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## The History of Education

### Sir Albert E. Worthington (1849–1915) in the Museum Collection of Cherkas Global University: Commemorating the 175th Anniversary of His Birth

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#### Abstract

This work commemorates the 175th anniversary of the birth of Albert Edwin Worthington (1849–1915), a member of the Masonic order of Knights Templar. It offers a biographical account of his life and examines a sword that used to belong to him.

The source base comprised the following three groups: 1) items of material culture from the museum collection of Masonic swords at Cherkas Global University; 2) personal documents from commercial US databases; 3) regional periodical press materials (specifically, those from the newspaper *Transcript-Telegram* for 1915).

The study's findings revealed that Albert E. Worthington (1849–1915) was a fairly well-rounded person. During his youth, he received a good education and was professionally engaged in choral singing as a tenor – eventually, he remained attached to the choir at his local Baptist church throughout his life. Around 1885, he joined Masonry (a local Masonic lodge and Springfield Commandery No. 6, KT). It is this period that his sword which is part of the sword collection at Cherkas Global University (Exhibit No. 036/KTO32) appears to date to. As regards his personal life, A.E. Worthington married twice and had three children. To date, no photographs of A.E. Worthington have been found, leaving the search for a likeness of him ongoing.

**Keywords:** Albert Edwin Worthington (1849–1915), tenor singer in a church choir, musical education, biography, Springfield Commandery No. 6, Knights Templar, museum collection, private university.

#### 1. Introduction

October 18, 1849, saw the birth of Albert Edwin Worthington, a member of the Masonic order of Knights Templar, in the city of Springfield, Massachusetts. Consequently, October 18,

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2024, marked the 175th anniversary of his birth. The Masonic sword collection at Cherkas Global University contains a sword that used to belong to him (Exhibit No. 036/KT032), and that is what adds relevance to the research reported in this paper.

## 2. Materials and methods

The source base comprised the following three groups: 1) items of material culture from the museum collection of Masonic swords at Cherkas Global University; 2) personal documents from commercial US databases; 3) regional periodical press materials (specifically, those from the newspaper *Transcript-Telegram* for 1915).

A valuable piece of material culture employed in this work was Exhibit No. 036/KT032 from the museum collection of Masonic swords at Cherkas Global University (Washington, DC, USA). This item is a rare Masonic sword (Figure 1), with a guard decorated with crosses and an ebony hilt.



**Fig. 1.** Front and back views of the Knights Templar Masonic sword which belonged to Albert E. Worthington (Exhibit No. 036/KT032)

One side of the sword's blade features the name of its owner – Albert E. Worthington, and the other, the name of the commandery he served – Springfield Commandery No. 6, KT (Figure 2).



**Fig. 2.** Inscriptions on the sides of the sword's blade (Exhibit No. 036/KT032)

The sword's ebony hilt (Figure 3) and silver-colored scabbard attest that it used to belong to a member of the Masonic order of Knights Templar.



**Fig. 3.** Hilt and guard of the sword (Exhibit No. 036/KT032)

Thus, based on the inscriptions on the sword, it used to belong to a Knight Templar named Albert E. Worthington, who was a member of Springfield Commandery No. 6, Feeding Hills, Massachusetts.

A search for similar swords led to an indistinguishably similar sword of a Knight Templar which, likewise, belonged to Springfield Commandery No. 6 (Figure 4). This attests that the sword was not an exclusive (presentation) weapon belonging to the owner, but was one of those routinely issued to Springfield Commandery No. 6 officers.



**Fig. 4.** Similar sword belonging to a Knight Templar from Springfield Commandery No. 6

Use was also made of the commercial database Ancestry.com (Ancestry.com) to establish the man's full name and birth and death years and gain insight into various details of his life.

Specifically, it was established that Albert Edwin Worthington was born on October 18, 1849, in Springfield, Hampden County, Massachusetts (Ancestry.com. Massachusetts), to a 42-year-old father, Henry Worthington, and a 35-year-old mother, Henrietta Renton (Records of the Bureau of the Census, 1850: 80). He died on May 20, 1915, in Agawam, Hampden County, Massachusetts, at the age of 65, and was buried in the same city.

### 3. Literature review

The historiography dealing with biographical accounts of the lives of various figures in the Masonic movement spans nearly 200 years. One of the first such works is C. Staats's 'Tribute to the Memory of De Witt Clinton, Late Governor of the State of New-York' (Staats, 1828). De Witt Clinton (1769–1828) was the first Grand Master of the General Grand Encampment of Knights Templar for the United States of America. He occupied this post from 1816 until his death in 1828. A noteworthy work that came out a little later is W. W. Campbell's 'The Life and Writings of De Witt Clinton' (Campbell, 1849).

Fourteen years later, and that was during the Civil War in the United States, a work entitled 'Leaflets of Masonic Biography: Or Sketches of Eminent Freemasons' was published under the editorship of the Mason C. Moore (Leaflets of Masonic Biography, 1863). This collection of biographies comprises 13 biographical works, which include biographical accounts of the lives of famous Masons such as Joseph Warren, Christopher Wren, Thomas Smith Webb, Rev. James Anderson, and Benjamin Franklin. The authors, besides C. Moore himself, include W.P. Strickland, Sidney Hayden, and Henry C. Deming.

The increase in the number of members of the Masonic order of Knights Templar appears to have been accompanied by a sharp increase in the number of biographical works on them. Of particular note is J.D. Richardson's 'Tennessee Templars: A Register of Names, with Biographical Sketches, of the Knights Templar of Tennessee, and Brief Histories of the Grand and Subordinate Commanderies', published in 1883 (Richardson, 1883). The work contains biographies of the state's 13 famous Masons, including Henry M. Aiken, George S. Blackie, and George C. Connor. On a side note, it presents a history of the Grand Commandery of Tennessee.

Another work worthy of mention is G.A. Lawrence's 'Sir Knight Lee Stewart Smith, Most Eminent Grand Master of the Grand Encampment of Knights Templar of the United States of America, 1916–1919', published in 1920 (Lawrence, 1920). Among the 1960s works, of particular note is 'Eugene F. Falconnet, Soldier, Engineer, Inventor', written by H. L. Swint and D. E. Mohler about Sir Eugene F. Falconnet, a participant in the Civil War, engineer, and inventor (Swint, Mohler, 1962), who, among other things, was a member of Nashville Commandery No. 1 (Nashville, Tennessee).

The topic remains one of relevance today. It is worth mentioning here two of our own works related to it – the one on Sir Frederick S. Rogers (1847–1908), who was a member of Monroe Commandery No. 12 (Rochester, New York) (Cherkas, 2024), and the one on Sir Albert A. Marden

(1824–1919), who was Recorder of De Molay Commandery No. 26 (New Ulm, Minnesota) ([Cherkas, 2024a](#)).

#### **4. Results**

The afore-mentioned Masonic sword belonged to Springfield Commandery No. 6, part of the Grand Commandery of Massachusetts. Springfield Commandery No. 6 was one of the many different organizations in the city of Springfield, part of Hampden County, at the beginning of the 20th century. There are no dedicated publications on the history of Springfield Commandery No. 6, but there is a mention of it in the 1902 book “Our County and Its People”: A History of Hampden County, Massachusetts’ ([“Our County and Its People”..., 1902](#)). Here is what it says about the organization: “Springfield Commandery Knights Templar is the only commandery in the county. Its present membership is more than six hundred and it has numbered among its members many of the leading citizens of the county. The movement for its organization was set on foot in the fall of 1825, there being a number of Knights in Springfield and vicinity who had received their knighthood in New York or Boston. On February 22, 1826, the movement took shape, and a meeting was held in the old Masonic hall which stood at the corner of Main and State streets in Springfield, the site of the present Masonic temple. At this meeting it was decided to petition the Grand Encampment for a charter. A petition already prepared was thereupon signed by Koswell Lee, Henry Dwight, Alpheus Nettleton, John B. Kirkham, Abiram Morgan, Major Goodsell, Arnold Jenckes, Amasa Holcomb and Hezekiah Cady.

Village Encampment of Greenwich, having jurisdiction over the territory in which the new encampment desired to be created, was requested to sanction the granting of a charter and its sanction was given. In June following the charter was granted, but for some reason, unknown to the present generation of Knights Templar, the charter was not signed until June 19, 1830, four years later. However, the delay in signing the charter did not operate to the disadvantage of the new organization, which has always ranked as of June 19, 1826 ([“Our County and Its People”..., 1902: 477-478](#)). Its relative position in order of precedence was retained when the change was made from encampments to commanderies of Knights Templar. Henry Dwight was the first Eminent Commander of the commandery or encampment. The commandery flourished until 1831, when in common with Masonic bodies it felt the anti-Masonic sentiment so strongly that it apparently abandoned work. From January 5, 1831, until July 4, 1851, the records are blank. In 1851, Sirs James W. Crooks, John B. Kirkham, Ocran Dickinson, Daniel Reynolds, Amos Call and James H. Call succeeded in reviving interest in the work, and from that date in July when the first meeting for twenty years appears to have been held, the interest in the knightly degrees has never flagged. But it was in 1861, when the late Judge W. S. Shurtleff was elected Eminent Commander, that the commandery took up the work with enthusiasm, his incumbency of the high office marking an epoch in the history of the commandery ([“Our County and Its People”..., 1902: 478](#)). This brief note gives us an idea of how Springfield Commandery No. 6 of Knights Templar developed. Albert E. Worthington, who was in his early 50s at the time, was one of the organization’s 600 members as at 1900.

In terms of biographical information on Albert E. Worthington, the following was written about him in the newspaper *Transcript-Telegram* on May 21, 1915, the day following his death: “Mr. Worthington was born in Springfield, being the youngest son of Henry and Henrietta (Renton) Worthington. His parents came to Agawam when he was two years old and bought a farm of his uncle, Amos Worthington. A few years later he bought the farm about opposite. It had previously been an old tavern stand owned and carried on by another uncle, Ambrose Worthington. Here Albert Worthington grew to young manhood. He was educated in the public schools of the town and the Connecticut Literary Institution in Suffield, Ct. He developed considerable musical ability, and was under the instruction and training of Prof. Zuchtman in Springfield for some time. He had an unusually fine voice. He united with the Baptist church in May, 1864, and occupied the position of tenor singer in the choir of that church for many years. He followed the occupation of a farmer, being foreman on the large farm of L. L. Whitman for some years. May 30, 1878, he was united in marriage to Miss Mary A. K. Whitman, daughter of the late L.L. Whitman of Agawam. Mrs. Worthington died May 24, 1883, leaving a little daughter. Mr. Worthington was again married March 17, 1887, to Miss Evelyn E. Bitgood, who survives him. He leaves, besides his widow, two daughters, Mrs. Charles Relyea of Hartford, Ct., and Mrs. Guy Perry of Agawam, also one brother, Henry R. Worthington of Yarmouth, and one sister, Mrs. J.N. Cook of Agawam” ([Transcript-Telegram, 1915](#)). As we can see, the obituary

says nothing about A. E. Worthington's service in Springfield Commandery No. 6, and the reasons behind that are not known.

## 5. Conclusion

The study's findings revealed that Albert E. Worthington (1849–1915) was a fairly well-rounded person. During his youth, he received a good education and was professionally engaged in choral singing as a tenor – eventually, he remained attached to the choir at his local Baptist church throughout his life. Around 1885, he joined Masonry (a local Masonic lodge and Springfield Commandery No. 6, KT). It is this period that his sword which is part of the sword collection at Cherkas Global University (Exhibit No. 036/KT032) appears to date to. As regards his personal life, A. E. Worthington married twice and had three children. To date, no photographs of A.E. Worthington have been found, leaving the search for a likeness of him ongoing.

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