

Solomon's Porch

Initial Research Findings

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Solomon's Porch

There is a building that appears often on samplers that will be familiar to many. Its form appears to have changed very little over the years. It has a central tower, flanked by two thinner towers, each with its own triangular roof. There usually appears to be a balcony running horizontally across the middle of the building above a central doorway. It can sometimes be adorned with birds or flags. It may have a geometric tiled forecourt and a pair of what look to be three stick candlestands on either side of the building. It can appear as the central motif, as a pair, or tucked away in a corner, going almost unnoticed in amongst the other motifs. If not centrally placed, on the majority of samplers the building seems to be placed on the right side of the sampler, but this is not always the case. It can also be included as part of a garden scene. It can be stitched in a variety of colours. By comparison to other buildings depicted in samplers: it is seen less often than a house, but more often than a church. This building has often been termed a 'dovecote', 'folly', 'castle', or 'ruin', but less commonly, it has been referred to correctly as 'Solomon's Porch'.



Porch extract and full sampler, Martha Bleasby, 1825 from Thorne, Yorkshire © Private Collection



Undated and unsigned spot motif sampler showing three different styles of Porch. © Private Collection

In this paper, we outline our ongoing research to date regarding this motif: - its inclusion on samplers, its history, relevance, symbolism, time scale, and geographic spread on samplers.

BRIEF LITERATURE REVIEW

Several scholars have already identified the building referred to as Solomon's Porch. The earliest reference we can find to the Porch in literature about samplers is from 1964 by Colby (p. 83), then by Bromiley Phelan (2001, 36), Feller (2012, pp. 25, 206-7, 210-1, 220-1), Humphrey (2017, pp. 106-121, 162-3) and Wyld (2018, pp. 26-7). The most extensive discussion of this building is by Humphrey (2017, pp. 106-109, 115).

An extensive article on Solomon's Temples by Newell (2011, pp. 5-12) examines the large, often very decorative Solomon's Temple samplers, but this does not mention the Solomon's Porch motif. The article does provide a very helpful historical context regarding the perception of Solomon's Temple and its social significance during the sampler period covered here.

DATING AND EXAMPLES

The earliest examples of Solomon's Porch in Britain appear on late band samplers dating from the 1730s, where the motif is placed centrally within the sampler. The earliest known example is in the Dorset County Museum and dates to 1734/5 (Bromiley Phelan, 2001, p. 36; Humphrey (2017, p. 107)). This is a band sampler stitched by Elizabeth Spear with the Porch centrally placed in a decorative band, which Elizabeth titled 'This is King Solomon Porch'. The Porch has two towers, but is of a slightly different design to the later examples by having no central tower, but instead an ornate internal structure instead.

Other early examples are found in Feller collection (2012, pp. 206-7), dating to 1741/2 and the Fitzwilliam collection (Humphrey, 2017, pp. 108 – 9), dating to 1754 and 1785, both with the Porch placed centrally in the sampler. These early examples are stitched in satin stitch in silk and resemble more structurally the type of Porches depicted on later samplers. An early example of the Porch which became more commonly used with the central tower with a pillar either side with birds perched on top is found on the top of the [sampler stitched by Mary Bardwell, 1767](#).¹ This sampler has a very large and prominent checkered floor separately beneath the main text.

The Porch with a checkered forecourt is used as a spot motif on [an anonymous sampler dating from around 1779-99](#).²



An early example of Porch extract and full sampler, Mary Jenkins, 1772. © Private Collection

¹ From the collection of the Victoria & Albert Museum see:

<https://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O359701/sampler/?carousel-image=2021MY8578>

² Also from the collection of the Victoria and Albert museum: see

<https://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O364233/sampler/>

Mary Jenkins' Porch is typical of the style of Porch that continued to be stitched well into the 19th century.

A good example of a centrally placed large porch dating to the early 19th century was stitched by Mary Lovejoy, 1808. It has pillars with facing perched birds flanking a central Porch, with two trees in place of turrets and a checkered forecourt (Synge, 1982, p. 115 (plate 25b)).

The motif is continued to be stitched quite commonly until the 1860s, but instances do appear later. The later examples were in a variety of threads, such as silk, cotton and wool and almost always in cross stitch. As time passes the Porch becomes used often randomly amongst other motifs, sometimes tucked away in a corner as in the anonymous sampler below, or as part of an idyllic garden scene as in Hannah Bonfield's 1841 sampler.



An example of the Porch as a motif: Extract and full sampler, unsigned and undated, stitched in wool on wool fabric. Probably around 1830s to 1840s, English. © Private Collection



Extract and full sampler by Hannah Bonfield, 1841, English. © Private Collection

The large Solomons Temple samplers have a date period not too dissimilar to the Porches. They do not, however, appear as early as Porches do, nor do they seem to be stitched in this form outside the British Isles. Newell (2011, p. 9) found the earliest example to be stitched in 1790, with the majority made from the 1820s to 1840s, and a small number stitched after 1849, with the latest dated 1868. Many of the Solomon's Temple samplers seem to take the Senex print or other print makers (discussed below) as a template or influence, and although recognisable, the design does change and seems to gain influence from large municipal Victorian buildings or the Brighton Pavilion (Colby, 1964, p.83). These large Temples do not appear to show in their architectural construction the Porch itself.

There are a few samplers which contain both the Porch and Temple motifs. Elizabeth French's sampler (Feller, 2012, 25 -F417) dated 1845 (age 50, suggesting she might have been a teacher) has a building resembling a miniature Solomon's Temple on the right side of the verse. It has a pair of birds and unusually a pair of butterflies, a black and white checked forecourt and the white diamond pattern on a red background on either side of the forecourt more in the tradition of the larger Solomon's Temples. At the bottom of Elizabeth's sampler is a centrally placed Porch.

GEOGRAPHIC SPREAD

United Kingdom

Depictions of Solomon's Porch are mostly found throughout England, but do appear to a lesser extent within the other parts of the United Kingdom. They also appear on the more stylistically identifiable genre of Norfolk samplers.



A pair of Porches can be seen on a sampler stitched by Maria Curtis in 1827 in Burham Thorpe, Norfolk. © Private Collection

In Scotland the motif is occasionally used, for example on the sampler by Jean Craigie, Montrose, Angus dating to 1800 (Wyld, 2018, pp. 26-7, which will be discussed further below), or on the sampler by Janet McNiel, 1819, where the Porch is positioned at the top of the sampler above a large house (Quinton, 2005, p.50).

An example from Northern Ireland of the Porch is found on a sampler stitched by Ellen Wood, 1826, where the large Porch is positioned centrally, has a tiled forecourt, central tower and two free standing pillars adorned with birds (Crawford, 1989, p.22).

A sampler with a centrally placed Porch (unsigned and stitched in 1828) is held in the collection of the Manx museum Garrad and Hayhurst (1988, p. 18, accession IOMMM: 3376).

Porches also appear on Welsh samplers. A number are shown on Mary Jenkin's Welsh_samplers Instagram page.³ Mary's collection of samplers date from 1826 to 1866 and are generally more decorated than their English counterparts. They seem to have a different stylistic origin, where there are two distinctive freestanding pillars on either side of the central tower. Perhaps they could be an imagined combination of the Porch with Solomon's Temple? On [Mary Jenkin's blogspot](#) a Porch is depicted on a sampler that the stitcher, Ann Wms, in 1856, has mislabelled 'The Tower of Babylon'.⁴ This seems to be a confusion by the stitcher with the Tower of Babel or perhaps the fact that the first Solomon's Temple building was destroyed by a King of Babylon.

Solomon's Temple itself is shown in a different form to the English versions of Solomon's Temple in two examples by [Harriet Drury](#) and [Hannah Featherson](#) in the collection of Museum Wales.⁵

³ Available at @welsh_samplers on Instagram. Examples include <https://www.instagram.com/p/CH5GETIn-V0/>; <https://www.instagram.com/p/CMczsF1nvg2/> and <https://www.instagram.com/p/CNaq0dprbLC/>

⁴ See <http://4.bp.blogspot.com/--FmnWNEhNhk/VPGEthUQK1I/AAAAAAAAAEZ8/R0rEy3Jtnh4/s1600/H0067-L70211050.jpg>

⁵ See Harriet Drury, 1839 at https://museum.wales/collections/online/object/0301cc15-e63f-3fd6-a87e-81a0e4320202/Sampler/?field0=string&value0=solomon&field1=with_images&value1=1&page=6&ind

The Netherlands

The Porch is a common motif on samplers from the Netherlands and from a similar time period to England. However, the motif does appear earlier. A few examples can be seen online:

The earliest example of a Porch we have been able to identify is an [anonymous sampler dated to 1737](#).⁶ It has a pair of centrally placed slightly different coloured Porches. They are described on the website as being the "gates of heaven". On either side of the Porch the candlesticks are clearly depicted.

An [anonymous sampler dated 1772/3](#) at the Rijksmuseum has two Porches, both of which have the central wide tower with a door, a triangular roof with a central flat, and two turrets either side with a pair of facing birds perched on top and the three candlestands / braziers on either side.⁷



A Dutch example from 1788, which shows the candlestand on either side of the Porch particularly well. © Private Collection



Dutch Spot sampler dated to 1844, where the checkered forecourt seems to have been incorporated into the tower. © Private Collection

[ex=60](#) and Hannah Featherson, 1830 at https://museum.wales/collections/online/object/c9948772-50f1-310a-942b-e92b37a9bd4d/Sampler/?field0=string&value0=solomon&field1=with_images&value1=1&page=2&index=23

⁶ From the collection of the Nederlands Openluchtmuseum, <https://www.collectiegelderland.nl/nederlandsopenluchtmuseum/object/4291c22f-54e4-5683-9138-f346f2c2af82>

⁷ From the collection of the Rijksmuseum, <https://www.rijksmuseum.nl/en/collection/BK-KOG-2671>



An unsigned and undated Dutch sampler with a more ornate Porch placed next to the central house. © Private Collection

A [late example of a Dutch porch](#) dates from 1866.⁸ Meulenbelt-Nieuburg (1984, p.150ff) describes the Porches as 'dovecotes' and has charted both dovecotes and Porches together; the three Porches, fig. 35, 37 and 41, from samplers dating to 1737, 1737 and 1777 respectively.

Germany

Porches also appear on samplers from North Germany. An early example on a spot motif sampler probably from Erfurt, in Thuringia, central Germany dates to 1777, has a regular Porch with flags (Gierl, 1987, p. 18). On a very decorated sampler from Quickborn, near Hamburg, dating from 1793, a small Porch is placed on the right of a pair of angels that surround the name and date octagon at the top of the sampler. On the left side of the other angel are the Spies of Canaan (Leszner, 1997, p. 33). A further much later example from Lübeck, dating from 1886, has the Porch in the bottom right corner (Leszner, 1997, p.96).

Denmark

An early example from Denmark, stitched in 1761 has the Porch placed centrally, along with the Spies of Canaan (Leszner, 1997, p.52).

DOVECOTES

Taking into account the mis-attribution of the building as a Dovecote, it is useful to show true dovecote motifs for comparison, as these do appear on samplers, but look quite different to the Porches. They are less common on British samplers than on Dutch samplers. A Dutch example [dating to 1782](#) can be seen in in the collection of the Nederlands Openluchtmuseum where the dovecote is designed around a central pole, with a base and the accommodation for the birds at the top of the pole, and there is a similar motif on [another sampler from the collection dating from 1697](#)⁹.

⁸ From the collection of the Nederlands Openluchtmuseum
<https://www.collectiegelderland.nl/nederlandsopenluchtmuseum/object/b4652eac-0288-58f0-a1c2-2ce2bb9944c0>

⁹ 1782 sampler at <https://www.collectiegelderland.nl/nederlandsopenluchtmuseum/object/df67ecec-7265-538c-9581-b371d03444ba>, 1697 sampler at <https://www.collectiegelderland.nl/nederlandsopenluchtmuseum/object/8408a5a5-4ab7-53e8-a13e-cf7e5d5588c4>



A dovecote motif, taken from a sampler dated 1701, Netherlands. © Private Collection

THE HISTORY OF SOLOMON'S TEMPLE, PORCH AND PILLARS

To understand the relevance of Solomon's Porch we must look to the physical descriptions from the Bible and also at the spiritual connotations.

The original Solomon's temple is described in 1 Kings 6:2-3. It was built on Mount Moriah, or the Temple Mount, Jerusalem, in 960 B.C., although its exact location is disputed. It was described as being around 90 feet long, by 30 feet wide and around 45 feet high. Solomon's Porch was built onto the east side of Solomon's Temple. It measured 30 feet in length and 15 feet deep. The Porch was also known as a Portico or Colonnade (depending on translation) [John 10:23](#); [Acts 3:11](#); [5:12](#). and had a roof, unlike the other temple courtyards. The other walls of Solomon's temple were bare.

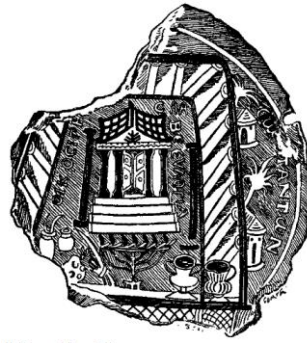
This first temple was destroyed in 856 B.C. by Nebuchadnezzar, the King of Babylon. A second temple was rebuilt on the site by Zerubabelin in 515 B.C, and then modified by King Herod between 16 B.C. to 66 A.D., increasing the size of the temple site considerably. The east wall, however, remained unchanged and the Porch built originally by Solomon remained. Walking through the Porch into the temple would lead you through the east gate to the Women's court and the Court of the Gentiles. Herod's temple was destroyed by the Romans in A.D. 70.

In the New Testament, several events took place in Solomon's Porch, which was the area where the non-Jewish people could go for debate and intellectual discourse. It was a place where Jesus taught and shared his views. In Acts 3:11 a lame man is healed there. Jesus was walking in the Porch when he was interrogated by the Jews and he confirms that he is the Messiah in John 10:23. In Acts 5:12 it says that, "...through the hands of the apostles many signs and wonders were done among the people. And they were all with one accord in Solomon's Porch.", which is taken to mean 'in accordance with God'.

Two freestanding pillars were erected on either side of the entrance to the Porch. The pillars were named Jachin (meaning: He shall establish) and Boaz (meaning: in Him is strength), and made of either copper, brass or bronze (Farrah, 2003, pp.46, 53). The pillars did not survive the first destruction of Solomon's Temple.

ORIGINS OF THE MOTIF

Humphreys (2017, p.107) notes that the pictorial origin of Solomon's Temple or Porch is unclear, but could possibly be derived from an illustration in the 1660 edition of the King James Bible, but other origins could be from Freemasonry or Judaism. From the longevity of the design and that there is little variation in its form, Humphreys suggests that the design might have come from '... a popular print, illustration, or instruction book, rather than a specific school or teacher'.



A very early image of the Porch and Pillars on a 4th to 3rd Century glass bowl.¹⁰

Depictions of Solomon's Temple began during the medieval period in ecclesiastical literature and art. Continuing from this during the 17th century, models of Temples began to be constructed. A Dutch scholar, Rabbi Jacob Jehudah Leon created a model of the temple in 1640 and it travelled to Paris, Vienna and London in 1675, and again in 1759 and 1760. The [model](#) is now in the Biblical Museum in Amsterdam.¹¹



A portrait of Rabbi Jacob Jehudah Leon and beneath him is shown in miniture the model of the Solomon's Temple which he built.¹²

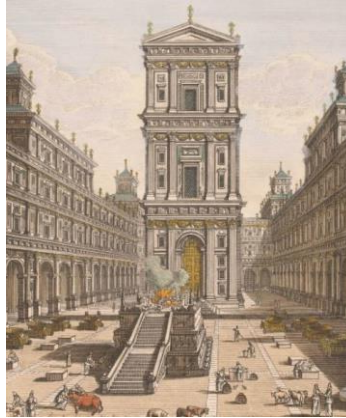
Another model was made in Hamburg by Gerhard Schott and shown in Hamburg until 1710, after which it was purchased by an English man and put onto public display between 1724-5 and 1729-30 (Newell, 2011, p.7). From the early 19th century onwards Newell (2011, p.7) notes that more models of the temple were constructed and toured around both England and the United States.

An important engraving of Solomon's Temple, inspired by Schott's model, was published by John Senex in 1725 (an English Freemason). This print was circulated widely throughout Masonic Lodges in the UK and the United States over the next 100 years (Newell, 2011, p. 7).

¹⁰ <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:C%2BB-Temple-Fig4-3rdCentADGlassBowlShowingJerusalemTemple.PNG>

¹¹ https://www.dbnl.org/tekst/_zev001199301_01/_zev001199301_01_0004.php

¹² From the collection of the Rijksmuseum, <https://www.rijksmuseum.nl/nl/collectie/RP-P-OB-47.111>



*Detail from a print by Robert Sayer of the courtyard in Solomon's Temple, by Robert Sayer, 1754 – 55, from the Rijksmuseum.*¹³

None of these models or engravings seem to depict the Porch in particular, however, and the consistent motif of Solomon's Porch does not seem to have its basis here. Its design does, however, emerge around the same time.



*A detail from a plate from the Rijksmuseum, dated 1752, representing Solomon's Temple.*¹⁴

FREEMASONRY, FRIENDLY SOCIETIES AND POSSIBLE HUGUENOT LINKS

There could be a link to Freemasonry with the use of the Solomon's Porch, particularly in England and Scotland. There is a timely coincidence worth noting at least. The origins of Freemasonry are unclear, but they were in existence in the late 17th century and the first organised Masonic Grand Lodge was formed in London in 1717 (Solt Dennis, 2011, p.57). The movement of Freemasonry was a driving force during the Enlightenment during the 18th century (Solt Dennis, 2011 p. 6). The organisation became more established and widespread over the next 150 years and accepted and supported members from all levels of society. Newell (2011, p. 7) notes that the timing of the Temple exhibitions in the 1720s coincided with the revival of the Freemasons and formation of the Grand Lodge of England in 1717. It is only around 10 to 20 years later that the Solomon's Porches are being stitched in England, with the Temples being stitched around 70 years later.

Perhaps the most visually relevant depiction of Solomon's Porch outside the samplers appears on Freemasonry artefacts. The Freemasons used the depiction of the Porch, checkered forecourt, pillars and braziers (candlestands) on ceremonial items, such as their

¹³ Full image available at <https://www.rijksmuseum.nl/nl/collectie/RP-P-1932-443>

¹⁴ Full image available at <https://www.rijksmuseum.nl/nl/collectie/BK-NM-4445>

aprons. Solt Dennis (2011 p.55), notes that the significance of these items and that the Altar (with fire) may signify the divine flame, which could account for the pairs of candles on either side of the Porch on the samplers. The checkered forecourt refers to the Masonic 'drawing floor'.



French Masonic Apron © Museum of Freemasonry

The Masonic aprons which bear the Porch motif are French. Researching further into links with Freemasonry in the early to mid-18th century England, a connection to the Huguenots emerges. The Huguenots were emigrant French Protestants and often highly skilled artisans in trades such as silk weaving, cabinet making, clock making and gold and silver work. The majority of the Huguenots settled in London. In 1719 a Huguenot became the third Grand Master of the London Lodge and the Union French Lodge was founded in London in 1730 (Wade, 2022).

The pillars were also adopted as symbols in the Loyal United Friends, where they are given a different name, which is thought to be Caelum and Terra (meaning Heaven and Earth) (Solt Dennis, 2011, p.138-9) and could have had a different meaning to their society. The Loyal United Friends are a Friendly Society, not unlike the Masons, but founded in the second part of the 19th century in Spitalfields, London by Polish Jewish immigrants. This is significantly later than the appearance of the Porch and Pillars on samplers.

Samplers which carry both the Freemasonry symbols together with the Solomon's Porch and Temple are rare. A remarkable example was stitched by Jean Craigie, Montrose, Angus, in 1800 (Wyld, 2018, pp. 26-7 and Tarrant, 2014, p. 114 and p.122-3, Fig 6.32). It depicts local landmark buildings, a large Solomon's Temple, a Porch (with clock tower), as well as other Masonic symbols. On the right of the sampler in a square bordered area, Jean stitched the Masonic set square and compass, sun and moon, and Pillars, which she named Jachin and Booz (likely to be a misspelling of Boaz). On the left of the sampler Jean stitched the Ark of the Covenant. Further highly symbolic motifs are included with her depiction of Adam and Eve with gardening tools, which would be seen as a reference to the Order of Free Gardeners, which was a Scottish society tracing back to the 17th century (Solt Dennis, 2011, pp.81ff). Wyld (2018, p.26) notes that there were three Masonic Lodges in Montrose, which is a significant number for a town of its size and their presence could have been a reason why Jean included the Masonic symbols on her sampler.

Another sampler which shows the symbolic motifs of Adam and Eve with gardening tools, along with other Masonic symbols and a Porch is shown below. This sampler also has a motif more commonly found on Quaker samplers.



Details of the Porch, Adam and Eve with gardening tools and the full sampler. Undated and unsigned sampler, British. © Private Collection

Newell (2011, 11) attempted to trace the ancestry of the Solomon's Temple stitchers to see whether they were from families where the father was a Freemason. She had limited success in identifying the stitchers and this could be an area for further research.

PILLARS ON SAMPLERS

There are some samplers which have a pair of pillars or a colonnade, which might be related to the idea behind the Porch. In Bromiley Phelan (2001, pp.50-1), a sampler by Clementina Reddrop, 1804 has a building with two prominent pillars and a triangular roof with the text 'Lord reigneth in Zion' and her initials C R. Also on this sampler are the Spies of Canaan. An unusual Scottish sampler stitched by Robina Story (1820 – 40) has both a pair of arches with trees beneath, beside a conventional Porch (Quinton, 2005, pp.60-1). An [example from Wales](#) shows a colonnade and pillars.¹⁵ Two pairs of colonnade style pillars which both contain two trees are found on a [sampler stitched by Mary Grace in 1797](#).¹⁶ Interestingly, the lintel above the pillars has a checkered black and white pattern, reminiscent of the Porch forecourt.

A sampler with two very imposing centrally placed pillars are found on an [English sampler by Sarah Nash](#), stitched in 1783.¹⁷

SOME ADAPTATIONS OF THE PORCH

In Scotland, an adaptation of the Porch by adding a clock to the central tower, is seen on several samplers.

Two examples, both stitched in 1783, by Jean Watson and Margaret Low from Montrose both have a Porch on the central right, with a clock at the top of the tower. The sampler by Margaret Low also has two birds sitting within the Porch (Scott, 1999, 20).

Elizabeth Ritchie 1837 (F366) stitched a spot sampler with a Porch with tiled forecourt, put a clock into the tower and stitched a stag in the central arch. The sampler was stitched in Arbroath (Feller, 2012, pp.220-1).

A sampler stitched by Sarah Maria Fey 1841 (F340) shows a depiction of St Paul's Church Covent Garden, London. The upper part of this building, with its two pillars and narrow central raised dome, flanked by a pair of birds certainly resembles the Porch. Sarah Maria's

¹⁵ From Mary Jenkin's Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/p/CvZqgM4NxzQ/>

¹⁶ From the collection of the Victoria & Albert Museum:
<https://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O1369595/sampler-grace-mary/>

¹⁷ From the collection of the Victoria & Albert Museum:
<https://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O359728/sampler/>

depiction looks more like St Paul's Cathedral architecturally (Feller, 2012, 174). Assuming that Sarah Maria never saw the original church, which has a very wide dome, she may have adapted the Porch design to fit her church.

RESURGENCE OF SOLOMON AS A POPULAR FIGURE IN THE MID 18th to MID 19th CENTURIES

King Solomon was a complex character. He is thought to have reigned from c.970 – 931 BC and was the son of King David and Bathsheba. His reign is outlined in 2 Samuel, 1 Kings and 2 Chronicles. He was portrayed as wealthy, wise and powerful, but also as a hoarder of wealth. In the New Testament, Jesus refers to him as a teacher of wisdom (Matthew 12: 42 and Luke 11:31).

During the post Enlightenment period, from around the 1750s to the mid Victorian 1850s, there seems to have been a resurgence in the interest in Old Testament figures, in particular Moses and Solomon, which also coincides with the period of time which the motif appears on samplers. Erdal (2021) discusses the reinterpretation of these figures by contemporary writers. For Solomon, he was "...recast ... as a global merchant and coloniser.", which chimes well with British colonial endeavours. "The Britain of the 1790s saw a renewed interest in charting Solomon's fabled trade routes, most of all to the land of Ophir..." the Biblical port or region famous for its wealth. By drawing parallels with Solomon's trading with Ophir, the British government could 'legitimise' trading with and colonising other parts of the world and taking their wealth. "The interest in Solomon then, occurred alongside trade expansion and the economic shift of Britain turning from a gold purchaser to an extractor in huge quantities in its colonies. A Christian empire which now had a certain 'inherited right' to the treasures it was stealing."

CONCLUSION AND INTERPRETATIONS

There have been a few suggestions as to what the Porch motif may indicate. From a Christian view, the early samplers with the Porch placed centrally or towards the top, could be read that it represents Heaven, the Heavenly Gates or Heavenly Jerusalem, as suggested by Feller (2012, pp. 206-7 re (F437). In particular, if the sampler is 'read' from the base upwards -so that the flora and fauna represent the Garden of Eden, followed by Adam and Eve representing the Fall of Man, with the Porch motif above, representing the Gates of Heaven.

A different view is put forward by Feller (2012, pp. 210–11) regarding Ann Middleton's sampler, dated 1799 (F338), which two depicts soldiers with their ladies. The sampler was stitched when England would have been involved with the French Revolutionary Wars. Here, it is suggested that the prominent placement of the Porch centrally at the top could reference that King Solomon was 'a great solver of disputes', which would tie in with the soldiers. The placement of the Porch at the top of this sampler might also link into the verse 'Go on Dear Child and may the lord of love Pour Down is Blessings from is throne above may he vow safe and Gard thee with is care and lead thy footsteps from each Dangers snare', perhaps further suggesting that the Porch could represent the Kingdom of Heaven above. Newell believes that the Temple motif was seen as a symbol of virtue, wisdom and leadership (2011, p.5, 7), which perhaps could also be attributed to the Porch.

As the Porch was used on Masonic aprons, could the Porch have had a hidden meaning for some of the stitchers – perhaps the motif being included as a covert message to those who could view a framed sampler on a wall.

Given the geographic spread of the motif from the Netherlands and North East Europe to the UK, this could indicate that that it was a particularly popular motif amongst Protestant Christians, perhaps even originating from the Lutheran or non-Conformist tradition of

Protestantism. If these motifs did come to the UK along with the Spies of Canaan motif, why did the Porch become popular and the Spies of Canaan motif not so popular at all? What made this motif resonate with the sampler stitchers or their teachers and families?

Given how much symbolism was attached to the motifs used in sampler making, the Porch would definitely have had a significance. The fact that the motif changed so little over time could be attributed to the girls following a specific and reasonably well-known pattern, either from paper, a print or from other samplers, or due to them following the design outlined in the Bible. Perhaps its significance to the stitchers is another reason as to why its form changed so little. As time passed, perhaps the original meaning of the Porch might have diminished or been confused and perhaps towards the end of its use seen merely as a pretty house with birds, that could be included in a garden scene.

ONGOING RESEARCH

1. Is there a specific regional distribution of the motif in the UK?
2. Can we find more European examples from other countries?
3. Do Porches occur on American samplers?
4. Continue research into the origins of the motif
5. Are there any more instances of Porches on Quaker samplers?
6. Is there any more evidence of Huguenot influences or other European migration or trade links to the emergence of the motif in the British Isles?

We would like to extend our thanks for help and guidance in putting parts of this research together. In particular, we would like to thank Joanne Lukacher and Bethany Clements for their thoughts on Norfolk samplers, and Emma Roberts at the Museum of Freemasonry, London for her expertise with symbolism and knowledge of artefacts in Freemasonry.

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