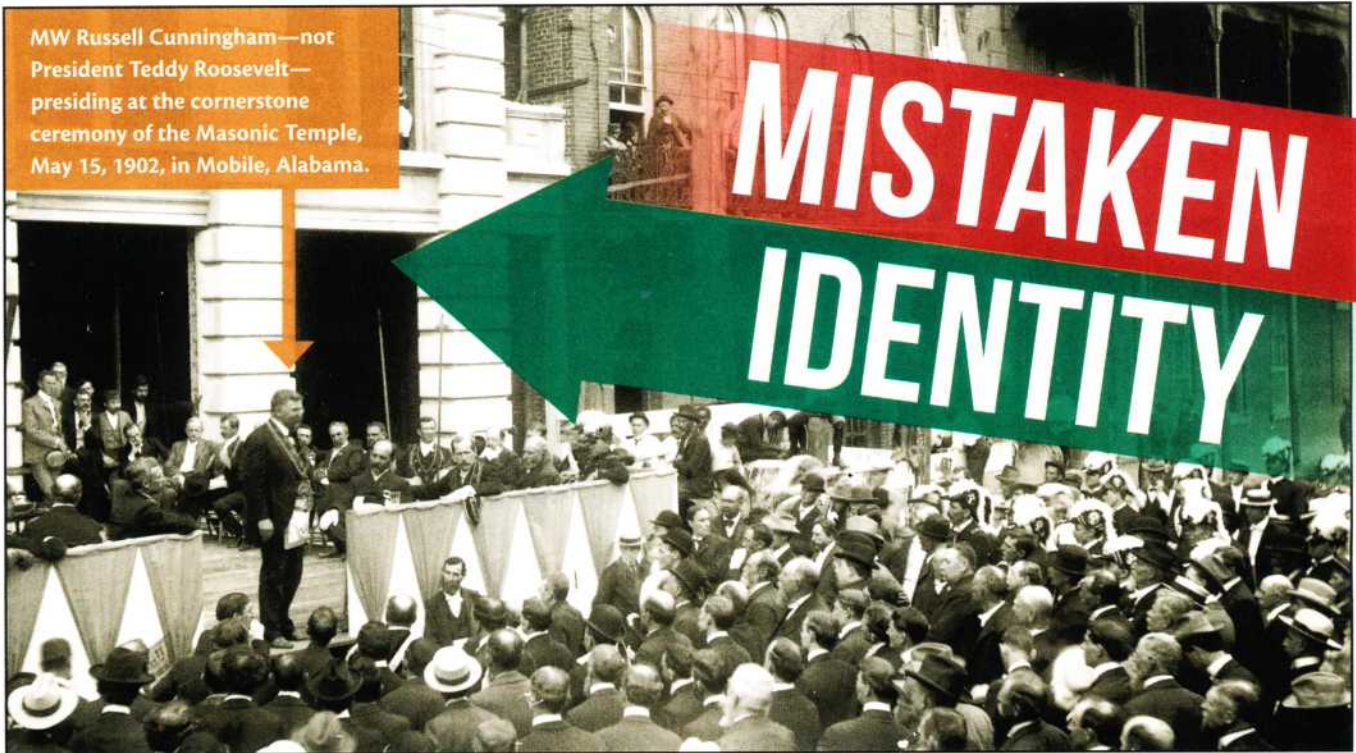


Photograph: Used with permission. Historic Mobile Preservation Society, William E. Wilson Collection



NON-MASONS OFTEN MISIDENTIFY OBJECTS AND PEOPLE as Masonic when they're not and similarly fail to recognize Masonic items for what they are. Masons are also guilty of such misidentification, but it's usually well-intentioned members of the general public who are at fault. This article looks at several such cases, including the confusion of the grand master of Alabama for President Teddy Roosevelt! —EDITOR

Wayne E. Sirmon, 33°, Valley of Mobile, Alabama

PRESIDENTIAL SPEECH OR CORNERSTONE CEREMONY?

At noon on a recent warm spring day, Dr. David Alsobrook, began a "Learning Lunch" lecture on a courageous young U.S. Attorney who served lower Alabama during the early days of the twentieth century. Historians strive to tie local events into the larger scope of national and international events. Thus we heard this attorney was appointed by President Theodore Roosevelt who visited Mobile in 1905 where he gave a significant speech concerning the construction of a canal that would connect the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans.

To illustrate the talk, the image of an outdoor speech was projected on the

screen. Based on the archive file information, it was described as the one and only such visit made by Teddy Roosevelt in this southern port city. This meant the photograph was taken in front of Mobile's U.S. Customs House. However, I recognized the image as the 1902 cornerstone ceremony of the Masonic temple constructed by the three downtown lodges and the area York Rite bodies. The two buildings were on the same block but face different streets and the two events were separated by three and a half years. When I mentioned this confusion about the temple to the museum's curator of history and the archive's director, they spoke with confidence that the photograph definitely marked the first



(Above) Scottish Rite 32° patent case misidentified as a "Double Headed Eagle German Wallet" and (right) the York Rite Order of Malta medal often is confused with a GAR funeral badge.

Photography: Wayne E. Sirmon, 33°

occasion where a sitting president would visit Mobile.

A COMMON CONFUSION

It is not uncommon for the general public to label anything fraternal as "Ma-

sonic." Sellers on eBay regularly confuse Freemasonry with the Knights of Pythias, Odd Fellows, Independent Order of Good Templars, Knights of the Golden Eagle, or the always baffling Junior Order of United American Mechanics. Perhaps the most common mistaken identity is when the Knights Templar Order of Malta Jewel is labeled the Funeral Badge of the Grand Army of the Republic (GAR). In the aftermath of the 1960s Civil War Centennial there was an increased interest in collecting a wide range of items related to America's deadliest war. A well-meaning medal collector published a small booklet outlining memorabilia related to the GAR. Included was a photograph of a Maltese cross suspended from a plain black ribbon. The caption identified it as a "Death Medal." A year later a second collector made a similar claim. Despite corrections by the authors and a number of articles pointing out the true nature of the medal, the confusion persists. (Just search for "Masonic Funeral Medal" on eBay.) The definitive article that busts this myth was published by George G. Kane in the July-September, 2006 issue of *The Veteran*, a quarterly publication of

The Junior Order of United American Mechanics badge (right) often is misidentified as being Masonic.

The Civil War Veterans Historical Society. We should be slow to demonize those who misidentify Masonic badges. There is nothing on the Templar's Malta or Red Cross jewels that suggest their Masonic nature. Beyond a Past Master's jewel, virtually none of the various honor awards overtly suggest their connection to freemasonry. The 32° jewel—no; KCCH jewel—no; and the 33° jewel contains a square and compasses that measures 1/16th of an inch high.

A different case of mistaken identity is associated with the badges of the Junior Order of United American Mechanics. The emblem of this, like the parent O. of U. A. M., features a square and compasses arranged as in the Masonic emblem. Where we expect to find the letter "G," however, is an arm holding a hammer. The ribbon is a representation of an American flag with thirteen stars and stripes. Formed as a nativist secret society in 1845, membership peaked at over 250,000 during the 1920s. Because of the long history and the size of its membership there are many examples of this organization's memorabilia to be found on line and in antique stores.



Photography: Wayne E. Sirmom, 33°

Other items also find their way on to antique shop shelves where they are mislabeled. One example was located in Savannah, Georgia, where a familiar Scottish Rite patent holder was marked "Double Headed Eagle German Wallet—\$30." To add insult to injury, the Austrian and Russian Empires, along with several Balkan countries are associated with the double-headed eagle; but not Germany.

A Presidential Mustache

Looking at them together, one can see how these two men might be confused!



Dr. Russell M. Cunningham
Grand Master of Alabama, 1900-1902



Bro. Theodore Roosevelt
26th US President, 1901-1909

IDENTIFYING THE TRUTH

It is difficult and at times impossible to correct the misinformation attached to items such as those described here. However, when armed with the facts, it is possible to make a correction. Gathering the data surrounding Theodore Roosevelt's 1905 visit to Mobile required a trip to the microfilm newspaper collection at the University of South Alabama. The

"MISTAKEN IDENTITY" is continued on p. 28 of this issue.

GAVELS

(Continued from p. 4)

These are only some examples of the many gavels held and displayed in the Cowles Collection. The collection also includes a much larger gavel made from ivory from the tusk of an Alaskan walrus and one made from wood from an oak tree that was grown on the Guilford Battle Ground in North Carolina.

Unfortunately, some of the gavels have no indication of where Cowles got them. So, the next time you get a gavel made for your year or for a VIP, make sure you engrave or attach a metal plaque with the person's name; date; location; and materials used. This way the gavel can be preserved properly for posterity. Who knows, one day your eclectic collection might end up at the House of the Temple! ✦

GOULASH

(Continued from p. 22)

7½ oz. butter

½ cup fresh chives, finely diced

22 oz. shredded Parmesan or cheddar cheese

Salt & pepper to taste

Peel and evenly dice potatoes into ¼-inch cubes and place in pot of cold water. Bring to a boil and cook until tender when pierced with a wooden skewer. Drain well in a colander and place potatoes back in the pot.

Just before potatoes are finished cooking heat the milk and butter in a sauce pot until warm, do not boil the milk.

With large potato masher; mash potatoes well then gradually add the milk, butter, cheese, and fresh chives. Season with salt and pepper. ✦

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THE GREEK RITE (Continued from p. 11)

organization was absorbed into the Delta Zeta Sorority (indicia on p. 11), which has over 160 collegiate chapters and nearly 250,000 members, making it the third largest sorority in the United States.

By no means is this list an exhaustive source of undergraduate fraternities started or influenced by Freemasons, as there are 123 different Greek letter fraternities and sororities nationwide totaling more than nine million members! For the sake of brevity, only 16 fraternities are listed in this survey. ✦

Bro. Jace S. Gentil is a Master Mason from Indiana and is also a member of Lambda Chi Alpha fraternity. He is a docent guide at the House of the Temple in Washington, D.C.

1. "The Flat Hat Club". Vol 25. No. 3 *William and Mary College Quarterly Historical Magazine*. January 1917. pp. 161-4. 1 July 2016.
2. Hastings, William T. *Phi Beta Kappa as a Secret Society with its Relations to Freemasonry and Antimasonry, Some Supplementary Documents*. Richmond, Virginia: United Chapters of Phi Beta Kappa. N.p. 1965. Print. 10 July 2016.
3. Stafford, David. "Freemasonry and the Development of Greek-Letter Fraternities." *Tennessee Lodge of Research*. N.p., 9 June 2007. Web. 7 July 2016.
4. Merchang, David and Paul Rich. "Freemasonry, the Greeks, and Stepping." *The National Conference on Stepping*. p. 5. 7 April 2001. Web. 20 July 2016.
5. "History of Alpha Tau Omega Fraternity" *University of Alabama and Alpha Tau Omega National Fraternity*. N.p. N.d. 20 July 2017.

MISTAKEN IDENTITY (Continued from p. 13)

details of the 1902 cornerstone ceremony for the Masonic temples were found in the *Proceedings of the Grand Lodge of Alabama*. The well-informed Mason is quick to recognize the deacons' rods and the Knights Templar chapeaus, but these details mean little to archivists unfamiliar with fraternal organizations. Details that showed a contrast between the two events included the time of day and temperature. The photograph in question was taken in bright sun, but Roosevelt spoke at sundown. Men in straw hats and workmen without coats suggest springtime in the early afternoon. The temperature was in the low 60s during the president's speech. Finally, the description of the dais decorations given in the 1902 *Proceedings* was a perfect match to the photograph. At this point, Bob Peck, the volunteer who supervises the Historic Mobile Preservation Society archives, produced three additional photographs of the event. One of which gave a clear, direct im-

age of the speaker who was not the president but matched the official photograph of Cunningham.

Gracious as Mr. Peck was, it seems there were no surviving photographs to document President Roosevelt's brief 1905 visit to Mobile. The AlabamaMosaic digital archives contains the cornerstone photograph but is labeled as "Theodore Roosevelt speaks to a large crowd at the Masonic Temple cornerstone dedication." The description lists the date as ca. 1900 and 1902. The state archives office was contacted and the description was corrected. Of course the erroneous information is sure to be copied from old print files and internet retrievals, and like a bad penny, this misidentification will persist. But, all is not lost. More and more we find that our Masonic history is being considered a valuable part of our national story and those professionals who are charged with preserving that story appreciate our helping hand. ✦