

south of Charlotte, and known as Bissell's, was formerly the property of Colonel Thomas Polk, one of the active patriots in that section. Early on Monday morning, I rode down to the mill. Informed that it had been materially altered since the Revolution, I did not stop to sketch the locality. It is an interesting spot, for there a portion of Cornwallis's army was encamped, and the mill was used during the cantonment there, to supply his troops with flour.

Let us glance at the historical events which render Charlotte famous in our annals. While public sentiment in North Carolina and its sister colonies was making rapid strides toward a bold resistance to augmenting oppressions, the people of Mecklenburg and vicinity, between the Yadkin and the Catawba, were neither indifferent nor inactive, notwithstanding their distance from the sea-board. There was no printing-press in the upper country; and as no regular post traversed that region, a newspaper was seldom seen there among the people. They were in the habit of assembling at stated places to hear printed hand-bills from abroad read, or to obtain verbal information of passing events. Charlotte was a central point for these assemblages, and there the leading men in that section often met at Queen's Museum or College, the Faneuil Hall of North Carolina, to discuss the exciting topics of the day. These meetings were at first irregular, and without system. It was finally agreed that Thomas Polk, a large property-holder in the vicinity of Charlotte, colonel of the militia of Mecklenburg, a man of great excellence of character, extensive knowledge of the people around him, and deservedly popular, should be authorized to call a convention of the representatives of the people whenever circumstances should appear to require it.¹ It was also agreed that such representatives should consist of two from each captain's company, to be chosen by the people of the several militia districts, and that their decisions, when thus legally convened, should be binding upon the people of Mecklenburg. This step was in accordance with the recommendation of the eleventh article of the *American Association*, adopted by the first Continental Congress (see page 62), and now generally acted upon throughout the colonies.

When Governor Martin made an attempt to prevent the assembling of a Provincial Congress at Newbern,^a the people were much exasperated, for they remembered his arbitrary proceedings in dissolving the last Provincial Legislature, after a session of four days, and before any important business had been transacted. The excitement throughout the province was intense. While the public mind was thus inflamed, Colonel Polk issued a notice to the elected committee-men of the county, to assemble in the courthouse^b at Charlotte toward the close of May. On what precise day they first met, can not now be positively determined. They appointed Abraham Alexander,^c an esteemed citizen,

¹ Colonel Polk was great uncle to the late President Polk. His brother, Ezekiel Polk, whose name appears quite conspicuous in the annals of Mecklenburg county, was the president's grandfather. "The house in which President Polk is supposed to have been born," says Honorable David L. Swain, in a letter to me of recent date, "is about two hundred yards south of Sugar Creek, and eleven miles south of Charlotte, on the lands of Nathan Orr. The house shown to me is of logs, was never weather-boarded, and is covered with a decaying shingle roof. It is formed by joining two houses together."

² The court-house was a frame building, about fifty feet square, placed upon brick pillars, ten or twelve feet in height, with a stair-way on the outside. It stood in the center of the town, at the intersection of the two principal streets, now the village green. The lower part was a market-house; the upper part was used for public purposes. Stedman says it was a "large brick building," and Lee says it was of stone. Tradition of undoubted character pronounces it such as I have described. The village at that time contained about twenty houses.

³ Abraham Alexander was a leading magistrate in Mecklenburg county, and represented it in the Colonial Legislature. At the time of the convention, of which he was appointed chairman, he was almost threescore years of age. He died on the twenty-third of April, 1786, at the age of sixty-eight years. He was buried in the old church-yard, near Charlotte, where a plain slab, with an inscription, marks his grave.

Elijah Alexander, a relative of the chairman, and who was present when the Mecklenburg Resolutions were read to the people at Charlotte, died at the residence of his son-in-law, James Osborne, Esq., in Cornersville, Tennessee, on the eleventh of November, 1850, at the age of ninety years. He voted for every president of the United States, from Washington to Taylor. His widow, to whom he was married in 1784, was yet living in 1851.

who had served them in the Colonial Legislature, chairman, and Dr. Ephraim Brevard,¹ a scholar and unwavering patriot, clerk or secretary. According to tradition, intelligence of the affairs at Lexington and Concord, in Massachusetts, was received during the session of the delegates, and added greatly to the excitement among the people, who had assembled in great numbers around the court-house, eager to know the resolves of their representatives within. The principal speakers on the occasion were Dr. Brevard, Reverend Hezekiah J. Balch, William Kennon (a lawyer of Salisbury), and Colonel Polk. The first three gentlemen were appointed a committee to prepare suitable resolutions, and on the thirty-first of May, 1775, the following preamble and resolves were unanimously adopted:²

"Whereas, By an address presented to his majesty by both Houses of Parliament in February last, the American colonies are declared to be in a state of actual rebellion, we conceive that all laws and commissions confirmed by or derived from the authority of the king and Parliament are annulled and vacated, and the former civil Constitution of these colonies for the present wholly suspended. To provide in some degree for the exigencies of this county in the present alarming period, we deem it proper and necessary to pass the following resolves, viz.:

I. That all commissions, civil and military, heretofore granted by the crown to be exer-

¹ Ephraim Brevard was one of the "seven sons" of his widowed mother who were "in the rebel army."² He graduated at Princeton, and, after pursuing medical studies a proper time, settled as a physician in Charlotte. His talents commanded universal respect, and he was a leader in the movements in Mecklenburg toward independence, in 1775. When the British army invaded the Southern States, Dr. Brevard entered the Continental army as a surgeon, and was taken prisoner at Charleston, in May, 1780. Broken by disease, when set at liberty, Dr. Brevard returned to Charlotte, sought the repose of privacy in the family of his friend, John McKnitt Alexander, who had succeeded him as clerk of the Mecklenburg Committee, and there soon expired. His remains were buried in Hopewell grave-yard. No stone marks his resting-place, and "no man living," says Mr. Foote, "can lead the inquirer to the spot." He was a remarkable man, and, as the undoubted author of the *Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence* and Constitution of Government, deserves the reverence of all patriots. His pen was often employed in the cause of freedom, and he was probably the most accomplished writer, of his day, in Western Carolina.

Minute biographical sketches of these leading patriots of Mecklenburg, if they could be obtained, would make an exceedingly useful and entertaining volume. Of the general character of the people in that vicinity at the period of the Revolution, J. G. M. Ramsey, M.D., the historian of Tennessee, who has studied the character of the Mecklenburg patriots with great care, writes thus appreciatingly to me, under date of January 19, 1852: "In regard to the people, then residing between the Yadkin and the Catawba, it is almost impossible to conceive, at this day, the incalculable benefits the country received from their immigration and settlement in it; nor the happy influences, secular, civil, religious, and literary, they uniformly diffused in their respective neighborhoods. To these are we indebted, in a great measure, for the enterprise, industry, thrift, skill, frugality, love of order, sobriety, regard for wholesome laws, family and social government, establishment of schools, churches, and a high standard of education and training for youth, attachment to well-regulated liberty, and the representative principle in government."

² The following are the names of the leading patriots in Mecklenburg, and reported to have been members of the Mecklenburg Committee, who met in the Convention at Charlotte: ABRAHAM ALEXANDER, EPHRAIM BREVARD, JOHN M'KNITT ALEXANDER, ADAM ALEXANDER, HEZEKIAH ALEXANDER, EZRA ALEXANDER, CHARLES ALEXANDER, WAIGHTSILL AVERY, HEZEKIAH J. BALCH, THOMAS POLE, JOHN FLENEKIN, JAMES HARRIS, NEIL MORRISON, DAVID REESE, ROBERT HARRIS, SENIOR, RICHARD BARRY, DUNCAN OCHILTREE, JOHN FORD, WILLIAM KENNON, SAMUEL MARTIN, ZACHEUS WILSON, SENIOR, BENJAMIN PATTON, ROBERT IRWIN, JOHN DAVIDSON, JOHN PEPPER, HENRY DOWNES, WILLIAM GRAHAM, MATTHEW M'CLURE, JOHN QUEARY, WILLIAM WILSON.

³ When Cornwallis was in pursuit of Greene, he passed near the plantation of the Widow Brevard, and ordered it to be desolated. When asked why he was so cruel toward a poor widow, he replied, "She has seven sons in the rebel army!" What higher compliment could that noble mother have received.

⁴ The Wilsons were all staunch Scotch-Irish, and sturdy Republicans. The wife of Robert Wilson, a brother of Zachens like the Widow Brevard, had "seven sons in the rebel army," and also her husband. When Cornwallis retired from Charlotte, he halted upon Wilson's plantation, and himself and staff quartered at the house of the patriot. Mrs. Wilson was very courteous, and Cornwallis endeavored to win her to the royal cause by flattering words. Her reply deserves to be inscribed upon brass and marble: "I have seven sons who are now, or have been bearing arms; indeed, my seventh son, Zachens, who is only fifteen years old, I yesterday assisted to get ready to go and join his brothers in Sumter's army. Now, sooner than see one of my family turn back from the glorious enterprise, I would take these boys (pointing to three or four small sons), and with them would myself enlist under Sumter's standard and show my husband and sons how to fight, and, if necessary, to die for their country!" "Ah, general," said the cruel Tarleton, "I think you've got into a hornet's nest! Never mind; when we get to Camden, I'll take good care that old Robin Wilson never gets back again!" Mrs. Wilson died in Williamson county, Kentucky, on the 20th of April, 1853, aged ninety years.—See Mrs. Ellet's *Women of the Revolution*, iii., 347.

Alex^r Alexander - Eph^r Burdick
 Tho^s Polk Adam Alexander
 David Reese J^r H^e Alexander
 Hery Alexander John Puffer
 Rob^t - James
 Will Kennon Richd Berry
 Benjamin Patton John Goad
 John Davidson William Graham
 John Lemithin Waightstill Avery
 Charles Alexander
 Henry Downs - Rob^t Harris
 Ezra Alexander Niles Morrison
 James Harris

AUTOGRAPHS OF THE MEMBERS OF THE MECKLENBURG COMMITTEE.¹

cised in these colonies, are null and void, and the Constitution of each particular colony wholly suspended.
 II. That the Provincial Congress of each province, under the direction of the great Continental Congress, is invested with all legislative and executive powers within their respective provinces, and that no other legislative or executive power does or can exist at this time in any of these colonies.
 III. As all former laws, are now suspended in this province, and the Congress has not

¹ I am indebted to the kindness of the Honorable David L. Swain, of Chapel Hall, John H. Wheeler, Esq., author of Historical Sketches of North Carolina and James W. Osborne, Esq., superintendent of the Branch Mint at Charlotte, for the originals from which these fac similes are made.

yet provided others, we judge it necessary for the better preservation of good order, to form certain rules and regulations for the internal government of this county, until laws shall be provided for us by the Congress.

IV. That the inhabitants of this county do meet on a certain day appointed by the committee, and, having formed themselves into nine companies (to wit: eight for the county, and one for the town), do choose a colonel and other military officers, who shall hold and exercise their several powers by virtue of the choice, and independent of the crown of Great Britain, and former Constitution of this province.

V. That for the better preservation of the peace and administration of justice, each of those companies do choose from their own body two discreet freeholders, who shall be empowered each by himself, and singly, to decide and determine all matters of controversy arising within said company, under the sum of twenty shillings, and jointly and together all controversies under the sum of forty shillings, yet so as their decisions may admit of appeal to the convention of the selectmen of the county, and also that any one of these men shall have power to examine and commit to confinement persons accused of petit larceny.

VI. That those two selectmen thus chosen do jointly and together choose from the body of their particular company two persons to act as constables, who may assist them in the execution of their office.

VII. That upon the complaint of any persons to either of these selectmen, he do issue his warrant directed to the constable, commanding him to bring the aggressor before him to answer said complaint.

VIII. That these select eighteen selectmen thus appointed do meet every third Thursday in January, April, July, and October, at the court-house in Charlotte, to hear and determine all matters of controversy for sums exceeding forty shillings, also appeals; and in case of felony to commit the persons convicted thereof to close confinement until the Provincial Congress shall provide and establish laws and modes of proceeding in all such cases.

IX. That these eighteen selectmen thus convened do choose a clerk, to record the transactions of said convention, and that said clerk, upon the application of any person or persons aggrieved, do issue his warrant to any of the constables of the company to which the offender belongs, directing said constable to summon and warn said offender to appear before said convention at their next sitting, to answer the aforesaid complaint.

X. That any person making complaint, upon oath, to the clerk, or any member of the convention, that he has reason to suspect that any person or persons indebted to him in a sum above forty shillings intend clandestinely to withdraw from the county without paying the debt, the clerk or such member shall issue his warrant to the constable, commanding him to take said person or persons into safe custody until the next sitting of the convention.

XI. That when a debtor for a sum above forty shillings shall abscond and leave the county, the warrant granted as aforesaid shall extend to any goods or chattels of said debtor as may be found, and such goods or chattels be seized and held in custody by the constable for the space of thirty days, in which time, if the debtor fail to return and discharge the debt, the constable shall return the warrant to one of the selectmen of the company, where the goods are found, who shall issue orders to the constable to sell such a part of said goods as shall amount to the sum due.

That when the debt exceeds forty shillings, the return shall be made to the convention, who shall issue orders for sale.

XII. That all receivers and collectors of quit-rents, public and county taxes, do pay the same into the hands of the chairman of this committee, to be by them disbursed as the public exigencies may require, and that such receivers and collectors proceed no further in their office until they be approved of by, and have given to this committee good and sufficient security for a faithful return of such moneys when collected.

XIII. That the committee be accountable to the county for the application of all moneys received from such public officers.

XIV. That all these officers hold their commissions during the pleasure of their several constituents.

XV. That this committee will sustain all damages to all or any of their officers thus appointed, and thus acting, on account of their obedience and conformity to these rules.

XVI. *That whatever person shall hereafter receive a commission from the crown, or attempt to exercise any such commission heretofore received, shall be deemed an enemy to his country;* and upon confirmation being made to the captain of the company in which he resides, the said company shall cause him to be apprehended and conveyed before two selectmen, who, upon proof of the fact, shall commit said offender to safe custody, until the next sitting of the committee, who shall deal with him as prudence may direct.

XVII. That any person refusing to yield obedience to the above rules shall be considered equally criminal, and liable to the same punishment as the offenders above last mentioned.

XVIII. That these resolves be in full force and virtue until instructions from the Provincial Congress regulating the jurisprudence of the province shall provide otherwise, or the legislative body of Great Britain resign its unjust and arbitrary pretensions with respect to America.

XIX. That the eight militia companies in this county provide themselves with proper arms and accoutrements, and hold themselves in readiness to execute the commands and directions of the General Congress of this province and this committee.

XX. That the committee appoint Colonel Thomas Polk and Dr. Joseph Kennedy to purchase three hundred pounds of powder, six hundred pounds of lead, and one thousand flints, for the use of the militia of this county, and deposit the same in such place as the committee may hereafter direct.

Signed by order of the Committee. EPHRAIM BREVARD, *Clerk of the Committee.*"

These resolutions, which not only substantially declared the people of Mecklenburg, represented by the convention, free and independent of the British crown, but organized a civil government upon a republican basis, were read to the assembled multitude from the courthouse door, and were received with loud acclaims of approbation. It is said that they were read to fresh gatherings of the people several times during the day, and were always greeted with cheers.

These resolutions formed the closing proceedings of the convention, and having provided for the transmission of the resolutions to the Provincial Congress of North Carolina, to meet in Hillsborough in August, and to the Continental Congress, then in session at Philadelphia, it adjourned. Captain James Jack, of Charlotte, was the appointed messenger, and a few days after the adjournment of the convention, he proceeded to Philadelphia, and placed the papers in his charge, in the hands of Caswell, Hooper, and Hewes, the delegates in Congress from North Carolina.¹ These gentlemen, perhaps considering the movement premature or too radical, did not make the proceedings public. They still hoped for reconciliation with the mother country, and were willing to avoid any act that might widen the breach. They addressed a joint letter to the people of Mecklenburg, complimenting them for their patriotism, recommending the strict observance of order, and expressing their belief that the whole continent would soon follow their example, if the grievances complained of were not speedily redressed. For the same prudential reasons, the Provincial Congress at Hillsborough declined taking any immediate action upon their bold proceedings.² But for

¹ It was the regular court day when Captain Jack passed through Salisbury. Mr. Kennon, a member of the convention, was in attendance there, and persuaded Jack to permit the resolutions to be publicly read. They were generally approved; but two men (John Dunn and Benjamin Boote) pronounced them treasonable, and proposed the forcible detention of Captain Jack. For this act, Dunn and Boote were arrested by some armed men sent by the committee at Charlotte for the purpose. They were first sent to Camden, in South Carolina, to be kept in confinement as "persons inimical to the country." They were afterward sent to Charleston for better security.

² The papers were referred to a committee, who reported on the first of September. After some discussion, the Congress resolved that "the present Association ought to be further relied on for bringing about a reconciliation with the parent state." No further notice was taken of the matter, and this brilliant spark was lost in the blaze of the Federal Declaration of Independence published the following year.

this hesitation, growing out of a sincere desire to preserve the integrity of the British realm, the world would long ago have conceded to the people of Mecklenburg, in North Carolina, the distinguished honor of making a *Declaration of Independence* of the British crown, thirteen months previous to the Federal declaration by the Continental Congress. That honor has not only been withheld, but the fact denied by men presumed to have positive information upon all subjects connected with Revolutionary events. Documentary evidence has settled the question beyond cavil.¹

¹ Almost fifty years this brilliant event in Mecklenburg county remained in obscurity, and when its radiance appeared, it was believed to be only reflected light. There appeared in the *Raleigh Register*, April 30, 1819, a statement over the signature of J. M'Knitt, that a convention of representatives of the people of Mecklenburg county met at Charlotte, on the nineteenth and twentieth of May, 1775, and by a series of resolutions substantially declared themselves free and independent.* He alleged that Captain Jack bore those resolutions to the Continental Congress, and placed them in the hands of the delegates from North Carolina in that body, who thought them premature. Mr. M'Knitt also stated that John M'Knitt Alexander was the secretary of the convention, and that all of the original papers were destroyed when the house of that gentleman was burned in April, 1800, but that copies of the proceedings were made, one of which was sent to Dr. Hugh Williamson, of New York, who was writing a history of North Carolina, and one to General William R. Davie.† This statement was copied from the *Raleigh Register* by the *Essex Register*, of Massachusetts, and was brought to the notice of the venerable John Adams. Mr. Adams sent the paper to Mr. Jefferson, accompanied with the remark that he thought it genuine. On the ninth of July, 1819, Mr. Jefferson replied to Mr. Adams's letter at some length, disclaiming all knowledge of such proceedings, and giving his decided opinion that the article in the *Register* was a "very unjustifiable quiz."‡ Among his reasons for not believing the thing genuine, he mentioned the fact that no historian, not even Williamson (whose *History of North Carolina* was published in 1812), alluded to any such proceedings. Such was the fact, and public opinion was divided. It was singular, indeed, that such an important event should not have been mentioned by Williamson, if he believed the resolutions sent to him by Mr. Alexander to be true copies of those adopted in convention at Charlotte. Because of a similarity of expressions and sentiments in these resolutions and the Federal Declaration of Independence, Mr. Jefferson was charged with gross plagiarism,§ while the North Carolinians were charged with attempting to arrogate to themselves a glory which did not belong to them.

In 1829, Judge Martin's *History of North Carolina* appeared, and in vol. ii., pages 272-274, inclusive, he publishes an account of the Mecklenburg proceedings, with the resolutions. These resolutions differ materially from those which were possessed by General Davie, and published as authentic in a state pamphlet, prepared by order of the North Carolina Legislature, in 1831. Whence Judge Martin procured his copy, is not known. In 1830, a publication appeared denying the statements of the *Raleigh Register* in 1819, and also denying that a convention, with such results, was ever held at Charlotte. The friends of those patriots whose names appeared as members of the convention in question, very properly tender of their

* The following is a copy of the resolutions, which were in the possession of General William R. Davie, and are now in the archives of the state, at Raleigh:

"Resolved, 1. That whoever directly or indirectly abetted, or in any way, form, or manner, countenanced the unchartered and dangerous invasion of our rights, as claimed by Great Britain, is an enemy to this country—to America—and to the inherent and inalienable rights of man.

"Resolved, 2. That we, the citizens of Mecklenburg county, do hereby dissolve the political bands which have connected us to the mother country, and hereby absolve ourselves from all allegiance to the British crown, and abjure all political connection, contract, or association with that nation, who have wantonly trampled on our rights and liberties, and inhumanly shed the blood of American patriots at Lexington.

"Resolved, 3. That we do hereby declare ourselves a free and independent people; are, and of right ought to be, a sovereign and self-governing association, under the control of no power, other than that of our God, and the general government of the 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.

"Resolved, 4. That as we acknowledge the existence and control of no law or legal officer, civil or military, within this county, we do hereby ordain and adopt, as a rule of life, all, each, and every of our former laws; wherein, nevertheless, the crown of Great Britain never can be considered as holding rights, privileges, immunities, or authority therein.

"Resolved, 5. That it is also further decreed, that all, each, and every military officer in this county is hereby retained in his former command and authority, he acting conformably to these regulations. And that every member present of this delegation shall henceforth be a civil officer, viz., a justice of the peace, in the character of a 'committee-man,' to issue process, hear and determine all matters of controversy, according to said adapted laws; and to preserve peace, and union, and harmony in said county; and to use every exertion to spread the love of country and fire of freedom throughout America, until a more general organized government be established in this province."

To these resolutions, it is said, a number of by-laws were appended to regulate the general conduct of citizens.

† The house of Mr. Alexander was destroyed in April, 1800. The date of the earliest copy of the resolutions is September of the same year.

‡ Jefferson's *Memoirs and Correspondence*, iv., 323.

§ The chief ground upon which this charge was predicated, was the identity of expression in the last clause of the third resolution, and the closing of the Federal Declaration—"We pledge to each other our lives, our fortunes, and our most sacred honor." This charge has no weight when it is considered that this was a common parliamentary suffix. Gibbon, writing to his friend Sheffield concerning the *Boston Port Bill*, in 1774, said, "We voted an address of lives and fortunes, &c." See volume I. of this work, page 515.

Charlotte was the point to which Gates retreated, with a few followers, after the disastrous battle near Camden, in August, 1780, and soon afterward it became the scene of ac-

reputation and the honor of the state, sought for proof that such a convention, with such glorious results, was held in Charlotte. The testimonies of several living witnesses of the fact were procured, some of them as early as 1819-20, and some as late as 1830. Their certificates all agree as to the main fact that *such a convention was held*, but all are not explicit as to date, and some evidently point to other resolves than those referred to. These discrepancies caused doubts, and the public mind was still unsatisfied. To set the matter at rest, the Legislature of North Carolina appointed a committee to investigate the subject. The result was published in pamphlet form in 1831, and the statement made in the *Raleigh Register* in 1819 was endorsed as true. The certificates alluded to (which also appear in Force's *American Archives*, ii., 855) are published therein, together with the names of the Mecklenburg Committee appended thereto. Yet one stubborn fact remained in the way—a fact favorable to a belief in the undoubted truth and sincerity of Mr. Jefferson in his denial—namely, that in no public records or files of newspapers of the day had the resolutions of the twentieth, or an account of the convention, been discovered. Some of the most important of those of the thirty-first were published in the *Massachusetts Spy* in 1775. Doubt still hung over the genuineness of the published resolutions, and eminent men in North Carolina made earnest searches for further testimony, but in vain.

In 1847, the Reverend Thomas Smyth, D.D., of Charleston, published an inquiry into "The true Origin and Source of the Mecklenburg and National Declaration of Independence," in which, assuming the published resolutions, purporting to have been adopted at Charlotte, on the twentieth of May, 1775, to be genuine copies of the originals prepared by Dr. Brevard, he advances an ingenious theory, by which Mr. Jefferson is impliedly defended against the charge of plagiarism and subsequent misrepresentation. Assuming that both Jefferson and Dr. Brevard were, as students of history, familiar with the *confessions, covenants, and bands* (declarations and pledges) of the Presbyterian Reformers of Scotland and Ireland in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, he draws the conclusion that their ideas, and even their expressions, were copied from those instruments of a people struggling for religious freedom. As a proof that such forms were appealed to, he quotes Jefferson's acknowledgment (*Memoirs*, &c., i., 2), that to a Scotch Presbyterian tutor he was indebted for his republican bias; and his statement (p. 6) that, in preparing a resolution at Williamsburg, recommending a fast on the first of June, 1774, they "rummaged over" Rushworth "for the revolutionary precedents and forms of the Puritans of that day." Upon these premises, Dr. Smyth argues that Mr. Jefferson and Dr. Brevard doubtless drew water from the same well, without a knowledge of each other's act—a well from which copious draughts were made by the Father of our Republic.

While these inquiries were in progress, the discovery of documentary evidence settled the main question beyond cavil, and established the fact that, on the thirty-first of May, 1775, the people of Mecklenburg, in a representative convention assembled, passed resolutions equivalent in spirit to a declaration of independence, and organized a civil government upon the basis of political independence. Among the most indefatigable searchers after the truth, was the Honorable David L. Swain, late governor of North Carolina. A manuscript proclamation of Governor Martin, dated August 8, 1775, which was deposited in the archives of the state by Reverend Francis L. Hawks, D.D., was found to contain the following words: "And whereas, I have also seen a most infamous publication in the *Cape Fear Mercury*, importing to be resolves of a set of people styling themselves a committee for the county of Mecklenburg, most traitorously declaring the entire dissolution of the laws, government, and Constitution of this country, and setting up a system of rule and regulation repugnant to the laws, and subversive of his majesty's government," &c., &c. Here was a clue. After repeated searches at the instance of Mr. Swain, a copy of the *South Carolina Gazette and Country Journal*, dated "Tuesday, June 13, 1775," and containing the entire set of resolutions printed on pages 620-21, bearing date of May 31, 1775, was discovered by Dr. Joseph Johnson, in the Charleston Library.* These were copied, and sent to Mr. Swain, who immediately forwarded a copy to Mr. Bancroft, the historian, then the American minister at the court of St. James. Before they reached Mr. Bancroft at London, that gentleman had discovered in the State Paper Office a copy of the same South Carolina paper, containing the resolutions. This paper was sent to Lord Dartmouth, the secretary of state for the colonies, by Sir James Wright, then governor of Georgia. In a letter which accompanied the papers, Governor Wright said, "By the inclosed paper your lordship will see the extraordinary resolves of the people of Charlotte-town, in Mecklenburg county; and I should not be surprised if the same should be done every where else." These facts Mr. Bancroft communicated in a letter to Mr. Swain, written on the fourth of July, 1848.

The only question unsettled now is, Whether the Mecklenburg Committee assembled at an earlier date than the thirty-first of May, 1775, and adopted the resolutions which were in possession of General Davie, and published in the *Raleigh Register* in 1819. It is a question of minor historical importance, since the great fact is established beyond cavil, that more than a year previous to the promulgation of the Federal Declaration, the people of Mecklenburg declared their entire independence of the British crown, and, in pursuance of that declaration, organized a civil government.

* Dr. Johnson, in his *Traditions and Reminiscences of the Revolution* (Charleston, 1851), gives a fac simile of a hand-bill, containing the first three of the Mecklenburg Resolutions published in the state pamphlet, together with the names of the committee. Dr. Johnson says it is "the oldest publication of the Mecklenburg Declaration yet found in print." This is a significant fact. The hand-bill was printed by Heiskell and Brown, who established their printing-office at Knoxville, Tennessee, in 1816. This document is not now (1852) more than thirty five years old. It was probably printed at about the time (1819) when the resolutions appeared in the *Raleigh Register*.