

# MECKLENBURG MONUMENT

Text of the Memorial Presented to the General Assembly Fifty-seven Years Ago.

To the Honorable the General Assembly of the State of North Carolina, now in Session:

At a meeting of the citizens of the county of Mecklenburg, and the adjoining counties, held on the 24th of August, 1842, at the court-house in the town of Charlotte, the undersigned were appointed a committee to prepare and forward a memorial to your honorable body on the subject of incorporating the "Mecklenburg Monument Association," whose duty and object will be the erection of a suitable monument, in the town of Charlotte, commemorative of the Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence on the 20th of May 1775.

There is no State in our Union whose early history is marked with greater devotion to the cause of Liberty than the State of North Carolina. The name will not be misconstrued when it is stated that neither at home or abroad is the real character of the people, and the unsullied patriotism of the citizens, known and appreciated. The historian is compelled, by examining the history of North Carolina, to be satisfied that the name, the merits, and the character of the first Governor are not known.

True and unpretending in character, firm and undeviating in her devotion to principles, her sons seem rather satisfied with a consciousness of the rectitude of their own intentions than to court the praise which belongs to merit, or to demand for their ancestry that need of renown which is due to exalted patriotism or chivalric daring. But we trust a more auspicious moment has arrived, when the industry and research of her sons will preserve those memorials of her patriotism, to be handed down as "a rich legacy" to future generations.

So far as the early history of the colony of North Carolina has been extended to the curious eye of the historian, it is full of incident, elevating to the character of the State, and worthy to be cherished by her sons. It was on her shores that the adventurous anchor of the first Anglo-Saxon to this western hemisphere rested. A fleet, sustained by the gallant Sir Walter Raleigh, and led by Amundans and Barlow, here found, in the language of the historian of the day, "a people most gentle, loving, and faithful, void of all guile and treason, and such as lived after the manner of the golden age." Among such a people, fleeing from the oppressions and persecutions of the Old World, our ancestors found the colony of North Carolina. Her whole history, from the earliest periods of its existence to the final overthrow of the royal power of England, shows an indomitable spirit of Liberty; and, although obedient to wholesome laws, that the least oppression or tyranny was promptly met, and manfully opposed.

"Are there any who doubt man's capacity for self-government?" asks an eloquent writer on her history, "let them study the history of North Carolina. Its inhabitants were restless and turbulent in their imperfect submission from abroad; the administration of the Colony was firm, humane, and tranquil, when left to themselves." The first American manifesto against the encroachments of power, the elective franchise, and the wise interference of its existence in North Carolina, as early as 1675, and nearly two hundred years before our Independence was declared. Thus were sown deep and broad, the seeds of Liberty among her people, with a liberal hand. Sometimes these seeds produced the fruits of unity and confusion; for, at an early period, the Colony was under the control of rulers in open rebellion against the English Crown. At another period, the imbecile hand that then swayed the English sceptre, Charles II., tired of the contest, left her to her own course, undisturbed either by the tyranny of rulers, or the rapacity of war.

Pursuing "the noiseless tenor of their way," the Colonists of North Carolina peacefully followed the avocations of agriculture and industry, acknowledging no superior and bending their knee to no power but to the God Almighty. Towards many of her Colonists that eloquent defender of American right, Lord Clarendon, on the floor of Parliament, denounced the course of the mother-country as that of "a cruel and unjust step-mother." But towards the faithful, driving her, Hagar-like, into the wilderness, there to perish, abandoned and alone. But the God of Abraham comforted her in her exile with the refreshing shade and the sparkling fountain, and declared unto her that she should not be numbered for multitude. It is not wonderful that a people thus nurtured should be ready, Islamah-like, to raise their hands against tyranny and oppression.

That the people of North Carolina should always have been "Men who knew their rights, and knowing dared maintain," is evidence from every page of their history. But that her sons should, on the 20th day of May, 1775, assemble at Charlotte, at a period of doubt, of darkness, and of danger, without concert with other States, without assurances of support from any quarter, and without dissolving the political bands which connected them with the mother country; and these "declare themselves a free and independent people, and that right ought to be sovereign and self-sustaining," is a subject full of moral sublimity, and a source of elevating State pride.

That this event should be deemed by some who, ignorant of our history, are of the fair name of our State, as a legend of a doubtful authenticity, of modern origin, is not to be wondered. But time, that steady but unerring guide of truth, has settled this matter beyond the reach of doubt or the ravings of envy.

The contemporaneous evidence of General Graham; of Capt. Jack who

Caswell, Hooper and Hewes, then members of the Continental Congress at Philadelphia, and the testimony of others, now preserved in the archives of American history, are sufficient to satisfy incredulity itself. But should any still doubt, considering these as the traditions of an obscure event, preserved by the filial fondness of North Carolinians, we would produce the proclamation of Governor Martin, on board of his Majesty's ship cruiser, on the Cape Fear river, dated the 8th August, 1775, denouncing "as most infamous a publication in the Cape Fear Mercury, importing to be resolved by 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 system of rule and regulation, subversive of his Majesty's government."

Here is the Mecklenburg Declaration fully set forth, and vindicated from calumny or doubt. But the very fact of its being doubted, first by an oracle, whose responses however prophetic in politics, cannot be regarded as infallible; and subsequently, by others abroad, should convince most earnestly and conclusively your honorable body the importance of securing to North Carolina a more enduring monument than legislative reports or paper resolutions. Nearly all who were actors in these scenes and perils have now passed away. It often occurs in the history of man that facts well known by one generation, are controverted by the next; and at a succeeding period are considered as doubtful legends, not worthy of historical faith. Let us then preserve these memorials of an event so soul cheering to the patriot, so elevating to our character as a State.

There are some events which are engraved on the hearts of the nation "are no inscriptions or entablatures, less broad than the earth itself, can carry the information where it lay, not gone." Of these is our national birth day, the 4th July, 1776. It is inscribed in living letters of joy, in the hearts of millions of freemen, and annually we rejoice and read "Its history in a Nation's eyes."

But the 20th of May, 1775, more than a year in advance of this glorious period belongs to the Old North State. It is one of her reserved rights, and one she will never cede to the Federal government. Let then a monument arise unto the memory of the signers of the Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence, and by this means show our sense of this glorious achievement, preserve the same pure spirit of patriotism, and keep alive a deep and abiding regard for the principles of our revolution.

"Human beings," said an eloquent orator at the laying of the corner-stone of the Bunker Hill Monument, "are composed not of reason only, but of imagination and sentiment; and that is neither wasted or misapplied, which is appropriated to giving right direction to sentiments and opening the proper springs of feeling in the human heart." In rearing this monument at the very spot where the first Declaration of Independence was made, we direct the mind by an elevated object to the great moral causes that produced our revolution, to the noble daring and chivalric patriotism by which it was achieved, and to the numberless blessings that have flowed down unto us by its happy consummation.

Before this monument hoary age may pause and rejoice in the fruit of his labors, and from it youth receive the inspirations of patriotism, as shown forth in their glorious examples, and thus vow to emulate their career. In the language of the orator, above alluded to, "we wish that this column, rising towards Heaven, amid temples dedicated to God, may produce in all minds a pious feeling of dependence and gratitude. Let it arise until it meets the sun in his coming, let the earliest light of the morning gild it, and parting day linger and play on its summit."

The undersigned, in conclusion, beg leave to submit a copy of the proceedings of the meeting above alluded to, and hope that your honorable body will, as requested, grant an act of incorporation to this association, and also an appropriation for funds to assist in accomplishing its objects. And, as in duty bound, etc.

Fred Nash, Wm. J. Alexander, David F. Caldwell, James W. Osborne, H. C. Jones, Paul Barringer, John Phifer, John H. Wheeler, Isaac T. Avery, M. Hoke, Charles Fisher, Jos. McD. Carson, Robert Strange, James Iredell, D. L. Swain, Wm. H. Haywood, Jr., Burton Craigie, Committee to Memorialize the Legislature of North Carolina.

Swain, Wm. Gaston, Edward B. Dudley, R. M. Saunders, I. T. Avery, Wm. Dixon, Gen. A. F. Gaston, Wm. A. Graham, John G. Bynum, Dr. Joseph W. Ross, Wm. A. Hargett, Dr. Cyrus Hunter, John Irwin, Dr. Wm. Johnson, Jas. B. Knox, Augustus Alexander, Eleazer Alexander, T. N. Alexander, Barlett Shipp, W. B. Alexander, John H. Wheeler, Col. Cad. Jones, Gen. Paul Barringer, Hon. Thomas Ruffin, Alfred M. Burton, Hon. J. J. Daniel, Jos. McD. Carson, Duncan Cameron, Gen. James Iredell, Geo. E. Badger, Wm. H. Haywood, Jonathan Bowens, James H. McTrissey, Thomas G. Polk, Dr. J. G. M. Ramsey, John Robinson, Dr. D. Charles W. Hargett, Daniel Coleman, Dr. Cyrus Alexander, Samuel Morrison, David White, Dr. D. T. Caldwell, Alexander Caldwell, Dr. Kiah, P. Harris, William F. Phifer, Robert Kirkpatrick, are such others as may be hereafter named, he appointed directors of the monument association, and that they proceed to collect subscriptions, and take other measures for erecting a monument on the spot where the Declaration of Independence was made on the 20th May, 1775.

That the above named gentlemen, or a majority of them, cause a memorial to be addressed to the next General Assembly, praying to be incorporated under the name and style of "The Mecklenburg Monument Association;" and that they proceed to appoint agents in the different parts of the State for the purpose of raising funds for the above purpose.

Resolved, also, that they petition the said General Assembly for an appropriation to assist in this truly patriotic undertaking.

These resolutions were advocated by the mover, and Messrs. Caldwell and Jones of Rowan, in pertinent and feeling addresses, and unanimously adopted. On motion it was ordered that these proceedings be published in the Charlotte papers, with a request to the other papers of the State to copy them. Wm. J. ALEXANDER, President.

S. FOX, T. I. GRIER, Vice-Presidents.

J. W. HAMPTON, I. S. ALEXANDER, Secretaries.

At a meeting of a portion of the members of the Association on Thursday evening, the following resolution was adopted: Resolved, That a committee composed of the following gentlemen, viz: Frederick Nash, W. J. Alexander, David F. Caldwell, J. W. Osborne, H. C. Jones, John Phifer, P. Barringer, John H. Wheeler, Michael Hoke, Isaac T. Avery, Charles Fisher, Joseph McD. Carson, Robert Strange, James Iredell, D. L. Swain, William H. Haywood, Jr., Burton Craigie, members of this association, be appointed to prepare and forward to the next General Assembly of North Carolina a memorial on the subject of erecting an act of incorporation to this association; and also to ask of that body an appropriation of funds to assist in accomplishing the object of this association to erect a monument to the memory of the signers of the Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence.

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