

# THE WILMINGTON GAZETTE.

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WILMINGTON, N. C. TUESDAY, JUN. 12, 1803.

[13th Year.]

## COMMUNICATION.

The 33d ANNIVERSARY OF AMERICAN INDEPENDENCE, was celebrated with more than ordinary spirit by Captain Hartman's Company of Light Infantry of this Town; its Band of Music commenced at 1 o'clock A. M., and continued a serenade until the break of day, at which time the company paraded and fired seventeen rounds, at the several public squares, &c. at 11 o'clock, accompanied by Captain Hill's Troop of Horse, and a numerous procession of Citizens, it proceeded to the Church, where after an eloquent and appropriate prayer by the Rev. Solomon Hailing, the Declaration of American Independence was read by Mr. Jesse Winslow, and the following Oration, composed for the occasion, delivered by the author, Edwin J. Osborne, Esq. both members of the corps.

Fellow Citizens & Soldiers,

While I acknowledge the honor conferred on me by an invitation to address you on this highly interesting occasion, candor obliges me to apprise you, that I should have little hope of meriting your attention, or obtaining your regard, were the object of this address any other, than to commemorate the era of the INDEPENDENCE of the UNITED STATES OF AMERICA. An event the contemplation of which commands the interest and rouses the enthusiasm of *freemen*, while it imparts with animating confidence, wher-ever essays to investigate its causes or examine its effects.

It is not consistent with the design of our present meeting, to consider with historical order, or trace with minute accuracy, the innumerable causes which ultimately produced the Declaration which you have just now heard. A declaration which breathes at once a spirit of manly Independence, a generous attachment to rational liberty, and which was framed by a mind amply endowed and elegantly cultivated. It will be sufficient for our present purpose to call to your recollection a few of the prominent causes which produced, and the principal events which effected our late glorious and happy revolution—when the letters of civilization were broken, the clouds of superstition dispersed, and the United States of America presented to the astonished and admiring world, a boundless wilderness "blossoming like the rose," an extensive empire having for the basis of its government universal freedom and unlimited toleration. This favored country, if not the native land of liberty, had at least been more genial to its growth, than any other state or empire of which we have been informed.

To these shores the genius of freedom, under the appearance of religious zeal, diverted the *pious* colony from Plymouth. The undisturbed exercise of their religion enabled them to cultivate those feelings and expand those sentiments which spurn unnatural restraint. Surrounded by difficulties, and threatened by dangers, sufficient to render desperate the most firm and intrepid they remained unappalled. Neither the enemy of the numerous savage Indians in their vicinity—the severity of winter nor the debilitating effects of a moral sickness, could change their purpose. Unswayed by hereditary or adventitious distinctions, they associated together as *Freemen* and their first efforts toward the establishment of a regular government, discovered a rational and independent understanding of the nature, the rights and the dignity of man.

In fine, the difficulties they encountered and the obstacles they surmounted, inspired their minds with freedom and energy. They felt their own importance, and relied on themselves. And this character, so formed, in the school of adversity, was uniformly developed and invigorated by a steady opposition to the various injuries and oppressions crowded on these colonies by the government of that country, from which to vain they expected protection. The same spirit pervaded these colonies and diffused itself through all descriptions of men. It was not confined to the inhabitants of the North. Early after its first permanent settlement, the people of Virginia were distinguished by a love of liberty and a contempt for its preservation. As they adhered to the cause of royalty during the contest between Charles the first and his parliament (prob'ly from their attachment to episcopacy, who they might suppose him to defend) yet when no longer able to sustain the now *rebel* Cromwell, previously security of their most important civil immu-

But in vain were the most solemn conventions ratified—in vain were the rights even of Englishmen demanded. Those conventions were wantonly infringed, and these rights insultingly violated. Great Britain, without the natural affection, but with more humiliating tyranny than a Roman parent, appropriated our property to her own purposes by taxation, and exercised a power equally unjustifiable over our yokes.

The humiliating usage of petition, was to them an evidence of pusillanimity, and the more manly style of remonstrance was severely treated as the effusion of rebellion. Influenced by a fatal policy—Great Britain attempting to give union and stability to her empire, effected its dismemberment. Influenced by a sense of justice, she was neglectful of the claims of justice. Deaf to the warning voice of her most enlightened statesman, the prophetic declarations of the great Lord Chatham, enforced with the earnestness of disinterested patriotism, and with an eloquence which defies comparison, could not arrest her progress. And when he solemnly declared that "all attempts to impose slavery on such men must be vain and futile," and that the tyrannical measures then pursued "would be retracted," his inspired denunciations were less regarded than the frantic cries of the unfortunate Cassandra by the ill-fated Trojans.

It is trespassing on your patience and unnecessarily occupying your time, to pursue this subject further. In fact, the history of the North American colonies, during their connection with Great-Britain, presents us with little else than a narrative of various exercises of tyranny on the one part and of resistance on the other—a resistance not by force, but by application for redress of unmerited grievances. But why should I attempt to excite your indignation by a detail of oppression the most tyrannical, and insults the most unpardonable. The measure was now full.—The American people were now wearied by repeated and fruitless efforts to obtain some security for the protection of their sacred and essential privileges, and a commencement of those acts which were in their direct violation. An army appeared on our shores.—The crisis of our fate had arrived; and we almost tremble at the recollection, that one moment was to determine whether we should continue servilely to bear the yoke of foreign despotism, or assume the manly and support the character of *Freemen*. When such was the alternative who would hesitate? Trusting in the justice of our cause, and the protection of the God of battles—force was resisted by force. "The dir<sup>d</sup> of battle" was heard, and the cry "to arms" was re-echoed from the North to the South, from the shores of the Atlantic to the stupendous heights of the Alleghany. The peaceful husbandman now fled with martial ardor, relinquished his hope of harvest, and abandoned his "green field" to join his country's standard. The indomitable strain inspired by the love of glory, delighted no longer in mechanic pursuits or the prospect of gain; but pants for battle. Even the learned counselor and the reverend divine threw off the gown and sought the tented field. An enthusiastic spirit with electric rapidity was communicated to every class and description of people. Unarmed, undisciplined, unpractised in the arts of war—the apprehension of defeat was lost in the contemplation of the invaluable prize to be secured by victory; & the celebrated engagement of Bunker's Hill sufficiently manifested that a loss of liberty and hope of independence were more than equal to a contest with the valour of courage and the cupidity of plunder.

I know, fellow soldiers, you would delight to follow me in imagination, through the various vicissitudes of this memorable war. The military art, which animates your bosoms would be informed by such a review; but, also, the test of sympathy would often fail, and the deep sigh of unavailing regret would be heard, on recollecting the melancholy fate of "those who greatly died to save their country's honor." Accurately let me be a moment to the height of Bunker's Hill; march with me over the rugged precipices and low banks of the St. Lawrence.—Fearless of danger, participate in the disastrous attack at Germantown, and glowing with enthusiasm pursue victory and glory on the plains of Princeton. But, while animated by the hope of success—while inspired by heroism, let not the feelings of the men be lost in the soldier; but turn aside and drop a tear for the premature fate of the patriotic Warren, the gallant Monroeville, the veteran Mercer, and our dear much loved Nash.—But why should

I fatigue you by a recurrence to the vicissitudes, difficulties, distresses, and embarrassments which eminently distinguished this all-important contest—indeed, when we consider the situation of the troops upon which the country depended for defence—their want of discipline—the short period of their entrenchment—the extreme hardships to which they were exposed from a deficiency of even necessary clothing during the severest winter ever known in these climates.—When we reflect these things and remember that the great object of our struggle was obtained, and the cause driven from our shores—we cannot avoid feeling a consciousness of the superintending providence of Omnipotence, and the deliverance of the numerous inhabitants of the continent by his paternal care and protection. The conflict was now terminated—the well known military engagement at Eutaw, and the surrender of the army commanded by Lord Cornwallis at Yorktown, humbled the aspiring hopes of a British Ministry, blindly ambitious and proudly obstinate. Under President and the superior genius, *Illustris et audax*, was the liberty of our country secured and its independence secured—immortal!—Hail thy wisdom as a statesman—the principles of patriotism—the deliberate course of a soldier—and thy virtues as a man, never cease to be admired, revered, and as far as attainable by the powerful humanity, imitated by thy great contrymen!!!—The blessings of smiling peace now began to be realized, and patient industry directed its efforts to remove and conceal the devastations of war. The character of the soldier was relinquished and the citizen retained his accustomed avocations. The applause and gratitude of a free people, accompanied with a dignified independence, afforded an ample and an honorable reward to the war-worn veterans. The horrors of war having ceased, it became the universal wish of the American people, to establish a government calculated to unite this extensive empire in one grand, permanent confederacy, capable of defending and perpetuating those invaluable and hard-earned blessings. In this, the power, the consummation, wisdom of our American statesmen, was not less conspicuous than the renowned courage of the American warriors. The venerable authors of our government were aided by the experience to be collected from the history of mankind. They justly appreciated the rights of the governed, and preserved them unimpaired; at the same time affording the machine of government sufficient energy to preserve peace at home, and command respect abroad. This constitution, original in its plan, and practical in its details, will prove an august monument of the disinterested patriotism and profound wisdom of those who composed it; while those who are so fortunate as to live under the operation of its principles, will not cease to be the envy of the world. If I could be so successful as to obtain your attention, yet I should desist of expressing in terms adequate to the importance and dignity of the subject, the innumerable & silences of our most free and happy government—a government having for its foundation the transcendental principle, that *the people is the fountain from whence flows every power, and every authority*. A principle which, while preserved, (and I earnestly pray God it may never be impaired) will equally protect us from the insidious machinations of aristocracy, and the destructive innovations of Jacobinism. Upon the preservation of this constitution depends the *independence* of these states and our existence as a nation will be determined by the distinction of its principles.

Seventeen years of peace with all mankind, has given strength and uniformity to the operations of our government, and has taught us to approve in practice, what we so much admired in principle. A peaceful and increasing commerce, extensive as the globe itself, amply supplied the public treasury and rewarded individual enterprise. While inferior here advantage, we congratulated ourselves on our remoteness from the eastern shores of the Atlantic, and were insensible of the operations which agitated the divided legions of Europe. Unconnected with the politics of the European governments, and uncontaminated by their corruptions—it was the sincere wish of the administration of this country to observe an inviolate neutrality, and thereby secure to the United States those advantages and privileges which, time immemorial, have been guaranteed to neutral nations.

This wise policy, I do not hesitate to say has been uniformly pursued—but without the expected success. Uninformed ambition

and sordid interest, were not to be controlled by the demands of justice—instead of a due observance of the laws and usages of all civilized countries; all law, all justice, have been perverted and violated from a love of dominion and a hope of gain. The stern and unchangeable principles of natural equity have been set at naught, and the sacred last of heaven have been profaned—Yes my Fellow Citizens and Soldiers, this country, while enjoying a profound and happy tranquility—while gently gliding down the unruffled current of prosperity—while cultivating the mild arts which tend to humanize mankind—while casting an eye of compassion towards them—while born in wealth in Europe, and sympathizing with them when condemned with the accursed calamities of despotism—while continuing hospitable aid to all those who sought her power—shores—is unexpectedly awakened, as from a delightful vision, by the thundering cannon's voice; and the jaded & unexampled outrage committed on one of her vessels of war, on her own coast, and within her own sovereignty, palpably evinced a disposition inimical to her repose, and hostile to her government—Nor is this all—While assuming the conciliatory language of amicable negotiation, and artfully attempting to lull us into a *fallacibus* security, by pacific professions—Great-Britain uncovers a fixed determination to prostrate all neutral rights, and render commerce subservient to her maritime supremacy. Our citizens have been dragged into a service odious and tyrannical, our vessels have been deviated, searched and plundered, while engaged in honest commercial pursuits, under false pretences, and frivolous pretexts; and to complete this climax of insult and aggression, a Proclamation has issued from the Throne of His Britannic Majesty, imposing restrictions on the commerce of the United States, inconsistent with the honor, and subversive of the existence and sovereignty of an independent nation.—Restrictions which were not hazard-ed during the arbitrary administrations of Granville and North, and which would have been received with indignation and aversion, were now submitted to, and reluctantly accepted by Great-Britain. Not in this!

The military despot of the French, whose ambition is unbounded, and whose principles readily become subornate to the love of power, has not been exceeded by Great-Britain in heapng injury and insult on our recruitment and its citizens. Acknowledging no law which interferes with the lust of dominion, he has seized the sword of justice—he yields it to the despot and destruction of mankind, but he has broken the balance and trampled it under foot.

When such is the state of our country, as to its foreign relations; what fellow citizens and soldiers, should be our feelings, and our conducts. Shall we pass our time in vain, juring, and augitory disputes on speculative and theoretic politics? What about we debate, even to the drawn dagger's point, on the comparative magnitude and number of insulting outrages pressed together on our country by France and Great-Britain!—Of what importance is it to us, my countrymen, when those aggressions commanded, or with whom they originated!—Why should we inquire by whom we are injured—by whom insulted—unless it be for the purpose of preparing the most effectual means of defense and annoyance? When France and Great-Britain are alike striving to drag us into the vortex of European hostilities—when they are mutually endeavoring to increase the most tyrannical, and if submitted to, the most degrading, each to appropriate exclusively to itself, the benefits to be derived from our extensive, and once flourishing commerce—all to engage in humiliating discussions on their national honor and commercial resources? Shall the hoist of this great republic be prostrated, its resources neglected, and we who were once a nation of freemen and warriors, become a nation of schoolmen and sophists!—No, citizens—No soldiers! The fire which was kindled and blazed throughout this land, on this memorable epoch, three and thirty years ago, is not extinguished. The spirit of seventy-six may slumber, but it is always terrible in its energies. Let us then stand together, as a band of brothers, or rather as one man. Let us beseech reasonable confidence, and we will give energy and security to our government. Let us unite for our mutual safety—for the honor of our country, and to the end that we may perpetuate those inestimable privileges derived from the establishment of national independence. By so doing we will merit