

“HISTORY OF PHOENIX LODGE NO. 8, A.F.& A.M., FAYETTEVILLE, NORTH CAROLINA, BY WILLIAM L. RAMSEY, PM”, 1959.

NO ONE KNOWS the origin of Phoenix Lodge No. 8 for it is veiled in mystery. The first Grand Lodge of England was formed in 1717 and at that time seven or more Masons could meet and organize a Lodge. In 1736 the Grand Lodge of Scotland was organized, and it is likely that there were several Masons in the group that settled in Campbellton (the first name of the settlement) in 1737.

These Scottish Masons wishing to continue their Masonic work, no doubt, organized a Lodge and continued through the years, taking the name of Union Lodge, which name it held when it issued the call for the first convention to organize - the Grand Lodge of North Carolina which was to be held on June 24, 1787, in Fayetteville. There were not a sufficient number of delegates attending the convention, and the convention adjourned to meet in Tarborough the following December 9, 1787, at which time the Grand Lodge of North Carolina was formed. The Grand Lodge of North Carolina convened in Fayetteville on November 17, 1787, at which time, Union Lodge presented a petition that its name be changed to Phoenix. (The change has never been explained.) Phoenix Lodge is the third oldest Masonic Lodge in North Carolina having continuous existence.

In 1793, the ground upon which the present building stands was donated to the Lodge by Brother James Hogg, a devoted Mason and a man of means, who took a prominent part in the affairs of state. He also gave the ground upon which the first courthouse was erected, now occupied by the Confederate Monument.

Phoenix Lodge was incorporated by the General Assembly of North Carolina in 1799. Its charter is as follows:

CHARTER OF PHOENIX LODGE No. 8

An Act to Incorporate the Phoenix Lodge No. 8. in the Town of Fayetteville. Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the State of North Carolina, and it is hereby enacted by authority of the same,

That the Master, Wardens and Members who are present, or in the future may be, of the Phoenix Lodge, No. 8, in the Town of Fayetteville aforesaid, are hereby constituted and declared to be a body corporate, under the name and title of the Phoenix Lodge No. 8, and by such name shall have perpetual succession, and a common seal, and may sue and be sued, implead and be impleaded, acquire and transfer property, and pass all such by-laws and regulations as shall not be inconsistent with the Constitution of this STATE or the United States. Passed 1799.

Men of prominence in the early history of Cumberland County have been members of the Lodge. Such as James Porterfield, John Winslow, Edward Winslow, Duncan McAuslan, Samuel Merly, David Anderson, Robert Donaldson, John Louis Taylor, John Sibley, William

Cochran, Wm. Barry Grove, Duncan McRae, Wm. S. Meroney, Eseck Arnold, Rufus King and A.M. Campbell.

In 1825 Phoenix Lodge was visited by the Marquis de Lafayette in whose honor the Town of Fayetteville was named. He was greeted by Robert Strange who was the Master, as well as the Commander of the Fayetteville Independent Light Infantry which acted as the Honor Guard in the reception of the Marquis, and it was very pleasing to Lafayette to see Robert Strange in such an exalted station. The Fayetteville Independent Light Infantry Company was organized in 1793 and is the second oldest military company having continuous service in the U.S.A.

Phoenix Lodge has furnished four Grand Masters of Masons in North Carolina. James Louis Taylor, who was a member of the legislature from 1792 to 1794. In 1798 he was a Justice of the Superior Court and in 1818 was Chief Justice of the Superior Court. He was Grand Master in 1802, 1803, 1804, 1814, 1815, 1816, 1817.

John A. Cameron, a member of the legislature from 1812 to 1814. United States Consul to Vera Cruz and United States Judge in Florida. He was Grand Master in 1820 and 1824.

Robert Strange, was a member of the legislature from 1821 to 1826. Judge of the Superior Court and in 1836 was elected United States Senator. He was Grand Master in 1823 and 1824.

John Huske Anderson, was Grand Master in 1927 and rose to receive most of the honors that Masonry has to confer. He was a General High Priest of the General Grand Chapter of Royal Arch Masons. At the time of his death, 1948, he was Grand Secretary Emeritus of the Grand Lodge of North Carolina.

Another distinguished son of Phoenix Lodge was William Rufus King, who was Vice-President of the United States, dying in office April 20, 1853.

The first Lodge building was erected in 1793, and the members had an eye to the mental and moral training of the young, and to the intellectual enjoyment, not only of themselves, but of the citizens generally, providing ample space for a commodious school room and theater.

In 1858 this building, which had served as a Lodge room, theater, as well as a place of worship, was demolished due to the ravages of time, it being unsafe to use. A new building was erected, to which an additional two wings were added in 1949, which is used every day by the various Masonic bodies of Fayetteville, such as its daughter, Creasy Proctor Lodge No. 679, organized 1946; Phoenix Chapter No. 2, Royal Arch Masons, whose organization (1815) antedates the organization of the Grand Chapter of North Carolina (1822); Fayetteville Council No. 27, Royal and Select Masters, Palestine Commandery No. 20, Knights Templar; White Shrine of Jerusalem; Order of DeMolay; Eastern Star; Rainbow Girls and others who helped rebuild this beautiful Temple.

In the immediate past decade, Phoenix Lodge No. 8 has been honored by three of its Past Masters who have received further honors. C. Wallace Jackson, 32d, Past Grand High Priest of the Grand Royal Arch Chapter of North Carolina, serving 1953; present Grand Warder of the Grand Commandery, Knights Templar of North Carolina; Thomas Gorrell Slate, 33d, Past Grand Master of the Grand Council, Royal and Select Masters in North Carolina, serving 1953; William Lee Ramsey, 32d, K.C.C.H., Past Grand Commander of the Grand Commandery of Knights Templar of North Carolina, 1952.

There are many other members of Phoenix Lodge No. 8 who have lent distinguished service, but, through lack of space we will not be able to record their achievements. However, James Evans McDavid, a member of Creasy Proctor No. 679 (daughter of Phoenix Lodge No. 8), who was its first candidate for the degrees in Masonry, is the Deputy Grand Master of the Grand Council of Royal and Select Masters in North Carolina, in 1959. Phoenix Lodge has a heritage; each of its members is proud of the place that it has taken in the life of Fayetteville, Cumberland County, North Carolina, and the nation. And in the years to come, may it always be strong in its service to take its rightful place in shaping the destinies of Fayetteville, North Carolina, and the United States of America.