

# On July 4, 1858, S.C. emphasized

THE CHARLOTTE OBSERVER

## its freedom, not the nation's

Celebrating American independence from Great Britain was, from the end of the Revolutionary War on, a time for South Carolinians to celebrate.

The state, as one of the original 13 colonies, had played a major role in the war — with more battles fought on its soil than in any other colony. And, the turning point of the Revolution had occurred in York County at the battle of Kings Mountain.

By the 1850s the pattern of celebration was fixed. Rural communities everywhere had a favorite picnic ground where the citizenry would meet. Usually, there was a parade, often led by the local militia. Sometimes the local militia demonstrated their skills and might blast away with their guns, but fireworks as we know them today were not likely to be present.



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*Nearby  
History*

Always, orators would hold forth. Most likely, a local sax-horn band would furnish music.

The committee on arrangements would have seen to it that stands were constructed for the listeners and a platform for the orators. They would also have put up rough-hewn picnic (pick-nick) tables ready for spreading with tasty dishes brought in picnic baskets. Glazed with a savory hot sauce, hogs from local plantations cooked

all night over a fire fed by hickory chips.

The July 4, 1858, celebration in the Bullocks Creek area of southwestern York District was typical of many in this area. The day was very hot, but that did not keep a number of citizens from joining the procession from White's Store to the picnic grounds. The orators of the day, Col. McCorkle and Maj. Burris, escorted by Bullocks Creek Band, led the parade.

The crowd, described as a "large multitude," was orderly and quiet in deference to the importance of Independence Day. Ceremonies began with the invocation given by the Rev. R.Y. Russell.

The traditional reading of the Declaration of Independence was rendered by W.B. Russell Esq. Many of the listeners knew the Declaration by heart. The crowd

was hushed and respectful. People might become restless during some of the lengthy orations, but they never tired of hearing Mr. Jefferson's masterpiece.

Next came the main speaker, B.H. Moore, the orator of the day. The *Yorkville Enquirer* reported that Moore's style was "easy and elegant."

The committee of arrangements provided toasts in descending importance:

1. The Day We Celebrate.
2. The Heroes of Kings Mountain.
3. George Washington.
4. Soldiers of 1812.
5. The Palmetto Regiment (S.C. troops in the War with Mexico).
6. John C. Calhoun.
7. The Administration (James Buchanan was president of the United States).

8. The Emerald Isle.

9. Women.

10. The Orators of the Day.

The Kings Mountain toast: "Upon its summit was enacted the greatest scene in the drama of the Revolution — the turning point of the noble struggle for the right. Its towering crest is its own enduring monument."

The Emerald Isle toast: "May her Harp be attuned anew to the rapturous song of Liberty; and Emmet's epitaph be written." (Emmet was Thomas Addis Emmet, an Irish nationalist who fought for Irish independence from England.)

After dinner the crowd reassembled to hear more oratory. The Fourth of July celebration was interpreted to the Bullock's Creek crowd as a state holiday and not as a national holiday. Each speaker was careful to point out that the

Fourth of July was the anniversary of South Carolina's independence as a state.

This viewpoint was a reflection of South Carolina's increasing uneasiness with the direction of national politics in mid-1858. Agitation over slavery in the territories, abolitionist activities, and the knowledge that the agricultural South was losing political power to the industrial North, weighed heavily on the minds of the orators and their listeners.

Thirty months later South Carolina seceded from the Union. It was to be a long time before the Fourth of July was again widely celebrated in York County.

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