

Silver Trophies of the Grand Encampment

By
Sir Knight Paul Scheeler, PC

Antique silver expert John D. Ward was guest speaker at the Illinois Lodge of Research annual meeting on 7 October 2011, at the Springfield Hilton Hotel. Mr. Ward is Vice President and head of the Department for Silver and Objects of Vertu at the New York office of Sotheby's, the global auction firm founded in 1744 which operates in forty countries, with principal salesrooms in New York, London, Hong Kong, and Paris.

His presentation featured research on Masonic patrons and silversmiths who created opulent trophies including punch bowls, libation sets, candelabra, tea services, and ornamental objects such as loving cups. These were offered as prizes at marching drill competitions during state and national conclaves of Knights Templar. Commissioned by the Grand Encampment, these masterpieces were presented to champion drill corps from the early 1870s through the 1920s. His talk featured pieces from the collection of St. Bernard Commandery No. 35 of Chicago, including their sterling silver libation set made by the Gorham Co. given as second prize at the 1901 Triennial in Louisville, Kentucky.

"Mr. Ward determined that our liba-



Photo courtesy of St. Bernard Commandery No. 35.

tion set was made by a silversmith who was the Master of a Lodge in Rhode Island. We know the craftsmen who assisted him, their labor and materials costs, and the jeweler who sold the set. We even learned of similar libation sets that might also have been crafted by the same artisans," said Paul Scheeler, Past Commander of St. Bernard Commandery No. 35. "As a fraternal historian, I look forward to John's further research



LIBATION SET, WON BY ST. BERNARD DRILL CORPS, AT 35TH TRIENNIAL CONCLAVE, KNIGHTS' TRMPLAR, 1901.

Photo courtesy of St. Bernard Commandery No. 35.

on our five other trophies, any discoveries regarding those awarded to rival drill corps, and possibly even trophies presented at the state level.”

Champion Drill Corps of Interest

An initial review of Grand Encampment and Grand Commandery proceedings show existing commanderies that won trophies include: California No. 1 and Golden Gate No. 16 from California, Colorado No. 1 from Colorado, Columbia No. 2 from the District of Columbia, St. Bernard No. 35 from Illinois, Raper No. 1 from Indiana, Mount Olivet No. 12 from Kansas, Louisville-DeMolay No. 12 from Kentucky, Reed No. 6 and Hanselmann No. 16 from Ohio, Detroit No. 1 and DeMolai No. 5 from Michigan, Damascus No. 1 from Minnesota, and Ivanhoe No. 24 from Wisconsin.

Additional Commanderies with significant trophies may include: Los Angeles No. 9 and Golden West No. 43 from California; Joliet No. 4, Ivanhoe No. 33, and Evanston No. 58 from Illinois; Akron No. 25 from Ohio; Godfrey de Boullion-Washington No. 4 from Massachusetts; Beauseant No. 8 from Maryland; Minneapolis Drill Corps from Minnesota consisting of Zion No. 2, Darius No.7, and Minneapolis Mounted No. 23; Oriental No. 35 from Missouri; Cyrene No. 7 from New Jersey; Cyrene-Monroe No. 12 from New York; Tancred No. 82 from Texas; and Kenosha No. 30 from Wisconsin.

Particularly important are original invoices that might be in the Grand Recorder’s archives, either with the Grand Encampment or respective state Grand Commanderies. Related ephemera such as publicity photos, jewelers’ catalogs, or news articles describing the object



Photo courtesy of St. Bernard Commandery No. 35.

can also help illustrate the historic and intrinsic value of a piece.

Not all Commanderies that won Triennial prizes during the so-called “Golden Age of Fraternalism,” i.e. the post-Civil War Reconstruction era through World War I (or in the view of some scholars, the start of the Great Depression) have survived. Defunct Commanderies thought to have won silver trophies or other prizes during this period include: Chicago No. 19, Siloam No. 54, Columbia No. 63, and Lincoln Park No. 64 which merged with St. Elmo No. 64; Englewood No. 59 and Woodlawn No. 76 also of Illinois which merged with Mizpah No. 53; Emporia No. 8 of Kansas; and Apollo No. 15 of New York.

knight templar

Provenance Influences Valuation

For two decades Mr. Ward has presided over the sale of some of the world’s rarest and most valuable collections of silver, including objects of historic significance. He has placed works currently on public display with the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, the Gilbert Collection in London, the Winterthur Museum and Country Estate in Delaware, as well as other major institutions in major American cities and the British National Trust.

At Sotheby’s Americana Week in January 2011, an important pair of American silver wine cups by Paul Revere, Jr. “The Patriot,” Boston 1792, attained a price at

auction of \$752,500. The cups were commissioned by Moses Michael Hayes, who founded The Massachusetts Bank in 1784 operating today as Bank of America. Artist and patron both served in the Grand Lodge of Massachusetts. In the year 1792 when the cups were made, Hays was Grand Master and Revere his Deputy. Hays had been Master of King David's Lodge in New York, the first Jewish Masonic Lodge in America, while Revere was one of the earliest Knights Templar in the United States. Masons composed a third of Revere's recorded clientele and spread across ten lodges including one in Surinam, and about two-thirds of his fellow Masons at St. Andrew's Lodge in Boston were clients.

"These findings highlight the importance of fraternal organizations in the patterns of patronage and diffusion of design, something that is just beginning to be in-

vestigated and which deserves to be better appreciated," said Mr. Ward. "For Commanderies and other Masonic bodies with major silver artifacts, it is vital to the historic provenance and accurate valuation of each piece, whether being evaluated for sale or insurance appraisal purposes, that the patron or jeweler who commissioned the object be identified. This process starts with the silversmith's mark typically stamped on the underside, and original invoices or early photographs can also prove quite useful."

A native of Springfield, Illinois, John Ward joined Sotheby's in 1997 and holds a bachelor of arts from the University of Chicago and master's degree in the history of decorative arts from the Bard Graduate Center for Studies in the Decorative Arts, New York. For more information contact: john.ward@sothebys.com, or Paul Scheeler at oldchicagoyorkrite@msn.com.



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