



# **The First American Declaration of Independence? The Disputed History of the Mecklenburg Declaration of May 20, 1775**

*Scott Syfert*

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This is a comprehensive history of one of the greatest mysteries in American history--did Mecklenburg County, North Carolina, declare independence from Great Britain more than a year before anyone else? According to local legend, on May 20, 1775, in a log court house in the remote backcountry two dozen local militia leaders met to discuss the deteriorating state of affairs in the American colonies. As they met, a horseman arrived bringing news of the battles of Lexington and Concord. Enraged, they unanimously declared Mecklenburg County "free and independent" from Great Britain. It was known as the "Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence" ("MecDec" for short). A local tavern owner named James Jack delivered the MecDec to the Continental Congress, who found it "premature."

All of this occurred more than a year before the national Declaration of Independence. But is the story true? The evidence is mixed. John Adams believed the MecDec represented "the genuine sense of America" while Thomas Jefferson believed the story was "spurious." This book sets out all of the evidence, pro and con.

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