

Catawba Journal.

VOL. I.]

CHARLOTTE, N. C. TUESDAY, OCTOBER 19, 1824.

[NO. 8.]

PUBLISHED WEEKLY
By **LEMUEL BINGHAM,**
AT THREE DOLLARS A YEAR, PAID IN ADVANCE.

No paper will be discontinued, unless at the discretion of the editor, until all arrearages are paid.

ADVERTISEMENTS will be inserted at the usual rates. Persons sending in advertisements, are requested to note on the margin the number of insertions, or they will be continued until forbid, and charged accordingly.

ORIGINAL.

FOR THE CATAWBA JOURNAL.

Declaration of Independence.

By the Citizens of Mecklenburg County, N. C. May 20, 1775; and by act of the Legislature of North-Carolina, April 12, 1776.

The following Address was delivered in Hopewell Church, Mecklenburg county, N. C. by Doct. M. Winslow Alexander, previous to a very appropriate and eloquent discourse delivered by the Rev. John Williamson, Pastor of said Church, July 5, 1824.

Fellow-Citizens: I have this day the honor of being appointed to read to you the Declaration of Independence, made by Congress on the 4th of July, 1776. Before proceeding to read that dignified and all important production of our government, I hope it will not be considered irrelevant to the business of the day, nor repugnant to the feelings of true patriotism, if we, the citizens of Mecklenburg county, should claim a more than equal honor in that transaction. From the sensibility which has latterly existed amongst our members of Congress on this subject, and the excitement which has in consequence been diffused through the United States; the high honor and feeling importance of this event may be adduced.

More correctly to estimate the importance of that honor we now claim in behalf of the citizens of this County, and of this State, let us pass over that circumscribed view which is generally taken of this subject, and devote our limited moment in tracing the effects, developed by those principles resulting from the establishment of American Independence, on ourselves, on the world at large,—on the general destiny of man.

The policy of previous ages, the most extensive and refined views of the greatest politicians of previous nations, have been unlimited conquest; or, as a last resort, they have always resolved the peace, harmony, and happiness of nations into an equilibrium of power;—hence the great desideratum, the grand climax of polity in Europe, has been to establish that political balance on which they rest that efficacy of political order which alone protects them from the greatest national calamities—hence the necessity of standing armies—hence the degradation, the vassalage, the misery of man. How uncivilized, how barbarous, how brutish the principle thus to substitute power to the exclusion of the refined and more operative principles of virtue, intelligence, national justice and equal benevolence, as the foundation of national order, of reciprocal happiness.

America alone has reversed this order of things, by establishing a written Constitution, sanctioned by the people—by identifying the individual with the national interests, and thus permanently establishing the power and energy of government on the affections of the citizens. Hence our example and influence are decalated by despots. Hence the open, firm and dignified policy pursued by our President in his message to our last Congress, as to South American independence, and as to our rights on the Pacific coasts, has made that league of despots fear and tremble, and caused even Russia to accede to every principle of national justice and reciprocity.

We, as a nation the most highly favored by heaven, are now independent, prosperous and happy: plenty smiles within our borders—peace encompasses our shores. Here we enjoy free and unbiassed suffrage, the only palladium of permanent and correct republican government; by which talents, integrity, moral and political excellence, become the qualifications to office and requisites to promotion. Here we are blessed with an uncontrolled liberty of the press, regulated alone by intelligence and virtue—without which liberty is licentiousness. Here, taught by the experience of ages, that knowledge constitutes the power, religion and virtue the wealth and happiness of nations,—literary, scientific and religious institutions have spread their illuminating and ameliorating influence over our land, and have pointed the ability and enterprise of our citizens to every noble and beneficial internal embellishment and improvement.

As a nation we now stand exalted above our fellow-men. Discarding the utopian principles of theoretic philosophy and sophisticated policy, our Cabinet, unwavering and candid, dignified and prudent, resting on the firm and impartial principles of national justice, of free, equal, and reciprocal intercourse, have latterly borne the palm in all our diplomatic intercourse with foreign nations, and have written to conviction, and thus frowned to silence, every attempt which has been made to drive us from those principles which have marked our march to national preeminence. (a)

Our Navy, in opposition to every effort of visionary policy, pusillanimity and sectional jealousy, has rode triumphantly over the waves of prejudice, and in every instance, on equal terms, has borne our star spangled banner victorious over the couchant British lion. Whilst by land, our patriot band of undisciplined freemen, impelled by love of country, and guided by that heroic Genius of undaunted patriotism and unbiassed rectitude, have witnessed at New-Orleans the last death groan of expiring British glory.

But our national polity, equally generous as energetic, has here afforded to oppressed humanity of every clime, the welcome asylum of benevolence. Here alone on earth, the sons of Abraham, after a vassalage of two thousand years, may become citizens and enjoy the blessings of civil and religious liberty. Here alone has been attained the full object of human government,—the perfection of civil polity,—human happiness:—happiness is justice,—justice is liberty. Here alone has been established those civil and moral principles, which most ultimately influence every age and clime; which will quicken with the lapse of years; spread as they endure, and brighten as they spread, until they will eradicate that spirit of civil intolerance, and break those spiritual fetters, forged by subtlety and riveted by superstition, which for ages have shrouded all the civil and religious, moral and physical powers of the human mind, in darkness, ignorance and apathy.

To this period in the history of man, to those views and principles developed in the establishment of our independence, we justly attribute the only correct understanding of the civil and religious rights of man, and the consequent enjoyment of civil and religious liberty. On these principles is here founded the only government that has ever existed on earth, where the religious has not been blended with the civil institutions of the country. The greatest civilians and philosophers, and the most eminent divines of previous ages, have not even treated this subject as problematical; but, pleased with the illusions of a brilliant sophistry, and mistaking the splendid delineations of courtly consequence and superstitious rectitude for the benign influence of correct morals and pure religion, they have universally maintained that religion could never long exist uncorrupted, without an establishment—without the mandate of a tyrant and the coercion of penal sanctions the most severe.

To America, under the fostering hand of a kind providence, has been confided the almost miraculous development of the fact, that a pure and uncorrupted religion can better exist without than with the aid and coercion of civil authority.

These are the views and principles which have impressed the powers and elicited the brilliancy of the human mind with such energy, and pointed its exertion to such a profitable and splendid extent, that the astonished eye of wonder gazes on the unfolding mysteries of invention, and cheerfully concedes that the useful inventions and improvements of the last thirty years have far transcended those of any entire previous century.

The knowledge diffused throughout the world, in consequence of these correct principles, has not only laid the foundation, but has given rise to all those charitable and patriotic institutions which latterly have done so much honor to the human character. The energy and enterprise resulting from these views, have originated all those bible, missionary, education, abolition and other institutions, which are now extending their ameliorating effects through every region and clime; proclaiming glad tidings of great joy, peace on earth and good will towards man.

When we thus view the declaration and establishment of American Independence, in all its extensive bearings, and trace those consequences which have already resulted from it to the welfare and happiness of the human race, we are lost in an illimitable scale of events, which, from their progressive increase and silent lapse, have perhaps not sufficiently arrested the attention of Americans; but which we must pronounce the most important epoch that has occurred since the birth of Christ, and the celebration of which ought to be handed down, with religious veneration and gratitude, to our latest posterity.

Thus has the tree of civil and religious liberty been planted here by the most enlightened patriotism and nourished by the purest virtue. Its fruit has become the happiness of millions; its shade defending them from the malignant rays of anarchy, persecution, bigotry, and tyranny—flourishing with immortal youth, and blooming with unfading verdure—its fruit will increase with the lapse of time, and its branches extend to the confines of the universe.

Who would not then glory in being instrumental in originating that, which has led to such all important, such happy results. And who can so justly boast of originating this happy era, as the people of this County, the citizens of this State? Our claim is fairly and honestly asserted—it is our indubitable right.

It was on the 19th of May, 1775, that a delegation of two representatives from each militia company of Mecklenburg county, then comprising the present county of Cabarrus, met in the town of Charlotte. You will now permit me to read the proceedings of that meeting, as drawn and certified by their clerk, and deposited in the safe keeping of Gen. W. R. Davie, for the benefit of some future historian:—

“Agreeably to arrangements made by the most respectable citizens of this county, Col. Thomas Polk issued an order to the captains of each militia company in this county, directing each company to elect two persons, and delegate to them ample powers to devise ways and means to aid and assist their suffering brethren in Boston, and generally to adopt measures to extricate themselves from the impending storm—and to secure unimpaired their invaluable rights, privileges and liberties, from the dominant grasp of British imposition and tyranny.

In conformity to said order, on the 19th day of May, 1775, the said delegation met in Charlotte, vested with unlimited powers; at which time official news arrived of the battle of Lexington on that day of the preceding month. Every delegate felt the value and importance of the prize, and the awful, and solemn crisis which had arrived; every bosom swelled with indignation at the malice and insatiable revenge developed in the late attack at Lexington. The universal sentiment was, let us deliberate—let us calculate the issue—the probable result—and then let us act with energy, as brethren leagued to preserve our property, our lives, and what is still more endearing, the liberties of America. Conformably to this view, the meeting was organized.

DELEGATES PRESENT.

Col. Thos Polk,	John McKnitt Alexander,
Ephraim Brevard,	Bez. Alexander,
Herckiss J. Bateh,	Adam Alexander,
John Pomer,	Charles Alexander,
James Harris,	Zachus Wilson, sen.
William Kemion,	Westell Avery,
John Ford,	Benjamin Patton,
Richard Barry,	Mathew McClure,
Henry Downs,	Ned Morrison,
Ezra Alexander,	Robert Irwin,
William Graham,	John Flanniken,
John Queary,	David Reese.
Abraham Alexander,	

Abraham Alexander was then elected Chairman, John McKnitt Alexander, Clerk. After a free and full discussion of the various objects for which the delegation had been convened, it was unanimously ordained—

1st. Resolved, That whosoever directly or indirectly abetted, or in any way, form or manner, countenanced the unchartered and dangerous invasion of our rights, as claimed by Great Britain, is an enemy to this country, to America, and to the inherent and inalienable rights of man.

2d. Resolved, That we, the citizens of Mecklenburg county, do hereby dissolve the political bands which have connected us to the mother country, and hereby absolve ourselves from all allegiance to the British crown, and abjure all political connection, contract, or association, with that nation, who have wantonly trampled on our rights and liberties, and intemperately shed the blood of American patriots at Lexington.

3d. Resolved, That we do hereby declare ourselves a free and independent people; are, and of right ought to be, a sovereign and self-governing Association, under the control of no power other than that of our God and the general government of the Congress, to the maintenance of which independence, we solemnly pledge to each other our mutual cooperation, our lives, our fortunes, and our most sacred honor.

4th. Resolved, That as we now acknowledge the existence and control of no law or legal officer, civil or military, within this county, we do hereby ordain and adopt as a rule of life, all, each and every of our former laws,—wherein, nevertheless, the crown of Great Britain never can be considered as holding rights, privileges, immunities or authority therein.

5th. Resolved, That it is further decreed, that all, each and every military officer in this county, is hereby reinstated in his former command and authority, he acting

conformably to these regulations. And that every member present, of this delegation, shall henceforth be a civil officer, viz: a Justice of the Peace, in the character of a “Committee-man,” to issue process, hear and determine all matters of controversy, according to said adopted laws, and to preserve peace, union and harmony in said county;—and to use every exertion to spread the love of country and fire of freedom throughout America, until a more general and organized government be established in this province.

After discussing the foregoing resolves, and arranging bye-laws and regulations for the government of a Standing Committee of Public Safety, who were selected from these delegates, the whole proceedings were unanimously adopted and signed. A select committee was then appointed to draw a more full and definite statement of grievances, and a more formal declaration of independence. The Delegation then adjourned about 2 o'clock, A. M. May 20.

May 20th, Delegation met.—The Select Committee reported a formal Declaration of Independence, (believed to be drawn by Dr. Ephraim Brevard, chairman of said Committee,) which was unanimously approved and signed; and which, together with the foregoing resolves, was publicly read and proclaimed from the Court-house door, by Colonel Thomas Polk, to a large and approving concourse of citizens, who had convened to sanction the proceedings of their delegates—being 13 months previous to the Declaration of Independence by Congress.

A full copy of the whole proceedings was then made out and attested, and Capt. James Jack, of Charlotte, was deputed as express to Congress, then sitting in Philadelphia, accompanying said proceedings with a letter addressed to Richard Caswell, Wm. Hooper, and Joseph Hughes, our then representatives from this Province—enjoining it on our said representatives to use all possible means to have the said proceedings sanctioned and approved by the General Congress. On the return of Capt. Jack, the Delegation learned, by a joint letter from said three representatives, that their proceedings were favorably approved by the members of Congress, but that it was deemed premature to lay them before the House; recommending perseverance, order, energy, &c.

The Committee of Safety, of which Abraham Alexander was chairman, held their regular and stated meetings alternately at Charlotte, at James Harris's, and John Phifer's. This was a civil court, founded on military process. Before this judicature all suspicious persons were made to appear, who were formally tried, banished or bound to good behaviour. Its jurisdiction was unlimited as to persons, and its decrees as final as the confidence and patriotism of the country. Several were arrested and brought before them from Tryon, (now Lincoln,) Rowan and the adjacent counties.” (b)

It is also highly gratifying to every citizen of this state, to learn, that at our Provincial Assembly, held at Halifax, on the 12th of April, 1776, a law unanimously passed the House, authorising and empowering our representatives in Congress to concur in declaring the United Colonies Free and Independent—to form foreign alliances, &c. This was nearly three months previous to the declaration by Congress, and stands the first legislative act on the subject of Independence in the United States. The delegates from this county at that time were John Phifer, Robert Irwin, and John McKnitt Alexander. (c)

The boasted resolve of the Provincial Legislature of Virginia, instructing their representatives in Congress to declare the United Colonies free and independent, was passed the 15th day of May, 1776, over one month after the North-Carolina act, from which it evidently originated. (Wirt's Life of P. Henry, page 193-4.)

These are transactions with which you, together with the citizens of this and the adjoining counties, have long been familiar—these have been the frequent topics of conversation amongst us for nearly fifty years—these were the proceedings of our fathers, of our relatives, of our fellow-citizens, every individual of whom has descended to the silent tomb:—but these are their living deeds of patriotism, which misfortune cannot now tarnish, and which the malignant breath of envy durst not now assail to blast.

Who would relinquish the glory of pre-eminently participating in those transactions, which can hereafter barely be *intimated*—which will forever stand firm as the eternal principles of justice—a model on the summit of civil and moral grandeur, to which all the benighted world may turn their eyes for a genial and regenerating light, until time shall be lost in eternity, and this globe itself dissolve in chaos. Compared with such characters, what is the glitter of empire, what the pageantry of state, or what are the empty unmerited titles of nobility. Who

would not glory in such ancestors—who would not emulate such virtue—who would not sanction such principles? Principles which have so pre-eminently distinguished, and crowned with never fading laurels of mental and moral grandeur, those illustrious patriots who occupy the brightest pages in the history of human greatness. Principles which constitute that germ of human happiness, which, deposited in its proper soil, springs up to luxuriance and bears the bloom of bliss—its fruit is that balm of life, which secures and perpetuates the felicity of man; and its unfolding verdure, fanned with the virtuous zephyrs of civil and religious liberty, beautifies and embellishes the scenery of life, and coolly shades our pilgrimage down this valley of toil, anxiety and trouble, to that peaceful bourne from whence no traveler returns.

NOTES.

(a) It is perhaps unparalleled in the history of national diplomacy, that in every instance, (as recollected) from the various important national subjects discussed at the treaty of Ghent, and those difficulties arising under it, together with all our subsequent collisions with England, Spain, France and Russia—the overwhelming arguments and correct principles assumed by John Q. Adams, our present Secretary of State, have produced an entire acquiescence in those powers to the correctness of American principles and policy.

(b) The following certificate is in our possession, viz:

NORTH-CAROLINA, } November 28, 1775.
MECKLENBURG COUNTY, }

These may certify, to all whom it may concern, that the bearer hereof, William Henderson, is allowed here to be a true friend to Liberty and has signed the Association. Certified by
ABRAM ALEXANDER,
Chairman of the Committee of Safety.

Dunn and Booth, two lawyers residing in Salisbury, Rowan county, having threatened to have this delegation arrested for treason, the Committee of Safety issued an order for their arrest—a guard was sent on to Salisbury with said order—they were arrested, brought to Charlotte, and banished to Charleston, S. C. Gen. George Graham, now living near Charlotte, was one of the guard who escorted them from Charlotte to Camden, and delivered them to Capt. Chesnut, who, in a few hours, set out with a detachment of his cavalry to place them in Charleston.

The certified statements relative to the transactions in Charlotte, of May 19th and 20th, 1775, by Gen. George Graham, William Littlejohn, James Clark, Robert Robinson, John Sorenson, of Mecklenburg county; and of Capt. James Jack and the Rev. Francis Cummins, of the State of Georgia, as published in a pamphlet, at Raleigh, 1822, will, we trust, do away all doubts, and put all difficulties to rest on this subject.

(c) As the Journal of the Provincial Assembly, held at Halifax, April 4, 1776, is in the possession of very few, a copy of the Resolve, it is presumed, will be acceptable.

The Select Committee to take into consideration the usurpations and violence attempted and committed by the King and Parliament of Britain against America, and the further measures to be taken for freeing the same and for the better defence of this province, report as follows, viz: (these follows a particular and formal statement of grievances, &c.) And whereas the moderation hitherto manifested by the United Colonies, and their sincere desire to be reconciled to the mother country on constitutional principles, have procured an mitigation of the aforesaid wrongs and usurpations, and no hopes remain of obtaining redress by those means alone which have hitherto been tried, your committee are of opinion that the House should enter into the following Resolve, viz:

Resolved, That the delegates of this Colony in the Continental Congress be empowered to concur with the delegates of the other Colonies, in declaring independence, and forming foreign alliances, reserving to this colony the sole and exclusive right of forming a constitution and laws for this colony, and of appointing delegates from time to time (under the direction of a general representation thereof) to meet the delegation of the other colonies, for such purposes as shall be hereafter pointed out. The House unanimously concurred therein. Page 9. April 12, 1776.

It ought to be observed, that the enacting clause to every law passed by this legislature, was “Resolved,” &c.

The last Colonial Congress was held March, 1774. First General Assembly at Newbern, Aug. 1774.
2d do do at Halifax, Aug. 1775.
3d do do at Halifax, April, 1776. Convention, which formed our present Constitution, Halifax, December, 1776.

William Penn and Thomas Story travelling together in Virginia, were caught by a shower of rain, and unceremoniously sheltered themselves from it in a tobacco house: the owner of which happened to be within it, accosted them with “you have a great deal of impudence to trespass on my premises—you enter without leave—do you know who I am?” To which was answered no. “Why, then I would have you to know I am a justice of the peace?” to which Thomas Story replied, “my friend here makes such things as these—he is the Governor of Pennsylvania.” The great man quickly abated his haughtiness.

Great Turtle.—A turtle, more than 7 feet long, and weighing upwards of eight hundred pounds, has been taken off Cape Ann, and carried into Boston.