



THE HISTORY OF JOHN R. GILMORE PRIORY NO. 2

John R. Gilmore Priory No. 2, Knights of the York Cross of Honour, Jurisdiction of Pennsylvania was established on August 31, 1995, in Harrisburg, PA. The minimum qualifications to be admitted as a Knight of the York Cross of Honour is that a candidate must have been elected, installed and served for one year as Worshipful Master of a Subordinate Lodge; Most Excellent High Priest of a Subordinate Holy Royal Arch Chapter; Thrice Illustrious Master of a Subordinate Council of Royal and Select Masters; and Eminent Commander of a Subordinate Commandery of Knights Templar. Knights of the York Cross of Honour is an Honor Group of York Rite Masons who are dedicated to serving the Masonic Fraternity as a Labor of Love. No individual should aspire to membership in K.Y.C.H., when he has done the required work, and done it well, he will be invited after his name is proposed for membership by a member of the K.Y.C.H. and be accepted unanimously by the membership of the Priory.

Alpha Priory No. 1, K.Y.C.H., Jurisdiction of Ohio is the first Prince Hall body of K.Y.C.H., established on November 18, 1987, in Akron, Ohio and is the Mother Jurisdiction of K.Y.C.H. Leonard Robertson was elected Eminent Prior as it was sanctioned by the Grand Encampment of Knights Templar, U.S.A., 61st Annual Grand Conclave, June 24-27, 1987, in Jacksonville, Florida with Most Eminent Sir Leonard Robertson, Most Eminent Grand Master of the Grand Encampment. This body was established as a forum not only for the exchange of knowledge and ideas for the perpetuation of York Rite Masonry, but to provide fellowship throughout the York Rite domain. The following year, Henry Choya Small of Pennsylvania became a member of Alpha Priory No. 1. Subsequently, with a sufficient number of members to form a Priory in Pennsylvania, Past Master Henry Choya Small #11, wrote a letter dated October 21, 1992 to then Most Worshipful Grand Master, the Honorable Roland K. Lee asking for permission to form a Priory in the State of Pennsylvania and it was subsequently granted.

Alpha Priory No. 1, K.Y.C.H. issued the following Proclamation:

To Whom These Presents Shall Come:

Greeting:

Whereas: Twenty-One (21) members of Alpha Priory No.1, Knights of the York Cross of Honour (KYCH), residing in the State of Pennsylvania, have voiced a strong desire to operate as a Priory in their Jurisdiction; and

Whereas Alpha Priory No. 1, realizing that the future of any organization is inherently dependent on how well and how quickly it grows; and

Whereas Sir Roland K. Lee, Most Worshipful Grand Master of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania has given his approval for the establishment of the ORDER.

Therefore, I, Clarence J. Walker, Jr., Eminent Prior of Alpha Priory No. 1, KYCH, P.H.A. do hereby declare and proclaim that the names appended hereto who owe allegiance to Alpha Priory, shall from this day be known as: John R. Gilmore Priory No. 2, KYCH

SIR KNIGHTS: Henry C. Small, William Clarke, Stark Gilliam, Charles Wright, William Don Jones, Madison E. Cherry, Fletcher Sampson, Jr., Booker T. Nichols, James Robinson, Milton R. Austin, Alexander Murphy, Jr., Kermit C. Downes, Jr., Haywood M. Greene, Charles E. Jones, Jr. Glenn Lankford, Joseph Jackson, Sr., Douglas W. Anderson, George W. Conyer, James Sheppard, William Moten and Joseph Serious

Given under my hand this 1st day of October 1994 in the City of Toledo, Ohio
Walker V. Biggs, Registrar
Clarence J. Walker, Jr. Eminent Prior

The Priory was named in memory of a distinguished York Rite Mason John R. Gilmore of Pennsylvania, Past Most Eminent Grand Commander, M.K.T., Past Right Grand Thrice Illustrious Master, R.&S.M. and Right Excellent Grand Secretary, H.R.A.M. He was also Past Thrice Illustrious Grand Master, R.&S.M. of New York and Most Eminent Honorary Past Grand Master of the Grand Encampment of Knights Templar, U.S.A.

On Wednesday, January 25, 1995, a meeting was held with Most Worshipful Grand Master, the Honorable Rev. Thomas A. Jackmon, Sr. relative to disposition of the Priory in Pennsylvania. Those in attendance were Past Most Worshipful Grand Masters Thomas J. Lashley, Jr. #99, Lorenzo Cruger #120, and Roland K. Lee #129; Right Worshipful Deputy Grand Master Howard A. Accooe, Jr.; and Right Worshipful Junior Grand Warden Cleveland L. Brunson. Grand Master Jackmon indicated that he had no problem with the organization being solvent in Pennsylvania; further suggested that Past Master Henry Choya Small #11 submit his petition before Jurisprudence Committee during Mid-Year Session 1995 in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. At the 180th Mid-Year Session, Jurisprudence Committee reviewed the petition and ruled in favor of the same viz. permission granted on April 8, 1995. Subsequently, Grand Master Jackmon sent a letter to the Most Eminent Grand Master, Most Eminent Sir Lawrence Wilkes (TN) of the Grand Encampment of Knights Templar, U.S.A., requesting the formation of John R. Gilmore Priory No. 2 in Pennsylvania and it was read and accepted at the 69th Annual Grand Conclave of the Grand Encampment in Orlando, Florida on June 30, 1995. Sir Henry Choya Small was Right Eminent Deputy Grand Master of the Grand Encampment at the time.

On August 31, 1995, in Harrisburg, PA, the following officers of John R. Gilmore Priory No. 2, K.Y.C.H. were elected: Henry Choya Small, Eminent Prior; William Clarke, Knight Deputy Prior; Stark R. Gilliam, Knight Herald (later changed to Knight Warder of the Temple); Charles Wright, Knight Treasurer; and Knight Registrar William Don Jones. It was agreed that the Priory would meet the Friday morning before the Grand Conclave of United Grand Commandery, Masonic Knights Templar, Jurisdiction of PA. Subsequently, John R. Gilmore Priory No. 2 had members from the Jurisdictions of New Jersey, New York, Connecticut, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Virginia, North Carolina, Delaware, Maryland, and D.C. Members from New Jersey, New York, Connecticut, Massachusetts, and Rhode Island formed Daniel W. Frazier Priory No. 5, Jurisdiction of New Jersey in 2000.

On April 24, 2003, in Memphis, Tennessee, delegates from Alpha Priory No. 1, Ohio; John R. Gilmore Priory No. 2, Pennsylvania; John W. Thompson Priory No. 3, Illinois; Harry J. Spencer Priory No. 4, Tennessee; and Daniel W. Frazier Priory No. 5, New Jersey met to organize the Convent General, U.S.A., K.Y.C.H., Prince Hall Affiliated. Past Eminent Prior Robert A. Wilson #2 was asked to Chair a committee to draft a proposed Constitution, General Regulations and By-Laws for the Convent General at the request of Eminent Prior Michael Steele from Harry J. Spencer Priory #4, which was approved. Knight Willie Mosley of Alpha Priory #1 was elected Most Eminent Grand Master-General; Knight Henry Choya Small of John R. Gilmore Priory #2, Right Eminent Deputy Grand Master-General; Knight Raymond Tucker of John W. Thompson Priory #3, Right Eminent Grand Warder of the Temple; Knight Michael Steele of Harry S. Spencer Priory #4, Right Eminent Grand Prelate; Knight Arthur Taylor of Daniel W. Frazier Priory #5, Right Eminent Grand Seneschal; Knight Curtis McKinney, Sr. of Alpha Priory #1, Right Eminent Grand Treasurer-General; and Knight William C. Parker of Alpha Priory #1, Right Eminent Grand Registrar-General. Past Eminent Prior Robert A. Wilson installed the officers of the Convent General. In 2005 at the 2nd Annual Grand Conclave of the Convent General, Past Eminent Prior Henry Choya Small, the first Eminent Prior of John R. Gilmore Priory No. 2, was elected the second Most Eminent Grand Master-General. Most Eminent Grand Master-General Small appointed Past Eminent Prior Joseph Jackson, Sr., Jurisdictional Deputy Grand Master-General for Pennsylvania, who served from 2005 to 2008, resigning due to illness. In 2008, on the recommendation of Past Most Eminent Grand Master-General Henry Choya Small, Most Eminent Grand Master-General Raymond Tucker #3 appointed Past Eminent Prior Walter J. Sims, Jr., Jurisdictional Deputy Grand Master-General for Pennsylvania.

In addition to Daniel W. Frazier Priory No. 5, Jurisdiction of NJ, John R. Gilmore Priory is the mother of Virginia Priory No. 8, Jurisdiction of Virginia; Tarheel Priory No. 10, Jurisdiction of North Carolina; Brown-Stewart-Thompson Priory No. 11, Jurisdiction of Maryland (members of Maryland & D.C.) and grandmother to Harry G. Walton Priory No. 7, Jurisdiction of New York; Zedekiah Priory No. 15, Jurisdiction of D.C. and Carolina Priory #17, Jurisdiction of North Carolina.

On April 5, 2008, at the 193rd Mid-Year Session, on the recommendation of Most Worshipful Grand Master, the Honorable Samuel King, the Most Worshipful Prince Hall

Grand Lodge did grant Fraternal Recognition to the Convent General. During the administration of Eminent Prior Calvin Ligons in 2011, a Mid-Year meeting was added due to the change in dates of the Convent General Annual Conclave as it now meets in conjunction with the Annual General Conference of Grand Councils Royal & Select Masters, U.S.A. In the fall of 2012, Jurisdictional Deputy Grand Master-General Walter J. Sims, Jr. asked Most Worshipful Grand Master, the Honorable Murphy J. Keller, III for permission to proceed in forming a Priorate under Tucker-Coffee Grand Court, Princesses of the York Cross of Honour of the Convent General in the State of Pennsylvania and it was granted. Jurisdictional Deputy Sims asked Princess Joyce Braxton, a member of Tarheel Priorate No. 3, Jurisdiction of North Carolina, to organize the Priorate and a meeting was held on January 27, 2013. Jurisdictional Deputy Sims enlightened the ladies that the late Henry Choya Small was the first Eminent Prior of John R. Gilmore Priory No. 2 and the second Most Eminent Grand Master-General of the Convent General. The ladies chose the name Henry Choya Small Priorate unanimously. Jurisdictional Deputy Sims proceeded with the nomination of officers and Princess Joyce Braxton was elected Regal Prioress and he installed the officers of Henry Choya Small Priorate. John R. Gilmore Priory permitted the ladies on April 13, 2013, to form the Priorate under the name of Henry Choya Small. Most Worshipful Grand Master, the Honorable Murphy J. Keller, III, granted permission for the ladies to form Henry Choya Small Priorate after receiving a letter, dated April 17, 2013 from John R. Gilmore Priory #2, which subsequently was approved by the Jurisprudence Committee and accepted at the 198th Annual Session of the Most Worshipful Prince Hall Grand Lodge of PA. On Friday morning, June 7, 2013, prior to Esther Grand Court, L.O.C.O.P. Annual Session in King of Prussia, PA, 23 eligible ladies were inducted by Tucker-Coffee Grand Court, P.Y.C.H. and with Princess Joyce Braxton formed Henry Choya Small Priorate U.D. Eminent Prior Wayne Parnell #2 appointed Knight George Howard, Knight Advisor, Knight Leroy C. Patience, Inside Sentinel and Knight Nicholas Bagley, III, Outside Sentinel. Right Eminent Deputy Grand Master-General Robert A. Wilson #2 and Jurisdictional Deputy Grand Master-General Walter J. Sims, Jr. were also present. The Priorate subsequently was chartered Henry Choya Small Priorate #5 by Tucker-Coffee Grand Court, P.Y.C.H., Most Regal Grand Prioress Yvonne German and Grand Knight Advisor Leroy Gary.

On Friday, May 1, 2015, at the 12th Annual Conclave of the Convent General in Virginia Beach, VA, Past Eminent Prior Robert A. Wilson of John R. Gilmore Priory #2 was elected the 7th Most Eminent Grand Master-General. Past Eminent Prior Calvin Ligons serves the Convent General as Right Eminent Grand 3rd Lecturer, was Right Eminent Grand 1st Lecturer; Past Eminent Prior Walter J. Sims, Jr., also serves as Right Eminent Grand 2nd Lecturer; Historian; Member, Constitution Committee; and Chairman, Audit Committee; Past Eminent Prior John White, Member, Audit Committee and Rules & Order of the Day Committee; and Past Eminent Prior George M. Howard, Audit Committee. Past Eminent Prior Braxton Mitchell was elected Right Eminent Grand Sentinel in 2009 but was unable to continue due to illness. There are 35 members of John R. Gilmore Priory who have been invested with the rank of Knight Grand Cross of Honour (K.Y.G.C.H.) including Past Most Worshipful Grand Master Joseph B. Jefferson and Past Most Worshipful Grand Master Leonard A. Heard. Right Worshipful Deputy

Grand Master Timothy Cager of PA is also a member of John R. Gilmore Priory #2. Past Eminent Prior John Anderson of Virginia Priory #8, (2007-2008), originally a member of John R. Gilmore #2, demitted back to the Priory on March 14, 2015, because he now resides in PA.

On Friday, May 5, 2017, at the 14th Annual Conclave of the Convent General in Atlanta, GA, Past Eminent Prior Walter J. Sims, Jr. was elected Right Eminent Grand Sentinel. The 8th Most Eminent Grand Master-General Bobby Thompson (OK) appointed Past Eminent Prior Calvin Ligons, Jurisdictional Deputy Grand Master-General to replace Past Eminent Prior Walter J. Sims, Jr. who served 9 years as Jurisdictional Deputy Grand Master-General. Subsequently on Friday, May 4, 2018, at the 15th Annual Conclave in Essington, PA and Friday, May 3, 2019, at the 16th Annual Conclave in Greenville, SC, Past Eminent Prior Walter J. Sims, Jr. was elected Right Eminent Grand Marshal and Right Eminent Grand Seneschal, respectively. Also at the 16th Annual Conclave, Past Eminent Prior Dr. George H. Williams of Brown-Stewart-Thompson Priory No. 11, Jurisdiction of Maryland was elected the 9th Most Eminent Grand Master-General. He was originally a member of John R. Gilmore Priory No. 2. Past Eminent Prior Tommy E. Campbell of Virginia Priory #8, elected Right Eminent Grand Registrar-General on Friday, May 5, 2017, at the 14th Annual Conclave, was also originally a member of John R. Gilmore Priory No. 2. At the Virtual 18th Annual Conclave via Zoom on April 30, 2021 due to the coronavirus pandemic, Past Eminent Prior Walter J. Sims, Jr. was elected Right Eminent Grand Prelate, a position he was re-elected to at the 19th & 20th Annual Grand Conclaves which were held at Rosemont, IL and Atlanta, GA respectively.

Due to the death of Eminent Prior Rev. Gerald Saunders, which occurred on November 15, 2023 and who was elected Eminent Prior on August 4, 2023, a Special Conclave of John R. Gilmore Priory No. 2 was held in Darby, PA on January 6, 2024 for the purpose of installing Knight Deputy Prior Larry O. Grant as Eminent Prior. Past Eminent Prior Elmer Evans was appointed Knight Deputy Prior (Pro-Tem).

On Friday, May 3, 2024, at the 21st Annual Grand Conclave held in Orlando, FL, Past Eminent Prior Walter J. Sims, Jr., KGC, KCT, KYGCH was elected Right Eminent Grand Warder of the Temple, the third constitutional officer of the Convent General.

For almost 30 years, the members of John R. Gilmore Priory No. 2, K.Y.C.H. have practiced the true principals of York Rite Masonry for their many accomplishments and contributions to the community, the York Rite Bodies and the Convent General.

P.E.P. Walter J. Sims, Jr. #2, KCT, KGC, KYGCH
Right Eminent Grand Warder of the Temple
Convent General
Knights of the York Cross of Honour-PHA, Inc.
Knight Historian
5/17/2024