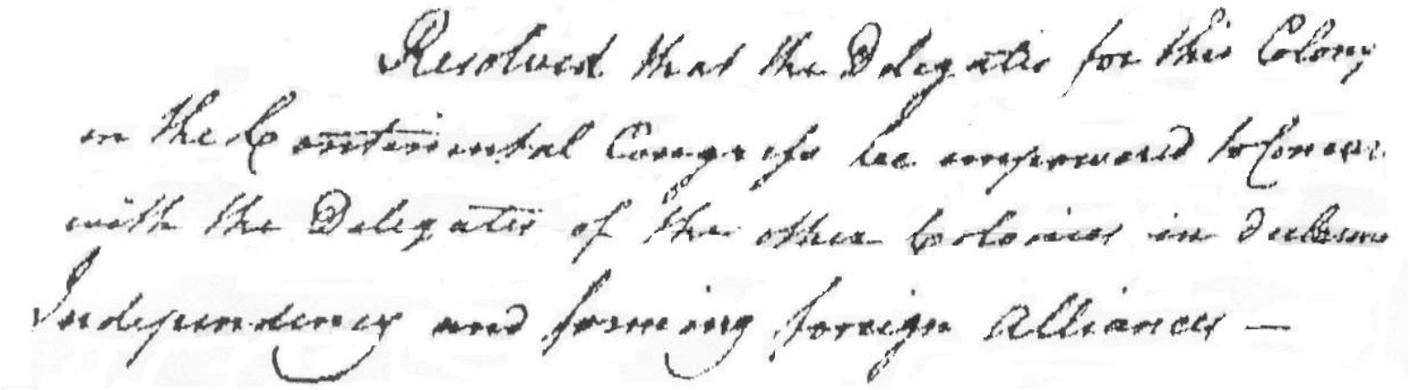
Moores Creek National Battlefield

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Moores Creek National Battlefield
40 Patriots Hall Dr
Currie, NC 28435

Halifax Resolves


Resolved that the Delegates for this Colony
in the Continental Congress be empowered to concur
with the Delegates of the other Colonies in declaring
Independency and forming Foreign Alliances —

The French and Indian War

Prior to 1763 Britain held an attitude of "salutary neglect" toward the American colonies. The colonial assemblies were allowed to run their own affairs with little or no interference from Britain. This attitude changed because of the increasing population and wealth of the colonies and the tremendous costs of the French and Indian War. This "World War" (also called the Seven Years War or Great War for the Empire) started in 1754 and ended in 1763. In the conflict, Britain, the colonists, and their Indian allies eventually defeated France and its Indian allies for control of North America.

Much of the war was fought at sea, out of sight and concern of the Americans. After the war, Tories in Parliament felt the colonists should start paying their share of the costs of defending and administering the expanded British Empire, to which they belonged. Many colonists felt the new taxes and laws imposed by the British were unjust. Thus, came an end to salutary neglect and a start of what many colonists saw as a reign of tyranny and encroachment from the Crown.

Government in Colonial North America

Who has the right to tax the people? Who has the right to pass or veto laws? These questions were part of the conflict between the North Carolina Royal Governor (appointed by the Crown) and the Assembly (elected by the landowners). By 1774 such issues caused open hostilities between these branches of government. After the governor refused to call the assembly into session, the representatives formed a congress. This congress assumed all governmental powers after Royal Governor, Josiah Martin, fled the colony in 1775. Over the next several months the people of the colony faced the decision of whether to support the congress in its call for independence, remain loyalists and support the Royal Governor, or to stay neutral in this political contest. It is estimated that the people in the colony were equally divided into these groups. However, the issue of who was actually in control of the government was settled once and for all in the early morning hours of February 27, 1776, at the Battle of Moores Creek Bridge. At this battle Patriot militia forces soundly defeated Loyalist irregular forces (consisting mostly of Scot Highlander settlers) and ended all hopes of the re-establishment of British government in the colony.

Tryon Palace, the residence of the last Royal Governor Josiah Martin, as it would have looked like in 1775.

The Fourth Provincial Congress

After the Patriot victory at Moores Creek Bridge, the Fourth North Carolina Provincial Congress met in Halifax, NC. Members unanimously adopted the Halifax Resolves on April 12, 1776. The Resolves were simply entered into the Congressional minutes and as such are not "signed" documents. After adoption, the secretary of the Congress, James Green, sent copies of the Resolves to the North Carolina delegation assembled with the Second Continental Congress in Philadelphia for execution.

The Halifax Resolves and the Declaration of Independence

The colonial assemblies desired self-governing status within the British Empire in early 1776. However, North Carolina was an exception. The Halifax Resolves ordered North Carolina's delegation to the Second Continental Congress in Philadelphia, not only to form foreign alliances, but also to seek and vote for independence from Great Britain. This action made North Carolina the first of the colonial governments to call for total independence. As such, it became a factor leading to the writing of the Declaration of Independence, which was adopted on July 4, 1776. Below is a transcription of the Halifax Resolves.

Halifax Resolves

In Congress 12th, April 1776

The Select Committee to take into Consideration the Usurpation's and violence's attempted and Committed by the King and Parliament of Britain against America, and the further measures to be taken for frustrating the same, and for the better defense of the province, report as follows, to wit.

It appears to your Committee, that pursuant to the plan concerted by the British Ministry for subjugating America, the King and Parliament of Great Britain have usurped a Power over the persons and properties of the people unlimited and uncontrolled, and disregarding their humble petitions for Peace, Liberty, and Safety, have made divers Legislative Acts, denouncing War, Famine, and every Species of Calamity, against the Continent in General.

That British Fleets and Armies have been, and still are daily employed in destroying the people, and committing the most horrid devastation on the country.

That Governors in different Colonies have declared Protection to slaves who should imbrue their hands in the blood of their masters.

That the ships belonging to America are declared prizes of War and many of them have been violently seized and Confiscated.

In Consequence of all which multitudes of the people have been destroyed, or from easy Circumstances reduced to the most lamentable distress.

And Whereas the Moderation hitherto manifested by the United Colonies, and their sincere desire to be reconciled to the Mother Country on Constitutional principles, have procured no Mitigation of the aforesaid Wrongs and Usurpation's, and no hopes remain of obtaining redress, by those means alone which have been hitherto tried, your Committee are of Opinion that the House should enter into the following Resolve.

Resolved, that the Delegates for this Colony in the Continental Congress be empowered to Concur with the Delegates of the other Colonies in declaring Independence and forming foreign alliances-reserving to this Colony, the Sole and Exclusive right of forming a Constitution and Laws for this Colony, and of appointing Delegates from time to time (under the direction of a General representation thereof) to meet the Delegates of the other Colonies for such purpose as shall be hereafter pointed out.

North Carolina Flag

Two dates appear on the North Carolina flag:

- May 20, 1775 is the date of the Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence.
- April 12, 1776 is the date of the Halifax Resolves, the first call by any colonial assembly for complete independence from Great Britain.