## The Mecklenburg Declaration of

## Dr. Moses W. Alexander's

Delivered in July, 1824, in Which Tribute is Paid to the Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence.

DECLARATION OF INDEPEN-DENCE

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 de livered by the Rev. John Williamson, Pastor of said church, July 5, 1824.

Fellow Citisens: I have this day the honor of being appointed to read to you the Declaration of Independence, made by Congress on the 4th Before proceeding to read that dignified and an-important production of our government. I hope it will not be considered irrelevant to the business of the day, nor repugmant to the feelings of true patriotism if we, the citizens of Mecklenburk 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 of 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 efforts, 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 rost 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 great climax of polity in Europe, has been to establish that political balance on which they rest. that efficacy of political order which he greates 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 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 dreaded 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, every principle of national justice and reciprocity.

We, as a nation the most highly favored by heaven, are now indepen ment, prosperous and happy; plenty smiles within our borders-peace encompasses our shores. joy free and unbiased suffrage, the only palladium of permanent and correct republican government; fications of office and requisites to promotion. Here we are blessed with an uncontrolled liberty of the press, 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 the 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 citiens to every laudable and beneficial internal embellishment and improvement.

As a nation we now stand exalted the Utopian principles of theoretic now permit me to read the philosophy and sophisticated policy. dignified and prudent, resting on the firm and impartial principles of national justice, of free, equal and re-ciprocal intercourse, have fatterly borne the palm in all our diplomatic intercourse with foreign nations, and of this county, Col. Thomas Polk have written to conviction, and thus issued an order to the captains of frowned to silence, every from those principles which have powers to devise ways and means to marked our march to national pre- assist their suffering brethren in Bos-

fort of visionary policy, pusillanimity and sectional jealousy, has rode triumphantly over the waves of prefudice, and in every instance, on equal terms, has borne our Star Spangled Hanner victorious over the couchant Whilst by land, our British Lion. patriot band of undisciplined freemen. impelied by love of country, and mided by that heroic genius of un-

fitude have witnessed at New Orleans i'g month. Every delegate felt the the last death groun of British glory, value and importance of the prize, now acknowledge the existence and group as energetic, has here afforded to oppressed humanity of swelled with indignation at the malice do hereby ordain and adopt as a new very clime, the welcome asylum of and insatiable

Winslow Alexander's speech was copied from The Catawaba Journal of October 18, 1804, a weekly newspaper published in Charlotte by Lemuel Eigham. Dr. Alexander was a son of Dr. Joseph McKnitt Alexander, a grandson of John McKnitt Alexander and father of Capt S. B. Alexander and father of Capt S. B. Alexander and father of Capt S. B. Alexander. He was bern in 1788 and was acquainted personally with most of the likerty. Here alone has been established those civil and moral principles, which must ultimately influence every age and clime; which will every age and clime; which will quicken the lapse of years; spread as they endure, and brighten as they spread, until they eradicate that spirit of civil intolerance and break those apiritual 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 grorance 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 onsequent enjoyment of civil and religious liberty. On these principles s here founded the only government that has ever existed on earth where the religious has not been blended with the civil institutions of the coun 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 ould never long exist uncorrupted, without an establishment-without the mandate of a tyrant and the coertion of penal sanctions the most se vere.

To America, under the fostering nand of a kind providence, has been enfided the almost miraculous develpment of the fact, that a pure and mcorrupted religion can better exist without than with the aid of 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 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 an entire previous century.

The knowledge diffused throughout 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, a) olition and other institutions. which are now extending their amehorating 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 have perhaps not sufficiently arrested the attention of Americans. but which we must pronounce the and caused even Russia to accede to most important since the birth of Treserve our property, our lives and Trivileges, immunities, or authority ally approved by the members Christ, and the celebration of which ought to be handed down, with religious veneration and gratitude, to cur 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. it has become the happiness of millions, its shade defending them from the which talents, integrity, moral and rays of anarchy, persecution and political excellence, become the qualiyouth, and blooming with unfading Barry. verdure-its fruit will increase with the lapse of time, and its branches regulated alone by intelligence and extend to the confines of the universe. Who would not glory in being instrumental in originating that which happy results? And who can so justly beast of originating this happy era, 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 You will of the meeting as drawn and ings our Cabinet, unwavering and candid, certified by their clerk, and deposited in the safe-keeping of Gen. Davie, for the benefit of some future historian.

Agreeably to the arrangements made by the most respectable citizens attempt each militia company to elect two which has been made to drive us persons and delegate to them ample ton and generally to adopt measures Our navy, in opposition to every e'- to extricate themselves from the impending storm-and to secure unmpaired their invaluable rights, priv-Heges and liberties from the domiant grasp of British imposition and

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 duunted patriotism and unbiased re:- Lexington on that day of the preced-But our national polity, equally and the awful and solemn crisis which had arrived; every bosom Here alone on earth. In the late attack at Lexington. The our former laws wherein, neverthe-

## Speech at Hopewell Church The Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence.

RESOLVED. That whosoever directly or indirectly, abets, or in any way, form or manner, countenances the invasion of our rights as attempted by the Parliament of Great Britain, is an enemy to his country, to America and the rights of Man.

RESOLVED, That we, the citizens of Mecklenburg county, do hereby dissolve the political bonds which have connected us with the mother country, and absolve ourselves from all allegiance to the British erown, abjuring all political connection with a nation that has wantonly trampled on our rights and liberties, and inhumanly shed the innocent blood of Americans at Lexington.

RESOLVED. That we do declare ourselves a free and independent people; that we are and of a right ought to be a sovereign and self-governing people, under the power of God and the general Congress; 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.

RESOLVED. That we do hereby ordain and adopt as rules of conduct, all and each of our former laws, and the crown of Great Britain cannot be considered hereafter as holding any rights, privileges or immunities against

RESOLVED. That all offices, both civil and military, in this county, be entitled to exercise the same power and authorities as heretofore; that every member of this delegation shall henceforth be a civil officer, and exercise the power of a justice of the peace, issue process, hear and determine controversies according to law, preserve peace, union and harmony in the county, and use every exertion to spread the love of liberty and of country, until a more general and better organized system of government be established.

RESOLVED. That a copy of these resolutions be transmitted by express to the President of the Continental Congress, assembled in Philadelphia, to be laid before that body.

> ABRAHAM ALEXANDER, Chairman, JOHN M'KNITT ALEXANDER, Secretary, EPHRAIM BREVARD, Secretary.

> > CHARLES ALEXANDER ZACCHEUS WILSON, JR., WAIGHTSILL AVERY, BENJAMIN PATTON, MATTHEW M'CLURE, NEIL MORRISON, ROBERT IRWIN, JOHN FLENNIKEN, DAVID REESE, JOHN DAVIDSON. RICHARD HARRIS, JR., THOMAS POLK.

WILLIAM KENNON, JOHN FORD, RICHARD BARRY, HENRY DOWNES, ESRA ALEXANDER,

WILLIAM GRAHAM, JOHN QUERY, ADAM ALEXANDER, HEZEKIAH ALEXANDER,

HEZEKIAH J. BALCH,

JOHN PHIFER,

JAMES HARRIS,

erties of America. Conformably to this view, the meeting was organized. Delegates present: Col. Thos. Polk, Jne. McKnitt Alexander, Ephraim Erevard, Hez. Alexander, Hezekiah Balch, Adam Alexander, John Charles Alexander, Harris, Zacheus Wilson, Sen., William Avery. Wrightsill Benjamin Patton, Richard Matthew McClure, Henry Downs, Neil Morrison, Ezra Alexanler, Robert Irwin, William Graham, John Flenniken, John Query, 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 consened, it was unanimously ordained: RESOLVED. That whoever directly or indirectly abetted, or in any way, form or manner, countenanced the unchartered and danger ous 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

Phifer.

Kennon,

2nd. RESOLVED. That we, the itizens of Mecklenburg county, do hereby dissolve the political bands which have connected us with the mother country, and hereby absolve curselves 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 inhumanly shed the lood of American patriots at Lexing-

3rd. RESOLVED. That we do ereby declare ourselves a free and adependent people; are, and of right ight to be, a sovereign and self-govrning association, and under the entrol of no power than that of our od and the general government of the Congress, to the maintenance of which independence, we solemnly pledge to each other our mutual coperation, our lives, our fortunes and

our most sacred honor. 4th. RESOLVED, That as we control of no law or legal officer, civil or military, within this country, we revenge developed rule of life, all, each, and every of ns of Abraham, after vassal- universal sentiment was, let us act less, the crown of Great Britain never of two Mousand years, may be with energy as brethren leagued to can be considered as holding rights, that their proceedings were individu-

what is still more endearing, the lib-5th. RESOLVED, That it is fur every military efficer in this county is hereby reinstated in his former comformably to these regulations. that every member present, of this delegation, shall henceforth be a civil officer, viz: a Justice of the Peace in the character of a "committees man," to issue process, hear and deaccording to gald adopted laws, and to preserve peace, union and harmony in said country-and to use every exertion to spread the love of ountry and fire of freedom throughut America, until a more general and organized government be established in this province.

After discussin the foreign r solves, and arranging by-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. select committee was then appointed to draw a more full and definite state-ment of grievances, and a more declaration of independence The delegation then adjourned about 2 o'clock a, m., May 20.

May 20, delegation met. The Seect committee reported a formal Declaration of Independence, (believed to have been drawn by Dr. Ephraim Brevard, chairman of said Committee), which was unanimously proved 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 sanctions 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 Captain James Jack, of Charlotte, was deputed as express to Congress. then sitting in Philadelphia, accompanying said proceedings with a letaddressed to Richard Caswell, Wm. Hooper and Joseph Hughes, our then representatives from this province, enjoining it on our said represcatatives to use all possible means to have the said proceedings sanctioned and approved by the General Con-On the return of Captain Jack, the Delegates learned, by a letter from said three representatives.

ongress, but it was deemed prematire to lay them before the House, recommending perserverance, order energy, &c.

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 Before this judicature all process. suspicious persons were made to appear, who were formally tried, banished, or bound to good behaviour. Its jurisdiction was unlimited as to Toryism, and its decrees as final as the confidence and patriotism of the county. Several were arrested and brought before them from Tryon, (now Lincoln), Rowan and the adjacent counties. (b)

It is also gratifying to every citizen of this State, to learn that our Provincial Assembly, held at Halifax, on mously passed the House authorizing and empowering our representatives at 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 longress to declare the United Colonies free and independent, was passed the 15th day of May, 1776, over one months after the North Carolina stands unequaled in its magnificent act, from which it evidently originated. (Wirt's Life of P. Henry, page 193-4).

These are transactions with which ou, together with the citizens of this and the adjoining counties, have long been familiar-these have been the conversation frequent topics of emongst us for nearly fifty yearsthese 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 ternish, and which the malignant

ever stand firm as the eternal princi- guard who ples 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 such characters, what is the glitter of an empire, what the pageantry of state, or what are the empty unmerit ed titles of nobility? Who would

not glory in such ancestors-who would not emulate such virtue-who at Ralegh would not sanction such principles? Principles which have so preeminently distinguished and crowned with never fading laurels of mental and moral grandeur those illustrious patriots who occupy the brightest pag :x ir the history of human greatness, 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 unfading verdure, fanned with the virtuous zephyrs of civil and religous liberty, beautifies and embelished the scenery of life, and coolly shades our pilgrimage down this valley of anxiety and trouble, to that peaceful bourne from whence no

NOTES

(a) It is perhaps unparalleled in the history of national diplomacy that in every instance, (now recalled from the various important national subjects discussed Ghent, and those difficulties arising under it, together with all our subsement collisions with England, Spain, France and Russia, the overwhelm ing argument and correct principles narumed by John Q. Adams, our present Sec. of State, have produced ar ntire acquiescence in those power the correctness of American principles and policy.

(b) The following certificate is in ur possession, viz: North Carolina,

Mecklenburg County November 28, 1775

These may certify, to all whom it may concern, that the bearer hereof. William Henderson, is allowed her to be a true friend to liberty, and has igned the Association. ABR'M ALEXANDER.

hairman of the Committee of Safety. Dunn and Booth, two lawyers reiding in Sallsbury. Rowan county, having threatened to have this delegation arrested for treason, the Committee of Safety issued an order fo their arrest—a guard was sent on to Salisbury with said order-they were prrested and banished to Charleston. S. C. Gen. George Graham, now living near Charlotte, was one of the 1776.

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## An Address by Rev. Dr. F. L. Haw

Delivered on the Occasion of the Celebra of the Signing of the Mecklenburg Dec tion of Independence, Held May 20, 182 Charlotte.

Charlotte Democrat, May 20th, 1857. Of the closing and historical On Wednesday last, May 20th, the address we add the fi 1857, the Anniversary of the Meck- carefully prepared synches. lenburg Declaration of Independence we do not prefend of May 20th, 1775, was duly celebrat- but merely to give a general ed in Charlotte according to previous the very interesting facts an

At 12 o'clock a procession was form- that we are indebted to ed at Public Square, under the direc- E. J. Hale, Esq. of The Fa tion of Gen. John A. Young, Marshal Observer, for valuable assist of the Day, and Messrs. Gillespie, Tor- preparing the abstract selerence, Grier and Gen. Walkup, Assis- enabling us to place tant Marshals.

Justice Nash and other officers of the sideration. day, together with the Orator and STATEMENT OF THE QUI Reader, His Excellency Gov. Bragg, and the Rev. Dr. Lacy.
The Marshal announced the Order

Proceedings, which commenced with a fervent, eloquent and patriotic prayer by the Rev. Dr. Lacy. for the purpose of reading the Meck-James W. Osborne, Esq., then arose

lenburg Declaration, which he did in The Committee of Safety, of which Abraham Alexander was chairman, with some highly patriotic and appropriate remarks. THE ADDRESS BY REV. DR. HAWKS.

Dr. Hawks was introduced to the audience in a brief and appropriate and 20th days of May 1774 manner by the venerable Chief Jus- tain resolutions, declaring

Dr. Hawks' exordium was a beau- ish crown, and claiming the tiful and most touching enforcement self-government were then of the idea of veneration with which adopted. North carolina fu we look upon places, by which either firms that there was also a our patriotism or our affections are of a Committee stirred. He applied this thought, this feeling, to the present occasion, in the ollowing eloquent passage:

"When, therefore, in the distant home where I dwelt, an unwilling exile from the land of my fathers, I was temporary evstern nonored with a summons to meet you here to-day, I felt that the only proper place is here, for the commemoration protection of the lass of the events we would recall. For on this day, four-score and two years ago, and on this spot, our fathers wrote their part of a large chapter in history, in the brave, but then perilous world-independence." He next passed to the consideration

of the American Revolution, that spectacle of unequaled moral sublimity," which, "whether considered troverted with reference to the motive that prompted it, the men who led it, the patient self-denial, and the oheerfully been received in borne sacrifices involved in it, or the incredibly marvelous consequences sembled in the low which have flowed from it, looms up cited by the intelligence. before is in collosel proportions, and grandeur.

From the Revolution generally, he passed on to a Jelineation of character of the people of this part of North Carolina, their origin, training. and principles of civil and religious liberty which were instilled into their minds more than in any other parts of the colony, from their youth up.

We pass over, as having neither time nor room for them, brilliant passages relating to the Union, to Northern fanaticism, to the Southern duty of calm watchfulness, preparation for whatever may happen, and a deter-mination to stand by the Constitution. preeminently participating in those transactions, which can hereafts: barely be imitated—which will for-"Develop your resources," said he,

The stand was occupied by Chief testimony on the same

meeting was held in the 19th and 20th of May 1 and there made, but was held on the 30th of Mar adopted, and that this only action of the people of On the other hand the let of North Carolina has affirm

the people of the State have o in that affirmation, that t meeting held in Charlotte ence, abjuring allegiance meeting was ! action of that las Mecklenburg mast

crown, PRESUMPTIVE PROB Dr. H. stated that the tain facts connected made in Mecklenburg. 20th or 30th and irresp contents, which were yond dispute, and had 1. Whatever paper was made when

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preserved at the time, both preserved at the time, both ory and by means of strike part of some of those that so. The document has been