

Previous Celebrations.

The Celebration in 1825.

With each recurring year the people of Mecklenburg have celebrated the 20th of May, and the following is an account of the ceremonies which took place in Charlotte in the year 1825:

CHARLOTTE, Tuesday, May 31, 1825.

MECKLENBURG INDEPENDENCE.

The celebration which took place in this town on the 20th inst., was equal to, if it did not surpass anything of the kind ever before witnessed here. The day was fine and not uncomfortably warm, and at an early hour a large concourse of people, strangers and citizens, had assembled to do honor to the day. At eleven o'clock A. M., a procession was formed, under the direction of Colonel Thomas G. Polk, on the street South of the Court House—Captain Kennedy's company of cavalry and the Lafayette artillery, under the command of Captain Thomas I. Polk, in front, citizens and strangers next, and lastly, a band of Revolutionary veterans, sixty or seventy in number, wearing badges with the figures '75 stamped on them. The procession then moved to the Presbyterian church, which, though spacious, was crowded to overflowing, and numbers found it impossible to procure seats.

The exercises at the church commenced with a prayer, replete with genuine piety and ardent patriotism, by the venerable Dr. Hunter; this was succeeded by appropriate music from the band, after which the Declaration of Independence by the citizens of Mecklenburg, was read by the same reverend gentleman. An oration was then pronounced by Mr. Morrison, which riveted the attention of the audience and caused tears to trickle down the furrowed cheeks of numbers of the war-worn and hoary-headed veterans. The orator did ample justice to his subject. He depicted in animated colors, the undaunted patriotism of our forefathers, whom no difficulties could dishearten, no terrors dismay, no privations subdue; who, looking only to the justice of their cause, and the wrongs they had received, indignantly renounced their allegiance to a government, whose protection was felt only in the injuries which it inflicted, and whose paternal regard was evinced only in systematic attempts to wrest from them all that they held valuable as men who claimed freedom as a birthright, and to reduce them to a state of bondage worse than death. His address to the patriotic band whose venerable forms were before him, and whose snowy locks and bended frames, formed such a striking contrast to the picture he had sketched of their youthful strength and vigor, was peculiarly appropriate and pathetic, and excited emotions in every bosom, which may be easily imagined, but not described. The address, in short, was well conceived and happily executed, and we regret that it will not be in our power to lay it before our readers, as the author has declined the request of the committee to furnish a copy for publication.

The exercises at the church were closed with music and discharges of cannon, and the Revolutionary veterans returned in procession, escorted by the military.

No one present at this celebration could have been entirely unmoved by the recollections and associations connected with it. The occasion was peculiarly calculated to produce an intensity of feeling, and to elicit reflections at once pleasurable and profitable. It was the fiftieth anniversary of an event of which the citizens of Mecklenburg, without the imputation of vanity, might justly be proud; it was a fit occasion of joy and gratitude, rejoicing and praise; but at the same time the reflection could not but arise in many a bosom, that but few, very few, of the number then assembled to commemorate it, would live to witness its return. Fifty years hence, and of the multitude then present, the greater part will be reposing beneath the clod of the valley; dust will have returned to dust, and the spirit of Him who

gave it. Such a reflection was well calculated to moderate the feelings, to induce a soberness of mirth, and to impart an interest to the scene at once peculiar and impressive.

About four o'clock, P. M., a large number sat down to a dinner prepared by Dr. Henderson, in the beautiful grove on the college green. General George Graham officiated as President, and Mr. Isaac Alexander as Vice-President. After the cloth was removed, the following toast were drank, interspersed with patriotic songs and accompanied with discharges of cannon:—

TOASTS.

1. "The day we celebrate"—On that day the republican banners were unfurled in Charlotte, independence declared by the patriotic citizens of Mecklenburg, absolving themselves from their allegiance to Great Britain. May the noble deed be engraven on the hearts of all present, and the gilded pages of history transmit it to posterity.

2. "The patriots who signed the Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence, the 20th of May, 1775."—We honor them for their firmness, love them for their virtues, and venerate them for their patriotism.

3. "The memory of those heroes of Lexington, Mass., who first sealed the broken covenant with their blood, and absolved all allegiance with mother Britain."

4. "Our Country and our Government."—The genius of Columbus, the patriotism of Washington, the philosophy of Franklin, the wisdom of Jefferson and compatriots, have erected a fabric that will last till time shall be no more.

5. "The heroes of the Revolution"—While we hold in sacred remembrance those that are gathered to their fathers, let us not fail to cherish in our hearts, the scattered remnants that yet survive.

6. "The President of the United States."—An able statesman—may his administration prove that the confidence of Congress was not misplaced.

7. "The descendants of the patriotic members of the Mecklenburg delegation who declared independence."

Let no mean hope your souls enslave
Independent, generous, brave,
Your fathers such examples gave—
And such reverse.

8. "Popular Elections."—Their purity and frequency are the best security for the safety of our republican institutions and the strongest barrier against the encroachments of tyranny.

9. "Internal Improvements."—The road to national and individual independence; may constitutional scruples yield to the national welfare.

10. "Andrew Jackson"—He has filled the measure of his country's glory; he is the friend of the people—the people are his friends.

11. "Bolivar and the independent provinces of South America"—May political and religious liberty be the basis of their constitution.

12. Washington and Lafayette.

13. "The fair sex"—Beauty and Beauty, the war cry of slavery—protection to beauty, the watch word of freemen.

VOLUNTEERS.

By Dr. James G. Ramsay of Tennessee:—"General Thomas Polk, and Dr. Ephraim Brevard"—The first bosoms that ever glowed with the joyous anticipation of American Independence.

Dr. Ramsey was formerly a citizen of Mecklenburg county, participated in our Revolutionary struggle, and was present in Charlotte, at the Declaration of Independence on the memorable 20th of May, 1775. The toast was forwarded to the committee from Tennessee.

By William Davidson, Esq.:—"Henry Clay,"—the great orator of the West, an able statesman and independent as a man—shielded by virtuous patriotism, he is impregnable to the shafts of malice.

By Colonel T. G. Polk:—"The political prospect of Henry Clay"

Like the dew on the mountain,
Like the foam on the river,
They are gone and forever.

By the Hon. H. W. Connor:—"General William Davidson," who fell at Cowan's Ford, bravely fighting for the rights and liberties of his country.

By J. H. Blake, Esq.:—"Henry Clay,"—the undaunted champion of universal liberty.

By Captain Thomas I. Polk:—"The next President of the United States"—May he be the choice of the people and not of Congress.

By L. H. Alexander, Esq.:—"Andrew Jackson and William H. Crawford"—Fair play is bonny play.

From the same journal of May 24, 1825:—

The fiftieth anniversary of the Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence was celebrated in this place on the 20th inst. Not being able to procure a copy of the toasts in season for this week's paper, and other causes intervening to render

a postponement necessary, we shall defer a particular account of the proceedings until our next, barely mentioning at this time, that the celebration throughout was worthy the occasion and honorable to the public spirit and patriotism of Mecklenburg.

The "toasts" indicate the presence in this semi-Centennial celebration of men of both parties, who, however much they differed on other matters, seem to have here met on common ground. Of the participants in these memorial ceremonies, a large number appear to have been old soldiers of the Revolution. At that date, as I ascertain by a paragraph in the *Journal* of May 10, 1825, the only survivors of those who issued the memorable resolves of May 20, was David Reese, then living in Cabarrus. It is also evident that the 20th of May had been commemorated in a similar manner in previous years.

The Centennial Celebration.

All other celebrations of the 20th of May dwarf into insignificance when compared with the Centennial Celebration which took place in 1875. It marked an important epoch in the history of the State, and the people of North Carolina gathered in Charlotte from all over her broad domain to do honor to the occasion. The crowd was estimated to be at least forty thousand, and was even estimated to be as high as sixty thousand. Speeches were made during the occasion by Hon. John Kerr, of N. C., Hon. John Bright, of Tenn., Gov. Thos. A. Hendricks, of Indiana, Gov. Brogden, of N. C., Senator Vance, of N. C., Gov. D. H. Chamberlain, of S. C., Ex-Gov. Graham, of N. C., Hon. Gilbert C. Walker, then Governor of Virginia, Hon. Bradley T. Johnson, of Maryland, Col. Jno. H. Wheeler, historian, and many others whom we do not now recall.

On the morning of the 22nd of May, 1875, this newspaper contained the following introduction to the proceedings which took place at the time, and are now republished as a matter of historic facts:

At noon, on the 20th day of May, in the year of grace, 1775, a body of delegates met in the old court house, at what was a short time before, the village of "Charlotte Town," to confer together concerning the relations which then existed between the province and the King, so weighty were the matters under consideration, and so important was the step which was about to be taken, that darkness fell before the deliberations were concluded; night even spent itself, and it was not until morning came that the resolutions, declaring themselves absolved from all allegiance to the British Crown, were finally adopted—these resolutions which have shed a halo of imperishable glory upon the memories of the signers, and have made for Mecklenburg and North Carolina a name more enduring than granite, and one which will live as long as the immortal principles of liberty themselves, and "until time shall grow old."

Wednesday was the Centennial anniversary, we say, of the meeting of those great and distinguished fathers, those earnest, thoughtful, patriotic disciples of Craighhead, those men whose minds were thoroughly imbued with a yearning after civil and religious liberties, and who had determined to strike the blow which afterwards shattered the fetters of the oppressor.

The city of Charlotte, the State of North Carolina, and her daughter and sister States were not unmindful of these facts. Not only did our own honor the day which stands upon the threshold of that one which we celebrate, by the decoration of their stores, dwellings and streets with gay flags, with flowers and evergreens, a great crowd had gathered here from different places in this State, and from South Carolina, Tennessee and Virginia, to unite in the opening exercises of this grand CENTENNIAL DAY.

The day could hardly be more auspicious. A gentle breeze tempered the heat of the sun, and by noon a numerous throng had gathered at Independence square to witness the hoisting of the stars and bars to the summit of the pole that had been made to receive it. As the flag ascended higher and higher, and while the hundreds of lesser flags on the buildings near by fluttered and danced in the pleasant breeze, the Citizens' Band, of Newberne, struck up our State air, "The Old North State." The opening words of this grand old poem, the production of our illustrious Gaston, must have suggested themselves to every North Carolinian present and many a one joined in the words of the song:

"Carolina, Carolina, Heaven's blessings attend her,
While we live we will cherish, protect and defend her."

It was indeed a thrilling occasion, and shouts of enthusiasm, induced by the inspiration of the scene, rent the air.

Col. Wm. Johnston, as Mayor of the city, announced the opening of the ceremonies of the Centennial occasion, and he was followed by a speech from Gov. Curtis H. Brogden, who was then Governor of the State. At the conclusion of the speeches, the Newberne band played the "Mecklenburg Polka," and a salute of thirty eight guns, representing the thirty eight States of the Union, were fired by the Raleigh Light Artillery.

The morning of the 20th proper dawned and witnessed the grandest and most brilliant event of its kind ever seen in the Old North State. The city was well nigh filled with visitors, many of them gentlemen of distinction from our own and other States. The streets were filled with firemen and military, dressed in their attractive uniforms, flags were floating everywhere, and an air of festivity could be felt on every hand. Charlotte opened wide her arms to her visitors and greeted all who came to help her celebrate this great event in her history in the most cordial manner.

Every train that reached the city was crowded with pushing, jostling humanity, everybody in the best of humor, and thousands arrived in wagons, buggies, carriages, and on horseback, and by 7 o'clock, a. m., the whole city was one living, moving mass of people. The opening exercises of the day were begun at daylight by the ringing of the church and city bells, and the firing of a salute of a hundred guns.

By 9 o'clock an immense multitude thronged the streets, and began the forming of the procession under the immediate charge of Genl. W. R. Cox, our member of Congress for the 4th Congressional District. The procession then moved in the direction of the Fair Grounds, and upon arrival at the stand erected for the speakers, Gov. Graham, the presiding officer, took the chair and announced that the programme would be carried out. This consisted of a prayer by Rev. Dr. A. W. Miller, the reading of the Declaration by Maj. Gales, of Raleigh, an oration by Hon. John Kerr, Hon. John Bright and others.

After the speaking the invited guests, distinguished gentlemen, military, fire and musical organizations, adjourned to Floral Hall, at the Fair Grounds, and partook of a sumptuous banquet. Several thousand persons were fed, and a number of patriotic toasts were announced and responded to, the whole dismissed by a speech from Gov. Brogden, while three rousing cheers were given for North Carolina.

Just after dark, a stand having been erected on Independence Square, the Centennial proceedings were concluded there, and speeches were delivered by Judge Davidson, of Tennessee, Gov. Chamberlain of South Carolina, Gov. Hendricks, of Indiana, Gov. Vance, of this city and State, Gov. Walker, of Virginia, Col. Thomas Polk, of Tennessee, and Generals Cox and Clingman of this State.

All in all the Centennial Celebration was one of which every citizen of North Carolina could be justly proud.

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mar 12

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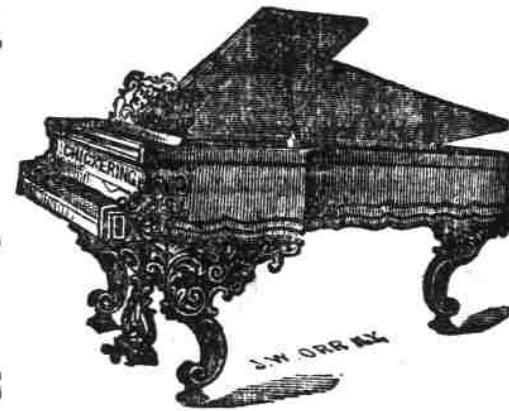
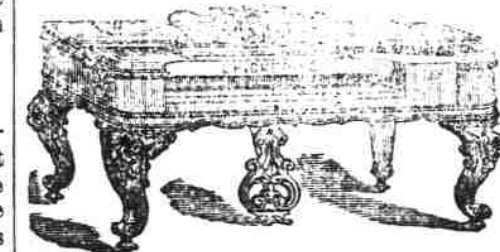
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mar 12

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