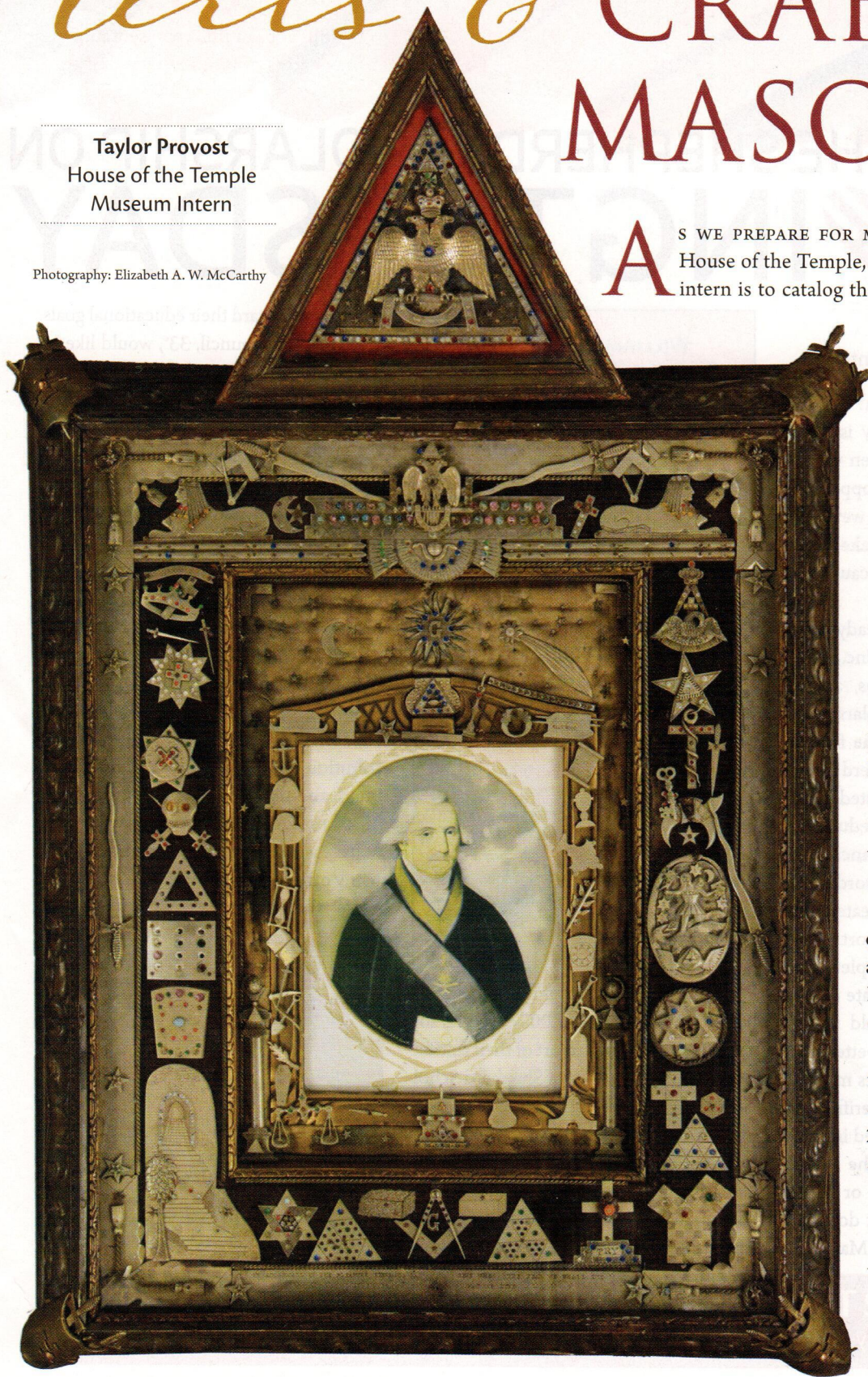


Arts & CRAFT MASONRY

Taylor Provost
House of the Temple
Museum Intern

Photography: Elizabeth A. W. McCarthy

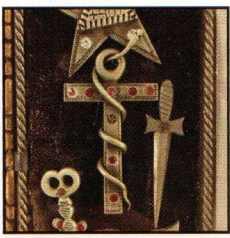


AS WE PREPARE FOR MORE RENOVATIONS OF THE House of the Temple, one of my tasks as a museum intern is to catalog the many artifacts in our collection.

One such artifact is an ornate, handmade frame made of wood, metal, fabric, and multicolored stones. Inside is a photographic reproduction of the famous William Williams portrait of George Washington. Both portrait and frame tell an interesting story.

William Joseph Williams was a portrait painter from Philadelphia who, in 1792, requested a portrait from President Washington by way of a letter from General Henry Lee. His initial appeal, however, was denied; Washington replied that he felt sitting for portraits was irksome and time-consuming, so he would only sit for them if they had been “requested by public bodies, or for a particular purpose (not of the Painters) and could not, without offence be refused.”¹

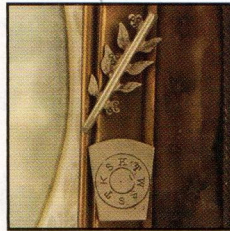
Williams, therefore, went to Washington’s lodge, Alexandria-Washington Lodge No. 22 in Alexandria, Virginia,² and offered them a portrait of the President if they would convince him to sit for it. The officers of the lodge wrote Washington in 1793 expressing their desire of a “correct likeness” of the lodge’s illustrious past master:



We deem it an honor of the highest and most pleasing nature, that our Charter is distinguished by your name, and if no greater could be conferred upon us, we might be satisfied that the parent of our Institution is the greatest character of the age.... To this end we beg leave to solicit you to set for your portrait. The

person we have chosen to execute the painting is Mr. Wm Williams, an American Artist—From a number of Specimens we have seen of this Gentleman's performance, we are persuaded he is the most successful portrait painter that we have yet seen or heard of in America.³

Washington agreed, and the portrait was completed by Williams in September 1794.⁴ It is believed to be the only authentic picture of the general from life in Masonic regalia. The portrait shows Washington as a Virginia past master, wearing an apron, collar, sash, and past master jewel—now the Grand Master of Virginia jewel—with a sun inside a compass and quadrant. He is depicted with many facial marks that do not appear on most other portraits of Washington: a mole under the right ear, scar on left cheek, and smallpox scars on the nose and cheeks.



The magnificent frame that holds this portrait is believed to have been made by Joseph F. Kimmel, 32°, in 1921. Kimmel was born in Ulm, Germany, in 1875 and moved to the United States to eventually work as a machinist in Washington, DC. He

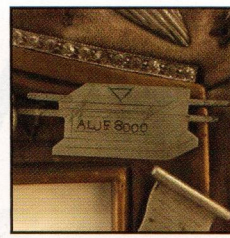
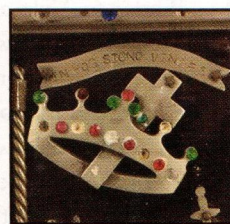
was a Scottish Rite Mason who was initiated, passed, and raised at Mattoon Lodge No. 260 in Mattoon, Illinois, and received the rest of his degrees in Washington, DC, in 1920.⁵



According to a handwritten note on the back of the frame, presumably by Kimmel, the frame is composed

of ninety-one different Masonic emblems from the first to thirty-third degrees. Around the inner border are emblems from the Blue Lodge degrees, such as the beehive, scales of justice, sprig of acacia, and the ark of the covenant. The middle border contains emblems from the higher degrees of both the Scottish Rite and York Rite. Some of these include: the cross and crown of Knights Templar, pelican from 18°, Rose Croix, 25°. Knight of the Brazen Serpent Jewel, and the keystone from the Royal Arch Chapter. The outer border consists of the checkered floor, representing King Solomon's Temple.

The emblems and symbols were originally set with 721 different-col-



ored stones and over 250 metal stars, although in the almost 100 years since the frame was made, some of these pieces have fallen out. Regardless, it is still a beautiful representation of the degrees of Freemasonry, built by a brother, and preserved for posterity at the House of the Temple Museum. ✚

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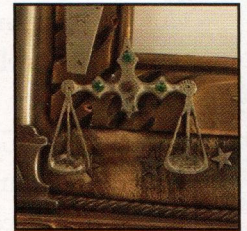
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ENDNOTES

1. "From George Washington to Henry Lee, 3 July 1792," in *The Papers of George Washington, Presidential Series*, vol. 10, 1

March 1792–15 August 1792, ed. Robert F. Haggard and Mark A. Mastromarino (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2002), 515–516.

2. Some sources maintain that Williams was also a Freemason, possibly also a member of A.W. Lodge No. 22, but there is no formal record that this was the case. (Eisen, 1932; Williams, 1933; Jeffares, 2006).

3. "To George Washington from Masonic Lodge, No. 22, Alexandria, Virginia, 29 August 1793," in *The Papers of George Washington, Presidential Series*, vol. 13, 1 June–31 August 1793, ed. Christine S. Patrick (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2007), 575–576.

4. G. A. Eisen, *Portraits of Washington, Volume III* (New York: Robert Hamilton and Assoc., 1932), 596.

5. Joseph F. Kimmel's membership card from the Archives of the Supreme Council, 33°, Southern Jurisdiction, USA.

