

SECESSION ORDINANCE, 1861

(Transcription)

An Ordinance

To dissolve the union between the State of North-Carolina and the other States united with her, under the Compact of Government entitled the Constitution of the United States.

We, the people of the State of North-Carolina, in Convention assembled, do declare and ordain, and it is hereby declared and ordained, That the Ordinance adopted by the State of North-Carolina, in the Convention of 1789, whereby the Constitution of the United States was ratified and adopted, and also, all acts and parts of acts of the General Assembly, ratifying and adopting amendments to the said Constitution, are hereby repealed, rescinded and abrogated.

We do further declare and ordain, that the Union now subsisting between the State of North-Carolina and the other States, under the title of the United States of America, is hereby dissolved, and that the State of North-Carolina is in the full possession and exercise of all those rights of sovereignty which belong and appertain to a free and independent State.

Passed, 20th day of May 1861.

W. N. Edwards
Pr. of Con.

Teste:

Walter L. Steele,

Sec.

L. C. Edwards

Assistant Sec'y.

[Transcription from original document in custody of secretary of state.]

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Many North Carolinians supported the Union as late as 1860, but the firing on Fort Sumter and other events that occurred in April, 1861, left little choice as to the course to be taken. Governor John W. Ellis, in his reply to Lincoln's request for troops, said that he regarded the levy of men as "a gross usurpation of power" and added, "I can be no party to this wicked violation of the laws of the country, and to this war upon the liberties of a free people. You can get no troops from North Carolina." North Carolina soldiers were sent to Virginia, however, and the state began to prepare for war. A special legislative session convened May 1 and called for the election of delegates to a convention. The convention met May 20, 1861, adopted an ordinance of secession, and ratified the Provisional Constitution of the Confederate States.

REFERENCES

Lefler, *North Carolina History Told by Contemporaries*, 285-289.

Lefler and Newsome, *North Carolina*, 421-425.

Robinson, *North Carolina Guide*, 83-84.

Noble J. Tolbert (ed.), *The Papers of John Willis Ellis* (Raleigh: State Department of Archives and History, 2 volumes, 1964), II, 612.