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GEN. FRANCIS NASH

AN ADDRESS

BY

HON. A. M. WADDELL

Delivered at the Unveiling of a Monument to General Nash, Voted by Congress, at the Guilford Battle Ground, July 4, 1906.

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Mr. President and Gentlemen of the Guilford Battle Ground Company.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

An ancient maxim declares that Republies are ungrateful. We are today in the presence of a noble and enduring proof of its falsity. A great statesman declared that no monument ought to be erected to a public character until a hundred years after the period of his active services, for there could be no absolute assurance of their permanent value until the lapse of that time.

To this supreme test the public character and services of which I shall speak on this occasion have been subjected, and they have gained additional lustre in the alembic of the years. Those services ended, and he who performed them closed his earthly career more than a century and a quarter ago upon one of the battlefields of the American Revolution, and today we are assembled to witness the final execution of his country's long-declared purpose to perpetuate his memory by the erection of this solid and beautiful work of art.

Such a tribute by a great nation to an unselfish patriot, a brave soldier and accomplished gentleman who sacrificed his life for the establishment and maintenance of the liberties of his country, is honorable to it, and, if the dead be conscious of the deeds of the living, must be grateful to his spirit.

Little did he dream when death confronted him on that bloody field in Pennslyvania that, in the far distant future, on the ground where another battle was fought in the same cause, and within fifty miles of his own North Carolina home assembled thousands would witness the unveiling of a nation's monument to his memory. His only hope and aspiration, as his letters prove, was that his country would be victorious and that he would soon return to his loved ones to pass the remainder of his days in the peaceful enjoyment

of domestic life. The full realization of this hope was denied him, in common with many another hero and patriot who gave his life to the cause, but the larger hope prevailed, and his country triumphed. Great indeed and far-reaching was that triumph, for it revolutionized human history and established forever—at least among people of Anglo-Saxon origin—the doctrine of government by the people. There have been lapses in the practical enforcement of this doctrine, but it has always persistently asserted itself and will continue to do so to the end of time. It is our inheritance from which we can never be divorced, and for the priceless possession we are indebted to the heroic men who in an apparently hopeless contest of seven years' duration finally forced its acceptance at the point of the bayonet and proudly proclaimed it to an astonished world.

The man with the blood of the American Revolution in his veins who can regard with indifference the career of any soldier of that struggle who gave his life for his country is unworthy of the privileges which he enjoys as an American citizen. If whenever that glorious era of the birth of liberty is celebrated, he does not feel a thrill of admiration and reverence for the men who by their valor and patient sacrifices made it immortal he is a degenerate.

Some years ago an American statesman declared that the government of the American Colonies by George III. was the best government then existing on earth, and he was right in his judgment for there was no government on earth at that time which fully recognized the rights of the people and the British government came nearer to it than any other. So much the more honor to the American subjects of that government for their demand for the fullest rights and privileges of British subjects, and, when these were denied, to assert the right of resistance to oppression. They began it in North Carolina long before the Revolution and even after their open resistance to the Stamp Act in 1765 for

nearly ten years they declared again and again—George Washington being a leader in such declaration—that they did not desire, or contemplate a separation from the British crown, but when finally driven to the wall they turned and deliberately declared themselves independent. The first Declaration of Independence was made at Charlotte on the 20th May, 1775, and the first instruction to representatives in the Continental Congress to declare for independence was given by the Convention at Halifax on the 12th of April, 1776.

How these bold declarations were sustained by North Carolina people when the issue of battle was presented, is a story that ought to be made familiar to every school child in the State. The duty assigned me today can only embrace a fragment of it, but that fragment covers a career of which every North Carolinian should feel proud.

A few miles below Farmville, in Prince Edward county, Virginia, and in the forks of the Appomattox and Bush rivers, there was in 1732 a large landed estate of more than 5,000 acres, which had been settled by a gentleman from Tenby, Pembrokeshire, South Wales, who from the time of his arrival in Virginia to the day of his death was prominent and active in affairs, both of church and State. The county of Prince Edward was a part of Henrico county prior to 1754, and therefore the earlier record of this gentleman is credited to the latter county.

He was presiding Justice of the county and is said to have attended the sessions of the court in great state, with a coach and four, being received by the sheriff at the door very ceremoniously. He had been sheriff of Henrico county and after the formation of Prince Edward county was the first member of the house from that county. He was associated with the leaders of the Colony and helped to build old St. John's church in Richmond, where Patrick Henry afterwards delivered his celebrated phillipic, and in 1757 was

appointed Colonel of a regiment that was sent to protect the frontier against the Indians.

This gentleman, John Nash, before coming to America with his brother Thomas, had married Anna Owen, daughter of Sir Hugh Owen of Tenby, and he named his estate in the forks of the Appomattox and Bush rivers, "Templeton Manor," after the town of Templeton, near Tempy. On this estate he lived in the style and with the abounding comforts that characterized the life of a wealthy Virginia planter of that period, and there brought up the four sons, and four daughters who were born to him, all of whom personally, or in their children reflected honor upon his name and their Indeed it may be safely asserted that there are few families in the country that produced, in proportion to their numbers, more distinguished men in civil and military life than his. The oldest of his sons, Col. Thomas Nash, married Mary Reed, and removed first to Lunenburg county and represented that county in the House of Burgesses and thence to Edenton, N. C., where he died in 1769, leaving an only daughter, Anna Owen Nash, who married in 1771 the Rev. John Cameron, of Petersburg, Va. Their children were Judge Duncan Cameron, of Raleigh, Judge John A. Cameron, of the U. S. District Court of Florida, Dr. Thomas Cameron, of Fayetteville, N. C., and Wm. Cameron, of Ellersly, Orange county.

His second son was Col. John Nash, the second, who was a Colonel in the Revolution in 1781, represented Prince Edward county in House of Delegates in 1778, was the founder and a member of the Board of Trustees of Hampden Sidney College, inherited the estate of Templeton by devise from his father, and died in 1803.

The third son of Col. John Nash, was Abner Nash, who after succeeding his father as representative from Prince Edward, moved to Newbern, N. C., and was a member of the Provincial Congress at Halifax in the years 1774-75-76, which

body appointed him, among other committees, on one to prepare the constitution of the new state. He was an able lawyer, the first Speaker of the first House of Commons, and the second Governor of the State, 1779-'81, and a member of the Continental Congress, 1782-'86, and died in New York during the session of Congress, December 2nd, 1786. He was the father of the late Chief Justice Frederick Nash, of our Supreme Court.

And now we come to the fourth and youngest son of Col. John Nash, (original owner of Templeton Manor,) General Francis Nash, in whose honor this memorial arch has been erected.

Like his brothers Thomas and Abner, be too removed to North Carolina, but selected his residence in a different part of the State—Hillsborough—a town which even then had begun to be historic. He came there a young lawyer seeking his career, and soon made his mark. He had never held any office, but some time after settling there he was appointed Clerk of the Superior Court of Orange County, and also a Captain under the Crown. He commanded his company in the battle of Alamance in 1771, and his steady conduct attracted attention. He was a member of the Provincial Congress that met at Hillsborough in August 1775, and was elected by that body September 1, 1776, Lieut.-Col. of the tirst regiment of the Continental Line, of which James Moore was elected Colonel.

That regiment with the militia under Caswell, Lillington and others, won the first victory of the Revolution at Moore's Creek Bridge, February 27, 1776. Col. Moore having been appointed Brigadier-General immediately after that fight, Nash became Colonel, his commission dating from April 10, 1776. On the first of June, Sir Henry Clinton's fleet with Cornwallis's forces, left the mouth of the Cape Fear for Charleston, and immediately the first and second regiments under General Moore started for that place, arriving on the

11th. The British fleet opened fire on Fort Moultrie on the 28th of June, and Cornwallis's troops tried to land, but were beaten off by Col. Thompson's South Carolina Rangers and a battalion of two hundred picked men from Nash's Regiment under Lieut. Col. Clark, and these North Carolina troops received high praise from the commanding General (Charles Lee) for their conduct.

After the defeat of the British the North Carolina regiments were concentrated at Wilmington, where they were rigidly drilled and disciplined until about the middle of November at which time they were ordered to the North to re-enforce Gen. Washington's army. They marched as far as Halifax on the way, but were kept there for three weeks, and were then counter-marched to the vicinity of Charleston again, to meet another threatened attack by the British who were near St. Augustine, Florida. On the 5th of February, 1777, Col. Nash was promoted to the rank of Brigadier General, and assumed command of the Brigade.

The States of Georgia and South Carolina were endangered, and because of the urgent request of those States the North Carolina troops were kept for their defence until March 15th, 1777, when they were again ordered to join Gen. Washington, who was retreating through New Jersey with great loss, and in extreme danger. They resumed their former route, passing through Wilmington, Halifax, Richmond, Alexandria and Georgetown to Philadelphia. Their splendid reputation had preceded them, and the result was that their march through Virginia, and Maryland was a succession of enthusiastic reception by the people.

After a few days stop in Philadelphia, some of the regiments arrived at Washington's camp at Middlebrook, New Jersey, about the last of June, 1777. The brigade was held at Trenton for about ten days in July, and from there Gen. Nash wrote one of the two or three letters of his that are still in existence. It was a letter to his wife dated July 25th,

and shows that he was thoroughly competent, and understood the strategy of the commander-in-chief, although they were both at that time uncertain as to the British commander's real point of attack. "When I left Philadelphia, which was a week or ten days ago," he says, "I expected that we should have proceeded directly to headquarters. ever, I received a letter from General Washington, directing me to remain at this place until further orders, under a supposition that the late movements of the enemy might probably be only a feint in order to draw our army as far to the north as possible, and then by a forced march endeavor to gain Philadelphia, before the necessary succor could be afforded. which case, we being directly in their route, should probably have it in our power to retard their progress, until our army could get up with their rear. However, from some accounts received this morning (to-wit, that a considerable part of their fleet had been discovered moving up the North river.) I think there cannot remain a doubt that their operations are intended against that quarter. General Washington, in consequence of this intelligence, has moved with his whole army within twenty miles of Fishkilns, about one hundred miles from hence, where he means to remain until the designs of the enemy are reduced to a certainty. I have been re-enforced since I came here by one regiment of Virginians and an artillery corps with six brass field pieces, making the strength of my brigade, in the whole, about 2,000."

"This morning for the first time, I have seen a general return of the state of our army, and it is with pleasure I inform you that we have now on the field, of continental troops, effective, upwards of 20,000, exclusive of those in Canada, which I suppose amount to 4,000 or 5,000 more; add to this a most admirable train of artillery, and 700 Light Horse equal at least to those of the enemy in discipline, equipage and everything else, is it possible with such an army and a

Washington at their head that Americans can have anything to fear? No, dear Sally. I now feel the fullest assurance that can be founded in human events, that nothing less than the immediate interposition of Providence (which I will not suppose to be excited in favor of tyranny and oppression) can prevent us from the invaluable blessings of liberty, freedom and independence. With these assurances I rest satisfied, with the blessing of Heaven, of returning to you ere long crowned with victory, to spend in peace and domestic happiness, the remainder of a life, which, without you, would not be worth possessing."

This accession of force, so greatly needed and longed for by Washington, not only served to stop his retreat but stimulated him to assume the aggressive against his opponent, Sir William Howe, who had embarked his forces by water to the head of Elk. in Maryland, with the intention of moving on Philadelphia. Washington and Howe fought at Chadd's Ford on the Brandywine, Sept. 11th, 1777, and Howe won the battle and took possession of Philadelphia. The North Carolina troops at Brandywine had to oppose the flanking movements of Lord Cornwallis, and although compelled with the rest of their division to retreat, they did so not only in good order, but with repeated attacks on the enemy, and they aided in bringing off the field the artillery and baggage of the division to which they were attached.

In less than a month after Brandywine, namely: on the 4th of October, 1777, the battle of Germantown was fought, in which Nash led the North Carolina troops. They behaved splendidly and won great praise from Washington. They were in the reserve force under Major Gen. Stirling, and were thrown into the attack on the right. Gen. Nash was leading them into action down the main street of Germantown, when a round shot shattered his thigh, killing his horse and throwing him heavily to the ground. He tried to conceal the extent of his hart by covering the terrible wound

with his hands, and cheered on his men, saying: "Never mind me. I had a devil of a tumble; rush on, my boys; rush on the enemy; I'll be after you presently." But he was mortally wounded, and was carried to a private residence, where after lingering in greatest agony for three days, he died on the 7th of October, 1777. His last words were: "From the first dawn of the Revolution I have been ever on the side of liberty and my country." He was buried in the Mennonist graveyard at Kulpsville, with military honors, and General Washington issued the following order for the funeral:

"Head Quarters, Toamensing, October 9, 1777.

"Brigadier General Nash will be interred at 10 o'clock this forenoon, with miltary honors, at the place where the road where the troops marched on yesterday comes into the great road. All officers, whose circumstances will admit of it, will attend and pay this respect to a brave man who died in defence of his country.

"GEORGE WASHINGTON."

The shot that killed him also killed his aide, Major Witherspoon, and was a stray one fired by a retreating enemy who had been driven for two hours or more, and were, as they themselves supposed, hopelessly defeated, when an accident saved them, and reversed the situation. There was a heavy fog and no breeze to dispel it or the smoke from the guns which so completely enveloped the field that it was impossible to see more than fifty yards. Two of the American columns mistook each other for the enemy, and each thought the other a re-inforcement with which it was unexpectedly confronted, and so, as Washington expressed it: "In the midst of the most promising appearances when everything gave the most flattering hopes of victory, the troops began suddenly to retreat, and entirely left the field in spite of every effort that could be made to rally them." In the same letter, however, he says: "In justice to Gen. Sullivan and the

whole right wing of the army whose conduct I had opportunity of observing as they acted immediately under my eye. I have the pleasure to inform you that both officers and men behaved with a degree of gallantry that did them the highest honor."

More than once he referred to the death of General Nash as a deplorable loss to the army and to the cause for which he fought, and letters from the most distinguished citizens of the state and country, and newspaper articles on the subject justify the belief that General Nash was very highly esteemed as a soldier, and gentleman, and that both in his military and civil life he won the affections of his associates by his generous and unaffected conduct. Thos. Burke, then a member of congress and afterwards governor of the State, writing to Governor Caswell, says he was "one of the best, the most respected, and regretted officers in the Continental Army," and Governor Caswell himself said that he "left no equal among the officers who survived him."

George Washington Parke Curtis, in his "Recollections of Washington," speaking of Gen. Nash's death and burial, uses the following language: "He lingered in extreme torture between two and three days and died, admired by his enemies—admired and lamented by his companions in arms. On Thursday the ninth of October the whole American army was paraded by order of the Commander-in-Chief to perform the funeral obsequies of Gen. Nash, and never did the warrior's last tribute peal the requiem of a braver soldier or nobler patriot than that of the illustrious son of North Carolina."

Many traditions of his physical comeliness, especially when mounted, have been preserved among his descendants, and one in particular I remember as told to me by a venerable man who said that one of Gen. Nash's soldiers told him that the General was the handsomest man on horse back that he ever saw. Col. Polk, who was one of his officers, was fond of

reciting his attractive qualities, and, (as another venerable gentleman told me) when describing the wound that crushed his leg invariably concluded his elogium by saying, "and he had the finest leg that was ever hung on a man!" But his physical beauty seems to have been only the complement of his moral and intellectual attributes, for he was one of the most enlightened, liberal, generous, and magnanimous gentlemen that ever sacrificed his life for his country.

And here it may not be inappropriate to record an incident of minor importance, but of some interest in connection with the events occurring on this battlefield of Guilford Courthouse and with which the name of Gen. Nash is associated. The incident is one which rests on a family tradition and is as follows: Judge Maurice Moore, his father-in-law, had imported from England a thoroughbred horse named "Montrose," and a mare called "Highland Mary," and had given to Gen. Nash their colt, a splendid bay named "Roundhead." When Gen. Nash went into the army he left this favorite horse at his residence in Hillsborough, and during his absence David Fanning, the Tory leader, made a raid on Hillsborough and stole the horse. After Nash's death his body servant, Harry, who was with him at Germantown where he was killed, came home and at the urgent request of General Wm. R. Davie, who had been made Commissary General, was turned over to him as his servant. Harry had been distressed at the loss of his master's favorite horse, and at the battle of Guilford Courthouse he had suddenly exclaimed: "Look yonder at that officer riding Roundhead!" The officer was Lord Cornwallis, and very soon after this the horse was killed under him. Cornwallis had two horses killed under him that day according to all accounts and some say three. The tradition to which I refer says the servant Harry not only recognized the horse at first but after he was shot went to him and identified him. The faithful servant saw his master killed four years before in Pennsylvania by the British, and now within fifty miles of his home witnessed the death of his favorite horse on this battle ground by the Americans, who were shooting at his rider, the commander of the British army.

General Nash married Miss Sally Moore, daughter of Judge Maurice Moore, and sister of Judge Alfred Moore, afterwards of the Supreme Court of the United States, and had only two children. These were girls, the elder of whom, Ann, died at the age of 13, and the younger of whom, Sarah, married Mr. John Waddell, a rice planter on the lower Cape fear river.

Some time after his death his widow married Gen. Thomas Clark, who had succeeded him as Lieutenant Colonel and finally as Brigadier General in the Continental Line, but they left no children.

One month after Gen. Nash's death the Continental Congress, on the 4th of Nov., 1777, expressed its appreciation of the heroic services he had rendered, and directed that a monument should be erected to his memory. The resolution of Congress was in the following words:

"Resolved, That His Excellency, Gov. Caswell, of North Carolina, be requested to erect a monument of the value of \$500,00 at the expense of the United States in honor of the memory of Brigadier General Francis Nash, who fell in the Battle of Germantown on the 4th day of Oct., 1777, bravely contending for the independence of his country."

That resolution remained unexecuted because the State of North Carolina was then, and for some years afterwards, engaged in a life-and-death struggle for self-preservation, and had no time to expend in the erection of monuments to her heroes. No monuments were erected, so far as I know, either by the general government or any State until long after the Revolution was ended, and therefore no blame could be justly attached to our State for not complying with the resolution at that time.

But the patriotic spirit of a stranger to our State and people, John F. Watson, Esq., of Philadelphia, prompted him seventy years ago to induce the citizens of Germantown and Norristown to erect a monument over the grave of Gen. Nash, which was done, and for this deed his name should be gratefully remembered by every true North Carolinian.

There have been persistent efforts for fifty years to have this resolution of Congress carried into execution by Congress, but from different sources opposition has with equal persistency interposed until these efforts ceased, from sheer desperation, to be made. But the patriotic Society of the Cincinnati, when re-organized in North Carolina, took charge of the matter, and from their meeting in 1896 annually pressed it upon congress through the senators and representatives from our State until 1903, when the bill was passed making the appropriation asked for. It would be an act of injustice, however, while accrediting the Society of the Cincinnati and the North Carolina senators and representatives fully with their action, not to record the fact that by his unremitting labors and fortunate acquaintance with leading senators and representatives from all parts of the country, the chairman of the committee of the Cincinnati, Col. Bennehan Cameron, is entitled to a larger share of credit for this legislation than any other individual, and it gives me great pleasure to make public acknowledgement of the fact. After a careful examination of the whole history of these efforts and their final success this award of merit to Col. Cameron as the chief instrument in accomplishing the result cannot be justly withheld. And in this connection I wish to say that the design for this noble arch and its construction is attributable to the skill and taste of another North Carolinian, Capt. R. P. Johnston, of the Engineer Corps of the United States Army, who gave much time and care to the work and has just reason to be proud of its final accomplishment.

Of course it goes without saying that in all these efforts to

secure this monument the devoted and patriotic President of the Guilford Battle Ground Company, Major Morehead, has been an indefatigable and active ally of the Cincinnati* and of the senators and representatives of our State and that his services in that behalf merit and should receive the fullest recognition. It was only in keeping, however, with his whole record as President of the Company to which he has unseltish ly devoted so large a part of his time for some years past.

And a nobler work these gentlemen never did, for from his first appointment as Lieutenant Colonel to the time of his death, General Nash enjoyed the confidence of all his superior officers and the affection of the soldiers under his command to a remarkable degree. His career was a brief, but brilliant one, and ended on the field of glory, when he was only thirty-five years old. It is unquestionably true, and therefore just, to say that there was no officer of the American Revolution who acquired in the same period a more solid reputation for soldierly qualities, or who died more universally regretted than he, and that therefore his country for which he willingly gave his life has never erected a monument to a Revolutionary hero and patriot that was more richly deserved than this which has been unveiled today.

We concede the right of private opinion of course, and we appreciate the speaker's very complimentary words gracefully spoken of us. But since after its usual custom these unveiling ceremonies were held upon its grounds by the Guilford Battle Ground Company, and since this pamphlet is edited and published by the Company, silence here would be construed into acquiescense in the opinion here expressed from which the Company emphatically dissents. The Con-

^{*}Note.

tinental Congress voted appropriations for monuments to General Francis Nash and William Lee Davidson which were never erected. In 1841-2 the late Governor W. A. Graham, then Senator in Congress from North Carolina, and in 1888 Senator Vance, we are told, and in 1896 the North Carolina Society of the Cincinnati, endeavored to revive these appropriations but failed in their efforts, and the inference is that a pursuance of the same method and advancement of the same arguments would have continued to fail. But in 1902 the Guilford Battle Ground Company furnished the Hon. W. W. Kitchin arguments and considerations which enabled him —to whom beyond all others merit is due for work done in Washington—to secure the appropriation by a two-thirds majority in the house, where a majority could never be secured, though attempted for 60 years. This was effected, too, over the objection of Speaker Cannon and his active op-Mr. Kitchin told the House that the Battle Ground Company (or Association as it ought to be called) of North Carolinians had purchased, redeemed, beautified and adorned the famous Revolutionary Battlefield of Guilford Court House; that in its poverty it was continuing its struggle of 15 years for its continued adornment and that Congress should therefore, among other reasons, vote the appropriation and place the monuments at Guilford. Mr. Kitchin was then addressing many members of Congress who knew that thus to aid the Battle Ground Company was not only to honor North Carolina's Noble Dead, but that it was also to make of this Battlefield for all time, a monument to troops from their own respective States who fought here under Greene in 1781. This two-thirds majority illustrated the difference in effect upon Congress between the mere introduction of bills and resolutions and the reclamation, after vast toil and expenditure, of this Famous Battlefield.

The Resolution, as adopted, placed the disbursement of the funds, erection of the monuments etc., in the hands of the Secretary of War, who should however, act jointly with the Governor of North Carolina "in the selection of a location for the said monuments." The authority was soon placed by the Secretary of War in the hands of Hon. C. B. Aycock, the then Governor, exclusively and very soon a bitter contest arose before the Governor between the Society of the Cincinnati and the Battle Ground Company—the Cincinnati desiring to locate the monument elsewhere than on the Guilford Battle Ground. Full evidence as to who secured the appropriation and whose wishes were therefore entitled to prevail in their location, was laid before the Governor, the legally constituted and final authority in the matter, and after patient, painful, conscientious consideration, the Governor put them at Guilford, where they now stand.

The supposed influence of Colonel Cameron, Chairman of the Committee of the Cincinnati, is here ascribed to his acquaintanceship with different members of Congress and in this connection we have heard the name of Senator Wetmore, of Rhode Island, mentioned specifically. We now re-publish and append two letters which show that the Company had its representative in Washington; that he labored among influential members, and that his labors were effectual.

UNITED STATES SENATE.

Washington, D. C., Feb. 24, (1903.)

DEAR SIR:

Since receiving your letter of February 16, I have conferred with Senators Pritchard and Simmons, as well as Mr. W. W. Kitchin, and find that all are in favor of creeting the statues of Generals Nash and Davidson on the Guilford Battle Ground. I have today addressed a letter to the Secretary of War, a copy of which is herewith transmitted, enclosing your letter to me on this subject.

Very truly yours,

GEORGE PEABODY WETMORE.

Colonel Joseph M. Morchead, Greensboro, N. C.

United States Senate. Washington, D. C., Feb. 21, (1903.)

DEAR MR. SECRETARY:

I desire to call your attention to the enclosed letter dated February sixteenth, addressed to me by Colonel Joseph M. Morehead, president of the Guilford Battle Ground Company, who during the consideration of the bill for the statues of Generals Nash and Davidson both in the House and Senate, manifested the greatest interest in it. You will notice that he is very much exercised lest another site be chosen than the Guilford Battle Ground. I have conferred with Senators Pritchard and Simmons, of North Carolina, as well as with Mr. W. W. Kitchin, member of the House from that State, who all agree that the statues should be erected on the Guilford Battle Ground. I might also add that the Guilford Battle Ground was the only place mentioned when the bill was under consideration in the House. Believe me,

Very sincerely yours,

George Peabody Wetmore.

Hon, Elihu Root, Secretary of War.

Joseph M. Morehead, President Guilford Battle Ground Company.



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