

MECKLENBURG DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE

Mystery still surrounds Meck Dec

No known copy exists, but that doesn't stop folks from celebrating it.

BY MELINDA JOHNSTON
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For more than 200 years, the Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence has caused a stir.

Its signing date is recorded on the N.C. state flag.

It prompted a feud between John Adams and Thomas Jefferson.

It brought four presidents, a first lady and a decorated general to Charlotte.

It helped a farmer win a free lot in Dilworth in 1891.

It demonstrated the backbone, dedication and resolve of area leaders – and no one can prove it even existed because no copy can be found.

Nevertheless, for more than

Want To Go?

Today's free event is at 3 p.m. at the Duke Mansion, 400 Hermitage Road.

On the Web

For more information about the Meck Dec, visit www.cmstory.org/meckdec. To find out about other Meck Dec activities, visit www.may20thsociety.org.



This souvenir book is from the Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence celebration in 1909.

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two centuries, folks around here have celebrated Meck Dec Day in various ways. Some years included dignitaries and solemn processions. Some boasted circuses, festivals, food and more.

This afternoon at the Duke Mansion, Jane Johnson of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg public library will tell the story of the Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence and will describe the parades, presidential visits and promotions that have surrounded it over the years.

Johnson helped create the library's Web site on the Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence and has lots of details and interesting facts to share.

She says tradition holds that Mecklenburg leaders were fed up with the news of shootings from Lexington, Mass. Already unhappy with British rule, they held a meeting at the courthouse in the middle of Trade and Tryon streets.

They declared their intention to be free and independent people by signing the Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence about 2 a.m. May 20, 1775.

Copies of the document were

dispatched to the Continental Congress in Philadelphia.

Documents show Capt. James Jack said he delivered the document by horseback to the colonies' new leaders, but there is no record of it.

In 1819, a story about the Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence appeared in a Raleigh newspaper and was picked up by the Essex Register in Salem, Mass. When President John Adams read it, he noticed great similarity to the Declaration of Independence and called Thomas Jefferson on the carpet.

Jefferson denied knowing anything about the Meck Dec, and the mystery continued.

Johnson says a copy of the document has never been found.

Some folks say they won't believe the story until a document can be produced.

Others say there is enough historical information alluding to it that it must have happened.

Whatever the case, the mystery of the Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence remains.

And you can find out more about it this afternoon at 3 p.m.