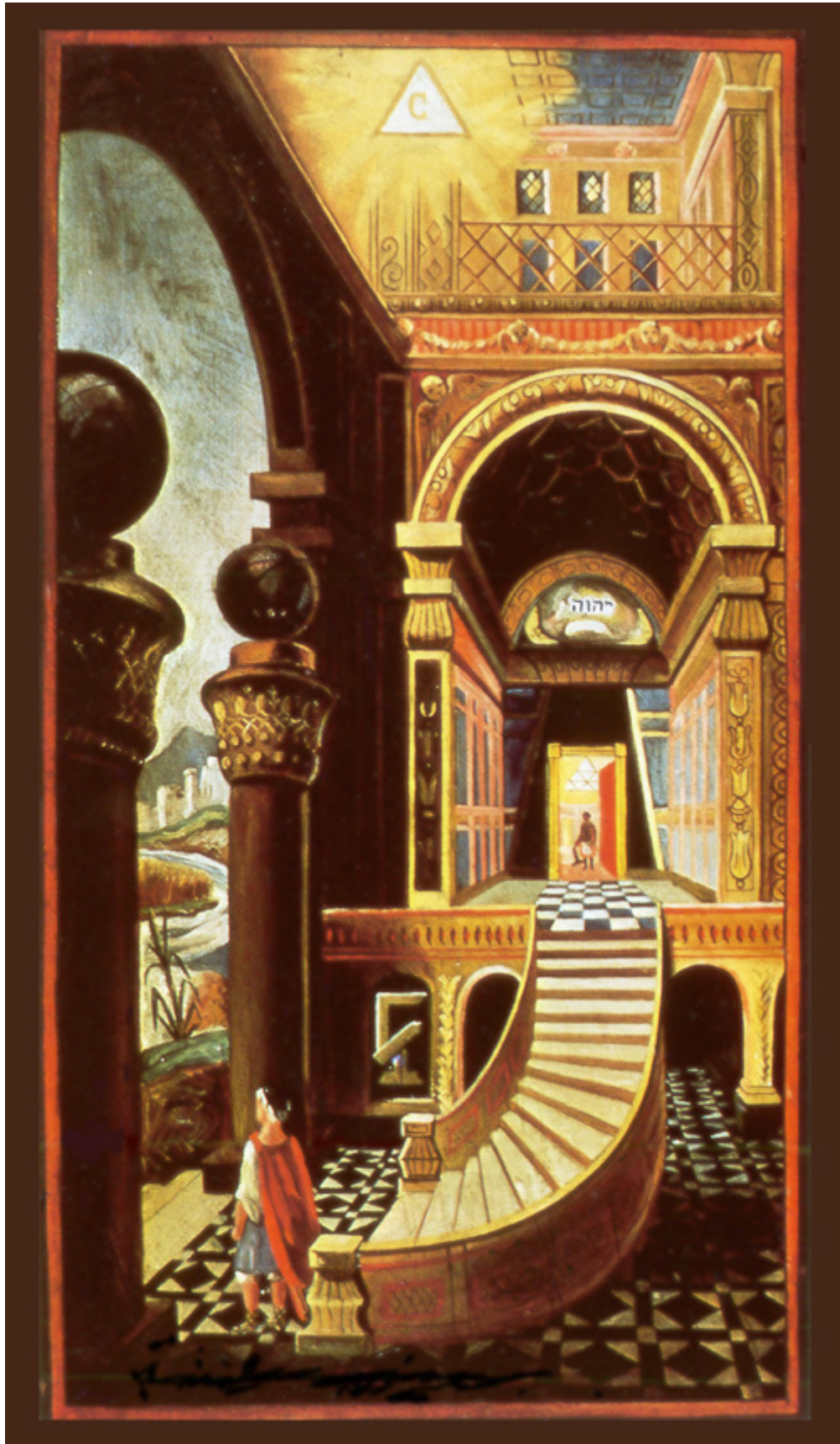


# Academia Lodge № 847

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## 2° Tracing Boards by John Harris



2° Tracing Board (First Edition)  
W. Bro. John Harris  
1825

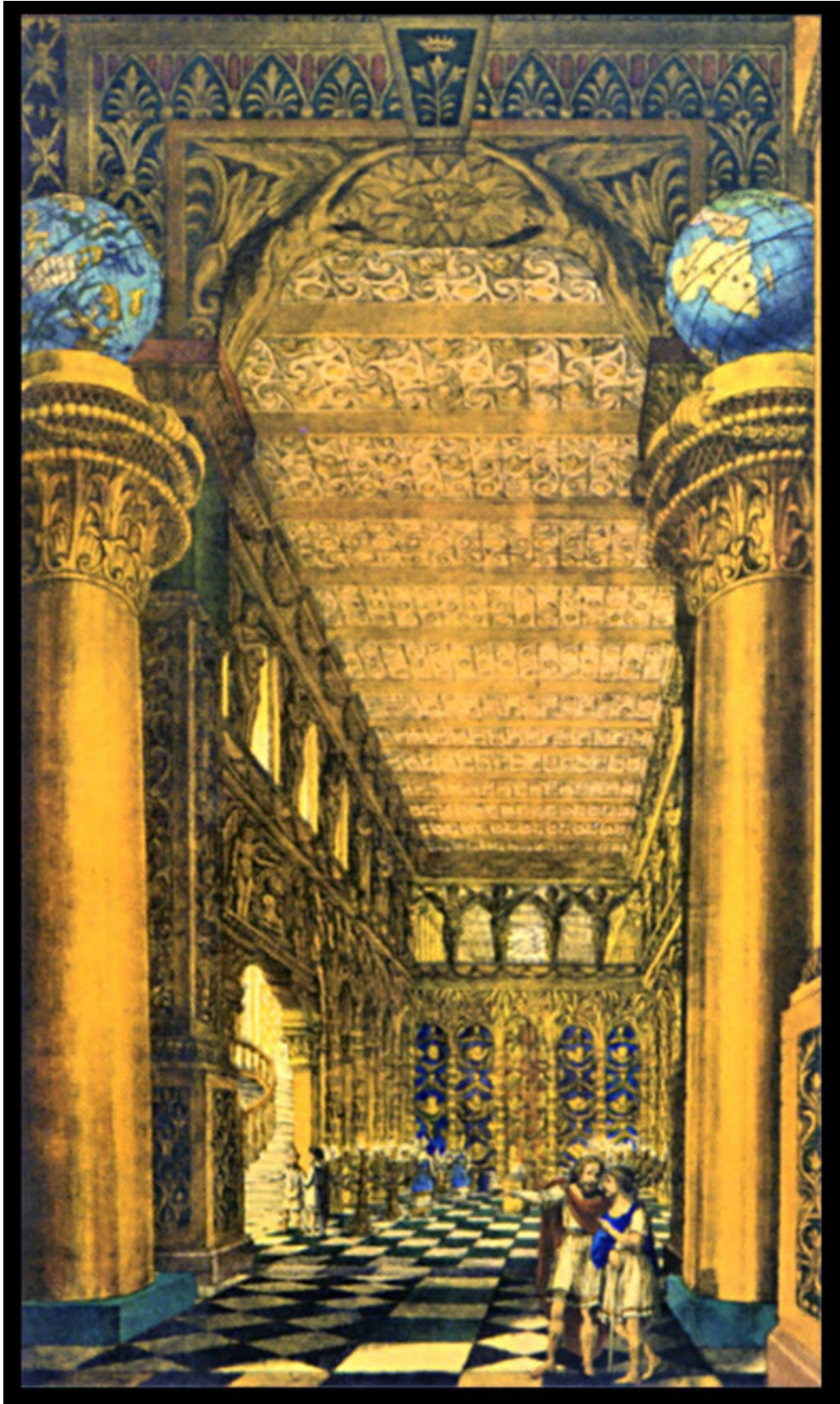
This is the classic Fellow Craft tracing board. Bro. Harris has vitalized Bowring's early picture by making the setting more ornate and integrating the "water crossing" aspect into the slender view between the pillars. This allows the symbolic journey through the Temple to be more powerfully expressed.

Viewers who literalize this picture and believe that Freemasonry has an architecturally unlikely concept of the Temple have missed an important point. This is a picture of the symbolic progress through the Fellow Craft degree. Tracing boards are not meant to be realistic pictures. Instead, they show us a process. They are reminders and contemplation aids. (Harris improved the architectural accuracy of his board in the version he released some 25 years later—see the next item in the exhibit.)

This board holds many important Masonic symbols:

- the prominent head of grain suspended over the waterway
- the pillars of Jachin and Boaz
- the outer and inner guardians
- the letter G glorified

It is interesting to note what may be the Pillars of Enoch in the distance of the outer view. An ancient legend recorded by Josephus and others states that prior to the Flood, mankind's wisdom was written upon two pillars: one of brick to survive fire, and one of stone to survive water. These were important Masonic symbols that have been subsumed in many Masonic traditions under the Temple pillars, which are now said to contain "the archives of the Order" within their hollow interiors, and designed to survive fire and flood.



2° Second Degree Tracing Board, Emulation, Revised Version (detail of lower section)

W. Bro. John Harris  
Oil on panel, circa 1845

Sometime before 1848, John Harris, who produced the standard-form Tracing Boards for the United Grand Lodge of England, introduced into the board for the Fellow Craft degree a representation of Solomon and the Queen of Sheba standing together in the Holy Place of the Temple. The inspiration for this was certainly the Queen of Sheba's role in the ritual of the Board of Installed Masters. These improved boards were released nearly 30 years after his original boards. Freemasons' Quarterly Review ran this description:

"There is a great alteration in the second tracing-board, Bro. Harris having given greater consistency to it, dividing the same into two views—one, the approach to the middle chamber; the other, to the temple itself. The former is a repetition of his original design, much enriched in decoration, &c., but omitting the two great pillars at the entrance. In the second Illustration, he has given a grand view of the entrance-porch, with the two pillars, and the court of the temple, with its altar of incense, and the ten candlesticks, of seven branches each; and terminating with the veil before the Holy of Holies, forming altogether a most beautiful and elaborate plate. The ornaments and details being clear and distinct, particularly as to the two spheres. The plate has been drawn to a scale of measurement as given in Holy Writ; and by the introduction of the figures in the foreground (viz., King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba, and Hiram the builder, and priests in the Court), gives an idea of the magnitude of the building." (1848, p. 359)

George Oliver, the most significant Masonic commentator of this time period, considered this the definitive second degree tracing board, He would have been surprised that Harris' revised board ultimately became neglected in favor of his original design.

Notes by Shawn Eyer, P.:Mthere4;

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