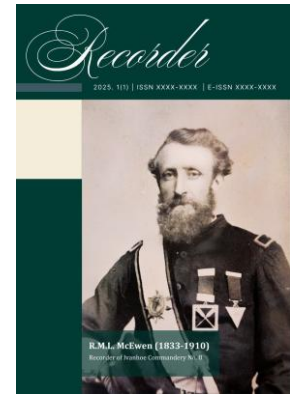




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## Lesser-Known Traditions of the Masonic Order of Knights Templar

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**Abstract.** Over the past two centuries, the Masonic Knights Templar have developed a wide range of customs, including the now-forgotten tradition of appointing unmarried women as Commandery sponsors. A notable example appears in the souvenir album of the 28th Triennial Conclave held in Louisville in 1901, which features a group portrait of twenty-nine sponsors representing every Commandery in Kentucky. Archival evidence shows that these women, aged 18–32, served as symbolic supporters of their Commanderies and were replaced upon marriage. Rooted in medieval precedents—such as the example of Catherine of Siena—the tradition highlights the historical moral and ceremonial role women played in supporting Templar ideals.

**Keywords:** Commandery sponsors, Kentucky 1901, 28th Triennial Conclave, Knights Templar, Freemasonry, women in Masonic culture, historical traditions.

Over the past two centuries, the Masonic Order of Knights Templar has developed numerous customs and traditions. Some have faded into history, while others remain alive to this day.

One of the more unusual and now-forgotten traditions was the appointment of unmarried women as sponsors of Commanderies.

After the 28<sup>th</sup> Triennial Conclave, held in 1901 in Louisville, Kentucky, a souvenir photo album was published. It included a remarkable group photograph of unmarried women sponsors from all Commanderies of Kentucky, along with members of the Drill Committee and the Grand Commandery of Kentucky.

According to the album, there were 29 sponsors across the Grand Commandery of Kentucky in 1901 (Fig. 2), each representing one Commandery and serving as an official sponsor of the 28<sup>th</sup> Triennial Conclave.

The complete list is as follows:

Miss Minnie Gertrude Vogt (Fig. 1), Louisville, for the Drill Committee.

Miss Elizabeth Julia Jefferson, Louisville for the Grand Commandery.

Miss Annie Leathers, for Louisville, No. 1.

Miss Sue Metcalfe, for Webb, No. 2, Lexington.

Miss Laura Browning, for Versailles, No. 3.

Miss Katherine Lindsey, for Frankfort, No. 4.

Miss Grace Waters, of Louisville, for Montgomery, No. 5, Mt. Sterling.

Miss Susie Bell Cox, for Moore, No. 6, Hopkinsville, represented by Miss Ethel Gray, of Louisville.

Miss Elizabeth Sarah Fisk, for Covington, No. 7.

Miss Florence Sinclair, for Bradford, No. 9, Georgetown.

Miss Beulah Louise Pugh, of Vanceburg, for Maysville, No. 10.

Miss Carrie Rieke, for Paducah, No. 11.

Miss Susie Mills Bartholomew, for De Molay, No. 12, of Louisville.

Miss Blanche Dorland, of Louisville, for Newport, No. 13.

Miss Sue Soaper, for Henderson, No. 14.

Miss Mary Jewell Watkins, for Owensboro, No. 15.

Miss Mary Robinson, for Cynthiana, No. 16.

Miss Bessie Gray Dunlap, for Ryan, No. 17, of Danville.

Miss Julia Higgins, for Richmond, No. 19.

Miss Allye Collins, for John C. Breckinridge, No. 20, of Flemingsburg.

Miss Lizzie Berry, for Alida, No. 21, of Sturgis.

Miss Clara Jenkins, for Bowling Green, No. 23.

Miss Grace Kirk, for Marion, No. 24, of Lebanon.

Miss Lucy Grubbs Orndorff, for Russellville, No. 29.

Miss Lizette Blanton Dickson, for Coeur de Lion, No. 26, of Paris.

Miss Martha Arnold, for Madisonville, No. 27.

Miss Jerrie A. Weaver, for Ashland, No. 28.

Miss Susan E. Atkinson, for St. Bernard, No. 29, of Earlington.

Archival research reveals that all the women sponsors were between 18 and 32 years old and

lived in the same towns as the Commanderies they represented. If a sponsor married, she was replaced by another candidate.

This tradition had deep historical roots, dating back to the medieval era. A prominent example is Catherine of Siena (1347–1380), a fervent supporter of the Crusades who engaged in advocacy, recruitment, and fundraising for the cause.

Thus, the photographs from Kentucky in 1901 are not merely rare historical documents but also a reminder of the symbolic and moral support that women offered to the Knights Templar and their ideals.



**Fig. 1.** Minnie Gertrude Vogt – sponsor of the Drill Committee



**Fig. 2.** Sponsors of the Grand Commandery of Kentucky in 1901.