

A Brief History of the 19th Masonic District

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Lee Lodge No. 209

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Shared in District 19's 2018 Directory

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For more than 235 years, Freemasons of the central Shenandoah Valley and Piedmont have assembled in Craft Lodges throughout the region for fraternal fellowship and to conduct the regular business of making Masons. During its history, the 19th Masonic District's numbering and boundaries have changed, but the Lodges of Augusta, Highland and Albemarle Counties have remained at its core.

On December 9, 1806 the Grand Lodge of Virginia divided the Commonwealth into "convenient districts" with an assigned District Deputy Grand Master in charge of each, abandoning the previous system of "Grand Inspectors" established by the Grand Lodge in 1792. It is unknown what the original district number assignment was for the area. It is also important to note the Grand Lodge of Virginia's jurisdiction, at that time, included what is now the state of West Virginia (whose Grand Lodge was established in 1865 after gaining statehood in 1863).

The Grand Lodge again laid off the subordinate Lodges into twenty districts in 1819. The 11th Masonic District was created and comprised of Lodges from Augusta, Albemarle, and Rockingham Counties. These included Staunton No. 13, Rockingham Union No. 27 (Harrisonburg), Door to Virtue No. 44 (Charlottesville), Widow's Sons' No. 60 (Charlottesville), Charlottesville No. 90, and Waynesborough Union No. 103. By 1847, the 11th Masonic District had added Worthington Smith No. 46 (Mt. Solon), New Hope No. 103, and Franklin No. 149 (Pendleton, now in West Virginia).

In 1850 the counties of Augusta, Rockbridge, and Bath were renumbered the 20th District and included Staunton No. 13, Bath Union No. 42 (Warm Springs), Worthington Smith No. 46, Natural Bridge No. 64, and New Hope No. 103. Over the next 24 years the District would expand to incorporate other Lodges to the south and west, including Friendship No. 66 (Fincastle), Mt. City No. 67 (Lexington), Goose Creek Valley No. 103 (Buford's Depot), Highland No. 110 (Monterey), Augusta No. 111 (Greenville), Laurel Hill No. 158 (Moffett's Creek), Covington No. 171, Warm Springs No. 204, and Lee No. 209 (Waynesboro).

Due to the number of Lodges in the district and the difficulty for District Deputy Grand Masters to travel across such a large territory, the district was renumbered the 16th in 1874 and reduced to consist of Lodges from within the cities and counties of Augusta and Highland only.

The final renumbering by the Grand Lodge occurred in 1894 and established the 19th Masonic District as we know it today. Since then, the district has seen the additions of Bicentennial No. 1978 (Fort Defiance) and, in 2018, King Solomon's No. 194 (Crozet).

The following is a timeline of the Masonic Lodges that have operated within the 19th Masonic District.

1750's: Members of the Fraternity settle in the Valley from the Tidewater and Piedmont areas of the Commonwealth

1784: First documented meeting of Freemasons in Staunton on May 27th

1786: Staunton No. 13 chartered at Staunton on October 28th

1816: Waynesborough Union No. 103 chartered at Waynesborough on December 10th and is extinct by December 1825

1839: New Hope No. 103 (renumbered No. 63 in 1870) chartered on January 16th at Piedmont and is extinct by December 1889

1843: Worthington Smith No. 46 (named in honor of Past Grand Master, 1843-1844, from Staunton No. 13) chartered at Mt. Solon on December 12th and is extinct by February 1914

1864: King Solomon's No. 194 chartered at Crozet on December 13th

1866: Lee No. 209 chartered at Waynesboro on December 12th

1869: Highland No. 110 chartered at Monterey on December 10th

1872: Laurel Hill No. 158 chartered at Moffett's Creek on December 11th and is extinct by December 1887

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1873: Augusta No. 111 chartered at Greenville on December 10th and consolidates with Lee No. 209 in September 2017

1978: Bicentennial No. 1978 chartered at Fort Defiance on February 13th and consolidates with Eureka No. 195 at Bridgewater in January 1998

Today (2018): Freemasonry continues to flourish in the Lodges of the 19th Masonic District now comprised of Staunton No. 13, Highland No. 110, King Solomon's No. 194, and Lee No. 209