

National Officers

2017—2020

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Order of Medieval Women: Women of Consequence

SECOND ANNUAL MEETING

Army Navy Club, Washington D.C.

April 9, 2019

8:00 - 10:15 a.m.

Welcome Debby Wilhite, President-General

Pledge to the American Flag Michael Schenk, 3rd Vice President-General

Blessing Eric Nielsen, Prelate-General

Breakfast

Introduction of our speaker Lynne Kogel, 1st Vice President-General

Guest Speaker Dr. Robin D. Young

“Women and the Exercise of Power in the Byzantine World”

Officer Reports

“The White Ship: What (really) Happened?” Peter Sheerin, DMD

Lagniappe Barbara Lewis

“Women of Consequence” Roll Call Laurie Aldinger, Secretary-General

Toast Tim Mabee

Closing remarks Debby Wilhite, President-General

Benediction Eric Nielson, Prelate-General

Dumbarton Oaks, 1703 32nd St NW, Washington D.C. open Tuesday -Sunday, 11:30 am-5:30 pm
1 hour museum tours offered at 1:00 Wednesday, Thursday and Friday

PILGRIMAGE BADGES

The poor, the fortunate, the barbarous, knights, foot soldiers, lords, the blind, those missing hands, nobles... bishops, princes abbots – some barefoot, some bound in iron chains in penance and weeping for their sins. This is a holy people, the people of God.
(12th century account of pilgrims in Santiago de Compostela in Spain)



Woodcut, Jost Amman, 16th century.

The Middle Ages were an 'Age of Faith' where religion dominated every aspect of people's lives. Religious journeys, known as pilgrimages, sought to close the distance between themselves and God, becoming an expression of their religious piety. Although there were many pilgrimage sites throughout Europe, each able to provide holy martyrs, relics and miraculous events, the three most important destinations were the 'Holy Land' in Palestine, St. Peter's tomb in Rome, and St. James the Apostle's shrine in Santiago de Compostela, Spain.

Pilgrimages involved all levels of society with far-reaching consequences. Hospitals were established along pilgrimage routes to offer care to poor pilgrims and travelers including the Abbey of Santa María la Real de las Huelgas and Royal Hospital. Located on one of Santiago's main pilgrimage routes Queen Leonor and consort Alfonso VIII founded the Cistercian monastery and hospital in 1187 and, with her daughter Berengaria, were actively involved in it. International travel led to exchanges of cultures as architecture transitioned to Gothic which accommodated the crowds with larger expanses of open space thru barrel vaulting, elongated arches, larger doors and additional chapels for relics. Secular literature was popular with prose tales, "courtly love" poems, and travel stories as Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* while allegories were often used as a chief literary element as in *Piers Plowman*, considered one of the greatest works of the middle ages. Margaret of Scotland sponsored pilgrims on their way to St. Andrews by providing a free ferry to safely cross the Firth of Forth and hostel near Edinburgh while Empress Matilda made a pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela in 1125 after the death of her first husband. Blanche of Castile's pilgrimage to Santiago in 1230 was changed at the last minute to rue Saint-Jacques, a local convent in Paris, due to the country's unrest as Henry III attempted to reconquer the provinces of France that had belonged to his father. Isabella of France made several pilgrimages to both the shrine of Our Lady of Walsingham and Canterbury. In June 1358, 2 months before her death and 31 years after her first pilgrimage to Canterbury she made her last pilgrimage to Beckett's shrine. Reasons for a pilgrimage were many whether it was to visit the site of a favorite saint, seek favor, find a miraculous cure or penitent seeking indulgences as Eleanor's father William did when he joined the pilgrimage to Santiago in 1137.

Religious journeys were big business complete with souvenirs and guidebooks such as *Liber Sancti Jacobi*, an 1106 illuminated manuscript which listed towns along the Camino route, useful phrases in Basque, and warnings against certain local foods and customs. Each shrine offered badges sold from stalls outside the church door or shops lining the nearby streets, becoming the world's first truly mass-produced tourist souvenir. One of the badge's most important aspects was it could be touched against the saint's shrine or relic to absorb some of its virtue, enabling the badge to later carry out miraculous cures when dipped into wine or water and drunk. Other badges included mirrors to focus the reflection of the holy relic onto themselves at busy shrines where it was impossible to physically touch the relic. Records from the 15th-century indicate badges cost about a penny per dozen with the most popular shrines selling over 100,000 a year. The small badge, cast in tin-lead alloy or pewter, was easily attached to a hat, cloak or worn around the neck as a symbol of their pious journey, placing the pilgrim during their sacred excursion above all laws but those of the church, exempt from taxes, debts, arrest or confiscation of property.

The idea of a badge to commemorate a pilgrimage originally developed by pilgrims collecting scallop shells from Santiago's nearby coast. By the 12th-century documents record over 100 licensed badge makers serving half a million pilgrims traveling to Santiago from as far as Scandinavia and southern Italy as the shell ultimately became the universal symbol of a pilgrimage.



Pilgrims travelling to Canterbury, John Lydgate's Prologue to the Siege of Thebes, c. 1457–1460: Royal MS 18 D II, f. 148r, British Library.