

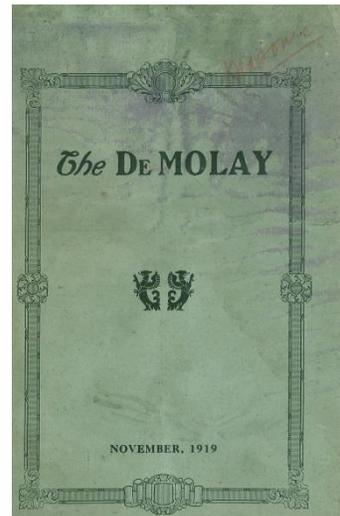
Centennial Celebration Moments #42 (April 19, 2019)

Changes in Age Eligibility

Members and Advisors often speculate on the progression of the eligibility age of DeMolay membership. Here is a review of the information available:

Beginning at 16

The first written statement about the age of Membership was printed in the November 1919 issue of "The DeMolay" (Vol. 1, No. 1)—the first publication of the Order. In the first paragraph of the first article it states, "In the early spring of 1919, a big wonderful idea, conceived in the mind of Frank S. Land, social secretary for the Scottish Rite Bodies of Kansas City, took shape in the form of the Order of DeMolay. The Order was organized with the purpose of getting the young men of Kansas City, between the ages of sixteen and twenty-one, together in some sort of association for their betterment morally, socially, physically, and mentally."



This was, of course, before the Grand Council was formed, and was simply by agreement of the members and the first Advisory Council of Kansas City Chapter No. 1, later known as The Mother Chapter of the World.

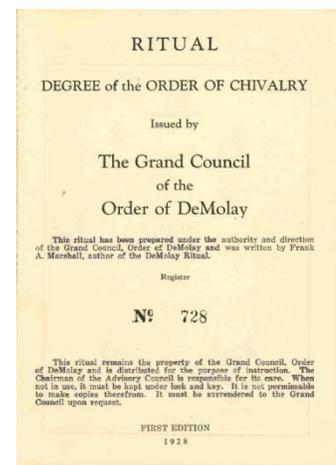
The next written record, and the first legal statement, came when the Grand Council was formed and directed the Secretary General, Dad Land, to file for incorporation in the state of Missouri. The petition for pro-forma decree of incorporation was granted by the Court on March 27, 1926, filed and recorded by the Secretary of State at Jefferson City, Missouri on April 6, 1926. The duration of the Corporation was initially set for fifty (50) years. The articles of incorporation included this defining statement:

"The Association is formed for the purpose of forming a perfect fraternal union, establishing order and tranquility and providing for and promoting the general welfare and serving the best interests of the Order of DeMolay throughout the world; the further purpose of The Grand Council of the Order of DeMolay is to

promote the social and moral welfare of young men between the ages of 16 and 21; to teach duty to God, neighbor and self; to demand of each clean living, high respect for parents, deference to womanhood and love of country and free institutions; and to do any and all things necessary and proper to develop boyhood into intelligent, moral, self-sustaining and law-abiding manhood. In order to accomplish the above results, it is the further purpose of The Grand Council of the Order of DeMolay to organize local chapters of boys between the ages of 16 and 21 years in all parts of the world, using the methods which are now and have heretofore been used by The Grand Council of the Order of DeMolay, a voluntary association."

Order of Chivalry for younger boys

In an effort to involve younger boys in a fraternal program to feed pledges to DeMolay, the Grand Council formed the Order of Chivalry in 1928. The program for Courts was social in nature and for boys 13-15 years-old. A short ritual for one degree was written by Frank Marshall. By 1931 only 18 Courts had been established, and with the advent of the Great Depression of the 1930s, the program shut down for lack of support and promotion.



Depression causes lowering of age to 15

The Fourteenth Annual Session was NOT held due to the national economic depression. However, the Executive Committee met in the Mayflower Hotel, Washington, D. C. on April 11, 1934. Jesse M. Whited, Grand Master Councilor presided. The Grand Scribe, Frank S. Land reported that on September 30, 1933 there were 1,136 Active DeMolay Chapters, a decrease of 40 under the previous year. There were 14,903 Candidates initiated during the year ended September 30, 1933 and on that date there were 60,775 Active Members, a decrease of 11,779 from the previous year. By formal action of the Executive Committee the Constitution and Statutes of the Grand Council of the Order of DeMolay was amended as follows:

Age reduced to 15 years for DeMolay membership.

Title of "Grand Master Councilor" changed to "Grand Master."

Title of "Grand Scribe" changed to "Secretary General."

War blamed for major membership losses; age lowered to 14

The 23rd Annual Session was not held due to war conditions, and government restrictions of various kinds placed in connection with holding large meetings. A meeting of just the Executive Committee was held in the Canadian Club, Waldorf Astoria Hotel, New York City, NY, on March 7, 1943.

Secretary General, Frank S. Land, reported that on September 30, 1942 there were 946 chapters—a decrease of 19 chapters. There were 16,543 candidates initiated during the year ending September 30, 1942 and on that date there were 55,301 active members, an increase of 1,767 over the previous year. He called the attention of the Executive Committee to its mail vote of the previous December approving the lowering of the age limit to petition for membership to fourteen years of age for the duration of the war. It was left optional, however, for the Active Member or Deputy (back when Deputies were also Active Members and the de facto Executive Officers; not like today) in each jurisdiction to make use of this authority, *and thus the age to join was different across the country for 29 years.*

Anti-establishment youth trends force age lowering to 13

Although recruitment of new members was high during the 50th Anniversary, due, in part to the excellent public relations efforts of the Kansas City Staff and the Chapters around the globe, the anti-establishment trends of the late 1960s and 1970s did not serve DeMolay well. A general rejection of the very traditional

What Are You Doing in Behalf of Membership?
There's Lots You Can Do!

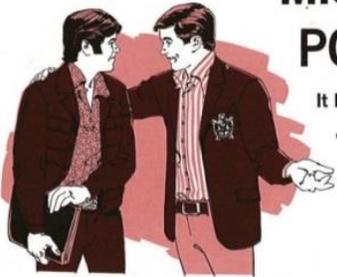
- Bring in 10 petitions and earn a Blue Honor Key
- Help plan a prospect party
- Help your chapter earn a Grand Master's Award (for initiating 10 in a special class)
- Ask your friends to join

AND JOIN DeMOLAY'S NEW MEMBERSHIP PROGRAM

MISSION POSSIBLE

It Is Possible To:

- Attract New Members
- Improve Activities
- Make Goals
- Be Great



Your Chapter Advisor Will Be Receiving The New Mission Possible Membership Kit Soon

values supported by the DeMolay program, perpetuated by pop culture and promoted by all forms of media (movies, theater, television, magazines, music, etc.) proved the need for one more age reduction.

During the 51st Annual Session in March of 1971 the age of eligibility was lowered to 13, *again, at the discretion of the Executive Officer*, and on a trial basis until June 30, 1973. The Chapters, however, overwhelmingly supported the opportunity to recruit members at age 13, and it was never changed back.

Move to include ALL middle-schoolers

After numerous attempts to revise the Rules and Regulations to lower the age, in 1996, at the 76th Annual Session, the Supreme Council adopted a program whereby the Grand Master could waive any section of the Rules and Regulations “to help support membership growth.” Waivers would end with the term of the Grand Master issuing them. Many, *but not all*, jurisdictions requested a waiver of the minimum age of initiation, to allow acceptance of 12-year-olds. It didn’t take long for the experiment to lead to a more permanent solution.

In 1997 at the 77th Annual Session, the Rules and Regulations were amended to accept petitions from 13-year-olds or from 12-year-olds *who had completed the 7th grade*.

In 1999, at the 79th Annual Session, the Rules and Regulations were amended to accept petitions from all 12-year-olds. Some jurisdictions resisted this for a while, but now, 12-year-olds are an important recruiting market for every Chapter.

With the formal establishment of the Squires Program for 9-11 year-olds in 2015, it is unlikely that the age for membership will be lowered again.

DEMOLAY SQUIRES



For discussion:

1. Do you think the lowering of the age of membership eligibility has helped or hurt the Order? Explain your answer.
2. If you joined at a young age, do you think you would have joined if you had to wait a few years to be old enough? Why, or why not?
3. If you joined at an older age, do you feel you would have been ready for the DeMolay program at a younger age? Why?
4. Is age, or maturity, the more important determination of a young man’s readiness for the responsibilities of DeMolay membership? Defend your answer.