



St-John DeMolay 3A – The History, the Dispute and the Amalgamation

St-John DeMolay Preceptory has a fascinating story. A story that we may not all be aware of. One that speaks in volumes of the character of the fratres of this area and of our honourable past. We have hosted eight Annual Assemblies of the Sovereign Great Priory, fielded forty-four Provincial Grand Priors and can claim three Most Eminent Grand Masters as having passed through and presided over the chairs and offices we now occupy. An interesting part of our story shook meetings at the Grand level in the late 1800's where some of our founders fought to maintain an allegiance to their Grand Authority, while others were helping to develop Canada's own Sovereign Great Priory.

To have a better understanding of our beloved Preceptory and how we came to be, it is important to understand an outline of the history of the Order of the Temple in Canada, in New Brunswick and the evolution of the Sovereign Great Priory of Canada.

The Order of the Temple in Canada

There is documentation that the Knights Hospitaller (Knights of St. John and Knights of Malta) were in active existence in the City of Quebec in the 17th and 18th centuries. As to whether these were associated with the masonic organization, or the actual military one has not been identified. It is claimed that Samuel De Champlain, who came to Quebec in 1603, was himself a Knight of Malta. The first record of Templar activities in Canada, are from Halifax, Nova Scotia. They give the minutes of a Royal Arch Masons Chapter No. 211 (*Ancient Grand Registry of England*) for September 20, 1782. There they conferred the Royal Arch Degree on three candidates, after which, "*an assembly or encampment of Sir Knights Templar being formed, the said Brothers, J.G. Pyke, John Clark, and Joseph Peters, were instituted and dubbed Knights of the Most Noble and Right Worshipful Order of the Knights Templar*". This is sometimes referred to as from Lodge Glittering Star, No. 322 (Irish Constitution) in the 29th Regiment of Foot. There are similar records of ten other meetings. In 1800 a Warrant was conferred to knights meeting in Kingston, Ontario.

Knight Templarism in Canada can draw its official history to March 10, 1854 when the Grand Master of England, granted a patent to Colonel William McLeod Moore making him the first Provincial Grand Commander for the Provincial Grand Conclave of Canada under the jurisdiction of the Supreme Grand Conclave of England and Wales. This body existed from October 9, 1855 to May 1, 1868.

The Provincial Grand Priory of Canada held its last Grand Session in Ottawa in 1867. There, a request was drafted and forwarded to England explaining with the confederation of the Canadian provinces, the members wished to confederate the various Templar organizations into a Supreme Grand Conclave for Canada. This was agreed to by England, and at the next annual session in Montreal, it met as the Grand Priory of Canada (still under the authority of the Grand Conclave of England and Wales) and was in existence from May 1, 1868 to August 10, 1876. This later became known as the National Great Priory of Canada until July 7, 1884.

Throughout these years, culminating in the 1880's, there was frequent disagreement in bringing the Templars of the other Grand Orders (of Ireland and Scotland) into union as a Sovereign Great Priory of Canada. On July 8, 1884, the Fratres of the National Great Priory, were absolved by the Prince of Wales from their allegiance to him as Grand Master, and formally inaugurated the Sovereign Great Priory of Canada. As Supreme Grand Master, Col. William B. Macleod Moore, GCT was chosen. The honorary rank of "*Past Supreme Grand Master of Knights Templar of Canada*" was conferred upon the Prince of Wales, as a mark of the very high esteem and affection in which he was held by the Templars of this jurisdiction". With this change in status and name the Order of the Knights Templar in Canada was secured. At its creation, the membership had 26 preceptories with a little under 1,000 members. The Grand Encampment of the United States promptly recognized Canada's sovereignty, and an exchange of Grand Representatives between the two bodies began.

The Order of the Temple in New Brunswick

- **Hibernian Encampment No. 318, St-Andrews, New Brunswick (Registry of the Grand Encampment of Ireland)**

The introduction of the Order of the Temple in an organized form in New Brunswick began in 1840. Previous to that year there was no chartered body of Knights Templars in the province. Many of the Loyalists had received the degrees of Knight Templar and Knight of Malta principally in regimental encampments before leaving their homes for this portion of North America. The members of the Order in St-Andrews (already having received their rites in the United States, England, Ireland or Scotland) forwarded a petition in late 1839 to the Supreme Grand Encampment of Ireland for a Warrant and Charter to practice here. This was granted and they became Hibernian Encampment No. 318 on April 5, 1840.

Many Royal Arch Masons in their vicinity and throughout Charlotte County were received and created knights. For several years the encampment was quite prosperous. Unfortunately, this success did not last and they held their last meeting in May of 1860 after a short existence of only 20 years. A number of knights later moved on to Saint John where they became Charter Members of the Encampment there.

- **St-John Encampment No. 48, Saint John, New Brunswick (Registry of the General Grand Chapter of the Religious and Military Order of the Temple and Hospital in Scotland)**

In 1854 plans were begun among a number of fratres to form an encampment of knights in Saint John (namely, John Willis, Charles V Forster, Angus McAfee, John Creighton, Robert Gray and William Ross and John Edwards of Fredericton). In June of 1855, two other companions (John Frost and George Wilson) made a special visit to St-Andrews and were there received into the Order at the Hibernian Encampment. Together they decided that they would petition the General Grand Encampment of Scotland for a Warrant, and their petition was forwarded in the summer of 1855. Unfortunately, the death of the Grand Secretary and Registrar in Scotland caused the delay of nearly one year in obtaining an answer to their requisition. As well, with only nine members signed on their petition instead of the required eleven, they were short of the requirement number for an application. Luckily, they were given special dispensation to meet to induct enough new members to form a sufficient base and the first assembly under this authority met on May 15, 1856.

They first met in the office of Companion Alexander Bullock at the northeast corner of Princess and Prince William streets in Saint John. Here, companions Alexander Bullock, Charles Eatmon, Andrew Hastings, Robert Crozier, Robert Stubs, William Bunting and Aaron Armstrong were created Knights Templars and Knights of Malta in the presence of fratres Willis, Forster, McAfee, Wilson and Creighton. On August 6, 1856 the Encampment met for the first time in the Masonic Hall located in Judge Ritchie's building on the south side of Princess Street. At this assembly, the first election of office bearers took place with Charles Forster as

Commander, John Willis as Lieutenant Commander, Alexander Bullock as Marshall and an Edward Allison Jr as Secretary. They received their official Charter in 1857. This was unfortunately destroyed along with all their seals, banners, jewels, property and regalia during the great fire of June 20, 1877. Luckily, their records were saved from destruction. During the period of 1856 to 1877 the Saint John Encampment was noted for having been involved in many masonic activities such as forming escorts for the Grand Master of the Grand Lodge in New Brunswick and visiting and hosting many of the commanderies from across the border.

- **The Priory of the Temple in St-Stephen, New Brunswick (Registry of the General Grand Chapter of the Religious and Military Order of the Temple and Hospital in Scotland)**

This priory was an offshoot of the encampment of Saint John. It was constituted in St-Stephen in Charlotte County on September 25, 1872 under the name of the "*Priory of the Temple in St-Stephen*". Their charter was issued on April 9, 1872. This priory and the Encampment of St-John were the only two bodies of the Order of the Temple in New Brunswick holding allegiance to the Chapter General of Scotland.

- **Union DeMolay Preceptory No. 11 (Registry of the National (later Sovereign) Great Priory of Canada)**

In 1867, the following fratres: Christopher Bezzant, Robert Marshall, Thomas Forster, James Domville, David Stewart, WG Logan, William Emslie, Christian Robertson, Thomas Peters, John Frost, John Hammond, Robert Crookshank, George Whiting, Aaron Armstrong and George Wilson (all members of Carleton Royal Arch Chapter #48) forwarded a petition to the Provincial Grand Prior for the Province of Canada to establish an encampment under the Grand Conclave of England and Wales. The Provincial Grand Prior of Canada, Right Eminent Knight William McLeod Moore, issued a provisional warrant dated October 1868 constituting them. This act was deemed an infringement of territorial jurisdiction by the Provincial Grand Prior from Nova Scotia (Right Eminent Knight Alexander Keith). He called this intrusion into his territory to the attention of the English authorities and asked for the intervention of the Grand Master of England and Wales on the matter. The Grand Chancellor of England agreed that Saint John nominally fell under both the Maritime and Canadian jurisdictions, but finally sided with Provincial Grand Prior Keith (his territory was Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Newfoundland and Prince Edward Island). The result was that in December 1868 the Grand Master of England declined to confirm the original request until a new draft was sent from Grand Prior Keith in Halifax. It is interesting to note that until the death of Right Eminent Knight Keith on December 17, 1873, Right Eminent Knight McLeod Moore refused to exercise authority over the Maritime jurisdiction. Following the death however, he saw an opportunity to consolidate the districts throughout the Dominion. The Chapter General of Scotland also claimed foul as they saw the territory under their authority, having been established in the City since 1856. There was much hesitation from them to cooperate with the Great Priorities of England and of Ireland. They were not quick in establishing any courtesies with Canada.

The warrant confirming Union DeMolay Encampment No. 104 on the registry of the growing Conclave of England and Wales was received in May 1869. Union DeMolay first met on October 8, 1868 with fratre Robert Marshall appointed as the first Eminent Commander and fratres Forster and Domville as Captains commanding the columns. In 1867, Robert Marshall was elected Grand Marshall of the Grand Priory of Canada and in 1874 and 1875 he served as Provincial Grand Prior for New Brunswick and Nova Scotia. In 1873 Union DeMolay Encampment became Union DeMolay Preceptory under the jurisdiction of the Sovereign Grand Priory of Canada. On July 8, 1884, a Warrant on application was granted by the Sovereign Great Priory of Canada confirming Union DeMolay Preceptory No. 11 on the new roll of Preceptories in Canada.

The two groups operated independently from each other, however, both met at the Masonic Hall (one on Mondays and the other on Thursdays). During the Great Fire of 1877, both lost their warrants, seals and paraphernalia, but both sets of records were luckily spared. It is noted that the Knights of St-John Encampment No. 48 was the larger of the two bodies and was deemed "*the most*

prosperous, efficiently equipped and spiritual Templar bodies in the Dominion of Canada". Union DeMolay Preceptory fell on hard times after the fire of 1877, and it wasn't until the early 1900's that they appeared to have resuscitated themselves.

From the late 1870's (in reality from about 1867) on there was, unfortunately a time of disharmony between the Grand or Great bodies, namely the Grand Scottish Encampment (or Chapter General) and the Sovereign Great Priory of Canada. Even the General Grand Encampments of the United States became involved as they had connections to both Saint John Templar groups. The Scottish Encampments at Saint John and St-Stephen (the only two in Canada maintaining fealty to Scotland) had been declared irregular and clandestine by the Sovereign Great Priory of Canada, as they ignored repeated attempts to join under the new jurisdiction through the inaction of their Grand Chapter General and their own fidelity to their original authority.

The Dispute

By the time of the 5th annual assembly of the Great Priory of Canada in 1880, the report on the Condition of the Order contained the following: *"...we trust that at an early date all knight templars in New Brunswick will yield their allegiance to the Great Priory of Canada". This was of course referring to the two Scottish Encampments in New Brunswick (St- John and St-Stephen Encampments). It was felt that the only body recognized as having any authority over Templar activities in the province would have been Union DeMolay Preceptory No. 11 under their Grand Authority. At this assembly a Notice of Motion was given by a Right Eminent Knight from a Toronto Preceptory which stated that "...if the Scottish Templars did not yield allegiance to the Sovereign Great Priory of Canada within 6 months, that intercourse with them by members of Preceptories owing allegiance to the national Great Priory of Canada be prohibited".*

Following this, the Grand Priory of Scotland issued a decree of suspension against any petitioners for this Great Priory and the members of Encampment of Saint John No. 48 passed their own bylaw declaring that members on its roll who should accept membership in any other encampment were to be considered as having resigned.

At the 7th Annual Assembly of the National Great Priory of Canada, the committee appointed to correspond with the Chapter General of Scotland reported that they considered it would be in the best interests of the Order to delay actions until the Great Priory of Canada was completely independent. This was not followed and an edict was still issued forbidding further intercourse with the Scottish fratres in New Brunswick. It is interesting to note that there was considerable debate on this move. Right Eminent Knight McKay (a past Provincial Grand Prior from Hamilton) entered the following protest, *"I protest against this action of this Great Priory in declaring non intercourse with the members of the Scottish Encampments in New Brunswick, as I am informed that they were in possession of the territory before the preceptory there which holds its Warrant from the Great Priory of Canada". Most Eminent Fratre McLeod Moore himself made the following statement at the 8th Annual Assembly of the Great Priory of Canada in 1883 "the negotiations were conducted by the Provincial Grand Prior, Fratre Monroe of St John NB, and at my suggestion every possible concession was made that could be thought of to affect so desirable an end to the future prosperity of the Order in Canada, but it appears that on the subject being fully discussed, they did not consider themselves justified in throwing off their allegiance to the Chapter General of Scotland, from whence they derive their charter at 1857, considerably prior to the formation of Great Priory. And never having any reason to be dissatisfied with the authority by which they exist, they declined acceding to the proposed amalgamation unless the General Chapter General of Scotland should otherwise direct. The matter is now for consideration of Great Priory. I do not myself approve of any coercive measure being adopted, while circumstances may hereafter occur to induce them to think differently and change their decision". It appears that during this Grand Session of 1883 there was extensive discussion about the Scottish Encampments in New Brunswick.*

The result was to delay any further action until Great Priory of Canada obtained its complete independence. During the 9th and final Grand Session held in Ottawa in July 1884 (later referred to as the 1st

Session of the Sovereign Great Priory of Canada), the Provincial Grand Prior for the New Brunswick District reported “...I believe that there is not a larger, or more thoroughly equipped body of men, Knight Templars within the whole Dominion of Canada. And one cannot fail to be impressed with the worldly wisdom of these fratres in desiring to be left alone. In the full enjoyment of the unobtrusive control of the Chapter General of Scotland, yielding, as that Supreme body does, the full protection of its authority, whilst exacting the payment of most moderate fees, and nominal constitutional restrictions”. The Provincial Grand Prior concluded his report saying that this was the only province within the Dominion of Canada with a divided jurisdiction, and his hope that reasonable measures would be adopted to secure sole control of territory to the Great Priory of Canada. It was at this assembly that the Sovereign Great Priory of Canada was constituted.

Before the assembly closed the following resolution was proposed and passed by Right Eminent Knight Monroe, the Provincial Grand Prior for New Brunswick; “...that the Right Eminent the Grand Chancellor be hereby authorized and directed under the direction of the Most Eminent the Great Prior to issue Preceptory Warrants, to either or both of the Encampments of Knight Templars now under the jurisdiction of the Chapter General of Scotland and working within the Province of New Brunswick in the Dominion of Canada upon such terms and conditions, as within the constitution of the Sovereign Great Priory of Canada, harmonized with the views of the fratres of the Encampments of Knight Templars respectively; and that, should the correspondence fails to secure the surrender of the warrants within 6 months from this date, the Supreme Grand Master shall issue an edict declaring non- intercourse with all Templar bodies meeting in Canada and holding warrants from any authority but this Sovereign Great Priory, and with all Knights Templar and Knights of Malta made within or by such bodies as shall then be declared illegal”.

The Second Assembly of the Sovereign Great Priory of Canada was held in Hamilton, Ontario in July of 1885. It saw the dispute over New Brunswick continuing. There, it was resolved that both the Saint John and the St-Stephen Scottish Encampments were illegal (in their eyes). Warrants would be issued to the “Foreign Scottish Encampments” if they requested them though. The Edict of Non-Intercourse remained in force. The Sovereign Great Priory of Canada felt that the onus rested with the Scottish Encampments for refusing to ask for permission to transfer allegiance to Canada.

It is interesting to note that in 1886 the Sovereign Great Priory of Canada was itself embroiled in conflict with the Great Priory of England and Wales over the granting of a Warrant for Melbourne Australia. The Australians had chosen to apply to Canada as a Grand Body and not England. The Great Priory of England saw this as an invasion of *their* territory. England then severed all connection and refused to recognize the Great Priory of Canada between 1887 to 1894.

By 1888, having achieved no change in the relationship of the Scottish Encampments, the Sovereign Great Priory of Canada lifted the Edict of Non-Intercourse and decided to treat the Saint John and St-Stephen fratres as equals to Canadian Preceptories. With no movement to join, in 1890, the Grand Master was empowered to resolve the issue. In 1893 the Scottish Encampment of St-John had created a committee to seriously look at the feasibility of joining Canada and creating one Preceptory in the City operating under a single Warrant. In 1894, the Most Eminent Grand Master visited both groups in the City and offered them a Warrant numbered 3A which would recognize St-John Encampment’s date of origin. The following year, 1895 saw the 12th Assembly of the Sovereign Great Priory actually meeting in Saint John. Although there was still no sign of an amalgamation in sight, this meeting saw considerable involvement of fratres from the Maritimes holding Grand Offices. As part of the negotiations, the Provincial Grand Prior from Union DeMolay Preceptory offered to resign in favour of one of the senior officers from St-John Encampment. This unfortunately did not go any further, and those fratres resolved to continue their relationship with the General Grand Chapter of Scotland.

The end was in sight however, and in 1896 the 135 fratres of St-John Encampment submitted their notice that they were prepared to discuss their terms of integration into the Sovereign Great Priory of Canada. This was the same year that saw the formation of Ivanhoe Preceptory No. 36 in Moncton and Prince Edward Preceptory No.35 in Charlottetown under a Dispensation for Union DeMolay officers who installed the new fratres for these preceptories. By 1897, St John Preceptory No. 3A had finally joined the Sovereign Great

Priory of Canada. Continued work was necessary with the fratres of the St-Stephen Encampment to resolve their issues preventing joining.

By 1900, St-John Encampment/Preceptory No. 3A was doing very well and had a strong membership of 142. Contrary to established practice, they were allowed to maintain the use of the word "*Encampment*" in their name as a precedent to their history as well as the continued use of the Scottish uniform and ritual which prompted considerable complaint from members of the Sovereign Great Priory of Canada and her sister Preceptories. Union DeMolay Preceptory No. 11 however had a very hard time drawing new members and developing interest. Considerations for an amalgamation were beginning. This was the year that Most Eminent Knight John V. Ellis of Saint John presided as Grand Master of the Sovereign Great Priory. He presided for two consecutive terms. In 1901 the Grand Assembly took place in Saint John again, where it was noted that several officers and the Eminent Commander from St-Stephen Encampment (Scottish Ritual) were in attendance.

The Amalgamation

With the dispute over, both Preceptories in Saint John now vied for membership. From the beginning, St-John No. 3A had the larger number with the most momentum. They were always noted among the top-five largest Preceptories in the Sovereign Great Priory. The details of Union DeMolay Preceptory No. 11 always remarked on low membership numbers. The City was just not large enough for the two bodies and by the Grand Assembly of 1912 a Notice of Motion for amalgamation of the two received and reviewed. Of the necessary conditions for this joining, the Sovereign Great Priory dictated that the use of the word "*Encampment*" and the use of the Scottish "*uniform*" and ritual be no longer accepted, the new Preceptory should now fully meet the Statutes of the Great Priory. By 1915 these conflicts had been hammered out and they became St-John DeMolay Preceptory No. 3A. A key role in the amalgamation was played by the Provincial Grand Prior at the time, Horace A. Porter who later served as the Most Eminent Grand Master from 1928 to 1930.

Today

St-John DeMolay Preceptory No. 3A is now in its 105th, 152nd or 164th year depending on what date and what organizational body you want to draw back to. We have seen the Sovereign Great Priory reach membership levels of almost 19,000 in the late 1980's and then dwindle away to the current number of around 4,000 fratres. Here in New Brunswick, we had reached provincial levels of over 1,000 and are now sitting at under 150 members. Documents show that in the late 1800's, our membership here in the City numbered in the 200's and by the 1980's in the 300's before the steady decrease began. At this point in time, we number at just over 50. We have moved from our beloved Masonic Temple and Armoury and have begun anew at the Luxor Shrine.

But our future is not bleak. As we look forward, our 51 members are *interested* members, *devoted* members, invested in wanting to do more. There is clearly a desire to see our Preceptory prosper and grow. The newer members have stepped up, the older members are mentoring and guiding and we are all working to move our Preceptory further into the 21st Century.

Respectfully submitted in the Bonds of the Order

REK Eric J. Johnson, Past PGP – The New Brunswick District No. 7
St-John DeMolay Preceptory No. 3A