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Official
Souvenir
Programme



Celebration
Mecklenburg
Declaration of
Independence



Charlotte, N. C.,
May 21-26, 1906



Southern States Trust Company

Capital \$200,000.00

Assets One Million Dollars

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The
Hundred and Thirty-First Anniversary
of the
MECKLENBURG DECLARATION OF
INDEPENDENCE

Souvenir Programme

MAY 20th, 1906

Charlotte, North Carolina.

Published by
D. HATCHER WATKINS and CHARLES G. MULLEN

Press of
RAY PRINTING COMPANY
Charlotte, N. C.



MAYOR S. S. M'NINCH

The Prime Mover in the 138th Celebration of the Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence.

The Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence

I. Resolved, That whosoever directly, or indirectly, abets, or in any way, form, or manner countenances the invasion of our rights, as attempted by the Parliament of Great Britian, is an enemy to this country, to America, and to the rights of men.

II. Resolved, That we, the citizens of Mecklenburg County, do hereby dissolve the political bonds which have connected us with the mother country, and absolve ourselves from all allegiance to the British Crown, adjuring all political connection with a nation that has wantonly trampled on our rights and liberties and inhumanly shed innocent blood of Americans at Lexington and Concord.

III. Resolved, That we do hereby declare ourselves a free and independent people ; that we are, and of right ought to be, a sovereign and self-governing people under the power of God and the General Congress ; to the maintenance of which independence we solemnly pledge to each other our mutual co-operation, our lives, our fortunes, and our most sacred honor.

IV. Resolved, That we hereby ordain and adopt as rules of conduct all and each of our former laws, and that the crown of Great Britian cannot be considered hereafter as holding any right, privileges, or immunities among us.

V. Resolved, That all officers, both civil and military, in this County be entitled to exercise the same powers and authorities as heretofore ; that every member of this delegation shall henceforth be a civil officer and exercise the powers of a justice of the peace, issue process, hear and determine con-

troversies according to law, preserve peace, union and harmony in the County, and use every exertion to spread the love of liberty and country until a more general and better organized system of government be established.

VI. Resolved, That a copy of these resolutions be transmitted by express to the President of the Continental Congress, assembled in Philadelphia, to be laid before that body.

Abraham Alexander,
(Chairman)

Ephraim Brevard,
Hezekiah J. Balch,
John Phifer,
James Harris,
William Kennon,
John Ford,
Richard Barry,
Henry Downs,
Ezra Alexander,
William Graham,
John Query,
Hezekiah Alexander,

John McKnitt Alexander,
(Secretary)

Adam Alexander,
Charles Alexander,
Zacheus Wilson, Sen.,
Waightstill Avery,
Benjamin Patton,
Matthew McClure,
Neill Morrison,
Robert Irwin,
John Flenniken,
David Reese,
John Davidson,
Richard Harris, Sen.,

Thomas Polk.



A Paper on the Mecklenburg Declaration

BY GEORGE W. GRAHAM, M. D.

ON May 19, 1775, delegates chosen by the people of Mecklenburg county, North Carolina, met in "General Committee" at Charlotte, and "after sitting in the court house all night, neither sleepy, hungry nor fatigued," and after discussing every paragraph, unanimously adopted a Declaration of Independence about two o'clock on the morning of May 20. A copy of the proceedings was sent to the Continental Congress, then assembled in Philadelphia, for ratification.

When Captain Jack, the bearer of the Declaration to Congress, arrived in Philadelphia, he found the members of that body not only opposed to independence individually, but actually preparing a petition to King George III, which was subsequently adopted and signed by every member of the Congress on July 8, 1775, declaring "we have not raised armies with the ambitious design of separating from Great Britain and establishing independent States."

At the meeting of the delegates in Charlotte, John McKnitt Alexander was elected Secretary, and thus became custodian of the records. In April, 1800, 25 years after this meeting, the records and declaration were burned with Alexander's dwelling. In the meantime, however, the Old Secretary, as he is called, had transcribed not less than seven copies from the original resolutions, and after the destruction of the Declaration Alexander made two additional copies from memory, one of which he gave to General William R. Davie. The other was found among his papers after death. One of the memory copies is known as the Davie copy. It contains many verbal errors, and besides, being written in past tense instead of the present, contains only five resolutions where the original has six. Alexander, however, confesses to a possible lapse of memory when writing the Davie paper, in the following certificate upon its back :

"The foregoing statement, though fundamentally correct, may not literally correspond with the original record of the transactions of said delegation."

In 1819, two years after the death of John McKnitt Alexander, the proceedings at Charlotte, including a duplicate of the Davie

copy of the resolutions, were published in *The Raleigh Register*, by his son, Dr. Joseph McKnitt Alexander, with this note appended: "The foregoing is a true copy of the papers on the above subject left in my hands by John McKnitt Alexander, deceased."

A copy of this publication fell into the hands of Thomas Jefferson, who wrote John Adams, "I believe it spurious, I deem it to be a very unjustifiable quiz."

Although the friends of Mr. Jefferson allege that nothing was ever heard of the Mecklenburg Declaration previous to its publication in *The Raleigh Register* in 1819, there is abundant evidence to prove that at least seven authentic copies of those resolutions were in existence before the destruction of the proceedings in the year 1800. Of these seven transcripts, John McKnitt Alexander, at the direction of the delegates, sent four to the Congress at Philadelphia shortly after the meeting at Charlotte adjourned; one to the President, and one to each of the three members from North Carolina. A fifth copy appeared in *The Cape Fear Mercury*, in June, 1775, that is, within 30 days after the Declaration was adopted. A sixth copy was supplied by Alexander to Dr. Hugh Williamson, who was collecting material for a history of the State, which copy Governor Stokes, in the preface to a pamphlet issued by the North Carolina Legislature in 1831, testifies to having seen together with a letter from Alexander in the possession of Williamson, as early as 1793. A seventh copy, which the author says was obtained by him before 1800, the year the records were burned, is preserved in Martin's *History of North Carolina*.

It is with this seventh, or Martin, copy of the Declaration that we propose to deal in this paper, and we shall therefore, before proceeding farther, inquire who Martin was, and ascertain his possible sources of information as to what was done at Charlotte on May 19-20, 1775.

According to the preface to his history and *The North Carolina University Magazine* for 1893, Francois Xavier Martin at the age of 20 migrated from France to New Berne, North Carolina, where he first taught school, then published a newspaper, and subsequently practiced law. In 1791-2 by a joint resolution of the State Legislature he was engaged to compile and publish the British Statutes then in use in North Carolina, and in 1803 to edit and print the private acts of the General Assembly. The character of this work and the collection of materials for State history, which the preface says "began to engage the attention of the

writer as early as the year 1791," required the presence of Mr. Martin at the State capitol, where he had access to the public documents and colonial records. There he saw much of William Polk, George Graham and Joseph Graham, who were present when the Mecklenburg Declaration was adopted, and became personally acquainted with James Harris and Robert Irwin, two of the delegates that subscribed the resolutions, since all five of these men, Wheeler's History says, were successively members of the Legisla-



MECKLENBURG COUNTY COURT HOUSE

Showing Monument to Signers of Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence

ture from Mecklenburg county from 1791 to 1803, the time Martin was serving the State and collecting material for his book.

In 1806 Mr. Martin was elected to the General Assembly from the borough of New Berne, when he was again associated with George Graham and with Nathaniel Alexander, who at the time was Chief Magistrate of North North Carolina. Governor Alexander, in addition to being a citizen of Mecklenburg county, was a

brother-in-law to Ephraim Brevard, who drew the Mecklenburg Declaration, and son-in-law to Colonel Thomas Polk, who immediately after the adoption of the Declaration, read the resolutions aloud to the large concourse of the people that had assembled to witness the proceedings of the delegates.

Mr. Martin's home was in Craven county, where he personally knew Richard Caswell, who lived in the adjoining county of Dobbs (now Lenoir), as both men were lawyers and contemporary attorneys at the bar of New Berne and the neighboring towns for several years prior to the death of Caswell in 1789. Richard Caswell represented the New Berne district in the Continental Congress from 1774 to 1776, and was a member of that Assembly when Captain Jack, the bearer of the Declaration to Congress arrived in Philadelphia, and is known to have received a special copy of the resolutions from Jack. For, as before stated, that messenger had been directed by the delegates at Charlotte to deliver copies of the proceedings to the three members from North Carolina, as well as the President of Congress; and when acknowledging receipt of the Declaration, Caswell, in a joint letter with his colleagues, Hewes and Hooper, predicted that the whole continent would soon follow Mecklenburg's example in declaring independence.

Mr. Martin was appointed Federal Judge in 1809, and removed to Louisiana. We learn from his preface that he had completed the manuscript of the first two volumes of his history, begun in 1791, prior to leaving North Carolina for the far south. These volumes, which recount the State's history, including the circumstances of the Mecklenburg Declaration, down to the summer of 1776, were taken by the author in manuscript to New Orleans, to await the completion of a third and fourth volume, for which the preface informs us he had "very ample notes and material"; but owing to a busy life and feeble health after his arrival in Louisiana, and finding no opportunity of finishing volumes three and four of his book, Judge Martin, in 1829, printed the manuscript of volumes one and two without revision. Thus it appears that, although Martin's History was not published until 20 years after it was written, and ten years after Mr. Jefferson first questioned the authenticity of the Mecklenburg Declaration, the manuscript had been prepared 1791 to 1809 and shipped to New Orleans ten years before the controversy arose. This long delay in printing the manuscript, years after the appearance of the Davie copy, no doubt caused Mr. Bancroft and other noted historians, who

evidently failed to read his preface, to undervalue Martin's account of what was done at Charlotte on May 19-20, 1775.

Martin's manuscript is shown to have been neither revised nor enlarged after the author became a citizen of Louisiana in 1809, by the fact that he refers to Captain Jack in his narrative as still living, where he says "James Jack, then of Charlotte, but now residing in the State of Georgia, was engaged to be the bearer of the resolutions to the President of Congress." Yet we find in Hunter's Sketches of Western North Carolina that Jack died in 1822, thirteen years after Martin's History was written, and seven years before it went to press. That the publication of Martin's manuscript was deferred long after the author had written it and removed to the Southwest is made evident by the following remark in the preface: "The determination has been taken to put the work to press in the condition it was when it reached New Orleans; this has prevented any use being made of Williamson's History of North Carolina (printed in 1812), a copy of which did not reach the writer's hands until after he arrived in Louisiana."

Additional proof that the copy of the resolutions printed by Martin were transcribed before the Declaration was destroyed is furnished by the Rev. Francis L. Hawks, D. D., LL.D., whose reputation as a divine is a sufficient guarantee of his loyalty to the truth. On May 20, 1857, Dr. Hawks delivered the anniversary address of the Twentieth of May celebration at Charlotte, and in the course of his remarks said that some years before, when he and Judge Martin resided in New Orleans, he asked that historian where and when he procured the copy of the Mecklenburg Declaration printed in his book, and the reply was "in the western part of the State prior to the year 1800." He also said, "it was not obtained from Alexander."

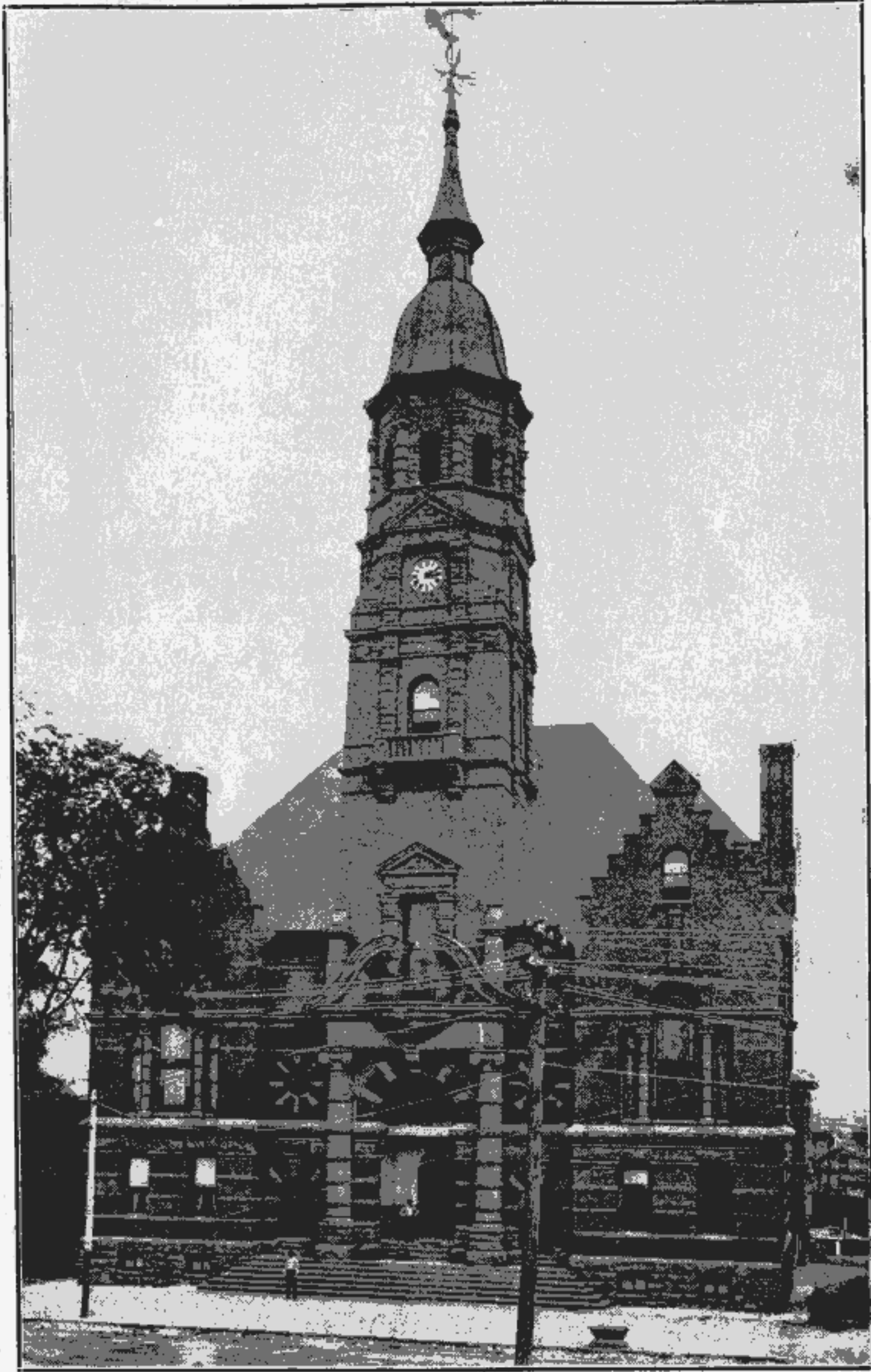
To recapitulate :

(1) Martin was engaged from 1791 to 1809, nearly twenty years, in work which gave him official access to the public documents and colonial records of North Carolina, and, as his book states, gleaned from the contemporary records, magazines and gazettes all data pertinent to the Mecklenburg Declaration.

(2) Martin told Dr. Hawks that he possessed a copy of that Declaration made before 1800, the year the original resolutions were destroyed with the Alexander residence, and Martin had also read the proceedings of the delegates printed in The Cape Fear Mercury of June, 1775.

(3) While collecting material for this history, Martin was daily associated with five members of the Legislature from Mecklenburg

county who were present when the Declaration was adopted, two of whom were delegates and signed the resolutions; and previously Martin had known at least one member of the Continental Con-



CITY HALL

gress, who received a special copy of the Declaration from the delegates at Charlotte.

(4) At the time Martin wrote his history, 1791 to 1809, all the facts he recorded were to be had from living witnesses, and as he was a man of fine personal character and integrity, why not accept his narrative as to what was done at Charlotte on May 19-20, 1775?

City of Charlotte and County of Mecklenburg

MECKLENBURG county was first a part of Anson county. It became a separate county by an act passed by the Colonial Legislature in 1762. The preamble to the charter reads: "Whereas by Reason of the large Extent of the County of Anson, it is greatly inconvenient for the inhabitants to attend Court of the aforesaid County, general Musters, and other public Duties by Law required: Be it therefore enacted by the Governor, Council and Assembly, and it hereby enacted by the authority of the same, That from and after the first Day of February, the said County of Anson shall be, and is hereby divided into two distinct Counties, by a Line beginning at Lord Carteret's Line, six miles North-East from Captain Charles Hart's plantation on Buffalo Creek, and to run from thence to the North of Clear Creek, which empties itself into Rocky River, below Captain Adam Alexander's place: and from thence due South to the Bounds of the Province of South Carolina: And that all that Part of said County which lies to the Eastward of said dividing Line, shall be a distinct County, and remain and be called by the Name of Anson County; and that all that part of the Said County lying to the Westward of said dividing Line, shall be henceforth one other distinct County, and called by the Name of Mecklenburg."



About six years after this, on the 7th of November, 1768, an act bearing the name of King George III, establishing a town in Mecklenburg County was passed. John Frohock, Abraham Alexander and Thomas Polk were "seized in fee" of 360 acres of land which had been granted them, and on these 360 acres the town of Charlotte was started. The act stated that the town was established "because of the healthfulness of the place and the convenient situation thereof for trade."



Settlers first began migrating to Mecklenburg in 1745, coming from three directions. The Scotch-Irish came from Western Pennsylvania and Virginia; the Germans from the same region; and English, Scotch, Germans, Huguenots and Swiss from Charleston and Georgetown. The Scotch-Irish came in the greatest numbers, though, and to them belongs the greatest credit for settling the county.

The present site of Charlotte was, because of its central location, naturally chosen as the county-seat, but this was not done permanently, because of much dissention, until 1774, when it was ordered that a court house be built here.



It was in this court house, about 2 o'clock on the morning of May 20th, 1775, that the Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence was signed. The old court house, a log structure, supported by a foundation of brick, stood in what is now known as Independence Square, at the intersection of Tryon and Trade streets, and is marked by a large iron plate.



Charlotte and Mecklenburg were named for Princess Charlotte of Mecklenburg, who, in 1761, became the wife of George III of England. There are two small duchies in North Germany that are known as Mecklenburg-Schwerin and Mecklenburg-Strelitz. Princess Charlotte was of the latter duchy, and she went from there to become the bride of King George.



Charlotte is sometimes known as the Hornet's Nest City. The name was given it by Lord Cornwallis, who commanded a British troop that fought the Mecklenburg Militia in the streets of the town, in the fall of 1780. In writing to the Earl of Dartmouth afterward, he stated that he got into a veritable hornet's nest when he came to Charlotte town.



The first educational institution in this part of the South was located in Charlotte. It was chartered by the Legislature as the Queen's Museum, in 1771, but was generally known as Queen's College. The college was located at the site of the present court house.



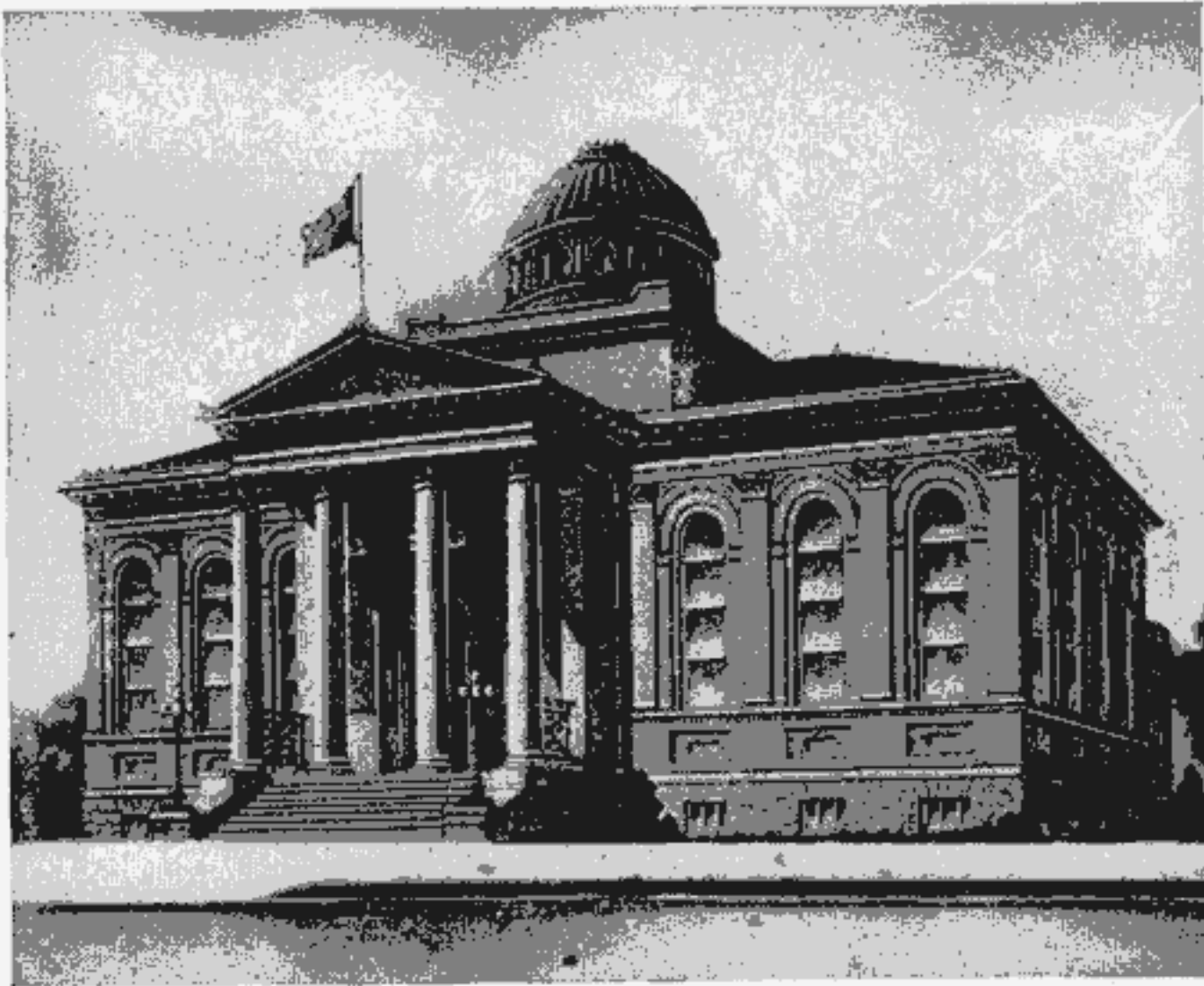
The population of Charlotte at the outbreak of the Civil War was scarcely 2,000. With the reconstruction days, the population began to increase steadily. When the country was relieved of military government and conditions became normal once again, the increase, both in population and business was pronounced. In 1880, its population was 6,000; in 1890, about 11,000, and in 1900, about 20,000. The past six years have added greatly to the population and business volume of the city. A conservative estimate now places the population of the city and its suburbs at 40,000.

The Celebration May the Twentieth, 1844

BY DR. J. B. ALEXANDER.

IT has been the custom of all the people in all the ages to celebrate the greatest events of history, and it is peculiarly fitting for us to celebrate each returning anniversary of the Twentieth of May; that it may be impressed upon the minds of the young from one generation to another. We have records of some notable ones in 1825 and in 1835, that were attended by men who participated in the war of the Revolution.

I remember distinctly the celebration of May the Twentieth, 1844. The exercises were held in the yard of William Junius Alex-

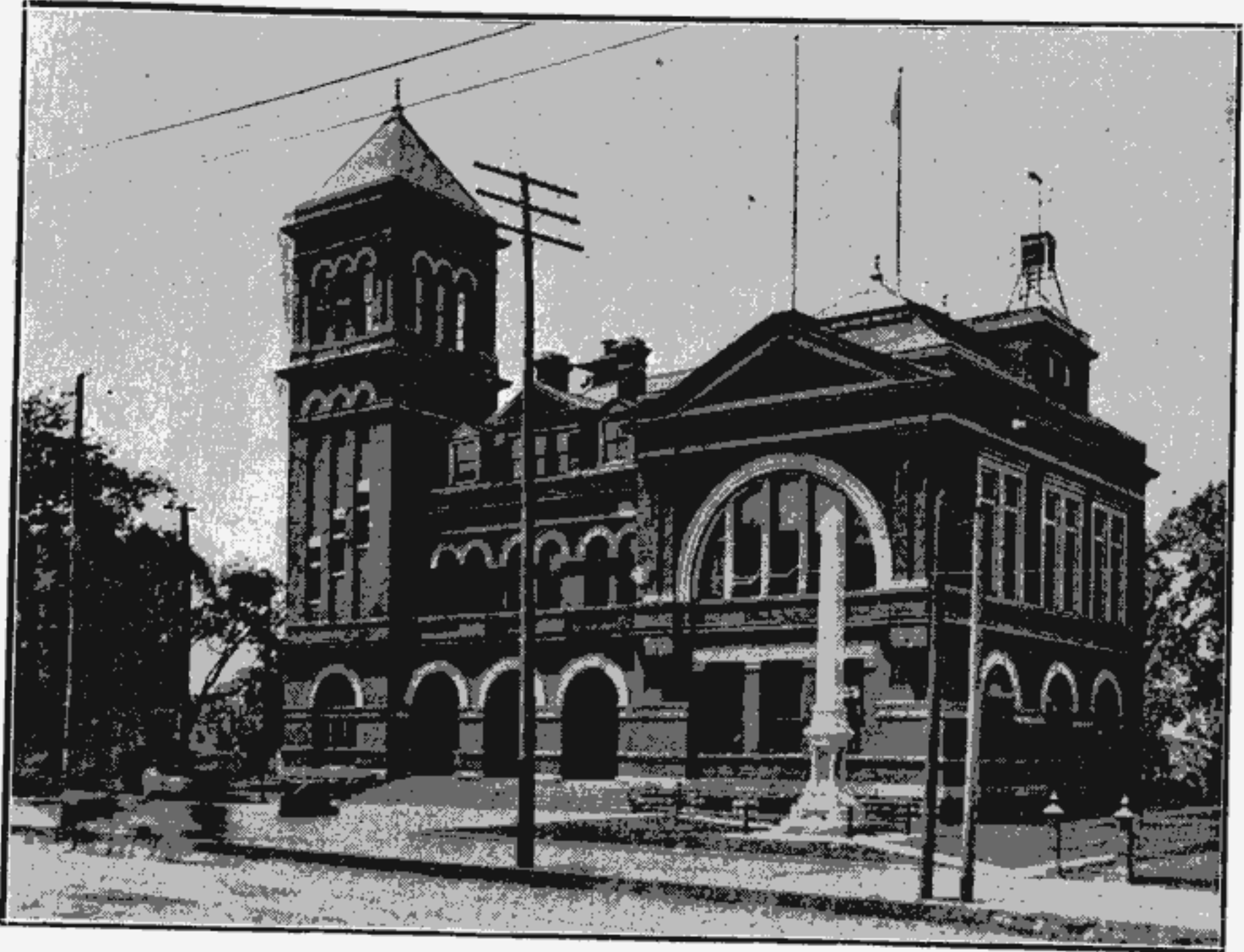


CARNEGIE LIBRARY

ander, Esq., on the lot now occupied by the court house. A dinner was prepared and served on a long table between the monument and Tryon street, that would seat between 50 and 100 people. The cost of a seat was \$5. This was the beginning to raise money to build a monument to the signers of the Declaration of Independence.

The county had at that time but three living men who had been soldiers in the war of Independence, and but one of whom was able to attend the celebration, viz., Major Tommy Alexander, then in his 84th year. He was placed in a large arm chair, at the upper

end of the table: he looked very old and was quite feeble. After they had dined, James W. Osborne, then a young man, comparatively, was called on for a speech. He stood beside Major Tommy Alexander, and, after speaking awhile, he turned and placed both of his hands over the Major's head, and I could see the tears trickling down the old soldier's cheek; and every one sitting at the



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table were turned around, looking at the scene. It was certainly an impressive one.

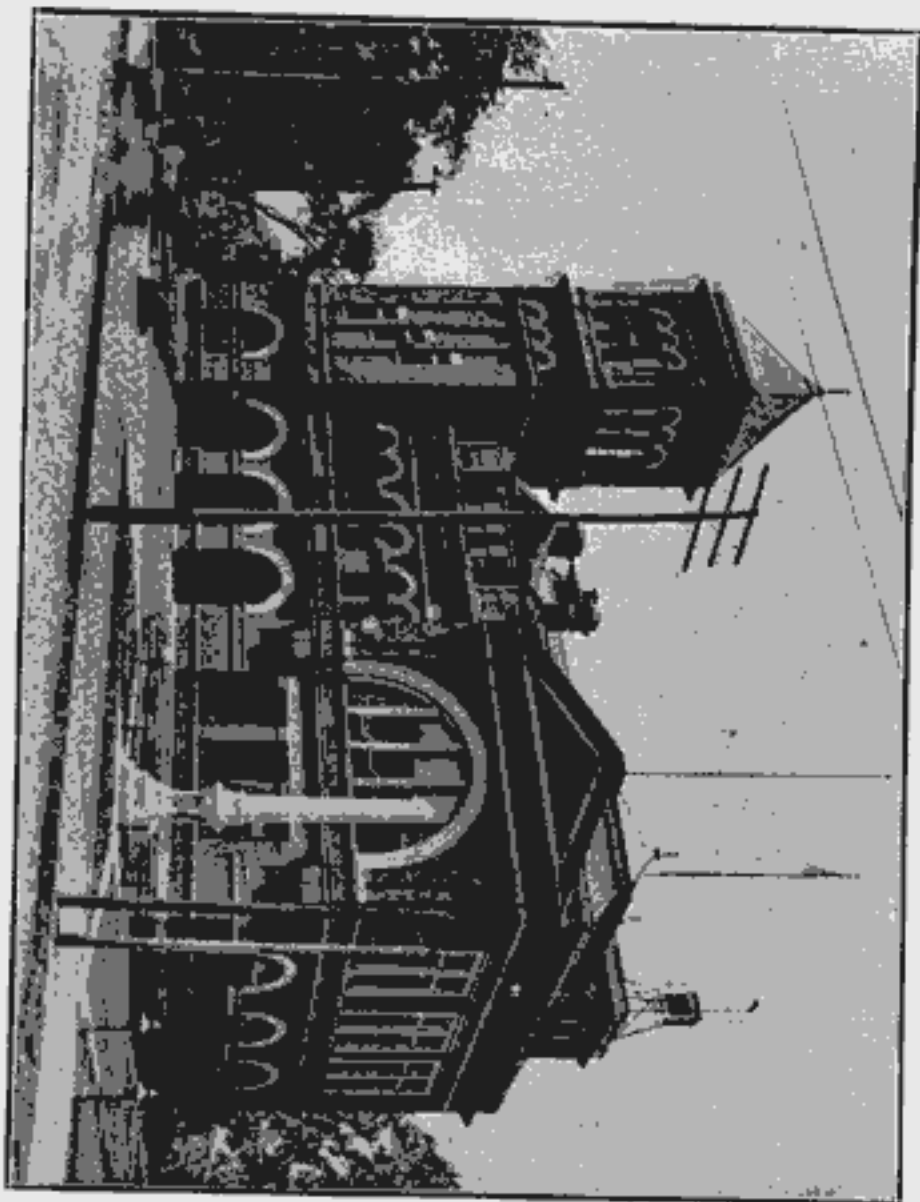
Ephriam Brevard, from Lincoln county, was chief marshal, and after Judge Osborne's speech, he walked up to the table and placed a \$20 bill down, and called upon the descendents of the signers and lovers of liberty to follow suit. He said if that was too much, to put down a \$10 or a \$5 bill. To my youthful eyes it looked like a mighty pile of money. But the monument has been built.



A Legal Holiday.

The Legislature of the State of North Carolina has enacted the 20th of May as a legal holiday, and it is observed with befitting ceremonies every year.

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"Chat Cape Fear Mercury"

BY PROF. ALEXANDER GRAHAM.

SUCH is the heading in The Charlotte Observer of January 1st, 1906, in a report made by the Charlotte committee, consisting of Dr. George W. Graham, Mr. R. O. Alexander and Mr. Alexander Graham. In the report these gentlemen make five succinct statements, showing why they concluded the Miller paper was not genuine, and conclude by printing that the committee is of the opinion that it did not see in the possession of Dr. Miller either a genuine copy of The Cape Fear Mercury or a copy of the one Dr. Miller printed in Collier's Weekly, in July, 1905. The report was signed:

(Signed) GEO. W. GRAHAM,
R. O. ALEXANDER,
ALEXANDER GRAHAM.

In this report, printed as stated above, January 1st, 1906, is the following note: Baltimore, Dec. 30, 1905: Gentlemen of the Committee from Charlotte, N. C. Dear Sirs:—I agree to secure the opinion of Worthington C. Ford (by direct written request upon him) within five days of this date as to the authenticity of The Cape Fear Mercury now in my possession. Yours truly,

S. MILLINGTON MILLER.

I have been requested to write a short sketch of the committee's visit to Baltimore to see Dr. Miller and the copy of The Cape Fear Mercury, which he agreed to show us with a view of selling the same, and also to secure our affidavits as to its genuineness. My sole object in complying with your request is because, in the recent April number of The American Historical Review, Mr. Worthington C. Ford has written an article in which he takes the credit, with the aid of Mr. A. Sally, Jr., of Columbia, S. C., of destroying the S. Millington Miller forgery, as he calls it, and ignores the Charlotte committee and their report entirely; thus making it appear to the readers of The Review that the Miller paper was destroyed by the enemies of the May Twentieth Declaration, instead of by the friends of that Declaration.

Unfortunately for Mr. Worthington C. Ford, the Charlotte committee printed their report on January 1st, 1906, and sent copies to Ford and Miller while his report was not printed until January 12th, 1906. Had it not been for the courtesy and the intercession of the Charlotte committee, Mr. Ford would never have seen the Miller Mercury. On behalf of the committee I wish to place on record a solemn protest against Ford's most remarkable statement in The Historical Review: That notwithstanding the Charlotte committee's very first statement that it objected to the paper exhibited in Baltimore because it contains only two columns, while the fac-simile printed in Collier's, in July, contained three; and notwithstanding the committee told Mr. Ford in Washington December 30th, 1905, after meeting Miller in the morning, and a few days later sent him a joint telegram, reasserting that the paper Miller showed in Baltimore was a two-column paper, Mr. Ford says he thinks Miller showed the Charlotte committee a three-column paper, because Mr. Miller said the Charlotte committee was mistaken in their report that the paper was two columns.