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# Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence

It is the misfortune of our Country, that the heroic deeds of many of her noblest sons have remained unrecorded. Patriots have lived & fought and died in her cause, whose very names are lost to posterity. There has been no historian to perpetuate their memories. Their actions like their existence, have slumbered for half a century in total obscurity, or in the dim memories of the surviving few of their compatriots. They have gone & their memories are buried with them. No monumental inscription marks the site of their resting place. Rank weeds wave over it & the foot of the traveller presses the spot, unconscious of the precious ashes that lie beneath.

Many of the most important events of ~~of~~ our revolutionary struggle have enjoyed a similar repose, and among these the Mec. Dec. of Ind. dec. in Mec Co N.C. May 1775 (explanation is eminently conspicuous. In a letter of the elder Adams to Thos Jefferson, in June 1819 he wonders at its long concealment, declares that "the genuine sense of America at that moment was never so well expressed before nor since" as in that document, & adds. "if I had possessed it I would have made the hall of Congress echo & re-echo with it. fifteen months before your declaration of Independence".

This seeming preference of Mr Adams for the
Mec' Dec' Ind' over the one Mr Jefferson himself
had written was well calculated to rouse the
pride & vindictive feelings of the latter, & accordingly
we shortly after hear the most thundering denuncia-
tions against this paper issuing from the shades
of Monticello. The "patriot" & the "sage" seems to
have lost the equanimity of his temper in the
violence of his zeal to throw into contempt & to discredit
its authenticity. Would that the manifestation
of his uneasiness had rested here! Would that the
fair fame of patriots who were resting in their
graves — of signers of our national Dec of Indepen-
dence — (&c) had remained unimpeached! But no,
all, all was sacrificed. Benevolence, justice, hu-
manity, magnanimity, integrity, were swal-
lowed up in the unhallowed of pride & of
ambition & of revenge. Happy for the Mec Dec' that
every vestige of of doubt which at one time ~~shrouded~~ enveloped
that it has been rescued from oblivion, that the curtain has
it has been long since entirely removed. Happy for
been drawn aside & that it now presents one of the brightest & most attractive
a Hooper, a Caswell & a Hughes that the evidences
pictures on the pages of our country's history.
of their patriotism lives in the hearts of their coun-
trymen undiminished by the lapse of time, & that
the brilliancy of their fame is still increasing in
lustre. But I would not impeach the character
of Thomas Jefferson. He was the writer of our
national Declaration of Independence. He was our
president, He was one of the brightest constella-
tions of our country's glory. He is now gone!

b May he rest in peace & may the patriot's blessing descend upon his tomb forever.

It is no less a singular, than for her a felicitous coincidence, that a single State should claim the honor of contributing the two remarkable occurrences, which have resulted in the building up of this temple of Liberty in the Western World. The beautiful shores which first burst like the promised land of old, upon the delighted visions of our adventurous forefathers & where originated the germ of our Anglo-American empire;— these same shores were the first to gladden the hearts of the oppressed, to echo with the shouts of Independence, & to proclaim to an astonished world the principles of freedom.

The greek warrior still celebrates in song the struggles of his countrymen to avert a Macedonian as well as Turkish ~~domination~~ domination. The mountains of Switzerland re-echo with ~~the~~ songs of the son of Uri, the battle of Mogarten & the emancipation of their much loved land. And the heart of every son of Scotland thrills with patriotic emotions at the recital of their country's champions. And well may the Greek, the Switzer & the Scott boast of the deeds of their ancestors. But the pages of history do not present a parallel to the brave sons of Carolina, battling, not with sword & bayonet to repel invasion from the land, but achieving a moral & political conquest a conquest of mind & opinion as well as of might. They battled not against the ambitious designs of a foreign despot, but against wily machinations of a legalised Tyrant, who like a mighty Colossus, was striding over their fair land, sapping the foundations of her liberal institutions & cramping her energies, by arbitrary & unjust enactments, & endeavouring to reduce them to a state of vassalage, by the slow yet certain means of unjust & burthensome taxation.

p123 But unlike most of her sister Colonies, the oppressions under which she writhed, proceeded not so immediately from the crown. They were both internal, & of so tortuous a nature as to throw into the shade the afflictions under which she, with the other provinces suffered. The great John Locke (who was evidently better qualified for developing the principles of the human understanding than for making laws to govern men) was the writer of her constitution; and a set of visionaries like himself were called to preside over the government. They seemed to have formed some such conceptions of wild woods of the new world as is generally entertained for the courts of Eastern magnificence. One governor must needs live in a splendid palace & to accomplish this much cherished object, the requisite sum of 15 thousand pounds of dollars must be wrung from the scanty purses of an already oppressed & indignant people, by direct taxation.

the famous Tryon who was appointed Governor of the province in 1765, and who afterwards acted so notorious a part in the State of N. York, seems to have set his affections more on empty show & courtly magnificence than the good of the people. Dissatisfied with the less princely Province house occupied by ~~of~~ his predeces he must needs live with his lovely wife (by far the better part of himself) in a kingly palace. Fifteen thousand pounds were thus wrung from the scanty purses of an infant & impoverished people. The palace rose a monument of his taste & pride from the bosom of the forest, but the stern & indignant spirits of the people persisted to the last in paying the necessary taxes for its erection. Just at this time too the province was inflamed to the highest pitch by the passage in parliament of the odious stamp act, & the approach of the ship which was to convey them to their shores. Ere the proclamation of the Gov' announcing her arrival had gone forth, the people were up in arms to oppose their landing. The palace was besieged, the stamp master ~~of this ship~~ demanded - dragged to the market place - sworn never to perform the duties of his office & exhibited as a public spectacle of infamy & disgrace. Dissatisfactions of this kind resulted in a civil war, & Tryon unable longer to withstand the popular discontents was called to the province of N. York and another substituted in his place. But the spirit of resistance had progressed too far to be checked at this juncture. The people of Carolina had determined to resist oppression to the last & never to yield what they esteemed their undoubted birthright to the command of any tribunal under heaven. Tryon was the last of the royal governors. His rule was short & fatal to the cause of his tyrannical master. The condition of the province was that of anarchy & confusion. There were no courts of law. The felon, the murderer, the defrauder & the thief went alike unpunished, & the innocent & injured had to look for justice at the hands of an inferior tribunal palsied by the restrictions of the Governor & Council There was at this time an evident effort on the part of the crown to run counter to the wishes & interests of the people. The Gov. & assembly were in consequence continually at swords points. The assembly enacted & his honor annulled. His honor made proclamations & the assembly pronounced them unjust. exhorting their constituents to treat them with contempt. His honors situation was truly unenviable "It was like the shirt of Nessus which stung the fabled son of Jove into madness." The mandate of the King compelled him to pursue one course, while the bold defiance of the assembly would drive him to another. In this dilemma he was compelled to do. as his only alternative, what the famous little Dutch Governor of N. York Wm. the Testy, did from choice; – "fight by proclamation!" This state of things was now to terminate, – the scene to change – the royal government to be trampled in the dust & a government of the people erected upon its ruins. For ten years had the people been protesting & vainly protesting against the oppressions of the mother country. Their protestations were couched in the submissive language of suppliants but now assumed a higher tone. They were demands; imperative demands. which the haughtiest monarchs that ever sat upon a throne dare not disobey with impunity. Fatigued, worn down & disgusted with the misrule of the crouching minions of the King in power, the people were now in arms. and elected a congress of their own. This body first assembled at Newbern the seat of Government in August 1774, in defiance of the pompous proclamations of the governor & the attempts of his vile emissaries to suppress it.

Startled by the tumults around him, ~~and~~ fearful for his safety, the governor had now to resort to the precaution of fortifying his palace.

But on the evening of the very day in which it was done, & while the governor was engaged with his privy council, a party of whigs headed by Alexander Gaston, marched boldly up to the palace & carried forcibly off. ~~in the face of his troops~~. ~~Also~~ Amid the deafening shouts of the populace the peices of ordinance planted there for its defence. That night will be ever memorable in the annals of N. Carolina for the ignominious flight of the last of her royal governors. That night saw him a fugitive & an exile, hurrying silently and alone under the cover of darkness towards the banks of the Cape Fear. No doubt he looked back with a wistful eye on the seat of his former magnificense as he caught the last glimpse of its lofty turrets through the dim distance. Unhappy man, His brightest visions of ambition, his most fondly cherished hopes were now blasted forever.

"It will not be - it may not last,
The vision of enchantment's past".

Where now do we look for the proud, unbending governor of a british province - the former inmate of a lordly palace? - He has exchanged it for a floating ~~palace~~ vessel in the Cape Fear River, being no more nor than "one of his magesty's sloops of war!!"

While the memory of Alexander Gaston will remain ever embalmed in the hearts of his countrymen - the tear of sorrow will never cease to be shed over his untimely fate. Hunted from home by Tory violence to the banks of the Trent, he was b

he was there basely & cruelly sacrificed, the victim of his country's liberty, in the presence of his wife & infant son. The tears of helplessness & innocence served not to stay the fury of his avengers, & to preserve the husband & the father. He fell! But like the towering oak when levelled by the wood=man's axe, he left a noble shoot behind, the proud inheritor of his father's glories. Wm Gaston ranks high in the catalogue of American statesmen & his name will be honored & revered by generations yet unborn.

Our Governor safely protected in his floating mansion in the Cape Fear & cut off from every other hope, endeavored to engender domestic seditions, but the hearts of the people were too true to themselves & their homes. He ~~attempted~~ endeavoured to excite the negroes to insurrection, but the attempt was as fallacious as it was base, and served but to stamp the character of the vile author of it with increased infamy & degredation. He enlisted in his cause the many clans of Highland Scots, who flocked to his standard as readily as did their vetran sires to that of Rod Dhu who had but to whistle

"And instantly from copse & heath arose
Bonnets & spears & bended bows.

But there ~~were some~~ hardy sons of the land of song & war, aided by the presence ~~of~~ encouraged by the smile & ~~gestures~~ of of Lady Flora McDonald - a second Joan of Arc;

Scots such as had with Wallace bled. Scots such as Bruce had after lead. Scots who in the rebellion 30 years before had proved their valour on the plains of Culloden. Scots such as these could not withstand the impetuous sons of Carolina, struggling for freedom. Scots such as these were beaten & dispersed before the victorious arms of of the whigs of Carolina, in the ever to be remembered battle of Moores creek. (ludicrous) He threatened the insurgents with the numerous fleet of Sir Petre Parker. the fleet came in formidable array— burned down the dwelling of a leading whig— stained their hands in the blood of its helpless inmates—prattling babes & tender females—then went away again, bearing the mortified & routed governor to other climes, more congenial to the spirit of slavery & slavery's chains. He went & the songs of victory rose high & loud, from the thousand hills of an emancipated land. Ere this however, another & more interesting event had occurred. As early as April 1774 Wm Hooper, a name engraven on the hearts of his countrymen for his brave & manly defiance of British power, whose vigorous mind was ever on the alert, & always in advance of the age, declared, that "the Colonies were striding fast to independence & ere long would build an empire on the ruins of Britain. In May 1775 the time had arrived in N. Carolina when this prediction was to be realised. The time for parleying and remonstrating had gone by & the time to act had come.