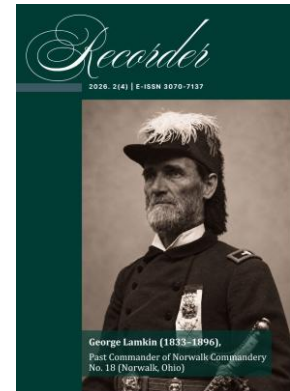




Publisher: East European Historical Society
So-publisher: Cherkas Global University

Published since 2025
E-ISSN 3070-7137
Recorder. 2026. 2(4): 564-574
DOI: 10.13187/rec.2026.4.564

Journal homepage:



The Portrait Gallery of the Museum of the History of the American Knights Templar: Collection Formation, Cataloging, and Historical Reconstruction

Violetta S. Molchanova ^{a, *}

^a Cherkas Global University, Houston, USA

Abstract

The article examines the history of the formation, principles of cataloging, and features of historical reconstruction of the Portrait Gallery of the Museum of the History of the American Knights Templar at Cherkas Global University. The purpose of the study is to examine the process of creating a specialized museum collection in 2024–2026 and determine its significance for the preservation of the historical and cultural heritage of the American Templar movement. The materials for the study were six painted portraits created by the artist Lyudmila N. Bogutskaya, historical photographs and images, museum objects, as well as scientific publications. The study used historical-descriptive and comparative-historical methods, as well as methods of museum attribution and cataloging. As a result, it was established that the formation of the Portrait Gallery was carried out in close connection with scientific projects and the development of museum collections. In creating the portraits, methods of historical reconstruction were applied using surviving images, authentic examples of Templar uniforms and regalia. The cataloging system of the collection was examined. Which received the status of an independent museum collection under number 7 on September 16, 2026. Particular attention is paid to the documentation of the works, establishing their provenance and connections with other museum exhibits. It is shown that the created gallery simultaneously performs scientific, memorial, and exhibition functions. It is concluded that the formation of the Portrait Gallery represents an example of a comprehensive approach to the study and preservation of the historical memory of the American Knights Templar. The results obtained can be used in organizing similar specialized museum collections and developing principles for their scientific cataloging.

Keywords: Cherkas Global University, Museum of the History of the American Knights Templar, Portrait Gallery, Knights Templar, museum cataloging, historical reconstruction, Lyudmila Nikolaevna Bogutskaya, historical and cultural heritage.

1. Introduction

The history of the American Masonic Order of Knights Templar is of interest not only from the point of view of the development of fraternal organizations, but also in the context of preserving the historical and cultural heritage of the United States. One of the directions of this work is the creation of museum collections dedicated to individual representatives of the American Templar movement.

On August 1, 2024, the Museum of the History of the American Knights Templar was established at Cherkas Global University, and the formation of the Portrait Gallery began within it. Its distinctive feature was the creation of modern painted portraits of historical figures based on surviving images and museum objects.

The purpose of our study is to examine the process of forming the Portrait Gallery in 2024–2026, to analyze the principles of historical reconstruction of images and the organization of cataloging of the created collection.

* Corresponding author

E-mail addresses: office@cherkasgu.press (V.S. Molchanova)

2. Materials and Methods

The materials for the study were the developing Portrait Gallery within the Museum of the History of the American Knights Templar. Let us recall that the museum was established on August 1, 2024, and from that time the museum began to be supplemented with portraits. During 2024–2026, six portraits were painted specifically for the museum, including two portraits in 2024, three portraits in 2025, and one in 2026. All portraits were created by the artist Lyudmila Nikolaevna Bogutskaya (born 1979) from the city of St. Petersburg, Russian Federation. Lyudmila Nikolaevna Bogutskaya (Fig. 1) was born in the city of Usinsk, USSR. She received private art education. Her main technique is oil painting on canvas. Portraiture is also among the artist's main genres. At present, her works are held in private collections in the United States, Ireland, Israel, China, and Russia. Six solo exhibitions of the artist during the period from 2012 to 2023 have been documented.



Fig. 1. Artist Lyudmila Nikolaevna Bogutskaya (born 1979)

On September 16, 2026, by Order No. 14/26 of Cherkas Global University, the Portrait Gallery became the seventh collection within the Museum of the History of the American Knights Templar.

The methodological basis of our study consisted of the traditional principles of historicism and objectivity, which made it possible to examine the formation of the Portrait Gallery in the context of the scientific and museum activities of Cherkas Global University. The study employed historical-descriptive and comparative-historical methods, as well as methods of museum attribution and cataloging.

The historical-descriptive method was used to reconstruct the chronological sequence of the creation of the portraits in 2024–2026. The comparative-historical method was applied to compare historical photographs and painted images with surviving examples of Templar uniforms and regalia. The methods of museum attribution and cataloging made it possible to systematize information about the works, determine their place in the museum collection, and establish connections with other exhibits (for example, Templar swords) and scientific publications.

3. Results

3.1. Formation of the Collection in 2024–2026

The formation of the Portrait Gallery was connected with the scientific projects that had begun, dedicated to the Masonic Order of Knights Templar. As the number of exhibits increased, ideas began to emerge for creating biographical studies of Masonic Knights Templar. One of the first such works was the biography of Frederick S. Rogers (1847–1908), whose Templar sword was kept in the Museum ([MHAKT CGU. Collection 1. Swords. Exhibit No. 007/KT005](#)). Frederick S. Rogers served in Monroe Commandery No. 12 (Rochester, NY).

Specifically for this work, a search for images of Frederick S. Rogers was conducted, and his portrait was commissioned with consideration of historical reconstruction. On October 17, 2024, the portrait of Frederick S. Rogers was completed (Fig. 2).



Fig. 2. Portrait of Frederick S. Rogers (1847–1908). Oil painting. 12 × 16 inches. Artist Lyudmila N. Bogutskaya. 2024 ([MHAKT CGU. Collection 7. Portrait Gallery. Exhibit No. 001](#)).

In the fourth issue of the journal *Bylye Gody* for 2024, Alexander Cherkas published the article “Sir Frederick S. Rogers (1847–1908) in the Museum Collection of Cherkas Global University” ([Cherkas, 2024](#)), in which the portrait of Frederick S. Rogers was published for the first time.

In October 2024, the sword of another Knight Templar, Civil War veteran, engineer, and inventor Eugene F. Falconnet (1830–1887), was also received for storage in the Museum ([MHAKT CGU. Collection 1.](#)

[Swords. Exhibit No. 034/KTo30](#)). In the postwar period, he served in Nashville Commandery No. 1 (Nashville, Tennessee). As part of the preparatory activities for a biographical study, his portrait was commissioned based on a discovered photograph of Eugene F. Falconnet in the uniform of a Knight Templar. The portrait was completed on November 24, 2024 (Fig. 3).



Fig. 3. Portrait of Eugene F. Falconnet (1830–1887). Oil painting. 12 × 16 inches. Artist Lyudmila N. Bogutskaya. 2024 ([MHAKT CGU. Collection 7. Portrait Gallery. Exhibit No. 002](#)).

At present, the portrait of Eugene F. Falconnet has not been published in the scientific literature.

In 2025, Alexander Cherkas began preparing a monograph on the history of one of the Knights Templar commanderies, namely Bethany Commandery No. 28 (Mendota, Illinois). Specifically for this project, a portrait based on a photograph was commissioned of one of the Commanders of the Commandery, Joseph William Edwards (1832–1925), who held this position in 1872–1873 and 1875–1877. Joseph William Edwards was also a Civil War veteran. Since the portrait was almost full-length, a large portrait format (16 × 24 inches) was provided for. On June 29, 2025, this portrait was completed (Fig. 4).



Fig. 4. Portrait of Joseph William Edwards (1832–1925). Oil painting. 16 × 24 inches. Artist Lyudmila N. Bogutskaya. 2025 ([MHAKT CGU. Collection 7. Portrait Gallery. Exhibit No. 003](#)).

The portrait of Joseph W. Edwards was first published in Alexander Cherkas's monograph "History of Bethany Commandery No. 28, Knights Templar (Mendota, Illinois)" ([Cherkas, 2025](#)).

The formation of museum exhibitions at the new residence of Cherkas Global University on the Polar Stone led to the commissioning of a portrait of De Witt Clinton (1769–1828), the First Grand Master of the Grand Encampment of Knights Templar of the USA. De Witt Clinton held this position from 1816 to 1828. Through historical reconstruction, a Sash of Knights Templar from that chronological period was added to the image. On September 3, 2025, this portrait was completed (Fig. 5).



Fig. 5. Portrait of De Witt Clinton (1769–1828). Oil painting. 16 × 24 inches. Artist Lyudmila N. Bogutskaya. 2025 ([MHAKT CGU. Collection 7. Portrait Gallery. Exhibit No. 004](#))

At present, the portrait of De Witt Clinton has not been published in the scientific literature.

In 2025, the book William Duncan's *Cicero's Select Orations* (Duncan, 1811) arrived from Australia at the P.A. Cherkasov Fundamental Library (Library of Cherkas Global University). According to inscriptions on the preliminary pages, in 1818 the book belonged to Benjamin Brown French (1800–1870), a well-known American politician and the 6th Grand Master of the Grand Encampment of Knights Templar of the USA. In connection with this, a portrait of Benjamin Brown French was commissioned for the Museum, which was completed on October 28, 2025 (Fig. 6).



Fig. 6. Portrait of Benjamin Brown French (1800–1870). Oil painting. 16 × 24 inches. Artist Lyudmila N. Bogutskaya. 2025 (MHAKT CGU. Collection 7. Portrait Gallery. Exhibit No. 005)

In 2026, Alexander Cherkas published a biographical study of Benjamin Brown French in the journal *Bylye Gody* (Cherkas, 2026), in which the portrait of the well-known politician and Templar was published for the first time.

In the same year, 2026, as part of museum activities to perpetuate the names of the first Grand Masters of the American Knights Templar, a portrait of Jonathan Nye (1783–1843), a clergyman and the 2nd Grand Master of the Grand Encampment of Knights Templar of the USA (who held this position in 1829–1835), was commissioned based on a historical photograph. On September 1, 2026, work on this portrait was completed (Fig. 7).



Fig. 7. Portrait of Jonathan Nye (1783–1843). Oil painting. 16 × 24 inches. Artist Lyudmila N. Bogutskaya. 2026 ([MHAKT CGU. Collection 7. Portrait Gallery. Exhibit No. 006](#))

At present, the portrait of Jonathan Nye has not been published in the scientific literature.

Thus, despite its young age, the Portrait Gallery of the Museum of the History of the American Knights Templar currently performs three interrelated functions: it serves as a source of illustrative material for scientific publications, contributes to the visualization of the results of biographical studies, and makes it possible to present historical figures in the permanent museum exhibition.

3.2. Cataloging and Organization of Museum Records

As we have already noted, on September 16, 2026, the Portrait Gallery received the status of a developing museum collection with its own cataloging system. In the museum record ([MHAKT CGU. Collection 7. Portrait Gallery. Exhibit No. 005](#)). MHAKT CGU means The Museum of the History of the American Knights

Templar at Cherkas Global University. Next, the collection number, 7, and the collection name, Portrait Gallery, are indicated, followed by the inventory number of the exhibit.

An important part of cataloging is the creation of a museum record card. A museum record card template was prepared specifically for Collection 7 and is presented in Fig. 8.

Field	Content
Exhibit Number	
Object Title	
Sitter	
Life Dates	
Historical Position	
Historical Image Source	
Reconstruction Details	
Artist	
Date of Creation	
Medium	
Dimensions	
Place of Creation	
Historical Context	
Provenance	
Acquisition Date	
Collection	
Condition	
References	

Fig. 8. Museum record card template.

An important part of cataloging is storage, preservation, and digital recordkeeping. All the portraits presented in this work are kept in the exhibition room of the Museum (Main Hall) in Houston. At the time of inspection, no damage to the frames or portraits was found. Lighting is provided by directional yellow-colored lamps or yellow-colored light fixtures (Fig. 9). The temperature in the Museum is 77 °F, or approximately 25 °C. Professional photographic documentation of the front side of each work has been carried out for all portraits.



Fig. 9. Placement of a portrait under a yellow-colored light fixture.

For better visualization, we have summarized some information about the portraits in a summary table (Table 1).

Table 1. Summary Characteristics of Collection 7. Portrait Gallery

No.	Sitter	Year of Creation	Dimensions, inches	Exhibit Number
1	Frederick S. Rogers	2024	12 x 16	001
2	Eugene F. Falconnet	2024	12 x 16	002
3	Joseph W. Edwards	2025	16 x 24	003
4	De Witt Clinton	2025	16 x 24	004

5	Benjamin B. French	2025	16 x 24	005
6	Jonathan Nye	2026	16 x 24	006

Table 1 shows that during 2024–2026, six portraits were painted for the Museum of the History of the American Knights Templar. The first two portraits measured 12 × 16 inches, while the remaining portraits measured 16 × 24 inches.

3.3. Sources of Historical Images and the Degree of Authenticity of the Portraits

Historical authenticity was achieved in several ways: reconstruction from several images using uniforms represented in the Museum; reconstruction from previously painted portraits with the addition of historically authentic clothing details; and the use of historical photographs in which the Templar was depicted in uniform. Thus, for example, an image of another portrait of De Witt Clinton was used to prepare the portrait of De Witt Clinton, while the Sash of Knights Templar added during the reconstruction belonged to Thomas Smith Webb (1771–1819). In 1816, Thomas Smith Webb was the Deputy Grand Master of the Grand Encampment of Knights Templar of the USA, while De Witt Clinton was the Grand Master. An image of the Sash was published in Francis J. Scully's monograph *History of the Grand Encampment of Knights Templar of the United States of America* (Scully, 1952: 67). The sash was added to the portrait of De Witt Clinton in order to connect De Witt Clinton with the Order of Knights Templar, since no other historical images of De Witt Clinton with Templar symbolism have been found at present.

To create the portrait of Joseph W. Edwards, a personal photograph of the sitter and the original uniform and sword (MHAKT CGU. Collection 1. Swords. Exhibit No. 008/KT006) of another Commander from Bethany Commandery No. 28, Casper Ruedy (1835–1896), from the same historical period, which are preserved and exhibited in the Museum of the History of the American Knights Templar, were used (Cherkas, 2025: 26–27). Thanks to this set, the historical uniform was recreated in the portrait with maximum authenticity.

A similar situation occurred with the portrait of Frederick S. Rogers. Four images of Frederick S. Rogers were found in books, three in civilian clothing and one in the everyday uniform of a Knight Templar. Taking into account the sets of everyday uniforms belonging to the Grand Commandery of New York preserved in the Museum, to which Monroe Commandery No. 12 belonged, the uniform of Frederick S. Rogers was recreated.

The portraits of Benjamin B. French, Eugene F. Falconnet, and Jonathan Nye were painted from surviving historical photographs in which the Templars were depicted in uniform.

Thus, the authenticity of all six portraits can be considered high.

4. Conclusion

As a result of the study, it was established that the formation of the Portrait Gallery of the Museum of the History of the American Knights Templar in 2024–2026 was carried out in close connection with the scientific research and exhibition activities of the Museum. During the period under study, six painted portraits of historical figures of the American Templar movement were created by the artist L. N. Bogutskaya.

A distinctive feature of the formation of the collection was the use of historical photographs and painted images. As well as authentic items of Templar uniforms and regalia, which made it possible to carry out a historical reconstruction of the appearance of the persons depicted. The creation of an independent cataloging system ensured the systematization of information about the works and their connections with other museum objects.

Thus, the Portrait Gallery represents not only an art collection but also the result of comprehensive scientific and museum work aimed at studying, visualizing, and preserving the historical memory of the American Knights Templar.

References

- Cherkas, 2024 – Cherkas, Alexander (2024). Sir Frederick S. Rogers (1847–1908) in the Museum Collection of Cherkas Global University. *Bylye Gody*. 19(4): 1674-1682.
- Cherkas, 2025 – Cherkas, Alexander (2025). History of Bethany Commandery No. 28, Knights Templar (Mendota, Illinois). Houston: Cherkas Global University Press. 181 p.
- Cherkas, 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.
- Duncan, 1811 – Duncan, W. (1811). *Cicero's Select Orations*. New Haven: New York (Evert Duyckinck) и New Haven (I. Cooke & Co.).
- MHAKT CGU – The Museum of the History of the American Knights Templar at Cherkas Global University.
- Scully, 1952 – Scully, Francis J. (1952). *History of the Grand Encampment of Knights Templar of the United States of America*. Greenfield, Indiana: Wm. Mitchell Printing Co.