



THE HISTORY OF MAINE IN THE KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS

RON SABOURIN : STATE HISTORIAN rrsabourin@aol.com

CHAPTER THIRTEEN: K of C FOURTH DEGREE BEGINNING IN MAINE

From the institution of the Order in 1882 until 1900 there had been insistent agitation from the membership at large for the Supreme Council to organize a higher degree that would carry greater prestige; be more exclusive while still remaining democratic; be voluntary by the membership. This would be a dress uniform degree to appear in public and compare favorably with some of the higher degrees of non-Catholic fraternal organizations. The Supreme Board of Directors heeding the many requests from the membership, consented to accede to their wishes.

Since there was such an immediate demand for membership, it was necessary to select a representative number of applicants from across the nation, for the initial exemplification. In keeping with the theme of Patriotism, the first Grand Exemplification was held in New York City on Washington's Birthday, February 22, 1900 when eleven hundred candidates were admitted. A similar event took place in Boston in May with another 750 candidates taking the patriotic degree. These new members were so enthused that when they returned to their homes in the larger cities they immediately organized exemplifications in their own communities. And thus the higher degree was soon established in all the larger cities.

Hundreds of suggestions had been offered concerning the functions, the organization thereof, the scope, the mechanics and objectives of the new organization. Thus, during 1903 the Supreme Board of Directors, after having carefully studied all of the suggestions that had been made, selected the best ones and accepted the ritual establishing the Fourth Degree, setting the theme to be PATRIOTISM. The work of perfecting and establishing the foundation of this was assigned to Mr. Charles O. Webber of Brooklyn, a former Supreme Director. Thus, the organization had been in existence for three years before the ritual and By-laws were perfected.

Massachusetts, with its large Irish population in the industrial cities was one of the first states to be organized and it became the nucleus to which the states of Maine and New Hampshire were attached into a District Assembly. In those first years the candidates from Maine and New Hampshire travelled to Boston to receive the degree, such was the interest shown.

Because the early leaders were not record-conscious, and perhaps they were more interested in expanding the membership than in providing a record for the future generations, and since the Supreme Council does not levy a per capita tax on the Fourth Degree members as a organization: neither the state Assembly nor the Supreme Council has any official and complete record of those early years. The official records of the Fourth Degree in Maine go back to 1945. Records prior to this date were assembled from such sources as what the Supreme Council could offer; The Columbiad magazine, later changed to Columbia and the official organ of the Order; early newspapers; memories of the living Past State Masters; old photos of early degrees and subordinate council histories.

The first record of a degree being held in Maine is recorded in the Columbiad magazine stating that Brother Thomas j. Kenney, of Dorchester, Massachusetts was given permission to exemplify a Fourth Degree in Maine in 1908. No doubt this was held in the city of Portland. It was also recorded that a degree was held in Portland in 1910, at which time about 100 were inducted. By 1910 there had been such an expansion of the Order that Massachusetts was separated in a jurisdiction of its own leaving Maine and New Hampshire in a new District

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Assembly. The first State Master was also our second State Deputy from 1898 to 1900. John F. Crowley, of Bangor, served both states as Master from 1910 to 1918 when he moved to Pennsylvania. In 1919 Maine and New Hampshire were separated into two District Assemblies and Fred D. Harvey, of Portland became State Master, which office he held until 1925. Ever since 1919 the District Assembly has been within the state boundaries. However, it was the practice in those early years for candidates living near the border of both New Hampshire and Canada to receive their degrees in those territories and residents of those two places living near the border would come to Maine to receive theirs in this state. Permission was readily given by the Masters of the respective jurisdictions for their exchange. One case of this was on October 9, 1938 when fourteen members of the Skowhegan Council #2089 went to St. George, Canada and took their Fourth Degree there.

In order to ensure that only candidates of a high moral character be inducted, and as positive proof that it is desired to receive only the best men in the Order, it is obligatory that each candidate present a certificate in writing from a priest that he has received Holy Communion within two weeks prior to the date of his initiation. Upon receiving the Fourth Degree, the members are equipped with a baldric of red, white and blue, a sword, and the emblem of the degree. The emblem shows a dove carrying the cross to the New World, emblematic of Columbus' motives is searching for a new world in order to bring Christianity to a foreign people.

One of the principle functions of the Fourth Degree is to give public support to the priests and bishops in all their public appearances. Usually any procession of a religious nature, or public reception of the clergy, finds the uniform Fourth Degree members serving as an Honor Guard.

For the first ten years of its existence- from 1900 until 1910- the Assemblies of the Fourth Degree were independent of one another. With the exception of a few general rules formulated by the Supreme Board of Directors, each Assembly was governed by its own by-laws. There had never been any attempt to unite the various Assemblies. They were incapable of any project, national in scope, and lacked the unity necessary to attain the objectives at which the Degree was created to aim. As soon as the Constitution and Laws were adopted and put into effect in January 1910, the Supreme Board of Directors appointed the first executive officers of the Fourth Degree, consisting of the Supreme Master, Supreme Secretary, and four Vice Supreme Masters. Their first meeting was held in Quebec on July 29, 1910 and biennial meetings were held until 1930. A meeting was held in Miami in 1946, New York in 1950, and have been held biennially ever since.

Admittedly, the early records of the Fourth Degree in Maine are very lacking. A perusal of what few records that are available indicates that the Portland Assembly was organized in 1908 or 1910, and that it was approved as the Father Sebastian Rasle General Assembly by the Supreme Board of Directors on April 1, 1912. Waterville had an Assembly in 1911. Millinocket formed in 1913 and Biddeford by 1914. Since there was a degree in Bangor on May 29, 1911, it could be assumed that an assembly was organized in that city at that time; especially since the State Master John F. Crowley, was a resident of the Queen City. The first records that we have for the city of Lewiston show there was an assembly there in 1920.

From 1910 until 1915, only three assemblies listed their officers with the Supreme Council: Waterville, Millinocket and Biddeford. During the five year period from 1915 to 1920, Portland was the only other assembly to list its officers. This was during and immediately following World War One.

Fred D. Harvey, of Portland, was appointed State Master in 1919 and this was the beginning of a period of great expansion. Records indicate that assemblies were organized as follows:

<u>1920</u>	<u>1921</u>	<u>1922</u>	<u>1923</u>	<u>1924</u>
LEWISTON	BATH	VAN BUREN	SKOWHEGAN	FORT FAIRFIELD
ORONO	BANGOR		SACO	
CARIBOU	FORT KENT		OLD ORCHARD	
HOULTON	EAST MILLINOCKET			
	WESTBROOK & SANFORD			

