

The **NORTH CAROLINA** **MISCELLANY**

A Collection of warm and
delightful fragments of
NORTH CAROLINA'S
past and present



Edited by
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A METEOR

A meteor of great brightness was observed by several citizens of our village on the morning of Monday the 31st ult. which exploded with a report equalling that of a cannon. The same meteor, it appears, was observed in Fayetteville, and also near Wilmington; how far in other directions we have not yet learned.

The Fayetteville Observer of the 3d inst. says:

On Sunday night last about half-past two o'clock there was a terrific meteoric explosion near this place. Accounts vary about the brilliancy of the light, but the explosion is agreed on all hands to have been the most startling ever known in this vicinity. It resembled the sudden discharge of a park of artillery, and shook the houses even to such a degree as at first to produce the impression that it was the shock of an earthquake. The reverberation of the echo continued several minutes and the effect was majestic beyond description.

The Wilmington Chronicle of the same date gives the following account of this wonderful phenomenon:

Being in the county of Bladen on Sunday night last, about thirty miles in a North-westerly direction from Wilmington, we were startled from sleep between two and three o'clock on Monday morning by a sudden and terrific explosion, as of a heavy, quick clap of thunder, or the near discharge of a large piece ordnance, followed by a rumbling sound of nearly a minute's duration. It aroused the whole household,

some of whom distinctly perceived the jar of furniture, &c. Looking out, we found the sky to be clear, and the atmosphere profoundly calm. The conclusion in our mind at once was that a meteor had exploded not very far distant, and this proved to be correct, as we subsequently ascertained from different persons who happened to be out at the time at various places a few miles distant. The meteor first appeared in the North East, and passing over towards the south-west, seemed to fall down near the line of Bladen and Columbus county, and there the explosion occurred. The light emitted by it was about like that of the moon when three or four days old.

It appears from these accounts that this extraordinary meteor could be seen and heard over a circle of some two or three hundred miles.

—*Hillsborough Recorder* (September 11, 1845)

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As a matter of interest to many of our readers, we copy from the Fayetteville Carolinian and Raleigh Star the following particulars in relation to the Meteor on the morning of the first instant, furnished, it seems, by gentlemen who witnessed the phenomenon.

FROM THE NORTH CAROLINIAN:

On the morning of the 1st of September, I was in my east piazza, about 15 minutes past 2 o'clock, when I saw a large meteor pass with rapidity over my house. I did not see it rise, as my back was to it, and the great light and hissing sound caused me to face round. I learn from several gentlemen, however, who saw it, that it rose from the horizon as well as they could judge, in a northeast direction, emitting a most vivid light, and having a long tail behind it, from which there dropped to the earth along the whole length of its course, a sprinkling of blue flame, apparently of sulphur, which after reaching the ground continued to blaze up probably to the height of 12 inches. When about two-thirds of the way across the firmament, it exploded and spread into millions of little stars or sparks. There were three explosions, apparently, so heavy that they shook my house as though it would fall, causing a rattling of window sashes, and dishes in the pantry. The explosions were followed by a long rumbling sound, as of distant or receding thunder. As near as I can calculate, it must have exploded somewhere over the upper part of the adjoining county of Robeson.

Those who saw it vary in their statements as to the time which expired between the visible explosion and the report which followed, from 2 or 3 to 10 minutes. I thought the time 5 or 6 minutes, but it was probably not so much, as the light was not quite extinguished when the report reached me.

A gentleman at the U. S. Arsenal told me that he plainly smelt the fumes of brimstone on hoisting his window to look out.

Two gentlemen from Randolph county, 70 miles west of this place, told me that the shocks were felt there, and the sound heard, but they did not see the light.

The ball appeared to be about the size of a ten-gallon keg. C.

FROM THE RALEIGH STAR:

About two o'clock on the morning of the 1st instant my attention was attracted by the sudden illumination of the southern part of the heavens. The light was brilliant and sufficient to cast a shadow from chairs standing in the room. The streaks of clouds along the sky appeared of a light orange, the heavens generally white, and the floor of the room reddish. The duration of the light was about three seconds. I saw no meteoric ball or globe, but am of opinion one passed about fifty degrees above the heavens, as the light was more brilliant at forty degrees than lower, and the intensity of the light seemed to diminish towards the horizon. My position at first was such that I could not see much over forty degrees above the horizon. If such a globe or ball passed, its course must have been from East North East to West South West, or thereabouts. About three minutes after the light had passed off, a sound faintly audible was heard in the East, which increased in loudness and violence for near ten seconds, when it was so violent as to shake the house to its very basement, though not as severely as I have known thunder: there was a similarity in the sound to thunder. It was a rolling, rumbling, swelling noise, but without the sharp cracking which accompanies sudden bursts of thunder. After the noise had reached its acme, it decreased gradually and slowly till it died away after the full space of a minute's duration. Sound passes at the rate of 1100 ft. per second, or about one mile in five seconds; consequently the meteor (if my calculations be correct) must have been forty miles distant. I saw nothing to justify the opinion that the meteor burst. There was an illustration of the optical illusion of a bluish light succeeding an intense red.

—*Hillsborough Recorder* (September 25, 1845)

