

The Declaration of Independence

BY THE

CITIZENS OF MECKLENBURG COUNTY,

ON THE

TWENTIETH DAY OF MAY, 1775,

WITH

ACCOMPANYING DOCUMENTS,

AND THE

PROCEEDINGS OF THE CUMBERLAND ASSOCIATION.

PUBLISHED BY THE GOVERNOR,

Under the authority and direction of the General Assembly of the State of

NORTH CAROLINA. Governor Jonathan Stokes, 1831.

RALEIGH:

LAWRENCE & LEMAY, Printers to the State.

1831.

"Declaration of Independence by the Citizens of Mecklenburg County on the Twentieth Day of May, 1775 with Accompanying Documents and the Proceedings of the Cumberland Association," Raleigh: Lawrence & Lemay, printers to the State, 1831, State Publications Collection, State Library of N.C.

DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE

AND

ACCOMPANYING DOCUMENTS.

REPORT AND RESOLUTIONS,

Adopted by the General Assembly at the session of 1830-'31, upon which this publication is predicated.

The committee to whom it was referred to examine, collate and arrange in proper order such parts of the Journals of the Provincial Assemblies of North Carolina, as relate to the Declaration of American Independence; also such documents as relate to the Declaration of Independence made by the patriotic men of Mecklenburg in May, 1775; and also such measures as relate to the same cause, adopted by the freemen of Cumberland county, previous to the fourth of July, 1776, in order to the publication and distribution of such documents, having performed the duty assigned them, respectfully report:

That upon an attentive examination of the Journals of the Provincial Assembly of North Carolina, which met at Halifax in the month of April, 1776, the committee are of opinion, that no selection could be made from the said Journal to answer the purpose of the House. But as every thing relating to that period, must be interesting to those who value the blessing of national independence, the committee recommend that the whole of the Journal be printed, and receive the same extended distribution which the resolution of the House contemplates for the proceedings in Mecklenburg and Cumberland. This course is deemed by the committee the more proper, because the Journal is now out of print, and it is highly probable that the copy in the possession of the committee is the only one now extant.

Your committee have also examined, collated and arranged, all the documents which have been accessible to them, touching the Declaration of Independence by the citizens of Mecklenburg, and the proceedings of the freemen of Cumberland.

By the publication of these papers, it will be fully verified, that as early as the month of May, 1775, a portion of the people of North Carolina, sensible that their wrongs could no longer be borne, without sacrificing both safety and honor, and that redress so often sought, so patiently waited for, and so cruelly delayed, was no longer to be expected, did, by a public and solemn act, declare the dissolution of the ties which bound them to the crown and people of Great Britain, and did establish an independent, though temporary government for their own control and direction.

This first claim of Independence evinces such high sentiments of valor and patriotism, that we cannot, and ought not lightly to esteem the honor

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of having made it. The fact of the Declaration should be announced, its language should be published and perpetuated, and the names of the gallant representatives of Mecklenburg, with whom it originated, should be preserved from an oblivion, which, should it involve them, would as much dishonor us, as injure them. If the thought of Independence did not first occur to them, to them, at least, belongs the proud distinction of having first given language to the thought; and it should be known, and, fortunately, it can still be conclusively established, that the revolution received its first impulse towards Independence, however feeble that impulse might have been, in North Carolina. The committee are aware that this assertion has elsewhere been received with doubt, and at times met with denial; and it is, therefore, believed to be more strongly incumbent upon the House to usher to the world the Mecklenburg Declaration, accompanied with such testimonials of its genuineness, as shall silence incredulity, and with such care for its general diffusion, as shall forever secure it from being forgotten. And in recounting the causes, the origin and the progress of our revolutionary struggle, till its final issue in acknowledged independence, whatever the brilliant achievements of other States may have been, let it never be forgotten, that at a period of darkness and oppression, without concert with others, without assurances of support from any quarter, a few gallant North Carolinians, all fear of consequences lost in a sense of their country's wrongs, relying, under Heaven, solely upon themselves, nobly dared to assert, and resolved to maintain that independence, of which, whoever might have thought, none had then spoken; and thus earned for themselves, and for their fellow-citizens of North Carolina, the honor of giving birth to the first Declaration of Independence.

The committee respectfully recommend the adoption of the following resolutions.

All of which is submitted.

THOS. G. POLK, Chr'n
JOHN BRAGG,
EVAN ALEXANDER,
LOUIS D. HENRY,
ALEX. M'NEILL.

Resolved, That his Excellency the Governor be directed to cause to be published in pamphlet form the above Report and the accompanying documents, in the manner and order following, viz. After the Report, first, the Mecklenburg Declaration, with the names of the Delegates composing the meeting; second, the Certificates, testifying to the circumstances attending the Declaration; third, the proceedings of the Cumberland Association; and that he be further directed to have reprinted in like manner, separate and distinct from the above, the accompanying Journal of the Provincial Assembly, held at Halifax in one thousand seven hundred and seventy-six.

Resolved further, That after publication, the Governor be instructed to distribute said documents as follows, to wit: Twenty copies of each to the Library of the State; to each of the Libraries at the University, ten copies; to the Library of the Congress of the United States, ten copies; and one copy to each of the Executives of the several States of the Union.

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