

Barbershopping in the Carolinas 1948-2010

Introduction

Close harmony singing in quartets is an American musical tradition. *Heritage of Harmony*, Val Hicks' 50-Year History of the Society for the Preservation and Encouragement of Barber Shop Quartet Singing in America, Inc. (S.P.E.B.S.Q.S.A.)¹, begins with this quote from Sigmund Spaeth²:

The male quartet is still the surest source of entertainment on the vaudeville stage or in the theatres and motion picture houses. But it is inevitably the amateur who gets the most fun of close harmony.

There is no doubt that quartets were singing close harmony in the States of North Carolina and South Carolina before 1948. It is the case, however, that the first Carolinas chapter of the S.P.E.B.S.Q.S.A. was chartered in 1948 and that will be the starting point for this history of *Barbershopping in the Carolinas 1948-2010*. The ending point is July 2010 with the formation of the *Carolinas District*. During this period all of the Carolinas chapters were part of the *Dixie Association of Chapters* (commonly called the Dixie District).

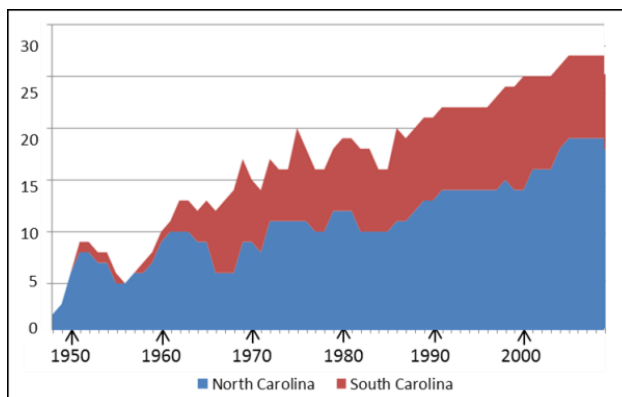
It was chance meeting in 1938 of two Tulsa, OK businessmen, O. C. Cash and Rupert Hall, in the lobby of the Kansas City Muehlebach Hotel that resulted in the establishment of the S.P.E.B.S.Q.S.A., Inc.

Ten years later it was also a chance meeting between two businessmen—Roney Hilliard, from Asheville, NC while he was on vacation in Miami Beach, FL and William H. Day, from Louisville, KY who happened to be a member of the S.P.E.B.S.Q.S.A. Louisville #1 Chapter—that resulted in the establishment of the first Carolinas chapter. The Asheville, NC Chapter was chartered June 14, 1948 with 60 members and was sponsored by the Louisville #1 Chapter. It was the 13th chapter to be chartered in the recently established Dixie District and Chapter #523 of S.P.E.B.S.Q.S.A.

Fifty-nine Carolinas chapters were formed, chartered, reformed, presented shows, and had quartets and choruses that competed in Dixie District and International (i.e. Society-level) contests from 1948 thru 2010. All of those chapters are identified in the map below. The chart to the right shows the growth of the total active chapters during each year. Twenty-seven chapters existed in July 2010 when the Carolinas District was established.

This history is presented by decades and includes chorus and quartet photos and other information about all of the 59 chapters: Volume I – 1948-1959, Volume II – 1960-1969, Volume III – 1970-1979, Volume IV – 1980-1989, Volume V – 1990-1999, and Volume VI – 2000-2010.

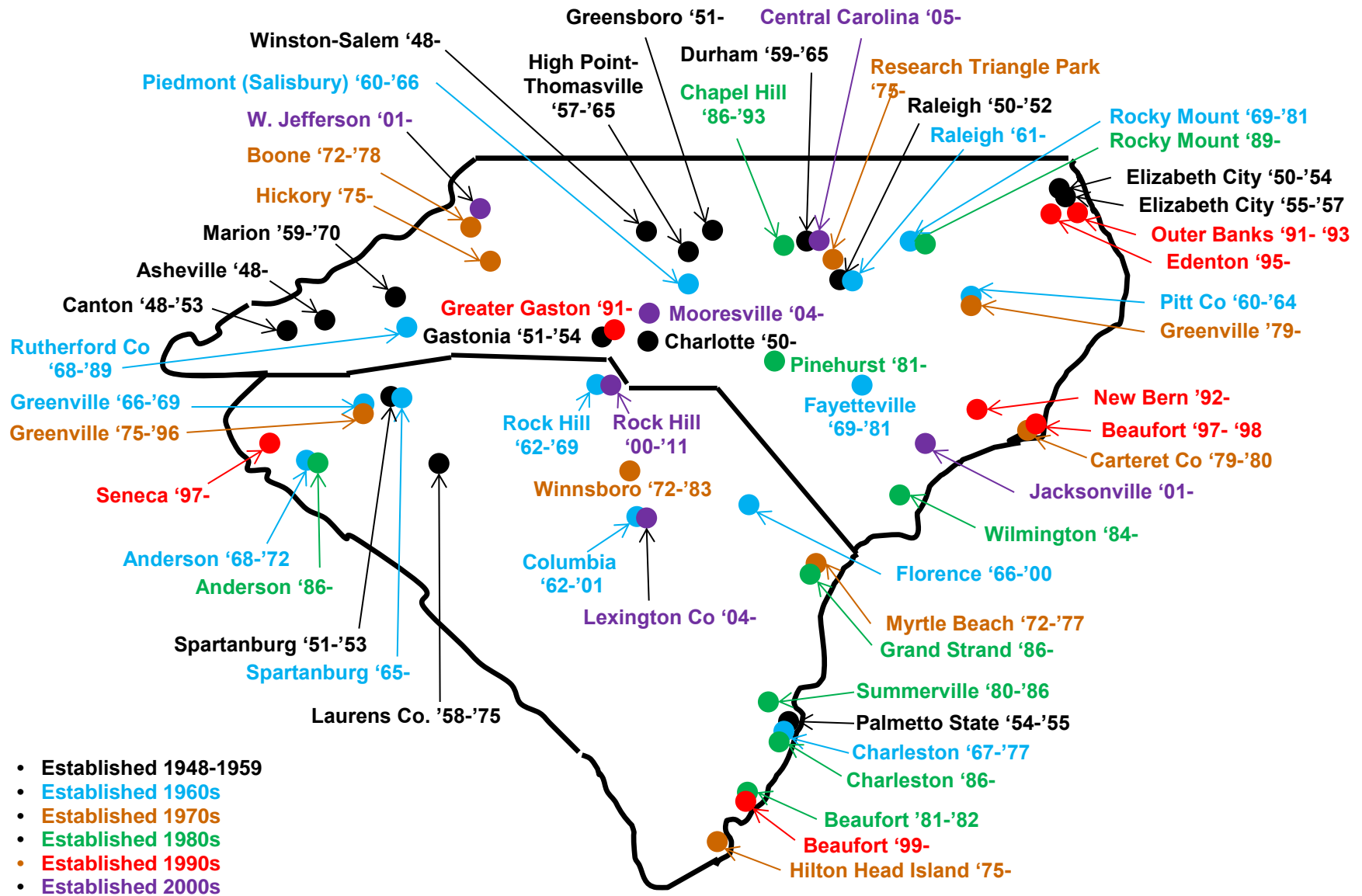
The remainder of this Introduction summarizes the accomplishments of the Carolinas chapters, choruses, and quartets during this 63-year period.



¹ Also referred to as the *Society* in this history. The organization was renamed the Barbershop Harmony Society in 2005.

² Author of *Barbershop Ballads and How to Sing Them* published in 1925.

North and South Carolina Chapters 1948-2010



- Established 1948-1959
- Established 1960s
- Established 1970s
- Established 1980s
- Established 1990s
- Established 2000s

From 1948 thru 2010 over 500 Carolinas quartets were formed and sang on annual chapter shows and countless events for the community. It did not take long for a Carolinas quartet to become the Dixie District Quartet Champion and represent the Dixie District at an International quartet contest. The *Vagabonds* from Winston-Salem, NC competed at the 1950 International Contest and were the 1952 Dixie District Quartet Champion. A total of nineteen Carolinas quartets were Dixie District Quartet Champions and/or represented the Dixie District at an International quartet contest:

Quartet	Chapter	District Champion	International Representative
<i>Vagabonds</i>	Winston-Salem, NC	1952	1950, 1951*, 1972*
<i>Southern Aristocrats</i>	Greensboro, NC	1963	1958-60, 1962, 1964, 1966**, 1967
<i>Dixie Colonels</i>	High Point-Thomasville, NC	1960	1961
<i>Kappa-Tones</i>	Raleigh, NC	1965	1970**, 1972
<i>Early Time Five 'N Dime</i>	Greensboro, NC; Raleigh, NC	1973	1974
<i>Main Street U.S.A</i>	Research Triangle Park, NC	1975	1976
<i>Male Order Music Company</i>	Research Triangle Park, NC; Asheville, NC; Nashville, TN	1977	1977, 1978**, 1979**
<i>Carpetbaggers</i>	Greensboro, NC		1980
<i>Vocal Impressions</i>	Greensboro, NC	1980	
<i>Blue Ribbon Edition</i>	Winston-Salem, NC	1983	1982-83
<i>Midnight Express</i>	Charlotte, NC	1985	1984-85, 1987
<i>Match Point</i>	Asheville, NC		1986
<i>Crackerjacks</i>	Research Triangle Park, NC		1991**
<i>New Attitude</i>	Charlotte, NC		1992
<i>Road Show</i>	Asheville, NC; Knox County Metro, TN		1998
<i>Crescendo</i>	Winston-Salem, NC; ; Greensboro, NC; Research Triangle Park, NC	2001	
<i>Genesis</i>	Greensboro, NC; Winston-Salem, NC		2004
<i>Overture</i>	Asheville, NC and Knox County Metro, TN		2002, 2004
<i>Let's Sing!</i>	Research Triangle Park, NC; Greensboro, NC; Winston-Salem, NC	2009	2009, 2010

* Finals (top 15) ** Semi-finals (top 20)

Carolinas chapters also had success in chorus competitions. While International quartet contests were held each year starting in 1939, it was not until 1954 that the Society held the first official International chorus contest. The *Tobacco Belt Chorus* from Winston-Salem, NC Chapter was invited to compete in that contest and finished 22nd. It would be another 26 years before a Carolinas chorus returned to the International stage.

In 1964 a Dixie District Chorus Champion Contest was added to the spring convention with the International Preliminary Chorus Contest continuing to be held at the fall convention. Four of the first seven Dixie District Chorus Champions were from the Carolinas chapters:

- 1964-1965 Dixie District Chorus Champion – *Greensboro Chorus* from Greensboro, NC
- 1965-1966 Dixie District Chorus Champion – *Marion Barbershop Chorus* from Marion, NC
- 1966-1967 Dixie District Chorus Champion – *Capital Harmonaires* from Raleigh, NC
- 1969-1970 Dixie District Chorus Champion – *Palmetto Statesmen* from Spartanburg, SC
- 1974-1975 Dixie District Chorus Champion – *Sir Walter Chorus* from Raleigh, NC

Starting with the fall 1980 Dixie District Chorus Contest the winner was declared both the Dixie District Chorus Champion for that year *and* the International contest representative for the following year. The 1980's was the Carolinas chapter's decade for Dixie District Championships and representing the Dixie District at International competitions. Here is their impressive record:

Year	District Champion	International Representative	Results
1979	Research Triangle Park, NC		
1980	Research Triangle Park, NC	Research Triangle Park, NC	6 th place
1981	Research Triangle Park, NC	Research Triangle Park, NC	7 th place
1982	Winton-Salem, NC	Research Triangle Park, NC	9 th place
1983	Research Triangle Park, NC	Winton-Salem, NC	9 th place
1984	Research Triangle Park, NC	Research Triangle Park, NC	6 th place
1985	Research Triangle Park, NC	Research Triangle Park, NC	6 th place
1986	Charlotte, NC	Research Triangle Park, NC	5 th place Bronze Medal
1987	Charlotte, NC	Charlotte, NC	11 th place
1988	Research Triangle Park, NC	Charlotte, NC	16 th place
1989		Research Triangle Park, NC	11 th place

Starting in 2000 the Dixie District returned to selecting the Dixie District Chorus Champion at the spring chorus contest and continued to select the International contest representative at the fall chorus contest. The 2001 Dixie District Chorus Champion was **General Assembly Chorus** from Research Triangle Park, NC. The 2006 Dixie District Chorus Champion was **Rocky Mount Chorus** from Rocky Mount, NC.

The first International Seniors Quartet Contest was held at the 1986 Midwinter Convention in Tucson, AZ. It took several years for the Carolinas quartets to get in the groove for seniors quartet competition but once they did they had an impressive record:

Quartet	Chapter	District Champion	International Representative
Never Home Four	Research Triangle Park, NC	1997	1997-99
Chord Street Station	Winston-Salem, NC	2000	
Joint Venture	Research Triangle Park, NC	2001	2002-04
Older But Wiser	Rocky Mount, NC; Research Triangle Park, NC	2003	
Daytime	Spartanburg, SC	2005	Qualified for 2005
Still Standing	Charlotte, NC		2007
Village Green	Rocky Mount, RTP, Winston-Salem, NC, Charlotte, NC	2007	2008-09
Archives	Research Triangle Park, NC	2008	
BLackJACK	Wilmington and Research Triangle Park, NC	2009	2010

The first Collegiate Barbershop Quartet Contest was held at the 1992 International Convention in New Orleans, LA. Carolinas collegiate quartets would represent the Dixie District at 12 of the first 17 International collegiate contests. Eight quartets from Appalachian State University in Boone, NC competed in 11 International collegiate contests winning three medals:

Quartet	Affiliation	District Champion	International Representative
Blue Ridge Blenders	Appalachian State University, NC		1992
Limestone Tonez	Limestone College, SC		1993
Senior Style	NC School of Science and Mathematics in Durham, NC		1993 Mic Testers
What's Yer Pleasure?	Appalachian State University, NC		1996
Chorder Boys	Appalachian State University, NC		1997
4 Point 0	Appalachian State University, NC		1999
Low Down Sound	Appalachian State University, NC	2000	2000 Silver Medal 2001 3 rd Place Medal
King Street Blues	Appalachian State University, NC	2002	2002 5 th Place Medal, 2003
Out of Nowhere	East Wake H.S, Wendell, NC	2003	
Relative Pitch	Appalachian State University, NC	2005	2006, 2007
High Country Post	Appalachian State University, NC	2008	2008

Over 100 men from the Carolinas chapters stood up thru the years to take leadership positions at the Dixie District and International levels. Twelve men were Dixie District Presidents and/or held International positions:

Name	Chapter	District President	International Positions
John T. Dawson	Winston-Salem, NC	1952-53	Board Member 1961, 1962, 1963, 1964
Edward J. West	Charlotte, NC		Board Member 1952-53, 1953-54
Paul D. Amsbary	Asheville, NC	1956-57, 1957-58	
Melvin J. Harris	Charlotte, NC	1964, 1965	Board Member 1966, 1967, 1968
Richard H. "Dick" DeMontmollin	Columbia, SC	1967, 1968	Board Member 1969, Executive VP 1970, President 1971
Warren T. Brown	Spartanburg, SC	1969, 1970	Board Member 1971, 1972
Ralph Delano	Raleigh, NC	1977, 1978	Board Member 1981, 1982
Randy Miller	Columbia, SC	1983, 1984	
Arthur P. Wourms	Columbia, SC	1987, 1988	Board Member 1991, 1992
Charles F. Rose	Rocky Mount, NC	1991, 1992	Board Member 1995, 1996, 1997, 1998, 1999
Jeff James	Charlotte, NC	1993, 1994	
Don Lang	Winston-Salem, NC	2003, 2004	

The Dixie District *Barbershopper of the Year Award* was established in 1959. Awardees from the Carolinas chapters were:

1959	Baxter Westmoreland	Greensboro, NC	1986	Charles F. Rose	Research Triangle Park, NC
1962	Melvin J. Harris	Charlotte, NC	1987	"Sev" Severance	Research Triangle Park, NC
1965	Warren T. Bowen	Spartanburg, SC	1988	Art Wourms	Columbia, SC
1966	Ed L. Anderson	Columbia, SC	1989	Jeff James	Charlotte, NC
1968	Paul B. Conway	Raleigh, NC	1991	Bill Hafley	Research Triangle Park, NC
1982	Ralph Delano	Raleigh, NC	2001	Bob Dickson	Research Triangle Park, NC
1985	John Smith	Asheville, NC	2006	Don Lang	Hickory, NC

The Dixie District *Hall of Fame Award* was established in 1994. Awardees from the Carolinas chapters were:

1994	Melvin J. Harris	Charlotte, NC	1999	Charles F. Rose	Rocky Mount, NC
1994	Sev Severance	Research Triangle Park, NC	2002	Warren T. Bowen	Spartanburg, SC
1997	Dick deMontmollin	Columbia, SC	2006	Randy Miller	Lexington CO.
1998	Bill Hafley	Research Triangle Park, NC	2009	Rudy Partin	Research Triangle Park, NC
1999	John T. Dawson	Winston-Salem, NC	2010	Chuck Green	Asheville, NC

Perhaps the most significant contribution from the Carolinas was (and continues to be) the formation of the North Carolina Harmony Brigade (NCHB) and the resulting eXtreme Quartetting movement within the Society. The NCHB was the vision of Charles Rose whose idea was a weekend rally that would attract good quartet men from North Carolina interested in learning more difficult and interesting arrangements and provide two days of unlimited quartetting opportunities. The NCHB held its first rally January 1993 in Pinehurst, NC.



After several years quartetters from outside North Carolina were invited to attend. The secret was out and the Brigade movement began to grow. The Association of eXtreme Quartetting Harmony Brigades (AXQHB) was formed in January 2010 under the leadership of Charles Rose, founder of the Brigade movement. The purpose of the AXQHB is to encourage and support the formation and operation of eXtreme Quartetting Harmony Brigades. As of 2019 there are 10 Brigades in the Society, one in Europe and one in the United Kingdom. The Brigade movement continues to grow.