

Today in Columbus History:

On May 16, 1883, the *Columbus Times* and *Columbus Enquirer*, both ran stories about the Grand Conclave of the Knights Templar of the state of Georgia. The Conclave lasted from May 16 to May 17 and included Knights from Augusta (Grand Commandery); Columbus (St. Aldemar #3); Macon (St. Omer #2); Atlanta (Coeur de Lion #4); Savannah (Palestine #7); and Albany (Tancred #8). Only the Americus Commandery did not attend. The Knights Templar is a Masonic order that differs from others in that it requires an adherence to a Christian belief, instead of simply the belief in a higher being.

The St. Aldemar Commandery #3 of Columbus formed in 1857, was chartered in 1859, and constituted in 1860. In March 1883, the Commandery elected its officers for the year. They chose Hiram Middlebrook as Eminent Commander, the leader of the group. You may recall that Middlebrook was the subject of my Today In Columbus History post on October 4, 2021. The 1884 city directory shows him as the presiding officer in three Masonic lodges that year. The Masons buried Middlebrook with full honors in Linwood after his death on February 13, 1888, as possibly the oldest Mason in Georgia.

Knights of the various commanderies began assembling in Columbus on May 15. The Grand Commandery took up residence at the Central Hotel, run by J. W. Ryan, who also catered their grand banquet at the Masonic Hall. The newspapers published details of their arrivals, listing who was arriving on which trains. The papers also included a schedule of events including their business meeting, parading, and drilling. Although only about 100 knights came to town, they anticipated thousands of spectators.

The highlight of the Conclave was a competitive drill, judged by local community leaders Mayor Cliff Grimes, Col. W. S. Shepard and Hon. W. A. Little. The prize for the best performance was a set of twelve silver candlesticks. For various reasons, only two Commanderies competed, Coeur de Lion of Atlanta and Palestine of Savannah. While the Atlanta group gave an outstanding performance, the Savannah Knights took the prize. Their commander was former Confederate General and West Point graduate, Richard Heron Anderson.

According to an article on May 13, 1883, the St. Aldemar Commandery had "only lately been aroused to activity," undoubtedly due to the Grand Commandery's visit. Despite a notice on April 7 that they would have a meeting to drill and another on May 9 that said twenty members spent \$800 on new uniforms for the drill competition, they realized their preparations were not sufficient and did not compete.

The second day of the Grand Conclave saw the Knights Templars choose Albany as the location for the next year's conclave and Dr. J. W. Oslin of Columbus selected as the grand orator for the occasion. After the business meeting the Knights marched in the annual Fireman's parade along with the local military companies. The Knights must have appreciated their reception as the Grand Conclave returned to Columbus in 1889.

Compiled by Daniel A. Bellware, Muscogee Genealogical Society

Clipping from Georgia Historic Newspapers (GALILEO).

Our weekly snippets of Columbus history are usually based on a few days-worth of searching through the most popular sources for Muscogee County history. Meant to inspire readers to explore more about Columbus history, they are not exhaustive dissertations on the topic and may contain mistakes. If you have corrections or additional information, feel free to share them with the group.

KNIGHTS TEMPLAR.

ARRIVAL OF SIR KNIGHTS—GRAND DEMONSTRATION TO-DAY.

The city is astir. The Grand Conclave of Knights Templar to held in the city to-day is creating much interest. The following grand officers arrived in the city yesterday, and are quartered at the Central Hotel. They were:

R E C—W S Rockwell,
D E C—W B Young,
G Gen—R B Hall,
G C G—Thos Ballentyne,
G S W—O T Watson,
G J W—Thos Wayne,
G P—S S Sweet,
G T—J E Wells,
G R—S P Hamilton,
G Standard Bearer—J F Fleming,
G S B—A H Sneed,
G W—A M Wolfhin.

The Cœur de Lion Commandery of Atlanta, twenty-six strong, arrived last night on the 8 o'clock train, and marched up Randolph street to Broad, and down Broad to the Rankin house. The following are the Sir Knights in line:

E C—A G Howard,
Gen—C L Wilson,
O G—H C Stockdell.

GRAND CONCLAVE.

The Knights Templar Assembling in the City.

Preparations for the Meeting of the Grand Commandery To-day—The Competitive Drill—Those Who Have Arrived, etc.

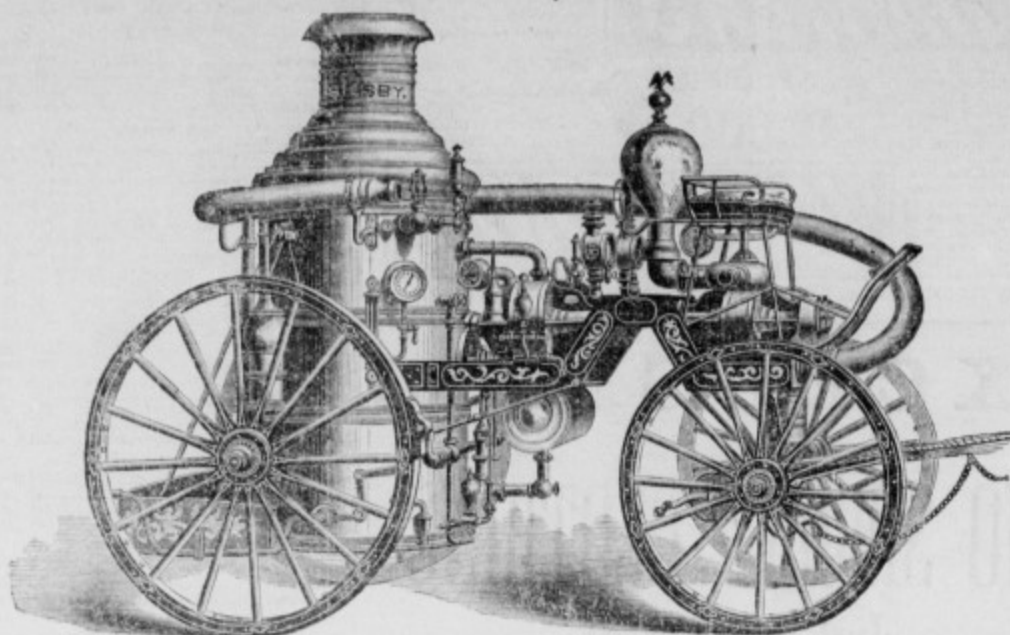
The annual convlave of the grand commandery of the Knights Templar of Georgia will convene in this city to-day. Rght Eminent Sir Wm. S. Rockwell, grand commander, reached the city yesterday at 1:40 o'clock p. m., and has his headquarters at the Central Hotel. The grand commandery will assemble in the asylum of St Aldemar commandery, at 10 o'clock this morning for business. The competitive drill will take place at 5 o'clock this afternoon on Broad street, between Randolph and St Clair. The prize to be awarded the best drilled commandery is a case containing twelve beautiful silver candlesticks. Public exercises will be held at the First Baptist church at 8:30 o'clock to-night, when the liturgy will be recited and an oration delivered by Sir James A Gray, of Cœur de Lion commandery.

From the *Columbus Daily Times* and *Columbus Daily Enquirer-Sun*, May 16, 1883,
<https://gahistoricnewspapers.galileo.usg.edu/>.



Stereoscopic view of the Macon Knights Templar drilling on Cotton Ave at 2nd Street, circa 1880, from Wikipedia, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Knights_Templar_\(Freemasonry\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Knights_Templar_(Freemasonry)).

THE 17TH.



BIG DAY FOR COLUMBUS.

ANNUAL PARADE OF THE FIRE DEPARTMENT.

Competitive Drill of the Knights Templar.

BATTALION DRILL AND GRAND DRESS PARADE OF THE MILITARY.

THE GRANDEST MILITARY AND CIVIC DISPLAY EVER WITNESSED IN COLUMBUS.

Ten Thousand Visitors Expected from
Neighboring Cities.

side of Broad to Bryan street, and counter march down the west side of Broad, so as to rest the right wing on Crawford and the left wing on Randolph street. Here the fire department will be inspected by the mayor, aldermen, visiting chiefs of other cities and the board of control of this city.

After the inspection, the Knights Templar and the military will march up east Broad, resting between St Clair and Randolph streets, where the competitive drill of the Commanderies of Knights Templar of Georgia and the battalion dress parade of the military will take place.

The mingling of the beautiful uniforms of the Sir Knights with the gaudy trappings of the military and the dazzling red shirts of the firemen, will form a pageant the brilliancy of which has never before

In both tests all companies to use the same kind of washer.

The Hook and ladder company will enter the contest with the other companies, instead of having a separate test as heretofore.

The same tests were adopted for the colored companies.

RULES.

1. No allowances for accidents, except in the event that the sand bag should fail to drop at the starting of any reel.

2. Only thirty minutes will be allowed each company in which to make the first and second tests and have its inspection, and every company should be ready to take position to run immediately after the company preceding it has made the two tests, for the half hour will commence at that time.

3. Should any protest be made or any

LOCAL NOTICES.

St. Aldemar Commandery No. 3, K. T.
Will meet this evening at 8 o'clock for
the purpose of drill.

By order of the E. C.

W. C. COART, Recorder.

From the *Columbus Daily Enquirer-Sun* April 7, 1883, <https://gahistoricnewspapers.galileo.usg.edu/>



President Andrew Johnson in Knights Templar uniform (1869) from Wikipedia.com, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Knights_Templar_\(Freemasonry\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Knights_Templar_(Freemasonry))



Logo of the Grand Commandery of Georgia from their Facebook page, <https://www.facebook.com/GeorgiaTemplars/photos/144304776516171>

KNIGHTS TEMPLAR.

Preparations for the Entertainment of the Grand Commandery.

The regular meeting of St. Aldemar Commandery No. 3 of Knights Templar was held last night in the asylum of the commandery. After the transaction of the regular business, the following committees were appointed to arrange for the annual convocation of the Grand Commandery of the state of Georgia, which convenes in this city on next Wednesday, the 16th inst :

Committee on Reception—H Middlebrook, W C Coart, D R Biza, Dr J W Oslin, A Wittich, J F Clegg.

Committee on Banquet—Dr J W Oslin, W C Coart, Dr T J S Kimbrough

On Invitation—Dr T J S Kimbrough, Dr J W McElhany, J P Kyle.

Twenty members of St. Aldemar Commandery ordered new Knight Templar uniforms at a cost of \$800. They have been received and are very handsome, indeed. They will fully equip the commandery. The competitive drill will take place on the 17th and will be a grand display. Large delegations will be present from all the principal cities and towns in the state.

From the *Columbus Daily Enquirer-Sun*, May 9, 1883, <https://gahistoricnewspapers.galileo.usg.edu/>