



Iowa Supplement

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Iowa's Templar Park

As our annual Grand Conclave session approaches, memories of Templar Park come to mind. In 1884, the Grand Commandery received a generous gift of ten acres of land on what was known as Kingman's Point on Spirit Lake. The first Grand Commandery Conclave session was held at that location in 1890, which was renamed "Templar Park".



Attendees traveled by train on the "Spirit Lake Summer Special" line of the Burlington, Cedar Rapids, and Northern Railroad. Once they arrived in Spirit Lake, then then traveled aboard the steamer "Queen" to Templar Park. The first year the sir knights gathered under a tent to provide cover from the heavy rains. The sir knights of Apollo Commandery #26 provided an artillery salute to the Grand Officers as they arrived aboard the Queen.

The first building at Templar Park was finished in 1891 and consisted of a dining room and offices. An interesting story with the construction of this first building was that the first load of lumber was brought to Templar Park by a young boy named Charles Edward Nary, who forty-one years later served as Grand Commander. Unfortunately, a tornado destroyed this first building in 1898.

A replacement building was built in 1899. The north wing consisting of 50 rooms was built first. A south wing was added later with an additional 50 rooms, and in 1900 a third wing with another 50 rooms was added. In the center was a large rotunda. A second building was constructed with a large dining room.

In 1907, Grand Commander Cromwell Bowen reported that the mortgage had been paid off. The buildings were electrified shortly after. Indoor plumbing was also added. Tragedy struck in early June of 1917, as a fire destroyed the apartment building. The Grand Conclave session was hastily moved to Cedar Rapids. At that session, the delegates approved rebuilding the building.

On June 9, 1919, the new building was dedicated during the Grand Conclave session. The new building was built to be essentially fireproof with thick concrete exterior and interior walls. The new structure contained a dining room that was able to seat 350. At that session, S.K. Newton Parvin presented a large lighted cross to be placed upon the new structure. It was to be illuminated when the Grand Commandery was in session. Templar Park continued to grow in 1921 with the purchase of an additional 32 acres. A six-hole golf course was constructed. In 1929, a dance and amusement pavilion was constructed. Templar Park provided fun and camaraderie to the sir knights and their families who visited.

June 2017 AD

In 1966, Templar Park Inc. was formed with the Grand Commandery officers serving as officers of the new corporation. Discussion was held about



needed renovations. It was decided to raise \$350,000 for renovations, but financial issues halted the project one year later. In 1972, Templar Park Inc. entered into an agreement with Lake Terrace Development to lease out a large part of the property. Plans were made to build an 80-room hotel, a meeting room for 300, and condominium units. A lawsuit was brought against these plans. 1972 would mark the last time that the Grand Commandery of Iowa would hold their annual Grand Conclave at Templar Park.

The litigation drug on for several years. It came to light that many of the condo owners had not been paying their rent to the Grand Commandery. It was suggested that the land that the condos were built on, be offered to the owners for \$400 a square foot, which coincidentally was far below market price. Ultimately the cottage owners were able to purchase the land for \$750,000. In 1976, the Trustees agreed to sell the lagoon area to the Conservation Commission, to include the remaining Templar Park property. A lawsuit was filed to prevent this sale. In 1987, the Conservation Commission exercised an option to purchase the property for \$350,000. After 94 years of existence, Templar Park was no more. Today this area is known as Templar State Park.

Although all that remains today of Templar Park is memories, the sir knights of Iowa are still benefiting from the existence of Templar Park. The proceeds received from the sale of the property were placed in an irrevocable trust and the earnings from that trust provide substantial assistance in the operations of the Grand Commandery of Iowa.

(Historical information from the book "Outremer ad Pratum" written by S.K. Kurt Hoffmann, 2014).

Farewell

Sir Knights, my term as your Grand Commander is swiftly coming to its' conclusion. Thank you for the honor and trust that you placed in me. I thank each of you for your support. My theme this year was "**Shine Your Light Through Templary**". I encourage each of you to shine your light each and every day. In closing, I ask for your support of those who will lead this Grand Commandery in the future. God bless each of you.

Important Dates

May 27 Wreath laying ceremony at grave of T.S. Parvin, Oakland Cemetery Iowa City

June 1-3 153rd Grand Conclave, Quality Inn & Suites/ Ames

Please bring a canned food item to Grand Conclave to donate to a local food pantry