

The following account is a brief review of the history of Catawba Lodge No. 56, A.F.M. of S. C. written from notes made for a talk given by F. M. Mack on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of the lodge. No attempt is made to write a complete history but merely to set down a few salient facts gathered from the following sources:

"A History of Catawba No. 56", by C. S. Link, P.M., 1923

"A History of Catawba Lodge No. 56, Pt. II", by W. B. Ardrey, Jr., P.M., 1951

"Catawba Lodge, No. 56, Brief History", by Dr. J. Lee Spratt, P.M., 1914

Catawba Lodge is the oldest institution in Fort Mill still in existence, with the exception of Unity Presbyterian Church which was organized in 1788, antedating the lodge by exactly ^{seventy}~~fifty~~ years. On November 15, 1858, a number of freemasons residing near Fort Mill presented a petition to the Grand Lodge for a charter and applied for the sanction of Philanthropic Lodge at Yorkville. This sanction was given and on November 20, 1858, Grandmaster Henry Buist issued a dispensation authorizing Brother Isaac Spencer to serve as Worshipful Master until the charter was regularly issued. This was done on November 18, 1859, giving to the new lodge the number 56 which was formerly occupied by the defunct Fellowship Lodge in St. George's Parish, Colleton District.

On January 11, 1860, a stated communication of Catawba Lodge was held and the following officers were installed by Brothers J. E. Jeffries and Richard Hare, of Philanthropic Lodge, deputized for that purpose:

John M. White	Worshipful Master
B. M. Cobb	Senior Warden
B. F. Powell	Junior Warden
T. B. Withers	Treasurer
R. H. Fulwood	Secretary
F. E. Moore	Senior Deacon
John H. Stewart	Junior Deacon
T. G. Culp	Tiler
B. J. Patterson	Steward
James H. Stewart	Steward

It is believed that most of the charter members were initiated in Philanthropic Lodge in Yorkville and Jackson Lodge in Lancaster.

Brother Isaac Spencer, master of the lodge under dispensation, came from Connecticut, and was probably a Mason before he came here. He lived on his farm about 2 miles east of Fort Mill, still known as the "Spencer Place", where he pursued his trade of cabinet-maker and wheel wright. It is said that he was an excellent craftsman and it is believed that he made the altar and other furniture of the lodge, of solid walnut, continuously in use until destroyed by the disastrous fire of February 1947.

The new lodge was very active in 1860, its first year. Then the war came on and many of the members were in the Confederate service. However, the lodge met very regularly, due to the efforts of Brother B. F. Powell who was stationed nearby on detached service.

At first, the Lodge met on the second Thursday night of each month, but at the meeting of February 8, 1866, the meeting night was changed to the Thursday on or before the full moon in each month. About thirty years ago, the regular meeting night was changed back to the second Thursday.

On March 1, 1866, a petition from several brethren in Rock Hill requested this lodge to sanction a lodge in Rock Hill. As a result of this sanction the new lodge was chartered as Rock Hill Lodge No. 111.

Over the years, Catawba Lodge has regularly met in five different lodge halls. It first met in a one-story frame school building on the corner of Monroe White and Tom Hall Streets, known as "Withers Corner", where the famous Fort Mill Academy was later organized, about the year 1870, with Brother Alex R. Banks as principal. The lodge built a second story to the school building for greater convenience. The date 1870 is significant in that exactly 60 years later a large brick high school building was erected just across the street, with the dates "1870-1930" cut into the stone above the entrance.

It was about this time, in 1873, that the town of Fort Mill was incorporated, received its charter and elected an intendant, or mayor, and four wardens, all of whom were members of Catawba Lodge. The first mayor was Brother B. Frank Powell, master of the lodge for 8 years.

In 1875 it was decided to provide better housing for the Academy. A two-story brick building, costing \$3800.00, was erected by the lodge, about a half mile, or four city blocks, south of the first ("Withers") site, on what is now called Academy Street. The first floor was used by the Academy and the second floor by the Lodge. The building was dedicated on August 31, 1876, by R. W. Bro. Asbury Coward of Yorkville, District Deputy Grand Master, a distinguished educator and soldier and a prominent Mason. Many visitors from nearby lodges attended the dedication exercises.

In 1888, for greater convenience, the lodge hall was moved "up town" to a new building owned jointly by the lodge and Mr. L. J. "Jack" Massey, who had a store on the first floor. The lodge hall was on the second floor. This third lodge hall was dedicated on November 15, 1888, by Grand Master Andrew H. White of Rock Hill. He also on this occasion exemplified the 2nd and 3rd degrees on an actual candidate, Brother James O. Stewart.

In 1890 the Lodge sold its interest in the Massey building to the co-owner and moved to a new hall on the second floor of the new brick building on the corner of Main and Confederate Streets, known as the "White Building". The first floor was occupied by the Savings Bank. Brother J. W. Ardrey, then Worshipful Master, laid the cornerstone on July 22, 1890, with the usual ceremonies, under dispensation granted by Grand Master R. F. Divver. The procession from the old hall to the new one was led by the Gold Hill Cornet Band. In the cornerstone were placed dated copies of the Fort Mill Clarion, Yorkville Enquirer, Rock Hill Herald, Christian Observer, Baptist Courier, Youth's Companion, lodge roll, Farmers Alliance roll and other articles of current interest. During the early occupation of this hall, the fourth one, the lodge minutes refer to Masonic addresses given by Brothers John White Ardrey, James H. Thornwell, William H. Stewart and Joseph B. Mack.

On February 6, 1947, the old White building containing our lodge hall was burned. Little was saved besides the Charter, the altar Bible, the old lodge bell and the old cornerstone. All of the old Isaac Spencer walnut furniture was lost, as was a small but valuable library of Masonic books. The material loss was partially covered by \$4000.00 insurance on the building and contents. However, there was a greater value that can never be recovered --

this hall, for each brother, was a place of tender memories and happy association with brother Masons over the years. Many brothers now living may now go back in memory only to association with the brothers he once loved but who have passed on to the Celestial Lodge above.

After meeting in various places for nearly two years, the purchase by the Lodge of the L. J. Massey house and lot, corner of Tom Hall and Forrest Streets, was consummated at a cost of about \$12,000.00. On January 13, 1949, the first meeting was held in this new hall, the fifth one in the history of the Lodge, with Worshipful Master W. L. Broadwell in the chair.

Mention should be made of the many worthy brothers who gave so liberally of their time and talents to the cause of Masonry, but time and space forbid. However, a few outstanding names are:

The first Master under charter, Colonel John McKemie White, who served four terms as Master.

Brother B. Frank Powell, who kept the lodge alive and working through 1861-65, and served eight terms as Master

Brother John White Ardrey served sixteen terms as Master and also a term as District Deputy Grand Master.

Brother William H. Stewart served five terms as Master.

Brother C. S. Link, seven terms as Master, many years as Secretary, and author of the Lodge History.

Brother Walter T. Barron served four terms as Master and also two years as District Deputy Grand Master.

Brother W. L. Broadwell served three terms as Master, two years as District Deputy Grand Master, and presently our Secretary since the year 1954.

For the past hundred years, the history of Catawba Lodge is the history of Fort Mill, so closely and completely have the members of the Lodge been identified with the institutions, the activities and the development of the Fort Mill community.

Catawba Lodge has ever and always met its obligations and raised its quotas in Liberty Bond drives, Red Cross and other worthy causes. The high spirit of patriotism and devotion to the principles in which they believed is exemplified by the records of our Catawba Lodge brothers in:

- (1) The War Between the States, 1861-65,
- (2) Struggles against the tyranny of Federal despots following that war,
- (3) World War I
- (4) World War II
- (5) The recent Korean conflict

The Masons of Fort Mill have always actively supported public education. The old Fort Mill Academy, famous throughout the South, was nurtured by the Masons. The trustees were all members of Catawba Lodge. Down through the years the promotion of education in Fort Mill has been in the hands of school trustees, who, with few exceptions, were members of Catawba Lodge.

Following is a list of the twenty living past masters of Catawba Lodge No. 56 as of November 13, 1959:

A. L. Parks	1917-1918	2 terms
F. E. Ardrey	1919-1920	2 "
F. M. Mack	1925-1926	2 "
W. H. Nims	1927-1928	2 "
W. B. Ardrey, Jr.	1931-1932	2 "

W. T. Barron	(1933-1934 (1937-1938)	4 terms
C. D. Turner	1935-1936	2 "
* L. E. Carothers	1939-1940	2 "
P. C. Turner	1941-1942	2 "
J. A. Helms	1943-1944	2 "
A. E. Hannon	1945-1946	2 "
W. L. Broadwell	1947-1948-1949	3 "
W. Frank Lytle	1950-1951	2 "
E. S. Parks, Jr.	1952-1953	2 "
J. C. Pearce	1954	1 "
W. A. Edwards	1955	1 "
Robert C. Hill	1956	1 "
* W. B. McFadden	1957	1 "
Lonnie Boyd	1958	1 "
Fred N. Mack	1959	1 "

* Deceased since the above list was compiled

Not included in the talk at the centennial but compiled later is the following account of the Fort Mill Chapter, Order of the Eastern Star.

It is believed that a chapter of the Eastern Star was organized here in the middle nineties although we have not been able to find any written records to prove this. C. S. Link, in his "History of Catawba Lodge No. 56", page 47 states, "The first chapter of the Order of the Eastern Star was organized about this time (1894), flourished for a number of years, and succumbed, to be succeeded some years later by another chapter which had considerable influence and interesting history before it ceased to function."

The writer distinctly recalls that in the 1890's before the turn of the century when he was only a small lad, that his mother, Mrs. J. B. Mack, with a number of other ladies, among them being Mrs. J. H. Thornwell, Mrs. J. W. Ardrey, Mrs. Mary Meacham, Mrs. Lucy Fulp, Mrs. J. M. Spratt, belonged to the Eastern Star, attended meetings and made considerable conversation in his presence regarding the same.

The following information regarding the Fort Mill Chapter, O.E.S., was gleaned from the official "History of the Grand Chapter Order of the Eastern Star South Carolina".

The Fort Mill Chapter, O.E.S., No. 12, was one of the four Chapters which met in Greenwood, S.C., on June 1, 1907, and organized the Grand Chapter of South Carolina, O.E.S. It is noted that at this time there were only six subordinate chapters in South Carolina. At this organization meeting the Fort Mill Chapter No. 12 was represented by its Associate Matron Mrs. Mary Meacham who was appointed Grand Chaplain. Dr. James H. Thornwell of the Fort Mill Chapter was elected Grand Secretary. Dr. Thornwell died on December 30, 1907, and Dr. J. Lee Spratt of Fort Mill was appointed by W.G.M. Mrs. Mary P. Ouzts to fill his unexpired term.

The record states that W.G.M. Mrs. Mary P. Ouzts visited Fort Mill Chapter No. 4 on March 28, 1908, so it is evident that the chapter number was changed from No. 12 to No. 4 prior to this visit, probably at the organization meeting in Greenwood on June 1, 1907.

The first annual session of the Grand Chapter was held in the Masonic Hall at Fort Mill, June 16, 17, 1908. Among the grand officers present were: Grand Secretary Dr. J. Lee Spratt

and Grand Chaplain Mrs. Mary Meacham. During this session the floor work of the Ritual was demonstrated by Fort Mill No. 4. Also at this session Dr. J. Lee Spratt was elected Grand Secretary and Miss Frances Harris of Fort Mill appointed Grand Martha to serve for the ensuing year.

At the second annual session June 15, 16, 1909, at Spartanburg, Dr. J. Lee Spratt was elected Associate Grand Patron, and on February 28, 1910, Dr. Spratt officiated, as proxy for W. G. Patron D. A. G. ~~N~~uzts, instituting Orangeburg Chapter No. 33.

At the sixth annual session at Greenville, June 17, 18, 1918, The charter of Fort Mill Chapter No. 4 was arrested for failure to make annual reports or pay dues for two years.

Then, during a period of 31 years no mention is made of the Fort Mill Chapter No. 4 in the records of the Grand Chapter, thus it is assumed that no chapter existed in Fort Mill during that period.

At the 43rd annual session at Greenville, June 21, 22 & 23, 1950, W.G. Patron Abe Wyman reported that he instituted a chapter at Fort Mill on October 15, 1949, with 40 charter members. Then at the 44th annual session at Charleston, June 20, 21 & 22, 1951, W.G. Matron Mrs. Thelma Todd, reported that she constituted Fort Mill Chapter No. 4 on August 30, 1950. It is noted that the new Fort Mill Chapter is given the original number 4.