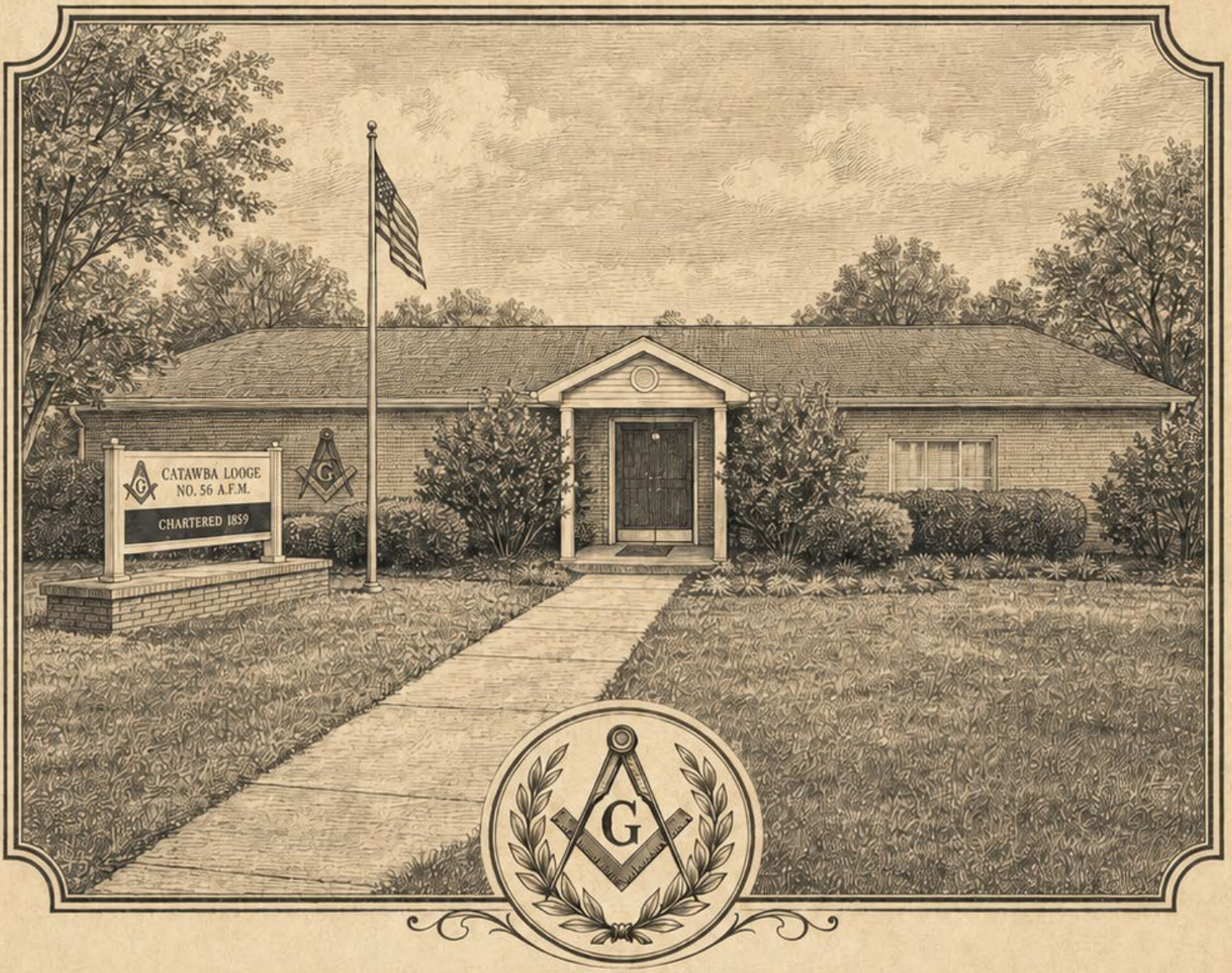


The CATAWBA JOURNAL

CATAWBA LODGE NO. 56 A.F.M.

Volume 1 • Number 2

September 2026



BUILDING BETTER MEN, TOGETHER.

FORT MILL, SOUTH CAROLINA

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FROM THE EAST

Building Something That Will Outlast Us

WB Alex Harlee • Worshipful Master



Brethren,

When I chose “Building Better Men, Together.” as the theme for my year in the East, I intentionally chose the word building. Masonry has always given us the language of building—foundations, tools, stones, and structures. But the longer I am a Mason, the more I realize that the most important things we build have very little to do with brick and mortar.

We build character. We build friendships. We build families, communities, and traditions. Most importantly, we build one another.

Catawba Lodge No. 56 has been here long before any of us sat in its chairs. Generations of Masons have gathered together, shared fellowship, taught one another, served their communities, and passed the Craft down to the men who came after them. We are fortunate to have inherited something that others worked hard to build.

“We are not the owners of this Lodge. We are its caretakers for a short time.”

FROM THE EAST

A message from the Worshipful Master on inheritance, responsibility, and building for those who follow.

FROM THE EAST

Building Something That Will Outlast Us

Continued



I want to recognize and express my sincere appreciation for the work that has been done by the brethren of Catawba Lodge, both those who came before us and those who continue to labor today. The strength of our Lodge did not happen overnight, nor was it built by any one person. It is the result of countless brothers giving their time, talents, and energy over many years. Whether their contributions were large or small, seen or unseen, they helped build the Lodge we have today.

But with that inheritance comes a responsibility.

We are not the owners of this Lodge. We are its caretakers for a short time.

Every generation of Masons gets the opportunity to decide what they will add to the foundation they inherited. Some will leave their mark through ritual. Others through service, mentorship, fellowship, or simply being the kind of brother someone else needed. Not every contribution will be remembered by name, but every contribution matters.

“But with that inheritance comes a responsibility.”

The goal is not simply to have more meetings, more events, or more names on our rolls. Those things have value, but they are not the measure of who we are. The real measure is what happens to the men who come through our doors. Are they learning? Are they growing? Are they finding brotherhood? Are we helping them become better men than they were when they first entered our Lodge?

One day, my year in the East will be over. Another brother will sit in this chair, just as I followed the brother who came before me. When that day comes, I hope I can look back and know that we left Catawba Lodge just a little stronger, a little closer, and a little better prepared for the generation that follows.

Because that is the work we are really doing. We are building something that will outlast us. And if we do that work together, we aren't just building a better Lodge.

We are Building Better Men, Together.

Fraternally,

Alex Harllee
Worshipful Master
Catawba Lodge No. 56 A.F.M.

LODGE NEWS

Welcome, Brothers

Celebrating three newly raised Master Masons

SATURDAY • AUGUST 22

MASTER MASON DEGREE

Edwin Paynter
Joshua Meeker
Avery Crowder

SEPTEMBER

NO DEGREE WORK

Regular practices continue
Mondays at 7:00 p.m.*

Catawba Lodge No. 56 had the privilege of raising three Brothers to the sublime degree of Master Mason on Saturday, August 22, 2026.

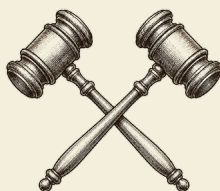
Please join us in welcoming Brothers Edwin Paynter, Joshua Meeker, and Avery Crowder as they begin the next chapter of their Masonic journeys.

The degrees may mark important milestones, but they are not the end of the work. The friendships, lessons, service, and growth that follow are where much of Masonry begins to take root.

There is no degree work currently scheduled for September. Lodge practices will continue on Monday evenings at 7:00 p.m., with the exception of the fourth Monday, when Catawba will host Masters & Wardens.

“The degree is a milestone. The journey continues in the Lodge beside our Brothers.”

*Please watch for any updates from the Worshipful Master or Lodge officers.



ALONG THE JOURNEY

A Place at the Table

A newer Mason's reflection on fellowship, belonging, and the meals before Lodge

One of my favorite parts of Lodge right now happens before the meeting ever begins.

It is dinner.

As a Steward, regular communication days can be a lot of work. There is food to prepare, a room to get ready, people moving in and out, and plenty to do before anyone takes his seat. But somewhere in the middle of all of that, I have started noticing something.

Those dinners remind me of holidays.

Not because of what is being served, but because of the feeling in the room. There are Brothers I see every week and others I may only see at regular communication. Old friends find each other. New visitors walk through the door. Conversations pick up as though no time has passed.



“There is something about a meal that makes a room feel like home.”

The more I experience it, the more I understand why fellowship has always mattered to Masonry.

ALONG THE JOURNEY

A Place at the Table

Continued



It brings back a feeling I did not realize I missed.

When I was younger, there was something special about everybody gathering at Grandma's house. People arrived at different times. Some you saw constantly. Others you had not seen in months. The house became louder as more people came through the door, and somehow the meal gave everyone a reason to stop what they were doing and be together.

I have caught glimpses of that same feeling at the Lodge.

I will look across the dining room and see men who have known one another for decades laughing together. I will see someone walk in who has not been around in a while and watch Brothers light up when they recognize him. I will see a visitor welcomed into a conversation as though a place had already been waiting for him.

I am beginning to understand that this is not separate from Masonry. It is part of it.

The ritual matters. The education matters. The business of the Lodge matters. But so do the moments before the gavel sounds—the handshake at the door, the chair pulled out for someone, the story told over dinner, the Brother you have not seen in months taking his familiar place at the table.

Those moments build something too.

As a newer Mason, I think I expected Brotherhood to be something I would learn about. I am discovering that much of the time, Brotherhood is simply something you experience.

ALONG THE JOURNEY

A Place at the Table

Continued



Maybe that is why these dinners have begun to mean so much to me.

They remind me that a Lodge is not only the room upstairs, the officers in their stations, or the work we perform. It is also a community of men who have made room in their lives for one another.

Some have been doing that for fifty years. Some of us are only beginning.

And there are Brothers whose stories I still have not heard. Men I know by name but not yet by experience. Men who may have memories of this Lodge stretching back decades, and others whose Masonic journeys are just beginning alongside mine.

I hope they will share those stories. I hope I get the chance to sit down, listen, and learn what Catawba Lodge has meant to them.

Because I am starting to realize that those stories are part of what makes this place feel the way it does.

So yes, communication day can be a long day for a Steward. By the time dinner is served, a fair amount of work has already happened.

But then the room fills up. The conversations start. Brothers who have not seen one another in a while shake hands and sit down together.

And I remember why the work is worth it.

There is nothing quite like a meal to bring people together.

And there is something pretty special about knowing there is a place at the table for you.

“There is something pretty special about knowing there is a place at the table for you.”

THE WORKING TOOLS

The Common Gavel

A lesson in removing what does not belong



The Common Gavel is one of the first working tools presented to an Entered Apprentice Mason.

Operatively, it is used to break off the rough and superfluous parts of stones so they may be better fitted for the builder's use.

Speculatively, we are taught to make use of it for a more noble and glorious purpose: divesting our hearts and consciences of the vices and superfluities of life, thereby fitting our minds as living stones for that spiritual building which extends beyond this life.

It is a simple image, but not an easy lesson.

The rough stone does not become useful because someone declares it finished. It becomes useful because work is done upon it.

“The work is not becoming flawless. The work is remaining willing to be shaped.”

The Common Gavel asks us to notice what weakens our character—and to be willing to remove it.

THE WORKING TOOLS

The Common Gavel

Continued

That work is deeply personal. Pride, impatience, resentment, selfishness, distraction, and habits that pull us away from the men we ought to be do not disappear simply because we put on an apron.

Masonry gives us tools. We still have to use them.

The lesson of the Common Gavel is not that a man must become flawless before he can be useful. It is that he must remain willing to be shaped—removing what weakens his character, surrendering what distracts his conscience, and preparing himself to take his proper place beside other living stones.



That last part matters.

A stone is not prepared only for itself. It is prepared so that it can take its place in something larger.

The same is true of us. The work we do upon ourselves affects our families, our friendships, our communities, and our Lodge. Becoming a better man is personal work, but its consequences are shared.

The Common Gavel leaves us with a question worth carrying beyond the Lodge room:

What in me still needs to be removed so that I may be of greater use to others?

“What in me still
needs to be removed?”

MASONIC EDUCATION

Why Masons Call Each Other Brother

More than a title, Brotherhood is a relationship

One of the first things a new Mason notices is how naturally the word Brother is used.

It is not reserved for close friends. It is not limited to men who have known one another for years. A newly made Mason may hear it from men he has only just met.

That can seem unusual at first.

Outside the Lodge, the word brother usually describes a family relationship. In Masonry, it describes something chosen.

Freemasonry brings together men who may differ in age, profession, background, experience, and circumstance. Some may have grown up together. Others might never have crossed paths if not for the Lodge.

Yet once admitted into the fraternity, they meet under a common obligation and share in the same work.

That is why the word matters.

To call another Mason Brother is more than a friendly habit. It is a reminder that we owe one another something.

Brotherhood suggests care.

It suggests respect.



It suggests that another man's welfare should matter to us.

It does not mean every Mason will become our closest friend. Families do not work that way either. Brothers can disagree. Personalities can clash. Men can disappoint one another.

The word does not promise perfect harmony.

It asks for something deeper.

It asks us to remember the relationship even when agreement is difficult.

MASONIC EDUCATION

Why Masons Call Each Other Brother

Continued



At Catawba Lodge, that idea becomes visible in ordinary ways.

A Brother helps another learn his part before a degree.
Someone prepares a meal.

A longtime Mason answers the same question for the hundredth time because a newer Brother is asking it for the first.

A man who has not been seen in a while walks through the door and is welcomed back.

A Brother notices when another is struggling and takes time to ask if everything is all right.

None of those things is particularly dramatic. That may be exactly the point. Brotherhood is often built through small acts repeated over time.

It is also one of the reasons Masonry can bring together men whose lives outside the Lodge may look completely different.

We do not have to share the same profession, politics, hobbies, income, or generation before we can care about one another. We already have something important in common. We are Brothers.

For a newer Mason, that word can take time to grow into. At first, it may simply sound like part of the language of the Lodge. Then names become familiar. Conversations become friendships. Men begin showing up for one another.

Eventually, the word begins to carry the weight it was intended to carry. Perhaps that is why Masons have continued to use it for generations. It reminds us that fraternity is not simply membership in the same organization.

It is a relationship.

And like every meaningful relationship, Brotherhood becomes real only when we choose to live like Brothers.

CATAWBA LODGE HISTORY



When the Cornerstone Was Opened

A message from 1890, discovered after the fire of 1947

In 1947, the destruction of Catawba Lodge's home revealed a message that had been waiting more than half a century.

There is an old stone at Catawba Lodge that would be easy to walk past without giving it much thought. Its face is worn. Its edges are chipped. Across the front, several dates and words remain plainly carved:



1858

Catawba Lodge No. 56, A.F.M.

1890-1950

Set into the top is a weathered metal covering over what appears to be a recessed compartment.

At first glance, it is simply an artifact from another time. But an old Fort Mill newspaper tells us why we should look at it more carefully.

On July 3, 1947, readers opened their paper to a headline: “Unlaying’ of Lodge Cornerstone Reveals Many Interesting Items of More Than Half Century Ago.”

The Lodge building then standing in Fort Mill had been nearly destroyed by fire the previous February. As what remained of the structure was being torn down, workmen reached the cornerstone.

“What they found inside
had been waiting for them
for fifty-seven years.”

CATAWBA LODGE HISTORY



When the Cornerstone Was Opened

Continued

What they found inside had been waiting for them for fifty-seven years.

The cornerstone had originally been laid in 1890. When workers removed it in 1947, they uncovered a metal box containing the items placed there by an earlier generation of Catawba Lodge. Around twenty people reportedly gathered as the contents were examined.



Inside was not treasure in the usual sense. What those Brothers chose to preserve was something more revealing. They left a record of themselves.

Among the contents were a membership roll, a photograph of the Lodge, minutes, a copy of the cornerstone speech, information from local churches and schools, newspapers, coins, Confederate currency, and a Confederate bond.

Most of the papers survived remarkably well. The photograph did not. According to the newspaper account, the image of the Lodge members had faded almost completely.

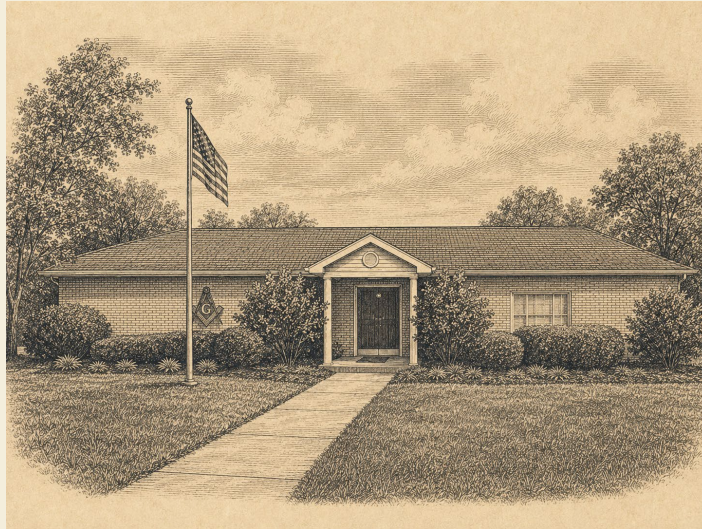
The words survived. The names survived. The records survived. But the faces had nearly disappeared.

The fire of 1947 ended one chapter of Catawba Lodge history, but not the Lodge itself. In 1948, Catawba Lodge purchased the L.J. Massey home at the northwest corner of Tom Hall and Forrest Streets. Beginning the following year, the house served as the Lodge home. The Lodge remained there until 1975. The present building was later constructed on the same site and dedicated in 1977.

CATAWBA LODGE HISTORY

When the Cornerstone Was Opened

Continued



Buildings changed. Generations changed. The Lodge continued. And somewhere along that journey, the old cornerstone was preserved.

The precise history of its later markings and metal-covered compartment still deserves further study. But there is little doubt about what the stone represents: continuity.

The Brothers of 1890 probably did not think they were living in “history.” They were simply living. They recorded the things that seemed worth remembering and sealed them behind stone. Fifty-seven years later, another generation opened it. Nearly eighty years after that, we are still talking about what they left behind.

Someday, Brothers we will never meet may look back and wonder who we were. We should leave them something worth finding.

BROTHER SPOTLIGHT

Benjamin “Benny” Patterson

Past Master • Raised March 21, 1972 • Worshipful Master 1993 & 2004

Some Brothers are remembered because they held office. Some because they were present for important moments. Some because, over the years, they quietly became part of the fabric of the Lodge itself.

Benjamin “Benny” Patterson is one of those Brothers.

Benny was initiated January 25, 1972, passed February 22, and raised March 21 of that same year.

At first glance, those dates seem almost impossibly close together. Benny remembers a different rhythm to the work. Candidates had 28 days to prepare from one degree to the next, and the Lodge did not organize its schedule around the candidate. The candidate organized his life around the Lodge.

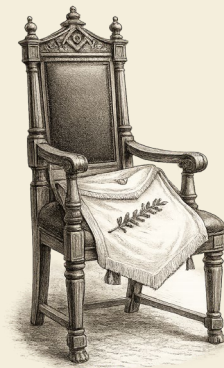
It was structured. It was demanding. And participation mattered.

Benny served as Worshipful Master twice—first in 1993 and again in 2004. His son, Scott Patterson, was raised in 1993, the same year Benny first sat in the East. Benny’s cousins Thomas Reid Patterson and Ray Franklin Patterson were also members of Catawba Lodge.

But dates and offices tell only part of the story.

More than fifty years later, Benny still shows up.

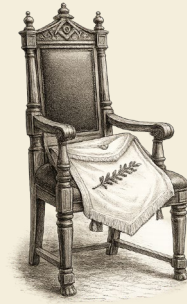
Over the years, Benny has helped care for the Lodge property, including many hours spent mowing the grounds. He still comes to practices and helps Brothers learn the ritual, their parts, and the work expected of them.



BROTHER SPOTLIGHT

Benjamin “Benny” Patterson

Continued



His service extends far beyond the Lodge room. Through the Shriners, Benny has helped with more than 100 trips involving children and families traveling to Greenville, along with more than 50 trips to Cincinnati. Behind every trip was a child, a family, a long day on the road, and someone who needed help getting where they needed to be.

Scott remembers that his father never pressured him to become a Mason. Even at home, “to be one, ask one” still applied. Benny did not need to sell Masonry to his son. Scott watched his father and the Masons around him live in a way that made him want to become one of them.

Raised 1972 • WM 1993 & 2004 • 100+ Greenville trips • 50+ Cincinnati trips

Recently, I watched Benny take part in the raising of three of our newest Master Masons. As I sat there, I found myself smiling. His voice is unmistakable.

The moment I heard it, I was taken back to my own degrees—hoodwinked, being led around the Lodge, listening carefully to voices I was only beginning to recognize. Benny was one of those voices.

At the time, I did not know the full story of the man speaking to me. Now I understand a little more about what stood behind that voice.

More than fifty-four years after he was raised, Benny is still showing up. Still helping. Still teaching. Still serving. Still taking his place in the work.

Some men leave their mark through titles, plaques, photographs, or names written in old records. Others leave it in the people they help along the way. Benny has done both.

SEPTEMBER CALENDAR

Important Dates



Practices, stated communication, fellowship, and district meetings

MONDAYS*

7:00 p.m.

Lodge practices
*Except the fourth
Monday

THURSDAY • SEP 10

6:30 / 7:30

Meal at 6:30 p.m.
Meeting at 7:30 p.m.

MONDAY • SEP 28

6:30 / 7:00

Masters & Wardens
Hosted at Catawba
Lodge No. 56

Additional September gathering:

Thursday, September 3 — Traveling Men,
7:00 p.m. at Rock Hill Diner.

There is no degree work currently scheduled
for September. Practices are held Monday
evenings at 7:00 p.m., except the fourth
Monday.

Please watch for
any additional
updates from the
Worshipful
Master or Lodge
officers.

CELEBRATING OUR BROTHERS

September Birthdays & Masonic Anniversaries

Recognizing the Brothers celebrating this month

SEPTEMBER BIRTHDAYS

September 4 — Carl James Guynn
September 8 — Christopher Stowe Henley
September 9 — Robert Ralph Andrews
September 11 — Randy Allen Stogner
September 11 — Richard Wayne Hoover
September 12 — Vernon Cornelius Godfrey
September 14 — Elliott Springs Close
September 14 — Ted Ligon Walker

September 17 — Carson Wendell Neely
September 17 — Mitchell Keith Benton
September 20 — Randall Stephen Smith
September 21 — James Paul Becknell
September 21 — Wyatt Eugene Smith
September 23 — Kevin Travis Simpson
September 28 — Charles Michael Short
September 30 — Raymond Michael Bleau

MASONIC ANNIVERSARIES

No Brothers reach one of our recognized major Masonic milestones during September.

LODGE FUNDRAISERS

Ways to Support Catawba Lodge No. 56

Fundraising, fellowship, and a chance to leave your mark

CHAIR ARM PLACARDS — \$56

Put your name on a chair at Catawba Lodge and leave a small mark on the Lodge for years to come. Placards include the Brother's name. See Dean Cullon for details.

CABELA'S \$500 GIFT CARD RAFFLE — \$10 PER TICKET

Hosted by the Traveling Men. The drawing will be held when all tickets are sold. See Alex Harllee for tickets.

CREW 357 + CATAWBA 56 BBQ BUTT SALE — \$45

Saturday, December 5. Pickup 9:00 a.m.—Noon at the Lodge. See Dean Cullon for ordering information and additional details.

ANNUAL BANQUET — \$20 PER PERSON

Saturday, November 7 at 6:30 p.m. at Catawba Lodge. A chance to celebrate the year with our Brothers and families. See Dean Cullon for tickets.

Every fundraiser is another way to support the life and work of the Lodge.

Please see the named Brother listed with each item for tickets, orders, or additional details.

LOOKING AHEAD

Coming This Fall

Important Lodge traditions and fellowship to keep on your calendar

Annual Lodge Banquet

Saturday, November 7 • 6:30 p.m.

*A chance to close out the year
together with Brothers and families.*

BBQ Butt Sale

Saturday, December 5

*Our annual partnership with
Crew 357 returns in December.*



More to Come

*Watch for additional Lodge activities and degree work as we move into the
final months of the year.*

UNTIL WE MEET AGAIN

What We Leave Behind

Receiving what others preserved—and adding something worthy of those who follow

A Lodge is built from more than stone, timber, ritual, or tradition.

It is built from the men who continue to show up.

Some come carrying decades of memories. Others are only beginning to understand what the work will ask of them. Some teach. Some listen. Some prepare the meal, cut the grass, help with a degree, welcome a visitor, or simply take their usual seat among the Brothers.

Over time, those ordinary acts become part of something larger.

The Brothers who came before us probably did not always realize when they were creating history. They were simply caring for the Lodge that had been entrusted to them.

We are doing the same.

Every gathering adds another story. Every Brother brings something that was not there before. And each time we meet, we have another opportunity to strengthen the bonds that make this more than a building or a monthly meeting.

Perhaps that is one of the responsibilities of Brotherhood: to receive what others have preserved for us, make good use of it while it is ours, and leave something worthwhile for the men who follow.

Until we meet again, may we remember that the Lodge is strongest when every Brother knows there is a place for him within it—and when each of us does our part to make that place worth returning to.

“There is a place for you here—and work worth returning to.”

IN THE NEXT ISSUE • Another working tool, another chapter of Lodge history, and another Brother whose story deserves to be known.

COLOPHON

The Catawba Journal

Volume 1 • Number 2 • September 2026

Published monthly for the Brethren of Catawba Lodge No. 56 A.F.M.
Founded 1858 • Fort Mill, South Carolina



— No. 56 —

WORSHIPFUL MASTER
WB Alex Harlee

Provides the vision and final approval for each issue.

EDITOR
Brad Curtis

Responsible for editorial planning, writing, design, and publication.

LODGE SECRETARY
WB Marty Monahan

Provided official Lodge records, membership information, birthdays, Masonic milestones, and calendar information for this issue.

PHOTOGRAPHY
Catawba Lodge Media Team

Photography and visual documentation of Lodge activities.

CONTRIBUTIONS
Members of Catawba Lodge No. 56

This issue includes contributions from the Worshipful Master and members of Catawba Lodge No. 56, including historical recollections and Lodge service stories.

EDITORIAL PURPOSE

The Catawba Journal exists to preserve the history of Catawba Lodge No. 56, strengthen the bonds of brotherhood, and encourage thoughtful reflection upon the principles of Freemasonry.

— No. 56 —

Articles may be edited for clarity, length, and consistency while preserving the author's intent.