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Published in the USA  
 Bylye Gody  
 Has been issued since 2006.  
 E-ISSN: 2310-0028  
 2025. 20(1): 188-195  
 DOI: 10.13187/bg.2025.1.188

Journal homepage:  
<https://bg.cherkasgu.press>



## 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

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### Abstract

This work details the collections of the Museum of the History of the American Knights Templar dating to between the second half of the 19th and the early 20th centuries.

The materials for the study included several emerging collections at Cherkas Global University's Museum of the History of the American Knights Templar. Currently, the museum features four major collections – the sword collection, the uniform collection, the badge collection, and the photo collection.

The study's findings revealed that as at December 31, 2024, the four collections at Cherkas Global University's Museum of the History of the American Knights Templar contained a combined 215 artifacts. The largest number of artifacts are in the uniform collection (80 items), followed by the badge collection (68), the sword collection (55), and, lastly, the photo collection (12). Most items in the museum collections date to between the second half of the 19th and the early 20th centuries, although there are also some that date to an earlier time. Some of the museum's items, like, for instance, those in the uniform collection, have already been exhibited. Overall, Cherkas Global University organized seven different exhibits in 2024. The museum's 8th exhibit was launched on January 13, 2025.

**Keywords:** museum, Cherkas Global University, American Knights Templar, Masonic order, period between the second half of the 19th and the early 20th centuries.

### 1. Introduction

The scattered Masonic Knights Templar organizations created in the United States in the late 18th century united into one – the General Grand Encampment – in 1816. At that time, the organization had barely 300 members ([Chicago Illustrated..., 1880: 58](#)). In 1856, the General Grand Encampment now had nearly 5,000 members ([Proceedings..., 1859: 331-332](#)), and the figure surpassed 114,000 in 1898 ([Proceedings..., 1898: 98](#)). The organization's dynamic development led to the accumulation of a substantial layer of artifacts, with many of these destined to become an item in a public or private collection. The present work examines the collections of the Museum of the History of the American Knights Templar at Cherkas Global University dating to between the second half of the 19th and the early 20th centuries.

### 2. Materials and methods

The materials for the study included several emerging collections at Cherkas Global University's Museum of the History of the American Knights Templar. Currently, the museum features four major collections – the sword collection, the uniform collection, the badge collection, and the photo collection.

In terms of methodology, the study relied on the historical-chronological and systems methods. The use of the historical-chronological method helped zero in on the subject matter of the museum's exhibits and determine the date of emergence of the items featured there. The use of the systems method helped

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systematize the items in groups and gain insight into patterns in the evolution of those items (e.g., that of the Knights Templar swords).

### 3. Discussion

The historiography of the subject under consideration can be divided into two major themes: 1) works addressing the subject of the Knights Templar through the lens of the museum collections of Cherkas Global University; 2) works examining various aspects of Cherkas Global University's activity. Let us take a closer look at these.

The museum collections of Cherkas Global University devoted to the Masonic order of Knights Templar have been drawn upon as a source in research more than once. Of particular note is the research by Alexander Cherkas, who has reconstructed the biographical portraits of the Knights Templar represented in the museum collections of Cherkas Global University, including Frederick S. Rogers (1847–1908) (Cherkas, 2024), Albert A. Marden (1824–1919) (Cherkas, 2024a), George S. Blackie (1834–1881) (Cherkas, 2024b), and Albert E. Worthington (1849–1915) (Cherkas, 2024c). Most of that research was produced in commemoration of one's birth anniversary.

Among the works devoted to Cherkas Global University, of particular note are the one by V.V. Tarakanov and M.A. Ponomareva, which discusses the results of the work of the International Network Center for Fundamental and Applied Research (INCFAR) over the first 5 years of operation (2014–2019) (Tarakanov, Ponomareva, 2019), the ones by G. Rajović and A.A. Cherkasova, which look at the organization's first print medium (Rajović, 2021; Cherkasova, 2022), the ones by A.A. Cherkasova and I.Yu. Cherkasova, which explore various aspects of Cherkas Global University's activity (Cherkasova, 2022a; Cherkasova, 2022b; Cherkasova, 2023; Cherkasova, 2023a; Cherkasova, 2023b), and, lastly, the one by A.Yu. Peretyatko, which focuses on the organization's publication activity (Peretyatko, 2024).

### 4. Results

The Museum of the History of the American Knights Templar at Cherkas Global University is currently in a stage of active formation. The decree for the establishment of the museum was signed on August 1, 2024, and as early as by December 31, 2024, the following collections were launched at it:

- 1) The sword collection, comprised of 55 items, with 50 of these belonging to the Masonic order of Knights Templar.
- 2) The uniform collection, comprised of 80 items (coats, aprons, belts, and sashes).
- 3) The badge collection, comprised of 68 items (badges, badge pins, ribbons, and jewels).
- 4) The photo collection, comprised of 12 items (portrait and group photos of members of the Knights Templar and promotional materials produced by Knights Templar commanderies in the United States (souvenir postcards)).

Concurrently with the development of its museum collections, Cherkas Global University has also been building a special collection of documents related to the Masonic order of Knights Templar in the United States (Holding 3), which today already contains a number of fairly unique sources. For example, there is *Register of De Molay Commandery No. 26 (1901–1955)*, which includes over 500 names and which was employed in a study exploring the biographical portrait of Sir Albert A. Marden (1824–1919), who served De Molay Commandery No. 26 as Recorder all the way until his passing (Cherkas, 2024a).

As already mentioned earlier, as at December 31, 2024, the museum's sword collection contained 55 items, with 50 of the swords belonging to the Masonic order of Knights Templar, four swords belonging to other orders (Order of Knights of Malta and Knights of the Golden Eagle), and one sword being a European item manufactured in the 1650s.

The swords of the Masonic order of Knights Templar have some very peculiar characteristics that distinguish them from those of other orders. More specifically, most Knights Templar swords have a helmet-shaped pommel (Figure 1), have a scabbard with a crown with a cross in it (Figure 2), and are monogrammed 'KT' (i.e., 'Knights Templar') (Figure 3).



**Fig. 1.** Sword's helmet-shaped pommel



**Fig. 2.** Crown with a cross in it on a sword



**Fig. 3.** KT monogram on a sword

All Knights Templar swords are inscribed with the owner's name. One's name appears typically on one of the sides of the blade (Figure 4), and sometimes on the scabbard.



**Fig. 4.** Owner's name inscribed on the blade of a sword

Two of the 50 Knights Templar swords are presentation swords, and one of these two used to belong to Casper Ruedy, a northerner who took part in the American Civil War (Figure 5).



**Fig. 5.** Presentation sword of Casper Ruedy, Past Eminent Commander, given to him by Bethany Commandery No. 28, KT



Little is known of the owner of that sword. Casper Ruedy was born in 1835. In 1877, he was Generalissimo (second-in-command) of Bethany Commandery No. 28 ([The Past and Present...](#), 1877: 323). Accordingly, he must have been Eminent Commander in 1878, and he must have received that sword as Past Eminent Commander in 1879.

The uniform collection is comprised of elements of Knights Templar clothing such as coats, aprons, belts, and sashes. The Knights Templar uniform has two variations – the white uniform and the black one. Also, the uniform of an Officer is different from that of a Knight. On January 13, 2025, the Museum of the History of the American Knights Templar at Cherkas Global University unveiled the main stand for its 8th exhibit ([Figure 6](#)).



**Fig. 6.** Main stand for the 8th exhibit at Cherkas Global University's Museum of the History of the American Knights Templar

The main stand features six members of the order of Knights Templar (four Eminent Commanders and two Sir Knights) and a 1900 Knights Templar flag. Shown in [Figure 6](#) from left to right are: Eminent Commander of Bethany Commandery No. 28 (Mendota, Illinois), Eminent Commander of Temple Commandery No. 2 (Albany, New York), Eminent Commander of Columbian Commandery No. 1 (New York, New York), Eminent Commander of New Haven Commandery No. 2 (New Haven, Connecticut), Sir Knight of Genesee Valley Commandery No. 15 (Flint, Michigan), and Sir Knight of De Witt Clinton Commandery No. 2 (Portsmouth, New Hampshire). The white feathers in the hats and the white sashes are in keeping with the white uniform, and the black ones correspond with the black one. The exhibit features five members in the white uniform and one in the black one.

On the whole, the uniform has been reproduced fairly accurately, with the exception of a few details – specifically, the fact that Exhibits 3 and 4 need aprons and the fact that Exhibits 2 and 3 are supposed to have yellow buckles.

The badge collection contains 41 exhibits and includes ribbons, badge pins, and jewels ([Figures 7, 8, 9 and 10](#)).



**Fig. 7.** Central City Commandery No. 25 badge    **Fig. 8.** Guard Officer's jewel



**Fig. 9.** Monroe Commandery No. 12 ribbon    **Fig. 10.** Damascus Commandery No. 58 Drill Corps badge pin

Lastly, the photo collection consists of personal (Figure 10) and group (Figure 11) photos of members of the Knights Templar and souvenir postcards produced by Knights Templar commanderies in the United States (Figure 12).



**Fig. 10.** Knight of the De Witt Clinton Commandery



**Fig. 11.** Officers of New Haven Commandery No. 2





**Fig. 12.** Colorado Commandery No. 1 postcard

## 5. Conclusion

As at December 31, 2024, the four collections at Cherkas Global University's Museum of the History of the American Knights Templar contained a combined 215 artifacts. The largest number of artifacts are in the uniform collection (80 items), followed by the badge collection (68), the sword collection (55), and, lastly, the photo collection (12). Most items in the museum collections date to between the second half of the 19th and the early 20th centuries, although there are also some that date to an earlier time. Some of the museum's items, like, for instance, those in the uniform collection, have already been exhibited. Overall, Cherkas Global University organized seven different exhibits in 2024. The museum's 8th exhibit was launched on January 13, 2025.

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