

On May 20, patriots took a stand in N.C.



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In 1762, a section of land from Anson County was set aside in western North Carolina to form a new county.

Where two stagecoach roads crossed, a little town was founded in honor of King George's wife, Queen Charlotte.

To further honor the queen, the county itself had been named for her home town in Mecklenburg, Germany. This part of the state had been settled by a staunch people called Scots-Irish. They served God faithfully, started schools and were law-abiding, but liberty was always first in their hearts.

In 1775 Charlotte was a village of about 20 houses. In the middle of the square where the two stagecoach roads crossed stood the courthouse. It was a frame building, raised high above the ground on brick pillars. Two flights of steps led up from the outside, one on either side of the building.

On May 19, 1775, the General Assembly of that county met to talk over the sad state of the colony. Many of the men had been with the Regulators at the Battle of Alamance in 1771.

Matters were growing worse as there was no law in North Carolina. All the courts were closed. The British governor had forbidden the Assembly to meet.

Since the battle, the colonists were afraid to meet openly to discuss the tyranny of the king. But this day was different.

Here were gathered people from all parts of the county, old and young and men from every calling. Lawyers and doctors mingled with the farmer in homespun cloth along with the hunter in buckskin and moccasins, standing by a minister in solemn black. Even the women were here.

They were discussing the farmers in Lexington, Mass., who had just a month earlier been shot down by British soldiers. Already outraged by the treatment the Carolinians had received at the Battle of



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On May 20, 1916, President Woodrow Wilson and his wife attend the Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence in Charlotte along with a crowd of about 100,000.

Alamance, this added to their anger.

Into the night, the assembly remained and tried to come up with a solution to fight the tyranny of King George. By noon, five resolutions were drawn up by Dr. Ephraim Brevard, read to the convention and adopted. The "resolves" were read from the courthouse steps to the crowd that had gathered again through the morning. This event has puzzled historians for years.

These "resolves" have come to be known as the "Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence." According to the Raleigh Register dated April 30, 1819, they printed what was meant to have been a document adopted by the citizens of Mecklenburg County, meeting at Charlotte, May 20, 1775, in which they declared themselves "a free and independent people, are and of right ought to be a sovereign and self-governing association under the control of no other power than that of our God and the General Government of Congress."

This account was based on the recollections of old men, who insisted that there had been such a meeting and that the original records had been destroyed by fire in 1800. Jefferson denounced the document as "spurious," lacking validity or authenticity. This was not seriously questioned until 1847, when a copy of a Charleston newspaper of June 16, 1775, was found containing a full set of the resolves adopted at Charlotte, May 31, 1775. The available evidence leads one to believe there was only one

meeting. Confusion as to dates probably arose because of the old style and new style calendars.

Though no copies of the original document survived, there is no doubting the sincerity and reverence with which the people of North Carolina hold the date May 20, 1775. On the left side of the state flag, the date appears on a gold scroll over the letters N.C. The date can also be found on the State Seal. A tablet in the rotunda of the State Capitol in Raleigh commemorates the "Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence" and its 27 signers. Today one can drive to the county seat of Mecklenburg, where in downtown Charlotte a tall monument stands before the courthouse, a tribute to the 27 men bold enough to make a stand for freedom and independence from England.

As we wave the American flag and pay tribute to the signers of the Declaration of Independence, signed on July 4, 1776, we as Carolinians should also pay tribute to a small village of people just southwest of the Piedmont who just a year earlier expressed their views in an almost exact expression as our founding fathers. Look at our North Carolina flag with new pride as the date May 20, 1775, waves proudly overhead and be thankful for that handful of patriots who loved God, home and country and were willing to die for their beliefs.

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