

ORIENT OF
NORTH CAROLINA
ANCIENT & ACCEPTED

SCOTTISH RITE

of Freemasonry Southern Jurisdiction, USA

WINTER 2026

Special Edition 2025 HONORMEN

College Scholarship Application
January 5 - April 2, 2026
NCSCOTTISHRITE.ORG

Event Calendar
2026

Rite Works:

2026 Scottish Rite Leadership Conferences

Innovation, Tradition, and Brotherhood.

How can we embrace these three elements to create the future for our great fraternity?

The 2026 Rite Works Membership Conferences will explore these ideas and allow Scottish Rite leaders and Brothers from across the Southern Jurisdiction to learn hands-on about new ways to build and strengthen the Rite. From using AI tools to reduce administrative burdens to learning how to make authentic connections across several generations, to finding ways to engage brothers who don't live close to a Valley, these conferences will be energetic, interactive, and informative. Most of all, they will be FUN!

Conference Dates & Locations are:

Las Vegas: March 5–7

Dallas: March 26–28

Charlotte: April 9–11

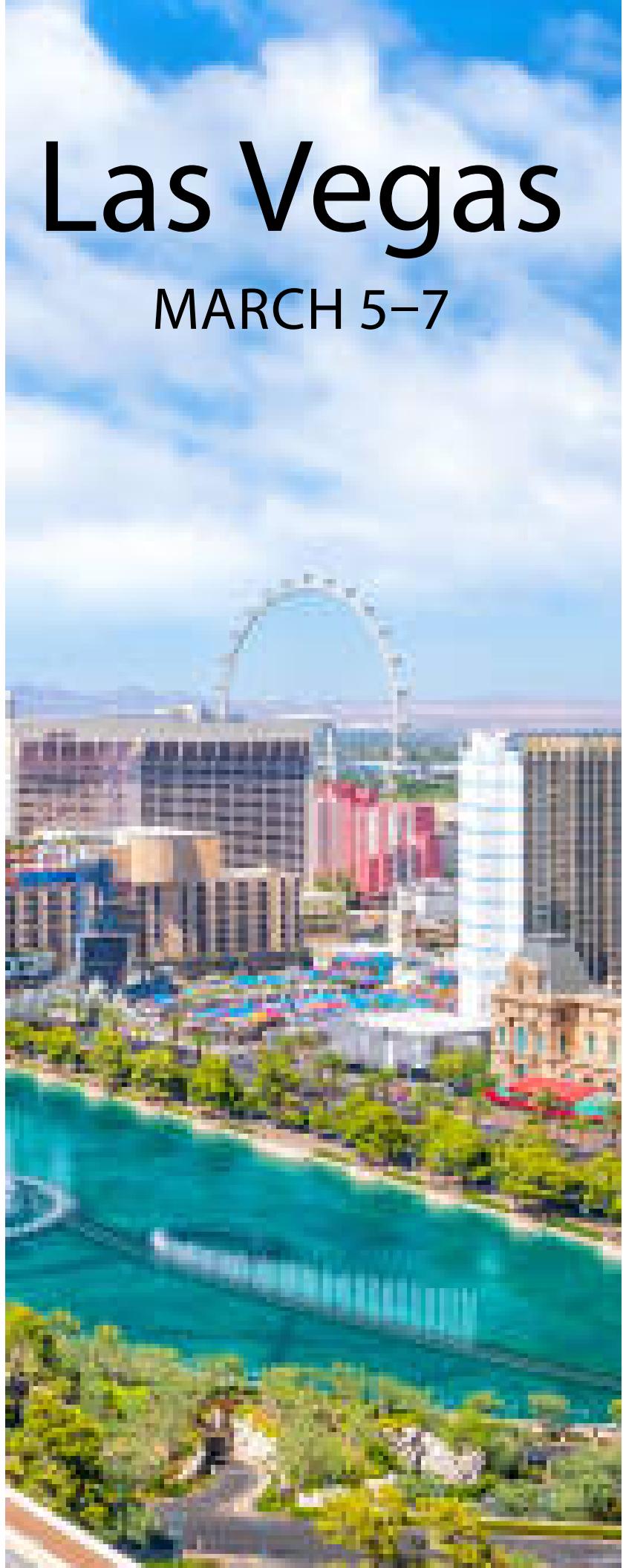
To be mindful of time & budget, the conferences will begin on Friday morning and conclude Saturday evening. We have optional social activities scheduled for Thursday evening. A more specific schedule and further details will be released in January.

The cost to attend is **\$195 and includes lunch on Saturday and light refreshments throughout**. Hotel reservations must be booked separately, and links for special rates at the host hotels will be provided at registration.

REGISTER
ScottishRite.org

Las Vegas

MARCH 5–7





Dallas

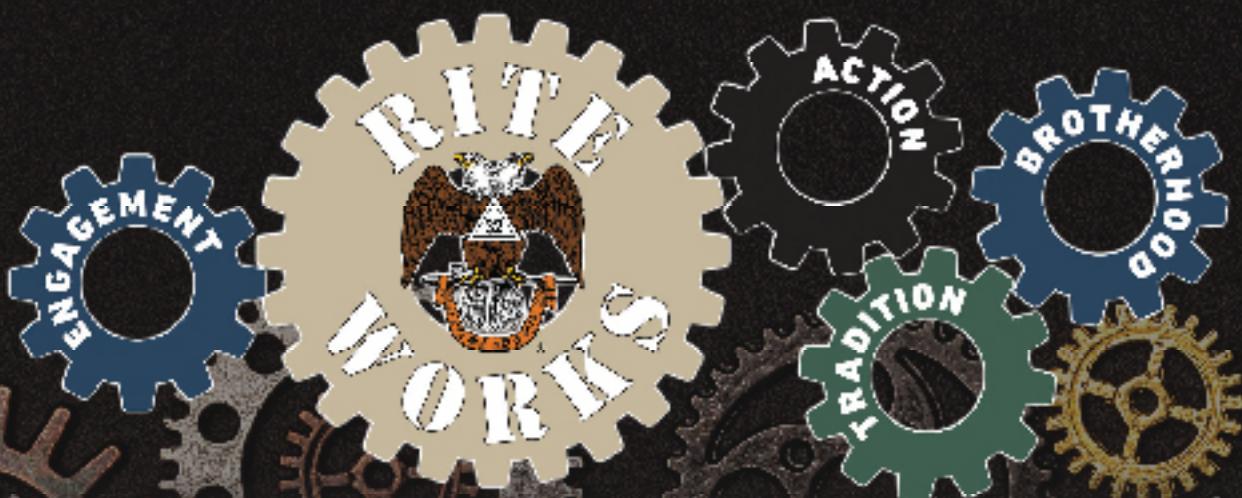
MARCH 26–28

Charlotte

APRIL 9–11



JOIN YOUR BRETHREN FOR THE 2026 SCOTTISH RITE LEADERSHIP CONFERENCES!



LAS VEGAS, NV: MARCH 5-7
DALLAS, TX: MARCH 26-28
CHARLOTTE, NC: APRIL 9-11

REGISTER ONLINE



— TENTATIVE SCHEDULE —

THURSDAY

REGISTRATION
3-6 P.M.

HAPPY HOUR
6 P.M.

FRIDAY

REGISTRATION OPENS
8 A.M.

WORKSHOP BEGINS
12:30 P.M.

SATURDAY

SESSIONS BEGIN
9 A.M.

LUNCH (PROVIDED)
12 P.M.

WORKSHOPS CONTINUE
1 P.M.

EVENT CONCLUDES
4 P.M.

VIEW
SCHEDULE
ONLINE

DINNER (ON YOUR OWN): 5-7 P.M.
OPTIONAL Q & A SESSION
WITH MASONIC HISTORIANS ARTURO DE
HOYOS, 33°, 6C, & B. CHRIS RULI, 32°, KCCH
7 P.M.

OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE ORIENT OF NORTH CAROLINA SCOTTISH RITE

SGIG:
A. Gene Cobb, 33°

Editor :
Craig Horton, 33°

UPCOMING 2026 Events

SPRING EVENTS

FEBRUARY 5-8 WASHINGTON, DC

GRAND MASTER / SGIG TRAIN TRIP

FEBRUARY 13 WINSTON-SALEM

VALENTINE'S DINNER (SEE PAGE 6)

MARCH 5-7 LAS VEGAS, NV

RITEWORKS CONFERENCES

MARCH 26-28 DALLAS, TX

RITEWORKS CONFERENCES



SUMMER EVENTS

MAY 15 STATE-WIDE

SPRING EDITION - OWN NEWSLETTER

ON THE COVER:
Johnny Surles, 33°
Valley of New Bern Secretary
photo taken by Don Butto, 33°

Featured Inside this Issue

05 UPCOMING 2026 EVENTS
III. Gene Cobb, 33°, PGM, SGIG of North Carolina & Georgia

07 SOME NEW YEAR RESOLUTIONS
III. Gene Cobb, 33°, PGM, SGIG of North Carolina & Georgia

09 THANK YOU TO THE 33RD DEGREE TEAM & HONOREES
III. Johnny Surles, 33° - Valley of New Bern Secretary

10 2025 SCOTTISH RITE HONORMEN
III. Gene Cobb, 33°, PGM, SGIG of North Carolina & Georgia

13 VALLEY OF CHARLOTTE LOOKS BACK ON A SUCCESSFUL 2025
Bro. Scott Brand, 32° KCCH - Valley of Charlotte

14 MEMBERSHIP MATTERS
Bro. Thomas VanEtten, 32° KCCH - Orient Membership

16 RECEIVING THEIR WAGES
III. Thomas Pope, 33° - Personal Representative Valley of Fayetteville

17 FROM THE FIRST LIGHT TO THE ROYAL SECRET
Bro. Drew Collier, 32° - Valley of Wilmington

17 VALLEY CONDUCTS RING CEREMONY
Bro. Jason Hicks, 32° - Valley of Greensboro

19 AN AMERICAN JOURNEY
Bro. George Gulglin, 32° - Valley of Franklin

HOW TO GET PUBLISHED IN THE NORTH CAROLINA SCOTTISH RITE NEWSLETTER INCLUDING ORIENT WEBSITE • SOCIAL MEDIA • YOUTUBE

The North Carolina Scottish Rite (part of the Southern Jurisdiction) publishes content through the Orient of North Carolina Ancient & Accepted Scottish Rite of Freemasonry, Southern Jurisdiction, USA, an Orient-level publication. This quarterly newsletter features articles relevant to North Carolina Scottish Rite Valleys (e.g., Asheville, Charlotte, Fayetteville, Franklin, Greensboro, New Bern, Raleigh, Wilmington and Winston-Salem).

SUBMISSION GUIDELINES:

- Articles are due quarterly on the 15th of March, June, September, and December.
- Submit directly to the Editor: Craig Horton at editor.ncsrjournal@gmail.com.
- Aim for 150–200 words, with high-resolution photos if possible.
- Topics should be uplifting, educational, or inspirational—focusing on Scottish Rite principles, history, personal reflections, events, or member stories.

INCLUDE YOUR NAME, DEGREE, VALLEY, AND CONTACT INFO



Presented by the Winston-Salem Scottish Rite

Valentine's Party



Semi-Formal Attire - Order Tickets at [Eventbrite.com](https://www.eventbrite.com)

[Eventbrite.com Web Link](https://www.eventbrite.com)

Access Eventbrite by pressing "Ctrl" and clicking on the link above

Contact Brother Matthew Peeler with Questions:
704-797-6949 peelerm@windstream.net

The Masonic Center of Winston-Salem
4537 Country Club Road
Winston-Salem, NC 27104

5:45 pm – 9:00 pm

13

February

SOME NEW YEAR RESOLUTIONS

A. Gene Cobb, Jr., 33°, SGIG, PGM

Keeping New Year's resolutions is one of the most difficult challenges a human being faces every 365 days. We say we are going to do something, and we fully intend to do it, but something happens along the way and we back off, cease, desist, and sometimes never even start to live into the resolution we made.

The ensuing year of 2026 will involve a resolution that has already begun. North Carolina Scottish Rite is restructuring how we do things as an Orient in North Carolina.

All of us can help if we make and keep a resolution that we Scottish Rite Masons, no matter how difficult that process may be. It involves changing the conversation in Freemasonry so that we can address some truth staring us in the face, but is, too often, overlooked.

Why would we ever suspend a "true brother" for non-payment of dues? The truth is that I cannot think of one good reason it should ever happen, especially if he has been faithful to his trust for many years and has reached the age of eighty. If a "true brother" is in need in any way, brotherly love expects us to help him. On bended knee we promised to help a "true brother" in need. If we are a "true brother" we will do it if possible.

If, however, the brother (note that I omitted the word "true") has a bad attitude toward or bad experience with the fraternity, that causes injury to any other person, then that brother owes it to us to meet on the level, act by the plumb, and part on the square to be "true." When we are too quick to let someone go, we cause more harm than good.

Any departure from the fraternity raises everyone else's dues. You ask, "How's that?" It is simple. Suspensions and demits, for whatever reason, is complicity with increasing the costs of operating the Lodge, Valley, Chapter, Commandery, Council,



SCOTTISH RITE MISSION

It is the mission of the Scottish Rite of Freemasonry, SJ, to improve its members and enhance the communities in which they live by teaching and emulating the principles of Brotherly Love, Tolerance, Charity, and Truth, while actively embracing high social, moral, and spiritual values, including fellowship, compassion, and dedication to God, family, and country.

Temple, for all "true brothers." You can add to that true knights, true nobles, or whatever "true" term applies in any part of the family of Freemasonry.

A "true brother" is one who keeps his vows and resolutions. He aids and assists another brother in need. He keeps up with him, not by just documenting his attempts through that ever-trustworthy email chain and the US Postal Service, but by mouth-to-ear and hand-to-hand care and concern. A "true brother" does not separate himself from the altar at which he knelt and made his initial resolutions. A "true brother" reminds an erring brother in tender manners of the need for redirection and then aids the reformation instead of making matters worse by condoning practices that makes this fraternal journey more difficult for everyone else.

It is time to change the conversation in North Carolina. It is time we resolved to be more attentive to those we have lost touch with, for whatever reason. It is time for us to understand that growth by subtraction equals lost revenue which drives the costs of Freemasonry upward—and DO SOMETHING positive about it.

Peace, harmony, interest, involvement, and integrity come with genuine caring for instead of about our brothers. Remember we are a brotherhood, not a bargain.

When 2027 gets here, how will we have done? Better yet, how will we help change the conversation?"

Front Cover Brother Spotlight

JOHNNY SURLES AND HIS CONNECTION TO THE D.B. COOPER CASE VIA RICHARD FLOYD MCCOY, JR.

Johnny Surles is a **retired Lieutenant** with the North Carolina State Highway Patrol (NCSHP), a U.S. Army **veteran**, and a **distinguished Freemason** (notably involved in Scottish Rite activities). He has become a key figure in discussions about the infamous D.B. Cooper hijacking due to his direct involvement in pursuing Richard Floyd McCoy, Jr., a prime suspect in the 1971 Northwest Orient Flight 305 skyjacking—where a man calling himself “Dan Cooper” (later misreported as D.B. Cooper) parachuted from a plane with \$200,000 in ransom, vanishing without a trace.

THE D.B. COOPER CONNECTION

The Bank of North Carolina (BNC) robbery on April 27, 1974, in Pollocksville, NC—often tied to Cooper lore as “D.B. Cooper”. McCoy, who had escaped prison earlier that month while serving time for the second Cooper hijacking, executed a strikingly similar crime: He boarded a plane from Denver to Salt Lake City, passed a note claiming a bomb, demanded \$500,000, and parachuted out mid-flight.

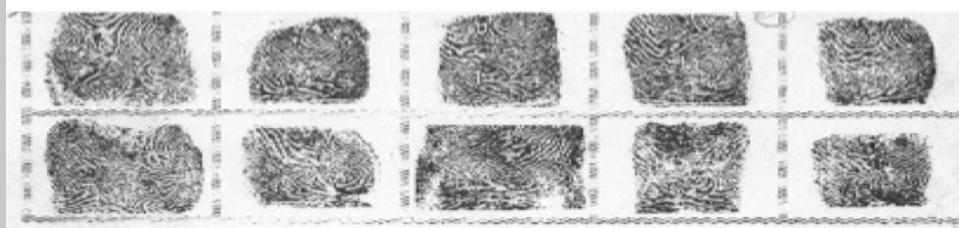
Surles' Role: As one of the first NCSHP officers on the scene at the BNC robbery, Surles helped investigate the aftermath, including the abandoned car. This led to two of his comrades/friends swift recapture in Cove City and allowed McCoy and Walker to escape. Surles has emphasized the robbery's eerie parallels to the D.B. Cooper case—same hijack method, parachute escape, and even similar physical descriptions—fueling theories that McCoy was Cooper.

SURLES' CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE MYSTERY

Surles frequently lectures on the case, arguing McCoy's guilt based on timelines, skills (McCoy was a skilled parachutist and BYU student), and FBI evidence like matching parachute tie fibers. He appears on podcasts like **The Cooper Vortex (2020 episode: “D.B. Cooper was a Student at BYU - Johnny Surles”)**, where he details the BNC pursuit. In a 2012 WRAL-TV segment (“**Did D.B. Cooper rob an NC bank?**”), Surles recounted the chaos: “We knew that it was McCoy due to the two hijackings were so much alike and evidence found at the scenes.”

The FBI closed the Cooper case in 2016 without confirming McCoy, but Surles' firsthand account keeps the debate alive. For more, check **The Cooper Vortex** podcast or Surles' is a speaker on the DB Cooper Connection and travels around the country and is on the Grand Lodge Speakers Bureau.

This saga blends crime and aviation history—Surles embodies the boots-on-the-ground pursuit of America's greatest unsolved heist.



SOJOURNING TARHEELS

Ill.Russell Bridges, 33°, Orient Personal Representative

MWB and Past Asheville Personal Rep W. Berry Rigdon 33°, Grand Jr. Deacon J. David Cashion 33°, and Grand Steward, Russell Bridges, Orient of NC Personal Rep 33°, traveled to Nashville, Tenn on Sat Dec. 13th for the conferral of the 33rd and final degree. They were hosted by SGIG Joseph Harrison PGM, (not pictured) Tennessee Orient Rep, PGM Casey Hood and Kenny Dalaet 33°, Valley of Memphis, PGHP. After a great lunch, PGM Hood conferred the degree on 14 Tennessee brothers and 1 (courtesy work) for the state of South Dakota. Three hot dogs and a Coke were specially ordered for SGIG Gene Cobb, PGM, but unfortunately, he could not attend.



32° KCCH INVESTITURE IN THE VALLEY OF RALEIGH

Ill. Russell Bridges, 33°, Orient Personal Representative

On Thursday, December 11th at J.J. Crowder Masonic Lodge #743 in Raleigh (after a great meal), SGIG A. Gene Cobb, 33°, PGM invested the 32° KCCH on three Masters of the Royal Secret that were unavailable to receive at the State Honors Investiture in Wilmington. Brothers John Frazier, Marc Fusco and Rufus Edmisten thanked the SGIG and Raleigh Bodies for the Honor and told a few anecdotal stories for all to enjoy. SGIG A. Gene Cobb, 33°, PGM was assisted by Buddy Brown, 32° KCCH, Bobby Rideout, 33°, PGM, David Wicker, 33°, PGM, Raleigh Personal Representative and Grand Sr. Deacon Alvin Billings, 32° KCCH, PP.



Left to Right: Russell Bridges, 33°, Orient Personal Representative; Alvin Billings, 32° KCCH, PP, Grand Senior Deacon; SGIG Gene Cobb, 33°, PGM; Rufus Edmisten, 32° KCCH; and Bobby Rideout, 33°, PGM.
Orient of North Carolina Scottish Rite Newsletter

THANK YOU TO THE 33RD DEGREE TEAM & HONOREES.

This article may be a little different. It's basically a thank you note to the 33rd degree team, and the Honorees. I'm sitting here at my desk the Tuesday before the Saturday we present the 33rd degree and looking back at the last biennal of studying, reading and driving back and forth to practice. It's been a long hard drive. We had an addition to our 33rd degree team this year and I have noticed something different. They want to impart a wisdom of learning to the recipients. The Brothers on this team have driven across the state many times since we began practicing back in February. Yes, since February. That was when the organized practices started, the work began months before. These Brothers didn't do this for recognition; they did it for the reasons the Honoree's received their Honors. They love the Scottish Rite, and they want to impart something that the Honorees will remember everyday of their lives from now, until they lay down their working tools of life. The SGIG did a great job in putting this team together. They are dedicated and humble men wanting to help, wanting to make a difference in the world. I urge each Honoree to go out into the world and make it a better place than you found it.

For those that sat in the audience to support your Brothers, on behalf of the Degree Team and the Honorees, thank you for taking the time out of your life to come and support your Brother. I'm sure there was a Brother you remembered as you watched the Degree. Trust me, these Honorees on stage will not forget that you came on their behalf to support them.

In our lives here below, we learn from each other. This Degree has been an inspiration to all of us. We hope you take advantage of the opportunity to renew yourself and your commitment to the fraternity we all love so very much.

When you read this our journey will be over. We will go our separate ways...our hope is that you go home a different person...more compassionate...more loving... more serving...better able to cope with the trials and temptations of life...better able to live through life's problems...and better able to serve your God and your fellow human beings.

May the Peace of the Master be with you.

Ill. Johnny C. Surles, 33°
General Secretary
Valley of New Bern

2025 SCOTTISH RITE HONORMEN

WASHINGTON, D.C. – CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR WORTHY SCOTTISH RITE, SJ, BRETHREN WHO HAVE BEEN ELECTED THIS BIENNUIUM TO RECEIVE THE 32°, KNIGHT COMMANDER OF THE COURT OF HONOR, THE 33°, INSPECTOR GENERAL HONORARY, AND THE 33°, GRAND CROSS OF THE COURT OF HONOR!



2025

<https://scottishrite.org/blog/2025/08/19/our-2025-scottish-rite-honourmen/>



SCOTTISH RITE OF FREEMASONRY ORIENT OF NORTH CAROLINA, SOUTHERN JURISDICTION, U.S.A.

Congratulations to the 2025 Scottish Rite Honormen of the Southern Jurisdiction! Your election to these prestigious honors—whether as Knights Commander of the Court of Honor (KCCH), Inspectors General Honorary (33°), or Grand Cross recipients—is a well-deserved recognition of your outstanding dedication, leadership, and service to Freemasonry, your communities, and the noble principles we all uphold. In the Orient of North Carolina and across the jurisdiction, your contributions inspire Brothers everywhere and strengthen the bonds of our fraternity. May these honors bring you continued joy, fulfillment, and opportunities to serve even greater good. Well done, Brethren—your light shines brightly!



BBQ

Chicken Plate Sale

Tickets Available

2100-A South Glenburnie Road
New Bern, NC 28562

(252) 638-4031

Proceeds to go to RiteCare Scottish Rite Childhood Language Program of North Carolina

MAX
15

**BBQ CHICKEN,
GREEN BEANS, POTATOES AND A ROLL**

\$12

PER PLATE

VALLEY OF CHARLOTTE LOOKS BACK ON A SUCCESSFUL 2025

L. Scott Brand, 32° KCCH

As we move into the New Year, the Brethren of the Charlotte Valley are looking ahead to achieving great things in 2026. But we may also take the time now to look back at the previous year, and celebrate our members and the Masonic labors they have performed.

The year 2025 saw a significant slowing of the negative membership trend that has been an ongoing challenge for our Valley and our Orient – and indeed, for the Craft in general. Although Charlotte sadly finished 2025 with 24 fewer members than we had at the beginning of the year, this represented less than a 2% loss, providing hope that the end of our membership decline may well be in sight.

On a more positive note, the Valley was honored to welcome a total of 22 new Masters of the Royal Secret: 13 at the Spring Reunion, and 9 in the Fall. We were also delighted to have two Scottish Rite members from other jurisdictions join us in fraternal fellowship: one from the Valley of Cleveland, and one from as far away as the Valley of Düsseldorf! It has truly been a joy to meet these new Brothers and welcome them among us – proving the Masonic adage that our gentle Craft “unites men of every country, sect, and opinion; and conciliates true friendship among those who

otherwise might have remained at a perpetual distance.” Best of all, several of these new members have “hit the ground running,” and have already begun to participate and contribute to our work: in the KSA, the degree casts, and the Study Club to name just a few areas.

The year 2025 also saw a number of Charlotte Brethren receive Honors. **Illustrious Chris Hall was coroneted as a 33° Inspector General Honorary** at Honors Weekend in Wilmington. Several members were also honored with the 32° KCCH investiture: **Scott Brand, Mike Cook, David Potts, Dana Rhodes, Leon Rippy, Julian Setzer, Ed Steel, Ranjan Varghese, and John Walston.** We congratulate these Brothers on being recognized for their dedicated and ongoing service to the Rite.

Our 2025 Officers also served well and honorably throughout the year: **Josh Bristol as Venerable Master, Galard Moore as Wise Master, James Pearson as Master of Kadosh, and Julian Setzer as Commander.** The Valley is grateful to these Brothers for their excellent stewardship over the course of the year.

Overall it was a very successful 2025, which saw the Valley now fully settled into our new home at Oasis Shrine in Charlotte, and continuing to refine and improve our ritual and staging for Reunions. With an excellent blend of experienced leadership and eager “new blood,”

CHARLOTTE LOOKS FORWARD TO AN EVEN BETTER 2026!

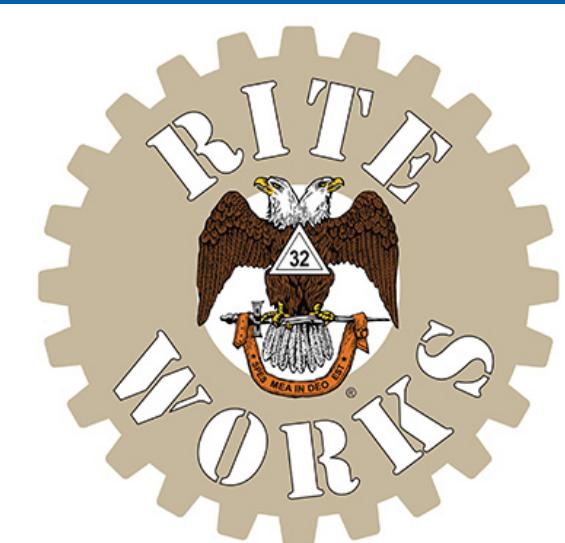
WILMINGTON HOSTS HONORS

Matt Moore, 32° KCCH, General Secretary

It was an honor to host honors weekend in Wilmington on November 22nd. The Brethren of the Valley of Wilmington thoroughly enjoyed seeing brethren from all over the state come together and witness the investiture of our newest Knights Commander of the Court of Honor and coronation of our newest Inspectors General Honorary. We greatly appreciate everyone who helped in making this weekend a success!

We enjoyed celebrating the many men who have given much to our Craft and our communities. We also value the time with Most Worshipful and Illustrious Brother Rick Moore who spent many years in the quarries. His words of wisdom resonated with all in attendance at the Red, White, and Blue banquet in his name. They inspired us to return to our several stations and resume our labors.

We also thank Illustrious Brother Arturo De Hoyos, 33°, Grand Cross, who gave an informative and inspiring keynote address at the banquet. At the conclusion of the weekend's events, we were all ready to get back to work in our several stations and resume labors in our several quarries.



MEMBERSHIP MATTERS: INTENTIONAL GROWTH

Thomas VanEtten, 32° KCCH

Strong organizations do not grow by accident; they grow through intent. It is this purpose that brings us together and helps us to advocate for the Scottish Rite. The Orient of North Carolina has a Membership Committee that exists to ensure the Scottish Rite continues to drive forward with purpose, relevance, and engaged brethren, not by chasing numbers, but by strengthening connection, participation, and commitment. If we want to see and feel change, we have to discuss what that change looks like.

With that said, we would like to introduce our Orient Membership Team:

- Committee Chair: Thomas VanEtten, 32° KCCH
- Personal Representative: Illustrious Rick Patton, 33°

We'll be supported by three Regional Heads who will help us stay connected across the state:

- West: Allan Mann, 32° KCCH (Franklin, Asheville, Charlotte)
- Central: Mark Alexander, 32° KCCH (Greensboro, Winston-Salem, Raleigh)
- East: Joe Thomas, 32° (Wilmington, New Bern, Fayetteville)

We also have five At-Large members who will be contributing their experience, perspective, and abilities to help drive us towards success:

- Keith Morgan, 32° KCCH
- Matt Cockman, 32° KCCH
- Tim Taylor, 32° KCCH
- Francis Anson, 32°
- Scott Lovvorn, 32°

AS A COMMITTEE, WE'RE BUSY BEHIND THE SCENES WORKING TO ADDRESS 4 FOUNDATIONAL ELEMENTS OF MEMBERSHIP:

1. **Recruitment:** Understanding how we can more effectively engage existing Blue Lodge members and support their journey into the Scottish Rite.
2. **Retention:** Keeping our current members active, connected, and involved.
3. **Restoration:** Reconnecting with former members, whether NPD or demitted, to bring them back into the fold.
4. **Care:** Reaching out to Brothers throughout the year to keep them engaged, not just to remind them to pay dues. We want Brothers to know how important they are to the Craft, and also to us!

HOW DO WE PLAN TO MAKE THIS HAPPEN?

For starters, we're kicking off 2026 with the intent to attend Valley meetings to discuss membership. We'll be asking for input and working to better understand the needs of the Valleys across the Orient. Meanwhile, during the first quarter, we'll be creating a series of YouTube videos to talk about "What Scottish Rite means to us," as well as create an elevator pitch that can be shared when anyone asks why to join the Scottish Rite.

We will also be sharing more about the updated Lifetime/Endowed membership plan, which can not only cover your membership dues for life, but continues to support our Valleys even long after we are gone. By becoming a life member, we can build a foundation that our children's children can use to continue the Scottish Rite in North Carolina for generations to come. Ask your Valley Secretary for more information.

As a closing thought, please remember how important each member of our Orient is to Scottish Rite Masonry. Each of us is an ambassador for our organization. Together, we can be the change that is needed to increase the activity and attendance in all of the Valleys. Thank you to each and every member in our Orient for continuing to proudly be a member of the North Carolina Scottish Rite!

Continue to expect regular updates from the Membership Committee in the Orient Wide Newsletter (OWN) as well as anywhere else we can find space. As always – visit NCScottishRite.org for all of the latest happenings in the Orient.



Join Our Mission to Transform Lives in North Carolina

Your support for the NC Scottish Rite Masonic Foundation powers life-changing programs like the RiteCare Scottish Rite Childhood Language Program (SRCLP) of North Carolina at ECU, WCU, ASU, and centers of excellence across the state. By donating to the North Carolina Scottish Rite Masonic Foundation, you help us unite resources to give more children the gift of communication.

DONATE NOW



**Transforming Lives Through Your Support:
RiteCare Scottish Rite Childhood Language Program of North
Carolina**

Thanks to your donations, the *RiteCare Scottish Rite Childhood Language Program (SRCLP) of North Carolina* helps children overcome speech, language, and reading challenges. Meet Emily, a 7-year-old who found her voice through North Carolina's RiteCare Scottish Rite Childhood Language Program and now reads bedtime stories to her little brother.

[Donate Now to Help More Children Like Emily](#)

RECEIVING THEIR WAGES

Thomas Pope Jr., 33° – Valley of Fayetteville Personal Representative

THREE MEMBERS OF THE VALLEY OF FAYETTEVILLE RECEIVED THEIR 32° KCCH HONORS DURING BIENNIAL HONORS WEEKEND IN WILMINGTON:

JAMES PUGSLEY

LEBANON LODGE #391

He's been a Master Mason for over 13 years, served as Lebanon's Worshipful Master in 2017, and was recently installed as its Secretary for 2026.

Pugsley was also the Master of Wilkerson College Lodge #750 in 2022-23 while also serving as District Deputy Grand Master of District 17 from 2020-23. Pugsley is a member of the Valley of Greensboro, and the General Secretary of the Valley of Fayetteville since its inception in 2023. He became a Scottish Rite Mason in November 2020.

JOHN FRAZIER

PHOENIX LODGE #8

Frazier was on active duty as a U.S. Marine for 30 years and a day, retiring as a Master Gunnery Sergeant, and he then spent 20 years as an Episcopal priest. Frazier was the Grand Chaplain of the Grand Lodge of North Carolina AF&AM under MW Grand Master Robert Rideout in 2025. Wilmington is his Consistory, and he was a member of the November 2020 class.

KENDALL "KENNY" BELL

STEDMAN LOSGE #730.

A Certified Coach, Bell is an electrician with Cumberland County Schools. He serves as Class Marshal for the Valley of Fayetteville. Bell joined the Scottish Rite, Valley of New Bern, in March 2019, and he is a member of New Bern's Advisory Council.

SGM (RET.) JEROME PIONK EXCELLENCE IN RETENTION MEDAL

James Pugsley, 32° KCCH was also recently recognized for his work outside of Masonry, having been awarded the SGM (Ret.) Jerome Pionk Excellence in Retention Medal at Fort Bragg. He said that Pionk "profoundly shaped my career and leadership journey. To receive an award in his memory is both humbling and deeply meaningful."



The SGM (Ret.) Jerome Pionk Excellence in Retention Medal was this year earned by Fayetteville's General Secretary (and new KCCM honoree) James Pugsley of Lebanon Lodge #391.

FAYETTEVILLE REUNIONS

Fayetteville's next reunion will be held Saturday, Feb. 28, at the Fayetteville Masonic Center. The class of candidates will see Valley members perform degrees 4-7, 14 and 18.

Looking ahead to the 2026 Fall Reunion on Sept. 28, the Valley will add the 9/10th degrees to its repertoire. At that time, Fayetteville will have been in existence for 37 months – and conferring eight of the 15 degrees for which it is authorized.

2026 SPRING REUNION DATE SET

The Greensboro Valley will host its 2026 Spring Reunion on April 8, 17, 18, and conclude with the 32nd degree at the May stated meeting on May 13.



FROM THE FIRST LIGHT TO THE ROYAL SECRET: A SERIES

Drew Collier, 32°

The First Light

There are moments in a man's life when time itself seems to pause — when the clamor of the world falls silent, and he stands face to face with his own reflection in the quiet of the Lodge. For me, that moment came when I was raised to the sublime degree of Master Mason.

In that sacred space, surrounded by Brothers whose feet had already traveled the same rough and rugged path, I came to understand that Masonry was not a destination, but a beginning. The working tools of the Craft, the lessons of the square and compasses, the subtle geometry of virtue — all of it pointed inward, calling me to rebuild the man within before I ever sought to shape the world without.

The Blue Lodge became my first sanctuary of transformation. It was there I learned that Brotherly Love is not a sentiment but a discipline, that Relief is not charity but compassion in motion, and that Truth is not taught — it is revealed, one act of integrity at a time. To be a Mason, I realized, was to labor daily upon an unseen temple — to shape my thoughts, refine my actions, and guard my heart against indifference.

VALLEY CONDUCTS RING CEREMONY

Jason F. Hicks, 32°

The Greensboro Valley conducted its 2025 ring ceremony at the December Stated meeting. All new Masters of the Royal Secret were presented with their 14th degree ring. The new members honored were:

Michael Wayne Bridge, 32°
Tyheem Dajohn Cooper, 32°
Onofrio Tony Costagliola, 32°
Craig Joseph Forster, Jr., 32°
Murphy Brian Fuller, 32°
Brett Charles Hinson, 32°
Harold Melvin Sanderson, 32°
Kyle Lee Street, 32°
Morgan Lewis Williams, 32°



1976-2026

50-YEARS RECOGNITION

In recognition of their unwavering dedication, these distinguished gentlemen have faithfully served the Scottish Rite for 50 consecutive years—a truly unique and rare honor bestowed upon few.

NCSCOTTISHRITE.ORG



WINSTON-SALEM

CHARITY GOLF

TOURNAMENT

- Play Golf for a Cause



- All Proceeds Goes to RiteCare Scottish Rite Childhood Language Program



**SHOTGUN
STARTS AT
12PM**

JUNE 6

CONTACT MICK GUNTER (336) 723-1217
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AN AMERICAN JOURNEY: LITTLE LODGES ON THE PRAIRIE - FREEMASONRY & LAURA INGALLS WILDER

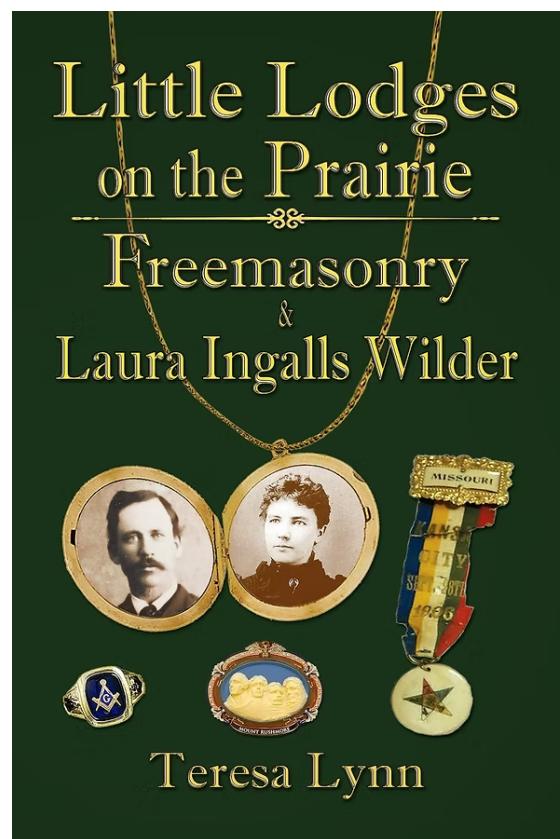
By Bro. George A. Bulgin, 32°

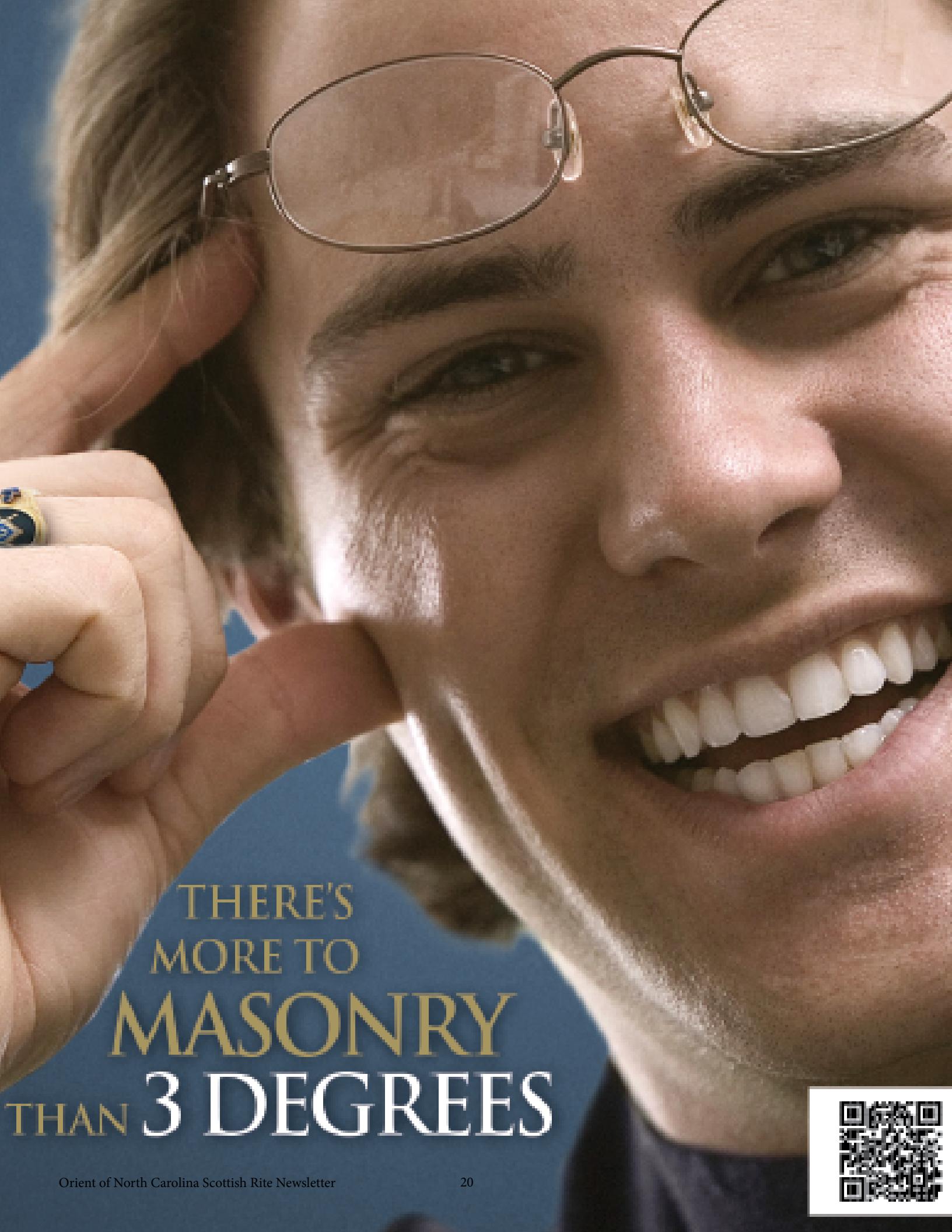
Many of us may have wonderful memories of growing up and watching TV with the family, before we were overwhelmed with so many choices of channels and shows. One of those shows was Little House on the Prairie, a historical western based loosely on the life and books of Laura Ingalls Wilder, and which ran for nine seasons. Today, one could correctly refer to that show as “pure Americana”. However, look more deeply into the past and the life of Laura and you will find a fascinating link to Freemasonry, the Order of the Eastern Star and the settling and opening up of the American countryside. This is exactly what Ms. Teresa Lynn has done with her book “Little Lodges on the Prairie: Freemasonry & Laura Ingalls Wilder”.

On 13 September 2025, members of the Valley of Franklin and Junaluskee Lodge #145, AF&AM, of Franklin, NC, hosted Ms. Lynn and her husband, David Lynn, 32°, to talk about her book and her journey researching the Ingalls and Freemasonry. The genesis of the book started when she overheard a conversation between her husband and his brother, a Mason and Shriner. Her husband was inquiring about beginning his journey in search of Light, and being the researcher that she is, this started her journey looking into what Freemasonry was. During this research, she came across a list of famous Masons which included Laura Ingalls Wilder! Being taken aback, wondering how a woman’s name was on such a list, she looked again and saw an asterisk that led her to the footnote stating that Laura was not a Mason, but a member of the Order of the Eastern Star. She further noted that the compiler of the list was not aware of who in Laura’s family was a Mason, which allowed her to become an Eastern Star. It was with this notation that set Ms. Lynn on the journey that was to become the book here referenced.

The book is well written and researched, giving the reader a concise background in Freemasonry and the Order of the Eastern Star. It also provides a good biographical grounding in the life and times of Charles and Caroline Wilder and their children Mary, Laura, and Carrie. Ms. Lynn shows the connection between the family and the settling of many communities across the Nation, the construction of churches and lodge buildings; the establishing of businesses and the oft harshness and hardships faced by the Wilders, and others, and their perseverance in adapting to these conditions.

What is fascinating to the author of this article is the direct ties that the Wilder family had in many Lodges, and in particular, the naming of what would become a most iconic American landmark. It seems that little Carrie, the youngest daughter whom in mind will always be the young actresses Lindsey and Sidney Greenbush seen tumbling down the hill in the opening of the TV show, worked for a newspaper in Keystone, SD. There she met and married David N. Swanzey, a brother mason. Brother Swanzey worked for the CB&Q Railroad and had a strong interest in mining. He soon became a noted expert in the local geology in the area. A young New York attorney made several visits to the area in 1884 to scout out possible locations for mining investments. He was guided by Brother Swanzey in these scouting adventures and it was on one such trip that they came to be near a particular hill, known to the locals by such names as Keystone Cliffs, Sugarloaf Mountain, and other names, but not having an official name. This attorney asked for its designation and Brother Swanzey stated, “We’ll name it after you”! Thus a piece of land would get a name that 57 years later would become an iconic landmark. That attorney’s name was Charles Rushmore.





THERE'S
MORE TO
MASONRY
THAN 3 DEGREES

