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Sir Jeremiah Tinkham Richmond (1829–1906): Sketches for a Historical Portrait

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Abstract

The paper examines the main stages of the life and activities of Jeremiah Tinkham Richmond (1829–1906), an American entrepreneur, public and political figure, as well as a representative of the Masonic movement in Massachusetts in the second half of the 19th and early 20th centuries. The study was initiated by the examination of a ceremonial Knights Templar sword from the collection of the Museum of the History of the American Knights Templar at Cherkas Global University (Houston, USA), on the blade of which the owner's initials and surname, as well as the name Old Colony Encampment, have been preserved. The source base of the study consisted of published proceedings of the Grand Commandery of Massachusetts and Rhode Island, biographical and reference publications of the late 19th century, newspaper publications from 1906, and materials from the museum collection. The methodological basis of the study consisted of the principles of historicism and systematicity, as well as historical-biographical and historical-chronological methods. As a result of the study, the identity of the sword's owner was established, and the main stages of his professional, socio-political, and Masonic activities were reconstructed. It was shown that Jeremiah Tinkham Richmond participated in the work of local government bodies, engaged in entrepreneurial activities, and belonged to several Masonic organizations. Particular attention was paid to his service in Old Colony Commandery, where he held the position of Eminent Commander. Based on an analysis of the annual proceedings, it was suggested that he was first elected to this position around 1889. A comparison of documentary and material sources made it possible to clarify the attribution of the ceremonial sword that belonged to him and to tentatively date its manufacture to the 1880s.

Keywords: Jeremiah Tinkham Richmond (1829–1906), American Freemasonry, Knights Templar, Old Colony Commandery, Grand Commandery of Massachusetts and Rhode Island, ceremonial sword, historical biography.

1. Introduction

The study of the history of American Freemasonry in the second half of the 19th and early 20th centuries is of interest not only from the perspective of the development of Masonic organizations but also in the context of the social, political, and economic life of the United States. Many representatives of the Masonic movement were active participants in local government, entrepreneurs, public figures, and politicians. In this regard, the study of their biographies makes it possible to consider Freemasonry as one of the components of American public life during this period.

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Preserved objects of Masonic material culture, including ceremonial swords of American Knights Templar, are of particular importance for historical-biographical research. Such objects often contain the names of their owners, the names of commanderies, manufacturers' marks, and other information that makes it possible to establish their origin and ownership. Comparing material sources with published documents, periodicals, and biographical reference works creates opportunities for reconstructing individual episodes in the lives and activities of representatives of American Freemasonry.

One such historical object is a ceremonial Knights Templar sword held in the collection of the Museum of the History of the American Knights Templar at Cherkas Global University (Houston, USA). The name of the owner, J.T. Richmond, as well as the name Old Colony Encampment, has been preserved on the blade of the sword. The study of this exhibit served as the starting point for conducting historical-biographical research. In the course of this research, it was possible to establish the identity of the sword's owner, Jeremiah Tinkham Richmond (1829–1906), who lived in Massachusetts and actively participated in the social, political, and Masonic life of his time.

The purpose of this study is to reconstruct the main stages of the life and activities of Jeremiah Tinkham Richmond (1829–1906) on the basis of published historical sources and materials from the Museum of the History of the American Knights Templar, as well as to clarify the attribution and dating of the ceremonial sword that belonged to him. Particular attention is paid to his professional and socio-political activities, participation in the American Masonic movement, and service in Old Colony Commandery.

2. Materials and Methods

The source base of the study is represented by several groups of historical sources:

1. Collections of published documents. This group of historical sources includes the annual proceedings of the Grand Encampment of Knights Templars and the appendant Orders of Massachusetts and Rhode Island for 1864, 1874, and 1891 (Proceedings of the Grand Encampment..., 1864; Proceedings of the Grand Commandery..., 1874; Proceedings of the Grand Commandery..., 1891).

2. Materials from the Museum of the History of the American Knights Templar (Houston, USA), namely a museum exhibit – a Knights Templar sword (MHAKT CGU. Collection 1. Part I. Swords. Exhibit No. 112/KT098).

3. Publications in reference works. For example, the Annual Register of the Executive and Legislative Departments of the Government of Massachusetts was used (Annual Register..., 1893).

The most important historical source is a museum exhibit – a Masonic Knights Templar sword that belonged to Jeremiah T. Richmond (Figure 1).



Fig. 1. General view of the sword and scabbard (MHAKT CGU. Collection 1. Part I. Swords. Exhibit No. 112/KT098) (MHAKT CGU. Collection 1. Part I. Swords. Exhibit No. 112/KT098)

Let us describe this exhibit. A sword with a scabbard. The guard has a design characteristic of the Grand Commandery of Massachusetts and Rhode Island (Figure 2).



Fig. 2. The guard is characteristic of swords belonging to commanderies within the Grand Commandery of Massachusetts and Rhode Island.

On one side of the blade, the name of the sword's owner, J.T. Richmond, is inscribed (Figure 3).



Fig. 3. Information about the sword's owner.

On the other side of the blade, the name of the commandery, Old Colony Encampment, is inscribed (Figure 4).



Fig. 4. The name of the commandery, “Old Colony Encampment,” is inscribed on the reverse side of the blade

The sword bears the manufacturer's mark (Figure 5).



Fig. 5. Manufacturer's mark – Ames MFG. Co., Chicopee, Mass

Ames MFG. Co., Chicopee, Mass., operated in Chicopee from 1847 to 1898 (Hamilton et al., 2008: 207). This allows us to immediately state that the sword was manufactured in the 19th century.

The sword's scabbard had ornamentation traditional for Knights Templar swords (Figure 6).



Fig. 6. Upper part of the sword's scabbard

The scabbard was most likely made of silver.

Thus, the initial information about the sword provides details about the owner's name and characteristic design features, which makes it possible to associate the sword with the Grand Commandery of Massachusetts and Rhode Island and identify the name of the commandery without indicating its number.

It is rather strange that the name of the commandery is inscribed not as Old Colony Commandery, but as Old Colony Encampment.

The fact is that Old Colony Encampment was located in Abington, Mass., and was established on October 26, 1863. Initially, the commandery had No. 14, but by 1874 it already had No. 15 (Proceedings of the Grand Commandery..., 1874: 105), and it was known as an Encampment only during the initial period of its existence (Proceedings of the Grand Encampment..., 1864: 43).

The methodological framework is based on the principles of historicism and systematicity. Historical-biographical and historical-chronological methods were employed. The former method was used to select sources and literature related to the life and activities of Jeremiah T. Richmond (1829–1906), while the latter method allowed the study to be structured in a retrospective perspective.

3. Discussion

The historiography of our study is not extensive, as Jeremiah T. Richmond is mentioned in only a few publications. One such work is *Biographical Review. Vol. XVIII. Containing Life Sketches of Leading Citizens of Plymouth County, Massachusetts* (Biographical Review..., 1897). A brief biography of Jeremiah T. Richmond was published in this volume. Other publications are newspaper reports on the death of Jeremiah T. Richmond in 1906. There are at least three such publications, which appeared in the newspapers *Boston Evening Transcript*, *The Evening Herald*, and *Middleboro Gazette* in 1906 (Richmond, 1906; Taunton, 1906; Abington man..., 1906).

4. Results

In the genealogical database Ancestry.com, we conducted a search using the initials and surname in combination with the known place of residence. As a result, it was established that J.T. Richmond of Abington, Mass., had the full name Jeremiah Tinkham Richmond (1829–1906) and was a well-known political figure in Abington (Ancestry.com). This determined the direction of further research, and the following information was established.

4.1. Jeremiah Tinkham Richmond: Early Life and Development

Jeremiah Tinkham Richmond was born on March 24, 1829, in Taunton, Bristol County, Massachusetts (Taunton, 1906: 5). His parents were Ruel Richmond (1804–1879) and Reliance (Tinkham) Richmond (1809–1844). The father was a well-to-do farmer on the banks of the Taunton River. They had eight children.

Jeremiah Tinkham Richmond was educated in public and private schools in Taunton. At about the age of twenty-two he entered into the retail shoe business in Taunton. In 1864 he removed to Abington, where he entered the employ of Nash & Jones, shoe manufacturers, having charge of the machinery. He set up and operated the first New Era pegging machine in this county. The firm soon after changed to Nash & Beal, Mr. Richmond remaining in their employ for a period of sixteen years. He invariably transacted all business intrusted to his care in such a way as to win the confidence of those by whom he was employed (Biographical Review..., 1897: 339).

In 1890s he was Trustee and Auditor of the Abington Savings Bank, and a Director of the Electric Light and Power Company of Abington and Rockland (Biographical Review..., 1897: 339). An active member of the Congregational church, he was for ten years superintendent of the Sunday-school (Biographical Review..., 1897: 340)

Mr. Richmond was married May 26, 1851, to Miss Almira H. Dean, of Raynham, Mass., daughter of O. S. and Lodicea (Hall) Dean. Her grandfather, Seth Dean, was an officer in the Revolutionary army. To Mr. and Mrs. Richmond six children were born, among them: Frank R., Alice D., Clara M., Charles O., George T., and Jesse H. Richmond (Biographical Review..., 1897: 339).

Jeremiah Tinkham Richmond died on February 20, 1906, in Abington, Massachusetts, at the age of 76 (Ancestry.com).

4.2. Jeremiah Tinkham Richmond as a Politician

In politics Mr. Richmond is a Republican. He has efficiently served the public in a number of important offices. While in the legislature, he was on the Committee on Prisons; in 1892 and 1893 he was a member of the Town Board of Registrars (Figure 7) (Annual Register..., 1893: 1149), and he has been for some time on the School Committee of Abington (Biographical Review..., 1897: 340).

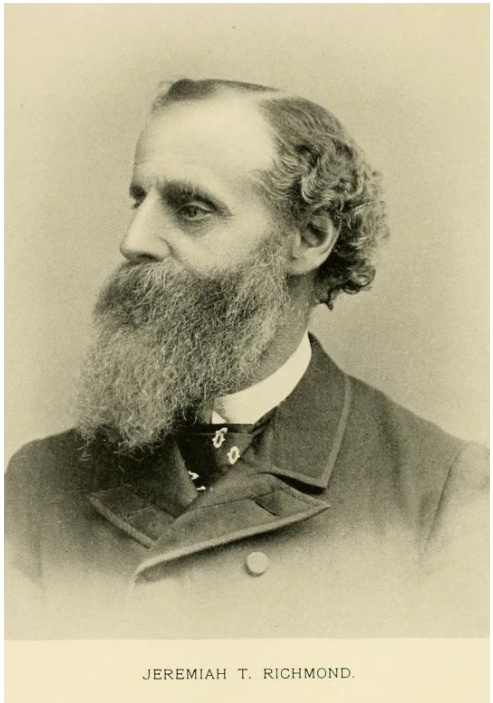


Fig. 7. Jeremiah Tinkham Richmond. 1892 (Biographical Review..., 1897: 338)

3. Jeremiah Tinkham Richmond as a Freemason

As a Mason, he is a member of John Cutler Lodge and Pilgrim Royal Arch Chapter; and he is Past Commander of Old Colony Commandery, Knights Templars (Biographical Review..., 1897: 340). The obituary published in the Boston Evening Transcript on February 21, 1906, noted that Jeremiah T. Richmond was Past Master of John Cutler Lodge A.F.&A.M. of Abington (Richmond, 1906: 12). In addition, it stated that the deceased was a member of Boston Lodge of Perfection (Richmond, 1906: 12). The least informative was the obituary notice published in the *Middleboro Gazette*, which contained only the most general statements about the life and activities of the deceased (Abington man..., 1906: 3).

In 1891, Jeremiah Tinkham Richmond was elected to the position of Eminent Commander (Proceedings of the Grand Commandery..., 1891: 114). At the same time, his name appears in the lists of Past Commanders (Proceedings of the Grand Commandery..., 1891: 118), indicating that he had previously held this position. In American Knights Templar commanderies with a small membership, there was a practice of annually re-electing the same individuals to officer positions, as a result of which certain knights could be elected to leadership positions for several consecutive years. In the list of Past Commanders, Richmond's name appears in the penultimate position. Since the list is arranged not alphabetically but probably chronologically, it can be assumed that he was first elected to the position of Eminent Commander around 1889.

Taking into account all the information obtained, the manufacture of the sword can be dated to the 1880s. This dating is based not only on the period of activity of the manufacturer Ames MFG. Co., but also on information about the Masonic career of its owner. According to the Proceedings of the Grand Commandery for 1891, Jeremiah Tinkham Richmond was already among the Past Commanders of Old Colony Commandery. Since the acquisition of a personal ceremonial sword was associated with initiation into the Knights Templar, which preceded election to the position of Eminent Commander, the manufacture of this sword should be attributed to an earlier period, presumably the 1880s.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, we would like to note that the study made it possible to reconstruct the main stages of the life and activities of Jeremiah Tinkham Richmond (1829–1906), an American entrepreneur, public and political figure, as well as one of the representatives of the Masonic movement in Massachusetts in the second half of the 19th century. It was established that his professional activities were associated with the shoe industry, banking, and local government, while his public activities included participation in legislative and municipal bodies.

Freemasonry occupied a special place in the life of Jeremiah Tinkham Richmond. He was a member of John Cutler Lodge, Pilgrim Royal Arch Chapter, Boston Lodge of Perfection, and Old Colony Commandery. It was established that Jeremiah T. Richmond held the positions of Worshipful Master and Eminent Commander. An analysis of the annual proceedings of the Grand Commandery of Massachusetts and Rhode Island suggests that he was first elected to the position of Eminent Commander around 1889 and held this position again in 1891.

An important result of the study was the attribution of a ceremonial Knights Templar sword from the collection of the Museum of the History of the American Knights Templar (Houston, USA). Based on the preserved inscriptions, the manufacturer's mark, and information about the Masonic career of its owner, the sword was identified as belonging to Jeremiah Tinkham Richmond, and its manufacture was tentatively dated to the 1880s. Thus, the study made it possible not only to supplement the historical portrait of Jeremiah Tinkham Richmond but also to clarify the historical context of the museum exhibit.

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