

New Bern Masonic Temple, 516 Hancock St. New Bern NC, 28560

Saturday Morning, 25 April 2026

At an Emergent Communication of the Grand Lodge of North Carolina at St. John's Lodge No. 3, A.F. & A.M. New Bern, North Carolina

HELD ON THE ABOVE DATE
OFFICERS PRESENT:

Most Worshipful Steve M. Norris	Grand Master
Worshipful Bro. Justin Robinson "As"	Senior Grand Warden
Right Worshipful Bro. Phil Johnson	Junior Grand Warden
Worshipful Bro. Arthur B. Romans "As"	Grand Secretary
Bro. Kito B. Romans "As"	Grand Treasurer
Bro. Aquiles P Faustino "As"	Grand Chaplain



Most Worshipful William L. Dill "As"	Senior Grand Deacon
Worshipful Bro. John Burns "As"	Junior Grand Deacon
Bro. Robert Webster "As"	Senior Grand Steward
Bro. Nicholas C. Coyle "As"	Junior Grand Steward
Bro. Mark E. Bledsoe "As"	Tyler

The Most Worshipful Grand Lodge of North Carolina was opened on the Third Degree of Masonry in Ample Form at 12:30 p.m.

After the Flag Ceremony,

The Grand Master, Most Worshipful Steve M. Norris made remarks thanking St. John's Lodge No. 3 for inviting him to participate in the Rededication of the Original Cornerstone celebrating the 225th Anniversary of the Cornerstone laying ceremonies which took place on 15 April 1801.

The Master of St. John's Lodge No. 3, Worshipful Brother Dominick P. Giorgianni then informed the brethren of the sequence of events for the day, and took a few minutes to thank the Most Worshipful Grand Master and representatives/brethren of the Grand Lodge for making time in their busy schedules to enjoy fellowship with the brethren, and preside over today's festivities.

There being no further business to come before the Grand Lodge of North Carolina the Most Worshipful Grand Master approved the minutes in ample form and closed the Most Worshipful Grand Lodge of North Carolina at 1245PM.

The Most Worshipful Grand Master asked Worshipful Brother Johnny Surles to lead the brethren in the closing charge before departing downstairs to conduct the Rededication Ceremony.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Arthur B. Romans'.

Arthur B. Romans, PM
Secretary

Attached::

Attendance Roster 4/25 Emergent Communication of GLNC
Cornerstone Rededication Agenda
Full Ceremony w/ Master's Speech
Ceremony Flyer / Fan
Invitation
Photos from Event



St. John's Lodge #3

OPENING OF GLNK @ SJ3 NBNC

Date 25 Apr 26

Name	Lodge	No.	City/State
¹ James Wiley ^{PM}	St. John's	3	New Bern
² Doug Soltow, ^{PM}	St. John's	3	New Bern
³ Bob Martelet	St. John's	3	New Bern
⁴ Richard Cabell	Cherry Point	688	Havelock, NC
⁵ Robert Muhl	ST JOHNS	3	NB
⁶ Bill Sanford ^{DM}	Cherry Point	688	Havelock NC
⁷ Chad Bagdahn	Doric	568	New Bern NC
⁸ Trevor Tompkins	St. John's	3	New Bern, NC
⁹ Zach Carpenter	DORIC	568	NEW BORN, NC
¹⁰ Tommy Potter	LILLIAN LODGE	925	LILLIAN, AL
¹¹ Charles Zimmerman	St John's	3	New Bern
¹² Johnny Surles	Zion	81	Trenton
¹³ Joe Fuller ^{PM} ^{CL}	St. John's	3	
¹⁴ Christopher White	ST. John's	3	NB
¹⁵ Steven Langenscheidt	ST. John's	3	NB
¹⁶ William L. Hill ^{PM}	Ionic	583	Cove City
¹⁷			
¹⁸			
¹⁹			
²⁰			
²¹			

CORNERSTONE AGENDA:

25 April 2026

TIME	ACTIVITY	WHO ATTENDS	
12:00 – 1:00	Guests arrive	All guests	Sit in ballroom or outside
12:30 - 1:00	Open/Close Grand Lodge	GL Officers & MM's	St. John's Lodge Room
1:00 - 1:15	Process from Front door to Monument	GL Officers, SJ3 Officers	1 st floor hallway
	Opening Prayer	Rob Webster	Podium
	Pledge	All	Flag
	Toast to the flag	Bob Mull	Flag
1:15 - 1:30	Welcome and opening remarks	Dominick/Steve	Podium
1:30 - 2:00	Rededication Ceremony	GL Officers	Podium
2:00 - 3:00	Lunch	All Guests	Ballroom

Ladies and gentlemen, distinguished guests, all who are present.

Most Worshipful Grand Master of Masons in North Carolina, esteemed Grand Line Officers here assembled, and to all our honored guests, it is my distinct honor and privilege to greet you this afternoon as we gather to mark a significant milestone—the 225th anniversary of the laying of our cornerstone on April 15, 1801.

It is an honor and privilege to stand here today and speak about a cornerstone of our community. Not just a building of brick and mortar, but a living testament to the history of New Bern and the Spirit of the Old North State. Over the years it has been called many different names, “Masons Hall”, “The Masonic”, “The Masonic Theatre”, “The Masonic Temple”, “The Scottish Rite Temple”, “St. John’s Lodge No. 3”

To walk through its doors is to step back more than two centuries. With the cornerstone being laid under masonic ceremonies on April 15th, 1801, to being completed and dedicated in 1809. Designed by Builder and Brother John Dewey this Federal styled landmark stands as the oldest continually used Masonic Building in our state and one of the oldest theatres in America. But its walls hold stories that go far beyond the fraternal brotherhood of just St. John’s Lodge No. 3.

Today, we celebrate not just an anniversary, but the enduring legacy of Saint John's Lodge No. 3 AF&AM, one of the oldest surviving Masonic buildings in America. This site, our beloved "Masons’ Hall," has witnessed the passage of time, serving as a beacon of Masonic principles and community spirit for over two centuries.

While we may not possess a full transcript of the original ceremony, we are fortunate to have a remarkable artifact: the engraved silver plate that was placed inside the cornerstone itself. This plate not only confirms the exact date—April 15, 1801—but also records the names of those who were instrumental in this historic moment. We are displaying this today from our archives.

Let us take a moment to remember those present on that day:

- **Deputy Grand Master John Louis Taylor**, who presided over the ceremony, and later became Grand Master of North Carolina. His portrait hangs in our Hall.
- **Francis Lowthrop**, our Master for 14 years. And responsible for managing the building of our temple.
- **George Ellis**, Senior Warden,
- **Edward Kean**, Junior Warden,
- **Isaac Taylor**, Treasurer
- **Rev. Thomas P. Irving**, Orator.

The inscription reads:

“This Foundation Stone of Masons’ Hall laid April 15, A. D. 1801, by the D. G. Master, assisted by the Officers & Members of this Lodge.”

Sealed within that stone were three coins: a 1797 half-cent, a 1798 large cent, and an 1800 silver dollar. This inscription places the ceremony in a broader national context, noting the Existence of President Thomas Jefferson, Vice President Aaron Burr, and Governor Benjamin Williams.

Though the exact order of the ceremony may have faded from history, we know it was no small affair. It was likely a formal public event, rich with Masonic symbolism, oratory, and the support of our community.

Interestingly, construction had already commenced prior to the cornerstone laying. Records indicate that architect **John Dewey** was compensated in February of 1801, suggesting that the laying of the cornerstone was a ceremonial milestone rather than the literal beginning of the building.

From that moment in 1801 grew a structure that would serve not only as a Masonic lodge but as a center of culture and community in New Bern for generations. The laying of the cornerstone symbolized the transition of St. John's Lodge No. 3 from a colonial-era fraternity meeting in borrowed spaces to a permanent, highly influential institution—one that still operates in this historic building today.

As we reflect on the past, let us also look forward to the future, carrying forth the values of brotherhood, charity, and community service that have defined us for 254 years.

The history of this site is marked by numerous moments in time that not only shaped our community but also shaped the nation.

In 1802 before the building was even finished, its grounds were the site of one of North Carolina's most infamous events, the duel between John Stanly and Governor Richard Dobbs Spaight, which ultimately led to the governor's death and the formal outlawing of dueling in our state. That happened right here on our lot.

The visit of President James Monroe in April of 1819. A formal dinner was held on 12 April 1819 honoring President Monroe where twenty-two toasts were offered on patriotic themes.

In 1862 during the Union occupation of New Bern, the building was converted to be used as part of the Foster General Hospital Complex. Lowthorp Hall served as the Administrative Headquarters for the Surgeons and Officers. The space was also used by the U.S. Sanitary Commission which was a precursor to the Red Cross to coordinate the distribution of supplies to wounded soldiers and freed camps nearby. During the Civil War the original Cornerstone was said to be pillaged by soldiers, and a Silver Plate and three coins were taken North. In 1878 St. John's Lodge No 1. of Providence R.I. returned the items in a specially made case after the items came into their possession by one of their members in 1876. We display them here today.

In 1906 the First Movie Screening was conducted in the Masonic Theater and by 1917 the theatre became a fulltime motion picture house.

On November 3rd, 1910, Booker T. Washington delivered a powerful address to a packed house at the Masonic Theatre with the New Bern Weekly Journal and The Sun reporting that over 1000 people crammed into the building with chairs placed in every available space to accommodate the overflow.

Lowthorp Hall has been a primary site for the preservation of New Bern, from hosting numerous New Bern Historical Society meetings over the years in the mid 20th century, it was known for being the

location for organizing the restoration of Tryon Palace and other downtown landmarks.

In 1920, 42 Years after the return of the cornerstone articles, the Manager of the Masonic Theatre Oscar A. Kafer located the original cornerstone in the basement of the building. Which we see here today.

In 1934 with the assistance of William B Duncan who was the Construction Superintendent and Robert F. Smallwood who was architect of the new Federal Building in New Bern (Current Federal Courthouse / Old Post Office) located one block from here. An appropriate memorial foundation was constructed and placed at the entrance of the Masonic Theatre using the same granite, concrete and limestone that was utilized to build the Federal Building. Which you see here today. The Marble Cornerstone remains in this same location 92 years later.

Thank you for being here to celebrate this momentous occasion. Together, let us honor our heritage and continue to build upon the foundation laid so many years ago.

Most Worshipful Grand Master, we welcome you with heartfelt enjoyment to proceed with the ceremony.

THE GRAND MASTER'S REMARKS

CORNERSTONE REDEDICTION CEREMONY:

St. John's Lodge No. 3

New Bern, NC

April 25, 2026

225TH Anniversary of cornerstone laying

GRAND MASTER: Brother Grand Marshal, you will ascertain if the cornerstone is in proper position and make the proclamation.

GRAND MARSHAL: By authority of the Most Worshipful Grand Master, and in obedience to his order, I do now command and require all here assembled to preserve silence, and to observe due order and decorum during the ceremonies. This proclamation I make to the South, to the West, and to the East.

The Grand Master gives three raps:

GRAND MASTER: Before entering upon any great and important undertaking, we should first invoke the blessing of Deity. Brother Grand Chaplain, lead our devotion.

The Grand Chaplain will then offer the following, or an extemporaneous prayer:

PRAYER

GRAND CHAPLAIN: Almighty and Eternal God, Creator and Upholder of the universe, in the beginning You laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of Your hands. As children of Your creation, we too, create and make, plan and mold. We, your servants, by Your kind providence, are assembled here today to dedicate this commemorative plaque and to identify this courthouse with the highest interests of this community. You, O God, know our needs in our present work. In You is our wisdom; in You is our strength. Vouchsafe to us, we implore You, grace, wisdom, and understanding, that we may discharge our solemn duties to Your honor and glory. To Your name will be given all the praise, both now and forever. Amen.

RESPONSE: So mote it be. Amen.

The Grand Master gives on rap to seat the audience.

WORSHIPFUL MASTER: **Most Worshipful Grand Master, this temple has been previously dedicated to God. We, the members of this lodge now ask that you, as Grand Master of Masons in North Carolina, rededicate this cornerstone, identifying this temple with the highest interests in this community.**

The Grand Master addresses the Grand Officers as follows:

GRAND MASTER: **Right Worshipful Brother Deputy Grand Master, what is the proper jewel of your office?**

DEPUTY GRAND MASTER: **The Square.**

GRAND MASTER: **What are its moral and Masonic uses?**

DEPUTY GRAND MASTER: **To square our actions by the Square of Virtue, and to prove our work.**

GRAND MASTER: **Apply the implement of your office to that portion of the stone that needs to be proved and make report.**

The Deputy Grand Master applies the Square to the plaque.

DEPUTY GRAND MASTER: **Most Worshipful Grand Master, I find the stone to be square. The craftsmen have performed their duty.**

GRAND MASTER: **Right Worshipful Brother Senior Grand Warden, what is the proper jewel of your office?**

SENIOR GRAND WARDEN: **The Level.**

GRAND MASTER: **What are its moral and Masonic uses?**

SENIOR GRAND WARDEN: **Morally, it reminds us of equality, and its use is to lay horizontals.**

GRAND MASTER: **Apply the implement of your office to the stone and make report.**

This is done.

SENIOR GRAND WARDEN: **Most Worshipful Grand Master, I find the stone to be level. The craftsmen have performed their duty.**

GRAND MASTER: **Right Worshipful Brother Junior Grand Warden, what is the proper jewel of your office?**

JUNIOR GRAND WARDEN: **The Plumb.**

GRAND MASTER: **What are its moral and Masonic uses?**

JUNIOR GRAND WARDEN: **Morally, it teaches rectitude of conduct, and we use it to try perpendiculars.**

GRAND MASTER: **Apply the implement of your office to the several edges of the stone and make report.**

This is done.

JUNIOR GRAND WARDEN: **Most Worshipful Grand Master, I find the stone to be plumb. The craftsmen have performed their duty.**

GRAND MASTER: **This stone has been tested by the proper implements of Masonry. I find the craftsmen have skillfully and faithfully performed their duty. I therefore declare the stone to be well formed, true and trusty, and correctly placed, according to the rules of our Ancient Craft. In the name of the great Architect, I do solemnly re-dedicate this cornerstone to Freemasonry, to virtue, and to universal benevolence. Together, brethren, the Public Grand Honors.**

(Public honors may be omitted by the grand master if desired)

The Grand Master gives three raps and, extending his hands, makes the following invocation:

INVOCATION

GRAND MASTER: **May the all-bounteous Author of Nature bless the inhabitants of this place with an abundance of the necessities, conveniences, and comforts of life. May His spirit inspire them to unite in worthy endeavors and long preserve this structure from decay; and grant to us all a supply of the Corn of Nourishment, the Wine of Refreshment, and the Oil of Joy.**

RESPONSE: **So mote it be. Amen.**

The Grand Master strikes the stone three times with the gavel.

The Grand Master then gives one rap and addresses the assembly:

GRAND MASTER: **Brother Masons, ladies and gentlemen, be it known to you that we are lawful Masons, true and faithful to the laws of our country. We are engaged, by solemn obligations, to provide and to dedicate magnificent buildings and to revere God, the Great Architect of the Universe. Unless our Craft were good and our calling honorable, we should not have lasted for so many centuries; nor should we have been honored with the patronage of so many illustrious men in all ages, who have ever shown themselves ready to promote our interests and defend us from all adversaries. We are assembled here today to re-dedicate this cornerstone originally laid 225 years ago, which, we pray God may prosper that it may continue to be a place of concourse for good men and women, and promote harmony and brotherly love throughout the world, till time shall be no more.**

RESPONSE: **So mote it be. Amen.**

Oration, if desired.

GRAND MASTER: **Worshipful Brother Grand Marshal, I now declare that the cornerstone of this temple has been found square, level, plumb, true and trusty, and dedicated according to our ancient customs. You will make the proclamation.**

GRAND MARSHAL: **By order of the Most Worshipful Grand Master of Masons in North Carolina, I proclaim that the cornerstone of this structure has been found square, level, plumb, true and trusty, and dedicated according to our ancient customs.**

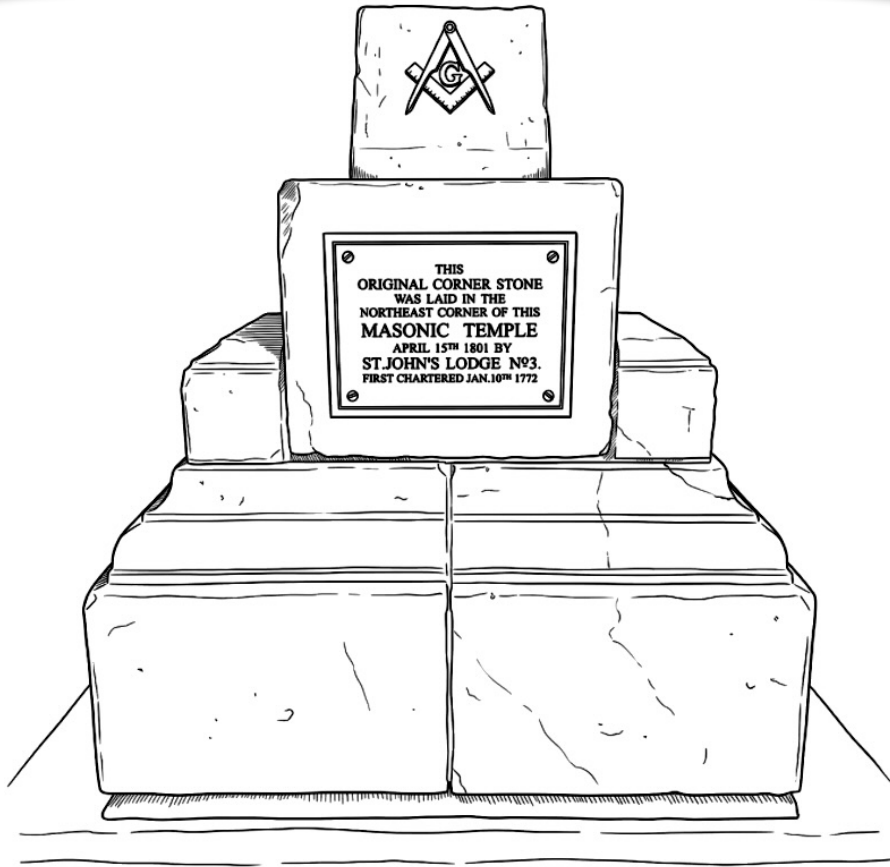
The Grand Chaplain then pronounces the benediction.

GRAND CHAPLAIN: **Blessed LORD GOD, whose watchful care is over all thy works; Grant us the fullness of thy mercy and establish thou this cornerstone which we have dedicated in thy Name. May this building long prosper and may those who use it be blessed, both now and forevermore. Amen.**

NOTE: If the Grand Master attends and presides at any ceremony, it is said to be performed in AMPLE FORM. If another, in DUE FORM.

End of Ceremony

**St. John's Lodge No. 3
A.F. & A.M.
Chartered January 10, 1772**



**225th ANNIVERSARY
CORNERSTONE REDEDICATION
CEREMONY
April 25th, 2026**

New Bern Masons' Hall cornerstone was laid April 15th, 1801 by the officers of the Grand Lodge of North Carolina and St. John's No. 3

While no full transcript of the ceremony survives, we do have the engraved plate that was placed inside the cornerstone along with a 1797 half-cent, a 1798 large cent and an 1800 silver dollar.

The inscription read:

"This Foundation Stone of Masons' Hall laid April 15, A.D. 1801, by the D. G. Master, assisted by the Officers and Members of this Lodge."

From that moment in 1801 grew a building that would serve not just as a masonic lodge, but as a center of culture and community in New Bern for over two centuries.

The cornerstone laying in 1801 symbolized the transition of St. John's No. 3 from a colonial-era fraternity, meeting in borrowed spaces, to a permanent, highly influential institution in New Bern, one that still operates in the same historic building 254 years later.

Today, we celebrate that anniversary in a special Masonic service presided over by the Grand Master of Masons in North Carolina, **MW Steve Norris** with the assistance of Officers of Grand Lodge and St. John's No. 3



**St. John's Lodge No. 3
A.F & A.M.**

Invites you to join us for the

**CORNERSTONE
REDEDICATION CEREMONY**

**Mason's Hall 516 Hancock Street New Bern
Saturday April 25th 1:00 pm**

Presided over by the
Grand Master of Masons in North Carolina
With the assistance of Grand Line Officers









WILLOW GROVE PLAYERS
26 SEASON

PUTTING IT TOGETHER
FEBRUARY 28 - MARCH 7

9 TO 5
APRIL 24 - MAY 9

TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD
JULY 18 - JULY 19

MURDER BY POE
AUGUST 28 - SEPTEMBER 6

LEGALLY BLOD
OCTOBER 16 - OCTOBER 17

ONCE ON THIS ISLAND
NOVEMBER 28 - DECEMBER 5

divertor
ts Available





RIVERTOWN THEATERS 2026 SEASON



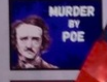
PUTTING TOGETHER
FEBRUARY 19 - MARCH 7



9-11
MAY 9



THE ROCKINGBIRD
JULY 19



MURDER BY POE
SEPTEMBER 6



LEGAL BLOOM
OCTOBER 25



SAND ISLAND
DECEMBER 13



TS.O
at M







