

The day the Knights Templar marched through Seattle

Originally published August 16, 2018 at 7:00 am



1 of 2 | THEN: From the Smith Tower (built in 1914), far left, to the Frye Hotel (1911) and its ranks of American flags, far right, this 1925 recording looking east from the corner of Second Avenue and Yesler Way is filled... (Courtesy Museum of History & Industry) [More](#)

In July 1925, 30,000 Masons convened in Seattle for a conclave at City Hill Park.

By [Paul Dorpat](#)

Special to The Seattle Times

Share story

THROUGH SEATTLE’S SO-FAR brief history (when compared to Jerusalem’s), one of the most flamboyant influxes into this well-defended city of about 77 hills came in late July 1925, when 30,000 “members and families” of — and the name is long — “The United Religious, Military and Masonic Orders of the Temple and of St. John of Jerusalem, Palestine,

Rhodes and Malta of England and Wales and Its Provinces Overseas” came to town.

These Masons were better known as the Knights Templar, named for the medieval crusading Christians who attempted to break the Muslim grip on Jerusalem and most of the eastern Mediterranean. These 20th-century marching Protestants — mostly — reached Seattle by land and sea (but not quite yet by sky) for the “conclave of the grand encampment of the United States of America for the 36th Triennial of the Knights Templar.”

Surely the most enduring vestiges of these warriors — preachers, super-salesmen, educators, disciplined clerks, meatpackers and other ambitious Protestants — were their uniforms, which they took care to keep brushed. Make a quick online visit to “[Knights Templar](#),” and you will be treated to a polished flood of fraternal regalia, most of it for sale: shoulder boards, sleeve and collar crosses, swords, pins of many sorts, stars centered with crosses, and chapeaus.

These chapeaus are the fancy plumed caps we see in our “Then” photo, heading east up Yesler Way from Second Avenue. Here the marching is in order, and you will not find any Mason out of line or step. They are moving up First Hill.

A cross is hanging over Yesler Way center-right, nearly lost in the shadows of First Hill. It is but one of scores of crosses the Templars raised in Seattle during their July visit. The largest sat atop the grand-sized welcome arch that covered the intersection of Second Avenue and Marion Street. The cross mounted on the roof of the then-brand-new Olympic Hotel competed with the cross on the welcome arch for dominance of the cityscape.

It is likely that these marchers were headed to their faux fort and headquarters constructed for their visit on City Hall Park, at the center of the photograph. The fort’s drawbridge on Terrace Street was manned by Boy Scouts, some of them, most likely, future knights.

Most Read Stories

3 WA rock climbers dead, 1 hurt in North Cascades climbing fall

Seattle's next move to slow Rainier Avenue: Plant trees in center lane

After 7 hours, eastbound I-90 reopens in Seattle

At least 10 people sickened in US listeria outbreak linked to prepared foods

Airlines seem to be getting stricter about carry-ons. Here’s what to do