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### FRIDAY THE 13TH • HISTORY OF SUPERSTITION

Many of us are aware that in America, Friday the 13th is considered an “unlucky” day, and has quite a superstitious following. But where did this superstition come from? Why is it still enacted to this date? And what connection does it have with our organization?

To understand Friday the 13th’s fall from grace, scholars have first tried to determine what about the number 13 rubs so many people across so many cultures the wrong way. Some have suggested that its nasty reputation dates back to at least 1780 B.C., when the ancient Babylonian legal document known as the Code of Hammurabi was enacted without a 13th law; this hypothesis has been questioned, however, since the original text did not include numeration.

But why are Fridays that fall on a month’s 13th day so vilified? According to biblical sources, Friday was the day on which Eve offered Adam the forbidden fruit and Jesus was crucified. Another popular theory links the superstition to the demise of the Knights Templar, a monastic military order whose members were arrested en masse by France’s King Philip IV on Friday, October 13, 1307.



*Two members of the Knights Templar play chess in a 1283 illustration by Alphonse X.*

In the late 12th century, Muslim soldiers retook Jerusalem and turned the tide of the Crusades, forcing the Knights Templar to relocate several times. In the decades that followed, Europeans’ support of military campaigns in the Holy Land began to dwindle; the Templars’ popularity met the same fate as they clashed with other



### FROM THE EDITOR

I would like to encourage all Sir Knights to submit articles, letters, pictures, or comments for inclusion into this supplement. Articles need to be submitted to me by the 1st of the month for the next issue. (Oct. 25th for the Nov. issue.)

Christian military orders and participated in a series of unsuccessful battles. By 1303, the knights had lost their foothold in the Muslim world and established a base of operations in Paris. Meanwhile, the French king Philip IV resolved to bring down the order, perhaps because the Templars had denied the indebted ruler additional loans and expressed interest in forming their own state in southeastern France.

On October 13, 1307, scores of French Templars were arrested along with the order’s grand master, Jacques de Molay. Charged with a host of offenses ranging from heresy, devil worship and spitting on the cross to homosexuality, fraud and financial corruption, the men were brutally tortured; many, including de Molay, confessed under duress. King Philip then convinced Pope Clement V, who had raised concerns about the knights’ secret initiation rites and practices in the past, to launch his own inquiry. In 1310, dozens of Templars were burned at the stake in Paris for recanting their earlier confessions during their trials; de Molay would suffer the same punishment in 1314. Under pressure from Philip, Pope Clement reluctantly dissolved the Knights Templar in 1312.



### The Knights Templar Today

While most historians agree that the Knights Templar fully disbanded 700 years ago, some people believe the order went underground and remains in existence to this day. In the 18th century, certain organizations, most notably the Freemasons, revived some of the medieval knights’ symbols and traditions. More recently, stories about the legendary Templars—that they dug up the Holy Grail while occupying the Temple Mount, for instance, or harbored a secret capable of destroying the Catholic Church—have found their way into popular books and films.

