



CONSTITUTED
SEP 18. 1868.

St. John's Commandery Knights Templar No. 1

UNDER JURISDICTION

GRAND ENCAMPMENT KNIGHTS TEMPLAR UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

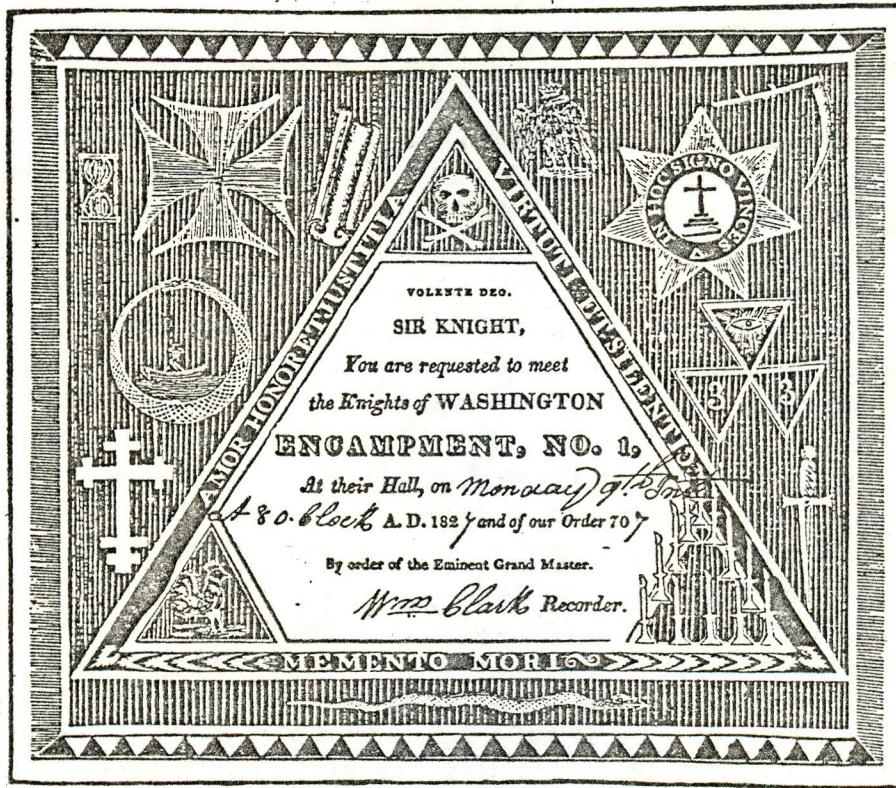
AND

STATIONED AT WILMINGTON 1, DELAWARE

MASONIC TEMPLE

818 MARKET STREET

LUX EST UMBRA DEI -- WASHINGTON ENCAMPMENT NO. 1



The above notice of a meeting of "Washington Encampment No. 1, at their Hall, on Monday 9th Inst. at 8 o'clock A. D. 1827" should be of tantalizing interest to the Knights of St. John's Commandery. Washington Encampment No. 1, received a CHARTER OF RECOGNITION on May 17, 1814 from the "PENNSYLVANIA GRAND ENCAMPMENT OF KNIGHTS TEMPLAR with jurisdiction thereunto belonging." Washington Encampment No. 1, was stationed in Wilmington, Delaware, and thus reflects the existence of an Encampment of Knights Templars in Delaware at least fifty-four years prior to the Constitution of St. John's Commandery on September 18, 1868.

On Tuesday, the 15th day of February, A. D. 1814, a Grand Convention of Knights Templar was convened, by appointment, in the Masonic Hall in Philadelphia. Their purpose -- to form a Grand Encampment. The rules of this Convention noted that the delegates to the Convention were to provide their credentials "under the seals of their respective Encampments". Representing

Washington Encampment No. 1 stationed in Wilmington, Delaware, were: Sir Knight John Sellars, Sir Knight Archibald Hamilton and Sir Knight John W. Patterson. It is more than of casual interest to note that "Sir Knight John W. Sellars, of the Borough of Wilmington, in the State of Delaware" presided over this Grand Convention. This Grand Convention was apparently quite successful, since the evening following this formation they adopted, ratified, signed their Constitution, and elected their Grand officers. Encampments represented at this Convention were: Encampment No. 1, of Philadelphia, Rising Sun Encampment No. 2, of Pittsburg, Rising Sun Encampment No. 1, of New York City, Washington Encampment No. 1 of Wilmington, and Encampment No. 1 of Baltimore. All would subsequently apply for, and receive Charters of Recognition from this Grand Encampment.

The first Grand officers of this body included Most Eminent Sir William McCorkle of Philadelphia as General Grand Master, and Most Eminent Sir Archibald Hamilton of Wilmington as Grand Generalissimo. Right Eminent Sir John Sellars of Wilmington was the first Grand Chancellor.

On May 13, 1814 on petition of Sir Knights Archibald Hamilton (Knighted - May 17, 1812), John Sellars (Knighted - June 10, 1812), John W. Patterson (Knighted - April 11, 1812), John Gordon (Knighted - May 11, 1812), George Reid, Sr. (Knighted - December 28, 1813), George Reid, Jr. (Knighted - December 28, 1813), John Ramman (Knighted - November 29, 1813), John Springer (Knighted - March 14, 1814), Thomas Stockton (Knighted - March 14, 1814), Amon Thomas (Knighted - April 22, 1813), and Nicholas G. Williamson (Knighted - April 4, 1812), Washington Encampment No. 1 applied to the Pennsylvania Grand Encampment for a Charter of Recognition; the Charter was issued on May 17, 1814, and the above named Sir Knights are thus noted as Charter members. No minutes, books, correspondence, documents of Washington Encampment have been brought to light to date, thus what is known about this Encampment is based on indirect reference from other sources. That it did exist is a known fact, and, as an entity, prior to the Grand Convention of February 15, 1814, although probably only shortly before. The "rules" of the "Order" prevalent in the earlier 1800's, then, as now, required nine members to form an Encampment. The Knighting dates noted above suggest that it was only at the very end of 1813, that an adequate number of Sir Knights were present to form an Encampment. The wording in the letter of Washington Encampment No. 1 to the Pennsylvania Grand Encampment in May of 1813 requesting recognition, strongly supports a theory of a very young Encampment. Where and how these Charter Members were received into the Order is unknown. But the name of the Encampment and its Charter Membership provides a very good indication of the origin of Washington Encampment. Six of the original Charter Members noted above were all Past Masters of Washington Lodge No. 1, Wilmington. (Strictly speaking John Patterson was Worshipful Master of the predecessor of Washington Lodge No. 1, Lodge No. 14). Every Worshipful Master of Washington Lodge from 1806 (its charter date under the Grand Lodge of Delaware) until June of 1823 (long past the date when the records of Washington Encampment are completely extinct) were, or became, members of Washington Encampment, many serving as presiding officers in both bodies. The first "class" of Sir Knights, Knighted into Washington Encampment No. 1 on June 10, 1814, consisting of almost 20 Companions, was composed almost entirely of Brethren from Washington Lodge No. 1. It should be noted, however, that a review of the minutes of Washington Lodge for the time period in which Washington Encampment presumably was in existence, notes not a single reference to this body. Also the meeting nights of the Lodge and the Encampment on no occasion are the same, this at least excluding the possibility that Lodge was closed, and Encampment opened.

The affinity to Washington Lodge No. 1 is further emphasized by Washington Chapter No. 1. The Lodge minutes of Lodge No. 14 (Pennsylvania Constitution and predecessor to Washington

Lodge No. 1, Delaware Constitution) for August 6, 1789 note that seven brothers of that Lodge were "exalted to that Sublime Degree of Royal Arch Most Excellent Masons". One of those exalted was John Sellars. It is safely assumed that the Royal Arch work in Delaware was carried on under Lodge warrants in the period 1789 to 1818, when the first Grand Chapter was Constituted. Examining early minutes of this Grand Chapter, it is not at all unusual to find that the three representatives of Washington Chapter No. 1 to the Royal Arch Convention, held in Wilmington on June 24, 1817, Benjamin H. Springer, John Springer, and James McKean, were all members of the Encampment, as was the first Grand High Priest of this Grand Chapter -- Most Excellent Companion Archibald Hamilton.

The minutes of Washington Chapter No. 1 during this time period are available and provide some further insights into this Encampment. At the time of the Convention of Knights Templars in Philadelphia on 15 February 1814, the top three presiding officers of Washington Chapter No. 1 were: A. Hamilton as High Priest, J. Sellars as Senior Warden and J. Patterson as Junior Warden -- the same three who attended that Convention as delegates from Wilmington. All the Charter Members of the Encampment as noted above, except George Reid, Sr. and George Reid, Jr. were members of Washington Chapter No. 1. The two exceptions were members of a Chapter associated with St. John's Lodge No. 2. The minutes of Washington Chapter No. 1 for January 17, 1814 (approximately one month prior to the Convention) note -- "On Motion Resolved that the funds of the Chapter and the Washington Encampment No. 1 be blended together and constituted one and the same fund". The minutes for September 18, 1815 start as -- "Stated Meeting of Washington Holy R. A. Chapter No. 1." Beneath the words "Holy R. A. Chapter" can be read "Encampment". Finally, the minutes of the Chapter for December 18, 1820 note -- "Resolved that the Treasurer of this Chapter be directed to keep the funds of Chapter distinct from the Encampment". It thus appears that Washington Encampment No. 1 and Washington Chapter No. 1 were closely intertwined with one another, and both a direct result of those patriarchs of Delaware Freemasonry -- Washington Lodge No. 1.

The first officers of Washington Encampment No. 1 are noted as:

Sir Archibald Hamilton, Eminent Grand Master
Sir John W. Patterson, Generallissimo
Sir John Sellars, Captain General
Sir John Hedrick, Standard Bearer
Sir Thomas G. Cable, Herald
Sir John Springer, Chancellor
Sir William B. Weaver, Recorder
Sir James Cochran, Treasurer
Sir John Adams, Marshal
Sir James McKean, Sword Bearer

It is fairly apparent that these are not the Charter officers, since some were not Knighted until June 10, 1814. Archibald Hamilton served as Eminent Grand Master until May of 1817. Others serving as Eminent Grand Master were John Sellars (1817), John Patterson (1818), John Mountain (1819, 1820), Benjamin H. Springer (1821, 1822), and Joseph F. Clements (1823). The records do not exist beyond this period of time.

When and why and how (and perhaps even if) Washington Encampment ceased to operate is not known. A recollection of the times offers one possible explanation. In 1825 and 1826 William Morgan embarked upon his anti-Masonic activities. In September of 1826, after being released from jail in Canandaigua, New York, Morgan disappeared. There then developed in

the eastern portion of the United States, an extremely powerful anti-Masonic fervor. Sir Knight Charles E. Green has noted that between 1826 and 1840, the number of Lodges holding charters from the Grand Lodge of Delaware decreased from 17 to 7 and its membership shrank from 365 to 150. It is not inconceivable that, sadly, Washington Encampment No. 1 fell, under the devastation of that terrible time.

Little is really known about Washington Encampment No. 1, but it did exist. Templary was present in Delaware in 1812. Of the three delegates to the Pennsylvania Convention in 1814, Archibald Hamilton would serve General Grand Master of the Pennsylvania Grand Encampment in 1817, and served this Grand Lodge as Grand Master in 1829. John Sellars served in many capacities on the Pennsylvania Grand Encampment, including Grand Generallissimo in 1822 and 1823; he was Grand Master of Masons in Delaware from 1814 to 1816. There is no evidence of John Patterson serving in the Grand body of the Pennsylvania Encampment, but he was Junior Grand Warden of this Grand Lodge in 1808, and Senior Grand Warden in 1809. Then, as now, Templary in Delaware was composed of the finest men the world has ever known.

Donald D. Thomas
May 1, 1976