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## MECKLENBURG.

BY MARY BAYARD CLARKE.

All hail to thee, thou good old State,  
The noblest of the band  
Who raised the flag of liberty in this  
Our native land!  
All hail to thee! thy worthy sons were  
First to spurn the yoke;  
The tyrant's fetters from their hands  
At Mecklenburg they broke.  
No coward foresight they possessed, on  
Pitiless brink to pause.  
Nor waited for a sister State to lead in  
Freedom's cause.  
"Our lives, our fortunes," was the cry;  
Our honors and our all,  
We lay upon our country's shrine, in  
Answer to her call!  
From every heart there rose a shout  
"No longer will we lie  
Submissive at the tyrant's feet: we'll  
Conquer or we'll die;  
For freedom and our liberties we'll  
Brave proud England's host!"  
Kings' Mount and Guilford prove it was  
No braggart's idle boast.  
There England found a worthy foe her  
Far famed steel had met;  
Firm as the rock our fathers stood and  
Crossed the bayonet;  
Locked in the fierce embrace of steel  
They bravely met their death,  
Each bore his foman to the ground,  
Then yielded up his breath.  
Reasons of Carolina, I bid you in her  
Name,  
Devote your time and talents to re-  
trieve her tarnished fame.  
Ye are scattered through the Union,  
And by your sterling worth,  
Are enriching every State save that  
Which gave you birth,  
Whatever your condition, wherever  
Your are found,  
In the ranks of the mechanic, or as til-  
lers of the ground,  
Among the learned professors, in the  
Legislative hall,  
As sailors or as soldiers, ye excel in  
Each and all.  
For steady perseverance, for honesty  
And truth,  
The sons of Carolina are famous from  
Their youth.  
Than why desert these mountains  
Where first your ardent soul,  
Flashed forth the fire of genius un-  
fettered by control?  
Why leave her peaceful bosom, her rich  
And fertile soil,  
To seek an El Dorado, for gold to dig  
And toil?  
Ah! deep beneath her surface she hideth  
Many an ore,  
Rich gold as pure as Ophir or Califor-  
nia's there.  
I tell you ye are wanting in the noble  
Pride of State.  
Or thus you'd not desert her and leave  
Her desolate.

sufficient reason for reflecting that date as a misprint, or an alteration from the manuscript of the attested copy, and refusing to celebrate the 31st as the N. S. date of the "digested resolves."

7. The N. S. date of this latter document would not then be the 31st of May, but the 1st of June.

8. Newspapers of the colonial period, and also the established churches, wherever found, kept English time, but Mecklenburg then had neither.

Now if there are those who still contend for a conclusion without any other premises than their suspicion that the old patriots did not, and could not, tell the exact truth as to the days of the month, I must bid them adieu in the language of the rider who refused to adopt the choice of route claimed by his mule, and say: "I will not argue with you or any of your kin folks."

Let us turn then to the several manuscripts on the subject of Independence emanating from Mecklenburg in the year 1775. In this letter, only an introduction to this branch of the subject will be given.

In a recent interview with Senator M. W. Ransom, after reiterating his faith in the document of the 20th, and, as Mr. Bayard so happily put it, in "the traditions of a virtuous and intelligent people," he remarked that his father had seen the original draft of the 4th of July Declaration, and often mentioned the number of interlineations displayed in the manuscript.

This "tradition" I find confirmed by the following extract from a newspaper of May 4, 1838, kindly loaned me by Mrs. Thos. J. Holton, of Charlotte:

[From the Fayetteville Observer, 1838.]

THE MECKLENBURG DECLARATION.—It is with no little surprise that we find the editor of the Charleston Courier, in his paper of Saturday last, expressing a doubt of the genuineness of this interesting document. It is some years since the testimony was embodied and published, and it may have gone out of the mind of the editor, and he may never even have seen it; but if any fact in history may be considered as established, settled beyond cavil, it is this: That on the 20th of May, 1775, a Convention of Delegates from each Captain's company in Mecklenburg, adopted, amidst the cheers of a large portion of the people of the county, an emphatic Declaration of their Independence of Great Britain. This happened immediately after the news of the Battle of Lexington was received. And the temporary government which was thereupon established was continued in full and vigorous operation until it was superseded by the adoption of the State Constitution in 1776.

The evidences of the authenticity of the Declaration are numerous, and of unquestionable veracity.

The statement of Major John Davidson, the last surviving signer; the certificate of Capt. James Jack, then of Charlotte, where the Convention assembled, but recently of Elbert county, Georgia, who was the bearer of the Declaration to Congress at Philadelphia; the Manuscript Journal of Rev. Humphrey Hunter, an eye-witness of the whole proceeding, and which gives an exact copy of the Declaration; the statements of Gen. Joseph Graham, of Lincoln, and Col. Wm. Polk, of Raleigh, two as honorable men as any age or State ever produced, who, though now no more, lived long enough to bear conclusive testimony to the occurrences of that day, of which they were both eye witnesses, would seem to be sufficient to establish the fact. But this is not all. The Journal of the Provincial Congress of North Carolina shows that a copy was laid before that body on the 25th day of August, 1775. The original book in which the proceedings were recorded was destroyed by fire about the year 1800; but the copy in the Executive Office at Raleigh was preserved by that great patriot and statesman, Gen. W. R. Davie, who would be little likely to have among his papers a spurious document of that kind. And yet further, the following extract from the celebrated Proclamation of the Royal Governor Martin dated, "On board His Majesty's Ship Cruiser, in Cape Fear River, the 8th of August, 1775," must make assurance double sure:

"And, whereas, I have seen a most infamous publication in the Cape Fear Mercury, importing to be resolves of a set of people styling themselves a committee for the county of Mecklenburg, most traitorously declaring the entire dissolution of the laws, government and constitution of the country, and setting up a sys-

tem of rule and regulation repugnant to the laws and subversive of His Majesty's Government, &c."

We would respectfully ask the Charleston Courier whether this array of testimony has removed its doubts of the genuineness of a document of which North Carolina is, and may well be proud.

If it should object, with Mr. Jefferson, that the Journals of the General Congress contain no allusion to the fact, the answer is at hand. The posthumous memoir of Rev. Mr. Hunter says expressly that Capt. Jack, who bore the Declaration to Philadelphia, reported on his return "that Congress individually manifested their approbation of the conduct of the Mecklenburg citizens, but deemed it premature to lay them officially before the House." In other words Congress had not given up the hope of a reconciliation with the mother country, and was not prepared for a declaration of final separation.

Sustained by such a mass of testimony, there never could have been a doubt of the truth of the Mecklenburg Declaration, had not Mr. Jefferson attempted to give it the go-by in 1819, when the subject was much agitated in the papers of the day. The charge of plagiarism was made against him, founded on the identity of four passages in that paper with four passages in his own National Declaration. To disprove the charge, he adopted the summary mode of disputing the authenticity of the Mecklenburg paper; and not satisfied with this, endeavored to sustain that ground by a foul charge of Toryism against Wm. Hooper one of the North Carolina delegates in Congress, and of lukewarmness on the part of another, Mr. Hewes. How these charges have been disproved and left without the shadow of a shade of support, is matter of history which it is not our purpose to enter upon.

But a few facts are stated in the April (1838) number of the Southern Literary Messenger, which have an important bearing upon the subject, acquitting Mr. Jefferson of plagiarism, taking from him the merit of originating some of the finest passages of the National Declaration, and adding strength, if strength were needed, to the claims of the Mecklenburg Declaration.

The four phrases, which are identical in the two Declarations are: "Dissolves the political bands which have connected," "absolve from all allegiance to the British crown," "are and of right ought to be," and "pledge to each other our lives, our fortunes, and our sacred honor."

Now the Messenger shows that the second phrase is in the Virginia resolutions instructing their Delegates in Congress "to propose to that body to declare the United Colonies free and Independent States," and that it occurs also, together with the first and third phrases, in Mr. Lee's resolution, moved in accordance with that instruction. That none of them were used by Mr. Jefferson in his original draft, but were interpolated by the committee to whom Mr. Jefferson submitted it, as follows, the words thrown in by the committee being in italics:

That these United Colonies are, and of right ought to be, free and independent States: that they are absolved from all allegiance to the British Crown, and that all political connection between them and the State of Great Britain is and of right ought to be totally dissolved." As to the last of the four parallel phrases, says the Messenger, "we cannot trace them to any other document."

In the Mecklenburg Declaration the phrase stood: "To the maintenance of which independence, we solemnly pledge to each other our mutual co-operation, our lives, our fortunes, and our most sacred honor." In Mr. Jefferson's Declaration it ran: "And for the support of the Declaration [with a firm reliance upon Providence] we mutually pledge to each other our lives, our fortunes, and our sacred honor." The words in brackets (above) were introduced by the committee. We have not been able to trace the origin of this phrase to any other source than the Mecklenburg paper, but it may be if we had the State, or other papers, of that remarkable age before us, our researches might trace the Jefferson's to some intermediate channel, or to some common fountain. So then the 4th of July Declaration did not, like a second Minerva from the brain of Jove, spring into notice fully armed *cap a pie*, but required the assistance of more than one mortal spirit in its gradual evolution. We shall see that such was the case also with the attested copy of the Mecklenburg Resolves.

## THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE

By the Citizens of Mecklenburg County, on the Twentieth Day of May, 1775, With Accompanying Documents, Published by the Governor, Under the Authority and Direction of the General Assembly of the State of North Carolina.

The resolution of the General Assembly directing "this publication, makes it the duty of the Governor to cause to be published in pamphlet form the Report of the Committee relative to the Declaration of Independence, and the accompanying documents, in the following order, viz: 1. The Mecklenburg Declaration, with the names of the Delegates composing the meeting. 2. The certificates testifying to the circumstances attending the Declaration; and 3. The proceedings of the Cumberland Association.

In the discharge of this duty, the Governor has deemed it proper to prefix to the publication the following brief review of the evidence by which the authenticity of this interesting portion of the history of North Carolina is controverted and sustained.

On the 30th of April, 1819, the publication marked A, made its appearance in the Raleigh Register. It was communicated to the editors of that paper by Doctor Joseph McKnitt, then and now a citizen of the county of Mecklenburg, and was speedily republished in most of the newspapers in the Union. A paper containing it (the Essex Register) was, it seems, on the 22nd June, 1819, enclosed to Mr. Jefferson, by his illustrious compatriot, John Adams, accompanied with the remark, that he thought it genuine; and this suggestion of Mr. Adams elicited the following reply, which was at that time published in various newspapers, and has been since given to the world in the 4th volume of Mr. Jefferson's works, page 314:

TO JOHN ADAMS.

Monticello, July 9, 1819.

"DEAR SIR: I am in debt to you for your letters of May 21st, 27th, and June the 22nd. The first, delivered me by Mr. Greenwood, gave me the gratification of his acquaintance; and a gratification it always is, to be made acquainted with gentlemen of candor, worth, and information, as I found Mr. Greenwood to be. That on the subject of Mr. Samuel Adams Wells, shall not be forgotten in time and place, when it can be used to his advantage."

"But what has attracted my peculiar notice, is the paper from Mecklenburg county, of North Carolina, published in the Essex Register, which you were so kind as to enclose in your last, of June the 22nd. And you seem to think it genuine. I believe it spurious. I believe it to be a very unjustifiable quiz, like that of the volcano, so minutely related to us as having broken out in North Carolina, some half dozen years ago, in that part of the country, and perhaps in that very county of Mecklenburg, for I do not remember its precise locality. If this paper be really taken from the Raleigh Register, as quoted, I wonder it should have escaped Ritchie, who culls what is good from every paper, as the bee from every flower; and the National Intelligencer, too, which is edited by a North Carolinian; and that the fire should blaze out all at once in Essex, one thousand miles from where the spark is said to have fallen. But it really taken from the Raleigh Register, who is the narrator and is the name subscribed real, or is it a fictitious as the paper itself? It appeals, too, to an original book, which is burnt, to Mr. Alexander, who is dead, to a joint letter from Caswell, Hewes, and Hooper, all dead, to a copy sent to the dead Caswell, and another sent to Doctor Williamson, now probably dead, whose memory did not recollect, in the history he has written of North Carolina, this gigantic step of its county of Mecklenburg. Horry, too, is silent in his history of Marion, whose scene of action was the country bordering on Mecklenburg. Ramsay, Marshall, Jones, Girardin, Wirt, historians of the adjacent States, all silent. When Mr. Henry's resolutions, far short of independence, flew like lightning through every paper, and kindled both sides of the Atlantic, this flaming declaration of the same date, of the independence of Mecklenburg county, of North Carolina, absolving it from the British allegi-

ance, and abjuring all political connection with that nation, although sent to Congress, too, is never heard of. It is not known, even a twelve-month after, when a similar proposition is first made in that body. Armed with this bold example, would not you have addressed our timid brethren in peals of thunder, on their tardy fears? Would not every advocate of independence have rung the glories of Mecklenburg county, in North Carolina, in the ears of the doubting Dickinson and others, who hung so heavily on us? Yet the example of independent Mecklenburg county, in North Carolina, was never once quoted. The paper speaks, too, of the continued exertions of their delegation (Caswell, Hooper, Hewes,) in the cause liberty and independence. Now, you remember as well as I do, that we had not a grater tory in Congress than Hooper; that Hewes was very wavering, sometimes firm, sometimes feeble, according as the day was clear or cloudy; that Caswell, indeed, was a good whig, and kept these gentlemen to the notch, while he was present; but that he left us soon, and their line of conduct became then uncertain until Penn came, who fixed Hewes, and the vote of the State. I must not be understood as suggesting any doubtfulness in the State of North Carolina. No State was more fixed or forward. Nor do I affirm, positively, that this paper is a fabrication, because the proof of a negative can only be presumptive. But I shall believe it such until positive and solemn proof of its authenticity shall be produced. And if the name of McKnitt be real, and not a part of the fabrication, it needs a vindication by the production of such proof. For the present, I must be an unbeliever in the apocryphal gospel.

"I am glad to learn that Mr. Ticknor has safely returned to his friends; but should have been much more pleased had he accepted the Professorship in our University, which we should have offered him in form. Mr. Bowditch, too, refuses us; so fascinating is the vinculum of the dulce natale solum. Our wish is to procure natives, where they can be found, like these gentlemen, of the first order of acquirement in their respective lines; but preferring foreigners of the first order to natives of the second, we shall certainly have to go, for several of our Professors, to countries more advanced in science than we are.

"I set out within three or four days for my other home, the distance of which, and its cross mails, are great impediments to epistolary communications. I shall remain there about two months; and there, here, and everywhere, I am and shall always be, affectionately and respectfully yours,

TH. JEFFERSON."

The republication of this letter in a work which is intended for, and will go down to posterity, recommended alike by its intrinsic excellence, and the illustrious name of the author, has imposed upon the Legislature the task of proving that, with regard to this particular fact, Mr. Jefferson was mistaken, and that his opinion was made up from a very superficial and inaccurate examination of the publication in the Raleigh Register, the only evidence then before him, and upon which his letter is a commentary.

The letter itself was evidently written *currente calamo*, and for that reason may not be regarded as a fair subject for severe criticism. It is not intended to subject it to such a test, nor is it designed to examine it further than may be necessary to the ascertainment of truth. Of the ability, the purity, the patriotism of the author, it is unnecessary to speak. His love of country was not bounded by the confines of Virginia; but it is no discredit to his memory that her institutions, her heroes and her statesmen occupied the first place in his affections. She was emphatically "the mother of great men," and "his own, his native land;" and it is no matter of surprise that he should be unwilling, without the most ample proof, to transfer the brightest page of her history to emblazon the records of a sister State. Mr. Wirt's Life of Patrick Henry had just been published, and for the latter was claimed the high distinction of having been the first to give motion to the ball of the Revolution. Mr. Jefferson himself was the author of the Declaration of Independence by Congress, and was not disposed to share in any degree the immortality with which it had crowned him, with a comparatively obscure citizen of North Carolina; and, therefore, the evidence which was at once satisfactory to Mr. Adams, is by him pro-

nounced "to be a very unjustifiable quiz."

The grounds for this opinion, in the order in which they are given to Mr. Adams, are, 1. That the story is "like that of the volcano having broken out in that part of the country, and perhaps in that very county of Mecklenburg." 2. "If this paper be really taken from the Raleigh Register, as quoted, I wonder it should have escaped Ritchie," &c., "and that the fire should blaze out all at once in Essex, one thousand miles from where the spark is said to have fallen." 3. "But if really taken from the Raleigh Register, who is the narrator, and is the name subscribed real, or is it a fictitious as the paper itself?" 4. "It appeals, too, to an original book, which is burnt, to Mr. Alexander, who is dead, to a joint letter from Caswell, Hewes, and Hooper, all dead, to a copy sent to the dead Caswell, and another sent to Doctor Williamson, now probably dead, whose memory did not recollect, in the history he has written of North Carolina, this gigantic step of its county of Mecklenburg," &c., &c.

Without further remark with regard to the first point—the quiz about the volcano—or the second, whether the "spurious" paper was really published in the Raleigh Register, it is proper to say, in reply to the third argument, that the name subscribed is real, that the individual still lives, that he is moreover a credible witness, and that it is to his laudable attention and exertions that the State is indebted for the preservation of much of the testimony which is now offered to the public. The fourth argument demands, and will receive more particular attention and examination.

The paper appeals to a book, which is burnt; to Mr. Alexander, who is dead; to Messrs. Caswell, Hooper, and Hewes, all dead; to a copy sent to "the dead Caswell," and another, sent to Dr. Williamson, probably dead, are the consecutive facts which Mr. Jefferson states, and on which he relies. Admit the premises, and the conclusion would be probable, though not inevitable; and a writer of much less ability, if permitted to assume his facts, might predicate upon them not only a very plausible, but an unanswerable argument. The very fact, however, on which Mr. Jefferson rests, as the climax of improbabilities, is not only not proved to exist, but, upon his own showing, does not exist; and justifies the remark in the outset, that his letter was written in haste, upon a very superficial and imperfect view of the subject. The paper does not appeal "to the dead Caswell," but to the then living Davie, a native of the section of country in which the event occurred, like the former, a distinguished hero of the Revolution, and, in every respect, a proper depository of the record. The following is the statement in question: ("The foregoing is a true copy of the papers, on the above subject, left in my hands by John McKnitt, Alexander, dec'd. I find it mentioned on file, that the original book was burned April 1800. That a copy of the proceedings was sent to Hugh Williamson, in New York, then writing a history of North Carolina, and that a copy was sent to Gen. W. R. Davie.") Gen. Davie died shortly after the date of Mr. Jefferson's letter; but this identical copy, known by the writer of these remarks to be in the hand-writing of John McKnitt Alexander, one of the Secretaries of the Mecklenburg meeting, is now in the Executive Office of this State. Caswell, Hooper, and Hewes are all dead; but Capt. Jack, who was appointed to carry to them, at Philadelphia, this Mecklenburg Declaration, lived long enough to bear testimony to the truth; and his statement is circumstantial, explicit and satisfactory. If it needed confirmation, it would be found to be fully sustained by the interesting communication of the late Rev. Francis Cummins, D. D., of Georgia, to the Hon. Nathaniel Macon. More satisfactory evidence, drawn from more respectable sources, Mr. Jefferson, if alive, could not, and would not require. It is not hazardous too much to say, that there is no one event of the Revolution, which has been, or can be more fully, or clearly authenticated.

It is, perhaps, needless to multiply proofs, or to extend this article. Col. William Polk is a resident of this city, a venerable remnant of the Revolutionary stock, has passed the common boundary of human life, and in green old age, is in the full possession of his faculties. His compatriots, Caswell, and Hooper, and Hewes, are dead, but he lives, was present, heard his father proclaim the Declaration to the assem-