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Mysterious Messages: Masonic Imagery in Baltimore Album Quilts

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MYSTERIOUS MESSAGES:
MASONIC IMAGERY IN BALTIMORE ALBUM QUILTS

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the American Studies Program

The College of William and Mary in Virginia

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

By

Anne Bayne Battaile

2000

APPROVAL SHEET

This thesis is submitted in partial fulfillment of

the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines imagery in Baltimore album quilts that may be Masonic. Because of the secretive nature of fraternal orders such as the Masons, it is impossible to know the relationship between Masons (who were male) and quilters (who were female).

A comparison of the motifs on two album quilts (in the Colonial Williamsburg collection) with other quilts and Masonic objects establishes a correlation between quilt squares and Masonic material culture. Though women were not Masons, they were privy to Masonic information taking through books, pamphlets, and ceramics. Other influences on album quilt designs include ladies' magazines and religion.

A study of mid-nineteenth century Baltimore culture establishes the context in which women produced album quilts. As society changed, education and leisure time became part of the lives of middle class women. The combination of these factors combined with an influx of textiles created an environment where album quilts (that were time-consuming to make) were a creative outlet for women with time and money.

This study concludes that women did have access to Masonic material culture but probably did not understand the meanings of Masonic images. Masonic images influenced the designs of album quilts, and when studied, these quilts can provide information about the ideology of the makers or the owners thereby revealing societal roles, Masonic themes and meanings.

**MYSTERIOUS MESSAGES:
MASONIC IMAGERY IN BALTIMORE ALBUM QUILTS**

Baltimore album quilts were produced in and around Baltimore, Maryland, in the mid-nineteenth century. These quilts incorporate many decorative motifs that were fashionable during the period including some imagery that may be Masonic. Because the Masons were an exclusively male and very secretive organization, the identity, meaning and source of some of these images is mysterious. Who transferred the Masonic motifs from traditional fraternal materials to quilt designs, or who was allowed access to this classified information?

Two Baltimore album quilts with motifs that may be Masonic are found in the collections of the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation. Two quilts (in the Smithsonian Institute collections) made by Eliza Hussey bear unmistakable Masonic devices. This study will use them to link known Masonic symbols to ladies' work and to argue that some of the motifs on the two Colonial Williamsburg quilts are in the Masonic tradition. The provenance, makers and owners of these quilts have been identified. Therefore, it is possible to examine the motifs in order to determine whether these quilts are a part of Masonic material culture, or merely an anomaly. Masonic imagery in album quilts will be explored by looking intensively at these two examples.

Album quilts were a product of a distinct era in Baltimore history. The economy was thriving, textile production was booming, and gender roles were evolving to allow women more leisure time. When leisure time and ornate textiles were combined with an artistic flair, album quilts were produced. Making them was time consuming. These quilts were not made for daily use and are not heavily padded (like traditional quilts) for warmth. These quilts were primarily a creative

outlet for Baltimore women who had free time, money to spend on exquisite textiles, and a flair for design that translated contemporary motifs into quilt patterns. Because of the invested time, money and skill, album quilts were a socially prestigious object that exhibited a woman's creativity. The question is: to what extent are some of them linked to Masonry?

CHAPTER I

THE EDUCATED EYE

The purpose of many art history classes is to educate a student's "eye" to look for qualities, characteristics, trends in styles and identifying marks of a specific artist. Identifying Masonic imagery in a quilt is much the same as for any other object. Without some knowledge of important figures and emblems it would be easy to overlook the implications and reminders of the Masonic presence on many objects. Although Masonic imagery appears frequently, few people recognize it on the most mundane of objects.

Masonic patterns of membership and beliefs and a brief history of the Masons help to explain Masonic imagery. "Freemasonry evolved in England as a philosophical fraternal brotherhood deriving its ceremonies and symbolism from the rules and craftsmanship of the ancient stonemason's guilds."¹ Stonemason's guilds were governed by "Old Charges," a set of regulations and rituals embedded in a constitution. Between 1717 and 1725 revisions were made to the Old Charges which led to a split in the Masons. The resultant groups were labeled the "Ancients" who were strict traditionalists, and the "Moderns" who accepted the revisions.

Each group of Masons is called a Lodge. Each Lodge follows a constitution and elects leaders from within its membership but is also governed by a larger Grand Lodge. The Grand Lodge is comprised of Lodges that are within the same city, area or state. Each Lodge sends representatives to Grand Lodge meetings and Grand Lodge leaders preside at special Lodge events.

It is difficult to unravel the hierarchy of knowledge in the Freemasons, not only are the proceedings, rituals and emblems very secretive but the levels of

¹John D. Hamilton, *Material Culture of the American Freemasons* (Lexington, Massachusetts: Museum of Our National Heritage, 1994) 3.

It is difficult to unravel the hierarchy of knowledge in the Freemasons, not only are the proceedings, rituals and emblems very secretive but the levels of initiation can be confusing as well.

An understanding of Freemasonry is imparted to initiates through an ascending series of steps or degrees by which the candidate receives a higher condition of knowledge. The first three degrees in Freemasonry are known as “symbolic” degrees. They are lessons concealed from outsiders but unfolded to initiates by secret ceremonies in terms of symbols derived from the science, craft, and tools of the ancient stonemasons who, according to biblical traditions, were employed in the building of King Solomon’s Temple.²

The various levels of initiation have labels attesting to the rank that the member has achieved. Master, Grand Master, Most Excellent Master, and Royal Arch Degree are a few of the names and levels of initiation afforded to Masons.

“Traditional British Masonic prohibition on politics (as well as on religion) in the Lodge was founded on a kind of religious idealism - from which American Masonry had retained the ‘religious’ while dropping the idealism.”³ The Constitution of Masonry reads: “Whosoever from love of knowledge, interest or curiosity, desires to be a Mason, is to know, that as his foundation and great corner stone, he is to believe firmly in the Eternal God, and to pay that worship which is due to Him as the great Architect and Governor of the Universe.”⁴

Masonic religious belief is traced to Old Testament texts, and Hiram who

²Hamilton 4.

³Piatigorsky, Alexander. *Who’s Afraid of the Freemasons?* (London: Harvill Press, 1997) 173.

⁴*The Virginia Text-Book Containing a Digest of the Laws of the Grand Lodge of Virginia with Illustrations of the Work.* Originally compiled by John Dove. 9th ed. (Richmond, VA: Everett Waddey Co., 1907)

Though this text is from Virginia rather than Maryland, and was published (in its 9th form) fifty years after the period of study, the original version was first published in 1846 (p. 5). Several other publishers printed this book through the years as seen on the Virginia Historical Society catalog. It can be assumed that since Virginia had its own text of this sort, Maryland would as well though no text could be found in the catalog of the Maryland Historical Society. The only distinguishing marks that make this a “Virginia” text is the list of Virginia’s Grand Masters and listing of some lodges within the state. The Constitution of Masonry and other ritual descriptions are uniform, no matter what state.

was King of Tyre when Solomon and David were kings of Israel, holds a special place in the ritual beliefs of Masons. “Hiram king of the city of Tyre sent messengers to David, along with cedar logs, carpenters, and stonecutters. They built a palace for David (2 Samuel 5:11).”⁵ The first recognized Masons were the stonemasons who constructed the Temple for Solomon and later David, thus the name “Mason” is used to describe the group. The *Virginia Text-Book* offers a description of Solomon’s Temple, as interpreted by the Masons:

This magnificent structure was founded in the fourth year of the reign of Solomon, on the second day of the month of Ziff, being the second month of the sacred year. It was located on Mount Moriah, near the place where Abraham was about to offer up his son Isaac, and where David met and appeased the destroying angel. Josephus informs us that although more than seven years were occupied in its erection, yet during the whole period it did not rain in the daytime, that the workmen might not be obstructed in their labor; and from sacred history we also learn that there was not the sound of axe, hammer, or any tool of iron heard in the house while it was building. It was supported by 1,453 Columns, 2,906 Pilasters, all hewn of the finest Parian Marble. There were employed in its erection, in addition to our first there Most Excellent Grand Masters, 3,300 Overseers, 80,000 Fellow Crafts, and 70,000 Entered Apprentices; and these were all so classed and arranged by the Masonic Art and Wisdom of King Solomon, that neither envy, discord, nor confusion was permitted to interrupt that universal peace and harmony which pervaded the world at that important period.⁶

The inclusion of orders of Masons (Overseers, Fellow Crafts, etc.) suggests that the initiation divisions are thought to have descended to modern Masons from their ancient predecessors.

At various times in American history Masonry was embraced; at others it was shunned. Soon after settlement, in the seventeenth century Masonry was very popular and many famous leaders were Masons. “At least twenty signatories of the Declaration of Independence of 1776, including George Washington, were

⁵*The Youth Bible*, New Century Version. (Dallas, TX: Word Publishing, 1991) 278.

Freemasons, most of whom belonged to the Grand Lodges previously warranted as provincial by the Grand Lodge of England.”⁷ Other famous Masons from that period include Edmund Randolph, John Marshall -- both were Grand Masters of Virginia,⁸ Benjamin Franklin, James Monroe, Henry Clay and Andrew Jackson.

American Masonry, . . . was not, in the main, an urban phenomenon. At the beginning of its decentralized, atomic existence, it continued to be based on small towns, townships, and provincial settlements. . . . Masonry often functioned as a kind of Duplicate of the local communities. . . . to American Masons Masonry is first and foremost an institution.⁹

American Masons saw the fraternity not as a way of life or a set of codes by which to live, but as a group in which to belong, making their membership less passionate than their English predecessors. This is not to say, however, that they were not passionate about the group.

Masonic groups have not always thrived in America. Eighteenth-century society, which was influenced by Diests and Anglicans, frowned upon ritualistic displays. In the Anglican Church, the ceremonial celebration of the Eucharist was simplified in an attempt to abandon ritual. This anti-ritual shift was detrimental to the Masons, as ritual is the fiber of their existence. Masons were not accepted because their prayerful, devout attention is not given to God, but rather to the Great Architect. Upon examination of the Constitution of Masonry it is clear that God and the Great Architect are one and the same, but to many the use of “Great Architect” was sacrilegious. “Against this background not only was Masonic Ritual seen as the apotheosis of pagan superstition, but the Freemasons’ own blend of Deism, rationalism, and Natural religion was also totally rejected.”¹⁰

In the early 1800s, American society did not accept Masonic belief or even

⁶*Virginia Text-book* 203-4.

⁷Piatigorsky 152.

⁸*Virginia Text-book* 75.

⁹Piatigorsky 169.

¹⁰*Ibid* 164.

the existence of the group. “When the provincial liberalism of the eighteenth century had died out altogether with the Masons of the third generation, the anti-Masonic opposition was left to do battle with social diversity.”¹¹ By the 1830s the Anti-Masonic Party had developed and was led by “the staunch Protestant” John Quincy Adams with a “refined Deist Protestantism as its ideological platform.”¹² The Anti-Masonic Party did not endure for many years. Despite its short lifespan, it had

among its active membership a presidential candidate, two state governors, and a great many judges and members of the Federal and State legislatures. The anti-Masonic campaign revealed itself with particular strength in the position taken by the churches, especially at the opposite ends of the religious spectrum - the Catholic Church and most radically Puritan denominations - where suspicion of Masonry had been fermenting since the end of the eighteenth century.¹³

During this period Masonic groups slipped out of public view. Membership dropped, social and political activism diminished, and the Masons seemed to vanish from the landscape.

By the 1840s Masonic groups were again active, and their membership rolls were growing. The growth in popularity and economic stability allowed for Lodges to purchase property and collectively own many “temples,” which is the name given to the physical building in which a Masonic Lodge meets. As the membership grew and the economy strengthened, material possessions of the group increased. “Luxury” items such as dishes, jewelry, furniture and specialized clothing including ceremonial gloves and aprons, became affordable. The availability of these items made the iconography of the Masons more widely recognized although many aspects of Masonic belief and practice were supposedly secret.

To begin examining the material culture of the Masons, the largest and most

¹¹*Ibid* 172.

¹²*Ibid* 166.

¹³*Ibid* 171.

obvious of their possessions, the building, must first be explained. The building where Masonic meetings are held is called a Lodge and within it, the meeting room is called a Temple. Several physical characteristics identify the space as a Temple rather than simply a room for a meeting. First, there are several raised platforms on which leaders sit. The most important platform at the eastern end of the lodge room is formally raised on a dais with three symbolic steps, each representing one of the degrees.¹⁴ The Master presides from an arm chair placed on a dais. The Master, being the most important person within a single lodge, was elevated both physically and symbolically on a platform. (See Figure 1.)

At the west end of the meeting room, brass pillars were placed. “Two hollow brass pillars were erected on the porch of Solomon’s Temple. Named Jachin and Boaz, they are contradictorily described in Scripture. They are first alluded to in the Masonic catechisms of the eighteenth century as historical details rather than symbols.”¹⁵ After several Masonic lecturers toured American Temples, added meaning was ascribed to these pillars. Lecturer William Hutchinson said that “the pillars were not only ornamental, they also carried emblematic import in their names: Boaz being “strength” and Jachin, “it shall be established” or stability.”¹⁶ (See Figure 2.)

Masonic floor cloths were painted depictions of how the interior of a lodge was supposed to appear, whether symbolically or realistically. These floor cloths provide evidence of how objects were arranged within a Temple and also show many Masonic symbols together. The arrangement of an album quilt is also similar to the arrangement of designs on floor cloths. (See Figure 3.)

The design of some album quilts seem to reflect the organization and

¹⁴Hamilton 52.

¹⁵*Ibid* 53-54.

¹⁶*Ibid* 54.

structure of a Lodge. The most important features of the quilt are centrally located and are often raised through the basic appliqué technique. But also, the placement of the most important designs at or near the top center of the quilt is much like the placement of the dais in the Temple. And, smaller, less important designs surround the main design and provide visual support within the context of a balanced quilt pattern. Borders flank the main quilt designs, much like the pillars of Jachin and Boaz. It is uncanny that the Lodge is called an “oblong square” which is exactly the geometric configuration of a quilt.

All Masonic emblems are vested with a meaning, some of which can be deciphered through comparisons, textual references and recurrent patterns. Masonic emblems appear in a variety of places and contexts. Some are displayed in very public ways, such as on a tavern sign while others are only seen by initiates. Aprons, gloves, pins and rings are some of the most popular accessories for personal decoration or display. Generally, Masonic aprons and gloves are worn only for rituals and rites such as funerals.

Lodge furniture is often decorated with symbolic emblems. Chairs, mantles, desks, pillars, and floor coverings are all embellished with Masonic motifs to show Lodge ownership and to provide members with a constant reminder of virtues. According to *The Virginia Text-book*, different symbols indicate the level of initiation that a Mason has achieved. There are some redundancies in the images, such as the compass and square placed on a Bible, which is shown in both the Fellow Craft and Master Mason sections.

The compass and square, tools of the carpenter and stonemason, are frequently found on Masonic paraphernalia. The combination of the compass and square is probably the most recognizable Masonic design. This design is easily identifiable as Masonic, rarely would a compass and square be seen together in a context that is not Masonic. Since this is a universally recognized symbol it usually

is placed on the exterior of a Lodge to convey the use of the building to passers-by.

The working tools of a Fellow Craft are here introduced, and explained, which are-- THE PLUMB, SQUARE AND LEVEL. The Plumb is an instrument used by operative Masons to try perpendiculars; the Square, to square their work; and the Level, to improve horizontals; but we, as Free and Accepted Masons, are taught to make use of them for more noble and glorious purposes. The Plumb admonishes us to walk uprightly in our several stations in life, before God and man, squaring our actions by the Square of virtue; and by the Level a King is reminded that although a crown may adorn the head, and a sceptre the hand, yet the blood in his veins is derived from the same Almighty Parent, and is no better than that of the humblest citizen, and teaches us all that we are traveling on the broad level of time to that undiscovered country from whose bourne no traveler returns.¹⁷

Mallets, trowels and other carpentry tools also are used since they are the traditional implements of stonemasons and carpenters.

THE WORKING TOOLS Of a Master Mason are all the implements of Masonry indiscriminately, more especially the trowel. The Trowel is an instrument used by operative Masons to spread the cement which unites a building into one common mass or whole; but it is used symbolically for the far more noble and glorious purpose of spreading the cement of Brotherly Love and Affection, which unites us into one sacred band or society of friends and brothers -- a Temple of living stones, among whom no contentions could ever exist, save that noble contention, or rather emulation, of who can best work and best agree.¹⁸

The symbolic explanations offered in the *Virginia Text-Book* allow the reader, whether Mason or not, to better understand the importance and meaning of various mundane objects.

Since Masons apply special meanings to ordinary objects lay people rarely recognize that the object carries significance. Lay people would only recognize images as Masonic if they had been exposed to a variety of Masonic emblems. Stars appear in many places, with varying meaning; some might be Masonic emblems. Five pointed stars indicate the Five Points of Fellowship, a part of ritual

¹⁷*The Virginia Text-book* 191.

¹⁸*Ibid* 200-201.

initiation. “The grip or token is the first of the Five Points of Fellowship . . . which are Hand to Hand, Foot to Foot, Knee to Knee, Breast to Breast, and hand over Back.”¹⁹ This ritual is further explained as: “the sign of horror, the sign of sympathy, the penal sign, the sign of grief and distress, and the sign of Joy and Exultation.”²⁰

The five pointed star is also the main emblem of Eastern Star, a division of Masons created in 1855 for women. Prior to that date women could not belong to a Masonic group in any capacity. A six-pointed star within a circle is the sign of the Royal Arch branch of the Masons. Eight-pointed stars were used on occasion with other Masonic icons such as the compass and square superimposed, or appearing within the star.

Often eagles are shown carrying banners on quilt squares. While this is a symbol of national pride, strength and vitality, a purely Masonic meaning has not been uncovered yet, but the frequent occurrence and placement over buildings of great import, including the Capital, shrines, and commemorative statues, suggests that another meaning remains hidden. Sometimes a person’s name is inscribed on the bannerol in the eagle’s mouth. And, other times the name and number of a lodge appears. The recurrence of eagles on specifically Masonic objects like ceramics and aprons, indicates that there is a secret meaning. No mention of eagles are made in *The Virginia Text-book* and no image is given in the sections where images of Masonic import are shown.

Epergnes and decorative vessels appear on many album quilts. Some may have no ties to Masonry, but others can be interpreted as incense pots. *The Virginia Text-book* shows an incense pot that looks much like the epergnes on album quilts. (See Figure 4.)

¹⁹Piatigorsky 259.

²⁰*Ibid* 262.

THE POT OF INCENSE Is an emblem of a Pure Heart, which is always an acceptable sacrifice to Deity; and as it glows with fervent hear, so should our hearts continually flow with gratitude to the great and beneficent Author of our existence, for the manifold blessings and comforts we enjoy.²¹

The beehive, one of the most recognized symbols of the Masons, appears on several quilts as well as objects created specifically for Masons.

It is an emblem of Industry, and recommends the practice of that virtue to all created beings, from the highest Seraph in Heaven to the lowest reptile of the dust. It teaches us that as we came into the world rational and intelligent beings, so we should ever be industrious ones, never sitting down contented while our fellow-creatures around us are in want, when it is in our power to relieve them without inconvenience to ourselves.²²

The ovoid shape of a beehive is easy to replicate, and with the variety of calico fabrics available to album quilters, it was especially easy to pair a fabric that appeared textured with the shape to recreate a convincing hive.

Before Masonic Lodges could afford to purchase buildings, meetings were held in taverns. “The Freemasons of Boston, Massachusetts, claim the honor of holding the first Masonic lodge meeting in America. They met on July 30, 1733, at the house of Bro. Edward Lutwych, landlord of the Bunch of Grapes Tavern.”²³ Since then, bunches of grapes have served as a marker for some Masonic groups. This commonplace image, which today is used as the standard road sign image for winery tours, harkens back to the earliest Masonic meetings in America. Some album quilts have a square with bunches of grapes forming a wreath or decorative swag.

Various offices within the Masonic Lodge have specific images that refer to the responsibilities of the position held. The cornucopia is a symbol of the Steward who provides refreshments for the Lodge meetings, as well as “the Annual feast.”²⁴

²¹*The Virginia Text-book* 205.

²²*Ibid* 206.

²³Hamilton 16.

²⁴Piatigorsky 75.

The quill pen is the sign of the Secretary, obviously because of his duty to record the proceedings of the meetings. Crossed keys represent the locked cash box of the Treasurer. An image of a radiant sun represents the Deacon, who assists the Marshals. A single sword is representative of the Tyler who, with a drawn sword, stood guard outside of the Lodge during a meeting. The Chaplain's symbol in the 18th century was a small, perfect circle. This later was changed to an open Bible. (See Figures 5 and 6.)

None of the symbols mentioned are unusual objects, and in the course of everyday life are rather mundane. When most people encountered a radiant sun on a tavern sign, or saw crossed keys on a box, the Masonic connection was not obvious. It is unknown whether more people in the mid-1800s recognized the significance of images on album quilts or if they also failed to distinguish the Masonic connections.

CHAPTER II

WOMEN, RELIGION AND EDUCATION IN BALTIMORE

In the mid-1800s, the textile industry in Baltimore flourished and provided new wealth for many citizens. This wealth allowed families to hire more household servants. Women enjoyed more leisure than in the past and could spend more time educating themselves and their children. All of these factors were important in the album quilt phenomena that occurred in Baltimore.

Industry in Baltimore had been growing since the early 1800s. The demand for cloth, and the desire for prints and colors encouraged many manufacturers to produce cloth that was comparable to imported cloth, although foreign fabric was still very popular and widely used.

In the earlier decades, mills along the Jones Falls, Gunpowder, and Patapsco Rivers had turned out flour, nails, gunpowder, paper, and cloth. By 1840 cotton manufacturing was an established industry; Baltimore even had a world monopoly on sail cloth production. The earliest Baltimore calico print factory that has been identified was begun about 1802.²⁵

The growth in cloth production allowed more merchants to sell goods to the public. Since the mills were so near the city, manufacturers often dealt directly with a merchant, reducing the number of people involved in a transaction and thus reducing the price to the consumer. "Local merchants invested in the factories and acted as sales agents as well as retailers for the mills' output. But the dry goods trade was not limited to the home product, [the city had] a thriving network of importers, jobbers, commission agents, and auctioneers in the city."²⁶ The network associated with a thriving industry brought many people comfortably up into the middle class and also attracted new settlers to this prosperous, industrial city. Population growth at all levels of society fueled the transition from a working

²⁵Dena Katzenberg, *Baltimore Album Quilts*. (Baltimore, MD: Baltimore Museum of Art, 1981) 56.

²⁶*Ibid.* 57.

middle class to a more leisurely middle class.

Jeanne Boydston discusses the change in women's work habits in *Home & Work: Housework, Wages, and the Ideology of Labor in the Early Republic*. One of her main topics is the introduction of leisure time into a woman's life. Leisure changed the main daily tasks from totally menial work to a combination of menial tasks (including cooking, cleaning and child rearing) and leisure activities. As time passed and leisure activities were accepted, girls were educated in scholarly topics as well as in "wifely" duties.

[I]t was the new prosperity of industrialization that precipitated the severest disruptions in the work of middle-class women -- in particular, the new domestic technologies that gradually interrupted the practical transmission of the traditional bodies of knowledge from one generation to the next.²⁷

Religion was an important part of a girl's education. Methodist churches were thriving in Baltimore at this time and allowed special opportunities for women and girls to participate. Methodist religious education classes were held on various afternoons of the week and were divided by gender. Study groups met often, as did philanthropic groups under the auspices of Methodist leadership. Katzenberg states that

the classes, in which membership was obligatory, were small groups which met weekly for devotions and discussion of their religious well-being with leaders, devout and articulate layman. In the larger congregations, the classes were divided by sex, with some led by women. In fact, Methodist women had a substantial role in their churches: raising funds for charities at home and missions overseas; furnishing the parsonages; housing itinerant preachers and church dignitaries.²⁸

Even though these groups met to do good works in the community it was an important social outlet for women and girls.

²⁷Jeanne Boydston. *Home & Work*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990) 109.

As women learned to enjoy leisure time, activities such as quilting parties sponsored by Methodist groups, specifically in Baltimore, were among the most popular entertainments.

Sewing groups made clothes and bedcovers, including quilts, for distribution among the poor and heathen. Other quilts were presented as tokens of respect and love to class leaders and preachers; yet others may have been sold to raise funds for special church projects.²⁹

Baltimore's very large Methodist population was active in philanthropic endeavors. Not only were quilts made for the poor but many were made as gifts for ministers. When a quilt was made for a minister, the names of the quilters (and sometimes other church members) were inscribed on the top of the quilt as part of the decoration. Short verses and poems were also popular decorations for gift quilts.

In the 1840's ten percent of the city's [Baltimore] population belonged to Methodist congregations, while almost one third of the quilt names have a Methodist connection. Eighteen of the twenty-four quilts. . . have some Methodist names on them, and seven of these were made for ministers or class leaders.³⁰

Many of the names of the women inscribed on album quilts also appear on church roll books, helping scholars to date the quilts, and place them within the context of Baltimore.

Textile production was important to Baltimore's economy, not only because it provided women with fabric to create masterpiece quilts, but also because it provided their husbands, who managed the mills and stores, with a larger household income thus allowing the family to hire household help. Because household servants were available and more affordable, women were no longer fully responsible for all of the daily duties of managing a house. Menial tasks were still responsibilities of middle class women, but suddenly they had two new pleasures:

²⁸ Katzenberg 58.

²⁹ *Ibid* 59.

³⁰ *Ibid* 59.

money to spend and leisure time.

Quilting combined leisure time, creative energies and beautiful fabrics that were both imported and produced in Baltimore. When ladies magazines such as *Godey's Lady's Book* became available, new and intricate designs were introduced. Ladies magazines were an important factor in this environment because they provided exposure to the latest fashions and design motifs to masses of women at the same time.

[T]hey also avidly consumed the flood of women's journals, treatises, and household manuals that promised to disclose the new mysteries of shopping, recipes for foods that had not been widely available in the eighteenth century, new cooking methods and kitchen designs, and information on the most efficient overall organization of household labor.³¹

The inclusion of information about efficiency and household organization was a great help to many women who were inundated with new inventions (cook stoves with ovens, sewing machines, etc.) and who found integrating these "conveniences" into daily life a challenge. Many women complained about the inconvenience of ovens that were made into ranges, since they were very different from traditional brick ovens. But only a woman who could afford to purchase a magazine could gain this exposure and benefit from the advice of her peers.

As women were exposed to more information, the focus of a woman's life changed from providing for her family to supervising the household. Education then became a focus. Mothers were responsible for the education of their children. For women who had been fortunate enough to attend school, this was not a difficult task, but for many women this was a challenge. Many women had to spend time learning basic information or more advanced lessons, depending on the family in order to convey it lessons to their progeny. Boydston outlines the attention that women gave to the secular education of their children:

³¹Boydston 113.

prescriptive writers cautioned that children required more, and more deliberate, preparation for adulthood than had been necessary in an earlier, presumably simpler period. . . [they] put great emphasis on the self-discipline and control of the parent shaping the child's character. . . . In his 1856 advice manual for women, T. S. Arthur recommended that mothers should read ahead of their children in their studies, becoming proficient in history, geography, the classics, and modern literature. Harriet Beecher Stowe had anticipated the counsel: in 1850, in order that she might be better prepared to teach her children English history, she had launched on a reading of all Sir Walter Scott's novels.³²

Though not all women were ambitious about teaching their children, there was a pressure to prepare children for society. And, as more people held jobs outside of the home both men and women and participated in organized social activities, including the Methodists, and the Freemasons, the level of education that was socially required increased. In order for Methodists to participate actively in a Bible study, they must be able to read and study the scriptures. And, in order for Masons to read initiation manuals and treatises, they must also be literate. In prior generations, the amount of education required for daily life was not as great. When a person learned a specific trade and worked from apprenticeship to the station of independent laborer, their necessary knowledge was much more specialized and often did not require literacy.

The changing role of women in Baltimore was very important to the popularity of album quilts. Women had more free time, were better educated and were exposed to more sources from which to draw inspiration. Evidence of these sources are found within album quilt designs and include religious emblems, ceramic designs, and motifs found in magazines.

³²Boydston 81.

CHAPTER III

THE QUILTS

Album quilts differ in construction from traditional pieced quilts. “These quilts were called albums because they shared the basic concept of album books in which young women collected verses, drawings, watercolor sketches, pressed flowers, and signatures of their friends.”³³ They are appliquéd, and the design is given dimension and a sculptural quality by tucking small amounts of batting underneath the fabric and raising the design off the surface. In both traditional and album quilts, a series of squares, generally twelve inches square, are pieced together to form a quilt top. The back of a quilt, whether album or traditional, is usually a single large piece of fabric. In between the front and back is a layer of cotton batting or a mixture of cotton and wool fibers. This generally fluffy layer adds weight and warmth to the quilt. The three layers are basted together and finally quilted where a decorative pattern is stitched onto the whole quilt.

The fact that Baltimore album quilts generally have little or no batting strongly suggests that these quilts were not made for use as warm bedding but were made as extravagant gifts and as examples of self-expression to be used occasionally for decorative purposes.³⁴

“Many of the women who made Baltimore album quilts were wives or daughters of bricklayers, butchers, tailors, farmers, and cabinet makers. Although not poverty stricken, these households were merely comfortable,

³³ Goldsborough, Jennifer F. “An Album of Baltimore Album Quilt Studies.” *Uncoverings 1994: Volume 15 of the Research Papers of the American Quilt Study Society*. Ed. Virginia Gunn. (San Francisco: American Quilt Study Society, 1995) 73.

³⁴ Jennifer Faulds Goldsborough. *Lavish Legacies*. (Baltimore, MD: Maryland Historical Society, 1994) 35.

not well-to-do. It is surprising that so many women had the disposable income and enormous amounts of leisure time to invest in the creation of elaborate quilts for “vain show” rather than daily use.”³⁵

Scraps, or small pieces of cloth, are the main source of the design on many traditional quilts. Whatever fabric is available is utilized to create the design. This is not the case in appliqué quilting however. The larger designs that are inherent to appliqué quilts use very few scraps. A large piece of fabric is cut into the desired design, such as a flower or wreath, and then stitched into place. And, because of the decorative nature of the designs, specific colors and patterns of fabric are desirable for creating the appliqué design. For instance, green foliage printed fabric would add dimension and depth to a wreath or leaf, whereas plain green material would look flat. Color and design continuity were very important to album quilters. Therefore, large and expensive pieces of fabric had to be purchased. The variety of fabric patterns used for each appliqué quilt which had up to 16 different squares, required a large variety of colors and prints of fabric.

Many Baltimore album quilts are documented because they were made to commemorate a specific event. The most frequent was the movement of ministers from one parish to another. Quilts made for a minister who was moving away from an area often have the names written or stitched onto each block. This method of giving the minister a keep-sake from his church provides scholars with a record of who was working on the quilt and a general time period. Parish records can then be used to substantiate the minister’s presence as well as the women’s membership in the church. Then, not only can fabrics be dated, research can also be conducted to place a quilt within the context of a specific church, community and time frame.

³⁵ *Uncoverings 1994 96.*

Often a mother would make an album quilt for a son's twenty-first birthday. Other quilts "descended in families which have always called them 'freedom' quilts made to mark a young man's completion of his apprenticeship."³⁶ These quilts include depictions of important events in the young man's life and motifs of organizations in which he was a member. These quilts have only the names of females within the family inscribed onto the squares.

While it is evident that there are names on quilts their relationship to citizens of Baltimore remains unknown. Jennifer Faulds Goldsborough describes the research of the Maryland Historical Society in preparation for a major exhibit of album quilts:

During the course of our research, curatorial assistants recorded several thousand names from quilts which they personally examined or which had been fully catalogued and published. Most, but not all, are women's names and about 80 percent of the total appear to have been written by the same talented calligrapher; consequently, we cannot consider them to be true signatures! While it is assumed that the inked names record the individuals who were associated in some way with a quilt or quilt square, at the present time we have not been able to determine whether they refer to the person who designed the quilt or quilt square, who did the appliqué work on the square, or who completed some other part of the sewing of the quilt. They may even record who paid for the square or towards making the square, who was simply a friend or relative being honored or memorialized on the quilt, or who was the intended recipient of the quilt.³⁷

Ladies in Baltimore drew inspiration for their quilt designs from many sources. Printed materials such as magazines and books, and ceramics are the easiest to identify. The contemporary nature of many designs indicates that the women kept up with the latest aesthetic trends and fashions. *Godey's Ladies Book* has been identified as an important source of aesthetic influence on the patterning of

³⁶ *Uncoverings 1994* 106.

³⁷ *Uncoverings 1994* 94.

appliqué designs. As women read magazines, design motifs and decorative images were transferred or used as a model for original designs on quilts. Many images from *Godey's* have flower motifs similar to the floral squares found on album quilts. The banners that flow and fold in *Godey's* are of the same design as the banners that appear in album quilt squares. The drapery and folding patterns are almost identical between the two, including shading and detailing -- stitching on quilts and stippling on *Godey's* pages. Examples of "popular designs," as titled in *Godey's* table of contents appears to be very similar to the decorative detail stitching between squares on album quilts. No particularly Masonic images were found in the selection of *Godey's Ladies Book* that were examined in this research. (See Figures 7, 8, 9, and 10)

Women in Baltimore utilized many objects as inspiration for their quilt designs. Jennifer Faulds Goldsborough points out the influence of transfer-printed Staffordshire dishes on album quilt design motifs. Transfer-printed dishes were immensely popular both in Baltimore and throughout America, as more color intricate designs were made available at a lower cost, middle-class Americans purchased copious amounts. Their aesthetic value had an impact on album quilt designs. "The transfer-printed technique for ceramic decoration reduced designs to their linear, two-dimensional components which were easily copied by quilt fabricators."³⁸ (See Figure 11)

"These [designs from fraternal transfer-printed ceramics] show up with great regularity on Baltimore album quilts, . . . and the 1840s and 1850s were the heyday

³⁸*Lavish Legacies* 29.

of fraternal organizations.”³⁹ The influence of ceramic decoration on quilt decorations provides further evidence of the desire of quilt makers to have “contemporary” and stylish images gracing their quilts. Both transfer-printed ceramics and album quilts were material goods that allowed middle-class women to display their affluence to friends and neighbors.

Many of the designs that appear on Baltimore album quilts can be identified as having Masonic meaning. Eagles, stars, national monuments, famous Masons, crossed keys, cornucopias, and similar design patterns are the most easily identified. It is intriguing that middle class women were making album quilts with specifically Masonic imagery since they were not privy to the meanings of the images. Theoretically, these women should not even know how to place several images with Masonic implications in juxtaposition. But, it is almost impossible that several decidedly Masonic images were placed together by happenstance. It is also curious that these women would spend so much time on an object to be displayed rather than used. Few album quilts show evidence of hard, daily use.⁴⁰

Some album quilt squares were reportedly, according to museum documentation⁴¹, bought and sold at Masonic sales. These sales were presumably charity events where various members brought goods to be sold for the benefit of the fraternity. All of the squares that were reportedly purchased from the Masons are now part of quilts. If squares were taken to the Lodge to be sold, it is assumed that Masonic images and icons would be the main design feature. It is not clear as

³⁹*Lavish Legacies* 30.

⁴⁰*Uncoverings 1994* 105.

to what types of designs were sold, but it can be assumed that particularly Masonic images and icons would be the main design feature of these squares. Nor is it clear whether the squares were “commissioned” or whether they were simply a cast-off, or so popular that they were made from a pattern or kit.

The Maryland Historical Society found evidence while examining a vast number of quilts and individual squares that quilts were made completely by one person. Several have been traced to one seamstress, Mary Simon, a Bavarian immigrant. Her husband was a carpet weaver and

it is likely that she sold her designs rather than freely distributing them or trading them with friends. The wide range and quantity of imported fabrics which consistently appear on Mrs. Simon’s squares would have been too expensive for her husband’s income. At the height of the Baltimore Album Quilt rage, Mary Simon would have been a busy mother with several babies and toddlers at home; no doubt creating cut and basted quilt square “kits” was one of the limited means at her disposal to supplement the family income.⁴²

The discussion of Mary Simon continues and suggests that some quilts were designed completely by her and owned by wealthy citizens while the quilts of less affluent people had only a few squares designed by Simon.⁴³ The entrepreneurial efforts of women are evident in Mary Simon’s work as a quilt designer.

Many quilt squares also have Methodist imagery, though this is not central to the discussion of Masonic themes, it is indicative of the theological and social influences that affected album quilts. Harps and Bibles are often seen on quilts. The harp is an allusion to David playing a harp (in 1 Samuel 16:23 and 18: 10-11).

⁴¹ Found on Curator Worksheet in the object file at Colonial Williamsburg Foundation. Research was conducted by a curator and recorded for future use in publications, exhibit labels and photography captions. No mention of a source for this information was given. File 79.609.14.

⁴² *Uncoverings 1994* 97-99.

⁴³ *Ibid* 100.

The harp was also used by the Psalmists to praise God through music (Psalms 33:2, 71:22, 15:3). Bibles are obviously an allusion to personal piety and the importance of religion in the lives of the makers and designers of the quilts. Bibles also appear on Masonic objects, not just quilts, because of the lore that establishes the Masons as descendants of the stonecutters who are first mentioned as having built temples for Solomon and David.

Baltimore album quilts reflect the social changes that were occurring in the mid-1800s and the various influences that were important to the residents of Baltimore. Textiles, ceramics, magazines, education, leisure time, religion and fraternal organizations were among the most influential. Because of the social and economic changes, women had the opportunity to create masterpieces from fabric that now can be seen as artifacts that attest to the unique situation of the era.

CHAPTER IV

EXAMINING THE EVIDENCE

The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation has two Baltimore album quilts in its collection. After seeing both of these quilts and noticing the recurrent Masonic images I began to wonder if this theme was common to this style of quilting. The more I read, the more questions I had. No answers were apparent. Many captions mentioned that a specific quilt square was thought to have Masonic meaning, but no author gave a definite answer concerning this theme. Jennifer Faulds Goldsborough mentions more about Masonic imagery in album quilts than any other author. She attributes their presence to the quilts being made as gifts for men. I do not find this a satisfactory conclusion because of the secretive nature of fraternal organizations. According to the many sources I have consulted, women were not supposed to know anything about the Masons. So, why then were women quilting these images?

The comparison between the organization of a fraternal lodge and the design of an album quilt is remarkably similar. The fraternal lodge is arranged in an “oblong square” pattern. “Chamber orientation is derived from Biblical descriptions of King Solomon’s Temple. The Master presides from the chamber’s eastern end, . . . The center of the floor is kept open for the conduct of ceremony and the working of ritual. . . . Seating for brethren and visitors who attend meetings is usually ranged along the southern and northern sidelines.”⁴⁴ This design not only is apparent in lodge construction but in materials placed within the lodge as well.

As part of the ritual of a meeting, a diagram of the lodge was marked on the floor with chalk. This would later be washed away to preserve secrecy and the floor

floor with chalk. This would later be washed away to preserve secrecy and the floor mopped clean. To reduce the hassle of this procedure, painted floor cloths replaced chalk drawings. The design painted on Masonic floor cloths is similar to an album quilt. Along the periphery of both quilts and floor cloths are “border” designs. Floor cloths have the pillars of Boas and Jachin creating an architectural space on the cloth. At the center of the floor cloth is a building and the rest of the space is filled with Masonic emblems and the markings to support the building. At the top and “dangling” down the sides of the floor cloth border decoration takes the form of a loosely draped rope that hangs in a wavy pattern. (See Figure 3)

Album quilts are very similar to the floor cloth in that many have a large square that is two or three times the size of a normal square, in the center. The border of many album quilts is much like the wavy rope decoration at the top of the floor cloth. Rippling flower tendrils, vines and geometric patterns form a barrier between the outer space and the inner, carefully designed space. The remainder of the space between the border and surrounding the central design is filled with smaller design motifs. (See Figure 18 and 20) The similarity between the two forms seems more than mere coincidence. Traditional quilts also have a central design panel and a border but do not have thematic depictions surrounding the central motif. Did women see Masonic floor cloths? Or, did men provide some of the designs and request their use without comment on their meaning? It would be virtually impossible to prove either, but the striking similarity strongly suggests that a relationship exists between floor cloths and album quilts.

⁴⁴ Hamilton 15.

Another possible influence on quilt designs are small framed mottos with Masonic symbols. Included on these printed sheets is a concise summary of the roles and virtues of a Mason. The summary is flanked by two pillars, with a three-stepped dais between the pillars. A winged hourglass, compass and square, trowel, plumb, bible and “all seeing eye” emitting rays are included. The summary reads :

WHAT IS A MASON? A MASON is a MAN and a BROTHER whose TRUST is in GOD. He meets you on the LEVEL and acts upon the SQUARE Truth is his COMPASS and he is ever PLUMB. He has a true GRIP on all that is RITE. He is loyal to is ORDER* and whatever his DEGREE he is MASTER of himself. In the LODGE of Life he wears unstained the white LAMB-SKIN of Innocence, From his INITIATION as an ENTERED APPRENTICE he travels ever EAST toward the LIGHT of WISDOM until he receives the final-the DIVINE PASSWORD that admits him into the INEFFABLE PRESENCE OF THE ETERNAL SUPREME GRAND MASTER OF THE UNIVERSE GOD.⁴⁵

(See Figure 12) Placards such as this often were hung in the homes of Masons.

This particular placard hung in the home of Mrs. Georgianne Hull, whose father was a Mason in Highland County, Virginia.

The placement of Masonic squares on album quilts is also similar to the designs of floor cloths and Lodge arrangement. Serpentine and saw-tooth designs are used for the borders while cornucopias, eagles carrying banners, shield shapes, and stars decorate the intermediate areas of both. Then, as the viewer’s eye moves

⁴⁵ What is a Mason placard. (Philadelphia, PA: Oscar DeLong, 1921)

This object was loaned to the author by Mrs. Georgianne Hull, whose father was a Mason. The framed image hung in the family home and her father said that it explained the organization. Bold and capitalized words are quoted exactly.

As well as this image, the owner had a lapel pin and Bible with Masonic insignias. Also belonging to this family were several ladies’ rings. These rings were gold with a compass and square encrusted ruby. In the 1920s when the young women set out to attend college (at Randolph-Macon Women’s College and the College of William and Mary, leaving Highland Co., Virginia) they were told to wear the rings at all times. In the event of an emergency, a Mason would come to their aid. There was great pride in the ownership of these rings, as well as their father’s membership in the Masons, though little information was revealed to the young ladies. Even though these women were never members of the fraternity (or Eastern Star), they believed strongly in the solidarity and philanthropy

inward to the most sacred area, the center, a more impressive monument fills the space, connoting its importance to both the designer and the viewer. On many quilts the central area is filled with a large epergne of flowers. Perhaps a middle-class quilter felt this motif showed off her wealth and appreciation for beauty better than an architectural form with Masonic meaning. On a floor cloth a temple usually fills this place. Though the motif differs, the meaning remains the same in the large central design. Both express power, reverence for size and volume, wealth, and respect through the gendered images of flowers and buildings.

Some album quilts include architectural motifs ranging from the national Capitol, the Ringgold Family Monument in Baltimore, Baltimore City Hall and its Washington Monument. Architecture is very important in Masonic lore, and consequently on all of the quilts depicting buildings, there are other Masonic images. Samuel Ringgold was a citizen of Baltimore who was

killed at the Battle of Palo Alto in the Mexican War of 1846-1848. On May 23, 1846, at a rally in Baltimore's Monument Square, one of the orators was the Senator from Texas, General Sam Houston. During his stirring address the death of Major Ringgold was reported, and 'at the mention of the death of the gallant Ringgold every head was uncovered, and many a manly cheek was suffused with tears'. The burial ceremonies for Major Ringgold were conducted with full military honors, and his catafalque was placed on view at the Merchant's Exchange on December 17.⁴⁶

There is no evidence that Ringgold was a Mason, but his patriotic service and death made him a hero to the citizens of Baltimore.

The inclusion of a Washington Monument on album quilts is also significant. George Washington is perhaps the most famous Mason in American

of the organization.

⁴⁶ Katzenberg 84.

history. He is revered for his patriotism and supreme commitment to virtue. Not only do architectural memorials to him appear on quilts, but on at least one quilt an actual image of George himself is included. (See Figures 13, 14 and 15.) The Baltimore album quilt in the collection of the Virginia Quilt Museum (Harrisonburg, Virginia) was made in 1848 in “memory of Joseph Brashers by his friends and relatives. Brashers was a ship captain out of Mayo, Maryland near Annapolis. He was lost in a shipwreck in the West Indies.”⁴⁷ The images of George Washington included on this quilt are cut from a piece of printed fabric that was appliquéd onto the quilt. Washington is seated sidesaddle, on a horse and has his left arm extended in the orators pose. There are two matching images of Washington, one on each side of the quilt.

The inclusion of mementos on quilts reminds Masons of significant people such as George Washington and Samuel Ringgold, virtues of the group and important fraternal offices. All of these are evidence of strong fraternal pride and the desire to display it. Not only were the Masons proud, but their families were also. Indicative of this pride are the Baltimore album quilts that have Masonic imagery, that were meticulously stitched by wives and daughters.

In order to identify a rough number of album quilts that possibly have Masonic imagery, an informal survey of quilt books ensued. Thirty-five album quilts were illustrated in two books.⁴⁸ Of the thirty-five, eleven included more than two squares that may be interpreted as Masonic. Many more quilts had a single

⁴⁷ *Legacy* (from exhibition guide) Sept 4, 1999- February 28, 2000 at Virginia Quilt Museum, Harrisonburg, Virginia.

⁴⁸ *Lavish Legacies* by Goldsborough and *Baltimore Beauties and Beyond* (vol. 1) by Sienkiewicz were examined.

image that has a potential Masonic meaning, but to increase the likelihood of a Masonic connection only those quilts with two or more of these motifs were counted. The motifs included crossed arrows, crossed keys, three linked chains, eagles with bannerols, architectural monuments, five-pointed stars, incense pots, and pillars.

Two quilts in the collections of the Smithsonian Institute are decorated with only Masonic images. These two quilts were made by Eliza Rosenkrantz Hussey in the 1840s. Both quilts were made for her husband, Edward, who was a Mason and an Odd Fellow⁴⁹. (See Figures 16 and 17.)

Hussey's Masonic Symbols Quilt includes twenty-five star quilt squares, and a narrow floral border. Between these squares are thirty-six images that must be Masonic. She includes many emblems that have already been discussed in this paper: compass and square, five pointed star, beehive, trowel, floor cloth with daises and pillars clearly stitched, pillars, incense pot, and aprons. The outer border includes a running vine with small flowers on two sides of the quilt. A running vine with bunches of grapes decorates the other two sides.

The Odd Fellows Quilt, also made by Hussey, includes ninety-eight small star squares. There is a plain white square between each star. On each of the plain squares and around the outer border of the quilt, Hussey has stitched emblems of the Odd Fellows. On some of these squares she also stitched phrases with mottos of the Odd Fellows. "Educate the Orphan," "Be Temperate," "Remember the

⁴⁹ Bowman, Doris M. *American Quilts*. (Washington, D. C.: Smithsonian Institute Press, 1991) 38-39.

Widow,” and “Bury the Dead,” are among those included.⁵⁰ Due to the small size of many of the Odd Fellows emblems and the quality of the illustration, not all of the images can be identified. Among the recognizable images are: crossed keys, aprons, bow and quiver of arrows, three links of a chain, pillars, crossed swords, bow with three arrows, and a Bible. Many of the objects that Eliza Hussey included on her quilts also appear in the Colonial Williamsburg quilts, but are fewer in number.

Identifying the maker and owner of an album quilt can help to identify their affiliations and possible sources of Masonic imagery. The maker of one of the Colonial Williamsburg album quilts was Sarah Anne Whittington Lankford Miles.⁵¹ She made this quilt (her initials are embroidered into the wreath in the lower left corner) for her brother, Henry Smith Lankford (1823-1905). (See Figures 18, 19, 20 and 21) It was then passed on through the family. (I will refer to this as the Miles quilt.) Henry Lankford lived in Baltimore from 1847 to 1869 and was a member of the King Davids Lodge, No. 68. He was initiated May 21, 1850. Since Henry was a Mason, it is obvious that some of the Masonic imagery was meaningful to him. We know that he would have understood the meanings of quilt blocks with cornucopias, national monuments and other patterns. But, it is still unknown how his sister would have known what images to include and which to place in juxtaposition.

To complicate the relationship between Masons and quilters, Henry Lankford is said to have

⁵⁰ Bowman 39.

⁵¹ Colonial Williamsburg Foundation collection. Accession number 79.609.14.

purchased the individual squares from the Order of Masons, whereas assembly of them and the quilting of the whole is believed to have been done by his sister Sarah Anne Whittington Lankford. . . She may also have been responsible for some or all of the simpler blocks and for the vine that forms the border on all four sides.⁵²

If someone was manufacturing quilt squares for the Masons, perhaps some female quilters (who may have been professional needlewomen) were supplied with classified information so that they could stitch quilt squares that conveyed specific messages and reminders to the Masonic viewer.

The center of the Miles quilt bears an epergne with five flowers, some foliage, and two birds flanking the epergne. Directly above each of the birds is a cluster of three small circles in an inverted triangle shape. The large epergne is centered within a wreath of foliage. This center design is the size of four of the other quilt squares. Directly above the central panel are two smaller squares with Masonic scenes. The Baltimore City Hall and the Ringgold Family Monument squares are centered at the top of the quilt. Designs similar to these two are often seen with on other album quilts with Masonic imagery.

The Baltimore City Hall can be placed within the Masonic context in order to unravel some of the hidden meanings. Because Baltimore was the center of much Masonic activity and it was the seat of local government, the building represents the loyalty and local pride of its citizens.

Adjacent to City Hall is a square depicting the Ringgold Monument. Six guns flank the monument, and two flags fly above it. A bird, presumably an eagle

⁵² Label copy in Curator Worksheet, Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, 2000. File 79.609.14.

is perched on the top. A series of ruched⁵³ flowers surround the monument. One large, white flower is between the flanking guns on the right and the monument. It seems unusual for a flower to break the symmetry of the design while most other squares on this quilt are symmetrical.

Other Masonic squares on this quilt include designs with cornucopias. The one single cornucopia flowers and foliage springs forth. On a second square four cornucopias are joined with two large horns on the bottom and two smaller, less decorative horns on top. The four adjoining cornucopias are the main element of this square, but it also has a considerable amount of floral design and foliage. Also, several other epergnes and urns appear on various squares. The shape of several of these is similar to the incense pot depicted in the *Virginia Text-book*.

The inclusion of the Ringgold Monument and City Hall are reminders of civic duty, patriotism and heroism. The placement of these two squares at the top center of this quilt indicates that these were important virtues either to Henry Lankford or the Masons. The cornucopias suggest that Henry Lankford was a Steward of his Lodge. The incense pot may be a reminder always to aspire to keep a pure heart and be grateful for the blessings of life. The inclusion of all of these images are evidence of a strong Masonic influence on both the maker(s) and the owner of the quilt. They were exhibiting their beliefs and pride in the fraternity.

If it is true that several squares were purchased directly from the Masons for this quilt, then it is highly probable that the meanings of the squares were apparent to the purchaser, and possibly to the quilter who made them. Did a woman or a

⁵³ Ruching is an appliqué technique where a narrow strip of fabric is gathered to create a rippled design, often circular, to look like a flower.

Mason design the squares?

Many quilters marked their work with inked initials. Sandi Fox states that

In the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, if a quilt were to be discreetly marked, as with household linens, it would most often be done with small cross-stitched initials, those the quiltmaker had perfected as a young girl on her marking sampler.⁵⁴

Not only did women mark their initials on their quilts, they also inked their full names and small decorative motifs using stencils. Many women in the eighteenth century had stencils made of their names with small decorative motifs surrounding the lettering.

Their names had been cut in the tiniest of letters into small metal plates (approximately 2 3/4 in. wide x 1 3/8 in. high), and with only a few pieces of equipment (ink, brush, and a small glass plate), their names and the modest motifs that surrounded them had been transferred onto their clothing and their household linens, and perhaps onto their quilts as well.⁵⁵

Anne Lankford marked the Miles quilt as being at least partly work of her hand by cross-stitching her initials on a square in the lower left corner. Also on the Miles quilt, there is an inked eagle above the Capitol with a banner in his beak. Anne Lankford marked her work with her initials but she did not write her name in indelible ink (as was also the fashion of the time). The inked eagle appears on the City Hall square, one of the most complicated on the quilt. The eagle may have been hand drawn, but its clean lines and precise details suggest the use of a stencil. Since Anne Lankford did not use a stencil or ink to inscribe her initials onto the quilt, it can be concluded that she did not have the equipment or skills to do this, and her initials are rather rough when compared to the delicate stitches on most parts of the quilt. The varying skill levels of stitching and inking reiterate that two

⁵⁴ Sandi Fox, *For Purpose and Pleasure* (Nashville, TN: Rutledge Hill Press, 1995) 31.

separate quilters were involved in the making of this quilt.

Unlike the Miles quilt, most of which was made by Anne Lankford, the second album quilt in the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation Collection has no known family history.⁵⁶ Some of the squares are attributed to but not confirmed to have been made by Mary Evans. The form of this quilt is slightly different from the previous example. There is no large central design but rather four blocks, each with an architectural form. The four central images are surrounded by an exterior row of quilt squares, with a serpentine floral border around the outside of the quilt. (See Figure 22)

There is some discrepancy about the identity of the four structures. One of the designs is very similar, with only a different color scheme from the Miles quilt. On the Miles quilt one block is identified as the Baltimore City Hall, but the curatorial notes for the second quilt list this as the Capitol building in Washington, D. C. (See Figures 19 and 25) The other three buildings are identified as the Metropolitan Catholic Church, Washington Monument in Baltimore completed in 1829, and the Battle Monument completed in 1815. From the available images of the Capitol and City Hall, it appears that both buildings are indeed the Baltimore City Hall. (See Figures 27, 28, and 29)

Before discussing the buildings any further, the monuments should be addressed. It is easy to ascribe Masonic meaning to the Washington Monument, as George Washington was the ultimate patriot, Mason and “Founding Father” of the nation. This monument is decorated with two American flags and an eagle is

⁵⁵ Fox 29-30.

⁵⁶ Colonial Williamsburg Foundation collection. Accession number 79.609.6

perched on top. In the beak of the eagle is a bannerol that reads “E Pluribus Unum,” meaning out of many, one. This image is strongly patriotic and is easily recognizable for its civic meaning. (See Figure 23)

The Battle Monument is also decorated with an eagle atop the obelisk and two American flags. The eagle that sits atop this monument holds a leafy branch, perhaps reminiscent of an olive branch for peace. This monument, commemorating the War of 1812, was erected in 1815. Two blue birds sit at the base of the monument, which is surrounded by Masonic images. Two pillars topped with candles, or possibly lamp posts, flank the monument. In Masonic terms these may be the pillars of Jachin and Boaz, or the candle stands that provide sacred light for rituals and meetings. Closer to the monument two smaller urn shaped posts hold a chain-link barrier. (See Figure 26) Linked chains are one of the most recognizable symbols of the Odd Fellows, a Masonic order that focused much of its attention on temperance. The Odd Fellows used many of the same images as other Masons, but the images most commonly associated with them include: radiant sun, stars, beehive, crossed arrows, three link chain, crossed hatchets, crossed swords, pair of candlesticks, and the hourglass.

The Baltimore City Hall on this quilt is slightly less elaborate than that seen on the Miles quilt, but the forms are the same. An eagle sweeps from flight toward the building, holding two crossed arrows in its beak. These crossed arrows, symbols of the Odd Fellows, appear on many other quilts as well as other objects associated with the Odd Fellows. Two American flags fly above the City Hall, and each has a single five-pointed star upon the blue background. This is not

uncommon for album quilts, as it was nearly impossible to cut and stitch numerous tiny stars onto a very small ground of blue. (See Figure 25)

The inclusion of a Catholic Church is fairly unusual for an album quilt. This building, including arches, a dome and a cross, is more in the style of church than civic construction. The arch over the door appears decorated, but relief sculpture would be impossible to render on a quilt, therefore a circular pattern appears on a blue ground. The pattern has ovals radiating from a central solid oval.

When the viewer moves from the central four squares outward to the outer band of quilt squares some interesting designs are noticed. Directly below the Metropolitan Catholic Church is a harp with floral decoration. This image has been directly linked to the Methodists, presenting a conflict between embedded meanings. Other squares contain cornucopias, bouquets, epergnes, urns, wreaths and birds. On several squares, decorative bows are used to “hold” a bouquet together or decorate a wreath. These bows are in a different style from most “plain” bows. Plain bows have two loops and two tails. The decorative bows that appear on this quilt have three loops, two exterior loops and a central loop as well. These bows have been interpreted as the three-link chain of the Odd Fellows. (See Figure 22, upper left square and square to the left of the Battle Monument.)

Many album quilts bear purely decorative motifs without Masonic meaning. But, many album quilts have a smattering of Masonic images that may help quilt historians draw conclusions about the makers and owners. The secretive nature of fraternal societies makes it difficult to unlock the mysteries stitched into the fabric of these quilts.

CONCLUSION

Baltimore album quilts have become quite important in the current art world. Some, rivaling masterpiece paintings, have been auctioned for millions of dollars. Because of the recent admiration of intricately worked textiles, attention has been given to their study. Most authors skirt around the issue of Masonic imagery and meaning that maybe embedded in album quilts.

By looking at the material culture and history of the Masons, it is easy to place album quilts within the context of mid-nineteenth century America. The economy was flourishing, gender roles had changed allowing for more leisure time, and the new availability of magnificent textiles culminated in the production of album quilts, specifically around Baltimore. Why, however, did women place Masonic images on decorative masterpieces? The Miles quilt indicates that some quilt squares were created for sale within the Masonic market sphere. These squares conveyed meaning, reminded the viewer of important themes and recorded membership and specific roles within the fraternity. While the Masonic implication of these particular squares is relatively clear, it remains unclear who designed and stitched the remainder of the Masonic squares.

With the massive influx of transfer-printed ceramics, textiles, books and pamphlets, women were privy to much information about the Masons. They may not (and probably in fact, did not) know the nature of the proceedings, but were very aware of the common images associated with the group. After looking at the *Virginia Text-book* and the printed wall plaque, both dating from the early 1900s,

Masons was brought into the home. Knowing this, it is understandable that women gained access to classified information. Though the *Godey's Lady's Book* pages that were examined for this paper had no specifically Masonic images, there is a similarity in style of the images in the magazine and on the quilts. The material used to create one building or monument is indicative of the variety of fabrics available and the artistic ingenuity of the quilters of the period.

With careful study, Baltimore album quilts can be used almost as a diary of the life, or a small segment of a lifespan, of its maker or the person for whom it was made. We often know who made a quilt. From church and Masonic register books we know member's names and occasionally stations in life. By weaving together a variety of sources, the beliefs of a person or family can be traced, using only a textile.

The cares and concerns of the maker are clearly displayed on the quilt. For example, Anne Lankford, though she did not design all of the squares on her quilt, was influenced by the Masons. She, or her brother, had an interest in patriotic duty, heroism, and politics including the Mexican War. Religious beliefs could be conveyed through the inclusion of harps and Bibles, or the Catholic church, as in the case of the second quilt examined. Through Anne Lankford's incorporation of purely decorative squares, it is evident that she was also committed to aesthetic beauty and the fine craftsmanship necessary to create a functional quilt.

No matter what perspective is used to examine these quilts, one motivation remains clear: pride. The makers of Baltimore album quilts were very proud of their work and their families. They honored male family members and exhibited

their wealth. The novelty of leisure time was revered and shared through quilting parties. Education, whether religious or secular, was valued and expressed through initials, names, poems, and songs on the quilts.

The vast amount of knowledge that is available from the careful examination of a single album quilt depends upon the preservation of evidence and its use by the scholar. Though many scholars examine the fabric and the style of images, more information may be lurking beneath the surface.

FIGURE 1: Plan view of Masonic Temple

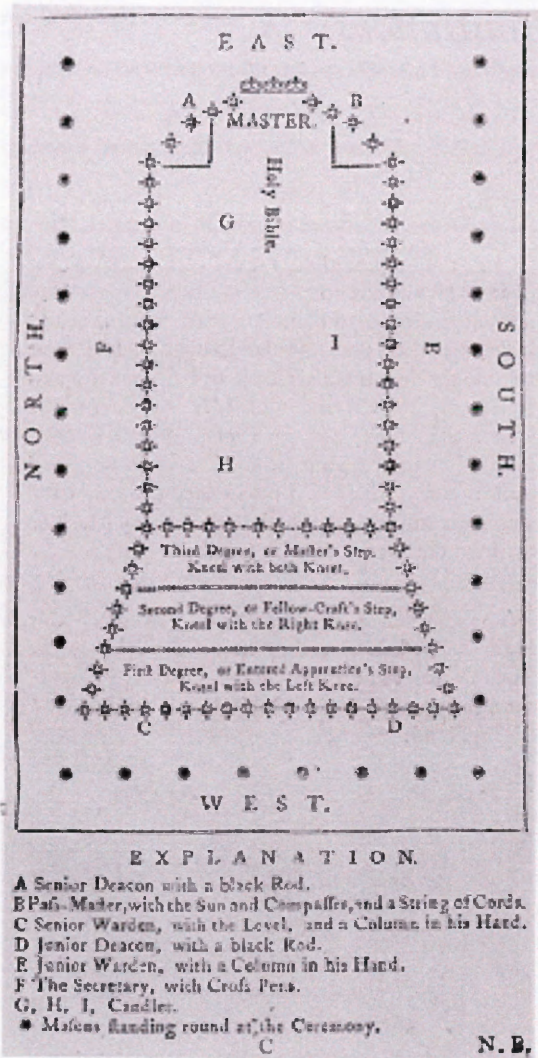


FIGURE 2: Pillars of Jachin and Boaz.

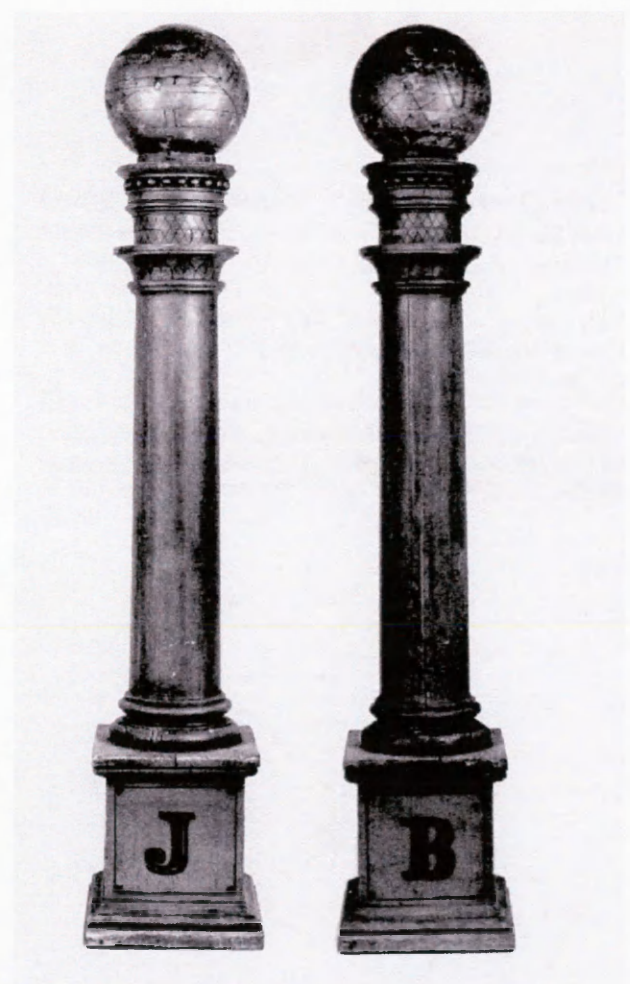


FIGURE 3: Masonic Floor Cloth

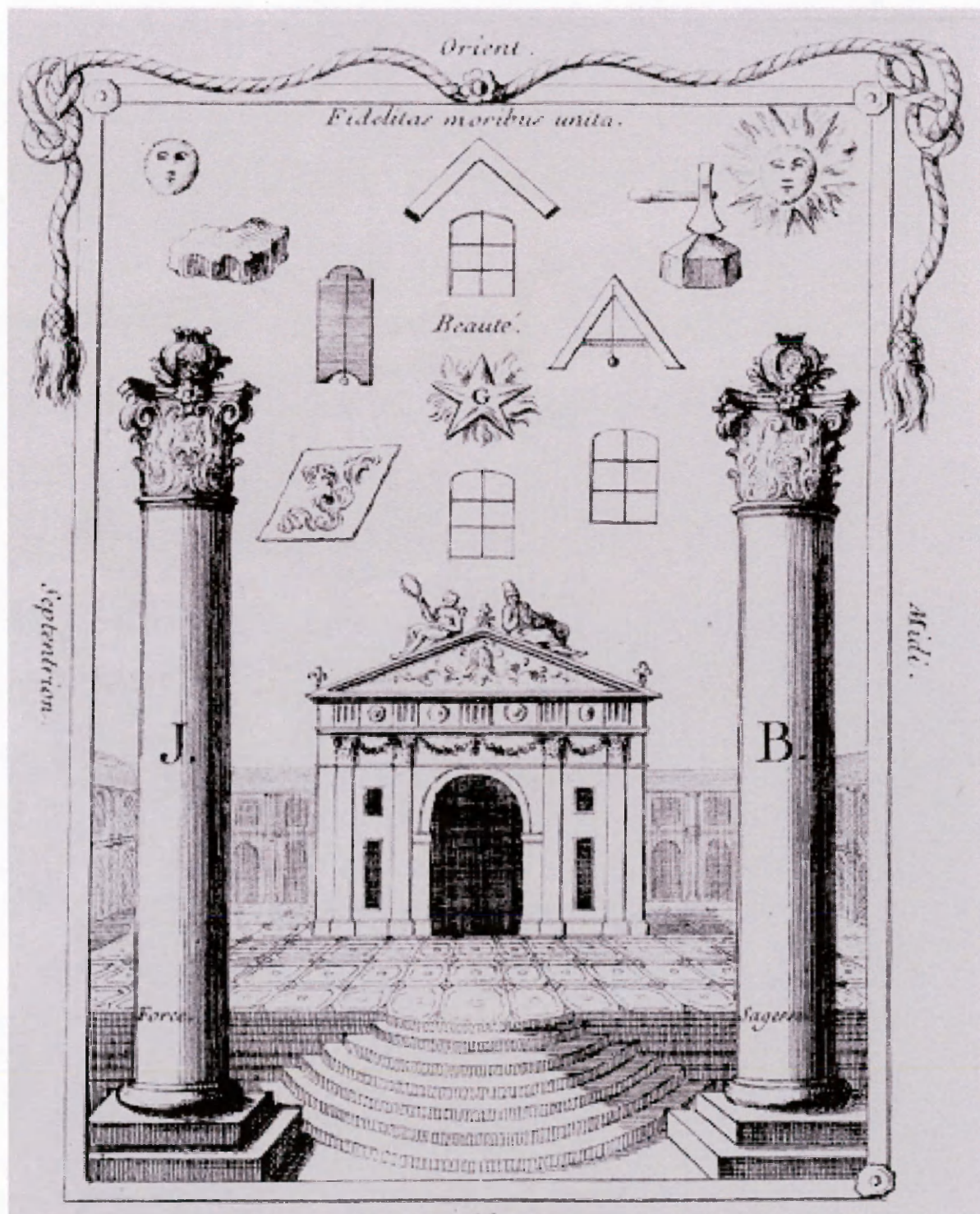


FIGURE 4: Pot of Incense

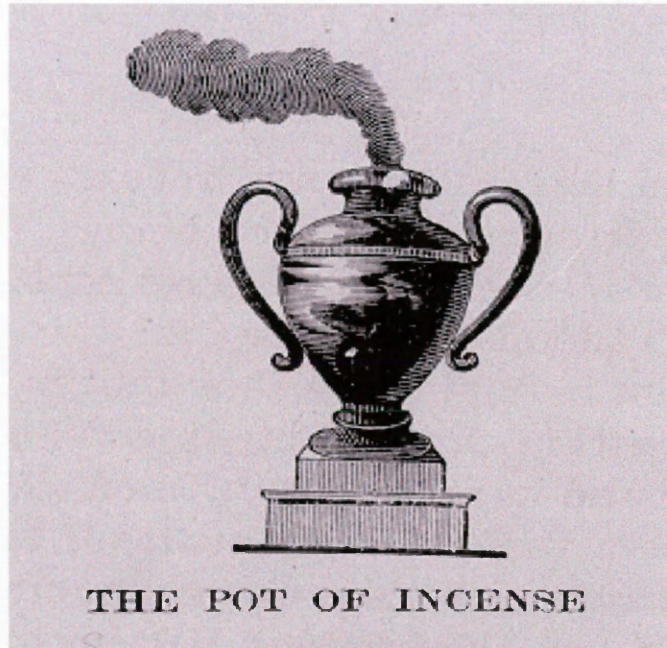


FIGURE 5: Lodge Medals



FIGURE 6: Grand and Subordinate Lodge Jewels

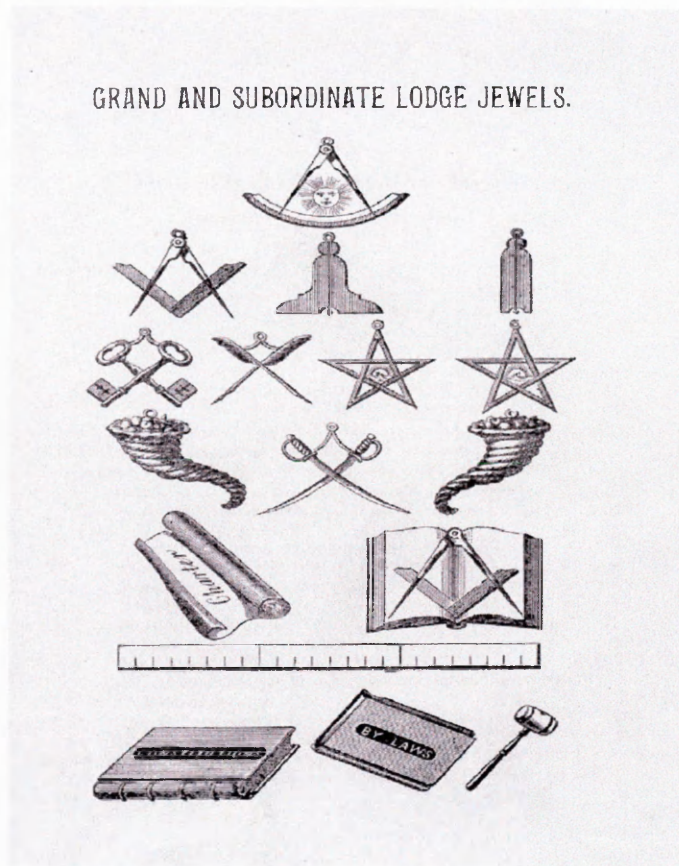


FIGURE 7: Godey's Lady's Book



FIGURE 8: Godey's illustration of popular decorative patterns. Note the similarity with Album Quilt designs.



FIGURE 9: Godey's page. Note the similarity between Album quilt decorative patterns and motifs on these objects

The Fine Arts Applicable to Useful Purposes.



Fig. 1. *A Design for a Door Knocker.* -- This beautiful design is by Mr. W. Harry Rogers. Without any pretensions to allusive enrichment, it possesses much imitative beauty. It is particularly adapted to the Italian style of architecture.



Fig 2. *The Boudoir Candlestick.* -- This is a very graceful arabesque of leaves, tendrils, and flowers.

FIGURE 10: Godey's illustration showing a new craft form in leatherwork. Design of wreath is very similar to Album quilt wreaths.

THE WORK TABLE

A NEW KIND OF WORK FOR THE FAIR SUBSCRIBERS TO "THE BOOK."

LEATHER WORK.



Directions for the Fashionable Leather Work.

FIGURE 11: Transfer printed ceramic with Masonic emblems. Designs have been simplified on the ceramic, which allowed quilters to copy motifs.



FIGURE 12: Masonic wall hanging from early 20th century.

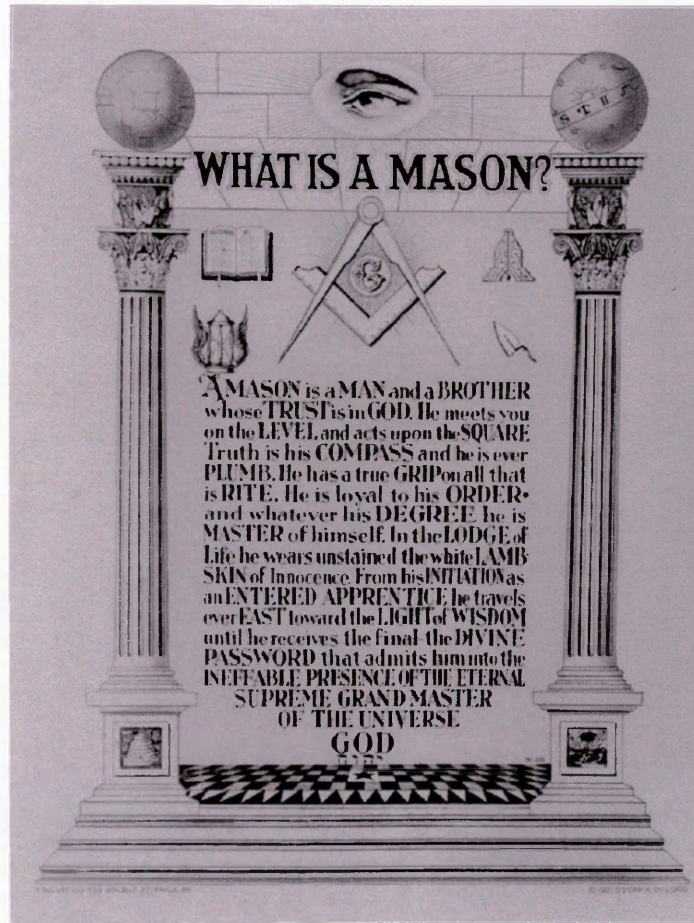


FIGURE 13: Baltimore album quilt with printed image of George Washington



FIGURE 14: George Washington on quilt square.



FIGURE 15: George Washington detail.



FIGURE 16: Masonic Symbols Quilt, Smithsonian Institute Collection



FIGURE 17: Odd Fellows Quilt, Smithsonian Institute Collection

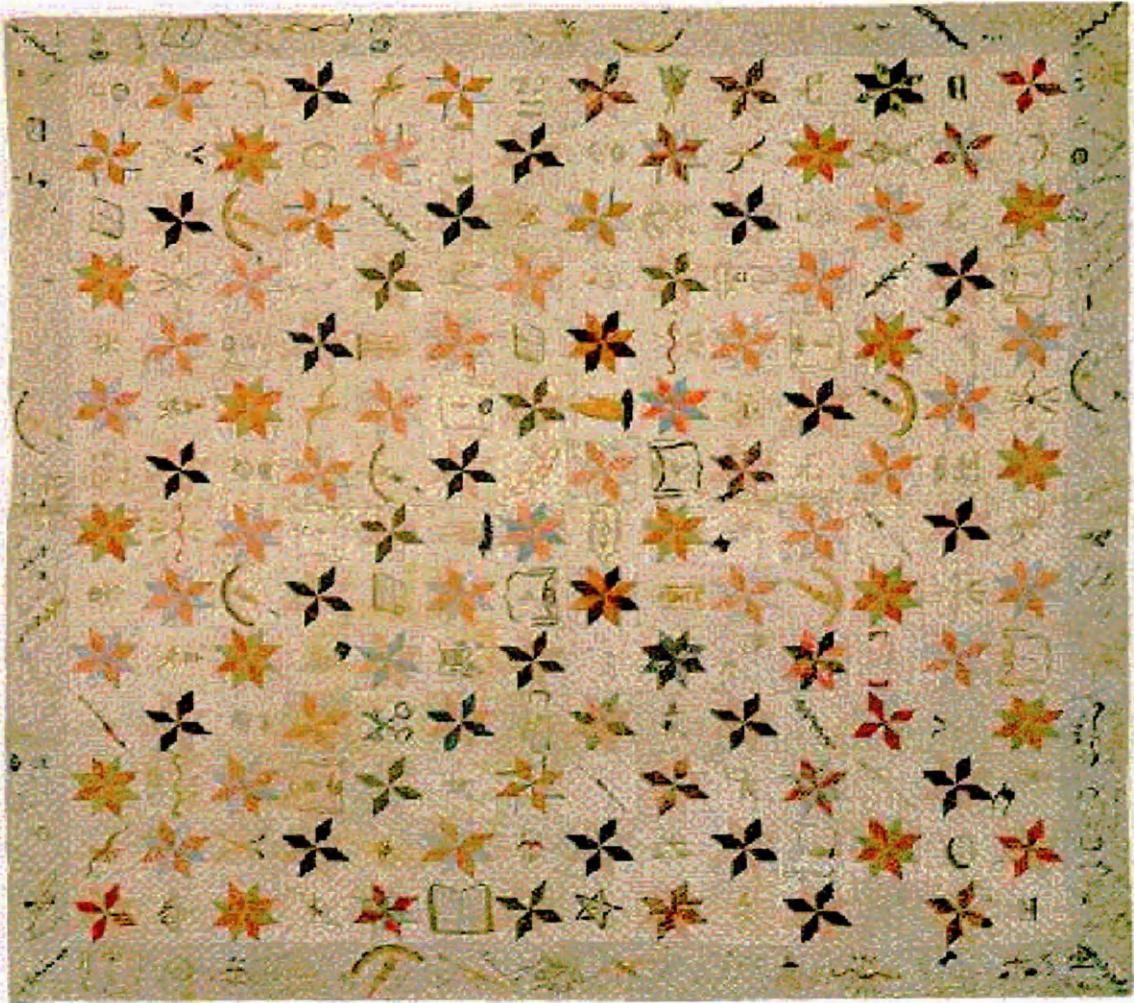


FIGURE 18: Baltimore Album Quilt, referred to in paper as Miles Quilt.
(Colonial Williamsburg Foundation Collection)



FIGURE 19: Baltimore City Hall, from Miles quilt.



FIGURE 20: Ringgold monument from Miles quilt.



FIGURE 21: Detail of Baltimore City Hall and Ringgold monument.



FIGURE 22: Baltimore album quilt.
(Colonial Williamsburg Foundation Collection)



FIGURE 23: Washington Monument in Baltimore (completed 1829) from album quilt.



FIGURE 24: Metropolitan Catholic Church from album quilt.



FIGURE 25: City Hall from album quilt.



FIGURE 26: Battle Monument (completed 1829) in Baltimore.



FIGURE 27: National Capitol in Washington D. C.



FIGURE 28: Baltimore City Hall, side view.



FIGURE 29: Baltimore City Hall,

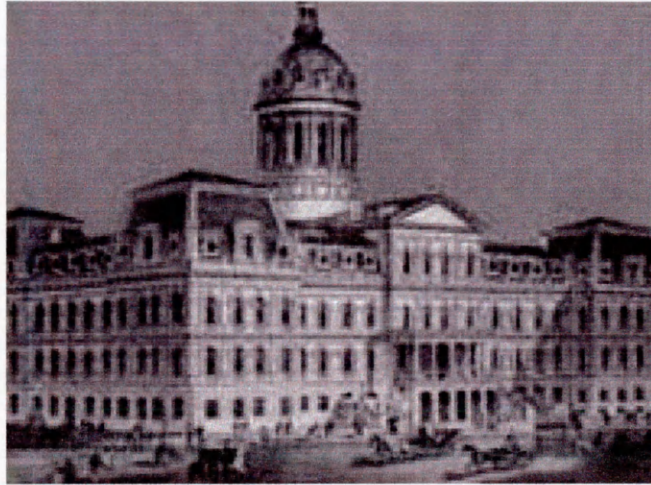


ILLUSTRATION SOURCES

Figure 1: Temple floor plan from *Material Culture of the American Freemasons* page 22.

Figure 2: Pillars of Jachin and Boaz from *Material Culture of the American Freemasons* page 67.

Figure 3: Floor Cloth from *Material Culture of the American Freemasons* page 37.

Figure 4: Pot of Incense from *Virginia Text-book* page 205.

Figure 5: Lodge Medals from *Material Culture of the American Freemasons* page 142.

Figure 6: Grand and Subordinate Lodge Jewels from *Virginia Text-book* page 271.

Figure 7 - 10: Godey's Lady's Book pages from February 1850, found on website: www.history.rochester.edu/godeys.

Figure 11: Masonic ceramic from *Material Culture of the American Freemasons* page 237.

Figure 12: Masonic wall hanging from personal collection of Georgianne Hull.

Figure 13 – 15: George Washington on album quilt from Virginia Quilt Museum collection, photography by Anne B. Battaile.

Figure 16: Masonic Symbols Quilt from collections of the Smithsonian Institution, published in *The Smithsonian Treasury American Quilts* page 38.

Figure 17: Odd Fellows Quilt from collections of the Smithsonian Institution, published in *The Smithsonian Treasury American Quilts* page 39.

Figure 18: Baltimore album quilt from collections of Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, archive photograph.

Figure 19 – 21: Baltimore album quilt from collections of Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, photographs by Anne B. Battaile.

Figure 22: Baltimore album quilt from collections of Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, archive photograph.

Figure 23 – 26: Baltimore album quilt from collections of Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, photographs by Anne B. Battaile.

Figure 27: National Capitol in Washington, D. C. found on www.aoc.gov.

Figure 28 – 29: Baltimore City Hall found on www.ci.baltimore.md.us/government/history.html

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