

HISTORICAL SKETCHES
AND
REMINISCENCES
OF AN
OCTOGENARIAN.

By THOMAS L. PRESTON.



PUBLISHED FOR THE AUTHOR BY
B. F. JOHNSON PUBLISHING CO.
RICHMOND, VA.
1900.

Virginia

F
R3R
.W3P8
1900
H231P
COPY 3

COPYRIGHT.
BY THOMAS L. PRESTON.
1900.

VTORAVIA
ABOAV 70

Lead Mines" (then but recently discovered by him), a few miles distant.

Fort Chiswell has other claims to historical association. It was the meeting place, in all probability, of that band of "West Augusta" patriots who were the first to resolve "to resist the aggressions of England by force." The author of those celebrated "Fincastle Resolutions" is not authentically ascertained. They may have been written by the Rev. Charles Cummings, or by Colonel William Preston, or William Christian, or Arthur or William Campbell, or by some other of the many who signed them. The only names given by Lyman C. Draper in "King's Mountain and Its Heroes" are Colonels William Preston, William Christian, Arthur and William Campbell, and William Edmondson, Rev. Charles Cummings and other leaders of Fincastle county, comprising the Holston settlements. They are dated January 20, 1775, *three months before* the battle of Lexington; *four, before* the "patriotic resolves" of the people of Mecklenburg, North Carolina; *five, before* the battle of Bunker's Hill, and nearly a year and five months before the Declaration of Independence.

These resolutions were sent to General Washington, then a member of the convention in Philadelphia. He knew, personally, several of the signers, and was a friend and correspondent of Colonel William Preston. With this knowledge of the leaders and the people of the county they represented, he felt warranted in saying, "Strip me of the dejected and suffering remnant of my army; take from me all that I have left; leave me but a banner; give me but the means to plant it upon the

mountains of West Augusta,* and I will yet draw around me the men who will lift up their bleeding country from the dust and set her free.”

The report of the committee appointed to draft the proceedings to the meeting of “the Freeholders of Fincastle county,” and “the Holston settlement” is so replete with interest and reflects so accurately the feelings of the intelligent citizens of Virginia at that period, that I give in full the text of the copy so kindly furnished me by R. A. Brock, former secretary of the Historical Society of Virginia, and present secretary of the Southern Historical Society. The men who composed that committee were representative men, and a more intelligent and patriotic group could not be found in any section of the “Old Dominion.” Their names are “household words” in Southwest Virginia. For their services in the Revolutionary War as citizens and soldiers each one deserves a separate biography and a monument of marble. Well may their descendants be proud of such ancestors.

AMERICAN ARCHIVES.

FINCASTLE COUNTY (VIRGINIA) MEETING.

In obedience to the resolves of the Continental Congress, a meeting of the Freeholders of Fincastle county, in Virginia, was held on the 20th day of January, 1775,

* Some of Augusta County's favorite orators have quoted this passage from Gov. McDowell's speech as applying to that county *exclusively*, but it is fair to presume that it had *primarily* reference to the signers of the Fincastle Resolutions as well as to his friends, the Lewises and others of Augusta County.

who, after approving of the association framed by that august body in behalf of all the Colonies, and subscribing thereto, proceeded to the election of a committee to see the same carried punctually into execution, when the following gentlemen were nominated: The Rev. Charles Cummings, Colonel William Preston, Colonel William Christian, Captain Stephen Trigg, Major Arthur Campbell, Major William Inglis, Captain Walter Crockett, Captain John Montgomery, Captain James McGavock, Captain William Campbell, Captain Thomas Madison, Captain Daniel Smith, Captain William Russell, Captain Evan Shelby, and Lieutenant William Edmondson. After the election the committee made choice of Colonel William Christian for their chairman, and appointed Mr. David Campbell to be clerk.

The following address was then unanimously agreed to by the people of the county, and is as follows:

To the Honorable PEYTON RANDOLPH, Esquire, RICHARD HENRY LEE, GEORGE WASHINGTON, PATRICK HENRY, *Junior*, RICHARD BLAND, BENJAMIN HARRISON, and EDMUND PENDLETON, Esquires, the Delegates from this Colony who attended the Continental Congress held in Philadelphia:

Gentlemen,—Had it not been for our remote situation and the Indian war which we were lately engaged in,* to chastise those cruel and savage people for the many murders and depredations they have committed among

* Called Dunmore's War, and ended by the battle at Point Pleasant, October 10, 1774.

us, now happily terminated under the auspices of our present worthy Governor, his excellency the Right Honorable the Earl of Dunmore, we should before this time have made known to you our thankfulness for the very important services you have rendered to your country, in conjunction with the worthy delegates from the other provinces.

Your noble efforts for reconciling the Mother Country and the Colonies on rational and constitutional principles, and your pacific, steady and uniform conduct in all that arduous work entitle you to the esteem of all British America, and will immortalize you in the annals of your country. We heartily concur in your resolutions,* and shall in every instance strictly and invariably adhere thereto.

We assure you, gentlemen, and all our countrymen, that we are a people whose hearts overflow with love and duty to our lawful sovereign, George Third, whose illustrious house for several successive reigns have been the guardians of the civil and religious rights and liberties of British subjects as settled at the glorious Revolution; that we are willing to risk our lives in the service of his Majesty for the support of the Protestant religion and the rights and liberties of his subjects as they have been established by Compact, Law and Ancient Charter. We are heartily grieved at the differences which now subsist between the parent State and the Colonies, and most ardently wish to see harmony restored on an equit-

* These resolutions were passed on the 14th October, 1774. Hinton's United States, pp. 232-3-4.

able basis, and by the most lenient measures that can be devised by the heart of man. Many of us and our forefathers left our native land, considering it a kingdom subjected to inordinate power, and greatly abridged of its liberties; we crossed the *Atlantic*, and explored this uncultivated wilderness, bordering on many nations of savages, and surrounded by mountains almost inaccessible to any but those very savages, who have incessantly been committing barbarities and depredations on us since our first seating this country. The fatigues and dangers we patiently encountered supported by the pleasing hope of enjoying those rights and liberties which had been granted to *Virginians*, and were denied us in our native country, and of transmitting them inviolate to our posterity; but soon to these remote regions the hand of unlimited and unconstitutional power hath pursued us, to strip us of that liberty and property with which God, nature, and the rights of humanity have vested us. We are ready and willing to contribute all in our power for the support of his Majesty's Government, if applied to constitutionally, and when the grants are made by our own representatives, but cannot think of submitting our liberty or property to the power of a venal British Parliament, or the will of a corrupt ministry.

We by no means desire to shake off our duty or our allegiance to our lawful sovereign, but, on the contrary, shall ever glory in being the loyal subjects of a Protestant Prince, descended from such illustrious progenitors as long as we can enjoy the free exercise of our Religion

as Protestants, and our Liberties and Properties as *British* subjects.

But if no pacific measures shall be proposed or adopted by Great Britain, and our enemies shall attempt to dragoon us out of these inestimable privileges which we are entitled to as subjects, and to reduce us to a state of slavery, we declare that we are deliberately and resolutely determined never to surrender them to any power upon earth, but at the expense of our lives.

These are our real, though unpolished, sentiments of liberty and loyalty, and in them we are resolved to live and die.

We are, gentlemen, with the most perfect esteem and regard, your most obedient servants.

COPY VERBATIM ET LITERATIM.

By Dr. R. A. Brock.

RICHMOND, VA., *April 30, 1898.*

The spirit of freeman in Virginia was not of recent nor of ephemeral growth. Nearly ten years before the date of this meeting of "the Freeholders of Fincastle county, Virginia," says Mr. George Bancroft, "received the plan to tax America by Parliament with consternation."

"Patrick Henry, then, for the first time, a member of "the Legislature, 'saw the time for the enforcement of "the stamp tax drawing near, while all the other colonies, through timid hesitation, or the want of oppor-