

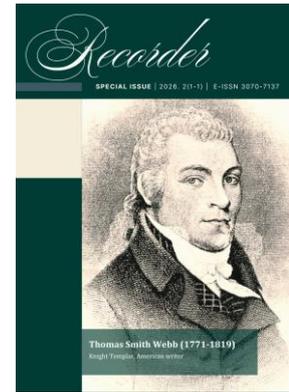
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Published in the USA
So-publisher: Cherkas Global University
Recorder
Has been issued since 2025.
E-ISSN: 3070-7137
2026. 2(1-1): 57
DOI: 10.13187/rec.2026.1-1.57



Journal homepage:



Editor's Note

Dear Reader,

Before you is the first special issue of 2026 – No. 1-1. With its publication, our journal reaches an important milestone: seven issues have now been released since its founding. This progression reflects not only editorial continuity but also the steady expansion of our scholarly community and readership. Each issue has aimed to combine source-based research with methodological reflection, and the present volume continues that trajectory in a particularly focused thematic format.

We are also pleased to announce that in January 2026 the journal was included in the full-text open access database Open Academic Journals Index. This development significantly enhances the international visibility of our publications and ensures broader accessibility for researchers, students, and independent scholars worldwide. Increased discoverability strengthens academic dialogue and confirms the growing relevance of the topics addressed in our pages.

The present issue continues our conceptual approach, according to which the history of Freemasonry should be viewed as a living cultural system encompassing not only statutes, proceedings, and institutional narratives, but also expressive forms through which brethren experienced ritual, instruction, and fellowship. Songs, hymns, odes, and toasts are often perceived merely as decorative appendices to early

“monitors”; however, in reality they functioned as a shared language of emotion, pedagogy, and identity. Performed at specific ritual moments – during initiation, at refreshment, in processions, or at commemorative gatherings – these texts facilitated the internalization of degree teachings, strengthened fraternal bonds, and translated symbolic content into memorable collective performance.

Natalia Shevchenko's study demonstrates the scholarly potential of this corpus of sources by systematizing 31 compositions from Thomas S. Webb's *The Freemason's Monitor* (1797; 1808) and Jeremy L. Cross's *The True Masonic Chart* (1826). A significant outcome of the research is the identification of patterns of attribution – named authors, initials, and collective designations such as “Brother” and “Companion” – as well as the observation that musical authorship is rarely indicated. The publication of musical notation in facsimile preserves source authenticity and opens new possibilities for textological, music-historical, and comparative research.

We invite readers to regard Masonic folklore not as a peripheral curiosity, but as a substantial source for the study of early American fraternal culture.

We wish you a pleasant reading.

Editor-in-Chief

Dr. Alexander C. Cherkas