

NCMCA Golden Anniversary Celebration Series – November 2024

2024-11-29

We're celebrating the North Carolina Masonry Contractors Association Golden 50th Anniversary Year by highlighting some monumental events that have taken place throughout the existence of NCMCA. Each month throughout 2024 we will have articles that will showcase the history and folks that helped NCMCA get to where it is today. Please enjoy this yearlong series with our eleventh article, "Think Local"

Among the characteristics that make the North Carolina Masonry Contractors Association unique among masonry promotional groups is the fact that 1) NCMCA is a true masonry contractors' association and 2) the role of local chapters in the state organization.

While the membership of associate companies is welcomed and essential, voting membership and holding NCMCA office is restricted to companies that are in the business of contracting masonry work. NCMCA maintains a strong partnership with block and brick producers as well as stone suppliers and other masonry product manufacturers, but unlike many other state masonry associations, block suppliers, brick manufacturers, and masonry contractors maintain separate promotional/trade associations in North Carolina. And while the three entities are usually of a single mind, there are rare instances when interests are not completely aligned. That separation is a strength of NCMCA. Focus is always on what's best for masonry contractors.

However, of those two unique NCMCA characteristics, "local chapters" is the topic for this anniversary article.

NCMCA member firms are encouraged to affiliate with a local chapter. Firms are also encouraged to affiliate with additional chapters if the firm has offices and operations in more than one area of the state.

Before there was a North Carolina Masonry Contractors Association, there were local masonry trade groups across the state. The first was in the Hickory-Lenoir-

Morganton area called the Western Carolina Chapter of the Mason Contractors Association of America. Soon to follow were groups in Lexington, NC, Burlington, Greenville, NC, and Asheville. With the eventual incorporation of the state association, the new bylaws reflected a desire for the local chapters to maintain a strong voice in the leadership of the new organization. The majority of the NCMCA Board of Directors is made up of local chapter representatives, specifically the president and the vice-president of each local chapter. Having a group of locally officially affiliated chapters with a specific role in managing our masonry contractors' association is a somewhat unique feature of NCMCA.

With changes in membership over the years and with recent consolidations, there are presently six local chapters: The Eastern Carolina Chapter which essentially covers the entire area east of I-95; The Raleigh Chapter; The Central Piedmont Chapter representing an area that includes Burlington, Greater Greensboro, Mount Airy, Lexington, and High Point; the Metrolina Chapter covering Greater Charlotte; the Western Carolina Chapter covering the Lenoir-Hickory-Morganton area; and the Land of the Sky Chapter for contractors in Asheville and in the western highlands of North Carolina and upper South Carolina. There once were as many as nine local chapters including Coastal/Wilmington, Triad/Burlington, and Sandhills/Fayetteville.

We invited comments from each of the six present local chapters:

Western Carolina Chapter: As a previous anniversary article covered, the Western Carolina Chapter of NCMCA predates NCMCA by a few years when a few like-minded masonry contractors in and around Hickory and Morganton, and a few of their suppliers began informally meeting for dinner now and then during the late sixties. Usually at the old Mull's Motel and Restaurant in Hickory. These masonry contractors were among the first in the Carolinas and the southeast to bid masonry turnkey, or as we like to say, "lump-sum." They had begun using reach forklifts and automatic scaffolding. In their search for innovative ideas, several of them began attending Mason Contractors Association of America (MCAA) conventions and tradeshows. In those days, MCAA was not particularly welcoming to non-union masonry contractors, but nevertheless, the Western group soon chartered as The Western Carolina Chapter of The Mason Contractors Association of America. In the early seventies, Western Carolina Chapter members led the effort to start the North Carolina Masonry Contractors Association.

Since that time, the chapter has produced seven NCMCA state presidents (Sipe, I. Griffin, A. Griffin, H. Townsend, W. Starr, L. Kirby, and B. Gates,) one MCAA President/Chairman (A. Griffin,) one member of the MCAA Masonry Hall of Fame (G. Sipe,) and one NCMCA executive director.

Years ago they decided that there is simply too much going on at Christmas time for a chapter Christmas party, so they instituted an Annual January Winter Social, a dress-up affair for members and their spouses when the accomplishments of the previous year are reviewed and longtime members are recognized with the chapter's "Founders' Award." Fourteen Western Carolina Chapter members have been so honored thus far.

In the eighties and nineties, the chapter always looked forward to at least one cookout at either Ivey Griffin or Hugh Townsend's Linville River cabin near the south end of the Linville Gorge. Beautiful surroundings, good fellowship, and always good food.

The Western Carolina Chapter has been one of the most generous contributors to the ongoing Executive Office Pledge, having exceeded the minimum annual donation requested by the board of directors for many years. Western has raised money by building masonry projects and by conducting raffles for shotguns, and one time, a John Deere Gator.

In the late nineties, the chapter decided they could help recruit young people to masonry by producing a video. This was before the days of cheap video equipment and editing software. A professional video production company was hired at a cost of about \$10,000, a lot of money at the time. Chapter members starred in the production filmed in member companies' offices and on local job sites. The resulting video was titled "Don't Look for Something to Do, Look for Something to Be!" and was duplicated and mailed to every high school masonry program in the state.

For quite a few years, members of the Western Carolina Chapter would travel to the Greenville-Spartanburg area each fall to serve as judges for the Upper South Carolina Masonry Contractors Association's Annual Masonry Workmanship Awards. The Western Carolina entourage, usually led by Ross Gary, was guided on a tour of recent USCMCA member projects to develop a score that determined the winners of the

award.

It is quite likely that Western Carolina Chapter member Carl Moser, Jr. has been affiliated with NCMCA longer than any other present NCMCA member. Now seventy-five, he began attending chapter meetings as a teenager working for his father's company, Carl Moser Masonry. Seventy-one year old Alan Griffin is a close second. Alan probably holds some sort of a record for serving as the Western Carolina Chapter Secretary/Treasurer for more than thirty-one years.

For the most part, the companies that were the core of the Western Carolina Chapter have faded away. But the chapter tradition of competitors becoming good friends remains strong. Second Tuesday of most every month. Just like it's been for over fifty years.

Eastern Carolina Chapter NCMCA Past President and MCAA Masonry Hall of Fame member Gary Joyner writes, “If you didn't know it, eastern North Carolina was represented in the organizational meetings of the NCMCA in the mid 1970's. NCMCA was rather dormant out our way until the early 80's. A supplier or two and a masonry contractor or two made up the Eastern Carolina Chapter. Adam's Concrete, Thomas Butts (original member,) Gary Joyner, and Stevie Harrington (once in while!) basically were the chapter.

“After attending several NCMCA conventions, the idea of attempting to become a lump-sum contractor (originating in the western part of the state) appealed to some of us. Eastern began to grow a little. We had contractors travel to Greenville to learn about conducting the masonry business as lump-sum contractors. Basically, it was a matter of turning the trowel into a balance sheet.

“Masonry meeting attendance was still a problem. The members were there, but ‘throwing in the towel’ was never an option. The Eastern chapter was kind of unique in that numbers (of people) did not matter.

“Keeping up with the Jones's (other chapters) was never a problem. In the early 90s when a full time executive director was hired, each chapter was challenged with donating a substantial amount of money each year to support this hiring. Eastern Carolina kept up with the largest chapter, Raleigh, through the years.

“This generation's offspring started to emerge in the workforce / industry in the 1990's. Their leadership is growing the Eastern Carolina Chapter to one of the strongest in the state. Namely, Tim Manning, Manning Masonry; Chris Joyner, Joyner Masonry; Kendra Blackmon, Rush Construction; and Bryan Overman, JB Overman Masonry.”

NCMCA President-Elect Tim Manning adds, “As one who gladly received the passing of the baton, I was told that the chapter survived for three reasons:

1. We put the industry over ourselves
2. We knew how to raise money
3. We like to have a good time

“In terms of putting the industry needs first, I believe we owe that to the patriarchs who led the way. Gary has always been a beacon for our industry and particularly our chapter. Our chapter members have always had the innate ability to scratch and claw for work on bid day and yet forge unbelievable bonds of friendship along the way.

“Fundraising for the state association has always been at the forefront of what we do. Perhaps there is a competitive spirit with the Capitol Chapter. We have always had to do more with less. With only 5-10 contractors spread out over 300 square miles, rallying the troops wasn't always the easiest. But every fundraising project exceeded expectations namely for one reason - the people. Whether it was a residential foundation, a ballpark project, or a fishing tournament, both contractor and associate members provided unbridled support. I still recall the first project I helped with. We laid all the brick and CMU at a record pace but when it came around to the steps, a \$50 stamp couldn't find a mason. As I recall it took me about two days to lay my first set of steps. Now we choose projects without steps. I am thankful most of our projects support the community. It seems like nearly every masonry-backstop wall in eastern North Carolina has been done by the NCMCA Eastern Carolina Chapter.

“A wise man once told me the NCMCA is a fraternity. Fraternities like to have fun and if we ever lose sight of that, it will not succeed. I think a quick glimpse into the history and personalities of the Eastern Carolina Chapter easily proves that theory. This business is a grind. 40-60 hours every week in the field or in the office is not an easy

life. That's not counting the sleepless hours spent agonizing over payroll, or labor force, or general contractors relationships. Just the ability to take a small reprieve to share a meal, a cup of coffee, or something a little stronger with a fellow mason contractor or vendor friend sometimes offers just the encouragement we need to get up at 4:30am and do it all over again. The fraternal aspect of this organization and its success cannot be overstated. The chapter and the association as a whole has served as the breeding ground for lifelong friendships and mentorships that I believe have proved invaluable to our success as a company and my quest to be a better human being. Little did I know walking into Professor O'Cool's on a random Tuesday night in August of 2002 would enrich my life for years to come. What was supposed to be just a lesson on flashing turned into my introduction to the fraternity; a badge that I wear with great honor.”

The Eastern Carolina and the Coastal Chapter (Wilmington area) merged in 2017.

Raleigh

Chapter Past NCMCA President Danks Burton writes, “The Raleigh chapter was formed several years after the state association was formed (actual year unknown). The chapter has had twelve presidents (Millard Peoples, Bill Mitchell, Dan Hutchins, Danny Batten, Calvin Brodie, Doug Burton, Danks Burton, Howard Pope, Todd Carver, Ron Williams, Bo Black and Matt Cable) in the +/- 48-year history. Five chapter presidents have gone on to be state president (Danny Batten, Calvin Brodie, Doug Burton, Danks Burton and Bo Black). Interesting to note that four of these, Calvin, Doug, Danks and Bo, are still active attendees of chapter meetings. Our longest serving president was Ron Williams, 14 years, and our current president is Matt Cable. Our chapter counts five members as recipients of the prestigious Eleanor Flowers Upton Award: John Cramer, Jimmy Wall, Danny Batten, David McQueen, and Dwayne Bryant.

“The chapter meets on the first Monday of every month, nine months per year with average attendance of 35. We have met in BBQ joints, cafeterias, sports bars, steak houses, Italian and Mexican restaurants. A new tradition was started five years ago. Custom Brick hosts the chapter for steak night at Milburnie Fish Club every October.

“The strength of our chapter comes from having informative masonry related

programs, which gets contractors to the meetings and in turn, encourages associates to attend.

“The chapter has hosted a golf tournament for 36 years and will be celebrating our 25th straight year in Myrtle Beach this January. The tournament is called Murdell. If you heard some of our eastern NC friends pronounce Myrtle, you will understand how it got the name. Also, Murdell rhymes with Steve Bell, a charter member. This tournament has raised over 148K dollars, which is used in the promotion of masonry. Doug has served as the chairman of the golf tournament Murdell since its inception. Many fun times, great stories, bus breakdown experiences have come from our Murdell trip. What happens in Murdell stays in Murdell. We have five people that have perfect attendance going to Murdell: Calvin Brodie, Danks Burton, Steve Bell, Bill Reed and Sheryl Crocker. We had 56 attendees last year and over the course of 25 years 191 different folks have attended.

“The NC State Fair masonry apprentice contest is 70 years old and the Raleigh Chapter has served as the host for longer than anyone can remember. It’s always a great day – Fall weather, Fair food, and young men and women showing off their masonry skills. This is the longest running masonry apprentice contest in the country. Calvin Brodie has served as chairman of the contest for 40 years and Doug Burton has served as head judge and master of ceremonies for about the same length of time.”

Metrolina Chapter Chapter President Mike Doane writes, "Our chapter’s success and continued growth would not be possible without the dedication and vision of those who came before us. Past Presidents and leaders have built a strong foundation, and we stand on their shoulders as we move forward. Their commitment to excellence has set the standard for our work, and their legacy inspires us to strive for even greater heights.

"We owe much to those who have given their time, energy, and expertise to guide our chapter. Their ability to adapt to challenges, mentor emerging leaders, and uphold the highest standards has helped our chapter remain a trusted and respected force in our industry.

"Each leader in our chapter’s history has contributed unique strengths, from driving

innovation to fostering a sense of community and collaboration. Their efforts have shaped who we are today and will continue to inspire future generations."

"Our past leaders have not only built our chapter but have set the course for our profession. Their work has made a lasting impact, and we're grateful for the enduring legacy they leave behind."

The Metrolina Chapter has produced four NCMCA state presidents: Red Brookshire, Ben Brookshire, Bob Gates, and Kent Huntley. Kent Huntley will soon be the Chairman of the Mason Contractors Association of America.

Land of the Sky Chapter Chapter President Micah Rogers convened a recent November breakfast meeting of a few past and present Land of the Sky members to talk about content for this anniversary article. He provided the following summary of their conversation, which he titled "The Journey of the Land of the Sky Chapter." Micah writes, "The Land of Sky Chapter's story began in the mid-to-late 1970's at Charlie Taylor's house, following a call from Bob Merrill, Monty Sneed and JD Silvers. They saw the local chapter as an opportunity to have friendly competition and to share experiences with each other.

"From those beginnings, the chapter quickly gained momentum, thanks to the leadership of its early presidents, listed in no particular order: Bob Merrill, Charlie Taylor, Jerry Bayne, Monty Sneed, Mike Rogers, Steve Stout, Robert Crawford, Mark Sneed, Donny Caldwell, and Gary Kitchen.

"When we got together to discuss our history for this article, two chapter members were in a discussion about a general contractor that is slow to pay, to which Charlie Taylor stated they were having the same conversations forty-plus years ago.

"Bob Merrill is the only member of the chapter to serve as president for the statewide organization. Bob was later inducted into the MCAA Masonry Hall of Fame, a testament to his dedication and service to the masonry trade and the community. Mike Rogers was in line to serve as president but had to resign due to a very serious ATV accident in 2007. He was recently elected as NCMCA secretary-treasure and has begun the cycle to become NCMCA President beginning in 2028. Donny Caldwell served as NCMCA Western Regional Vice President for many

years. David Hart now holds this position. David Bass, who selflessly dedicated his time and efforts most of his career to serving his many customers in the region, is thus far the only recipient of the Eleanor Upton Award from The Land of Sky Chapter.

“One of the chapter’s most comical moments involved Becky Hensley, who recruited a belly dancer for a chapter meeting one night. I heard that the next meeting was so full they had to use the overflow room. Becky spent a lot of time organizing events and speakers for the chapter’s meetings. Jeff Hartig is responsible for organizing a membership drive at Western Steer in the mid 1980’s. It was at this membership drive at Western Steer that James McC Carson and Jerry Bayne were introduced to the chapter and became lifelong members. Another moment worth mentioning was when an OSHA consultant gave a presentation one night on safety and ended up getting drunk and breaking several things. One memory Charlie Taylor related was when a local general contractor invited him and another masonry contractor from the chapter to bid a project, at the same time. Charlie said the contractor’s intentions were to ‘pick a fight’ between the two members but it was in fact the opposite reaction that he received. Neither of them did the job for the contractor.

“As the chapter grew, so did its activities. Early members regularly participated in a NASCAR Southern 500 outing at Darlington, strengthening camaraderie and building lasting friendships. One memorable activity involved the members going on a cruise. One evening a dinner show on the cruise included imitating what was to be an earthquake as part of the show, to which James McC Carson reacted by flipping the entire table over while holding his beverage and shouting ‘God save the queen!’ James McC Carson was also responsible for the story that David Bass tells to this day, where David delivered Gatorades and waters to a project in the middle of the summer when the temperature was well over 100 degrees. When David told James what he had for the guys, James told David to get the refreshments off the job because the guys hadn’t worked hard enough to deserve any Gatorades.

“The chapter owes much of its success to the lifetime members who have been integral to its growth. These individuals, including Monty Sneed, James McC Carson, and Charlie Taylor, played a crucial role in ensuring the chapter’s continued success and influence in the community. Donny Caldwell was nominated to be a lifetime member by the Land Of Sky Chapter at its most recent chapter meeting. Additionally, key local associate member firms, past and present, such as RMC, Metromont, Cemex, Adams

Oldcastle, Casons Builders Supply, and Moland Drysdale, have made everything possible, contributing time, effort, and resources to further the chapter's mission.

“Over the years, the Land of Sky Chapter has hosted guest speakers of the trade, and fostered relationships with local high school instructors and contractors at monthly meetings. One of the chapter's proudest accomplishments is its Annual High School Contest, which has been running for 27 years consecutively, providing students with valuable experience and showcasing their talents. The chapter took a short break from hosting this event in the late 80's to early 90's.

“For twenty-plus years, Donny Caldwell has been responsible for raising funds for the chapter to distribute to needy folks in the community as part of the chapter's annual Christmas celebration.

“The Land of Sky Chapter members have donated their skills and resources to many local organizations over the years. These community outings consisted of installing foundations to non-profits such as Habitat For Humanity, and Elida Homes. Contractors and associates from the chapter have also been able to give back to the community by working at local churches and schools with various projects.

“As we celebrate 50 years, we honor the legacy of those who have contributed to its growth and look forward to continuing the traditions and spirit that have made this chapter so impactful.”

Central Piedmont Chapter The Central Piedmont Chapter merged with the Triad Chapter (originally chartered with the North Carolina Secretary of State as “Triad Masonry Association” prior to NCMCA's incorporation) in 2022. Both chapters have a long history of successful chapter fundraising golf tournaments that also served as important construction community social events. The Central Piedmont Chapter took the lead in the development and construction of the North Carolina Vietnam Veterans Memorial Park near High Point in the nineties. The Triad Chapter produced three state presidents: Richard Robertson and his son Dickey, and James “Red” McAdams. The Central Piedmont Chapter has also produced three state presidents from three generations of the same family: Belton Koontz and his son Freddy, and Freddy's daughter Ashlee Koontz Moore. The Central Piedmont Chapter first introduced NCMCA to Freddie McMahan who developed the NCMCA Insurance

Program, later also partnering with John Cramer's firm.

NCMCA local chapters each have their own unique characteristics, reflecting the diverse regions of North Carolina itself. One could be forgiven if they didn't realize the local meeting they attended in the east was part of the same organization as a local meeting attended in the west. That diversity adds to the strength of the association. The sum of the parts is greater than the total, ultimately enhancing the special fraternity that has always been at the heart of NCMCA's success.

Article by Lynn Nash



A Western Carolina Chapter workday installing a foundation as a fundraiser in March of 1999.



The Land of the Sky Chapter raised funds during June and July 2000 by veneering an addition to the Macedonia Baptist Church near Asheville. Pictured (left to right) Reverend Dr. J. H. “Jim” Johnson, past NCMCA president Bob Merrill, and then-chapter President Mike Rogers. Doing masonry has always been a popular means for local chapters to raise funds.



In the late nineties and early two-thousands, the Metrolina Chapter hosted an awards dinner for architects and general contractors to recognize outstanding masonry design in recent building projects. Attending left to right were Doby Chapman, Wesley Curlee, and Paul Seaver.



Participants prepare to board the bus for the first Raleigh Chapter “Murdell” Golf Tournament in year 2000.



After his passing in 2000 at age 44, the Central Piedmont Chapter renamed their annual golf tournament in memory of Danny Koonts, a longtime active contractor member of the chapter. Family and friends gathered for a photograph at an early Danny Koonts Memorial tournament. Top Row, left to right, Wesley Davis, Roger Koontz, Craig Koonts, Cliff Koonts, Russell Buchanan, Freddy Koontz and Kent McGuire. Bottom row, left to right, Sabrina Koontz Beck, Jaime Koonts Davis, and Darin Koontz Hall.



In 2002, members of the Coastal Chapter participated in the Blue Sky Foundation's demonstration of storm-resistant wall systems and "safe room" technology in Wilmington. NCMCA and the Coastal Chapter helped to sponsor the Clemson University "air-cannon" used in the demonstration. Examining the 2 x 4 "bullet" to be used in the cannon fired at test walls are (left to right) Andy Barnes, then-Chapter President Chris Barnes, Dwayne Sigmon and Brantly Rivers.



For the 30th consecutive year, Dickey Robertson (left) chaired the Triad Chapter's 2004 Annual Golf Tournament, which was generally held at the Shamrock Golf Club in Burlington. Left to right, Robertson, 2004 first-place winners Andy Andrews, Chuck Grant, and Sammy Horne congratulated by then-chapter president Red McAdams.



Left to right, Lee Amick, Gregg Swartz, Joseph Canitano, Todd Cox, and then-chapter president Chris Bruner celebrate the winners of the Metrolina Chapter's 2005 Annual Golf Tournament.



Since the early days of the chapter, Statesville Brick has hosted the Western Carolina Chapter for a summer cookout at their Lake Norman cabin at Sunset Point. Guests cook their own steaks on the massive charcoal grill.



Group photo from a Land of the Sky Chapter Saturday workday fundraiser in 2007. Eric Gilliam says among the folks pictures are Logan Gilliam, Ronnie Ewart, Kevin Craig, Justin Guy, Jeff Guy, Eric Gilliam, Joe Shively, Perry Guy, Tommy Shepherd, Mark Austin, Dean Rice, and David Bass. *Photo by Don Caldwell.*



Left to right, Danks Burton, Freddy Koontz, Doug Burton, Gary Joyner, Jeb Burton, and Virginia farmer Buck Arthur enjoying Murdell Golf at the Raleigh Chapter's 2008 tournament. Danks Burton says, "Buck is Murdell famous for losing big in the poker game on the Murdell bus and stating 'Guess I've got to kill a cow when I get home.'"



The Land of the Sky Chapter hosted past and present members of NCMCA along with their families and guests for their August 2010 chapter dinner meeting. More than sixty people attended. Then-NCMCA Western Regional Vice President Don Caldwell introduced the masons and other Asheville-area masonry industry leaders in attendance, sharing personal stories and recognizing contributions made by each to the Association and to the Carolina's masonry industry. In the photo, left to right, Jerry Bayne, Charles Taylor, Warren Cochran, James McCarson, Bob Merrill, Jeff Hartig, J.D. Silver, and Don Caldwell.



Members of the Eastern Carolina Chapter built masonry dugouts and knee walls on a softball field at First Christian Church in Greenville, NC as a chapter fundraiser in November 2011. Chapter members laid approximately 1,300 blocks and 9,000 brick in a day. Chapter President Tim Manning said labor, equipment, materials and lunch were all donated by chapter member firms.



Chapter members pose with the contestants of the Land of the Sky Chapter's Annual High School Masonry Contest in 2011.



The Eastern Carolina Chapter's 2018 high school "Lineburner" competition underway in Goldsboro.



The contestants for the Annual Butch Hardy High School Masonry Contest and Eastern Carolina Chapter "Lineburner" competition in 2018 at Goldsboro.
