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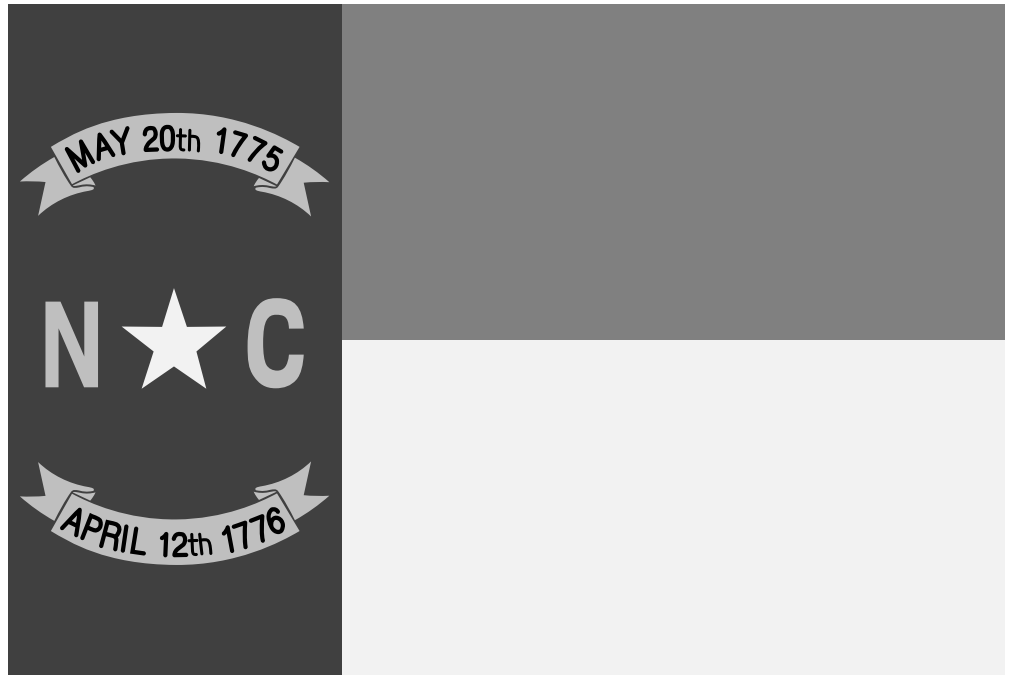
FIRST IN FREEDOM (PART 2)

- ◆ **Learning Outcome:** *Students can explain the significance of the two dates that*
• *appear on the North Carolina flag and the reasons why North Carolina claims to be*
◆ *“first in freedom.”* ◆

In an earlier lesson, you learned that each state has its own flag in addition to the American flag. Just as the American flag represents the government, people, and history of the United States of America, the North Carolina flag represents the government, people, and unique history of our state.

If you look closely, you will see two dates on the left side of the North Carolina flag. These dates are May 20, 1775, and April 12, 1776. They are on our state flag to remind us of two important events that took place in North Carolina during the American Revolution.

You may already know that the United States declared its independence on July 4, 1776. That day is the birthday of the United States of America. However, the American Revolutionary War began over a year earlier in April 1775. It took about a year for everyone in the 13 states to agree to declare independence.



However, a group of brave leaders in Mecklenburg County (in and around the present-day city of Charlotte) were ready to declare independence much earlier. In May 1775 (more than a year before the U.S. Declaration of Independence), a group of North Carolinians signed two documents declaring their freedom and independence: the **Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence** and

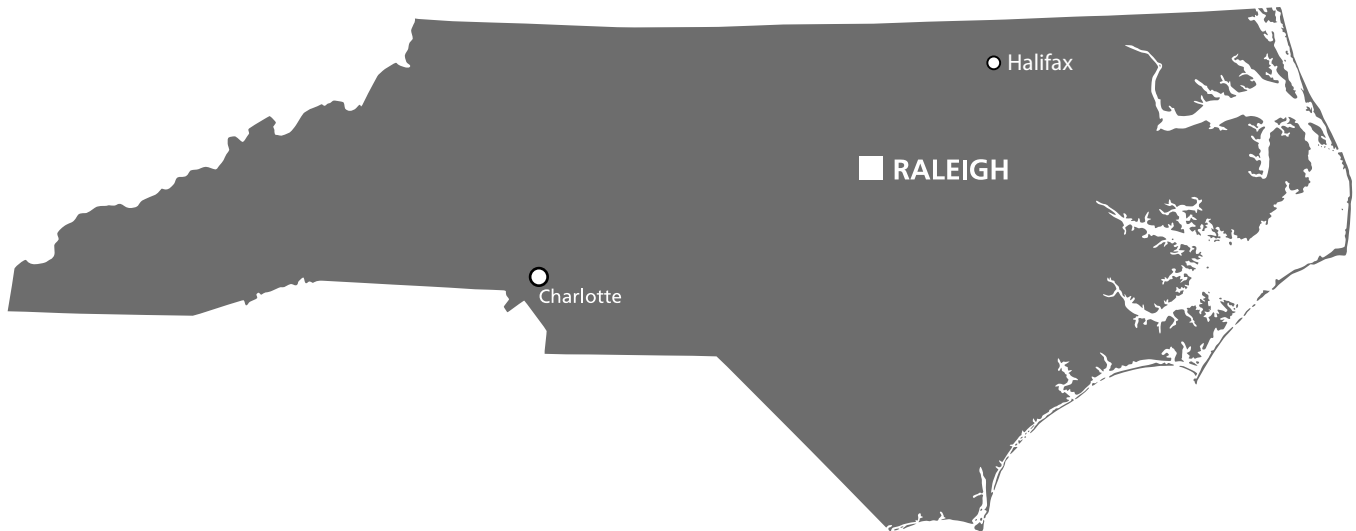
VOCABULARY WORDS

- ◆ Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence
- ◆ Mecklenburg Resolves
- ◆ Halifax Resolves
- ◆ Resolve

the Mecklenburg Resolves. Although the original version of the Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence was lost (and some people question whether it ever really existed), people throughout North Carolina have talked about the “Mec-Dec” since the days of the American Revolution. (“Mec-Dec” is short for Mecklenburg Declaration.) The date May 20, 1775, appears on the North Carolina flag to help us remember the day when the Mec-Dec is believed to have been written and to honor the people who wrote it for their courage and love of freedom.

The **Mecklenburg Resolves** were written by the same leaders a few days later on May 31, 1775. This document explains how Mecklenburg County was going to govern itself independently because the British were no longer going to control it. The original copy of this document still exists, so

nobody doubts that it is real. Therefore, even people who don't believe that Mecklenburg County officially declared independence on May 20, 1775, accept that the county unofficially declared independence a few days later when its leaders signed the Mecklenburg Resolves. Both the Mecklenburg Resolves and the Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence (whether it was real or a legend) show how North Carolina was "first in freedom."



The other important date on the North Carolina flag is April 12, 1776. This is the date when representatives from throughout North Carolina signed the **Halifax Resolves**. If you say that you have resolved to do something, it means that you have made your decision and are not going to change your mind. When a group of people **resolves** to do something, it means they are making a firm decision to do something. When leaders from across North Carolina signed the Halifax Resolves, they were declaring that the people of our state were ready to declare independence and there was no going back!

The document that we call the “Halifax Resolves” was signed by elected leaders from throughout North Carolina at a meeting in the town of Halifax. The Halifax Resolves officially gave our state’s leaders permission to sign the United States Declaration of Independence. The document also suggested that the other 12 colonies do the same thing. This document shows that North Carolina was the first of the original 13 states to officially vote for independence. Today, we continue to honor our state’s commitment to freedom by including the date of the Halifax Resolves on our state flag. It is another reason why many people say that North Carolina was — and still is — “first in freedom.”

