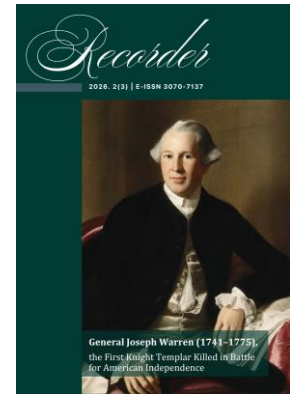




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From the Restoration of an Antique Masonic Knights Templar Sword (1840s–1850s)

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Abstract

This article presents the restoration of an antique sword that belonged to a member of the Masonic Order of Knights Templar. The study is based on a sword (MHAKT CGU. Collection 1. Swords. No. 116/KT101) acquired by the Museum of the History of the American Knights Templar (Houston, USA).

The study concludes that the sword, which entered the Museum's collection in an extremely poor state of preservation, proved, after restoration, to be a Knights Templar sword manufactured in Philadelphia by W.H. Horstmann & Sons. This sword manufacturer operated between 1840 and 1859. Although it is not currently possible to determine the precise year of manufacture, the available evidence makes it possible to attribute the sword to the pre-Civil War period. At present, this artifact is the oldest sword preserved in the Museum of the History of the American Knights Templar.

Keywords: Museum of the History of the American Knights Templar, Knights Templar sword, restoration, W.H. Horstmann & Sons, 1840s–1850s.

1. Introduction and Materials

In the spring of 2026, a sword believed to have belonged to a member of the Masonic Order of Knights Templar (MHAKT CGU. Collection 1. Swords. No. 116/KT101) was acquired by the sword collection of the Museum of the History of the American Knights Templar (Houston, USA).

The sword arrived in an extremely poor state of preservation and without its scabbard. The blade was completely covered with a thick layer of rust (Figs. 1–2).



Fig. 1. General view of the sword. The blade is entirely covered with a thick layer of rust.



Fig. 2. Blade. Close-up.

The sword's grip was made of ivory and was heavily encrusted with corrosion products resulting from both iron rust and the oxidation of copper or brass alloys (Fig. 3).



Fig. 3. The sword's ivory grip with extensive corrosion encrustations.

The sword's brass guard was also severely affected by metal oxidation (Figs. 4–5).



Figs. 4–5. The sword's brass guard.

Overall, it may be concluded that the sword entered the Museum's collection in a poor state of preservation. The decision to acquire an artifact in such condition was justified solely by the distinctive design of its guard, which represented a modified version of the Massachusetts-pattern Knights Templar swords used by the Grand Commandery of Massachusetts and several other Grand Commanderies. The modifications were limited to the central medallions. On the newly acquired sword, one side of the guard bears the Knights Templar cross and star emblem, while the reverse side displays another Masonic symbol—a skull and crossbones. By comparison, the guard of the Massachusetts-pattern sword features a rooster, an ancient symbol of Christianity (Fig. 6).



Fig. 6. The guard of the Massachusetts-pattern sword featuring a rooster, an ancient symbol of Christianity.

2. Results

Restoration Process

The initial stage of rust removal required approximately one week. Owing to the considerable thickness of the corrosion layer, treating the blade with WD-40 for eight hours produced no noticeable effect. Extending the treatment to 48 hours allowed part of the rust to be removed, after which the 48-hour treatment cycle was repeated. Ultimately, the corrosion was successfully removed from the blade, revealing the complete etched decoration.

Description of the Sword

The sword consists of five components: the blade with tang (Fig. 7), the guard (Fig. 8), the ferrule (Fig. 9), the ivory grip with an inlaid cross (Fig. 10), and the pommel (Fig. 11).



Fig. 7. Blade with tang.

The overall length of the sword is 830 mm, of which the blade measures 650 mm. The maximum thickness of the blade at the ricasso, adjacent to the guard, is 4 mm.



Fig. 8. Guard.

The guard measures 133 mm in length. Its maximum thickness is 19 mm.



Fig. 9. Ferrule.

The ferrule is 21 mm in length and 19 mm in width.



Fig. 10. Ivory grip with an inlaid cross.

The ivory grip measures 89 mm in height. In all probability, its original height was 90 mm. Its maximum width is 25 mm. The cross inlaid into the grip measures 34 mm in length.



Fig. 11. Pommel.

The pommel measures 46 mm in height. Its maximum width is 24 mm.

The disassembled sword is shown in Fig. 12.



Fig. 12. General view of the disassembled sword.

Blade Decoration

The etched decoration extends over a length of 275 mm on each side of the blade (Fig. 13).



Fig. 13. Extent of the etched decoration on the blade.

The sword has an obverse and a reverse side.

The obverse side displays the following features: on the tang beneath the guard are the number **43** and the letter **C**. Immediately above the guard is the image of a crowned king's head. Above it is a radiant cross, a symbol used by the Knights Templar to denote the senior officers of a Commandery. Higher still is the Order's motto, *In Hoc Signo Vinctes*, although it is only partially legible. Above the motto is a Templar cross within a shield, followed by two crossed standards and a decorative foliate motif. To facilitate visual examination, enlarged details of the features described above have been added to Fig. 14.



Fig. 14. Etched decoration on the obverse side of the blade.

The reverse side of the sword displays the following decorative elements. Near the lower portion of the blade, immediately above a foliate ornament, is the maker's mark, W.H. Horstmann & Sons. This sword manufacturer operated in Philadelphia between 1840 and 1859 ([Hamilton et al., 2008: 209](#)). Based on the surviving maker's marks, it is not currently possible to determine the exact date of manufacture. Nevertheless, the available evidence is sufficient to establish that this museum artifact ([MHAKT CGU. Collection 1. Swords. No. 116/KT101](#)) is the oldest sword in the collection of the Museum of the History of the American Knights Templar.



Fig. 15. Etched decoration on the reverse side of the blade.

Another distinguishing feature separating swords of the 1840s from those of the 1870s is the shape of the blade tip. On earlier swords, the blade terminates in a rounded tip, whereas on Massachusetts-pattern swords of the 1870s the tip is sharply pointed (Fig. 16).



Fig. 16. Blade tips of Massachusetts-pattern swords: 1870s tip (left) and 1840s tip (right).

Following the restoration work, the sword assumed the appearance shown in Fig. 17 and took its rightful place in the collection of the Museum of the History of the American Knights Templar.



Fig. 17. Restored sword. General view.

3. Conclusion

In conclusion, the sword that entered the collection of the Museum of the History of the American Knights Templar in an extremely poor state of preservation proved, after restoration, to be a Knights Templar sword manufactured in Philadelphia by W.H. Horstmann & Sons. This manufacturer produced swords between 1840 and 1859. Although it is not currently possible to determine the exact date of manufacture, the available evidence allows the sword to be attributed to the pre-Civil War period. At present, it is the oldest sword in the collection of the Museum of the History of the American Knights Templar.

References

[Hamilton et al., 2008](#) – *Hamilton, John D., Marino, Joseph, Kaplan James* (2008). *The American Fraternal Sword*. Woonsocket, Rhode Island: Andrew Mowbray Publishers.

[MHAKT CGU](#) – The Museum of the History of the American Knights Templar at Cherkas Global University.