

The Charlotte Observer

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MONDAY, MAY 14, 2007

Living Here

YOUR GUIDE TO THE CHARLOTTE REGION

Events honor Mecklenburg declaration of 1775

More than a year before the Declaration of Independence, Mecklenburg leaders signed a document asserting that they, not the king, controlled local government. And for nearly 200 years, local leaders have celebrated the Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence, "Mec Dec" for short. Presidents Taft, Wilson, Eisenhower and Ford are among those who have visited Charlotte for anniversary celebrations.

It matters little that historians disagree over whether there was actually a declaration signed on May 20, 1775. The original was reportedly destroyed in a fire and later reconstructed from notes. But copies do exist of Mecklenburg Resolves signed 11 days after the original declaration. And they represent a spirit that founders of the May 20th Society hope to keep alive.

"We are a region made up of people who have refused to let other people define who we are," said Charles Jonas, chair of the society's board. "We are the 'just do it'

Got a question?
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Leigh Dyer



community, and we have been from the beginning."

I think it's important for newcomers to know this aspect of local history, but I'm also telling it because of a personal connection: I'm a direct descendant of one of the Mec Dec signers, Waightstill Avery (1741-1821), who was North Carolina's first attorney general. (He's my great-great-great-great grandfather).

Learn more about the history at a series of events this week: Nationally known historian David McCullough visits Thursday for lectures at ImaginOn and the Charlotte City Club; a commemoration of the Mec Dec signing happens at Trade and Tryon streets uptown Friday at noon; Friday evening, Ri Ra Irish Pub hosts a party; Saturday brings a celebration to the Charlotte Museum of History; and Sunday, there's a free movie screening at Main Library uptown.

Details at www.may20thsociety.org or 704-969-4241.