

# Charles Roome, 14<sup>th</sup> Grand Master of the Grand Encampment

(Eighth in a series on our Grand Masters)

by

Sir Knight George L. Marshall, Jr.

**M**ost Eminent Past Grand Master Charles Roome was born in New York City on August 4, 1812, the son of Nicholas Roome and Jemima (Lewis) Roome. His father was a wealthy merchant and a leader among the Masons of the city, having served



as Worshipful Master of Independent Royal Arch Lodge No. 2 in 1809, 1810, and 1811 and as High Priest of Ancient Chapter No.

1, Royal Arch Masons, and he was a member of Columbian Commandery No.1, Knights Templar.

Charles was educated in the best public schools then existing in New York, and after receiving his education, he entered upon a business career. In 1837 he became a clerk in the Manhattan Gaslight Company. He then undertook a study of civil engineering and later became an assistant engineer in the company. In 1842 he was promoted to chief engineer and in 1855 he was elected president of the company, an office which he held until the company was merged into the Consolidated Gas Company in 1884, when he was elected president of the new corporation and continued as such until January of 1886, when he became chairman of the board of managers and continued as such until his death. Thus, his name became known in connection with the manufacture of illuminating gas in all

parts of the civilized world.

In early life, he enlisted in Company D of the Seventh Regiment of the New York State Militia, and in less than five years, he rose to the rank of Captain. During the Civil War, he assisted in organizing and equipping the 37<sup>th</sup> New York State Volunteers and was commissioned Colonel on May 29, 1862, when he served in the defense of Baltimore and received the thanks of the Secretary of War. On March 13, 1865, he was commissioned Brevet Brigadier General, United States Volunteers, "for faithful and meritorious services."



In September of 1836, he married Anna C. Wheeler, and to this union was born two daughters. After Anna's death, he married Mary Marvin Wells in June of 1859, and two sons were born of this marriage.

He was a member of various military and other organizations, among them the Grand Army of the Republic (GAR), the Military Order of the Loyal Legion of the United States (MOLLUS), the New York Historical Society, the American Institute, the Society of Mechanics and Tradesmen, and the Saint Nicholas Society, of which he was president in 1867.

His Masonic career was impressive. He was initiated, passed, and raised in January of 1866 in Kane Lodge No. 454, New York City. He served as Master in 1868, 1869, 1870, and again in 1876. He was appointed District Deputy Grand Master of

the Grand Lodge of New York in 1870 and the next year was appointed as Grand Marshal and served as such until 1876. In 1878 he was elected Deputy Grand Master, and in 1879 he became Grand Master.

One of Sir Knight Roome's proudest achievements was his role in the building of the Masonic Temple in New York City. He was a member of the Building Committee in charge of overseeing its erection and finishing, and he used his time and influence to assist in its construction. At one time, he is said to have advanced \$60,000 to help clear the Temple of indebtedness. The Temple was dedicated in 1875.

He was exalted a Royal Arch Mason in Jerusalem Chapter No. 8, Royal Arch Masons in May of 1866 and served as High Priest in 1882 and 1883. He received the Council degrees in Adelphi Council No. 7, Royal and Select Masters. In November of 1866, he was knighted in

Coeur de Leon Commandery No. 23 and served as Eminent Commander from 1867 to 1872. All of these bodies are located in New York City.

In 1869 he was elected Grand Sword Bearer of the Grand Commandery of New York. The following year, he was elected Grand Junior Warden and progressed through the line until, in 1875, he was elected Grand Commander. In 1880 he was elected Grand Generalissimo of the Grand Encampment of Knights Templar of the United States of

America; in 1883 he was elected Deputy Grand Master; and in 1886, at the Triennial Conclave at St. Louis, he was elected Grand Master. During his tenure from 1886 to 1889, four states completed the formation of Grand Commanderies, Oregon and Washington both in 1887 and Wyoming and Montana in 1888. The Northwest was growing, and its Templary was growing as well. Further, in 1866 the Grand Encampment and Great Priory of Canada exchanged Grand Representatives. At the Twenty-fourth Triennial Conclave of the Grand Encampment at Washington, D. C., on October 8, 1889, thirty-seven Grand Commanderies

and twenty-two constituent Subordinate Commanderies had representatives present to respond to the roll call. A special reception by President Harrison gave recognition to Templary as one of the great forces for good in the Nation. There

was not much immediate need for new legislative work. A complete ritual, fixed in print, introduced at the two previous Conclaves, demanded much internal adjustment and readjustment within the order, as such actions generally do. After a trial of three years, no change or revision of any sort was found necessary in the ritual adopted at San Francisco and St. Louis. However, room for diversity in unity and for future progress and development was left by dividing the ritual into two parts, the "Essentials" and the



**New York Masonic Temple**



“Ceremonials,” a certain flexibility being left to the Grand Commanderies in the latter.

He was active in the Northern Masonic Jurisdiction of the

Scottish Rite as a member of the New York bodies, and in 1872 he received the Thirty-third Degree. He was also an Emeritus Member of Honor of the Southern Jurisdiction.

After a decline in health several months prior to his death, he finally succumbed to bronchitis and pneumonia at his home at 1:30 p.m. on June 28, 1890. His services were held at St. Thomas’ Episcopal Church, where he had long been a member. In ac-

cordance with his wishes, no Masonic rites were held at the church. The white lamb-skin aprons worn by the members of Kane Lodge in attendance were the only outward display. Following the solemn church services, the body was conveyed to Green-



Wood Cemetery in Brooklyn, New York, where he received a Masonic burial service rendered by Kane Lodge. His tombstone is shown at left.

Right Eminent Sir Knight Marshall, KYGCH(3), KCT, 33°, is a Past Grand Commander of the Grand Commandery of Knights Templar of Alabama. He is a member of the Editorial Review Board of the *Knight Templar* magazine and has published several articles in that magazine as well as in the *Royal Arch Mason* magazine. He can be reached at geomarsh@yahoo.com.

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