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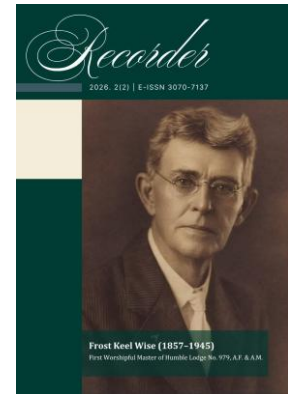
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Editor's Note

Dear Reader,

The present issue of *Recorder* once again demonstrates the breadth and vitality of contemporary research devoted to the history of York Rite Masonry and, in particular, the Knights Templar in the United States. The materials brought together in this volume reflect both the diversity of approaches and the growing maturity of the field, which increasingly combines traditional documentary work with modern analytical and interdisciplinary perspectives.

A central place in this issue is occupied by studies grounded in primary sources. The article on Humble Lodge No. 979 reveals how local lodge history, when carefully reconstructed from Proceedings and periodical press, allows us to trace the interaction between fraternal life and global events such as the First World War. Similarly, the study of the Grand Commandery of Pennsylvania offers a rare attempt to systematize institutional data across more than a century, highlighting patterns of growth, geographical distribution, and the influence of historical circumstances on organizational development.

Equally important is the continued expansion of research into material culture. The article on the uniforms of the Knights of Malta and the study of commandery badges in Illinois demonstrate how artifacts—uniforms, insignia, and regalia—can serve as independent historical sources. These works remind us that the visual and symbolic language of the Order is not merely decorative but constitutes a structured system reflecting hierarchy, identity, and institutional evolution.

The historiographical study included in this issue is of particular significance. It shows that the history of commanderies has long been written within the Order itself, evolving from commemorative narratives into more rigorous academic analysis. This transition marks an important step toward integrating Masonic studies into broader historical scholarship.

Finally, the section devoted to the Museum of the History of the American Knights Templar illustrates the growing role of museum work in preserving and interpreting the heritage of the Order. The expansion of collections and the creation of new exhibitions reflect a conscious effort to preserve not only artifacts but also the memory and identity of generations of Masons.

Taken together, the contributions in this issue confirm that the study of American Templar Masonry is entering a new stage—one characterized by methodological diversity, source-based rigor, and an increasing awareness of the importance of material culture and institutional memory.

Editor-in-Chief

Dr. Alexander C. Cherkas

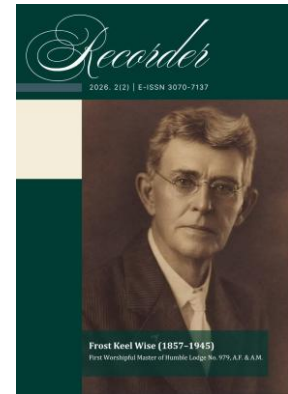
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Original Research

Humble Lodge No. 979 A.F. & A.M. (Humble, Texas) during the First World War: Selected Pages

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Abstract

This article is devoted to the history of Humble Lodge No. 979, A.F. & A.M., Humble, Texas, in the period preceding and during the First World War. Particular attention is given to individuals and events connecting the lodge with the wartime period.

The study is based on the *Proceedings of the M.W. Grand Lodge of Texas* for the years 1911–1918, which constitute an important source on the membership of lodges within the state of Texas. In addition, materials from American periodicals of the First World War era were used, specifically *The Houston Post* for 1918.

In conclusion, the author notes that Humble Lodge No. 979 during the First World War represented a dynamically developing Masonic organization, whose membership continued to grow even under wartime conditions. The analysis of the membership made it possible to identify a close connection between lodge members and wartime events, including the participation of individual brethren in military service. Particular significance is attached to the case of Phillip O. Davant, connected with the sinking of the transport ship *Tuscania*, demonstrating the involvement of lodge members in global processes. The results confirm the importance of local studies for understanding the social history of Freemasonry.

Keywords: Humble Lodge No. 979, A.F. & A.M., Humble, Texas, First World War, biographies of Masons, genealogy.

1. Introduction

The history of American fraternal organizations during periods of war represents a significant field for studying the relationship between brotherhoods and broader social processes. In this study, using the example of Humble Lodge No. 979 A.F. & A.M. (Humble, Texas), we examine the lodge's involvement in wartime events and trace the influence of this period on its membership, structure, and the personal trajectories of its members. The work also includes brief biographical sketches of Masons who held the office of Worshipful Master.

2. Materials and Methods

The materials for this study consist of the *Proceedings of the M.W. Grand Lodge of Texas* for the period 1911–1918. These Proceedings serve as an important source on the membership of lodges within the state of Texas. In addition, materials from American periodicals of the First World War era were utilized, specifically *The Houston Post* for 1918 ([The Houston Post, 1918](#)).

Methodologically, the study is based on the principles of historicism, systematic analysis, and objectivity. The combined application of these approaches made it possible to reconstruct the overall picture of events, examine the personnel and membership of the lodge during the First World War, and consider these developments within a broader historical context.

3. Results

Humble Lodge No. 979 A.F. & A.M. (Humble, Texas) was chartered on December 3, 1908. It was held in Humble, Harris County, on the third Friday of each month. The first Worshipful Master of the lodge was Frost K. Wise (1857–1945), a local judge (Fig. 1).



Fig. 1. Frost Keel Wise (1857–1945)

Frost Keel Wise (1857–1945) – First Worshipful Master of Humble Lodge No. 979, F. & A.M.

Frost Keel Wise was born on February 21, 1857, in Plantersville, Grimes County, Texas, to Joseph Lacey Wise (1810–1886) and Lucy Eliza Wise (1820–1870).

In 1890, he married Jessie McKeever Wise (1871–1954), née Perkins.

From 1906, he was a resident of Humble.

In 1908, he became Justice of the Peace in Humble, serving until January 1945.

Frost Keel Wise was one of the organizers and the first Worshipful Master of F. & A.M. Lodge No. 979 in Humble.

He was also a member of the Royal Arch Masons and the Arabia Temple Shrine of Houston.

He passed away from heart disease on April 24, 1945, at the age of 88.

It is likely that Frost K. Wise remained in the office of Worshipful Master for several years. This is indirectly confirmed by the fact that in 1911 there was only one Past Master—Frost K. Wise ([Proceedings..., 1911: 889](#)).

In 1911, the total membership of Humble Lodge No. 979 was 46 ([Proceedings..., 1911: 889](#)); in 1912 it increased to 61 ([Proceedings..., 1912: 399](#)); in 1913 to 74 ([Proceedings..., 1913: 402](#)); in 1914 to 81 ([Proceedings..., 1914: 473](#)); and in 1915 to 85 members ([Proceedings..., 1915: 481](#)). For 1916, the reports of the Grand Lodge of Texas have not been located; however, it is highly likely that the lodge's membership reached approximately 100 at that time.

In the pre-war period, the lodge had six Past Masters: F. K. Wise, H. C. Duke, F. M. Burton, E. W. Corley, T. E. Moore, and P. O. Davant. The first Worshipful Master remained in the office of Secretary at least until 1915 ([Proceedings..., 1911: 889](#); [Proceedings..., 1912: 399](#); [Proceedings..., 1913: 402](#); [Proceedings..., 1914: 473](#); [Proceedings..., 1915: 481](#)). In 1915, another Past Master, F. M. Burton, assumed an officer position as Tiler ([Proceedings..., 1915: 481](#)).

Henry Clay Duke (1867–1947)

He was born on November 7, 1867, in Mississippi. In 1910, he married Hunta Duke. In 1911, he became the second Worshipful Master of Humble Lodge No. 979. He died on December 3, 1947.

Frank M. Burton (1874–1916)

He was born on December 27, 1874, in Orange County, Texas. In 1912, he became the third Worshipful Master of Humble Lodge No. 979. He died on February 23, 1916.

Edmund Warren Corley Sr. (1872–1959)

He was born on September 3, 1872, in Mississippi. He was married to Lillie B. Corley. In 1913, he became the fourth Worshipful Master of Humble Lodge No. 979. He died on April 28, 1959.

Thomas Edward Moore (1887–1946)

He was born on December 18, 1887, in Teague, Freestone County, Texas. He was married to Lizzie Mae Moore. In 1914, he became the fifth Worshipful Master of Humble Lodge No. 979. He died on October 13, 1946.

Phillip Orrie Davant (1879–1970)

He was born in Cross County, Arkansas. He was married to Lydia Louise Davant. In 1915, he became the sixth Worshipful Master of Humble Lodge No. 979. In 1918, he was among the survivors of the troop transport *Tuscania*, torpedoed by a German submarine ([The Houston Post, Feb. 8, 1918](#)). He died on September 30, 1970.

In 1917, the year the United States entered the First World War, according to the *Proceedings of the M.W. Grand Lodge of Texas*, the lodge had a membership of 116 ([Proceedings..., 1917: 480](#)).

The officers of the lodge in 1917 were as follows:

A. J. Smith W. M.
 C. R. Maske S. W.
 W. H. Allen J. W.
 N. P. Ward Treasurer
 N. R. McKay Secretary
 J. A. Neath S. D.
 J. W. Thomas J. D.
 J. J. Dean S. Steward
 William Struwe J. Steward
 T. E. Moore Tiler ([Proceedings..., 1917: 480](#)).

Albert Jason Smith (1863–1934)

He was born on April 16, 1863. In 1917, he became the seventh Worshipful Master of Humble Lodge No. 979. At that time, one of the lodge members was Charles Albert William Smith (1893–1966), who was serving as a private in the U.S. Army and was stationed on the European front. He died on May 9, 1934.

By 1917, the lodge had five Past Masters: F. K. Wise, H. C. Duke, E. W. Corley, T. E. Moore, and P. O. Davant. Some of the Past Masters held officer positions in 1917. For example, Past Master T. E. Moore served as Tiler in that year.

Among the Master Masons were: Allen, W. H., Abercrombie, J. S., Bozarth, H. F., Bozarth, Rex, Black, W. M., Black, W. R., Bruner, E. L., Beard, J. W., Brown, C. W., Berry, E. A., Boehling, A. O., Brady, Mike, Boykin, T. S., Beaumont, E., Bennett, W. H., Brennon, G. C., Boydston, H. T., Bell, Jno. B., Clincy, W. D., Corley, E. W., Cameron, H. S., Cezeaux, E. A., Cezeaux, R. E., Carr, B. B., DuBose, J. B., Dickson, J. S., Dean, J. J., Duke, H. C., Davant, P. O., Epperson, G. P., Filson, W. W., Flowers, A. G., Flagg, W. D., Gunn, D. H., Gunn, H. B. W., Gillispie, G. S., Hollyfield, R. J., Hines, Isaac, Hancock, L. B., Hobson, R. R., Hester, J. M., Hester, S. R., Hardcastle, J. H., Hardcastle, J. A., Herring, G. R., Hails, P. G., Hillergiest, W. B., Jones, T. M., Jones, F. W., Jones, Olin, Johnson, L. O., Kiser, W. H., Kornegay, R. E., Long, F. M., Long, J. D., Meyers, N. A., Meyer, A. R., Moore, L. W., Moore, T. E., Moore, S. H., McKay, N. R., Martin, J. W., Martin, R. S., Martin, G. A., Morton, G. L., Montgomery, A. H., Maske, C. R., Nie, J. H., Nuby, J. C., Neath, J. A., O'Neil, J. R., O'Bryan, L. D., Patrick, S. H., Parks, Joe, Pruitt, J. F., Pray, G. L., Redmond, J. W., Rhodes, B. E., Rhodes, V. M., Rowe, I. G., Rowe, W. W., Rikard, Reid, Roark, J. E., Sutherland, J. S., Sharp, R. L., Smith, A. J., Smith, W. A. R., Smith, C. A. W., Schlottmann, Wm., Scheible, E. A., Sullivan, W. H., Sholars, W. E., Stokley, G. F., Shock, E. D., Shear, C. V., Sandlin, T. L., Sandlin, Dick, Struwe, Wm., Stanton, E. W., Thames, J. P., Thomas, J. W., Thomas, A. M., Vasser, E. A., Vasser, C. A., Wise, F. K., Wynn, W. W., Ward, N. P., Wolf, A., Williams, Chas. S., Willis, J. F., Weisenthal, I., Watson, P. F. ([Proceedings..., 1917: 480](#))

Entered Apprentices: Chas. E. Masoner, C. T. Rucker, J. E. Pearce, C. E. Eversole, Eugene Long, A. H. Gilcrease, I. K. Gaskin, R. G. Youngblood, D. W. Day.

Fellow Craft: T. E. Wintz.

Death: W. T. Dawson.

Expelled: A. A. Adams ([Proceedings..., 1917: 480](#)).

In 1917, the only deceased member of the lodge was William Thomas Dawson (1863–1917). William was born on October 11, 1863, in Trinity County, Texas. During his youth, he worked as a farmer in Trinity County; however, by 1900 he was residing in Harris County. He was married to Lucy Dawson. Only one photograph of William Thomas Dawson is known, which was most likely taken in Harris County (Fig. 2).



Fig. 2. William Thomas Dawson in a carriage. Early 20th century.

William Thomas Dawson died on March 21, 1917.

In 1918, according to the *Proceedings of the M.W. Grand Lodge of Texas*, the membership of the lodge increased to 131 ([Proceedings..., 1918: 512](#)).

The officers elected in that year were as follows:

T. E. Moore W. M.
 W. H. Allen S. W.
 E. Beaumont J. W.
 F. K. Wise Treasurer
 N. P. Ward Secretary
 Jacob Leff S. D.
 Olin Jones J. D.
 G. C. Brennon S. Steward
 G. W. Norwood J. Steward
 G. N. Lacewell Tiler ([Proceedings...](#), 1918: 512).

The number of Past Masters increased to six: F. K. Wise, H. C. Duke, E. W. Corley, T. E. Moore, P. O. Davant, and A. J. Smith ([Proceedings...](#), 1918: 512). In 1918, two Past Masters returned to officer positions in the lodge. T. E. Moore was elected Worshipful Master, and F. K. Wise was elected Treasurer.

Among the Master Masons were: Allen, W. H., Abercrombie, J. S., Alexander, F. M., Bozarth, H. F., Bozarth, Rex, Black, W. M., Black, W. R., Bruner, E. L., Beard, J. W., Brown, Chas. W., Berry, E. A., Boehling, A. O., Brady, Mike, Boykin, Thos. S., Beaumont, E., Bennett, W. H., Brennon, G. C., Boydston, H. T., Bell, John B., Bowen, S. M., Cline, W. D., Corley, E. W., Cameron, H. S., Cezeaux, E. A., Cezeaux, R. E., Carr, B. B., DuBose, J. B., Dickson, J. S., Dean, J. J., Duke, H. C., Davant, P. O., Durham, Oscar, Epperson, G. P., Filson, W. W., Flowers, A. G., Flagg, Wm. D., Flagg, Hugh E., Gunn, D. H., Gunn, H. B. W., Gillispie, G. S., Gilcrease, A. H., Holleyfield, R. J., Hines, Isaacks, Hancock, L. B., Hester, S. R., Hester, J. M., Hobson, R. R., Hardcastle, J. H., Hardcastle, J. A., Herring, G. R., Hails, P. G., Hillegeist, W. B., Haltom, J. B., Harrell, D. B., Jones, T. M., Jones, F. W., Jones, Olin, Johnson, L. O., Kiser, W. H., Karnegay, Roy C., Long, F. M., Long, J. D., Leff, Jacob, Leff, Ben, Leggett, R. B., Lacewell, Geo. N., Meyer, N. A., Meyer, A. B., Moore, L. W., Mooney, J. K., Mooney, F. W., Musselwhite, V. E., McKay, N. R., Moore, S. H., Martin, J. W., Martin, R. S., Martin, G. A., Morton, G. L., Montgomery, A. H., Maske, C. R., Moore, M. H., Moore, T. E., Nie, J. H., Nuby, J. C., Neath, J. A., Norwood, G. W., O'Neal, J. R., O'Bryan, L. B., Patrick, S. F., Parks, Joe, Pruett, J. F., Pray, G. L., Pylate, John Samuel, Redmond, J. W., Rhodes, B. E., Rhodes, V. M., Rowe, J. G., Rowe, W. M., Rikard, Ried, Roark, J. E., Reardon, J. E. G., Rainey, Claud, Southerland, J. S., Sharp, R. L., Smith, A. J., Smith, W. A. R., Smith, C. A. W., Schlottmann, Wm., Scheible, E. A., Sullivan, W. H., Sholar, W. E., Stokley, G. F., Shock, E. D., Shear, C. V., Sandlin, Dick, Strew, Will, Stanton, E. W., Smith, John William, Thomas, J. W., Thames, J. P., Thomas, A. M., Vasser, E. A., Vasser, C. A., Wise, F. K., Wynn, W. W., Ward, N. P., Wolf, A., Williams, Chas. S., Willis, J. F., Wiesenthal, I., Watson, P. F.

Entered Apprentices: H. E. Bowles, Philip Beavins, Floyd Chambers, Ira K. Gaskins, A. G. Harrison, Mike Long, J. H. Needler, J. E. Pierce, J. R. Posey, Eugene Long, W. I. Niel, R. G. Youngblood, Chas. H. Casoner, C. T. Rucker, C. E. Eversole.

Fellow Crafts: D. W. Day, L. E. Hoover, Chas. W. Ogden, Porter Williamson, T. E. Wientz.

Death: T. L. Sandlin ([Proceedings...](#), 1918: 512-513).

The only member of the lodge who died in 1918 was Thomas Latimer Sandlin (1891–1918). Tom Latimer was born on October 18, 1891, in Tenaha, Shelby County, Texas. In 1911, he married Eula Hendon. No photographs of Thomas Latimer Sandlin have been identified. He died on August 25, 1918.

In February 1918, an incident occurred that connected Humble Lodge No. 979 with the American troop transport *Tuscania* (Fig. 3), which was torpedoed by a German submarine.

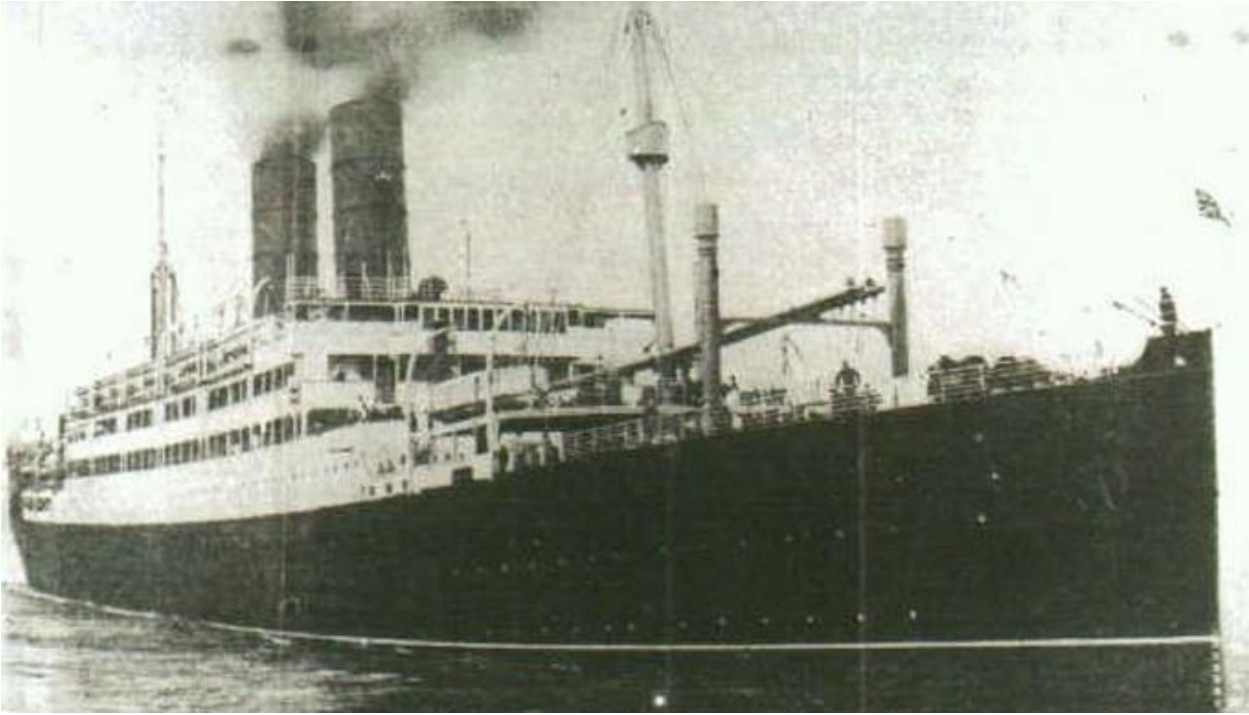


Fig. 3. Troop Transport *Tuscania*

During the First World War, the transport ship *Tuscania* was engaged in carrying American troops to the European theater of operations. On February 5, 1918, while en route to Liverpool in the Irish Sea, the vessel was torpedoed by the German submarine UB-77. There were 2,013 American servicemen and 383 crew members on board, and approximately 210 people perished (Massie, 2004). Among the survivors was Phillip Orrie Davant, the sixth Worshipful Master of the lodge.

4. Conclusion

The conducted study has shown that Humble Lodge No. 979 during the First World War represented a dynamically developing Masonic organization, whose membership continued to grow even under wartime conditions. The analysis of the membership made it possible to identify a close connection between lodge members and wartime events, including the participation of individual brethren in military service. Particular significance is attached to the case of Phillip O. Davant, connected with the sinking of the transport ship *Tuscania*, demonstrating the involvement of lodge members in global processes. The results confirm the importance of local studies for understanding the social history of Freemasonry.

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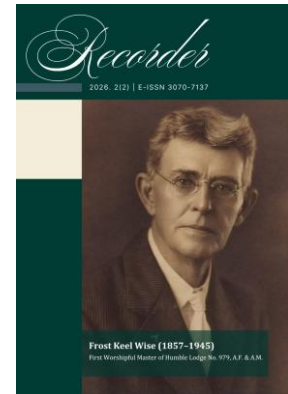
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Grand Commandery of Pennsylvania of the Knights Templar: Commanderies, Location, and Period of Formation

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Abstract

This study examines the history of the formation of commanderies of the Masonic Order of Knights Templar within the Grand Commandery of Pennsylvania, with particular attention given to their names and numbering, geographical locations, and periods of establishment.

The research is based on the annual reports of the Grand Commandery of Pennsylvania covering the period from 1860 to 1983, which reflect official documentation on the activities of the Grand Commandery and its subordinate commanderies.

The author concludes that the majority of commanderies were established in the second half of the nineteenth century, when the overwhelming number of commanderies were created, and that by 1928 the organization had reached an almost complete structure—99 commanderies (or 99%).

A dependence of the rate of commandery formation on broader historical factors has been identified: the Civil War and the First World War led to a temporary suspension in the expansion of the commandery network. A geographical analysis demonstrates a relatively even distribution of commanderies across the state, with a concentration in major cities such as Philadelphia and Pittsburgh.

Particular significance is attached to the achievement of 100 commanderies, reflecting a high level of organizational maturity and influence of the Grand Commandery of Pennsylvania. The results confirm the importance of official reports as a key source for studying the institutional history of Masonic structures.

Keywords: Freemasonry, York Rite, Grand Commandery of Pennsylvania, commanderies, catalog.

1. Introduction

In the history of the American Masonic Order of Knights Templar, there remain a significant number of insufficiently studied aspects, one of which is the lack of publicly accessible catalogs of commanderies. In this study, we aim to present, in a cataloged format, a single Grand Commandery of the Order—namely, the Grand Commandery of Pennsylvania, which at its peak comprised 100 commanderies within the state.

2. Materials and Methods

The materials for this study consist of the annual reports of the Grand Commandery of Pennsylvania for the period from 1860 to 1983. These documents reflect official records of the activities of the Grand Commandery and the commanderies under its jurisdiction. In addition, selected Proceedings of other Grand Commanderies, such as those of Wisconsin ([Proceedings of the Grand Commandery of Wisconsin..., 1860](#)), as well as materials from the triennial conclaves of the Grand Encampment of the United States (e.g., the [46th Triennial Conclave..., 1955](#)), were utilized.

Methodologically, the study is based on the principles of historicism and objectivity. The historical-chronological method played a key role, allowing for the examination of the development of the Grand Commandery of Pennsylvania in chronological sequence. The historical-statistical method, in turn, made it possible to identify characteristic patterns in the formation of commanderies within the state.

3. Discussion

The historiography of the subject under study is, unfortunately, not extensive. Nevertheless, the first scholarly attempt to address the history of the Knights Templar in Pennsylvania dates back to 1867, when

Alfred Creigh published *History of the Knights Templar of the State of Pennsylvania from February 14th, A.D. 1794 to November 13th, A.D. 1866* (Creigh, 1867). In this work, the author sought to examine the history of Templar Masonry in the state from the earliest recorded presence of the Order.

A century later, in 1965, a collective of authors from York Commandery No. 21 prepared a history of their commandery to commemorate its centennial ([History of York Commandery..., 1965](#)).

No other studies specifically devoted to the history of this Grand Commandery have been identified.

4. Results

The first Knights Templar commandery established in Pennsylvania was created in the early period of the Order, prior to the establishment of the General Grand Encampment of the United States in 1816. This first commandery was St. John Commandery (then St. John Encampment), founded in 1814. It is likely that in the first half of the nineteenth century this commandery temporarily ceased its activity, and by the mid-nineteenth century it was assigned the number 4.

By 1853, there were already seven commanderies in Pennsylvania, which was more than sufficient to establish its own Grand Commandery. On April 12, 1854, the Grand Commandery of Pennsylvania was instituted, becoming the tenth Grand Commandery of Knights Templar in the United States ([46th Triennial Conclave..., 1955: 18](#)).

By 1860, the Grand Commandery of Pennsylvania comprised 20 commanderies, and by 1983 their number had reached a historical maximum of 100. For better visualization, the data on the commanderies have been compiled into Table 1, which includes information on their names and numbering, locations, and dates of establishment. It should be noted that exact dates of establishment are known only for commanderies numbered 1 through 16; beginning with No. 17, such data were not found in the reports, and therefore the year of first mention has been used as the date.

Table 1. List of commanderies within the Grand Commandery of Pennsylvania as of 1983 ([Proceeding of the Grand Commandery of Wisconsin..., 1860: 40](#); [Proceeding of the Grand Commandery of Pennsylvania..., 1858: 57](#); [Proceeding of the Grand Commandery of Pennsylvania..., 1860: 47](#); [Proceeding of the Grand Commandery of Pennsylvania..., 1865: 44](#); [Proceeding of the Grand Commandery of Pennsylvania..., 1866: 68-69](#); [Proceeding of the Grand Commandery of Pennsylvania..., 1867: 86-87](#); [Proceeding of the Grand Commandery of Pennsylvania..., 1868: 83-84](#); [Proceeding of the Grand Commandery of Pennsylvania..., 1869: 79-80](#); [Proceeding of the Grand Commandery of Pennsylvania..., 1870: 61-62](#); [Proceeding of the Grand Commandery of Pennsylvania..., 1871: 120](#); [Proceeding of the Grand Commandery of Pennsylvania..., 1872: 106-107](#); [Proceeding of the Grand Commandery of Pennsylvania..., 1874: 134-135](#); [Proceeding of the Grand Commandery of Pennsylvania..., 1876: 202-203](#); [Proceeding of the Grand Commandery of Pennsylvania..., 1878: 142](#); [Proceeding of the Grand Commandery of Pennsylvania..., 1881: 152](#); [Proceeding of the Grand Commandery of Pennsylvania..., 1883: 104](#); [Proceeding of the Grand Commandery of Pennsylvania..., 1884: 160](#); [Proceeding of the Grand Commandery of Pennsylvania..., 1885: 102](#); [Proceeding of the Grand Commandery of Pennsylvania..., 1886: 130](#); [Proceeding of the Grand Commandery of Pennsylvania..., 1889: 176](#); [Proceeding of the Grand Commandery of Pennsylvania..., 1890: 123](#); [Proceeding of the Grand Commandery of Pennsylvania..., 1892: 209](#); [Proceeding of the Grand Commandery of Pennsylvania..., 1895: 167](#); [Proceeding of the Grand Commandery of Pennsylvania..., 1897: 214](#); [Proceeding of the Grand Commandery of Pennsylvania..., 1899: 230](#); [Proceeding of the Grand Commandery of Pennsylvania..., 1900: 222](#); [Proceeding of the Grand Commandery of Pennsylvania..., 1903: 263](#); [Proceeding of the Grand Commandery of Pennsylvania..., 1904: 273](#); [Proceeding of the Grand Commandery of Pennsylvania..., 1905: 281](#); [Proceeding of the Grand Commandery of Pennsylvania..., 1906: 284](#); [Proceeding of the Grand Commandery of Pennsylvania..., 1907: 229](#); [Proceeding of the Grand Commandery of Pennsylvania..., 1910: 281](#); [Proceeding of the Grand Commandery of Pennsylvania..., 1913: 293](#); [Proceeding of the Grand Commandery of Pennsylvania..., 1914: 281](#); [Proceeding of the Grand Commandery of Pennsylvania..., 1921: 267](#); [Proceeding of the Grand Commandery of Pennsylvania..., 1922: 281](#); [Proceeding of the Grand Commandery of Pennsylvania..., 1923: 271](#); [Proceeding of the Grand Commandery of Pennsylvania..., 1924: 317](#); [Proceeding of the Grand Commandery of Pennsylvania..., 1925: 407](#); [Proceeding of the Grand Commandery of Pennsylvania..., 1928: 321](#); [Proceeding of the Grand Commandery of Pennsylvania..., 1948: 159-161](#); [Proceeding of the Grand Commandery of Pennsylvania..., 1983: 60](#))

Name	location	Chartered
Pittsburg Commandery No. 1	Pittsburg	1847
Jacques de Molay Commandery No. 2	Washington	1849
Philadelphia Commandery No. 3	Philadelphia	1849
St. John Commandery No. 4	Philadelphia	1814
Hubbard Commandery No. 5	Waynesburg	1851
Union Commandery No. 6	Philadelphia	1851
St. Omer's Commandery No. 7	Uniontown	1853
St. John's Commandery No. 8	Carlisle	1854

De Molay Commandery No. 9	Reading	1855
Mountain Commandery No. 10	Altoma	1855
Parke Commandery No. 11	Harrisburg	1856
Crusade Commandery No. 12	Bloomsburg	1856
Columbian Commandery No. 13	Lancaster	1856
Palestine Commandery No. 14	Carbondale	1856
Jerusalem Commandery No. 15	Pottstown	1856
Towanda Commandery No. 16	Towanda	1857
Couer de Lion Commandery No. 17	Scranton	1858
Kedron Commandery No. 18	Greensburg	1860
Hugh de Payens Commandery No. 19	Easton	1860
Allen Commandery No. 20	Allentown	1860
York Commandery No. 21	York	1865
Baldwin II Commandery No. 22	Williamsport	1866
Packer Commandery No. 23	Mauch Chunk	1867
Hermit Commandery No. 24	Lebanon	1867
Northwestern Commandery No. 25	Meadville	1867
Lewistown Commandery No. 26	Lewistown	1867
St. Andrew's Commandery No. 27	Susquehanna	1867
Tyagaghton Commandery No. 28	Wellsboro'	1867
Kadosh Commandery No. 29	Philadelphia	1867
Mount Olivet Commandery No. 30	Erie	1868
Ivanhoe Commandery No. 31	Mahanoy City	1868
Hutchinson Commandery No. 32	Norristown	1868
Constans Commandery No. 33	Bellefonte	1868
Cyrene Commandery No. 34	Columbia	1869
Allegheny Commandery No. 35	Pittsburg	1869
Mary Commandery No. 36	Philadelphia	1869
Calvary Commandery No. 37	Danville	1870 ¹
Rose Croix Commandery No. 38	Titusville	1871
Prince of Peace Commandery No. 39	Ashland	1871
Knapp Commandery No. 40	Ridgway	1871
Constantine Commandery No. 41	Pottsville	1871
Reading Commandery No. 42	Reading	1871
Talbot Commandery No. 43	Oil City	1872
Franklin Commandery No. 44	Franklin	1872
Dieu Le Veut Commandery No. 45	Wilkes-Barre	1872
Hospitaller Commandery No. 46	Lock Haven	1872
St. Alban Commandery No. 47	Philadelphia	1872
Tancred Commandery No. 48	Pittsburg	1874
Uniontown Commandery No. 49	Uniontown	1874
Rebecca Commandery No. 50	Sharon	1874
Clarence Commandery No. 51	Corry	1874
DeBouillon Commandery No. 52	Coatesville	1875
Corinthian "Chasseur" Commandery No. 53	Philadelphia	1875
Kensington Commandery No. 54	Philadelphia	1875
Centennial Commandery No. 55	Coatesville	1876
Continental Commandery No. 56	Chambersburg	1876
Wyoming Valley Commandery No. 57	Pittston	1878
Trinity Commandery No. 58	Bradford	1881
Ascalon Commandery No. 59	Pittsburg	1881
Temple Commandery No. 60	Tunkhannock	1883
Oriental Commandery No. 61	Johnstown	1884
Lawrence Commandery No. 62	New Castle	1884
Warren Commandery No. 63	Warren	1885
Canton Commandery N. 64	Canton	1886
Huntington Commandery No. 65	Huntington	1889
Chester Commandery No. 66	Chester	1889

¹ Constituted of August 4, 1870.

Mt. Calvary Commandery No. 67	Greenville	1890
Melita Commandery No. 68	Scranton	1890
Potter Commandery No. 69	Coudersport	1890
Pennsylvania Commandery No. 70	Philadelphia	1891
Nativity Commandery No. 71	Pottstown	1892
Duquesne Commandery No. 72	Pittsburg	1892
Mt. Vernon Commandery No. 73	Hazleton	1892
Moshannon Commandery No. 74	Philipsburg	1892
Gethsemane Commandery No. 75	York	1895
St. Andrew's Commandery No. 76	Susquehanna	1895
Shamokin Commandery No. 77	Shamokin	1897
Chartiers Commandery No. 78	Carnegie	1899
Gettysburg Commandery No. 79	Gettysburg	1900
McKean Commandery No. 80	Charleroi	1903
Samuel S. Yohe Commandery No. 81	Stroudsburg	1904
Germantown Commandery No. 82	Philadelphia	1904
Bethany Commandery No. 83	Dubois	1905
Beaver Valley Commandery No. 84	Beaver Falls	1906
Mt. Hermon Commandery No. 85	Sunbury	1907
McKeesport Commandery No. 86	McKeesport	1907
Lorraine Commandery No. 87	Butler	1910
Brandywine Commandery No. 88	West Chester	1913
Savona Commandery No. 89	Honesdale	1914
Bethlehem Commandery No. 90	Bethlehem	1914
Lincoln Commandery No. 91	Wilkesburg	1921
Frankford Commandery No. 92	Philadelphia	1922
Cyprus Commandery No. 93	Oxford	1923
Beauseant Commandery No. 94	Allentown	1923
Damascus Commandery No. 95	Lansdale	1924
Mizpah Commandery No. 96	Doylestown	1924
Ascension Commandery No. 97	Ardmore	1925
Bethel Commandery No. 98	Hanover	1925
Nazarene Commandery No. 99	Montrose	1928
Holyrood Commandery No. 100	Kittanning	1983

An analysis of the data presented in Table 1 demonstrates that up to and including 1850, only four commanderies existed within the jurisdiction; by 1860, their number had increased to 20, by 1870 to 37, by 1880 to 57, by 1890 to 69, by 1900 to 79, by 1910 to 87, by 1920 to 90, and by 1930 to 99 commanderies. The final, 100th commandery was established in 1983. Thus, nearly 80% of all commanderies in the state were created by 1900. Over the following 28 years, an additional 20 commanderies were formed, bringing the total to 99% of all commanderies, and more than 50 years later, the final, 100th commandery was established.

It should be noted, however, that by the 1920s—when the Masonic Order of Knights Templar reached its peak in influence and membership—not all commanderies continued to exist. For example, DeBouillon Commandery No. 52 is mentioned only in the proceedings of the 1875 conclave, the year of its establishment. It was subsequently dissolved, and its number was not reassigned.

During its most active phase of growth in the second half of the nineteenth century, this process was interrupted only by the Civil War. The last commandery prior to the war was established in 1860, and the next only in 1865, the year the war ended. Thus, the development of the Order was temporarily suspended during the conflict. A similar pattern can be observed during the First World War: the last commandery was established in 1914, and the next only in 1921.

As for the geographical distribution, commanderies were established in nearly all major towns and cities across the state, with multiple commanderies founded in larger urban centers. For instance, a total of 11 commanderies were established in Philadelphia and 5 in Pittsburgh.

Finally, it is important to emphasize that the existence of 100 commanderies within a single Grand Commandery represents one of the most remarkable achievements in the history of the American Knights Templar. A greater number of commanderies was established only within the Grand Commandery of Texas.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, it should be emphasized that the majority of commanderies were established in the second half of the nineteenth century, when the overwhelming number of commanderies were created. By 1928, the organizational structure had reached near completion, totaling 99 commanderies (or 99%).

A clear dependence of the rate of commandery formation on broader historical factors has been identified: both the Civil War and the First World War led to temporary interruptions in the expansion of the commandery network. Geographical analysis demonstrates a relatively even distribution of commanderies across the state, with a concentration in major cities such as Philadelphia and Pittsburgh.

Particular significance is attached to the achievement of 100 commanderies, reflecting a high level of organizational maturity and influence of the Grand Commandery of Pennsylvania. The results confirm the importance of official reports as a key source for the study of the institutional history of Masonic structures.

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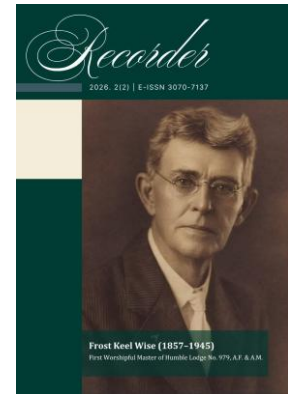
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Uniform of the American Knights of Malta: The Case of Norman Commandery No. 135, Lehighton, Pennsylvania (Early 20th Century)

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Abstract

This article examines the uniform of the American Knights of Malta in the early twentieth century, using Norman Commandery No. 135 (Lehighton, Pennsylvania) as a case study. The research is based on the analysis of museum artifacts from the collections of The Museum of the History of the American Knights Templar (Houston, USA), as well as a visual examination of photographic materials that make it possible to reconstruct the appearance of the commandery.

The study demonstrates that the Knights of Malta uniform constituted a coherent and highly standardized system, including headgear, coats, shoulder straps, insignia, belt plates, and ceremonial swords. Particular attention is given to the distinctions between senior (officer) and junior ranks, which were primarily expressed through the symbolism of crosses (patriarchal and passion crosses), as well as through differences in weapon design and certain elements of dress.

It is shown that, despite the overall unity of style, the uniform combined elements of hierarchical differentiation with a tendency toward standardization, reflecting the internal organization of the commandery. The analysis also highlights the important role of symbolism (crosses, monograms, colors) as a means of expressing affiliation with the order and its structural units.

The study concludes that the Knights of Malta uniform represents an important source for the study of Masonic material culture, offering deeper insight into the corporate identity and visual representation of fraternal organizations in the early twentieth century.

Keywords: Knights of Malta, Norman Commandery No. 135, Lehighton, Pennsylvania, USA, early twentieth century

1. Introduction

The study of Masonic uniforms constitutes an important direction in the investigation of the material culture of fraternal organizations, making it possible to identify features of their internal structure, symbolism, and corporate identity. In this context, the uniform of the Knights of Malta—one of the less numerous yet significant branches of American Freemasonry—presents particular interest, especially given that its regalia have survived in far smaller quantities than those of the Knights Templar.

Unlike the well-studied Templar traditions, the material culture of the Knights of Malta remains insufficiently explored, particularly at the level of individual commanderies. This makes museum collections especially valuable, as they allow for the reconstruction of the appearance, system of distinctions, and symbolic content of the uniform.

The aim of this study is to analyze the uniform of the Knights of Malta in the early twentieth century using the example of Norman Commandery No. 135 (Lehighton, Pennsylvania). Based on visual and material sources, the article examines the principal elements of dress, their functional and symbolic meanings, and the distinctions between the senior and junior ranks within the commandery.

2. Materials and Methods

The materials for this study consist of historical artifacts from The Museum of the History of the American Knights Templar (Houston, USA). A total of eight artifacts from four collections were examined (Collection 1: Swords; Collection 4: Photo Materials; Collection 3: Badges and Ribbons; Collection 2: Uniforms).

These artifacts date to the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It is important to note that Knights of Malta uniforms are relatively rare, which can be explained by the smaller number of members of this order in the United States during that period compared to the Knights Templar, and consequently by the smaller number of surviving uniform items.

The methodological framework of this study is based on the principles of historicism, systematic analysis, and an interdisciplinary approach applied to the study of Masonic material culture. The research combines methods from history, source studies, museum studies, and visual analysis, allowing the uniform to be considered not only as a material object but also as a carrier of symbolic and institutional meaning.

A key role is played by the source-critical approach, within which museum artifacts (uniforms, badges, swords, photographs) are treated as independent historical sources. Their provenance, dating, state of preservation, and context of use are taken into account. Particular attention is given to attribution and the correlation of artifacts with Norman Commandery No. 135.

3. Results

One of the most informative artifacts is a postcard depicting the members of Norman Commandery No. 135, located in Lehigh, Pennsylvania (MHAKT. Collection 4. Photo Materials. Exhibit No. o80). Its significance lies in the fact that it provides insight not only into the uniforms of both junior and senior ranks, but also into the commandery's flag. The image shows 29 members, 16 of whom belong to the senior rank and 13 to the junior rank.



Fig. 1. Postcard of the Knights of Malta. Norman Commandery No. 135, Lehigh, Pa. (MHAKT. Collection 4. Photo Materials. Exhibit No. o80)

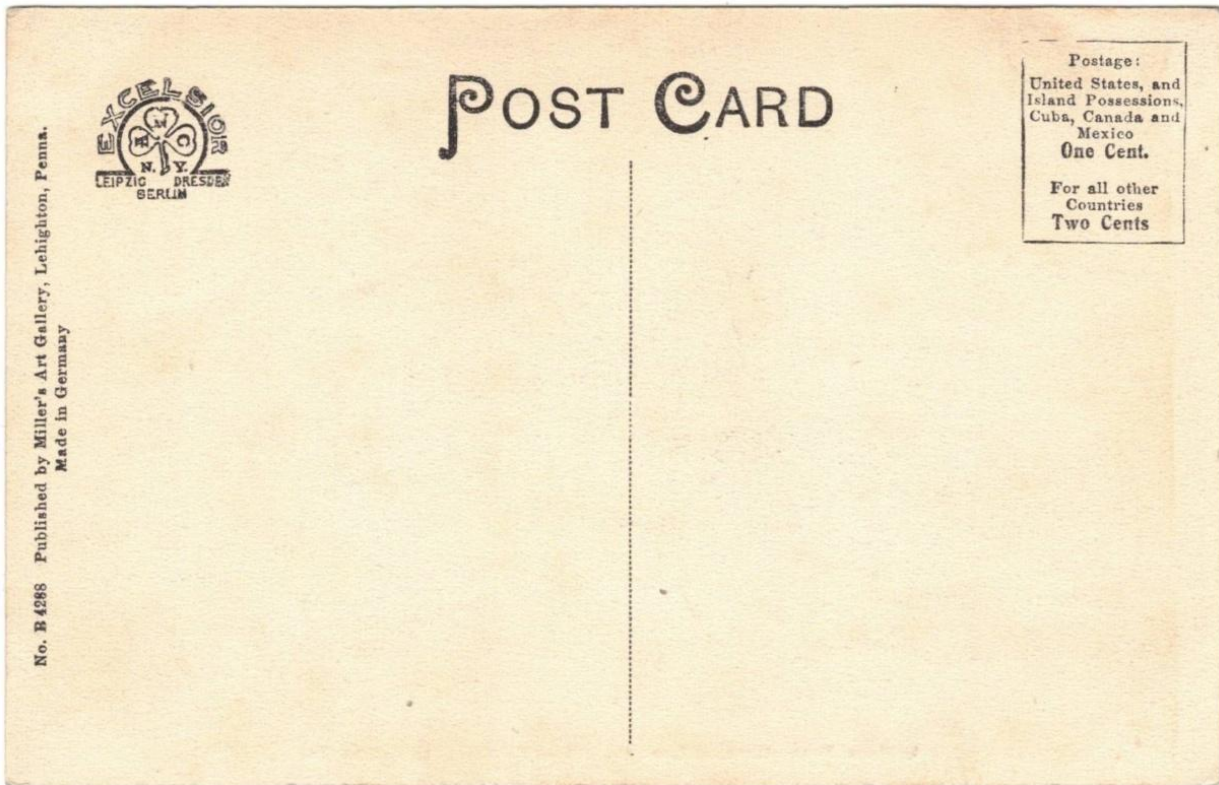


Fig. 2. Postcard of the Knights of Malta. Norman Commandery No. 135, Lehighton, Pa. Reverse side (MHAKT. Collection 4. Photo Materials. Exhibit No. 080)

Let us examine Fig. 1 in greater detail.

An important attribute of a commandery, both among the Knights Templar and the Knights of Malta, was its flag, which since the Middle Ages has been known as the *Beauseant*. Norman Commandery No. 135 possessed its own flag, which is shown in Fig. 3.



Fig. 3. Flag of Norman Commandery No. 135

The flag had a triangular shape, the central field of which was most likely black, while the border was made of a white ribbon. In the central field, the inscription *KNIGHTS MALTA* was embroidered along with the number 135.

The headgear (*Fatigue Caps*) of this commandery was of two types: for the senior (officer) staff (Fig. 4) and for the lower ranks (Fig. 5).



Fig. 4. Fatigue Cap of the senior (officer) staff of the commandery



Fig. 5. Fatigue Cap of the lower ranks of the commandery

As seen in Fig. 4, the senior or officer staff wore headgear bearing the patriarchal cross, whereas the lower ranks (Fig. 5) displayed Maltese crosses. The museum collection also contains a cap of the lower ranks of the Knights of Malta, which provides a clearer understanding of the Maltese cross and the color of the headgear (Fig. 6).



Fig. 6. Cap of the lower ranks of the Knights of Malta (MHAKT. Collection 2. Uniforms. Exhibit No. 058)

In Fig. 6, we can see that the Maltese cross on the headgear was embroidered with gold thread and featured gold braid, while the top of the cap was black.

The fatigue dress was black in color, with the commandery number indicated on both sides of the collar. All members wore black gloves. Shoulder straps were identical for all ranks and featured a patriarchal cross; thus, no distinction between senior and lower ranks was expressed through shoulder insignia. One such artifact is preserved in the museum collection (Fig. 7).



Fig. 7. 1900s shoulder strap of the Knights of Malta (MHAKT. Collection 2. Uniforms. Exhibit No. 077)

Figure 7 shows a single shoulder strap of the Knights of Malta; a patriarchal cross is depicted on a crimson background. On the reverse side, the strap was attached to the uniform by means of a pin with a clasp.

On the sleeves of the uniform, members of the senior (officer) ranks bore a patriarchal cross, while those of the lower ranks displayed a passion cross. Among eight representatives of the senior ranks, we can observe the Past Commander badge (Fig. 8), indicating that the individual had previously held the highest office within the commandery.



Fig. 8. Past Commander badge

The museum collection contains one such badge of the Knights of Malta, which we present here (Fig. 9).



Fig. 9. Badge of the Past Commander of White Cross Commandery No. 159, KM (MHAKT. Collection 3. Badges and Ribbons. Exhibit No. 002)

The badge shown in Fig. 9 belonged to the Past Commander of White Cross Commandery No. 159, Le Roy Adams. Such badges were made of base metals or silver and were often adorned with gemstones, including rubies.

Let us also consider the belt and buckle of the Knights of Malta. All members of the commandery wore identical buckles, meaning there was no distinction between senior and junior ranks in this element. The buckle can already be seen in Fig. 8. The museum collection contains one such example (Fig. 10).



Fig. 10. Belt plate of Knights of Malta members ([MHAKT. Collection 2. Uniforms. Exhibit No. 149](#))

As can be seen in Fig. 10, the belt plate had a dark gold color with a red patriarchal cross. Finally, let us turn to the swords of the Knights of Malta. In Fig. 1, it is evident that the hilts of the swords of the senior members of the commandery bear a patriarchal cross, while those of the junior members display a passion cross. The museum collection contains three such Knights of Malta swords (Fig. 11).



Fig. 11. At the top — a sword of a senior (officer) member of the Knights of Malta; below — two swords of lower-ranking members.

One sword belongs to the senior rank of the commandery (the sword without a scabbard) ([MHAKT. Collection 1. Swords. Exhibit No. 064/KM003](#)), while the other two belong to the lower rank (middle — [MHAKT. Collection 1. Swords. Exhibit No. 023/KM002](#); bottom — [MHAKT. Collection 1. Swords. Exhibit No. 006/KM004](#)). The hilts and guards of the swords had distinctive features (Fig. 12).



Fig. 12. Hilts of Knights of Malta swords

All sword grips were black in color; however, the guard and pommel of officers' swords were made of gold, while those of lower-ranking members were made of silver. The guard, identical on all swords, bore an emblem (Fig. 12).

The upper part of the scabbard featured Maltese crosses (Fig. 13).

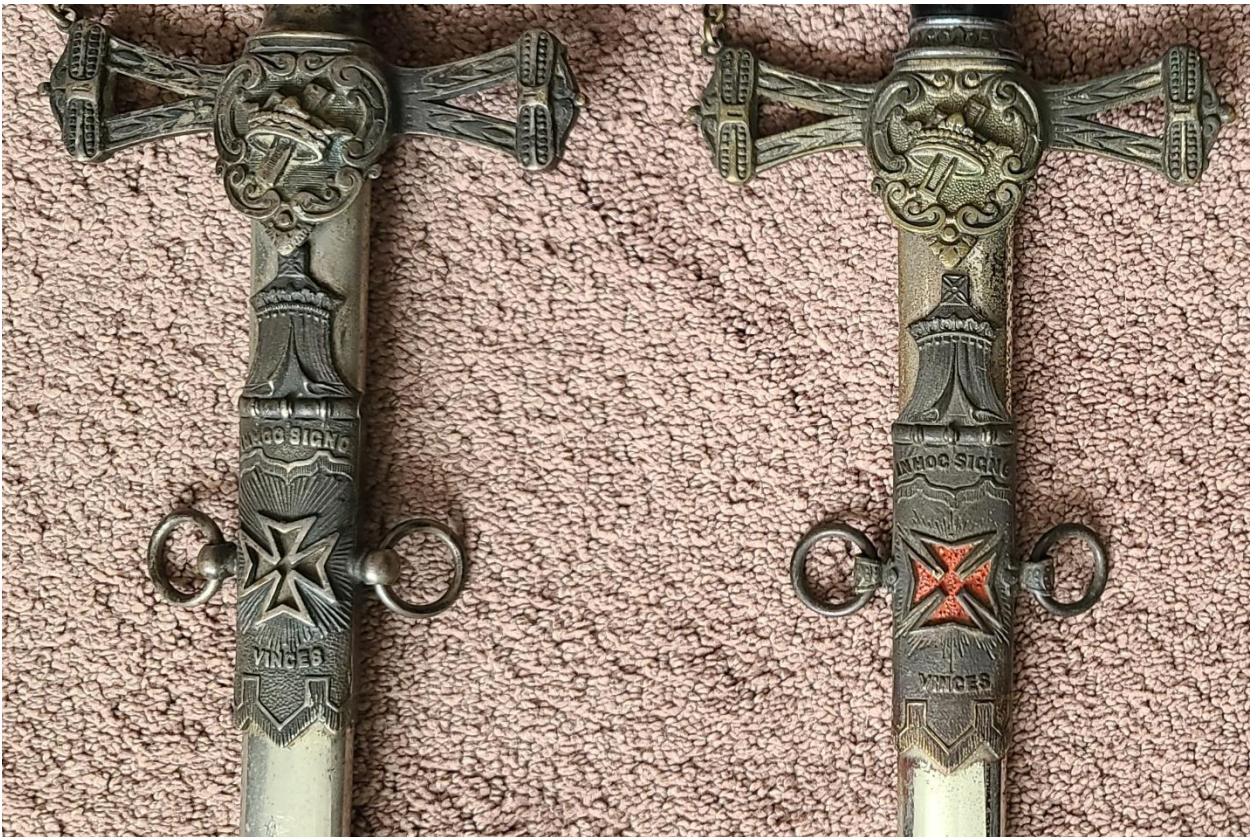


Fig. 13. Maltese crosses on the scabbards

In the middle section of the scabbard there was a monogram with the letters "KM," which stood for *Knights of Malta* (Fig. 14).



Fig. 14. Monogram “KM” – *Knights of Malta*

Finally, the lower part of the scabbard was also decorated with Maltese crosses (Fig. 15).



Fig. 15. Lower sections of *Knights of Malta* scabbards

Thus, concluding the analysis of Fig. 1 — *Norman Commandery No. 135* of the Knights of Malta in the early twentieth century — we can observe that the uniform of the commandery was executed in a strict and unified style.

4. Conclusion

The conducted study has made it possible to reconstruct the principal features of the uniform of the American Knights of Malta in the early twentieth century using the example of *Norman Commandery No. 135* (Lehigh, Pennsylvania). Based on the analysis of museum artifacts and photographic materials, it has been established that the uniform constituted a coherent, structured, and symbolically rich system reflecting both the internal organization of the commandery and its affiliation with the broader Masonic community.

One of the key characteristics of this system is the combination of uniformity and hierarchical differentiation. While maintaining an overall unity of style—black color scheme, standardized equipment, and consistent insignia—distinctions between senior and junior ranks were expressed in specific details, such as types of crosses, the design of headgear, sword hilts, and particular insignia. This demonstrates an effort to balance visual unity within the fraternity with the need to denote rank and function.

Particular importance was attached to symbolism, represented by patriarchal and Maltese crosses, monograms, and color schemes. These elements performed not only a decorative role but also a communicative function, ensuring identification of members and emphasizing their affiliation with a specific commandery.

Thus, the uniform of the Knights of Malta represents an important element of Masonic material culture, reflecting processes of institutional development, standardization, and the formation of corporate identity. Its study significantly expands our understanding of the visual and symbolic representation of fraternal organizations in the United States in the early twentieth century.

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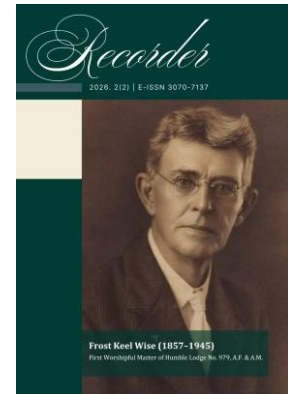
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On the Evolution of the Badges of Commanderies within the Grand Commandery of Illinois of the Masonic Order of Knights Templar (Late 19th – Early 20th Century)

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Abstract

This article examines the evolution of the badges of commanderies belonging to the Grand Commandery of Illinois of the Masonic Order of Knights Templar in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The study is based on an analysis of museum artifacts from the collection of *The Museum of the History of the American Knights Templar at Cherkas Global University*, as well as on a comparison of material sources with the documents of annual conclaves.

The research has established that, prior to the 1880s, commandery badges were most likely not used on the uniform, and that their appearance was associated with the formation of a system of visual identification within the Order. The earliest examples are characterized by an elongated black ribbon connecting the elements of the badge. Later, at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, this ribbon was shortened, while the overall composition remained unchanged.

Special attention is paid to the reform of 1913–1914, which resulted in the introduction of a standardized type of badge on a black-and-white ribbon, approved by the Grand Commandery of Illinois. It is shown that the Chicago company R. M. Johnson & Son played a key role in the manufacture of these badges, ensuring the continuity of the visual tradition.

It is concluded that the evolution of the badges reflects a combination of the stability of symbolic form and adaptation to institutional changes. The study demonstrates the significance of material culture as a source for the history of Masonic organizations.

Keywords: Freemasonry, Knights Templar, Grand Commandery of Illinois, commandery badges, material culture, Masonic symbolism, regalia, R. M. Johnson & Son, nineteenth–twentieth centuries, museum collections.

1. Introduction

The study of the material culture of Masonic organizations represents an important direction in modern historiography, making it possible to reconsider the processes of institutional development and symbolic representation of fraternal communities. A special place in this context is occupied by the badges and regalia of the Knights Templar, which performed not only a decorative function, but also served as means of identification, expressions of hierarchy, and indicators of принадлежности to specific divisions of the Order.

Within the Masonic Order of Knights Templar in the United States, the state Grand Commanderies played a significant role, including the Grand Commandery of Illinois, formed in the mid-nineteenth century and actively developing in the subsequent decades. Despite the existence of individual works devoted to the history of the Order, the evolution of commandery badges remains insufficiently studied, especially at the level of specific objects of material culture.

The aim of the present study is to analyze the evolution of the badges of the commanderies of the Grand Commandery of Illinois in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries on the basis of museum artifacts. Particular attention is paid to changes in the design, structural features, and symbolism of the badges, as well as to the role of manufacturers in shaping stable visual standards. The study makes it possible to identify the main stages in the development of these objects and to determine their place within the system of Masonic symbolism and corporate culture.

2. Materials and Methods

The materials used in this study were artifacts from Collection 3 (badges and ribbons) of *The Museum of the History of the American Knights Templar at Cherkas Global University* (Houston, USA). Among the exhibits in this collection are six badges that belonged to commanderies within the Grand Commandery of Illinois: Elwood Commandery No. 6 – Exhibit No. 090; Galesburg Commandery No. 8 – Exhibit No. 231; Chicago Commandery No. 19 – Exhibit No. 233; Bethany Commandery No. 28 – Exhibit No. 042; Englewood Commandery No. 59 – Exhibit No. 207; Columbia Commandery No. 63 – Exhibit No. 197.

The methodological foundation of this study consists of the principles of historicism, systematicity, and source criticism applied within the framework of the study of material culture and the institutional history of Masonic organizations.

The study is based on a comprehensive interdisciplinary approach combining the methods of history, source studies, museum studies, and visual analysis. In particular, the historical-descriptive method was used to reconstruct the stages in the formation and transformation of the badges of the commanderies of the Grand Commandery of Illinois in the context of the development of the Order of Knights Templar in the United States.

Particular importance was attached to source criticism, within which museum objects are treated as independent historical sources. Their provenance, dating, state of preservation, and context of use were taken into account. Special attention was given to comparing the objects with written sources, above all the materials of the annual conclaves of the Grand Commandery of Illinois, which made it possible to correlate changes in badge design with institutional decisions.

An important role was also played by the comparative-typological method, applied to identify differences and similarities among the badges of various commanderies. This made it possible to distinguish the main types of badges (with an elongated ribbon, with a shortened ribbon, and the 1914 pattern) and to trace their evolution.

In addition, visual-formal analysis was employed, aimed at studying the composition, color scheme, materials, and structural features of the badges. This approach made it possible to reveal the stability of the basic Maltese cross form despite changes in auxiliary elements, above all the ribbon.

Thus, the combination of source criticism, comparative, and visual analysis ensured a comprehensive study of the evolution of commandery badges and made it possible to regard them not only as elements of uniform, but also as important bearers of symbolic and institutional information.

3. Results

The Grand Commandery of Illinois of the Masonic Order of Knights Templar was founded on October 27, 1857 ([46th Triennial Conclave...](#), 1955: 18). At that time it consisted of only three commanderies: Apollo Commandery No. 1 (founded in 1847), Belvidere Commandery No. 2 (founded in 1853), and Peoria Commandery No. 3 (founded in 1856) ([164th annual conclave...](#), 2020: 86–88). In the 1860s–1870s, commandery badges were not used on the uniform. As an illustration, one may cite the uniform of the Eminent Commander of Bethany Commandery No. 28 (Mendota, Illinois) (Fig. 1).



Fig. 1. Eminent Commander of Bethany Commandery No. 28 in the 1870s ([Cherkas, 2025: 117](#))

In Fig. 1, we may see that there are no badges on the uniform of the Knight Templar other than the badge of the Eminent Commander.

In all probability, the first commandery badges appeared among the Knights Templar of Illinois in the 1880s. This is indirectly indicated by the oldest complete uniform in the museum from Bethany Commandery No. 28, which belonged to the Civil War veteran Casper Ruedy (1835–1896) ([Cherkas, 2025: 102](#)). Casper Ruedy was also elected to the office of Eminent Commander in the 1870s and died in 1896. The uniform set also included the badge of this commandery (Fig. 2).



Fig. 2. Uniform set of Bethany Commandery No. 28 with the commandery badge (Cherkas, 2025: 27)

Let us examine this badge more closely.



Fig. 3. Badge of Bethany Commandery No. 28 on an elongated ribbon (MHAKT. Collection 3. Badges and Ribbons. Exhibit No. 042)

Thus, we may see that the badge was made of metal and that most of it was coated with gold enamel, while the leaves of the Maltese cross were white. The badge consisted of two metal parts connected by an elongated black ribbon. The manufacturer of the badge was the company R. M. Johnson & Son of Chicago, which had been operating since the 1880s (Fig. 4).



Fig. 4. R. M. Johnson & Son hallmark

The badge of another commandery, Englewood Commandery No. 59, was likewise connected by the same elongated black ribbon (Fig. 5). This commandery was founded in 1886 ([164th annual conclave...](#), 2020: 87).



Fig. 5. Badge of Englewood Commandery No. 59 (MHAKT. Collection 3. Badges and Ribbons. Exhibit No. 207)

The presence of an elongated ribbon on the badge of a commandery founded in 1886 indicates that the design of the badge with an elongated ribbon belongs specifically to the 1880s.

The badges of Bethany Commandery No. 28 and Englewood Commandery No. 59 are the earliest commandery badges from the Grand Commandery of Illinois in the collection of the Museum of the History of the American Knights Templar.

At the turn of the nineteenth and in the first years of the twentieth century, the ribbon on the commandery badges was shortened, and a new version of the badge on a shortened black ribbon appeared. The museum collection contains two badges of this type: the Badge of Chicago Commandery No. 19 (Fig. 6) and the Badge of Columbia Commandery No. 63 (Fig. 7).



Fig. 6. Badge of Chicago Commandery No. 19 on a shortened ribbon ([MHAKT. Collection 3. Badges and Ribbons. Exhibit No. 233](#))



Fig. 7. Badge of Columbia Commandery No. 63 on a shortened ribbon ([MHAKT. Collection 3. Badges and Ribbons. Exhibit No. 197](#))

For visual confirmation of the two versions of commandery badges in the Grand Commandery of Illinois, we placed them side by side in Fig. 8.



Fig. 8. Later version of the badge on the left, earlier version on the right.

In Fig. 8, we may see that the length of the black ribbon was significantly reduced. At the same time, the manufacturer of the badges remained unchanged.

In 1913–1914, the Grand Commandery of Illinois undertook steps to change the design of the commandery badge in the state. A special Committee on Designative Badge was created for this purpose, and in 1914 it presented its proposal. We consider it appropriate to quote this document in full:

“REPORT — Committee on Designative Badge.

The report of the Committee on Designative Badge made the following report, which was adopted.

To the Officers and Sir Knights of the Grand Commandery of the Knights Templar, Illinois:

Your committee to whom was referred the matter of selecting a designation badge; an adoption of one having been made by recommendation of the committee on finance at the annual conclave of this Grand Commandery in 1913, recommend that said adoption be now annulled and would now recommend that the adoption of the Maltese Cross badge with two bars made of gold, the upper bar being black enameled, having stamped on it the name and number of the commandery and the lower bar to be of gold, connected by one link with the upper bar and on said lower bar be stamped the word ‘Illinois.’ A sample of said designation badge is herewith submitted (Fig. 9).



Fig. 9. Designative Badge Illinois Commanderies ([Fifty-eighth annual conclave..., 1914: 101](#))

Your committee further report that the Grand Recorder had already received designs of such a badge with bids from several firms and after discussion of the proposition your committee recommend the acceptance of the badge and bid submitted by R. M. Johnson & Son, Chicago, Ill., the cost of the name plate and the furnishing of the designation badges at the rate of thirty cents apiece; that the Grand Recorder be instructed to notify R. M. Johnson & Son of said acceptance. That the officers of the subordinate commanderies be required to place all orders for such number of designation badges as they may require for their Sir Knights with the said R. M. Johnson & Son.

All of which is courteously submitted,
 Albert F. Schoch,
 Thomas Albert Stevens,
 Delmar D. Darrah,
 Committee» ([Fifty-eighth annual conclave..., 1914: 102-103](#)).

The museum collection contains two badges with the design of the 1914 pattern: the Badge of Elwood Commandery No. 6 and the Badge (Fig. 9) of Galesburg Commandery No. 8 (Fig. 10).



Fig. 9. Badge of Elwood Commandery No. 6 (MHAKT. Collection 3. Badges and Ribbons. Exhibit No. 090)



Fig. 10. Badge of Galesburg Commandery No. 8 (MHAKT. Collection 3. Badges and Ribbons. Exhibit No. 231)

Essentially, all the changes in the new badge consisted in the fact that from this time onward the badge was placed on a slightly elongated black-and-white Knights Templar ribbon (Fig. 11).



Fig. 11. From left to right: early badge of the 1880s, badge of the late nineteenth–early twentieth centuries, badge of the 1914 pattern.

The manufacturer of all the badges shown in Fig. 11 was the Chicago company R. M. Johnson & Son, which specialized in the production of Masonic ornaments. Thus, over the course of more than fifty years, from the 1880s to at least the 1930s, the entire evolution of the badges of the commanderies of the Grand Commandery of Illinois produced by R. M. Johnson & Son consisted in changes in the colors and size of the ribbon, while the badge itself remained unchanged.

4. Conclusion

The analysis of the museum artifacts has made it possible to reconstruct the main stages in the evolution of the badges of the commanderies of the Grand Commandery of Illinois in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It has been established that before the 1880s such badges were, in all probability, not used on the uniform of the Knights Templar, and that their appearance was connected with the gradual development of a system of visual identification within the Order.

The earliest examples of badges are characterized by the presence of an elongated black ribbon connecting the metal elements, which makes it possible to date their appearance to the 1880s. Later, at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the construction changed: the ribbon became shorter, although the overall design of the badge remained unchanged. This indicates an aspiration toward standardization while preserving traditional symbolism.

The reforms of 1913–1914, initiated by the Grand Commandery of Illinois, led to the introduction of a standardized badge pattern mounted on a black-and-white ribbon. This stage reflects the transition from local variations to a centralized system of regalia regulated at the level of the Grand Commandery.

It should be especially noted that for more than half a century the key role in the manufacture of these badges was played by the Chicago company R. M. Johnson & Son. Despite changes in the design of the ribbon, the basic composition of the badge remained stable, which underscores the continuity of the symbolic tradition.

Thus, the evolution of the badges of the commanderies of the Grand Commandery of Illinois demonstrates a combination of conservatism in form and gradual adaptations conditioned by institutional and organizational changes within the Order. The results obtained confirm the importance of studying material culture for a deeper understanding of the history of Masonic organizations and their internal structure.

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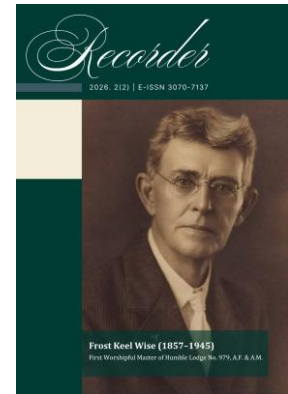
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Historiography of the History of Commanderies of the Masonic Order of Knights Templar

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Abstract

This article is devoted to a comprehensive analysis of the historiography of the history of commanderies of the Masonic Order of Knights Templar in the United States. The study covers the period from the mid-nineteenth to the early twenty-first century and is based on a body of regional, commemorative, and modern scholarly publications. The main stages in the development of historiography are identified: the early descriptive-apologetic stage, the commemorative-institutional stage, the systematizing stage, and the modern analytical stage. It is demonstrated that the formation of the historiographical tradition took place predominantly within the Order itself, which determined its specific features—namely, its orientation toward the preservation of corporate memory, the recording of membership, and the legitimization of institutional continuity. Particular attention is given to regional differences (New England, the Midwest, and the South), as well as to the role of commemorative publications as a key genre. Contemporary studies reveal a transition to academic methods, including source criticism, the use of archival materials, and the study of material culture. The article concludes that historiography has evolved from an internal memorial narrative to a scholarly interpretation of Freemasonry as a social institution.

Keywords: Freemasonry, Knights Templar, historiography, commanderies, Grand Commandery, United States, commemorative publications, source studies, material culture, institutional history.

1. Introduction

The historiography of the Masonic Order of Knights Templar in the United States represents a specific field of study situated at the intersection of institutional memory, symbolic tradition, and historical scholarship. Unlike academic historiography formed within a university environment, the majority of works on the history of commanderies were produced within the Order itself by its members.

Commanderies, as the principal organizational units of Templar Masonry, performed not only administrative functions but also acted as centers for the formation of historical narrative. As a result, an extensive body of local histories emerged, devoted to the development of individual commanderies, regional jurisdictions, and Grand Commanderies.

The purpose of this article is to systematize this historiographical tradition, to identify the main stages of its development, and to analyze the transformation of methodological approaches from descriptive forms to modern analytical research.

2. Discussion

The historiography of the history of commanderies exhibits several distinctive features.

First, it is based predominantly on internal sources, including minutes of meetings, reports of Grand Commanderies, membership lists, and commemorative publications. These materials constitute the foundation of most historical reconstructions.

Second, a significant portion of the works is represented by commemorative publications dedicated to milestone anniversaries (25th, 50th, 100th anniversaries), which largely determined both their structure and their objectives.

Third, early studies are characterized by a limited degree of critical analysis and are primarily descriptive in nature, aimed at preserving corporate memory.

3. Results

3.1. Early Historiographical Tradition (Mid-19th Century)

The early stage in the formation of the historiography of the Masonic Order of Knights Templar in the United States is represented by works of the mid-nineteenth century, which may be conventionally classified as belonging to a descriptive-apologetic school. Among the most illustrative examples are the studies of Theodore S. Gourdin ([Gourdin, 1855](#)) and Alfred Creigh ([Creigh, 1867](#)), which constitute some of the first attempts at a systematic interpretation of the history of the Order on American soil.

Gourdin's work ([Gourdin, 1855](#)), composed in the form of a ceremonial address to the members of the South Carolina Encampment, demonstrates the characteristic features of early Masonic historiography. Above all, it is oriented less toward a critical investigation of the past than toward its symbolic interpretation. The author seeks to emphasize the antiquity and sacred character of the Order, linking American Templar structures with the medieval European tradition. In this context, historical argumentation is often subordinated to rhetoric aimed at strengthening corporate identity and reinforcing the moral authority of the organization.

Similar features can be observed in Creigh's work ([Creigh, 1867](#)), devoted to the history of Templar Masonry in Pennsylvania. Despite a more developed documentary base, including early records and information on the activities of commanderies, this study also retains a distinctly apologetic orientation. The author presents the Order as a continuous and legitimate institution, emphasizing its stability and significance within public life. Particular attention is given to the recording of founding dates, membership lists, and key events, while critical analysis of sources remains largely absent.

The works of this period share several defining characteristics. First, they are oriented toward affirming historical continuity between the medieval Order of the Knights Templar and modern Masonic structures, reflecting the ideological needs of the fraternity. Second, considerable attention is devoted to ritual and symbolic elements, which are treated as the foundation of the Order's identity. Third, the style of exposition is distinctly rhetorical and publicistic, a feature explained by the origin of many of these texts as public addresses, commemorative speeches, and ceremonial orations.

Moreover, early historiography does not clearly distinguish between history, tradition, and myth. The historical narrative is constructed as part of the internal culture of the Order and serves primarily a memorial and consolidating function. These texts were intended for members of the fraternity and functioned as instruments for transmitting values, reinforcing unity, and legitimizing the existing organizational structure.

Thus, the early historiographical tradition of the mid-nineteenth century laid the foundations for subsequent studies of the history of commanderies, establishing a durable narrative model that combined elements of historical description, symbolic interpretation, and corporate ideology. Despite its limitations from the standpoint of scholarly criticism, these works became the starting point for the further development of the historiography of the Masonic Order of Knights Templar in the United States.

3.2. Institutional-Commemorative School (Late 19th – Early 20th Century)

The next stage in the development of the historiography of the Masonic Order of Knights Templar in the United States is associated with the emergence of the so-called commemorative (jubilee) school, which became widespread in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Among the most representative works of this trend are those by Jesse B. Anthony ([Anthony, 1882](#)), Stephen Berry ([Berry, 1882](#)), Norman T. Gassette ([Gassette, 1884](#)), Edward T. Schultz ([Schultz, 1891](#)), George W. Creamer ([Creamer, 1901](#)), Jacob T. Barron ([Barron, 1902](#)), Wesley P. Rickart ([Rickart, 1903](#)), Elwood W. Goodell ([Goodell, 1910](#)), Richard A. Searing ([Searing, 1913](#)), and Thomas M. Jackson ([Jackson, 1919](#)).

The emergence of this school is directly connected with the practice of celebrating commandery anniversaries—25th, 50th, centennial, and other commemorative milestones. The preparation for such events required the systematization of accumulated historical material, which in turn stimulated the production of extensive historical narratives devoted to individual commanderies. In contrast to earlier works, these studies relied on a significantly broader source base and aimed at greater factual completeness.

One of the key features of commemorative historiography is its documentary richness. Authors actively utilized minutes of meetings, membership lists, financial records, correspondence, and other archival materials. As a result, detailed reconstructions of the institutional life of commanderies were produced, including founding dates, changes in membership, participation in public activities, and information about key figures. For example, the works of Goodell ([Goodell, 1910](#)) and Searing ([Searing, 1913](#)) represent large-scale compilations covering decades of organizational activity.

A second important characteristic is the biographical orientation of the historical narrative. Considerable attention is devoted to individual members of the commanderies—their careers, achievements, and public service. In effect, “galleries of distinguished brethren” are constructed, reflecting an intention to highlight the contributions of specific individuals to the development of the Order. In this context, the history of a commandery acquires a personalized dimension, while collective memory is structured through biographical accounts.

A third feature is the combination of descriptive narrative with elements of organizational and administrative analysis. Works of this period document changes in governance structures, the development of ritual practices, fluctuations in membership numbers, and the financial condition of commanderies. Although these observations are rarely formulated as explicit analytical conclusions, they provide a substantial empirical foundation for later scholarly research.

Despite clear progress in comparison with earlier historiography, the commemorative school retained several limitations. Most notably, it continued to exhibit an apologetic character. The history of commanderies is presented as a consistent and harmonious process of development, largely devoid of conflicts, crises, or internal contradictions. Critical analysis of sources remains marginal, as the primary objective of the authors was the preservation of memory and the strengthening of corporate identity.

Moreover, an important function of these works was the construction of institutional memory. Jubilee publications served as a form of “official history,” consolidating a particular vision of the past intended for transmission to future generations of members. They functioned not only as repositories of information but also as instruments of collective identity formation, emphasizing continuity, stability, and the significance of commanderies.

At the same time, it was within this historiographical framework that substantial bodies of factual material were accumulated, which later became the basis for more critical and academically oriented studies. Thus, commemorative historiography occupies an intermediate position between the earlier descriptive-apologetic works and the later analytical scholarship.

Overall, the commemorative school of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries represents an important stage in the development of the historiography of the Masonic Order of Knights Templar. It is characterized by a transition from rhetorical narrative to document-based description, an expansion of the source base, and the formation of stable narrative models oriented toward the preservation and transmission of corporate memory.

3.3. Regionally Generalizing Historiography

At the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century, a new direction began to emerge in the historiography of the American Masonic Order of Knights Templar, which may be defined as regionally generalizing historiography. In contrast to commemorative histories of individual commanderies, which were primarily focused on local memory, personalities, and the internal life of the organization, works of this stage sought to move to a broader level of analysis—namely, the level of the state or even that of the Order as a whole. The most illustrative examples include the works of John Carson Kidd ([Kidd, 1899](#)) on the history of the Grand Commandery of Texas and William Lee Roy Milligan ([Milligan, 1917](#)) on Ottawa Commandery No. 10 in Illinois, which, despite its formal focus on a single commandery, significantly transcends the limits of a local jubilee history in terms of scale, methodology, and analytical scope.

The defining feature of this historiographical direction was the attempt to combine description, statistical data, and institutional analysis. Whereas in the commemorative school the history of a commandery was typically presented as a sequence of memorable events, changes in officers, and tributes to distinguished members, regionally generalizing works shifted the emphasis toward governance structures, membership dynamics, geographic expansion, administrative systems, and the position of individual commanderies within a broader jurisdictional network. In this sense, history was no longer merely a record of memory but became an effort to understand the mechanisms of institutional growth and functioning.

Particular importance was given to statistical material. In Kidd’s work ([Kidd, 1899](#)), statistics are not an auxiliary appendix but a central means of representing the historical process. Through data on membership, the establishment of commanderies, and the administrative development of the Grand Commandery of Texas, the author demonstrates not only a chronology of events but also the logic of institutional expansion. Statistics thus function both as evidence of vitality and growth and as a tool for structuring historical knowledge. This approach marks a transition from purely memorial writing to a more systematic understanding of history as a set of measurable processes.

Milligan’s work ([Milligan, 1917](#)), although formally local, represents a different yet closely related form of generalization. It is not simply a history of a single commandery but an extensive compendium situating Ottawa Commandery No. 10 within the broader development of Templar Masonry in Illinois. Such works aim to present local organizations as components of a larger system, and their histories as reflections of broader institutional trends. In this respect, Milligan expands the framework of commandery history by integrating micro-level material into a wider institutional and cultural context.

Another important characteristic of regionally generalizing historiography is the emergence of a comparative perspective. Authors increasingly move beyond the uniqueness of individual commanderies and begin to compare development rates, organizational structures, membership composition, spheres of influence, and forms of institutional stability. Even when not explicitly articulated as a formal method, this comparative approach is embedded in the structure of the narrative, the selection of facts, and the analytical emphasis. As a result, the history of the Knights Templar begins to be perceived as a multi-level system in which individual commanderies and Grand Commanderies can be meaningfully compared.

It is within this historiographical school that regional differences in historical writing and interpretation become particularly visible. These differences are not always explicitly stated but can be clearly observed in narrative style, structure, source selection, and analytical priorities.

New England: Archival Precision and Documentary Emphasis

The northeastern tradition, particularly that of New England, is characterized by a strong inclination toward archival precision, accurate fact-recording, and careful attention to documentary evidence. History is constructed through the meticulous reproduction of minutes, dates, membership lists, decisions, and legal-administrative formulations. The historiographical ideal here is the most complete and reliable reconstruction of the past based on written sources. This reflects both the region's developed print culture and the prominent role of archives in Masonic life. The historian acts primarily as a custodian and systematizer of documentary heritage.

The South: Symbolic and Ideological Approach

The southern historiographical tradition tends toward a **symbolic-ideological model**. Here, the history of the Order is interpreted not only as a sequence of organizational developments but also as the expression of a moral, spiritual, and social mission. Southern works are marked by a rhetorical style, emphasis on chivalric ideals, religious justification, and symbolic continuity. Even when dealing with specific commanderies, authors focus on their place within a broader moral and cultural framework. This tradition preserves strong connections with earlier apologetic historiography, though in a more structured form.

The Midwest: Institutional Analysis

The Midwest represents a particularly important development, where a more explicit institutional analysis emerges. Here, the Order is increasingly studied in terms of organization, growth, governance, administrative efficiency, and structural evolution. Attention is given to the functioning of Grand Commanderies, the formation of subordinate bodies, membership expansion, standardization of regalia, and internal governance practices. In this context, the history of the Order becomes the history of an institution rather than merely a commemorative brotherhood.

This approach had significant implications. First, it laid the foundation for future research oriented toward systemic analysis. Second, it generated a body of material suitable not only for memorial purposes but also for comparative historical study. Third, it introduced an understanding of commandery history as part of the broader development of American Masonry.

Significance of the Regionally Generalizing School

Overall, regionally generalizing historiography occupies a transitional position between commemorative traditions and later analytical scholarship of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Its significance lies in several key developments: the expansion of historical perspective from local to regional systems; the increasing use of statistics and comparison; and the identification of regional intellectual traditions—New England's documentary precision, the South's ideological orientation, and the Midwest's institutional pragmatism.

For this reason, the works of Kidd and Milligan should be viewed not merely as major historical studies of their time but as indicators of a transformation in historiographical logic. In them, the history of the Knights Templar begins to be understood not only as a subject of memory and commemoration but also as an object of systematization, comparison, and analytical interpretation.

At the turn of the 1920s–1930s, a number of other works on the history of Knights Templar commanderies were published: on the history of Raper Commandery, No. 1 ([Knights Templar..., 1925](#)), J. Claude Keiper ([Keiper, 1925](#)), John Leslie Tewksbury ([Tewksbury, 1930](#)), and C.E. Baldwin ([Baldwin, 1938](#)).

3.4. The Stage of Systematization (Mid-Twentieth Century)

By the mid-twentieth century, the historiography of the Masonic Order of Knights Templar in the United States entered a new phase that may be characterized as the stage of systematization. In contrast to the earlier apologetic tradition, as well as the subsequent commemorative (jubilee) school—primarily oriented toward memorialization and local identity—and the regionally generalizing approach of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, which expanded the scale of analysis, this stage is distinguished by a more mature and reflective engagement with historical material. At its core lies the aspiration to synthesize accumulated knowledge, structure it systematically, and subject it to critical organization.

Among the most representative works of this period are those of Ray Vaughn Denslow ([Denslow, 1947](#)) and Harold A. Tireman ([Tireman, 1951](#)). These studies mark a qualitative transition from descriptive and compilatory traditions toward a more systematic historical analysis in which the history of the Order is understood as a complex, multi-layered process. In addition, other works were published during this period, for example: 'History of York Commandery No. 21' ([History of York Commandery..., 1965](#)).

From Description to Systematization

The principal feature of this stage is the shift from the mere accumulation of facts to their organization and interpretation. Whereas jubilee histories were primarily concerned with preserving memory—recording dates, names, events, and achievements—mid-twentieth-century works sought to interpret these data within broader analytical frameworks.

Historians began to: structure material into thematic blocks (administration, ritual, finance, social activity), identify stages of development of commanderies and Grand Commanderies, analyze patterns of change, detect regularities in institutional growth.

As a result, historical writing moved beyond linear narrative and acquired analytical depth.

Institutional Approach

A defining characteristic of this stage is the emergence of a pronounced institutional approach. Scholars focused on: the structure of Grand Commanderies, mechanisms of governance, interactions between central and local bodies, processes of standardization (including regalia, ritual, and administrative practices), the role of offices and governing authorities.

In Denslow's work (Denslow, 1947), for example, the history of St. Louis Commandery No. 1 is examined not only as the story of a single body but as part of a broader Templar system. The author explores how the commandery functioned within its jurisdiction, how its role evolved over time, and how it interacted with other organizational units.

Similarly, Tireman (Tireman, 1951), in his study of Detroit Commandery No. 1, presents a model of institutional development, analyzing phases of growth, identifying crises and periods of stabilization, and highlighting factors contributing to organizational resilience. In this framework, the commandery is understood as a dynamic institution rather than merely a fraternal community.

Chronological Thinking and Periodization

Another important feature of this stage is the development of periodization. Authors sought to identify key stages in the development of the Order: early formation, institutional expansion, periods of crisis (e.g., wars or economic difficulties), phases of stabilization and modernization.

This reflects a shift toward historical thinking oriented toward identifying temporal patterns rather than simply recording events. The history of the Order thus comes to be understood as a process governed by internal developmental logic.

Expansion of the Source Base

The mid-twentieth century also witnessed a significant expansion and deepening of the source base. Researchers increasingly relied on: commandery archives, minutes of meetings, financial records, correspondence, printed Proceedings, earlier commemorative publications.

At the same time, attention to source criticism increased. Although not yet reaching the standards of modern academic historiography, scholars began to distinguish between: documentary evidence, interpretation, traditional narratives.

This development enhanced both the reliability and scholarly value of their works.

Synthesis of the Local and the General

A key feature of this stage is the effort to synthesize local and general levels of analysis. The commandery is viewed simultaneously as: an independent organizational unit, part of a regional structure, an element of a national system.

This multi-level perspective contributes to a more integrated understanding of the Knights Templar Order in the United States.

Decline of Apologetics and Rise of Scholarly Standards

Compared to earlier historiographical stages, there is a noticeable decline in rhetorical and apologetic elements. While expressions of pride and commemoration remain (as expected in internally produced Masonic literature), they no longer dominate the narrative.

Instead, greater emphasis is placed on: accuracy, structural coherence, objectivity, critical engagement with sources.

Thus, historiography moves closer to academic historical discourse, even while retaining connections to traditional Masonic narrative forms.

Significance of the Systematization Stage

The mid-twentieth-century stage holds fundamental importance for the development of Templar historiography. First, it marks the transition from the accumulation of material to its systematic interpretation. Second, it establishes the institutional approach that will underpin later research. Third, it creates a substantial body of structured data that serves as the foundation for contemporary historiography.

Moreover, this stage may be understood as a transitional bridge between traditional internal Masonic history and modern academic historical scholarship. The works of Denslow, Tireman, and their contemporaries extend beyond purely memorial literature, while still remaining connected to the internal culture of the Order.

In sum, mid-twentieth-century historiography represents the emergence of a new type of historical knowledge, combining tradition and analysis, local and general perspectives, description and interpretation. It is precisely this synthetic character that makes this stage a key moment in the evolution of the historiography of the Masonic Order of Knights Templar.

3.5. Modern Analytical Historiography

The modern stage in the development of the historiography of the Masonic Order of Knights Templar may be defined as analytical. In contrast to earlier phases—the apologetic, commemorative (jubilee), and

systematizing stages—this period is characterized by a transition toward full-fledged scholarly research. Within this framework, the history of commanderies is approached as a complex socio-institutional phenomenon, subject to critical and interdisciplinary analysis. Here we may identify the works of such authors as: Benjamin F. Hill (Hill, 2010), Alexander C. Cherkas (Cherkas, 2025; Cherkas, 2025a; Cherkas, 2025b; Cherkas, 2025c).

Expansion of Research Problematic

A key feature of contemporary historiography is the expansion of research questions. Whereas earlier studies focused primarily on the internal history of individual commanderies, modern scholars address broader issues, including: institutional development of Masonic structures, the social role of the Order within American society, interaction between Freemasonry and public or state institutions, transformation of ritual and symbolic systems, formation of corporate identity.

The Source-Critical Turn

One of the most significant developments in modern historiography is the source-critical turn. Attention has shifted from published commemorative histories to a wide range of primary sources, including: commandery minutes, annual Proceedings of Grand Commanderies, financial and administrative records, personal archives of members, visual materials (photographs, regalia, uniforms).

Particularly important is the introduction into scholarly circulation of previously unpublished archival materials. This shift enables researchers to move beyond compilative narratives toward reconstructing the actual everyday life of commanderies, including their organizational practices, social networks, and internal mechanisms of operation.

Within this framework, museum objects are increasingly treated as полноценные historical sources, bringing Masonic historiography closer to the methodologies of material culture studies and museum research.

Interdisciplinary Character

Modern analytical historiography is distinctly interdisciplinary. It incorporates methods from: social history, institutional analysis, cultural anthropology, visual studies, history of everyday life.

This approach allows commanderies to be understood not merely as ritual bodies but as social institutions embedded within the broader context of American society.

For example, the study of Templar participation in charitable and patriotic initiatives—particularly during wartime—reveals their role in shaping civic culture. Similarly, analysis of ritual and symbolism helps reconstruct the system of values and collective identity of the fraternity.

Institutional and Comparative Approaches

Comparative analysis plays an increasingly important role in contemporary historiography. Scholars compare: the development of different commanderies within a single jurisdiction, the characteristics of various Grand Commanderies, regional differences in practice and symbolism.

This enables the identification of both general patterns and local particularities in the evolution of the Order.

At the same time, the institutional approach continues to develop at a more advanced level. Researchers now examine not only governance structures but also: mechanisms of membership reproduction, models of interaction between organizational levels, processes of standardization and reform.

New Research Centers and Publication Practices

The modern stage is also characterized by the emergence of new research centers, including university-based and independent scholarly initiatives. Specialized academic publications play a crucial role by: publishing studies based on archival materials, introducing new sources into scholarly circulation, establishing a unified academic style of presentation.

Contemporary publication practices are marked by: the use of scholarly apparatus (citations, sources, methodology), clearly structured research design, orientation toward an international academic audience.

Reassessment of the Individual and Microhistory

Another important trend is the development of a microhistorical approach. Studies increasingly focus on: individual commanderies, specific historical figures, local communities.

However, unlike the jubilee tradition, such works go beyond description and aim to: identify typical and unique features, demonstrate connections between local and national levels, reconstruct real practices and everyday life.

Critical Approach and Reinterpretation of Tradition

Modern historiography is also distinguished by a more pronounced critical perspective. Scholars seek to: distinguish historical facts from later interpretations, reassess established narratives, identify mythologized elements in traditional accounts of the Order.

This is particularly important for the study of early periods, where sources are often fragmentary or ideologically influenced.

4. Conclusion

The conducted historiographical analysis makes it possible to trace the long and multi-layered evolution of studies devoted to the history of commanderies of the Masonic Order of Knights Templar in the United

States. The works examined, spanning the period from the mid-nineteenth century to the early twenty-first century, demonstrate a gradual transition from descriptive-apologetic forms to a fully developed scholarly interpretation of this phenomenon.

At the early stage (mid-nineteenth century), historiography was shaped primarily within a memorial and educational tradition. Works of this period were rhetorical and apologetic in nature, emphasizing the antiquity, legitimacy, and symbolic continuity of the Order. Historical material was presented as part of an ideological narrative aimed at strengthening the internal identity of the fraternity.

In the subsequent period, particularly in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the so-called commemorative (jubilee) school emerged. Its representatives produced detailed chronicles of individual commanderies, introducing a substantial body of factual material into circulation. Despite their continued orientation toward an internal audience, these works laid the groundwork for further research through the systematization of sources and the preservation of institutional memory.

At the same time, regionally synthetic historiography began to take shape, attempting to move beyond local studies and consider the development of the Order within broader territorial and institutional contexts. Works of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries demonstrate an increasing interest in statistical data, comparative analysis, and the structure of Grand Commanderies. Regional differences in methodological approaches also became evident, reflecting the cultural and historical diversity of different parts of the United States.

The mid-twentieth century marked a stage of systematization, during which previously accumulated material was generalized and conceptualized. Historiography acquired a more structured character, with increased attention to institutional analysis, chronology, and documentary foundations. Studies of this period contributed to the formation of a more comprehensive understanding of the Order as a stable organizational system.

The modern stage of historiographical development is characterized by a transition to analytical and interdisciplinary approaches. The focus has expanded beyond institutional structures to include social functions, cultural practices, symbolic systems, and material culture. A significant role is played by the expansion of the source base, including archival documents, visual materials, and museum artifacts. This allows scholars to move from description to interpretation and from the recording of facts to their explanation.

Particular importance is attached to the application of source criticism and comparative methods, as well as to the development of microhistorical studies focused on individual commanderies and personalities within broader historical processes. Contemporary historiography seeks to overcome the limitations of earlier traditions, including their apologetic nature and local scope, offering instead a more critical and comprehensive understanding of the Order's history.

Thus, the historiography of the commanderies of the Masonic Order of Knights Templar has evolved from an internal corporate memory into an independent field of academic inquiry. Its development reflects broader trends in historical scholarship: the transition from description to analysis, from isolated studies to interdisciplinary synthesis.

At the same time, several перспективные направления remain for future research. These include: the broader introduction of archival materials from individual commanderies into scholarly circulation; comparative studies of different jurisdictions; analysis of material culture and visual representation; and the study of the social role of Masonic structures within the context of American history.

In this regard, the further development of historiography is closely linked to the deepening of methodological approaches and the expansion of the source base, which will make it possible to more fully reveal the significance of commanderies as an important element of the social, cultural, and institutional history of the United States.

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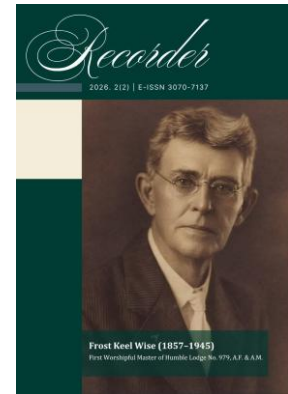
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Museum News

The Museum of the History of the American Knights Templar Today: Spring 2026

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Abstract

This section presents selected exhibitions of the Museum of the History of the American Knights Templar (Cherkas Global University), reflecting the formation and development of its collections from 2024 to 2026. Since its establishment on August 1, 2024, the museum has created its core thematic collections: swords, uniforms, badges, and photographic materials. Subsequently, the holdings were significantly expanded through the addition of new collections—personal belongings and souvenirs (2025), as well as artifacts of other Masonic orders (2026).

By March 2026, the museum's holdings had reached approximately 1,000 items, demonstrating the dynamic development of the institution. Special attention is given to the design of the western exhibition space, the central feature of which is a portrait of the first Grand Master of the Knights Templar of the United States, Sir Knight De Witt Clinton (1769–1828). Presented together with a document bearing his personal signature, this ensemble highlights the museum's role as a space for preserving historical memory, material culture, and the personalized history of American Templar Freemasonry.

Keywords: Museum of the History of the American Knights Templar, Cherkas Global University, collections, uniforms, badges, photographs, Knights Templar history, Spring 2026.

This section presents selected exhibitions of the Museum of the History of the American Knights Templar (also known as the Museum of Cherkas Global University). The museum was established on August 1, 2024, and at that time four main collections began to take shape:

The Sword Collection (Collection No. 1);

The Uniform Collection (coats, aprons, belts, and sashes) (Collection No. 2);

The Badge Collection (badges, badge pins, ribbons, and jewels) (Collection No. 3);

The Photo Collection (portrait and group photographs of members of the Knights Templar, as well as promotional materials produced by commanderies in the United States, including souvenir postcards) (Collection No. 4).

On November 1, 2025, a new collection was added to the museum—the Collection of Personal Belongings and Souvenirs (Collection No. 5). On February 14, 2026, another new collection was established—the Collection of Artifacts of Other Masonic Orders (Collection No. 6).

As of March 2026, the museum's holdings comprised approximately 1,000 items.

In March 2026, work was carried out on the western section of the Museum of the History of the American Knights Templar. The central feature of the exhibition became a portrait of the first Grand Master of the Knights Templar of the United States, Sir Knight De Witt Clinton (1769–1828) (Fig. 1), who also served as Governor of the State of New York. The exhibition also includes a document bearing De Witt Clinton's personal signature (Fig. 2). The portrait was painted in oil in 2025 by the artist Lyudmila N. Bogutskaya (b. 1979). It should be noted that De Witt Clinton led the General Grand Encampment of the Knights Templar of the United States from its establishment in 1816 until his death in 1828.



Fig. 1. Sir De Witt Clinton (1769–1828), 1st Grand Master of the Grand Encampment of Knights Templar in the United States. Oil Painting. By Art. Lyudmila N. Bogutskaya (1979 year of birth). 2025

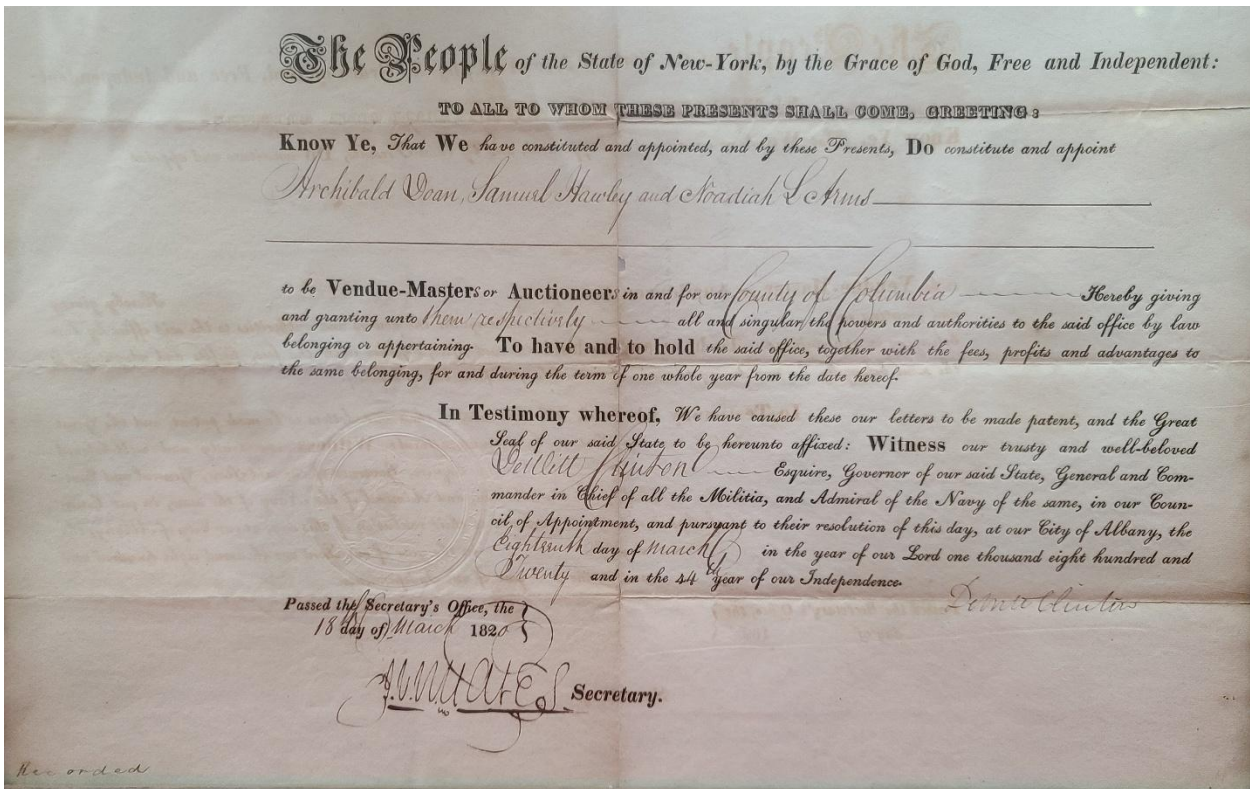


Fig. 2. Document "The People of the State of New York." 1820. Autograph of De Witt Clinton.

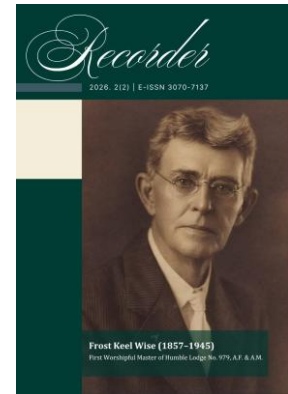
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Review of Exhibitions at the Museum of the History of the American Knights Templar (Expositions No. 26–30 Presented between August 21 and October 30, 2025)

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Abstract

This section examines a series of exhibitions held at the Museum of the History of the American Knights Templar between August and October 2025, highlighting key aspects of the material culture of the Order in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Four exhibitions (Nos. 026, 027, 029, and 030) are analyzed, each focusing on distinct elements such as uniforms, ceremonial accessories, and antique swords. Particular attention is given to Monroe Commandery No. 12 (New York), whose artifacts—including swords, insignia, and rare photographic materials—illustrate the historical continuity of Templar traditions. The exhibitions also address specific components of uniform culture, such as cuffs differentiated by color according to uniform type, and the evolution of ceremonial swords from mid-nineteenth-century models. Special emphasis is placed on the exhibition dedicated to New Haven Commandery No. 2, centered on the personal belongings of Sir Walter Sherman Garde. These materials provide valuable insight into the distinctive features of certain commanderies, including the use of daggers and unique aprons, thereby contributing to a broader understanding of American Templar material culture.

Keywords: Museum of the History of the American Knights Templar, Exhibitions, Review.

Between August 21 and October 23, 2025, four exhibitions were presented at the Museum of the History of the American Knights Templar: August 21 — Exposition No. 026, August 23 — Exposition No. 027, October 7 — Exposition No. 029, and October 23 — Exposition No. 030. As in previous exhibitions, these displays were devoted to the uniforms of Knights Templar from the late nineteenth to the early twentieth centuries.

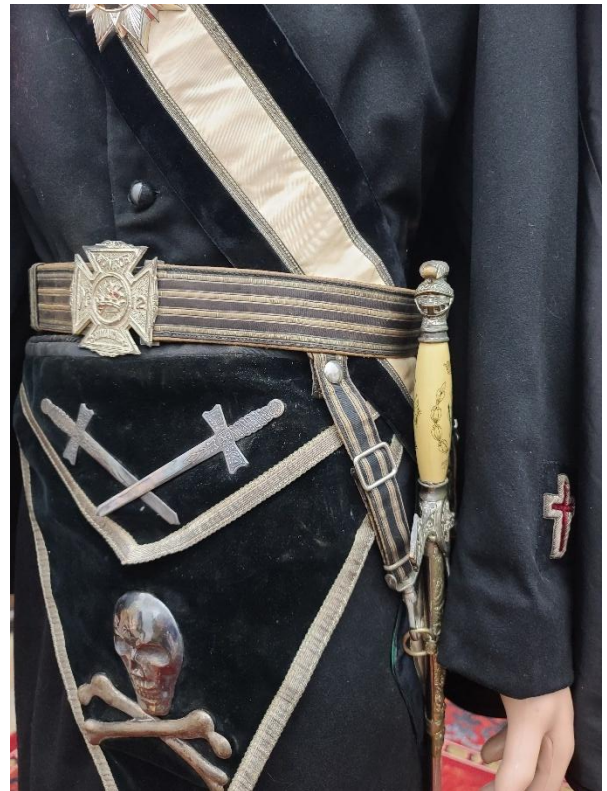
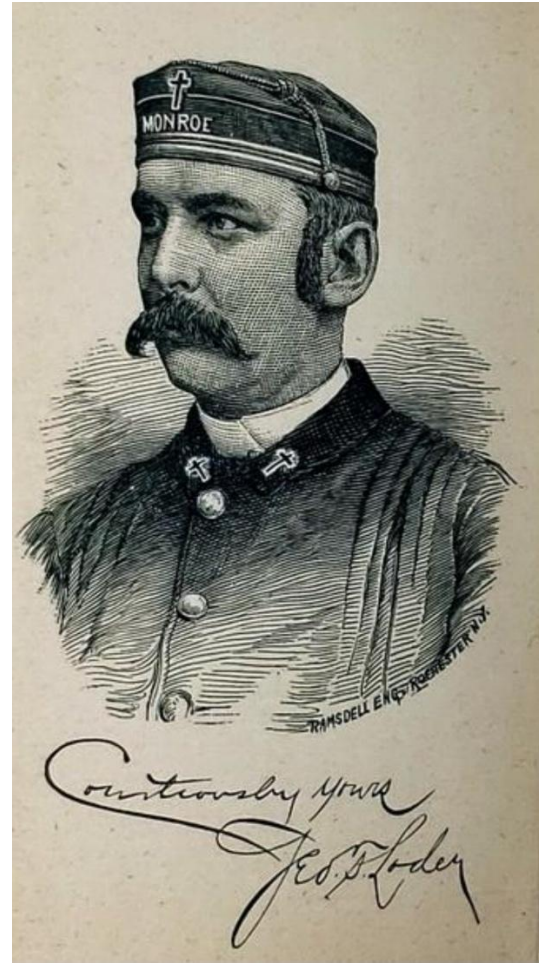
Exposition No. 026 (August 21, 2025) was dedicated to the Monroe Commandery No. 12 (Grand Commandery of New York). Founded in Rochester, NY in 1826, Monroe Commandery No. 12 will celebrate its 200th anniversary next year. The collection of the Museum of Cherkas Global University preserves several artifacts connected with this Commandery, including: two Knights Templar swords; a belt with buckle; a pin; a portrait and a rare image of one of the members of Monroe Commandery No. 12.

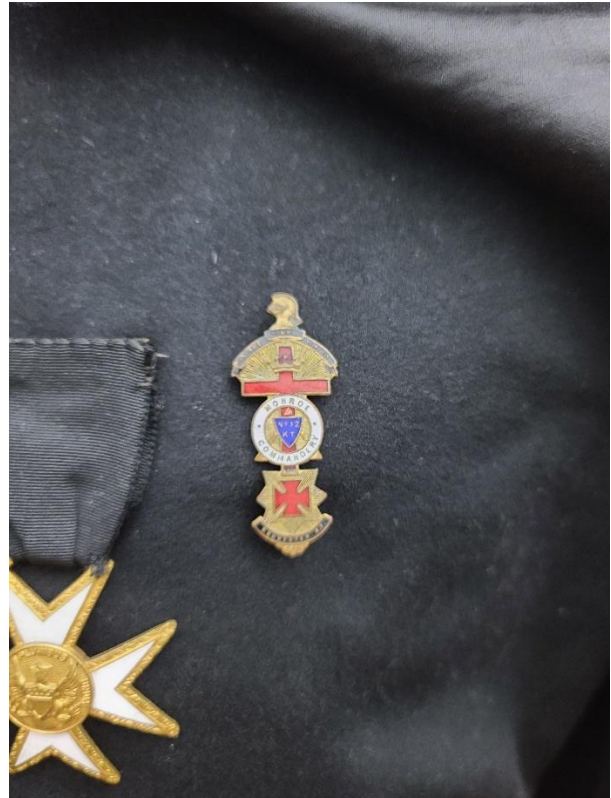
Exposition No. 027 (August 23, 2025) focused on Cuffs of American Knights Templar. Cuffs were produced in two colors: White — for the white uniform; Black — for the black uniform.

Exposition No. 029 (October 7, 2025) presented Antique Swords of the Masonic Order of Knights Templar. Our museum collection features several antique swords of the Masonic Order of Knights Templar, dating from circa 1850–1870. Their design follows earlier models from the 1840s — for instance, a similar sword belonged to Rev. Jonathan Nye (1783–1843), the second Grand Master of the General Grand Encampment of Knights Templar in the USA.

Exposition No. 030 (October 23, 2025) was devoted to the Uniform of New Haven Commandery No. 2. The foundation of our exhibition is based on several personal belongings of Sir Walter Sherman Garde (1876–1946), who served as Eminent Commander of New Haven Commandery No. 2 in 1905 (photograph attached). His personal items include a sword, a belt, headgear, and a group photograph of the officers of this commandery. A photograph of Walter S. Garde is also included. New Haven Commandery No. 2 was one of the few commanderies that possessed daggers and distinctive aprons.

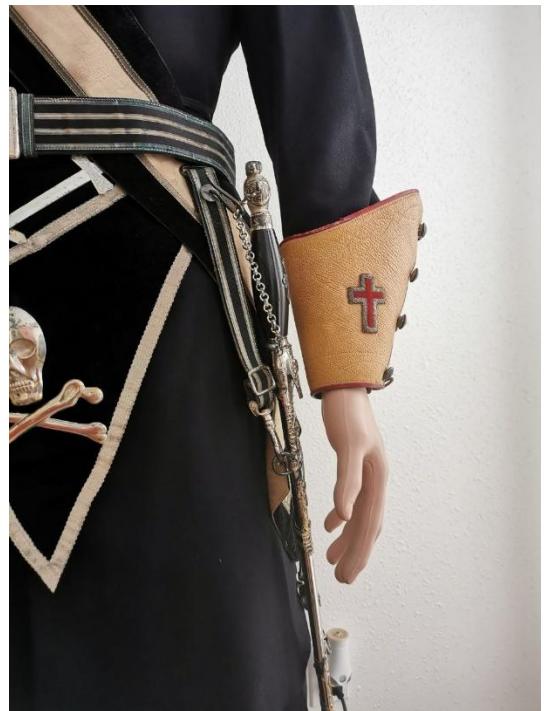
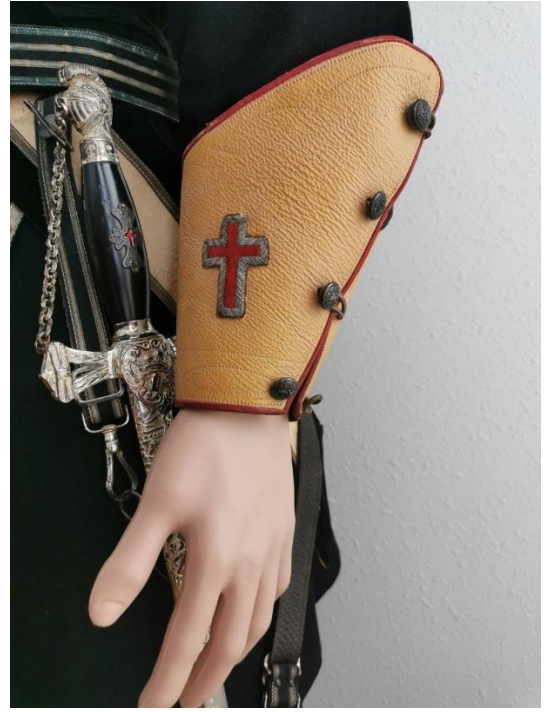
Exposition No. 026 (August 21, 2025)
Monroe Commandery No. 12 (Grand Commandery of New York)





Exposition No. 027 (August 23, 2025)
Cuffs of American Knights Templar





Exposition No. 029 (October 7, 2025)
Antique Swords of the Masonic Order of Knights Templar





Exposition No. 030 (October 23, 2025)
Uniform of New Haven Commandery No. 2





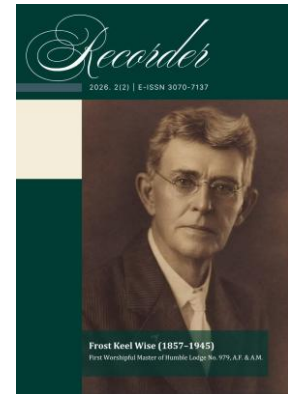
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Our Publications

A List of Publications Devoted to the History of Freemasonry

In 2024–2026, the staff of Cherkas Global University prepared and published the following works on the history of Freemasonry:

2024

Cherkas, Alexander (2024). A Few Fresh Strokes to the Biographical Portrait of Sir Albert A. Marden (1824–1919): Commemorating the 200th Anniversary of His Birth. *History and Historians in the Context of the Time*. 33(1): 3-9.

Cherkas, Alexander (2024). Sir Albert E. Worthington (1849–1915) in the Museum Collection of Cherkas Global University: Commemorating the 175th Anniversary of His Birth. *European Journal of Contemporary Education*. 13(4): 742-746.

Cherkas, Alexander (2024). Sir Frederick S. Rogers (1847–1908) in the Museum Collection of Cherkas Global University. *Bylye Gody*. 19(4): 1674-1682.

Cherkas, Alexander (2024). Sir George Stodart Blackie (1834–1881) in the Museum Collection of Cherkas Global University: Commemorating the 190th Anniversary of His Birth. *European Researcher. Series A*. 15(2): 32-37.

2025

Cherkas, Alexander (2025). A History of Bethany Commandery No. 28, K.T. (1868–1918). *Bylye Gody*. 2025. 20(1): 264-288.

Cherkas, Alexander (2025). History of Beauseant Commandery No. 11, KT (Quincy, Illinois). *Recorder*. 1(2-1): 98-168.

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Cherkas, Alexander (2025). History of El-Aksa Commandery No. 55, KT (Quincy, Illinois). *Recorder*. 1(2-2): 172-212.

Cherkas, Alexander (2025). History of Quincy Commandery No. 77, KT (Quincy, Illinois). *Recorder*. 1(2-3): 216-312.

Cherkas, Alexander (2025). Rare Publications from the American Masonic Order of Knights Templar (first half of the 19th century). *Bylye Gody*. 20(2): 775-779.

Cherkas, Alexander (2025). Ribbons in the American Masonic Order of Knights Templar (second half of the 19th century): Their Emergence and Evolution. *Bylye Gody*. 20(3): 1465-1476.

Cherkas, Alexander (2025). Sir Alfred Constantine Barry (1815–1888): Minister, Educator, Mason. *European Journal of Contemporary Education*. 14(4): 617-624.

Cherkas, Alexander (2025). Sir Benjamin F. Howard (1835–1908): Soldier, Police Officer, Mason. *Bylye Gody*. 20(4): 1811-1822.

Cherkasova, Anastasiya A. (2025). The Museum of the History of the American Knights Templar at Cherkas Global University: Its Collections Dating to between the second half of the 19th and the early 20th centuries. *Bylye Gody*. 2025. 20(1): 188-195.

Mamadaliyev, Anvar M. (2025). Lesser-Known Traditions of the Masonic Order of Knights Templar. *Recorder*. 1(2): 65-67.

Mamadaliyev, Anvar M. (2025). Russian Freemasonry from Peter I to Nicholas II: a Historical Sketch. *Bylye Gody*. 20(2): 532-539.

Mamadaliyev, Anvar M. (2025). The Masonic Organizations in the Russian Empire (XVIII century): Structure and Personalities. *Bylye Gody*. 20(3): 1095-1104.

Taran, Konstantine V. (2025). "Little Commandery" – Children from the Masonic Widows and Orphans' Home of Kentucky. *Recorder*. 1(2): 62-64.

Taran, Konstantine V. (2025). The materials of the General Grand Encampment of Knights Templar serve as a statistical source for the number of Knights Templars in 1856. *Recorder*. 1(1): 22-23.

2026

Cherkas, Alexander (2026). Sir Benjamin Brown French (1800–1870): an American Politician and the 6th Grand Master of the Grand Encampment of Knights Templar. *Bylye Gody*. 21(1): 113-118.

Cherkas, Alexander (2026). Sir Benjamin Brown French (1800–1870): an American Politician and the 6th Grand Master of the Grand Encampment of Knights Templar. *Bylye Gody*. 21(1): 113-118.

Cherkas, Airin (2026). Sir Peter Lauck (1753–1839): Soldier of the Revolution and Knight Templar. *Recorder*. 2(1): 4-8.

Cherkas, Alexander (2026). Sir Knight Samuel May Williams (1795–1858): Missionary Activity of the First Texas Knight Templar. *Recorder*. 2(1): 9-15.

Cherkas, Airin (2026). Personnel of Winchester Grand Encampment No. 1, Knights Templar (Winchester, Virginia) in 1821: A Historical and Genealogical Study. *Recorder*. 2(1): 16-25.

Molchanova, Violetta S. (2026). In Memory of Sir Knight Gilbert W. Barnard (1834–1908), Grand Recorder of the Grand Commandery of Illinois (based on periodical press materials of 1908). *Recorder*. 2(1): 26-31.

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