

**ARIZONA
SUPPLEMENT**

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A SHORT HISTORY OF PHOENIX COMMANDERY NO. 3

The organization of Phoenix Commandery No. 3, Knights Templar, happened March 22, 1891, or rather what led to its organization happened at that time; and we purposely use the word “happened” for a new Commandery had not been contemplated till the Sir Knights found themselves together in such goodly number.

Sir Freeman Rickerson, pastor of the First Baptist Church of Phoenix, a most able divine and enthusiastic Knight Templar, a Past Grand Prelate of the jurisdiction of Illinois, published a call for a meeting of Knights Templar of the city for the purpose of assembling Sir Knights to arrange for holding Easter service for which he proposed to prepare an address on Templar Masonry.

Nineteen Sir Knights answered the call and Easter services were arranged for and held on Sunday evening, March 29, 1891. The number which responded suggested the idea of a new Commandery and the matter of Easter services having been arranged, the expediency of its organization was discussed and resulted in the adoption of a resolution offered by Sir Harry Budd Lighthizer that the Sir Knights present join in a petition to the Most Eminent Grand Master of the Grand Encampment, there being no Grand Commandery in Arizona at that time, for a dispensation to organize and hold a Commandery of Knights Templar in the City of Phoenix.

The petition was prepared and directed to the Most Eminent Sir John Peter Shindel Gobin, of Pennsylvania, then Most Eminent Grand Master of the Grand Encampment. This petition was signed by nineteen Sir Knights from fourteen different jurisdictions, indicating the wide diversity of the population, and that the list includes individuals in many walks of life from the Governor of the Territory and the Justice of the Supreme Court on down to the private citizen in the more humble walks of life.

The name “Phoenix Commandery No. 3” was selected and Sir Harry Budd Lighthizer named for Eminent Commander, Sir Ephraim J. Bennett for Generalissimo, and Sir Prosper Powell Parker for Captain General and the petition was forwarded to the proper authority.

In due time a dispensation was granted to open a Commandery U.D. and the first conclave was held June 15, 1891, and the additional officers were

selected: Prelate, Senior Warden, Junior Warden, Treasurer, Recorder, Standard Bearer, Sword Bearer, Warden.

Three petitions for Orders were received at this conclave and the postulants subsequently elected and the Orders were conferred on them and by the time the Triennial Conclave of the Grand Encampment assembled in Denver in 1892, where the matter of granting a Charter for Phoenix Commandery No. 3 would be considered, eleven more postulants received the Orders.

Sir Harry Budd Lighthizer was sent to the Triennial Conclave which met in August, 1892, in Denver, to see that the petition for the Charter should not fall by the wayside and he came back with the Charter granted, to the intense satisfaction of the Sir Knights. A Charter was received in due time and just at this point a peculiar thing occurred to the Commandery; the Charter, after being received, disappeared and to this day its loss has remained a mystery. It became necessary to have a second charter issued which was done and that essential document was received and more carefully preserved.

On November 14th, 1892, Phoenix Commandery No. 3 was regularly constituted under the Charter which is signed by Most Eminent Grand Master Sir John Peter Shindel Gobin of the Grand Encampment. Thus Phoenix Commandery No. 3 was finally permanently established and started on its course of prosperity that has every since prevailed. This Commandery has not recklessly sought to augment its membership and has uniformly discouraged possible postulants unless of the very best material and likely to be able to come up to the high standard of manhood and citizenship upon which the Commandery began its career.

The change in our political condition from a Territory to a full-fledged State was an event not only in the political world but was noted in Phoenix Commandery No. 3 by the knighting of Sir Charles Henry Pratt as the last postulant under territorial regime and Sir Cyril Stanley Gilbert as the first postulant to be knighted under the State regime and the minutes of the Commandery were made to note the fact.

The Grand Commandery Knights Templar of Arizona was constituted in 1893, and in the first eighteen years of its existence Phoenix Commander No. 3 furnished seven Right Eminent Grand Commanders to the jurisdiction, all of whom were numbered in the membership while the Commandery was yet under dispensation which is an index to the character of men and Sir Knights who rallied to the Beauseant of Knighthood in those pioneer days which are so rapidly disappearing in the shadows of the past. But, as has already been intimated, Phoenix Commandery has been constructed from select material and will hold her position where she has been placed in the forefront of local Knighthood.

Reprinted from an article by N. A. Morford, PGC, in A History of Freemasonry in the State of Arizona, (1912).