

THE MASONIC TEMPLE
Fayetteville, N. C.

This building is the home of the various branches of Masonry and its affiliated Orders in the Fayetteville area. The title of the land and building is in the name of Phoenix Lodge No. 8, although funds for remodelling in 1949 were obtained through a cooperative effort of all which used the building at that time.

Phoenix Lodge No. 8 is one of the most ancient institutions in the Upper Cape Fear section. Although insufficient records survive to establish claim to existence prior to 1787, it is known from contemporary writings, that a Masonic Lodge, then called Union Lodge, was in operation here in 1760. It is generally supposed that Union Lodge, later called Phoenix, was organized about 1736 when the Highland Scots settled the Cross Creek section.

After winning our independence from English rule, utter confusion spread among the different States. There was no uniformity, the Articles of Confederation meant little. Finances were disrupted, there was no money system, credit was suspended, confusion was the order of the day everywhere. The government of Masonic lodges, of which there were several, was no less disrupted than civil government. But gradually, order was restored. A Constitutional Convention was called in Philadelphia in May, 1787, which resulted in our present Constitution. The Fayetteville Masons were no less aware of the need of a governing body. On January 1, 1787, Union Lodge issued a call to the several lodges in the State to assemble in Fayetteville on St. John's Day, June 24th of that year, for the purpose of forming a Grand Lodge, to assume the position formerly ~~held~~ held by the Grand Lodge of England. But owing to the great distances and the small intercourse between the widely separated parts of the State, insufficient representation was present, and a second meeting was called in Tarboro in December of that year, when the present Grand Lodge of North Carolina was formed. The name of the Fayetteville lodge became Phoenix, spelled "Phenix" in the old records, on November 17, 1788.

Another Masonic body of great age also has its home in this building. Phoenix Chapter No. 2, Royal Arch Masons, began its work under a dispensation dated September 1, 1815. This Chapter issued the call which resulted in the formation of the Grand Royal Arch Chapter of North Carolina on this site, June 2, 1823. Its first presiding officer, termed the Grand High Priest, was a Fayettevillian, Robert Strange, whose original Dispensation is now preserved in its archives. It is interesting to note that two of the governing bodies of North Carolina Masonry had their inception in Fayetteville.

The land on which the building stands was bequeathed in perpetuity by James Hogg, an ardent Mason, an ancestor of the Huske and Anderson families, in 1793. The plot is identified on the "Frenchman's Map" as St. John's Square. The original building contained a lodgeroom, a schoolroom, and a theatre - for many years the only theatre in Fayetteville. While it seems to have escaped the great fire of 1831, the baseless and prejudiced anti-Masonic agitation of the 1830s caused a virtual suspension of meetings. The building fell into bad repair and was razed about 1844. A new building was built on the same site

about 1852. It contained a schoolroom and lodgeroom, but no theatre. The structural parts of this building were so sound that when the building was remodeled in 1949 by the addition of wings to either end of the old part, very little strengthening was needed. All junctures of timbers are mortised, with pegs preventing separation; the roof trusses are massive enough to bear the entire weight of the building; the floor joists are 4 x 12s 35 feet long, all of fat lightwood so hard it is impossible to drive a nail into them.

Many prominent names appear on the roll of Phoenix Lodge, among whom is William Rufus King, U. S. Senator and Vice President of the U. S. The lodge has produced four Grand Masters of Masons in North Carolina: John Louis Taylor, 1802; John A. Cameron, 1820; Robert Strange, 1823; and John Huske Anderson, 1927. The latter was a direct descendant of James Hogg who deeded the lodge property, and became General Grand High Priest in 1939. As such he headed Royal Arch Masonry in North America, the largest body of Masons in the world. He was the recipient of most of the honors Masonry has to offer. In the course of his travels, he was received by the Kings of England and Sweden.

In 1946 another lodge was organized. They too, have their home in the building, and assisted in the enlargement in 1949. This lodge chose the name Creasy Proctor Lodge No. 679, in honor of an esteemed Superintendent of the Masonic Orphanage at Oxford.

In 1963 a third lodge was formed, which also meets in the building. This lodge is named John Huske Anderson Lodge No. 731, in honor of the prominent Mason before mentioned.

In addition to the three lodges and the Royal Arch Chapter noted above, numerous other Masonically affiliated organizations meet in the building, among which are a Council of Royal and Select Masters, a Commandery of Knights Templar, a Chapter of the Eastern Star, a Shrine of the White Shrine of Jerusalem, a Court of Amaranth, a Chapter of Demolay for Boys, and a Chapter of the Rainbow Girls. The combined memberships of the organizations meeting here totals somewhere in the neighborhood of 2000.

FROM THE PEN OF: M. E. Comp C. Wallace Jackson