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# *The Proceedings of the Revolutionary Committee of the Town of Newbern, North Carolina, 1775*

A newly discovered printed document of the American Revolution brought to light by the American Imprints Inventory of the Historical Records Survey, Division of Women's & Professional Projects of the Works Progress Administration.

*Provided with an introductory note and privately printed by Douglas C. McMurtrie, Consultant to the National Director of the Historical Records Survey, as a keepsake for presentation to friends attending the sixtieth annual conference of the American Library Association at Kansas City, Missouri, June 13-18, 1938. Presswork by students of the Chicago School of Printing, Chicago, Illinois.*

*Introductory Note.* As one result of its explorations of the holdings of libraries throughout the country with the aim of recording early imprints of historical importance, the American Imprints Inventory of the Historical Records Survey is able to report the preservation in the Archives of the Moravian Church in America, Southern Province, at Winston-Salem, North Carolina, the hitherto unrecorded Revolutionary document here reproduced in facsimile.

Also reported from this collection are four printed legislative journals and the printed laws of one session, all of pre-Revolutionary dating and all previously undescribed by any bibliographer.

The document here reproduced needs no proof of its interest and significance, for it obviously speaks more eloquently for itself than could any advocate.

For appreciated cooperation in arranging to photostat this precious record of Southern patriot activity, I am under obligation to Miss Adelaide L. Fries, custodian of the Moravian Archives at Winston-Salem, North Carolina.

D. C. McM.

# PROCEEDINGS of the COMMITTEE for the Town of *Newbern*, and County of *Craven*, May 31, 1775.

CIRCULAR LETTER to the several COMMITTEES of this Province.

GENTLEMEN,

**W**E herewith transmit you a Copy of the Proceedings of our Committee, hoping they will meet with your Approbation, and that you will think it necessary, in these Times of general Danger, to adopt something of the like Nature for our common Safety and Defence. We think it necessary, upon this Occasion, to inform you, that Association Papers have been circulated through this County (supposed under the Direction of the Governor, as they are in the Hand-Writing of his Private Secretary) with a direct View to draw off the People from the Cause of Liberty, and to create in them Suspicions and Jealousies of all those who openly declare in Favour of Freedom. Some few very ignorant People in this County were by the Artifice of our Enemies drawn in to subscribe such Association; but we have the Pleasure to acquaint you that they have been since convinced of their Error, with indignation tore off their Names, and now look with Horror on the Trap that was laid for them. If any such Papers have been circulated in your County, we doubt not they will, through your Vigilance, be easily and suddenly put a Stop to.

We also transmit you a Letter from *Charlestown* Committee, which was sent to the several Committees in that Province, for the better Information of the People at large; which explains and sets in a clear Light the real State and Nature of the present Disputes between *Great-Britain* and *America*, in which this Province is involved as well as the rest. It is, we think, the Duty of the several Committees to inform the People of their Danger. We remain most respectfully, Gentlemen,

Your obedient Servants, &c.

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In the COMMITTEE at *NEWBERN*, May 31, 1775.

**W**HEREAS it appears by Letters from the Committees of Correspondence in *New York* and *Philadelphia*, and by the Public Papers, that all Exportation to *Quebec*, *Nova Scotia*, *Georgia*, and *Newfoundland*, or any Part of the fishing Coasts or Islands is suspended.

Resolved, That the above Measure be recommended by the Committee to the Merchants and Inhabitants of this Town and County; and that from this Time no Provisions, or any other Necessaries, be sent from this Port to the Army or Navy at *Boston*, unless otherwise directed by the Continental Congress.

**W**HEREAS having received certain Intelligence that a most bloody and barbarous Action hath lately been committed by the Army under General *Gage* on the Inhabitants near *Boston*, whom they unmercifully fell upon and murdered in cool Blood, and without Provocation, as they marched through the Country, having no Regard to Age, Sex, or Infirmary; at the same Time ravaging the Country, burning, destroying, and laying all waste wherever they came, until at length they were met by a few Companies of Provincials, who then thinking themselves justified by all the Laws of God and Nations, took up Arms in the immediate Defence of their Lives, and by a manly Exertion of that brave Spirit which a good Cause never fails to inspire, they, though greatly their Inferiors as to Numbers, providentially put a Stop to their destructive Career, and forced them to retreat with Precipitation and much Loss, for near 20 Miles, to their fortified City of *Boston*, which unhappy devoted Place the Army now consider as their own Property, in open Exclusion of the right Owners.—From all which it manifestly appears that the *British* Ministry mean no longer to receive the peaceable Addresses of the much injured People of *America*, on the Subject of their invaded Rights; but are determined, since they will not voluntarily make a total Surrender of their Freedom and Constitution, to wrest it from them by the brutal Hand of Violence. The People of *America* are therefore now driven to this fatal Extremity—either they must tamely submit to Slavery, and agree for themselves and their Posterity for ever, to work for and maintain, with the Sweat of their Brows, their proud Masters and Overseers, the ministerial Pensioners, Placemen, and Hirelings, of every Denomination whatever; or they must resolve firmly and manfully to maintain those Rights, which God gave, and the Constitution warrants. The latter Resolution our Sister Colonies have unanimously adopted, and accordingly have now in the field not less, from the best Accounts we have received, than 25,000 Men, well disciplined, and equip'd with a large Train of Artillery, and every Kind of military Implement necessary for immediate Action.

And whereas there is much Reason to fear, in these Times of general Tumult and Confusion, that the Slaves may be instigated and encouraged by our inveterate Enemies to an Insurrection, which in our present defenceless State might have the most dreadful Consequences; we therefore, induced by these most weighty Considerations, do think it our indispensable Duty to take every Precaution that Prudence and Forethought can possibly suggest, so as to

be prepared in Time against the worst Event that may happen. We therefore recommend it strongly to our Constituents, the Inhabitants of *Newbern* and *Craven* County, that they form themselves immediately into Companies, and nominate proper Officers to each Company; that such Officers, when nominated, use unwearied Diligence in instructing their respective Companies in the Use of Arms; and from Time to Time, as they shall judge expedient, that they send out Detachments to patrol and search the Negro Houses, and all other suspected Places within their several Districts, giving strict Orders to the Officer of such Detachment to seize all Arms and Ammunition found in their Possession, and to apprehend and carry before the next Magistrate all such Negroes as they shall find under Circumstances of Suspicion, to be dealt with according to Law.

The following Persons are appointed for the present to summon together the several Companies, viz. *Abner Nash*, *Lovick Jones*, *Richard Blackledge*, *Charles Crawford*, *Moses Amond*, *John Gray Blount*, *Lemuel Hatch*, *Nathan Bryan*, *Levi Dawson*, *Frederick Hargett*, *Francis Dillamar*, *Samuel Smith*, *Richard Nickson*, and *Thomas McLin*. And in Order that the most perfect Union and good Understanding may prevail amongst the good People of this County and Town on Subjects of such Importance, it is further recommended that the several Companies, so to be formed as aforesaid, do meet in their several Districts twice in a Month, if convenient, to advise and consult together how they may best act with united Force, in Case of any sudden and dangerous Emergency.

Resolved, That the Proceedings of this Committee be printed and made public, with the printed Letter from the Committee of *South-Carolina* to the Inhabitants of their Province, explaining the real State and Nature of the present Disputes between *Great-Britain* and *America*.

A CIRCULAR LETTER to the COMMITTEES in the several Districts and Parishes of South Carolina.

GENTLEMEN,

CHARLESTOWN, April 27, 1775.

THE General Committee thinking it of the highest Importance that the Committees in the interior Parts of the Colony, and that, through them, the People at large, should from Time to Time be informed of all such Affairs and Transactions as have any Relation to the *American* Cause; they have for the Management of so necessary a Service, nominated a Committee of Intelligence.

We are very sorry that at our entering upon that Service we are to announce to you that there is but little Probability of deciding the present unhappy Public Disputes, by the pacific Measures we have hitherto pursued. However, even this Circumstance, we hope, will be of Service to our Cause; for we have no Doubt, but that the Ministry having thus turned a deaf Ear to the Complaints of the Colonies, these will be confirmed in their Resolution to complain in a louder Tone, and be ANIMATED to meet those Difficulties and Dangers they can now no longer avoid, with Honour to themselves, and Safety to their Liberties.

On the 9th of *February* the two Houses of Parliament addressed the King. In Substance, they declared to his Majesty that *America* was in a State of actual Rebellion; they desired the King, by all possible Means, to enforce the late Acts of Parliament against *America*; and they assured him that in such a Measure they would support him with their Lives and Fortunes. The King acquiesced, and some Days after desired from Parliament an Addition to his military Forces—it was granted without Hesitation. In Consequence of these Measures, Reinforcements of Troops and Ships are ordered to *Boston*; where, when they shall be arrived, General *Gage* may have under his Command about 10,000 Men. But what are 10,000 Men against THE UNITED POWERS OF AMERICA!

Amidst this Gloom, some Rays of Light break in, and cheer us in this Extremity of Affairs. The City of *London* has declared in our Favour; in a few Hours, some of her Merchants subscribed 26,000*l.* Sterling for the Relief of *America*, and public Subscriptions for the same Purpose are industriously promoted. *London*, and other considerable Towns have petitioned Parliament, and continue to exert themselves vigorously in our Behalf. The most illustrious Noblemen, and the most eloquent Orators, are loud in our Defence. The Friends of Liberty in *England* look with Horror upon the late Address to the King; they term it a cruel and unjust Declaration of War against *America*. In short, the whole People of *England* are alarmed at such a Measure, and look to the Virtue of the *Americans*, to preserve even the Liberties of *England* herself, now almost annihilated by Corruption. The Ministry are irresolute, and nothing can be more fluctuating than their Counsels; they resolve one Thing one Day, and the contrary the next. But, from such a Conduct, this evident Truth results; they are utterly at a Loss what Measures to pursue—a Dilemma, without Doubt, arising from a Consciousness of the Iniquity of their Schemes. Hence, we may still justly entertain flattering Expectances; for, where there is not any regular and connected System of Operations formed, Artifices fabricated for the Purposes of the Day, must from Time to Time afford Circumstances improvable to our Advantage.

The Ministry themselves seemed frightened at their own Declaration of War; they grew doubtful of the Event of military Operations; and fearing the combined Force of *America*, they turned their Thoughts to Stratagem. In a few Days they formed a Plan, calculated, as Lord *North* openly declared, to DISUNITE the *Americans*; and, on the 20th of *February*, only eleven Days after the Declaration of War, his Lordship suddenly introduced it into the House of Commons. He termed it a conciliatory Plan, and it is to the following Purpose: "That if the Colonies will tax themselves in such Proportions, as shall come up to the Idea that

that a *venal Parliament* MAY CHOOSE TO ENTERTAIN of their respective Abilities; and also tax themselves to *such an Amount*, and at *such Times*, as shall be AGREEABLE to *Parliament*; and consent that this general *American Tax* shall be ENTIRELY at the DISPOSAL of a *corrupt Parliament*; and also provide for their civil Government in *such Manner* as shall be SATISFACTORY to *Parliament*; that is, to make permanent and profitable Establishments for all the *ministerial Tools Administration may chuse to send among us*; then, while the *Americans* shall be thus SERVILE, *Parliament, that is THE MINISTER,* will "FORBEAR" to lay any Tax upon them.

But, Gentlemen, surely ALL THIS is *nothing more or less, than lying at the Mercy of Parliament* EQUALLY AS BEFORE. For you must have observed, EVERY PARTICULAR is to DEPEND ENTIRELY upon THE PLEASURE OF PARLIAMENT; that is, in FACT, upon the PLEASURE OF THE MINISTER.

Of late Years they taxed us to what Amount, and at what Time they pleased; and this, to raise a Revenue in order to preserve themselves from paying so large a Tax as otherwise they would be obliged to contribute; and also to be able to give comfortable Salaries to their Dependents, sending them to *America, without the least Care of examining whether or not they are proper Men to fill those Offices which they are destined to hold*. However, at length Administration finding that such a Mode of Taxation is no longer practicable; the Minister changes his Ground, in Hopes of imposing upon, and over reaching the *Americans*. He comes into Parliament, and "demands" that we consent to tax ourselves at *such TIMES, in such SUMS, and for such PURPOSES* as shall be agreeable to Parliament---that is to himself. Without Delay, the Parliament register the *Ministerial Edict*, they presume not to alter one Word of it: How much happier are the People of *France* in their Parliaments---they are only required to register the *Royal Edicts*! Gentlemen, this Demand alone is an Affront to our Understanding; it is adding new Inult to old Injuries; indeed, it comprehends Terms to which *America* never can submit, until her united Counsels shall decree, that it is *no longer practicable* to resist the Iron Hand of Oppression. And remember, Gentlemen, that even at the Time that Administration offers such humiliating Terms to us, they do it with the Musket and Bayonet at our Breasts. For Lord North declares that this Offer must be looked upon as "A DEMAND;" and that he does not "mean in the least to suspend his military Operations by Sea and Land, until" the *Americans shall "submit to his Laws."* Is there any Difference between this Conduct, and that of a Robber, who, with a Pistol at your Head, demands your Parie, with a blustering Threat---*deliver, or I will blow your Brains out?* The Magnitude of the Crime constitutes the ONLY Difference.

You will Observe, Gentlemen, that although *America* may tax herself, yet Parliament does not by any Means give up the Point of Taxation, the Object of our ten Years Struggle. No, they have determined, that so long as *America* will tax herself at such Times, in such Sums, and for such Purposes, as shall be agreeable to their Pleasure; so long only will they graciously "FORBEAR" to tax her. Lord North, in his Speech upon this Occasion, declares, "THE EXERCISE OF THE RIGHT OF TAXING every Part of the British Dominions, MUST BY NO MEANS BE GIVEN UP." He said, he did not mean to give up a single Point. He confessed, that he did not believe his conciliatory Plan would be agreeable to the Taste of the *Americans*, nor did he know "whether any Colony will come in upon these Terms;" but added his Lordship, *if only ONE of them consents, "A LINK OF THE GREAT CHAIN IS BROKEN."*

Here, Gentlemen, fix your Attention. The Minister confesses, he does not think his conciliatory Plan is calculated to compose the *American Troubles*, and to restore the wanted Harmony between the Mother Country and the Colonies, which ought to be the grand Objects in a Minister's Contemplation; but his Lordship hugs himself in the Idea, that IT IS CALCULATED TO DISUNITE THE AMERICANS, and to break a Link in the great Chain on this Continent now formed, happily for us, as dreadfully for him, in Defence of *American Liberties*, and as a Barrier against Ministerial Tyranny, influencing and inducing Parliamentary Exactions.

The Minister's Politics evidently point out the Means of our Safety. *Let us unite every Effort to preserve this Chain*; and, *above all*, let us with the utmost Circumspection guard THAT LINK entrusted to our Care; let us maintain it not only unbroken, but let us preserve it unfulfilled by the Breath of Treachery.

But should the *American Combination* be unfortunately broken, of which we have not the slightest Apprehension, by this conciliatory Plan of Division; behold, Gentlemen, the probable Consequences. Each Province must then enter into a separate Negotiation with a distant Administration. A Province must send and make a Proposition, which, in all Probability, will receive no Answer until all the Provinces shall have made theirs. Then, after a long Negotiation with our Agents, the Minister will tell this and that Province, their Quotas of the Tax they offer are not equal to their Abilities; and that their Propositions for the Support of civil Government are not satisfactory, in this and in that Article. These Answers must be returned to the respective Provinces; much Time will be requisite to form new Terms to undergo a new Course of long Negotiation in *London*, and to be exposed to new Objections. Perhaps, the Demands may be erroneously, or designedly, made above the real Abilities and Proportions of the respective Provinces. When, Gentlemen, can we expect a satisfactory Adjustment of our respective Quotas of a Tax, which it will be the Study of Parliament to screw up as high as possible, because, *the MORE they can make us pay, the LESS will be their Burden*: Nay, when can we expect even an End of a Negotiation, which it will be the Interest of Administration to procrastinate as long as possible! For, in the mean Time, having disunited the Colonies after such a Struggle as the present, they will be sensible there will not be any Danger of a new Resistance, and they will continue to tax us; they having only promised to "FORBEAR," WHEN our respective Propositions "SHALL BE APPROVED

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by his Majesty and the two Houses of Parliament." In short, if we DIVIDE, our Liberties are LOST; we shall lie totally at the Mercy of Administration, and be obliged to pay SUCH A TAX as *they please*; and that too, in the most ignominious Manner, because we should do it under evident Compulsion. Such a Conduct would prove our Minds to be weak; it would demonstrate, that, Heroes in Words, we shrink at *but the Appearance* of Danger. We should be more abject than the most abject People we read of; we should be deemed *unworthy of the Name of Men*: History could not give an Example of so base a Conduct. The Inhabitants of *Europe, Africa and Asia*, have at various Times signalized their Love of their Rights and Liberties. There is scarce a State among them, but has declared this in Characters written with her own Blood; and whole Cities have voluntarily perished, rather than resign their Liberties. The Ruins of *Saguntum* in *Europe*, *Carthage* in *Africa*, and *Xanthus* in *Asia*, are glorious Monuments of Nations preferring Death to Slavery; and this is the Hour in which the Virtue of *America* is to be tried. And are the *Americans* less virtuous, less Lovers of Liberty, than the Rest of Mankind!—Three Parts of the World are now looking on, to see if the *Americans* are as bold, as heroic, as great in Deeds, as they have experienced them to be in Words. But, if at this Time of Trial, three Millions of *Americans* shall hide their Heads because of the Appearance of ten Thousand Soldiers, an *American* must ever be a Term of Reproach among all Nations.

Shameful to our Reputation, and ruinous to our Affairs, as such a Conduct would be; we have the Pleasure to assure you that, from every Appearance on this Continent, we do not see any Room to think we run any Risk of being exposed to such Consequences. Every Advice from the Northward informs us their People are training to Arms. The neighbouring Provinces of *North-Carolina* and *Virginia* have embodied very considerable Forces, that are ready to march on the shortest Notice; and we have it from good Authority, that the four *New England* Governments alone have 25,000 Men in actual Pay, and ready for Action at a Moment's Warning, besides 20,000 more who are enlisted without Pay, and prepared to take the Field when called upon; and all this Force, exclusive of a well trained Militia, who are resolved to defend their Liberties at the Hazard of their Lives. The Inhabitants of this Capital, and the neighbouring Country, are equally determined; and are happy in finding that a similar Purpose prevails throughout the Province. In short, from every Appearance, we have the most sanguine Expectations that *America* will not be guilty of any Conduct in her Youth, that she will be ashamed of in her maturer Age.

Notwithstanding Lord North's conciliatory Motion, which we have to fully observed upon, and upon the Principles of which his Lordship means to ground an Act of Parliament; yet, having already punished the Province of *Massachusetts Bay*, by the Violation of their Charter and the military Blockade of her Capital, the Town of *Boston*, Lord North proceeds in extending the Effects of his Vengeance. On the 8th of March a Bill passed the House of Commons, restraining the Provinces of *Massachusetts Bay, New Hampshire, Connecticut, and Rhode Island*, from fishing on the Banks of *Newfoundland*; and from exporting to any Part of the World, but "to *Great Britain*, or some of the *British Islands* in the *West Indies*." Thus, as these four Provinces have by the *American Association* contracted not to export to these Places, THEIR EXPORTS ARE TOTALLY STOPPED. And the Act further says, that into those Provinces shall NOT be imported any "Sort of Wines, Salt, or any Goods or Commodities whatsoever (except Horses, Victual, and Linen Cloth, the Produce and Manufacture of *Ireland*, and Goods for the victualling his Majesty's Ships, and for his Majesty's Forces and Garrisons, or the Produce of the *British Islands* in the *West Indies*) upon any Pretence whatsoever, unless such Goods be shipped in *Great-Britain*, and carried directly from thence." Thus, as those Provinces are bound by the Association not to import FROM *Great-Britain, Ireland, or the West Indies*, it is evident that their IMPORTATION in the Way of Trade is TOTALLY PREVENTED. If the Blockade of *Boston* alone ROUSED the whole Continent to their Rescue and Support, HOW VIGOROUSLY ought we to exert ourselves, now that four entire Provinces are blockaded by an Act of Parliament, and CUT OFF FROM ALL MANNER OF TRADE! And, Gentlemen, remember, this violent Measure has been executed SINCE the Introduction of Lord North's conciliatory Motion.

This arbitrary Conduct on the other Side of the Water has driven the People of this Capital, and the neighbouring Country, TO DESPAIR of a Redress of American Grievances, without an EFFUSION of AMERICAN BLOOD—OF THIS they are virtuously willing to contribute their Quota, and even more than their Proportion, to procure this invaluable Relief. These Advices arrived on the 14th and 19th Days of this Month; and on the Night of the 21st Inst. the Public Armory and Magazines were opened, and a considerable Quantity of Arms and Ammunition were taken, without Doubt, for the Ends for which they were originally procured—THE PUBLIC SAFETY.

Last Wednesday, the 26th Instant, the General Committee passed a Vote, that the Provincial Congress be summoned to meet in *Charlestown* on Tuesday the 20th of June. We make no Doubt but that you will exert yourselves to give a general Notification of it, that the Congress may be as full as possible, as it is expected Affairs of the HIGHEST Importance will be the Subject of Deliberation.

#### A S S O C I A T I O N.

WE the Subscribers, Freeholders and Inhabitants of the County of *Crown* and Town of *Newbern*, being deeply affected with the present alarming State of this Province, and of all *America*, do resolve that we will pay all due Allegiance to his Majesty King *GEORGE* the Third, and endeavour to continue the Succession of his Crown in the illustrious House of *Hanover*, as by Law established, against the present or any future wicked Ministry or arbitrary Set of Men whatsoever. At the same Time we determine to assert our Rights as Men; and sensible that by late Acts of Parliament the most valuable Liberties and Privileges of *America* are invaded, and endeavoured to be violated and destroyed, and that under God the Preservation of them depends on a firm Union of the Inhabitants, and a steady spirited Observation of the Resolutions of the General Congress; being shocked at the cruel Scene now acting in the *Massachusetts-Bay*, and determined never to become Slaves to any Power upon Earth, WE do hereby agree and associate, under all the Ties of Religion, Honour, and Regard for Posterity, that we will adopt, and endeavour to execute, the Measures which the General Congress, now sitting at *Philadelphia*, may conclude on, for preserving our Constitution, and opposing the Execution of the several arbitrary and illegal Acts of the *British* Parliament; and that we will readily observe the Directions of our General Committee for the Purposes aforesaid, the Preservation of Peace and good Order, and Security of Individuals and private Property.



