The Catawba Journal

CATAWBA LODGE NO. 56 A.F.M.

Volume 1 • Number 4

November 2026



Building Better Men, Together.

Fort Mill, South Carolina

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FROM THE EAST

Our Fraternity Should Be Proud to Call You Its Own



Alex Harllee • Worshipful Master

As we move into November, it is hard to believe how quickly this year has gone by. It seems like only yesterday that I stood before our Lodge on the Festival of St. John the Evangelist and began my journey as Worshipful Master. I started this year with hopes for what we could accomplish together, but more importantly, with a desire to see our Lodge continue to grow into the kind of place where every brother knows he belongs.

Now, as the end of the year draws closer, I find myself reflecting on what this experience has meant to me. Serving in the East has given me a greater appreciation for the time, dedication, and heart that so many of our brethren put into this fraternity. Much of that work happens without recognition, and sometimes the men doing the most for their Lodge are the least likely to seek praise for it.

That is something I have come to appreciate deeply about Catawba Lodge. I have watched brethren give their time to help another brother, offer guidance when it was needed, and continue working to make this Lodge stronger. I have seen our officers take their responsibilities seriously and our Past Masters continue to offer the wisdom and support that only experience can bring. These things may seem ordinary to those who do them, but they are exactly what makes a Lodge worth belonging to.

“Our fraternity should be proud to call you its own.”

FROM THE EAST

Our Fraternity Should Be Proud to Call You Its Own



Continued

And it is why I want our brethren to remember something, especially as we look back on this year: our fraternity should be proud to call you its own.

I mean that sincerely. Masonry is not measured simply by how many meetings we hold, how many events we attend, or how many names appear on a membership roll. It is measured by the men who practice its lessons and carry its principles into their daily lives. It is reflected in how we treat one another, how we respond when things are difficult, and whether we are willing to put the good of our brethren and our Lodge ahead of our own pride.

No Lodge is perfect, and Catawba is no exception. We will always have things to learn and ways we can improve. But I believe we have something worth being proud of here. We have brethren who care about this Lodge and who have worked hard to bring it to where it stands today. Catawba has faced difficult times in its history, and the strength we see today was not built overnight. It came from men who continued to believe in this Lodge and were willing to put in the work to see it thrive again.

We owe those brethren our gratitude, and we owe the generations who follow us the same commitment. My time as Worshipful Master will eventually come to an end, just as it has for every Master before me. The gavel will pass to another brother, and the work will continue. That is how it should be. None of us owns this Lodge or the fraternity we serve. We are caretakers of something that began long before us, and our responsibility is to leave it stronger for those who will come after.

We are caretakers of something that began long before us.

FROM THE EAST

Our Fraternity Should Be Proud to Call You Its Own



Continued

As I look toward the close of this year, I hope each of you takes a moment to recognize the value of what you bring to this Lodge. You do not have to hold an office or receive an award to make a difference. Sometimes the greatest impact comes from simply being the brother someone else can count on. The encouragement you offer, the time you give, and the example you set may mean more to another Mason than you will ever know.

I also hope we remember that our work is not finished simply because another Masonic year is approaching. We have made progress, and we should be proud of it, but there is still more to build together. We must continue strengthening our own Lodge, supporting one another, and making sure that the Catawba we pass on is even better than the one we inherited.

When I chose the words “Building Better Men, Together,” I wanted them to represent more than a theme for my year in the East. I wanted them to reflect the kind of fraternity I believe we should strive to be. We are all still learning, all still growing, and all responsible for the example we leave behind. The true measure of our work will not be found in a single year, but in the lives we influence and the Lodge we leave for the future.

Brethren, thank you for allowing me the privilege of serving as your Worshipful Master. As we finish this year together, I hope you know how much I appreciate what you have done for Catawba and for one another. Be proud of the work you have put in, be proud of the men standing beside you, and never underestimate the example you set.

Fraternally,
Alex Harllee
Worshipful Master
Catawba Lodge No. 56 A.F.M.
Building Better Men, Together

Our fraternity should be proud to call you its own.

ALONG THE JOURNEY

Because Someone Kept It



Reflections from a Brother still early in the journey

By Brad Curtis, Steward and Editor

Sometimes preservation looks like something very small.

A Brother is working through his part at practice and says “every” where the ritual says “all.” Someone stops him. “Not every. It’s all.”

That is it. One word.

To someone standing outside the Lodge, the difference might seem almost silly. The meaning has not changed much. Everybody knows what was intended. But the correction is made anyway.

I have noticed moments like that more and more since becoming a Mason. A Brother remembers the exact wording. Another remembers how something was done years ago. Someone points out a custom that has started to fade. A longtime member explains why a certain thing matters, even if most of us would never have known there was another way to do it.

At first, some of those moments can look like men being particular about small things. Lately, I have started seeing them differently.

I think I am watching preservation happen.

Sometimes keeping a tradition alive comes down to one word.

ALONG THE JOURNEY

Because Someone Kept It

Continued



Not the preservation of Masonry as something frozen in time. Lodges change. Men change. Communities change. Some traditions naturally evolve, and some probably should.

But there are also things worth carrying forward. Words matter because someone taught them to us. Customs matter because someone practiced them before we arrived. Standards matter because someone decided they were worth maintaining.

The beginning of the holiday season probably has me thinking about this more than usual. This is the time of year when traditions suddenly seem to matter a little more. Families prepare the same meals. Decorations come out of the same boxes. Someone makes a recipe that belonged to a grandmother or great-grandmother. We tell stories we have all heard before and somehow still want to hear again.

Most of those traditions survived for a very simple reason: someone kept them. Someone remembered the recipe. Someone saved the ornament. Someone told the story one more time. Someone decided that a small thing was not too small to matter.

I see something similar at Catawba Lodge. I see Brothers who care about the words, the work, the practices, the degrees, and the old customs. More often than not, that care is quiet. It is one Brother correcting another at practice, someone explaining why we do something a certain way, or an older Brother sharing a phrase that might otherwise disappear.

ALONG THE JOURNEY

Because Someone Kept It

Continued



That realization has made me more grateful for the Brothers who have been here longer than I have. There are things I now experience as normal parts of Masonry only because someone before me refused to let them become forgotten parts of Masonry.

The words were waiting for me. The customs were waiting for me. The lessons were waiting for me. Even the little things were still here.

Because someone kept them.

And I am beginning to understand that there is both a weight and an honor in knowing that some of this now becomes my responsibility, too. I am not only being shown what came before me. I am being trusted to help carry it forward.

That is a different kind of gratitude. It is not simply being thankful that something was preserved for me. It is recognizing that, in time, I will have a part in whether it is preserved for someone else.

At some point, the Brothers who taught us will no longer be the ones responsible for preserving these things. We will be. The words we are learning now will someday be words someone else learns from us. The customs we are being shown will become customs we either continue or allow to disappear.

We inherit more than a Lodge room, an apron, or a ritual. We inherit the care other men took with what was entrusted to them. And one day, another Brother may receive something from us and never know how close it came to being lost. He will simply know it was there when he arrived.

Because someone kept it.

THE WORKING TOOLS

The Square

Are my actions true?



Last month, the Plumb asked a personal question:

Am I standing true?

The Square asks another:

Are my actions true?

In Masonry, the Square teaches us to square our actions by the Square of Virtue. It gives us a standard.

That matters because most men already know the difference between right and wrong. The harder test comes when doing what is right is inconvenient. When patience would be easier to abandon. When honesty may cost something. When fairness does not work in our favor. When keeping our word becomes more difficult than giving it.

That is where the Square becomes more than a symbol.

A builder does not decide by sight alone whether something is square. He places a known standard against the work and lets the tool reveal what the eye might miss. Virtue asks something similar of us.

The Plumb asks: Am I standing true?
The Square asks: Are my actions true?

THE WORKING TOOLS

The Square

Continued



It is easy to judge our conduct by our intentions. We meant well. We had our reasons. We were frustrated. But the Square asks us to measure the action itself. Was it fair? Was it honest? Was it kind? Was it worthy of our word? Did it reflect the principles we claim to value?

This time of year gives that question a particular warmth. As Thanksgiving approaches, we naturally think about the people for whom we are grateful: family, friends, Brothers, and the people who have stood beside us, taught us, encouraged us, forgiven us, shared a meal with us, or simply made life better by being part of it.

And perhaps gratitude asks something of us too. Not only that we say we are thankful, but that the people we value can feel it — in the patience we give them, in the time we make for them, in the way we speak to them, in the grace we extend when they fall short, and in the way we keep faith with them when it would be easier not to.

That is not a burden. It is a privilege. There is something good in having people in our lives worth treating well, worth showing up for, worth forgiving, and worth giving our best to.

The Square reminds us that virtue is not simply about avoiding what is wrong. It is also about building something right: a life of integrity, a reputation that can be trusted, relationships that can bear weight, and a Brotherhood strengthened by fairness, honesty, patience, and fidelity.

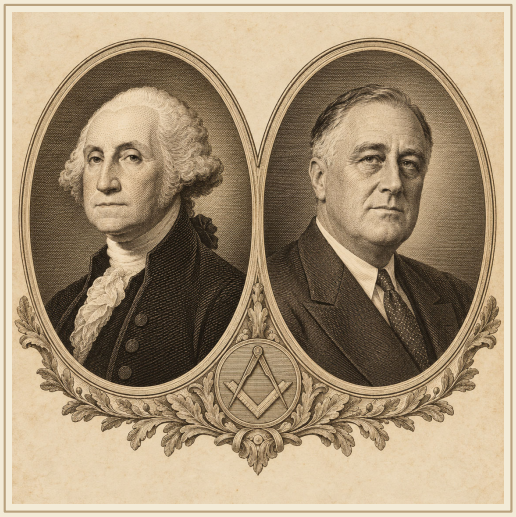
And when we fall short — as every man will — the Square does not exist to shame us. It gives us a standard to return to. Something fixed when pride, frustration, convenience, or self-interest begins to pull us away from the line. Something that allows us to look again, measure again, correct what has begun to drift, and continue the work.

Gratitude is good to speak.
Virtue is better when it can be seen.

MASONIC EDUCATION

Two Brothers and the Thanksgiving Calendar

Two Masonic Presidents in the story of an American tradition



Every November, Americans glance at the calendar and know where Thanksgiving will fall: the fourth Thursday of the month.

That feels ordinary now. It was not always so.

The story of how Thanksgiving found its place on the American calendar stretches across generations, and two Presidents who played important roles in that story were also Freemasons: George Washington and Franklin Delano Roosevelt.

Brother Washington and the Thanksgiving of 1789

On October 3, 1789, President George Washington issued a proclamation recommending Thursday, November 26, as a national day of thanksgiving and prayer. It was the first Thanksgiving proclaimed under the newly adopted Constitution of the United States.

Washington called on the young nation to acknowledge the providence of Almighty God and give thanks for peace, union, liberty, and the peaceful establishment of its new government.

> ***"That we may then all unite in rendering unto him our sincere and humble thanks."***

MASONIC EDUCATION

Two Brothers and the Thanksgiving Calendar



Continued

Washington was already a longtime Freemason. In fact, when he issued the proclamation in 1789, he was serving as Master of Alexandria Lodge No. 22.

That makes the connection especially interesting, but it should not be overstated. There is no evidence that Washington issued the proclamation because he was a Mason, nor was Thanksgiving a Masonic observance. The history is compelling enough as it is: a Brother serving as the nation's first President helped establish one of America's earliest national Thanksgiving observances.

Then Came Brother Roosevelt

One hundred fifty years later, another Masonic President would leave his mark on Thanksgiving.

In 1939, November had five Thursdays, placing the traditional last-Thursday observance on November 30. With the country still recovering from the Great Depression, concerns grew that such a late Thanksgiving would shorten the Christmas shopping season. President Franklin D. Roosevelt moved the observance forward one week.

The reaction was immediate. Some states followed the President's proclamation. Others did not. For a time, Americans in different parts of the country were literally celebrating Thanksgiving on different Thursdays. The controversy even earned Roosevelt's observance a nickname: "Franksgiving."

Congress eventually settled the matter. In 1941, lawmakers established Thanksgiving on the fourth Thursday of November, and Roosevelt signed the measure into law on December 26. That is where Thanksgiving remains on the calendar today.

Roosevelt's connection to the Craft was well established. He was a member of Holland Lodge No. 8 in New York City and became a 32° Mason.

MASONIC EDUCATION

Two Brothers and the Thanksgiving Calendar



Continued

Thanksgiving at Warm Springs

Roosevelt's Thanksgiving story has another chapter. For years, he spent the holiday at Warm Springs, Georgia, with patients and staff at the polio rehabilitation center he had helped develop. Thanksgiving there became a tradition of its own: a President gathered around the table with people whose struggles he understood personally.

That image may tell us as much about Thanksgiving as any proclamation or act of Congress. Not simply a date on the calendar, but a table, a gathering, and people sharing a meal.

The Masonic Connection

Freemasonry did not create Thanksgiving, and there is no evidence that either Washington or Roosevelt shaped the holiday because of his membership in the Craft. But the connection is still worth knowing.

Two Presidents. Two important chapters in the development of the American Thanksgiving. Two Freemasons.

Washington helped establish one of the nation's earliest national Thanksgiving observances. Roosevelt played an important role in the events that led to the calendar placement we still follow.

And both stories touch ideas familiar to every Mason: gratitude, duty, fellowship, service, and the responsibilities we owe to one another.

Two Brothers helped shape the Thanksgiving we recognize today.

Sources: National Archives • George Washington Masonic National Memorial • FDR Presidential Library • National Park Service

CATAWBA LODGE HISTORY

A Tradition of Giving

For more than a century, Catawba Brothers have found ways to help when others were in need.

In the early years of Catawba Lodge, requests for help sometimes arrived from other lodges.

Some were rebuilding after fire. Others were trying to establish or maintain a lodge hall of their own. Catawba understood those burdens well, because it had building obligations and financial responsibilities of its own.

That is what makes one small entry in C. S. Link's 1923 history of the Lodge worth remembering.

At one communication, two appeals for assistance came before the Lodge. The brethren voted to appropriate five dollars and divide it equally between the two requests.



Link does not tell us which lodges asked for help or what was said before the vote. He does tell us enough to understand the larger point: Catawba was not giving from a position of unlimited means. The Lodge had obligations at home, but it still found something to give.

The Lodge had obligations at home, but it still found something to give.

CATAWBA LODGE HISTORY

A Tradition of Giving



Continued

That same spirit showed up in other ways.

Link records that annual dues were sometimes remitted for Brothers experiencing what he called “temporary financial embarrassment.” In the language of today, they were simply going through a hard time, and the Lodge chose to ease the burden rather than add to it.

He also records committees being appointed to visit sick brethren, with later reports showing that those duties were usually carried out faithfully.

There were larger moments as well. Catawba sent assistance after the Charleston earthquake of 1886, the yellow fever epidemic in Jacksonville in 1888, the Galveston flood of 1900, and the earthquake and fire in San Francisco in 1906.

Taken together, those entries tell us something about the Lodge. Its Brothers noticed need. Sometimes the need was far away. Sometimes it was sitting beside them. Sometimes the response was money. Sometimes it was relief from dues. Sometimes it was simply a visit.

None of those things sound especially dramatic now, and perhaps that is exactly why the story matters. Brotherhood is often expressed in ordinary decisions: a vote, a visit, a little help at the right time.

That feels especially fitting to remember in November. Thanksgiving naturally draws our attention to what we have been given. But gratitude has always meant more than simply recognizing our own blessings. At its best, it also turns our attention outward.

More than a century later, the amount of that five-dollar contribution matters less than the spirit behind it. Those Brothers had responsibilities of their own. They still found something to give.

And perhaps that is one of the better Thanksgiving lessons they left us.

Source: C. S. Link, A History of Catawba Lodge No. 56, Ancient Free Masons of South Carolina (1923), pp. 52–53.

BROTHER SPOTLIGHT

He Shows Up

Brother David S. Harllee



When I first met David Harllee, I was not entirely sure I was going to make it through the investigation.

David was one of the Brothers who came to my home as part of the committee assigned to meet with me after I petitioned Catawba Lodge. I had expected questions. What I had not expected was my wife asking nearly as many as they did.

Kristin was thorough. Very thorough. For a few minutes, I remember thinking that maybe she was interviewing them as much as they were interviewing me.

David never seemed rattled. He laughed, answered her questions, stood his ground when he needed to, and later joked about how thorough she had been.

At the time, I knew almost nothing about him. I did not know that he had twice served as Worshipful Master. I did not know about his years of service to Scouting, the Shrine, or the Lodge.

I certainly did not know that, over time, I would come to recognize something about David that many Brothers at Catawba already knew.

David began his Masonic journey as an Entered Apprentice on August 21, 1997. He was passed to the degree of Fellow Craft on November 21 of that year and raised to the Sublime Degree of Master Mason on April 18, 1998.

In the 28 years since, his service has taken many forms. He has twice served as Master of Catawba Lodge, worked on numerous Lodge committees, served through the Shrine, and today continues that work as Junior Warden and as a member of the Building and Grounds Committee.

He shows up.

BROTHER SPOTLIGHT

He Shows Up

Continued

When the Lodge recently needed someone to step into the Junior Warden's chair, David did what his record suggests he has done many times before. He stepped forward.

That willingness to serve has never been limited to the Lodge room. Years ago, when David became involved in Scouting alongside his sons, he served as a den leader, assistant Cubmaster, assistant Scoutmaster, and Scoutmaster. Before long, he was also helping build a stronger relationship between local Scouting and Catawba Lodge.

When Cub Scout Pack 108 experienced tremendous growth and needed additional meeting space, Catawba opened its community room. Scouts used the Lodge flagpole to learn proper flag etiquette. And during David's service as Master, Catawba helped establish a scholarship fund so that a boy who wanted to experience Scouting would not be kept away simply because his family could not afford it.

That work eventually helped earn David the Daniel Carter Beard Masonic Scouter Award in 2019, recognizing his efforts to strengthen the relationship between Freemasonry and Scouting.

Spend enough time around David and you begin to see the rest. He is generous with his time, his effort, and often whatever else is needed. There is a quiet comfort in knowing that if you truly needed something from him, all you would have to do is ask.

Awards and titles only tell part of the story.

BROTHER SPOTLIGHT

He Shows Up

Continued

That generosity shows up in what he builds for the Lodge. David put together a dinner to thank Catawba's officers and Past Masters for their service. It was his idea, and he saw it through from beginning to end. No committee assignment required it. He simply believed it was worth doing.

David also owns several miniature jeeps and regularly represents the Lodge in parades across the state. Wherever they go, Catawba goes with them. One project says thank you to the men inside the Lodge. The other introduces the Lodge to everyone outside it. Both reflect the same thing: David sees an opportunity to support Catawba and gets involved.

That is David. He helps care for the building. And if something is happening around the Lodge, there is a pretty good chance David is somewhere nearby, usually with a story to tell.

David is one of those Brothers who can turn a simple memory into a full account, complete with all the details along the way. That is part of his personality, and part of what makes him such a familiar presence around Catawba. He does not simply participate in Lodge life. He brings himself fully into it.

There is another meaningful chapter in his story today. His son Alex Harllee is serving as Worshipful Master of Catawba Lodge. For nearly three decades, David has invested his time, energy, and heart in this Lodge.

What many Brothers at Catawba already knew is simple: David shows up. I have only known David for a fraction of his years in Masonry, but his example has already influenced the way I think about service, generosity, and Brotherhood. I am better for knowing him.

Showing up. Helping where he is needed.
Giving what he can.

CELEBRATING OUR BROTHERS

November Birthdays & Masonic Milestones

A month worth celebrating

A HALF-CENTURY IN THE CRAFT

Howard Eugene Adkins

Raised November 18, 1976
50 years as a Master Mason

Ray Franklin Patterson

Raised November 18, 1976
50 years as a Master Mason

FORTY YEARS IN THE CRAFT

John Reid Barnes

Raised November 22, 1986
40 years as a Master Mason

NOVEMBER BIRTHDAYS

NOV 1	Martin Edward Monahan
NOV 5	Wallace Clinton Coleman
NOV 5	Manning Edward Watts
NOV 12	Danny Patrick Funderburk
NOV 27	Roger Edward Allen

Happy Birthday, Brothers — and congratulations on these remarkable Masonic milestones.

AROUND THE LODGE

November at Catawba



Banquet, communication, and the regular rhythm of Lodge life

ANNUAL BANQUET

Saturday, November 7 • 6:00 p.m. • $20 per person

Dinner includes chicken or flank steak, vegetables, drink, and dessert. Join us for an evening of good food and fellowship as we honor those among us who have exhibited exceptional service.

STATED COMMUNICATION

Thursday, November 12 — Meal 6:30 p.m. • Lodge opens 7:30 p.m.

LODGE PRACTICE

Mondays • 7:00 p.m. — At the discretion of the Worshipful Master

Good food. Good fellowship. A good month to be together.

LOOKING AHEAD

Boston Butt Sale

Catawba Lodge No. 56 & Boy Scout Crew 357

GREAT FOOD • GREAT CAUSE

BOSTON BUTT SALE

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 12

Pickup at Catawba Lodge • 9:00 a.m.–Noon

$45 EACH

For orders or more information, contact a Catawba Lodge No. 56 officer.

Catawba Lodge No. 56 • Boy Scout Crew 357

UNTIL WE MEET AGAIN

The Gift of Brotherhood

A closing reflection

By Brad Curtis, Steward and Editor

There is something about November that makes familiar things easier to notice. The people we gather with. The traditions we repeat. The places that have become part of the rhythm of our lives.

Lodge can become like that too.

We get used to the meal before the meeting, the same voices in the room, the same stories, the same jokes, and the Brothers who seem to be there whenever the doors open. What once felt new eventually becomes familiar. And familiar things are easy to take for granted.

In his message this month, our Worshipful Master reminded us to be proud of the men standing beside us and of the work being done at Catawba. That is worth remembering. But perhaps November gives us another reason to notice them as well: to simply be thankful they are there.

Thankful for the Brother who taught us something we did not know. The one who made us laugh when we needed it. The one who quietly took care of something before anyone else noticed it needed doing. The one we know we could call if we needed help.

None of that is guaranteed. It is simply one of the gifts we have been given.

So as Thanksgiving arrives and another Masonic year begins drawing toward its close, perhaps it is enough to recognize the value of having a place to gather and men we are glad to see when we get there.

That is not something every man has. We are fortunate that we do.

Until we meet again, may we not overlook the gift of Brotherhood simply because it has become familiar.

COLOPHON

The Catawba Journal

Volume 1 • Number 4 • November 2026

Published monthly for the Brethren of Catawba Lodge No. 56 A.F.M.
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No. 56

WORSHIPFUL MASTER

WB Alex Harllee

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

Provides official Lodge records, membership information, birthdays, Masonic milestones, and calendar information.

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.