

Black Freemasonry ^[1]

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Black Freemasonry

by Robert C. Kenzer, 2006

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Black Freemasonry, like its white counterpart, promotes fellowship within a membership that engages in a wide variety of social and benevolent activities. Although black freemasonry dates back to the [American Revolution](#) ^[3], it was not until 1866-during a period of tremendous antiblack sentiment following the [Civil War](#) ^[4]-that the first African American lodge appeared in North Carolina. Within five years of the founding of King Solomon Lodge in New Bern, lodges were also created in [Wilmington](#) ^[5], [Fayetteville](#) ^[6], and [Raleigh](#) ^[7]. In 1870 these four groups established a state organization, the Most Worshipful Grand Lodge of the State of North Carolina, with headquarters in Fayetteville.

As black freemasonry spread across the state, the composition of its membership changed. Whereas most of the original members were urban residents, the fraternal organization gradually reached the countryside. Because black masons were often businessmen and landowners, there was a close relationship between freemasonry and black economic enterprise. Such membership increased personal and business contacts and promulgated valuable skills about property management. Black lodges often rented their property to black businessmen.

During the late nineteenth century, black freemasonry in North Carolina continued to grow in size and extend the range of its social and benevolent activities. From 37 lodges and 1,000 members in 1880, the organization grew to 358 lodges and more than 10,000 members by 1910. The fraternal society offered short-term financial assistance to members experiencing financial problems, provided insurance for the widows of deceased members, and established a black orphanage in Oxford. It also made substantial contributions to the [United Negro College Fund](#) ^[8], the Legal Defense Fund of the [National Association for the Advancement of Colored People](#) ^[9], a scholarship program for black students, and a number of [black North Carolina colleges](#) ^[10]. By 2005 the [Most Worshipful Prince Hall Grand Lodge Free and Accepted Masons of North Carolina and Jurisdictions, Inc.](#) ^[11], headquartered in [Durham](#) ^[12], was the state's central organization of black lodges, which numbered more than 320.

Additional Resources:

"King Solomon Lodge." North Carolina Highway Historical Marker Program. <https://www.ncdcr.gov/about/history/division-historical-resources/nc-highway-historical-marker-program/Markers.aspx?sp=map&sv=C-81> ^[13] (accessed June 19, 2012).

Stradling, Richard. "State's two Masonic groups join" News and Observer (Raleigh, N.C.). November 22, 2008. <https://www.heraldonline.com/news/local/article12242276.html> ^[14] (accessed June 19, 2012).

Grimshaw, William Henry. "Official History of Freemasonry Among the Colored People in North America. Montreal: Broadway Publishing Company. 1903. https://www.worldcat.org/title/freemasonry-in-north-carolina-in-1865/oclc/172979121&referer=brief_results ^[15]

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[Kenzer, Robert C.](#) ^[20]

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[Encyclopedia of North Carolina, University of North Carolina Press.](#) ^[21]

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