

# THE PALIMPSEST

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## Historic Beginnings

Despite its name The Ancient Arabic Order of the Nobles of the Mystic Shrine for North America is as American as apple pie. Such at least is the opinion of George M. Saunders, Imperial Recorder of the Shrine. In his *A Short History of the Shrine* Noble Saunders records:

This is a story of brotherhood, good fellowship and philanthropy. . . .

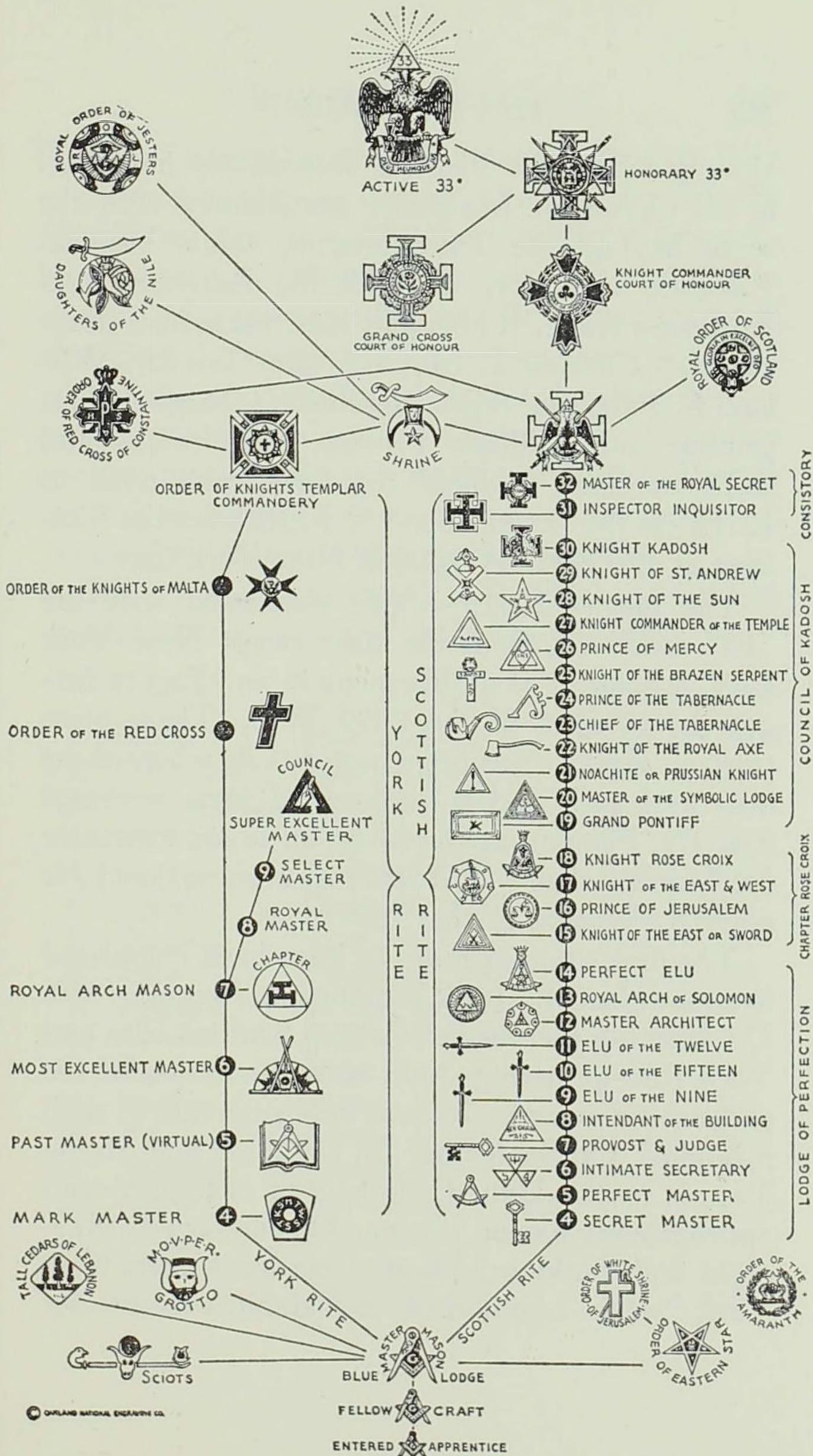
It is a story of an organization which has grown strong and powerful through the years without losing the human warmth and light-heartedness in which it had its beginning.

It also is a story which has puzzled a few well intentioned scholars and historians who have tried solemnly to link this organization with secret societies of antiquity. Despite its name, however, The Ancient Arabic Order of the Nobles of the Mystic Shrine for North America was conceived, founded and developed in America by Americans. Any similarity it may have to ancient societies of the Middle East is more an indication of the founders' imagination and showmanship than of any historical significance.

The Shrine was in large measure the brainchild of Dr. Walter Fleming and Actor Billy Florence. Dr. Fleming was completing his work in Scottish and York Rite Masonry, and in his quest for complete relaxation, conceived the idea of an organization abounding in good fellowship and fraternalism that would serve as a playground for Masons. Dr. Fleming was fortunate in his choice of men to assist in this undertaking, particularly in Billy Florence, an outstanding showman and one of the most popular actors on the American stage.

From its inception, Dr. Fleming and his associates had insisted that a Master Mason or Third Degree Mason must have continued until he had either reached the Order of Knights Templar, or Commandery degree, via the York Rite, or had followed the colorful Scottish Rite ritual to the Master of the Royal Secret, or 32° Mason. The complexity of this quest for further light in Masonry is demonstrated by the Plan of the Orders of Masonry reproduced herewith. Although the Shrine represents a single step from either York or Scottish Rite, it was not originally associated with the Masonic orders. One can not become a Shriner, however, without first following one of the above two courses.

During its early years, especially under its founder, Dr. Walter M. Fleming and Actor William Jermyn Florence, the Ancient Arabic Order of the Nobles of the Mystic Shrine experienced a



PLAN OF THE ORDERS OF MASONRY

slow growth. Dr. Fleming was deeply immersed in all phases of Masonry, particularly with the work beyond the Third Degree, while William Florence was busy on both the American and European stage. They, and their immediate associates — Charles T. McClenachan, lawyer; William S. Paterson, paper merchant; George Millar, printer; and William Fowler, restaurateur and wine merchant — dined regularly each noon at 12:13 on the second floor of Knickerbocker Cottage at 426 Sixth Avenue in New York City.

The time — 12:13 — was associated with the "13" craze which at the time swept New York City, a flouting of all ill omens in an effort to forget the ravages of the Civil War. There were thirteen seats at this huge round table where these men gathered, and it was out of their meetings that Dr. Fleming conjured up an order expressly for Masons that would serve as a playground for eligible members of that fraternity.

The first ritual appears to have been completed in rough draft by Billy Florence in August, 1870. Dr. Fleming then began visiting Scottish Rite and York Rite gatherings, and soon discussion of the proposed new order became anteroom talk at such meetings. On September 26, 1872, the first Shrine Temple in the United States was organized and appropriately named Mecca. On January 4, 1875, eight high ranking Masons from Rochester, New York, were empowered to establish a second

Shrine Temple named Damascus. It was duly organized under a charter granted by Mecca Temple on June 6, 1876. The success of this venture gave Dr. Fleming the idea of selecting a number of prominent Masons in various parts of the United States and investing them with the rights and prerogatives of Past Potentates so they could establish subordinate Temples. They were carried on the rolls as members of Mecca Temple until they joined another Temple. This procedure was followed in creating Iowa Temples.

Some idea of the speed with which Shrinedom spread may be gathered from the following list.

TEMPLE	LOCATION	DATE OF CHARTER
1. Mecca	New York, N. Y.	Sept. 26, 1872
2. Damascus	Rochester, N. Y.	June 6, 1875
3. Mount Sinai	Montpelier, Vt.	Oct. 31, 1876
4. Al Koran	Cleveland, Ohio	Jan. 22, 1877
5. Cyprus	Albany, N. Y.	Feb. 6, 1877
6. Syrian	Cincinnati, Ohio	Feb. 6, 1877
7. Oriental	Troy, N. Y.	Feb. 27, 1877
8. Syria	Pittsburgh, Pa.	Feb. 6, 1878
9. Pyramid	Bridgeport, Conn.	Feb. 7, 1878
10. Kaaba	Davenport, Iowa	July 1, 1878
11. Ziyara	Utica, N. Y.	July 1, 1878
12. Moslem	Detroit, Mich.	June 2, 1880
13. Aleppo	Boston, Mass.	June 6, 1883
14. Medinah	Chicago, Ill.	June 6, 1883
15. Islam	San Francisco, Calif.	June 6, 1883
16. Lu Lu	Philadelphia, Pa.	June 4, 1884
17. Murat	Indianapolis, Ind.	June 4, 1884
18. Boumi	Baltimore, Md.	June 4, 1884

A distinguishing feature of the Shriner is his unquenchable desire to travel to Mecca — and Mecca to him was any Temple where Good Fellowship prevailed — be it East, West, North or South. As early as 1882 Imperial Potentate Fleming had journeyed to Detroit with Sam Briggs and twenty-four Nobles to exemplify the Ritual at Moslem Temple. There had been pilgrimages to Oriental Temple in Troy, New York, and to Pyramid Temple in Bridgeport, Connecticut. In April of 1884 they had gone to Medinah Temple in Chicago which had been chartered with Aleppo of Boston and Islam of San Francisco, on June 6, 1883.

The first real recorded Shrine parade was at the investiture of Boumi Temple at Baltimore by Lu Lu Temple of Philadelphia. But the first great Imperial Session took place in Cleveland in the spring of 1886. At that time nineteen Temples had been created and the membership had sprouted from a handful in a dozen Temples to over three thousand. Eight more Temples were to be created at the Cleveland session — June 19, 1886.

NO.	TEMPLE	CITY	NO.	TEMPLE	CITY
20.	Kosair	Louisville	24.	Almas	Washington, D. C.
21.	Tripoli	Milwaukee	25.	El Kahir	Cedar Rapids
22.	Osman	St. Paul	26.	Moolah	St. Louis
23.	Zuhrah	Minneapolis	27.	Saladin	Grand Rapids

This was a historic convention in more than one way. It was the last but one Imperial Session the

## Directory of 166 Temples in Shrinedom

155 in the U. S. A., 9 in Canada, 1 in Canal Zone, 1 in Mexico

Aad	Duluth, Minn.	Kalif	Sheridan, Wyo.
Aahmes	Oakland, Cal.	Kalurah	Binghamton, N. Y.
Abba	Mobile, Ala.	Karem	Waco, Tex.
Abdallah	Kansas City, Kansas	Karnak	Montreal, Que.
Abou Ben Adhem	Springfield, Mo.	Kazim	Roanoke, Va.
Abou Saad	Canal Zone	Kem	Grand Forks, N. D.
Abu Bekr	Sioux City, Ia.	Kena	Alexandria, Va.
Acca	Richmond, Va.	Kerak	Reno, Nev.
Afifi	Tacoma, Wash.	Kerbela	Knoxville, Tenn.
Ahmed	Marquette, Mich.	Khartum	Winnipeg, Man.
Ainad	East St. Louis, Ill.	Khedive	Norfolk, Va.
Akdar	Tulsa, Okla.	Khiva	Amarillo, Tex.
Aladdin	Columbus, O.	Kismet	Brooklyn, N. Y.
Al Azhar	Calgary, Alta.	Kora	Lewiston, Me.
Al Bahr	San Diego, Cal.	Korein	Rawlins, Wyo.
Al Bedoo	Billings, Mont.	Kosair	Louisville, Ky.
Alcazar	Montgomery, Ala.	Lu Lu	Philadelphia, Pa.
Al Chymia	Memphis, Tenn.	Luxor	St. John, N. B.
Alee	Savannah, Ga.	Mahi	Miami, Fla.
Aleppo	Boston, Mass.	Maskat	Wichita Falls, Tex.
Algeria	Helena, Mont.	Mecca	New York, N. Y.
Alhambra	Chattanooga, Tenn.	Media	Watertown, N. Y.
Ali Ghan	Cumberland, Md.	Medinah	Chicago, Ill.
Al Kader	Portland, Ore.	Melha	Springfield, Mass.
Al Kaly	Pueblo, Colo.	Midian	Wichita, Kan.
Al Koran	Cleveland, O.	Mirza	Pittsburg, Kan.
Al Malaikah	Los Angeles, Cal.	Mizpah	Fort Wayne, Ind.
Almas	Washington, D. C.	Mocha	London, Ont.
Al Menah	Nashville, Tenn.	Mohammed	Peoria, Ill.
Aloha	Honolulu, Hawaii	Molla	St. Joseph, Mo.
Al Sihah	Macon, Ga.	Moolah	St. Louis, Mo.
Alzafar	San Antonio, Tex.	Morocco	Jacksonville, Fla.
Anah	Bangor, Me.	Moslah	Fort Worth, Tex.
Anezeh	Mexico City, Mex.	Moslem	Detroit, Mich.
Ansar	Springfield, Ill.	Mt. Sinai	Montpelier, Vt.
Antioch	Dayton, O.	Murat	Indianapolis, Ind.
Arab	Topeka, Kan.	Naja	Deadwood, S. D.
Arabia	Houston, Texas	Nemesis	Parkersburg, W. Va.
Ararat	Kansas City, Mo.	Nile	Seattle, Wash.
Bagdad	Butte, Mont.	Nur	Wilmington, Del.
Bahia	Orlando, Fla.	Oasis	Charlotte, N. C.
Ballut Abyad	Albuquerque, N. M.	Oleika	Lexington, Ky.
Bedouin	Muskogee, Okla.	Omar	Charleston, S. C.
Bektash	Concord, N. H.	Orak	Hammond, Ind.
Ben Ali	Sacramento, Calif.	Oriental	Troy, N. Y.
Ben Hur	Austin, Tex.	Osiris	Wheeling, W. Va.
Benl Kedem	Charleston, W. Va.	Osman	St. Paul, Minn.
Boumi	Baltimore, Md.	Palestine	Providence, R. I.
Cairo	Rutland, Vt.	Philae	Halifax, N. S.
Calam	Lewiston, Idaho	Pyramid	Bridgeport, Conn.
Crescent	Trenton, N. J.	Rajah	Reading, Pa.
Cyprus	Albany, N. Y.	Rameses	Toronto, Ont.
Damascus	Rochester, N. Y.	Rizpah	Madisonville, Ky.
Egypt	Tampa, Fla.	Sahara	Pine Bluff, Ark.
El Bekal	Long Beach, Cal.	Salaam	Newark, N. J.
Elf Khurafeh	Saginaw, Mich.	Saladin	Grand Rapids, Mich.
El Hasa	Ashland, Ky.	Scimitar	Little Rock, Ark.
El Jebel	Denver, Colo.	Sesostris	Lincoln, Neb.
El Kahir	Cedar Rapids, Ia.	Sphinx	Hartford, Conn.
El Kalah	Salt Lake City, Utah	Sudan	New Bern, N. C.
El Karubah	Shreveport, La.	Suez	San Angelo, Tex.
El Katif	Spokane, Wash.	Syria	Pittsburgh, Pa.
El Korah	Boise, Idaho	Syrian	Cincinnati, O.
El Maida	El Paso, Tex.	Tadmor	Akron, O.
El Mina	Galveston, Tex.	Tangler	Omaha, Neb.
El Riad	Sioux Falls, S. D.	Tebala	Rockford, Ill.
El Zagal	Fargo, N. D.	Tehama	Hastings, Neb.
El Zaribah	Phoenix, Ariz.	Tehran	Fresno, Cal.
Gizeh	Vancouver, B. C.	Tigris	Syracuse, N. Y.
Hadi	Evansville, Ind.	Tripoli	Milwaukee, Wis.
Hamasa	Meridian, Miss.	Wahabi	Jackson, Miss.
Hasan	Albany, Ga.	Wa-Wa	Regina, Sask.
Hejaz	Greenville, S. C.	Yaarab	Atlanta, Ga.
Hella	Dallas, Tex.	Yelduz	Aberdeen, S. D.
Hillah	Ashland, Ore.	Za-Ga-Zig	Des Moines, Ia.
India	Oklahoma City, Okla.	Zamora	Birmingham, Ala.
Irem	Wilkes-Barre, Pa.	Zembo	Harrisburg, Pa.
Isis	Salina, Kan.	Zem-Zem	Erie, Pa.
Islam	San Francisco, Cal.	Zenobia	Toledo, O.
Ismailia	Buffalo, N. Y.	Ziyara	Utica, N. Y.
Jaffa	Altoona, Pa.	Zor	Madison, Wis.
Jerusalem	New Orleans, La.	Zorah	Terre Haute, Ind.
Kaaba	Davenport, Ia.	Zuhrah	Minneapolis, Minn.

founder of Shrinedom ever attended. It marked the beginning of two successive three-year terms for Sam Briggs of Al Koran Temple, Cleveland. The infancy of Shrine was over, and a period of tremendous expansion began with the energetic and dynamic Sam Briggs playing a leading role as he emphasized the fellowship and social features of Shrinedom.

Meanwhile, Mecca Temple continued to show the way, challenged no doubt by the magnitude of the Cleveland session. It organized a series of great pilgrimages to various temples. These pilgrimages, leading very shortly to Imperial Sessions, were destined to increase greatly the number of Temples and members, and make the Shrine a powerful force by the opening of the 20th Century. The 167 Shrine Temples that have been established in the United States since the founding of Mecca Temple are the outgrowth of these colorful Ceremonials and Imperial Council Sessions.

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