

Forward

Although the oldest records of Masonic activity in North Carolina have been lost or destroyed, existing minutes represent one of the best sources of social history for the colony and early state. The minutes of Royal White Hart Lodge in the town of Halifax are intact for almost a decade preceding the American Revolution. Those of Unanimity Lodge at Edenton cover the war years and supplement the colonial minutes surviving from Buffalo Lodge in Bute (now Warren) County, St. John's Lodge No. 3 at New Bern, and other Masonic records of the colonial period.

From the later 1780's, Masonic records become abundant and deal with the activities of dozens of lodges from the Atlantic Coast to the mountains and even across the mountains into what is now Tennessee. Minutes of the Grand Lodge of North Carolina go back to 1787 and provide a valuable record attesting to the growth of social order and control in Masonic affairs as in other phases of life. Contained in these records are some of the social and personal interests of thousands of leading citizens of North Carolina in the 18th century, including many who served as governors, senators, military leaders, judges, and so on.

Masonic tradition and policy have served to maintain, except in rare instances, the privacy of these ancient records from public

scrutiny. Historians, having had but limited and infrequent access to Masonic papers, have not been able to blend the record of Masonic activity into the pattern of North Carolina development. On the other hand, the tradition of secrecy has probably helped to preserve the old records in some instances from loss.

This volume attempts to correlate, for the first time, the full record of 18th century Masonic activity in North Carolina with the history of the colony and state. Only in this way can the contributions of Freemasonry to our history and the influences of our general history upon Freemasonry be clearly understood. It is hoped that the interaction of the history of Masonry with the development of other institutions, the evolution of North Carolina more broadly, may be of interest and service to all who are interested in the development of the Craft and of the state.

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T.C.P.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Thomas C. Parramore, author of *Launching the Craft*, is a native of Winton, North Carolina. He was educated at Ahoskie High School, North Carolina State University, and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. From the latter institution he received his doctoral degree in history in 1965. He is the author of many articles and other publications dealing with the history of North Carolina. Since 1962, Dr. Parramore has been a member of the Department of History and Political Science at Meredith College in Raleigh. He is married to the former Barbara Mitchell and has two daughters. Lisa and Lynn.