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Mamie Jones

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## In Cleveland County's Early Days

By MAMIE JONES

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The historian, Macauley, said:

"A people which takes no pride in the noble achievements of remote ancestors will never achieve anything worthy to be remembered by remote descendants."

Today I write of those ancestors of ours who came to this section less than 200 years ago, conquered a wilderness, set up a government, and made it possible for use to live in a democracy in this lovely county of ours.

### BRITISH OPPRESSION

About 1772-3-4, Great Britain's policy toward the Colonies underwent a drastic change. The illegal, oppressive measures she adopted caused the colonists to rise in revolt. If you remember, Governor Martin was almost a prisoner in his palace at Newbern. That lovely palace which at that time was the most beautiful building in America.

(Note: Is the State of North

Carolina going to appropriate thousands of dollars to restore this palace? To do so, several good buildings will have to be torn away, and a highway changed.)

### COMMITTEES OF SAFETY

Since the Colonists refused to recognize the King's authority; and refused to be subject to the King's officers, they must of necessity set up some sort of law enforcement machinery of their own. Hence, Committees of Safety were formed.

Tryon county was divided into 13 militia districts (townships). Each district had its captain and one or two assistants. Their duties were varied. They served as peace officers; they helped list and collect taxes; frequently they were Justices of the Peace. The Captain was head of the militia in his district.

### TRYON CITIZENS DEFY KING

At the second meeting of the Committee of Safety for Tryon county, held at the temporary Court

House (which was the home of Christian Mauney) on the 14th of August, 1775, a defiance of King George, hereinafter referred to as "Tryon Resolves," was formulated and signed by those present. And later, by 48 freeholders of Tryon County. They called this declaration of rights and independence.

"The unprecedented, barbarous, bloody actions committed by the British troops on our American brethren near Boston on the 19th

See LIFE Page 11

*When a Cold Strikes*  
*Strike Back with*  *for*  
**COLD DISCOMFORTS**  
*It's Liquid - 35¢ Per Bottle*

## LIFE

From Page 1, Second Section

of April and the 20th of May (1775)

... together with the hostile operations and traitorous designs ... for the subjugating of all British America, suggests to us the painful necessity of having recourse to arms for the preservation of those rights and liberties which the principles of our Constitution, and the laws of God, Nature and Nations have made it our duty to defend. We ... freeholders ... of Tryon County ... unite ourselves ... to resist force by force ... against all invasions ... and solemnly engage to take up arms and risk our lives and fortunes in maintaining the freedom of our country. And we do firmly agree to hold all such persons inimical to the liberties of America who shall refuse to subscribe to this

Association."

After signing these Resolves they ordered gunpowder.

**MONUMENT ON HIGHWAY 274**

A monument has been erected to these signers. It is located on State Highway 274 halfway between Bessemer City and Cherryville, situated in a pine grove just off the highway. One side contains the names of these 48 men. (It is interesting to note that each of these men—with one exception—wrote his name in legible handwriting. Some of them in perfect English script). The other side contains the explanation: "Here on August 14, 1775, was formulated and signed the Tryon Declaration of Rights and Independence from British Tyranny."

**FIVE CLEVELAND SIGNERS**

I have record of only five of these 48 signers who were residents of what is now Cleveland County at the time of the signing of these Resolves. They are: Wm. Graham,

Perrygren Magness (Mackness), Thos. Espey, Joseph Hardin and Benjamin Hardin.

**COL. WILLIAM GRAHAM**

A man of wealth, education, and political importance; perhaps Tryon County's foremost citizen. He came here from Virginia, and soon began to render valuable service. He built forts; led expeditions against the Indians; was Justice of the Peace; was one of the county's delegates to the Third and Fifth Provincial Congresses. He was a signer of the Tryon Resolves; in fact, there is evidence that he wrote these Resolves.

**GRAHAM'S FORT**

In 1779 he acquired a home on Broad River seven miles South of Shelby, formerly Rutherford now Cleveland County, which he fortified. To this fort came elderly people, women and children for protection against marauding bands of Tories. In September, 1780, this fort

was attacked by 25 Tories, and the only defenders were Col. Graham, David Dickey, William Twitty, the colonel's step-sons, and William's sister, Susan Twitty. After a fight in which one Tory was killed and three wounded the attackers left. Later they returned and did considerable property damage.

#### **IN DEFENSE OF LIBERTY**

Graham said: "When the war begun I was wealthy; with a firm constitution, and was stout; but in seven years in the prime of life I served with all my strength and fortune in defense of liberty and lost all." (He died at 93).

#### **HELPED DRAFT CONSTITUTION**

It is interesting to note that of the five delegates Tryon County elected to attend the Constitutional Convention in 1776, three of this number came from the section that is now Cleveland County. They are Col. Jos. Hardin, John Barber, and Col. Wm. Graham. This remarkable document (with few changes) was the one under which the State operated until the Yankees took over the State Government in 1868, and set up a constitution to suit themselves.

#### **CAPT. PERRYGREN MAGNESS AND CAPT. BENJAMIN MAGNESS**

This father and son came from England. They settled on Buffalo Creek in what is now Cleveland County when Benjamin, the son, was ten years old. The name was spelled Mackness then. Perrygren was appointed a captain in Tryon county militia in 1770. He was a signer of the Tryon Resolves. Benjamin fought in the battle of Kings Mountain.

#### **CAPT. THOMAS ESPEY AND CAPT. SAMUEL ESPEY**

These brothers came from Philadelphia and settled in Lincoln (now Cleveland) county. Thomas was one of the signers of the Tryon Resolves. Samuel was a Justice of the Peace. Both were members of Tryon county militia and fought in the battle of Kings Mountain.

#### **COL. JOSEPH HARDIN AND BENJAMIN HARDIN**

These brothers came from Virginia with the Hambrights in the 1760's. They settled in that part of Mecklenburg county which later became Cleveland. Both signed the Tryon Resolves and were prominent in the political life of the county.

Joseph Hardin was an unusually well educated man for his day. He was one of Tryon's delegates to the Third and Fifth Provincial Congresses. He served as an officer in the battle of Ramsour's Mill, and the battle of Kings Mountain.

#### **COL. FREDERICK HAMBRIGHT**

He was a signer of the Tryon Resolves. I shall write of him later.

#### **SCOTCH-IRISH INDEPENDENCE**

Mecklenburg county declared her independence of Great Britain just a little earlier than Tryon county did. She was an older, better organized county.

It is worthwhile to remember that the first voice publicly raised in America to dissolve relations with Great Britain came NOT from the Puritans of New England; NOT from the Dutch of New York; NOT from the planters of Virginia; but from the Scotch-Irish Presbyterians of North Carolina.