

Stokes Lodge No.32

An Historical Sketch of Stokes Lodge No. 32, A.F. & A.M.

written by Clarence Horton for the Stokes Lodge No. 32
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On June 24, 1717, St. John the Baptist's Day, four English Masonic lodges met in the Goose and Gridiron Ale House in London for the purpose of establishing a Grand Lodge. A Grand Master and other officers were elected, and an annual communication set for St. John's Day, with other meetings to be held each quarter. From that small beginning came Grand Lodges in Ireland and Scotland, and rival Grand Lodges in England. Only eight decades were to pass before Freemasonry put down roots in Cabarrus County, North Carolina, then only recently formed from neighboring Mecklenburg County. That historic first lodge was formed in 1797 in Concord, the village built to house the government buildings for the new county. As was the custom of that day, the lodge was given the name of a distinguished North Carolinian, General Montfort Stokes. For two centuries, Stokes Lodge No. 32, A.F. & A.M., has built on its proud heritage, has distinguished itself through service to its community, has sought to develop the highest moral principles among its members, and remained constant in its quest for the pure light of truth. As Stokes Lodge celebrates its bicentennial, it is appropriate that we pause for a moment to remember those on whose shoulders we stand, to retrace their steps and honor their accomplishments – and to gather strength for the journey into a third century of service.



In 1771, Colonel Joseph Montfort of Halifax, North Carolina, was given a commission by the Grand Lodge of England as "Provincial Grand Master of and for America," and began to organize lodges. Before that time, however, lodges had worked in North Carolina. Although there are few written records, Solomon Lodge worked near Wilmington from 1735 to 1754, and was succeeded by St. John's Lodge, now Number 1. Royal White Hart Lodge at Halifax, chartered in 1764, survives as Number 2. Although there was probably an earlier lodge in New Bern, Provincial Grand Master Joseph Montfort organized St. John's Lodge there in 1772; it exists today as Number 3. Other lodges were also organized in eastern North Carolina and survived the turbulent years of the American Revolution. With the exception of Old Cone Lodge in Salisbury, little work was done in the backcountry of North Carolina until war's end in 1783. The coming of peace allowed lodges throughout the state to obtain suitable quarters and organize their remaining records. In December of 1787, ten lodges sent representatives to an assembly in Tarborough and organized the Grand Lodge of North Carolina to regulate the work of Freemasonry throughout the state.

At about the time that Grand Lodge was organized, the Scotch-Irish and German settlers in the northeastern section of old Mecklenburg County began to agitate in earnest for a county of their own. In 1792 those efforts bore fruit, and a new county, named Cabarrus to honor Stephen Cabarrus, the distinguished French immigrant who was then serving as Speaker of the House of Commons, was formed. Stephen Cabarrus was himself a prominent Mason, having served as Grand Warden in 1790 and 1791. Although the first court in the new county was organized and held in January 1793, factions within the county disagreed on the location of the seat of

Stokes Lodge No.32

government. In 1795 an accord was reached and a compromise location agreed upon a site on a ridge near the old Indian Trading Path. The village was named Concord, and its main streets were called Union and Corbin. In April of 1796 town lots were surveyed and sold, with lot number 4 in the northwest square of the new town sold to a silversmith named William Atkinson. On that lot Atkinson built a log home, the first in Concord, and in that simple frontier dwelling, Stokes Lodge was soon to be born.

According to original records preserved in the archives of the Grand Lodge of North Carolina, an undated petition by 18 residents of Cabarrus County was presented to the Grand Lodge on December 3, 1796, by Major General Robert Smith. It read as follows:

Petition of Inhabitants of Cabarrus for a Charter.

To the most Worshipful, Grand Master, Grand Wardens, & Brethren of the Grand Lodge of the State of North Carolina:

The Petition of the Subscribers, Inhabitants of the County of Cabarrus, in the State of North Carolina,

Most Humbly Sheweth

That many of your Petitioner have illegally and clandestinely in irregular Lodges or meetings of Masons, been made acquainted with part of the Mysteries of the Craft; That some of your Petitioners have been regularly & properly introduced in the Mysteries; And that the whole of us, from a conviction that we have too long mistaken the duties of the Craft by Assembling without Authority, are now desirous of becoming regular Craftsmen by the permission and under the Jurisdiction of the Most Worshipful Grand Lodge of North Carolina.

We therefore pray that the Most Worshipful Grand Lodge will take our petition into their most Serious Consideration, and if it should be deemed expedient, to grant us a Charter to hold a regular Lodge under the Superintendence of such regular and Ancient Masons as the Most Worshipful Grand Lodge may think proper to name, that we your petitioners may by proper means and measures become regularly and fairly initiated in the mysteries of the Craft, and ever afterwards Cherish & promote the duties of Masonry.

And your petitioner will ever pray &c.

*John McGee
Archibald McCurdy
William Houston
James Nixon
John Houston
James Bradford
Arthur McCree
William Morton
Saml. Dougherty*

*Thomas Shields
Jas. Plunkett
Martin Shive
John Patterson
George Rogers
Thomas Rogers
Jacob Hudson
Wm. Atkinson
Hugh Rodgers*

Although Smith withdrew the petition on December 9, 1796, the document confirms the presence of Masonic activity, both regular and irregular, in the area which became Cabarrus County, for some time prior to the filing of the petition. On December 16, 1796, Robert Smith, together with Montfort Stokes and John Long, submitted another petition asking that the Grand Lodge grant them a dispensation to hold a lodge in Cabarrus County. A dispensation was then

Stokes Lodge No.32

issued by Most Worshipful William Richardson Davie, Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of North Carolina, to Montfort Stokes, authorizing him to form a lodge in Concord in Cabarrus County, and appointing Stokes as the first Master of the new lodge.

Montfort Stokes was born about 1760 in neighboring Rowan County, North Carolina. Although there are few records about his early life, records of the Revolutionary War indicate that despite his age, he entered service in 1776 and was taken prisoner near Norfolk, Virginia. He was confined for several months on board a British prison ship before being released.

In 1783, the petition of Montfort Stokes for membership in the Royal White Hart Lodge at Halifax, North Carolina, was approved. He was raised to the degree of a Master Mason on March 1, 1784. Stokes was very active in the craft, and served as Junior Grand Warden in 1796 and 1797. He also held the offices of Senior Grand Warden from 1798 through 1801, and was Deputy Grand Master from 1802 through 1807. On several occasions, Stokes served as Grand Master *pro tem.* over communications of the Grand Lodge of North Carolina.

Stokes was Clerk of the Superior Court of Rowan County for many years, and also served as Clerk of the North Carolina Senate. He was elected United States Senator in 1804, but declined the appointment. During the War of 1812, Stokes was Major General of a militia division composed of seven regiments. The sixth of those regiments was raised in Cabarrus County, with Richard Allison commanding.

General Stokes was again elected to the United States Senate in 1816 and served his state in that capacity until 1823. He was elected to the North Carolina Senate from Rowan County in 1826; following his removal to Wilkes County, he was elected to the House of Commons from his new home in 1829, and was returned in 1830 at which time he was elected as Governor of North Carolina.

In 1832, President Andrew Jackson appointed Montfort Stokes as Indian Agent in Arkansas, in which office he served until his death in 1842. General Stokes was buried at Fort Gibson, Oklahoma, the only soldier of the Revolution to be buried in Oklahoma. Upon receiving news of his death, the North Carolina House of Commons adjourned as a mark of respect to his memory.



On August 15, 1797, an organization meeting was held in the home of William Atkinson in Concord, with Montfort Stokes as Master. Also present were Robert Smith, Senior Warden, John Long, Junior Warden, and Robert Lowther, Tylar [Tyler]. Visitors included James Crawford, John McGee, James Creaton, and Hugh Rogers. The initial bylaws, which provided for certain fees and set out the duties of Lodge officers, were signed by the eight men named above and by Silas Shinn, Robert Benson, Aaron Voorhis, John Patterson, Wm. Atkinson, J [ohn] Rogers, J [ohn] Melcher, Benjamin Biggs, Jno. Houston, Jas. Plunkett, Arthur McCree, J[ames]. Nixon, T. Rogers, M[artin] Shive, W[illiam]. Martin, Joeseeph Long, John Goodman,

Stokes Lodge No.32

William Phillips. Regular meetings were to be held in Concord on the second Thursday of each month, and on St. John's Day.

In December 1797 that Grand Lodge of North Carolina and Tennessee issued a charter to the new Lodge, to be known as Stokes Lodge No. 32 in honor of its first Master. The charter names Martin Shive, a surveyor, as the lodge's first elected Master, John Patterson as Senior Warden and Silas Shinn as Junior Warden. The Lodge also paid its charter fee of ten pounds at that time. Although Stokes Lodge continued to work regularly and was in good standing with the Grand Lodge, it surrendered its charter in 1811 and was dormant until 1828.

As the years passed, considerable sentiment for restoring the old Lodge emerged in Cabarrus County. On April 8, 1828, local residents met pursuant to a dispensation issued by the Grand Lodge to Stokes Lodge, no. 32, with George W. Kluttz, Master, George W. Harris, Senior Warden, and George W. Spears, Junior Warden. Also present were Thomas V. Cannon, Treasurer, David Nicelar, Daniel Coleman, William McGraw, Junior Deacon, A.H. McRee, Secretary, and William A. Russell, Tyler. At its communication later that year, the Grand Lodge granted a petition from Stokes Lodge to issue a new charter, with George W. Kluttz as master, George W. Spears, Senior Warden, and John N. Spears, Junior Warden. Thus Stokes Lodge again became subject to the jurisdiction of the Grand Lodge on December 18, 1828.

Stokes Lodge was not represented at the Grand Lodge communication in 1829, but was ably represented during the next six years by Daniel Coleman. Coleman served as Senior Grand Warden, *pro tem.*, in 1830, and was elected as Junior Grand Warden, serving in 1831 and 1832. Coleman was the first to suggest that the State be divided into districts, and that Grand Lecturers be appointed to instruct the subordinate lodges throughout the State.

Daniel Coleman served as Clerk of the County Court for Cabarrus County from 1824 through 1828, then read law and was licensed to practice. He then served as Third Assistant Postmaster General from 1836 through 1841. Coleman was elected Solicitor of the 6th Judicial District in 1848, but returned to the general practice of law after five years. He and Dr. E.R. Gibson were involved in the construction of the North Carolina Railroad in the mid-1850s. Coleman was appointed to an office in the United States Treasury in 1871, and held that position until his death.

In 1833, when Daniel Coleman was serving as Senior Grand Warden of the Grand Lodge, he introduced resolution on December 9, 1833, setting out that a fire had occurred in Concord in January of 1833 which destroyed the room in which Stokes Lodge met, together with all the furniture, jewels, records and the Lodge charter. The petition asked that a new charter, dated January 28, 1833, be issued to the Lodge without cost. Pursuant to that petition, a new charter was issued to Stokes Lodge and its Grand Lodge dues remitted.

George Kluttz of Concord was appointed Grand Marshal of the Grand Lodge in 1834, and was appointed Grand Sword Bearer in 1835. Daniel Coleman had the honor of opening the Grand Lodge as Grand Master, *pro tem.*, in 1835, and continued to serve on Lodge committees. Coleman was not present at another communication of the Grand Lodge for 15 years, however, and with his absence came a period of decline in the affairs of Stokes Lodge. In 1839, Stokes was

Stokes Lodge No.32

among a group of 30 Lodges recorded as being several years delinquent in payment of Grand Lodge dues. In 1840, Stokes Lodge disappeared from the list of subordinate lodges under the jurisdiction of the Grand Lodge. Its name does not reappear until January 15, 1850, when it was re-chartered by the Grand Lodge of North Carolina.

During that period of inactivity, Stokes Lodge suffered the loss of its distinguished Past Master, County Surveyor Martin Shive. When War with Mexico was declared in 1846, North Carolina Governor Graham called for volunteers. Martin Shive raised a company from Cabarrus County to join eight other companies of volunteers from around the state. In Mexico, the North Carolina troops were assigned the monotonous duty of guarding the Army supply lines, and saw no actual combat. In August, 1847, Captain Shive became ill and died on August 15th. His comrade, Lieutenant Henry A. Area, sent the grim news home in a letter to Thomas S. Henderson:

Camp Beuna Vista, Mexico
2 o'clock, Monday morning, August 16, 1847

Dear Sir: I write these lines in haste (in order to get it in the mail, which will leave very early this morning for Monterey) the painful intelligence of our Captain Shive. He died about 12 o'clock last night, with Typhoid Pneumonia. He was sick only two days. Our Captain was a good officer, and I believe a brave man. Please forward this to his family, as soon as possible. We will bury him so, if necessary, he can be raised again, and I will mark the spot of ground.

N.B. The last words he spoke were, "Onward Boys! And discharge the duties before you."

When the War was over and the volunteers returned to Cabarrus County, they brought with them to body of Captain Shive, so that he could be interred in the Old Lutheran Cemetery on East Corban Street in Concord.



With the end of the War with Mexico came an effort to revive Stokes Lodge. A dispensation was obtained from the Grand Lodge of North Carolina in 1848, but reorganization efforts were not successful. In 1850, however, under the leadership of Daniel Coleman, another dispensation was obtained and the work of Stokes Lodge resumed.

On Tuesday evening, January 15, 1850, the lodge met with Daniel Coleman as Worshipful Master, R.S. Young, as Senior Warden, W.F. Phifer [by his proxy, A. Bethune], Junior Warden, and John McDonald, a native of Pennsylvania and manager of the local cotton mill, as Senior Deacon.

Stokes Lodge No.32

Remaining officers were elected at a meeting the next night, with Clerk of Court Kiah P. Harris as Treasurer, merchant Aaron Jones York as Secretary, and Martin Luther Barringer as Junior Deacon. A committee of R.S. Young, A.J. Yorke, and M.L. Barringer, was appointed to “procure such articles as may be necessary for this Lodge and also to make such improvement in the Lodge room as may be deemed necessary.” Although the location of that early lodge is not given in the minutes, the room was shared with the Sons of Temperance, for the minutes of January 22, 1850, reveal that a committee was appointed to “meet a committee of the Sons of Temperance with a view to a settlement of the accounts for the property held and used in common by the two Orders and furnished by then ub tge Hall.” Brothers Coleman, Barringer, and Yorke served as the committee.

With the organization complete, on February 1, 1850, the lodge appropriated ten dollars to be paid “to Bro. Coleman to pay for the Dispensation under with this Lodge is organized, also to pay for a former Dispensation procured in the yaer 1848 but under which no action was had.” Later in February, the lodge ordered that “A.J. Yorke purchase for the use of this lodge in some of the Northern cities collars and a full set of Jewells [sic] for the officers of this lodge and that he Draw on the treasurer for the necessary amount of Funds.” In August, 1850, Yorke and K.P. Harris were also directed to have the by-laws adopted in 1850 printed in one of the “Northern cities.”

Officers for 1851 were elected in November, 1850, with Robert S. Young, Worshipful Master; M.L. Barringer, Senior Warden; E.R. Gibson, Junior Warden; K.P. Harris, Secretary; A.A. Smithdeal, Treasurer; A.J. Yorke, Senior Deacon, C.N. White, Junior Deacon; and G.W. Kestler, Tyler. The newly-elected officers were installed at Concord [later, Central] Methodist Church on December 27, 1850.

The lodge began to be dissatisfied with its accommodations, and Daniel Coleman, C.N. White, and A.J. Yorke were appointed as a committee to “contract with Mrs. Rosanna Kluttz for a Lodge room” and report on their progress at the next regular meeting. Apparently, the committee able to make arrangements for a new meeting place, for the same committee was directed in March, 1851, to make temporary arrangements for a room until the “new Lodge be completed.” On June 23, 1851, the committee was directed to buy all necessary furniture for the new lodge room, and either paint or paper the room.

In 1854, Stokes Lodge was renting an second floor hall from Brother J.D. Frazier at an annual rental of \$35. The building was located on the west side of South Union Street, to the south of the Cabarrus County jail. Upon the transfer of Frazier’s interest, a Lodge committee met with A.H. Moss, the new owner, who agreed to continue to rent the hall to the Lodge on the same terms.

On November 30, 1855, Kiah P. Harris was elected as the Lodge’s delegate to the Grand Lodge. The treasurer was to furnish him with \$50, so that he could pay the Lodge’s annual dues of \$15, pay the \$20 subscription to St. John’s College, and have \$20 for traveling expenses. In 1860, the Lodge sent \$50 as a subscription to St. John’s College, and paid \$25 as a contribution to the Mount Vernon Association of North Carolina.

Stokes Lodge No.32

St. John's College was established by the Grand Lodge of North Carolina in 1855 as an education institution. However, the school was never financially successful and was reorganized as the Oxford Orphan Asylum in 1872, with John H. Mills as its first Superintendent. In addition to the usual curriculum, each student was given vocational training. The Orphanage was the first institution of its sort in North Carolina, and one of the first in the South.

For many years, Stokes Lodge shared its hall with other fraternal and civic organizations. At a meeting on December 26, 1856, the Lodge agreed to allow a lodge of Odd Fellows, which was "about to organize in the town" to share the room. The Lodge also tendered the use of the hall to the Concord Ladies Benevolent Society to be used for a concert. In November, 1860, the Sons & Daughters of Temperance and the Odd Fellows were invited to join the Lodge in a procession to a local church to have the Stokes Lodge officers installed pursuant to the established custom.

Stokes Lodge continued to meet and transact business during the war years from 1861 through 1866, but the work suffered from the absence of so many members due to the war. Due to the economic upheaval wrought by the war, Daniel Coleman moved in 1866 that past dues against the members of the Lodge who were in the war be remitted. An old ledger shows the following members credited for past dues at \$2 for each year of service:

J.C. Benson	\$8.00	F.A. Archibald	6.00
G.G. Smith	6.00	Ira A. Fitzgerald	6.00
James N. Brown	6.00	John W. Fisher	6.00
J.A. Gibson	6.00	J. Phifer Gibson	6.00
J.L. Bost	6.00	C.A. Patterson	6.00
E.M. Correll	6.00	V.W. Kestler	6.00
L.R. Rose	6.00	A.M. Wilhelm	6.00
F.M. Henderson	6.00	J.E. Bostian	6.00
C.W. Bradshaw	6.00	Martin L. Bost	4.00
Thomas P. Coleman	6.00	Wm. A. Patterson	4.00
Phillip A. Correll	6.00	Daniel R. Coleman	3.30
James C. Gibson	2.00		



In 1866, Stokes Lodge had its bylaws reprinted by J.J. Bruner in Salisbury. Regular meetings of the Lodge were set on the "last Friday of each month, and on Tuesday of each Court week, and on the festival of St. John the Baptist and St. John the Evangelist." The "liver of the Lodge [was to be] deep blue; and it shall be the duty of the Tyler to see that every brother is properly clothed before he enters the Lodge." In those difficult times, dues were reduced to \$2 per year, payable quarterly. At that time, J.C.H. Burkhead was serving as Worshipful Master, William A. Patterson, Senior Warden; C.A. Caldwell, Junior Warden; Joseph Young, Treasurer; D.R. Coleman, Secretary; J.A. Fitzgerald; Senior Deacon; P.S. Deaton, Jr., Deacon; and C.A. Patterson, Tyler. Stokes Lodge had grown to a membership of 85 Masons by that time.

Stokes Lodge No.32

On June 28, 1867, members of Stokes Lodge who were living near the northern edge of Cabarrus County asked for a dispensation to open a lodge and hold meetings at the home of Mrs. Winecoff, the new Lodge to be called Eureka Lodge. The petitioner had named John Sloop as their first master, R.F. Erwin as Senior Warden, and P.A. Correll, Junior Warden. Other petitioners included J.V. Pethel, V.W. Kestler, J.S. Goodnight, C.A. Patterson, C.W. Alexander, H.C. Baughn, J.K. Baughn, and Frederick Cline, all of Stokes Lodge, and W.L. Williams and E.A. Patterson, both of Industrial Lodge No. 20.

J.C.H Burkhead, E.R. Gibson, and A.J. Yorke, Past Masters of Stokes Lodge, recommended that the petition be granted. After examining the officers of the new lodge, the members of Stokes Lodge unanimously resolved that their petition be forwarded to the Grand Lodge of North Carolina, with a recommendation for favorable consideration.

At a regular meeting on July 31, 1868, another group of Masons who resided in the Mt. Pleasant area presented a petition with regards to establishing a new Lodge in that town. After considering the petition for some time, Stokes Lodge voted on October 30, 1868 to recommend to the Grand Lodge that the petition of the Lodge at Mt. Pleasant be given “favorable notice,” and that it be called Patterson Lodge.

Patterson Lodge worked under a dispensation of the Grand Lodge until it received its charter in December, 1870. the charter members were L.R. Rose, Worshipful Master; Lee Davis, Senior Warden; G.D> Snuggs; Junior Warden; John M. Barnhardt, Treasurer; W.R. Kindley, Secretary; John M. Harkey, Jr., Senior Deacon; William M. Eudy, Junior Deacon; and Obidiah Kern, Tyler. Patterson Lodge had three homes, the first being a hall over the old store building which occupied the northeast corner of the square in Mt. Pleasant. As the decade of the 1930s began, however, a limited membership forced Patterson Lodge to unite with Stokes Lodge.



During the decades of the 1870s and 1880s, Stokes Lodge continued to rent its hall from A.H. Moses for \$50 per year. During that Reconstruction era, many members had financial difficulties, and dues attempted to respond to requests for assistance from other lodges, the minutes of December 27, 1870, record that because of the “impoverished condition” of the Lodge, Stokes could not contribute to the effort of Stonewall Lodge in Robbinsville, North Carolina, to construct a new lodge. On May 30, 1873, the Lodge agreed that the Good Templars might use the hall for \$6 per month, “with the Lodge jewels, books, and archives to be kept locked up.” During that year, the Grange was also allowed to meet in the Lodge hall. Having so many other tenants apparently became a problem, however, and Stokes Lodge voted not to rent the Lodge room after January 1, 1874. Despite that decision, the Lodge voted in September, 1874, to allow the Odd Fellows to have the use of the hall, with rent to be determined later. A detail from an 1885 Sanborn insurance map shows the location of the Lodge hall on the second floor of a hardware store on South Union Street.

Stokes Lodge No.32

In 1888, Stokes Lodge desired a better meeting place, and negotiated a five year contract with the City of Concord to rent the hall on the second floor of the City office building at an annual rental of \$50. City Offices, including the fire department, were located in a building on South Union Street across from the intersection of Means and South Unions Streets, now usually known as the Ritz Building, and presently occupied by attorney Barbara D. Hollingsworth. During the decade Stokes Lodge rented quarters from the City, it continued to share the room with other organizations. In the latter 1890s, the Concord Lodge No. 51 of the Knights of Pythias also met in the hall, as did the Cold Water Lodge No. 62, International Order of Odd Fellows, the Elm Camp of the Woodman of the World, and the National Union. Stokes Lodge collected rent from the other tenants; depending on how many times the hall was used each month for meetings. As early as 1898, however, there were so many complaints from members about the condition of the hall that a committee was appointed to look into "procuring a better hall." In an effort to improve the room's condition, all the organizations sharing the hall joined together to hire a janitor for 50 cents per month.

As the century drew to a close, Stokes Lodge continued to support worth causes, regularly making contributions to Oxford Orphanage, and sending small donations to other lodges in need. Monetary contributions were sent to meet other needs, such as suffering Masons in Cuba, and sufferers in India.

The lodge by-laws were reprinted in 1899, establishing the regular communications of the Lodge on the "Monday night on or before the full moon in each month and on the festivals of St. John the Baptist and St. John the Evangelist." Lodge dues were then \$3 per year, with the dues for ministers set at 60 cents per year. Stokes Lodge then had 46 active members, whose names were listed in the newly-printed bylaws.

On July 9, 1900, the Lodge made a disposition of one of its most treasured relics, when it voted to "present the old Tiler's sword, form the property of the late Col. Marin Phifer, of the Revolutionary fame, to Mr. & Mrs. J.M. Odell, Mrs. Odell being a descendent of the late Col. Phifer." The Lodge soon realized the need to have a sword for ceremonial purposes, and agreed on April 21, 1902, to purchase another sword "for the use of the Marshall on special occasions."

Stokes Lodge was unaware at that time of its history before the issuance of the 1850 Charter. Thus in November, 1900, a committee was appointed by the Lodge to arrange a semi-centennial celebration. On December 6, 1900, a special communication was called in honor of the Lodge's 50th Anniversary. Grand Lecturer B.W. Hatcher accepted the invitation to be present, and made a public lecture in the courthouse at 3 o'clock p.m. Following his lecture, a collection of \$4 was taken for Oxford Asylum. Lodge members then went to their hall, where Hatcher gave Masonic instruction for several hours.

The old question of securing a better meeting place recurred, and a committee was appointed on January 20, 1902, to confer with the other Concord fraternal organizations about securing a new hall. That effort was spurred on when the City of Concord raised the Lodge rent to \$10 per month on March 24, 1902, and Stokes Lodge was forced to pass a portion for the increase on to its subtenants. Interested businessmen in Concord, many of whom were members of the various local fraternal organizations, decided to build a new building on South Union

Stokes Lodge No.32

Street in Concord, with business offices on the first floor and a spacious hall on the second floor. A company known as the Pythian Realty Company was organized and stock in the new company was offered. On June 16, 1902, Stokes Lodge appointed a committee to investigate Lodge finances with a view towards “taking stock in the Knights of Pythias building.” On June 23, 1902, the committee recommended that the Lodge subscribe to ten shares of Pythian Realty stock for a total of \$500, with \$300 to be paid down and \$200 paid in payments. M.L. Buchanan was elected Trustee to represent the Lodge, and was authorized to borrow \$200. On January 5, 1903, the Lodge agreed to borrow \$500 for 10 additional shares in Pythian Realty Company.

A committee from Stokes Lodge conferred with Pythian Realty Company about the “fitting up” of the Lodge Hall, and began to dispose of the old Lodge furnishings. Stokes paid rent to the City of Concord through August 28, 1902, and then rented the same quarters from H.G. Ritz, who had purchased the building from the City when the new City Hall next door was completed. Stokes Lodge sold its “furniture, fixtures & the switchboard” to the I.O.O.F. for \$65.40, and the moved into the new Pythian Building where it was to meet for two decades until the purchase of the Reed Building on the corner of South Union and Corban Streets.

On April 1, 1918, Stokes Lodge again adopted amendments to its bylaws and then had the bylaws printed for the use of its members. Thereafter, regular communications of the Lodge were to be held “on the first Monday in each month and on the festivals of St. John the Baptist and St. John the Evangelist, and shall be promptly and duly opened at 8 o’clock, p.m.” Dues were set in the amount of \$4 per year payable in advance. The Lodge had prospered during the early years of the twentieth century, and membership had increased to 135 active members.

Later in 1918, on August 5, Stokes Lodge learned of its 1797 origins when Past Grand Master A.A. Andres wrote the Lodge to “call attention regarding the existence of this Lodge prior to the present Charter.” Thereafter, Lodge officials obtained documentation from the proceedings of the Grand Lodge documenting and detailing the early history of Stokes Lodge.

As Stokes Lodge continued to grow, members discussed the purchase of land on which a suitable Lodge could be constructed. As a result, trustees for Stokes Lodge were authorized to purchase a building on the corner of South Union and Corban Streets. On July 13, 1923, S.E. Buchanan, trustee for Stokes Lodge purchased the property from A.A. Morris and his wife for the sum of \$30,000. The following year, an adjoining lot was purchased from Dr. John F. Reed and wife, Mary Lewis Harris Reed, for \$1,000. Serving as trustees for Stokes Lodge were S.E. Buchanan, C.W> Abernathy, and P.A.G. Barringer. A suitable lodge was outfitted on the second floor of the newly purchased building, and was occupied by Stokes Lodge until it moved to its present quarters on Brumley Street in Concord in the 1950s. For “tax purposes,” as one veteran member of Stokes Lodge describes it, the property was conveyed to the John C. Drewry Chapter No. 82, Royal Arch Masons, on December 17, 1931.

By 1929, Stokes Lodge was well settled into its new home and celebrated by inviting Grand Lodge officials to participate in its Past Masters’ Night on February 18 of that year. According to careful notes made by Worshipful Master L.T. Hartsell, Jr., past Masters of Stokes Lodge who were present included L.A. Bikle, James C. Fink, T.J. Hendrix, E.B. Grady, G.H. Hendrix, Joe A. Hartsell and T.B. Sturgis. Also present were representatives of the Grand Lodge

Stokes Lodge No.32

of North Carolina, the Grand Chapter of North Carolina, and the Grand Commandery of North Carolina. The highlights of the evening included conferring the Master Mason Degree by the Past Masters, an address by Most Worshipful John J. Phoenix, Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of North Carolina, and dinner at the Hotel Concord following the program. According to the souvenir program, Stokes Lodge boasted 228 members at that time.

The following year, Stokes Lodge made a dramatic real estate investment. It was brought to the attention of the Lodge that the Concord Realty Company, which owned the lovely Hotel Concord, had defaulted in payment of its mortgage, and that the property was to be sold at public auction. A committee consisting of G.H. Hendrix, C.A. Cannon, and L.T. Hartsell, Jr., was appointed by the Lodge with authority to purchase, finance, and/or lease the hotel property if it could be “purchase at a figure which can be properly financed.” On July 2, 1930, Stokes Lodge purchased the Hotel Concord at the courthouse door for \$120,000. On August 1, 1930, when a deed for the Hotel property was delivered, the Lodge also entered into a lease agreement with The Concord National Bank, adjacent to the Hotel, to lease for a term of 15 years “all the rooms and building located over the banking room of the Concord Nation Bank and now being used as a part of Hotel Concord.” Stokes Lodge operated the Hotel during the term of the 15-year lease, then sold the property to the Concord Hotel Company by deed dated November 6, 1945, for the sum of \$153,500.

Despite depression and war, the membership of Stokes Lodge remained relatively stable and its financial condition prosperous. In a brochure issued near the end of 1942, the Lodge listed 224 active members, led by Worshipful Master R.E. Bryson, E.E. Duckett, Senior Warden; A.C. Widenhouse, Junior Warden; L.T. Hartsell, Jr., Treasurer; R.S. Arrowood, Secretary; E.T. Bost, Jr. Senior Deacon; R.A. Folkman; Junior Deacon; E.W. Liverman, Senior Steward; Jack E. Duffy, Junior Steward; and G.A. Batte, Sr., Tyler. Eight members of the Lodge were serving on active duty in the armed forces at time: W.G. Baucom, H.W. Calloway, Jr., Roy S. Carpenter, B.E. Ketchie, C.T. Lyerly, G.W. Passage, Joe W. Pike, and Clyde Roberts.

Stokes Lodge celebrated its Sesquicentennial with events throughout 1947. An additional cause for celebration was the election of Pat master L.T. Hartsell, Jr., as Grand Master of the North Carolina Lodge. The newly-elected Grand Master was honored at a banquet held at the Hotel Concord on April 25, 1947, during which Hartsell made his first speech since his induction into the high office on April 16th; His father L.T. Hartsell, Sr., was given the pleasure of introducing his son on that historic occasion.

L.T. Hartsell’s election as Grand Master was the culmination of a long period of service to Masonry. He served Stokes Lodge as Warden, Master, Trustee, and Treasurer. He was a member and a Past Master of Lodge No. 666, the North Carolina Lodge of Research Hartsell served as Grand High Priest of the Grand Royal Arch Chapter of North Carolina at the age of thirty four years, was Right Eminent Grand Commander of Knights Templar in 1944, and was a Chevalier of the Great Priority of Helvetia, Switzerland.

In addition to achieving great proficiency in the practice of law, Mr. Hartsell had served his community as County Attorney, Chairman of the County Board of Elections, State Senator,

Stokes Lodge No.32

church Deacon, member of the Concord City School Board, and Chairman of the Cabarrus County Selective Service Board Number One during the difficult years of World War II.

After making what newspaper accounts described as a “brilliant speech,” the new Grand Master was presented an engraved silver pitcher by Stokes Past Master E.B. Grady. Hartsell pledged himself “to work toward proficiency and knowledge of Freemasonry in all Mason lodges throughout the State.”

The second in the series of sesquicentennial events was held on Friday, September 19, 1947, when there was a joint meeting of Stokes Lodge and the North Carolina Lodge of Research, No. 666, of Monroe. In addition, the 25th Masonic District of North Carolina held its annual communication and reviewed the work going on in the 12 lodges making up the District.

Due to the number of persons present, the joint meeting was held in the Concord High School auditorium following a picnic barbecue dinner served on the school grounds to more than 500 Masons. In addition Grand Master L.T. Hartsell, Jr., Earl Duckett was present as Master of Stokes Lodge, and Royal C. Stephenson of Raleigh as Master of the Lodge of Research. Stokes historian Leon Godown also served in his capacity as Deputy District Grand Master of the 25th District. The program featured talks by Grand Orator J. Ray Shute, D.D.G.M Godown, and a speech by Past Master Timberlake of Wake Forest. Gilbert H. Hendrix, Stokes Past Master, was also warmly applauded for his work as chairman of the Stokes Lodge Sesquicentennial Committee.

The highlight of the banquet was an address by the Rev. Henry Fitzhugh Collins, of Columbia, South Carolina, a Past master of the South Carolina Grand Lodge. A tableau in three scenes was then presented by members of Stokes Lodge, some of them in colonial costumes, depicting historical highlights of Stokes Lodge. Each Mason present was given a gold-plated trowel, engraved for the occasion. The ladies present received a large blue bath towel, each bearing in gold thread the words “Stokes Lodge, No. 32, 1797-1947.”

Decorations for the occasion included a multi-tiered birthday cake featuring 150 large candles, and bearing the anniversary dates of Stokes Lodge. A check was presented to A. DeLeon Gray, the Superintendent of Oxford Orphanage, in the amount of \$729.50 by Past Master Leon Godown.

The Masons of Stokes Lodge continued to periodically discuss the purchase of property to be used exclusively for Lodge purposes, on which a spacious hall with kitchen facilities and ample parking could be constructed. To carry out that old dream the Lodge purchased a tract of land in Concord's Ward No. 2 on March 3, 1953, from Mary Lewis Harris Reed, the widow of Dr. John F. Reed. A building committee was formed, consisting of Dr. T.N. Spencer, Chairman, J.C. McCachren, Hugh Gray, A.C. Widenhouse, T.O. Sills, E.S. Towery, Sr., A.R. Erwin, and W.L. Mills, Jr.

After several years of careful planning, the cornerstone for the present Lodge was laid in a ceremony on Tuesday, November 27, 1956, at 3 o'clock p.m. An Emergent Communication of the Grand Lodge of North Carolina was call for the purpose of laying the cornerstone, and was

Stokes Lodge No.32

opened by Grand Master John Catlett Vance of Asheville. The Grand Lodge met in the Stokes Lodge Hall and then proceeded in 30 degree weather to the construction site in a procession led by Masons wearing aprons. There a triumphal arch had been erected at a corner of the building. After powerful messages by the Grand Master and then by Past Grand Master L.T. Hartsell, Jr., a steel box containing a list of Lodge members, various photographs, and souvenirs of the 150th anniversary celebration was sealed and placed within the cornerstone. The cornerstone was then laid with full Masonic rituals, employing elements of corn, wine, and oil, and using the square, level and plumb, and the stone was found to be well formed, true and trusty.

The modern two-story lodge building cost in excess of \$100,000 and included the Hall, a lodge room, a reception room and rest room facilities. A dining room designed to seat 150 persons and a large kitchen were located on the basement floor, and the large parking lot provided ample space for vehicles.



In 1960, a Petition was presented to the Grand Lodge of North Carolina asking that a dispensation issue to hold a new lodge to be known as Cabarrus Lodge. There were forty-three signatures on the August 23, 1960 petition. After investigation, the Grand Lodge issued a dispensation on September 15, 1960, authorizing the new Lodge to meet, with Fred Baxter Lisk as Master, Edgar Carrol Caton, Sr., as Senior Warden, and James Edward McIntyre, Jr., as Junior Warden. The organizational effort was successful as evidenced by the March 15, 1961, Petition to the Grand Lodge asking that a Charter be issued. A Charter was subsequently issued by the Grand Lodge on April 19, 1961, to Cabarrus Lodge No. 720. The new Lodge has continued to share the spacious quarters on Brumley Street with Stokes Lodges, and Cabarrus members enjoy close fraternal ties with the members of the mother lodge.

During the four decades Stokes Lodge have continued their heavy involvement in worth causes in the Concord area, and have also continued to serve in the Grand Lodge. Through that involvement, Stokes Lodge again became a part of history when another of its members was chosen to lead the Grand Lodge of North Carolina. In 1974, after years of faithful service, William L. Mills, Jr., was elected Grand Master and began a dynamic year of leadership.

William Lee Mills, Jr., was born on September 14, 1914, the oldest of eight children. After graduation from high school he worked for Cannon Mills Company in Kannapolis, while continuing his education. In 1936, Mills married Miss Erin Morris and also became assistant overseer of the Cannon Mills Company Sheet Department. He valiantly served his country in World War II, and was among those landing on the French Coast in the June 6 "D-Day" invasion. Shortly after the landing he was wounded but returned to his troops with the rank of Captain. During the heavy fighting in the Seigfried Line, Captain Mills suffered the loss of a leg while attempting to aid and injured comrade. He retired from the Army in 1946 with the rank of Major. Numerous decorations included the Silver Star, Bronze Star for Valor with Oak Leaf Cluster, and the Purple Heart with Oak Leaf Cluster.

Stokes Lodge No.32

After the War, William Mills studied for the bar, and was awarded his law degree from UNC at Chapel Hill in 1952, having distinguished himself as a student. He then joined the law firm of Hartsell and Hartsell in Concord, and quickly excelled in his chosen profession, serving as State Bar Councilor, a member of the North Carolina Bar Association Board of Governors, and as a member and chairman of the Board of Law Examiners. Despite the heavy demands of his practice, Mr. Mills was active in numerous civic and service organizations, including the American Legion, Concord Rotary Club, the United Way, and Cabarrus Rescue Squad. He was a faithful member of First Baptist Church of Concord, serving as Sunday School Teacher and Superintendent, and Chairman of the Board of Deacons.

With all his other activities, however, William L. Mills, Jr., was best known for his Masonic activities. He was an active member of DeMolay as a youth, as a member and Past Master of Stokes Lodge, a member of the York Rite, and numerous other Masonic organizations. In 1967, Mills was appointed Grand Steward and advance in the work until his election as Grand Master in 1974. With his customary humility, Mr. Mills accepted the high honor with humility and a pledge to dedicate himself to the task to the best of his ability.



Stokes Lodge has continued to function with its usual vitality as it approaches the end of its second century of service. The Lodge has continued its long tradition of raising funds for Masonic charities, hosting spring and Fall Fish fries for that purpose each year, along with various other fundraisers.

On the eve of its Bicentennial, Present Master Robert R. Speidel has stated his vision for the future of Stokes Lodge: “ Basically, we are a service organization, and we hope to continue for the next century. Beyond that, our mission in Freemasonry is to raise the moral, social, intellectual, and spiritual conscience of our society by continuing to teach the ancient and enduring tenets of brotherly love, charity, and truth. As Masons, we express those cornerstones of our philosophy through our service to God, Family, Country, and Self, under the Fatherhood of God, and within the Brotherhood of Man. Those goals seem lofty,” he said, “but I firmly believe that we can attain them because of the solid foundations that Stokes Lodge has build on for 200 years. My challenge to Stokes Lodge is that we continue to build and to grow – but that we never forget those who worked and who sacrificed so much for our fraternity over the past centuries.”

Clarence Horton