

# LAUNCHING THE CRAFT

*The First  
Half- Century of Freemasonry  
in North Carolina*

by Thomas C. Parramore  
*1975*

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## *Preface*

In 1970 when the Most Worshipful Brother Maurice E. Walsh was Grand Master of Masons in North Carolina a committee was appointed for the purpose of planning the things Masons in North Carolina should do to commemorate the birth of liberty in the United States. The committee, which was thereafter to be known as the '76 Committee of the Grand Lodge of AF Sc AM of North Carolina, was given the status of permanency by the Grand Lodge to serve in their functional capacity until the end of the celebrations in 1976. Subsequently, the committee enjoyed the support and encouragement of the successive Grand Masters, Most Worshipful Brothers William W. Mims, Jr., Berl M. Kahn, Nathaniel C. Dean, and William L. Mills, Jr.

As we move into the year 1975 when this interesting volume on the early history of Masonry will be released, the climactic observances of the Bicentennial celebrations will take place under the administrative direction and inspiration of two Grand Masters: Most Worshipful Brother S. Frank Noble, Jr. for the year 1975 and Most Worshipful Hiram J. Casebolt for the concluding year 1976.

Thus, the '76 Committee will have had the coveted privilege of serving under seven Grand Masters, all of whom have been most generous in offering suggestions for the observance. They have

diligently urged the committee to project a '76 Celebration comprehensive in its scope and state-wide in its implementation, that would reflect the part Masonry played in the Revolutionary Period of our history; that would let the world know how much the Masons of 200 years ago contributed to the founding of our country! The year 1976 was to be Masonry's golden opportunity to capitalize on the privileges it would present and the '76 Committee of the Grand Lodge of North Carolina was admonished each year by its Grand Master to proceed with such plans as would be consistent not only with our glorious heritage, but also with the challenging mandate the opportunities would inspire.

On the national level, the '76 Committee of the Conference of Grand Masters in North America had been selected in 1970 to give direction to the national Masonic observances. The Committee consisted of eight members, one of whom was Past Grand Master Robert L. Pugh of North Carolina, who was thereupon appointed by the Grand Lodge of North Carolina to serve as the '76 Chairman for this State and to select certain others to serve with him. Accordingly, he selected the following:

Berl M. Kahn, at that time the Deputy Grand Master, but now a Past Grand Master; Hiram J. Casebolt, Grand Marshal in 1970, but who in 1976 will become the Grand Master; W. Edward Burner, Past Grand Master; Nelson B. Banks, Past Master and Recorder of Sudan Temple, A.A.O.N.M.S.; Dr. William E. Fulmer, Past Master, and Past Grand Master J. Edward Allen. In January, 1972, Most Worshipful Brother Burner died and his position on the Committee remained unfilled.

During the first meeting of the '76 Committee of North Carolina, and continuing thereafter, it became apparent that one of the objectives of the Committee would be the preparation of a history of Masonry in North Carolina. Many discussions in the Committee had disclosed the appalling lack of authentic information on the origins and early history of Masonry and Masonic lodges in North Carolina and it was agreed that, among the many anticipated activities for the '76 celebrations, perhaps the best first objective on the State level would be the compiling of a volume of history that would satisfy this need. It was agreed also that for this initial historical effort by the Grand Lodge, perhaps greater accuracy and more detailed coverage might be obtained by confining the volume to a certain smaller period of time, and

leaving to a later generation the task of completing the published record. The year 1800 appeared to be a good year to use as a terminal objective for complete coverage of the Revolutionary period and accordingly it was adopted by the Committee for recommendation.

During a portion of this time, consideration had been given to the selection of a qualified historian who would accept the assignment. Several names were mentioned and, at length, Dr. Thomas C. Parramore, a member of the Department of History at Meredith College was invited to meet with the Committee for a review of the possibilities. The Committee was deeply impressed with Dr. Parramore and with his concept of the proposed history. Accordingly, it entered into an Employment Agreement with him on February 2, 1973 which was signed by the then Grand Master, Berl M. Kahn, to prepare such a history as the Committee had contemplated.

Dr. Parramore began his research immediately, visiting many of the early lodges for examination of such documents and other items of historical interest as would be helpful; he did research in many of the larger libraries of the State; he talked with many authorities in the subject area; he had easy access to the Grand Lodge resources and to the State Department of Archives and History. It can be said that he spared no opportunity to avail himself of any Masonic information that might enable him to produce a history of the beginnings of Masonry in North Carolina worthy of the efforts that had been expended and of the high aspirations of all those closely related to the project. Worshipful Brother Reynold S. Davenport, Editor of *The North Carolina Mason*, very generously gave his efforts to facilitate the photographing of many of the Masonic historical treasures included in the volume. To him this Committee expresses its deep gratitude.

This volume, then, is the happy result of all those efforts and the '76 Committee of the Grand Lodge of North Carolina congratulates Dr. Parramore on the splendid historical volume he has produced. The Committee also proudly presents it to the Masons of North Carolina and other interested friends with the hope that it may provide many pleasant hours of-- interesting perusal and reflection for all those who have longed for a comprehensive and authoritative narrative of the early years of Masonic history in North Carolina.



The "76 Committee": L to R: Dr. William E. Fulmer, District Deputy Grand Master; Hiram J. Casebolt, Deputy Grand Master; Robert L. Pugh, Chairman and Past Grand Master; Nelson B. Banks, Grand Steward; and J. Edward Allen, Past Grand Master. Not Present: Berl M. Kahn, Past Grand Master. (Photo by Reynold Davenport).