

IOGT History

IOGT was not the first temperance or total abstinence society. There was a sporadic growth of such organizations in the early decades of the nineteenth century, particularly in North America, Great Britain and in several other parts of Europe. Drinking problems had become endemic in these parts of the world and were severely affecting the fabric of society by blighting families and causing poverty, misery and distress to children. Drink was also seen as detrimental to the growth of commercialism and industrialization at the time.

IOGT started in America in the middle of the 19th century. At Oriskany Falls (then known as Castor Hollow) a village near Utica, a lodge of the Knights of Jericho was established in 1850. Shortly afterwards, it was visited by 13 members of a group which had been established in Utica. Under the leadership of Wesley Bailey, this body of printers decided to rename the two lodges as the "Order of Good Templars." Thus, in 1851 in Utica, the name of "Good Templar" came into existence.

Over the next 12 months, 14 Good Templar lodges were established; by the summer of 1852, a convention was called in Utica to establish a Grand Lodge. During the convention, a dispute broke out between Wesley Bailey and Leverett Coon, who had established a lodge in Syracuse.

Leverett Coon left the meeting and his lodge, Excelsior, in Syracuse supported his actions by renaming the organization the "Independent Order of Good Templars" with the motto altered to "Faith, Hope and Charity".

After a faltering start, the Order had a phenomenal rise in the United States, establishing itself throughout the Union and in Canada.

In 1868 a man named Joseph Malins returned to his native England and held a meeting in a small chapel in Cregoe Street, Birmingham. From this small gathering IOGT was to spread to the continent of Europe and to the rest of the world.

Within two to three years the Order spread to Ireland, Wales, Australia, Malta, New Zealand, France, Portugal, Cape Colony South Africa, Bermuda, Belgium and East India.

By 1876 the Order had been planted in Ceylon (Sri Lanka), Madras, British Honduras, British Guyana, the island of St. Christopher, Jamaica, Malacca, China, Japan, Sierra Leone, St. Helena, Argentina, Trinidad, Grenada and the Bahamas. After 1876 it was established in Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Iceland, Switzerland, Germany and Jerusalem and from 1900 onwards Holland, Burma, Colonial Malay, Nigeria and Panama.

The work among children was officially recognized in 1871 and was soon organized in separate chapters with their own specific rules and rituals. Officially, the lower age limit was 5 years. Members over 16 years were to join the adult lodge. Youth groups were formed within the lodges. Separate Good Templar youth organizations were formed in some countries at the beginning of the 20th Century.

The idea of separate youth groups spread rapidly after World War II. The international

umbrella for the youth work, "The International Good Templar Youth Federation" (IGTYF) was founded in 1962. It is now called "Active- Friendship, Sobriety and Peace" and works with European organisations.

A shortend version of a review by Derek Rutherford, edited by Jenny Gustafsson. For the longer text please visit <http://www.iogt.us/iogt.php?p=35>