

## **Shriners International – A Brief History**

Shriners International, commonly referred to as The Shriners, is a society established in 1870, now headquartered in Tampa, Florida. It is an appendant body of the Masonic Fraternity, which simply means you must be a Master Mason, with current membership in a Masonic Lodge, to join the Shrine.

It is a fraternity based on fun, fellowship and the Masonic principles of Brotherly love, relief and truth. There are many temples (chapters) around the world and the Shriners are best known for the Shriners Hospitals that it administers, and the red fezzes that members wear.

The History of the organization is most interesting:

In 1870, there were several thousand Masons in Manhattan, many of whom lunched at the Knickerbocker Cottage at a special table on the second floor. It was there the idea of a new fraternity for Masons stressing fun and fellowship was discussed. Walter M. Fleming, M.D. and William J. Florence took the idea seriously .

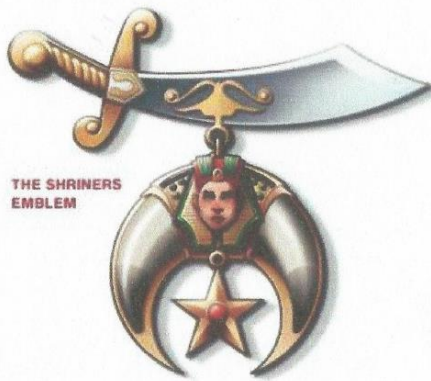
Florence, a world – renowned actor, was invited to a party given by an Arabian Diplomat while he (Florence) was on tour in France. The entertainment was something in the nature of an elaborately staged musical comedy, and at its conclusion, the guests became members of a secret society. Having the same experience in Algiers and in Cairo, upon his return to America, Florence collaborated with Dr. Fleming, who created the ritual, emblem and costumes, adopting a middle eastern theme. The first Temple, known as the Mecca Temple (and now known as Mecca Shriners) was established at the New York City Masonic Hall with Fleming as the First Potentate, in 1872.

Despite its Orientalist theme and name “The Ancient Arabic Order of Nobles of the Mystic Shrine”, the Shrine is a men’s fraternity, connected to neither Arab culture nor Islam. Its only religious requirement is indirect: All Shriners must be Masons, and petitioners to Freemasonry must profess a belief in a Supreme Being. To further minimize confusion with religion, the use of the words “temple” and “mosque” to describe Shriners’ buildings has been replaced by “Shrine Center”, although some individual, local chapters are still called Temples.

Philanthropy: The Shrine’s charitable arm is the Shriners Hospitals for Children, a network of 22 hospitals in the United States, Mexico and Canada. In 1920, the Imperial Council in session voted to establish a “Shriners Hospital for Crippled Children.” The purpose of this hospital was to treat orthopedic injuries, diseases and birth defects in children.

Today, we have 22 hospitals in all, 2 being special burn centers. Shriners Hospitals now provide expanded care to any child under the age of 18, admitted to the hospital if, in the opinion of the doctors, the child can be treated. There is no requirement for religion, race or relationship to a Shriner, and while insurance companies are billed, treatment is free for those admitted to the Hospitals.

Many Shrine Centers support parade units. These units present and promote a positive image of a Shriner to the public as a caring organization, as do fund raising football games, college all star games, golf tournaments and circuses.



**THE SHRINERS  
EMBLEM**

The emblem on the front of the fez, the crescent and scimitar, is an important part of the fraternity's theme, and is representative of the characteristics embodied by the Shriners.

The scimitar stands for the backbone of the fraternity, its members.

The two claws are for the Shriners fraternity and its philanthropy.

The sphinx stands for the governing body of the Shriners.

The five-pointed star represents the thousands of children helped by the philanthropy each year.

The emblem also bears the phrase "Robur et Furor," which means "Strength and Fury."