude that there was an existing Royal Arch Lodge or at the very least a group of Royal Arch masons previous to the arrival of the British Army Lodges on 30 September 1768.

Who was William Davis, and what was his background? How did he happen to be in the right place at the right time to become the First Knight Templar created in America? He was born on 13 June 1724 the son of William and Mary Davis in Boston, Massachusetts and baptized in the Episcopal Church on 19 July, 1724.

Military life must have fascinated him as well, for it was he who proposed the «Barrel Defense» used at the battle of Bunker Hill on 17 June, 1775. This was a simple but effective defense and consisted of barrels filled with stones and earth rolled down on the attacking units. He appears on the « List of men subscribing to regulations for formation of an independent company to be raised in Boston.ⁱⁱⁱ The officers of this company were commissioned in council on 7 December, 1776, with John Hancock named as Major General and Colonel of the Regiment. His immediate superior was Colonel Henry and the dates of his service were from 1 February, 1777 to 15 October, 1778 when he received an honorable discharge from General John Sullivan. Freemasonry was also an important part of his life. He is listed as a member of St. John's (First) Lodge in Boston on 1750. He then disappears for a time, emerging again as Worshipful Master of the British Army Lodge No. 58 and is, in fact, one of the signers of the petition sent to the Grand Lodge of Scotland for the appointment of Joseph Warren as Provincial Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of the « Ancients » established in Massachusetts (this is recorded in the proceedings of the Grand Lodge of Massachusetts). Although there are no written records, it is obvious from his attaining JK (?) the Chair of his Lodge that he not only continued his Masonic career, but excelled at it. It was during this period that we see mention made in the records of the Massachusetts Grand Lodge and the Lodge of St. Andrew, that he joined the Lodge of St. Andrew (1757) and presumably became friendly with Paul Revere and Joseph Warren. He was present at the St. John's Day banquet on 27 December, 1769 when Joseph Warren was installed as Provincial Grand Master and again on 2 March, 1770 when he was appointed to serve on a Committee « To prepare a body of laws for the regulation of the Grand Lodge. »* He also served as Secretary of British Army Lodge n° 58 until 1772 when the 29th Regiment and the 14th Regiment were shipped out to other areas because of the unrest surrounding the « Boston Massacre. »

It was a natural extension of Davis' Masonic Career that led him to petition for and receive the four steps of Excellent, Super-Excellent, Royal Arch and Knight Templar on 28 August 1769. He was a member of two Ancient's Lodges, St. Andrew's and British Army Lodge n° 58. At that period the Lodges of the « Moderns » did not recognize any degree above the Third or Master Mason Degree, and it was through the Scottish and Irish Ancient Lodges that the Higher Degrees of York Rite Masonry arrived in America. Here we might pause and ask the question, « If English (Modern) Lodges did not (recognize) the so-called Higher Degrees, how then did the members of British Army Lodge n° 58, become acquainted with them? » The answer is simple ; they probably became aware of and received them in Halifax, Nova Scotia some time between June of 1766 and of 1768 when both lodge n° 58's



regiment and lodge No. 322's regiment were stationed there. Lodge n° 322 was an Irish Lodge and had been stationed in Ireland for some years before being shipped out to North America. It is therefore a logical assumption the ritual or ceremonial system used to confer the four steps in St. Andrew's Lodge in August of 1769 was, in fact, learned in Ireland where « Glittering Star » Lodge n° 322 was active between 1759 and 1765. In the museum of the Grand Lodge of Massachusetts are several Knight Templar membership certificates: one dated 1759 from Ireland, and several others dated in the period 1770-1790. What Ritual was used to confer the Four Steps or Degrees? There has been much speculation on this question but no certain answer has been given. We would love to know the content of those early degrees, but our curiosity and thirst for knowledge will remain forever unsatisfied. There are no written records, and those that may have existed have long since disappeared. There does exist a plate used in the printing of Lodge Summonses in 1790. This does have many recognizable emblems, and seems to show that the central idea of the Knight Templar Degree was basically the same as it is today with a very much shortened ritual. We do know that it was the regular custom to « Work » or « Communicate » the Four Degrees at one meeting. The degrees must have been Communicated, as a Bylaw of St. Andrew's Chapter of 1769 appears to indicate that the early meetings were held with the members seated around a table.^{iv} In his book *Pour La Foy*, (pp. 207-211), George Draffen gives an extract from the « Regulations of the Temple » relative to the reception of new Fratres. The extract consists of a list of questions and answers that was apparently used to admit knights into the medieval Order of the Templars. At the end of the text it is indicated that the Scottish Templar Ritual is based on this working. It is thus probable that the degree communicated to William Davis that evening followed this Ritual to some extent.

Who followed Davis and how did the Masonic Order of the Temple grow in the United States? The second Knight Templar in America was created on 11 December, 1769. His name was Paul Revere, immortalized in Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's poem on his famous midnight ride. He was born in Boston on 1 January, 1735 and was apprenticed as a Silversmith and Engraver, which trade he followed all of his life and in which he achieved distinction. He was an avid Patriot, joining an expedition against the French at Crown Point in 1756, and was an ardent advocate of American Independence, well known for his activities at the Boston Tea Party. He was military minded, being appointed Major and afterward Lieutenant-Colonel of a regiment raised in Boston. He petitioned and received the Degrees of Excellent, Super-Excellent, Royal Arch and Knight Templar in St. Andrew's Chapter on 11 December, 1769. During the early part of 1770, he was elected junior Warden of the Chapter, thus becoming the third person to hold that rank. Eventually he was elected Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of the Ancients in Massachusetts, thus crowning a long and distinguished career in Freemasonry.

The third Knight Templar in America was created on 14 May, 1770. His name was Joseph Warren, perhaps the best known of the three. He was the first hero of the Revolution, and his 'Job description' at that time might have consisted of physician, patriot, politician, spy, military General, writer, and, most importantly for our purposes, freemason. He held the title of Presiding Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of St. Andrew (Ancients) when he was



created a Knight Templar and still held it when he gave his life on the battlefield of Bunker Hill. He was the author of the Suffolk Resolves which had a tremendous impact on the Congress of 1774. Being very much respected by both the British and Americans, he had on his staff as Grand Master several British Officers of the Military Traveling Lodges as well as Americans. It is a local legend that after the battle of Bunker Hill and after the British evacuation of Boston, his three brothers went looking on the battlefield for his grave. They were looking for an Acacia bush left by sympathetic British Officers, who were Masons, to mark his grave. The first monument on Bunker Hill was erected by Warren's Lodge to commemorate his name. The life and deeds of Joseph Warren still remain a mystery to most American historians to this day. It is said that, had he lived, he would certainly have rivaled George Washington in popularity and might have become first President of the U.S.A.

CONCLUSION

Following in the footsteps of these pioneers individual Knights Templar appear in Pennsylvania (1779), South Carolina (where an Encampment of Knights Templar was formed in 1780), Nova Scotia, and in Massachusetts during the 1780's and 1790's. On 13 May, 1805 at a convention of Knights Templar held in Providence, Rhode Island, the convention adopted a constitution and declared the Grand Encampment of Knights Templar in the United States duly Formed. These then were the first men and Freemasons who joined the large army of Knights Templar who have rallied to the call of the Beauceant, an army of Christian freemasons who have sworn to « hold their swords ever ready to be drawn in the cause to which they have so solemnly consecrated it. »

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Addison, C. G. The Knights Templar. Masonic Publishing Co., New York, 1874
Bothwell-Gosse, A. The Knights Templar. John M. Watkins, London, n.d.
Brown, William M. Highlights of Templar History. Wm. Mitchell Printing Co. Greenfield, Indiana, 1944
Coil, Henry W Coil's Masonic Encyclopedia. Macoy Publishing, New York, 1961
Darrah, Delmar The Evolution of Freemasonry. Masonic Publishing Co. Bloomington, Illinois, 1920
Draffen, George S. Pour La Foy. David Winter & Son, Dundee, 1949
Laurie, William History of Freemasonry and Grand Lodge of Scotland 1859
St. Andrew's Royal Arch Chapter, 150th Anniversary of St. Andrews Royal Arch Chapter.
Privately printed, Boston, MA, 1920 Stevens Jay, 'The Riddle of Joseph Warren'. Yankee Magazine, Dublin N.H., July 1993

NOTES

1. Proceedings of the Grand Lodge of Massachusetts 1737-1792.
2. 150th Anniversary of St. Andrews Royal Arch Chapter
3. See Massachusetts Soldiers and Sailors of the Revolutionary War.
4. Article II of the Bylaws of 1769 reads as follows: "The Master, wardens and rest of the brethren shall seat themselves at the table during business according to Seniority and every member of this Society shall obey the master in all reasonable matters which tend to Masonry."

