

Al Azhar Shriners



**SHRINERS INTERNATIONAL
CALGARY, ALBERTA**

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**A Brief History...
In The Beginning**

The following has been taken from the first Al Azhar Koran published Thursday July 29th, 1909.

The idea of establishing a Temple in the business Metropolis of Alberta originated with Noble R. A. Darker who communicated with Nobles A.P.H. Cutten, A.W.R. Markley, R.J. Stuart, and F.J. Hughes of Calgary: Nobles Justice H.C. Taylor, Dr. E.A. Braithwaite, H.W.B. Douglas and A.G. Harlan of Edmonton, who fell in with the idea and appointed R.A. Darker a committee of one to carry on the arrangement of preliminaries and right valiantly did he perform his duties, surmounting obstacles and overcoming opposition that would have thoroughly discourage a less fearless person. A proper appreciation of the difficulties encountered cannot be had without perusal of the voluminous correspondence which he had to carry on besides visiting various Temples in connection therewith.

On October 14th, 1907, R.A. Darker and the Nobles of Calgary and Edmonton completed an application for dispensation and armed with the approval of all the Temples located in Canada, El Katif in Spokane, WA and Algeria in Helena, MT approached the Imperial Potentate with the application. On November 11th, 1907 Nobles of Khartum of Winnipeg, MB were appointed to institute Al Azhar Temple. The order of nobility was conferred on 32 sons from Calgary, 20 sons from Edmonton, 4 sons from Medicine Hat and 4 sons from the surrounding area.

The second season was held on June 15th, 1908 when 29 sons of the foothills were raised to the order of nobility.

At the meeting of the Imperial Council held in St. Paul in 1908, Al Azhar was granted a charter and the Imperial Potentate appointed Nobles from El Katif, Spokane, WA, to constitute Al Azhar Temple under charter and install its Officers. On December 8th, 1908, several Nobles from Spokane visited Calgary, performed the ceremony of constituting, held the election of officers, and installed same for the ensuing year.

A Ceremonial Session was called to order and 42 poor sons of the desert, hanging on to the rope, appeared before the Ill. Potentate who conferred on them the order of Nobility.

The Al Azhar Temple is a Temple of the Shrine in North America (Ancient Arabic Order of the Nobles of the Mystic Shrine) and the membership is effectively organized into smaller clubs and units. These are geographically and strategically located in Calgary, Banff, Red Deer, Lethbridge, Stettler, Bassano, High River, Drumheller, Brooks and Medicine Hat. The Shriners are involved in a number of particular types of units, e.g., drill and marching bands, oriental bands, clowns, motor corps, provost corps, mounted patrol and other unique units.

The site on which Al Azhar Temple stood, erected in 1910, was then in the wide-open spaces on the course of the Calgary Golf and Country Club, their club house being located on the North side of the course on what is now the South west corner of 17th Avenue and 4th Street South west. The Shrine building was designed and constructed on the Northwest corner with the anticipation that it would become the Masonic centre in Calgary. The Masonic order expanded to fast for the temple to provide space for the Lodges and this idea never came to fruition.

The 17th Avenue Temple was the centre of activity until 1978 when it was sold. The present Centre was designed and built to provide an office and a facility to accommodate all of the units to meet and practice. The area that is now the parking lot yielded many yards of gravel that was sold to help pay for the new development. It is now one of the finest Shrine Centres in all Shrinedom.