

**AN ADDRESS COMMEMORATIVE  
OF THE PART TAKEN BY THE  
INHABITANTS OF THE ORIGINAL  
TOWN OF LEICESTER, IN THE  
EVENTS OF THE REVOLUTION**

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An address commemorative of the part taken by the inhabitants of the original town of Leicester, in the events of the revolution by Emory Washburn

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**EMORY WASHBURN**

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# AN ADDRESS

Commemorative of the part taken by the Inhabitants

OF THE

ORIGINAL TOWN OF LEICESTER,

IN THE

EVENTS OF THE REVOLUTION:

DELIVERED AT LEICESTER, JULY 4, 1849.

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BY EMORY WASHBURN.

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BOSTON:  
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1849.

In suffering the following Address to be published, the reader is assured, that the only motive of the writer is, to furnish to many who desired it, the brief historical sketch which it contains of some of the events of the revolution in which the inhabitants of the original town of Leicester took part. Their posterity, which has become numerous and greatly scattered, it was thought, would naturally take an interest in a recital of these, and it was believed that by presenting them in an authentic form, many might be gratified by an opportunity thereby to refer to them, who were not present on the occasion when the Address was delivered. This explanation, it is hoped, will relieve the writer from remark, for having so far departed from the line of prudence as to suffer an address to be published, which had been prepared upon so hackneyed a topic as the commemoration of American Independence.

NOTE. — The Address was delivered in a grove, a little distance west of the meeting house, where a part of Gen. Burgoyne's army encamped on their march through Massachusetts, as prisoners of war, in 1777.

## A D D R E S S .

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EVERY year serves to develop the importance of that event which we are met to celebrate. Its history has too often been recited to need its being repeated here. Looking back upon it from the point at which we now view it, the Declaration of American Independence stands out as the great political event of modern times. It forms the commencement of a new era. In its consummation, the charm of antiquated systems was broken. The mere force of brute power lost its terrors, and man, at last, stood forth the equal of his fellow man in the conscious dignity of a common nature.

Standing as we do at the distance of seventy-three years from that event, our curiosity is naturally awakened to trace the causes which led to such a declaration. And as we glance along the history of that period, and mark the prominent incidents as they rise before the mind, we must still be conscious that there is something to be sought for, deeper down among the elements, of which the state is composed, which gave the first impulse to the American Revolution. We may read of the "Stamp Act," and the "Tea Tax," and the "Boston Port Bill," and how our fathers rose, as one man, to resist those acts of oppressive legislation. But the reason why our fathers thus rose — why, when



almost all Europe were content to be taxed to the utmost, the few and feeble and scattered colonies of America stood ready to repel the first attempt to levy duties upon them, against their consent — must be sought for at an earlier period of our history than that chapter which is recited in the Declaration of our Independence. We must go back to the character and opinions of the men who planted Plymouth, and Salem, and Boston, if we would find the germ of that revolution. They were the men and the companions of the men who, in their zeal as republicans, bearded royalty in its own palace halls, and in their devotion as Christians, had rather worship God in the wilderness, than mingle in what they regarded as the mummeries of human ordinance, though played off in the most gorgeous cathedral, by the proudest prelate whom church and state ever bedizened with the robes of power. They came here with the rights of Englishmen, and there never was an hour, from the time the Pilgrims landed till the Treaty of Peace in '83, when these men or their descendants were willing to compromise or yield their birthright as Englishmen. When the struggle, therefore, came, when in an evil hour for the mother country, she undertook to levy moneys of the colonists which they had never granted, it found the country alive to the indignity. The spirit of Hampden was roused in every village in the land to resist at the threshold, the encroachment of royal prerogative.

If we undertake to ascertain how it was that this spirit was thus kept alive in these remote colonies, while it had, at times, been so nearly extinct in England, I greatly mistake, or it will be found that few causes exerted a more direct influence than the institution and maintenances of town organizations. It should be re-

membered that these municipal corporations, blending as they do the management of social, religious, and educational interests, are, principally, of a New England origin. They were, at first, identified with the maintenance of churches and religious worship. And when, as was soon the case, that other glory of New England—the common-school system—was established, it was through the agency of towns that it grew up to its present beauty and strength.

By this division of the territory, each municipality became a little independent democracy, in which its several members, while taking care of its local interests, were acting a part in the affairs of the whole Commonwealth. In this way, a healthy circulation was kept up through every part of the body politic, and, as their government was representative in spirit as well as in form, the feelings and opinions which prevailed in one quarter, found a ready response throughout the colony.

In the history, therefore, of almost any of the early towns in this ancient Commonwealth, we should be able to trace in no small degree, the progress of the struggle between the English government and the Colonies, and therein to read of the motives which impelled them to resist, together with the sacrifices to which they submitted, to sustain that struggle. It would be found, that it was by means of these town organizations, that the leading spirits in one section held intercourse with those in another, and, through them, reached the masses who were to be moved. Newspapers were comparatively rare, and intercourse through the post-offices and mails was slow, expensive, and, by no means, in general use. When, therefore, that noble band of patriots who had their home in Boston and its vicinity, were desirous

of moving the remote parts of the Province, they transmitted their letters or their pamphlets to leading individuals in the several towns, where they were read and discussed in open town meetings before all the inhabitants. And in this way, much of that harmony of action, that generous self-devotion was awakened which burst forth, as if spontaneously, in every part of New England.

I have thought these remarks were due to the occasion when assembled, as we are, to commemorate the part which one of these towns took in the struggle for our independence. Humble as this part may have been, and limited as were her means to urge forward the great enterprize of the nation, we shall, if I do not greatly mistake, discover in her unpretending history, the same springs of action, the same sacrifices, the same hopes and the same causes of discouragement which give to our national annals, of that period, so much of their exciting interest.

It is well therefore that we have come up hither, to renew the associations which this spot is calculated to awaken. It is well, while a few yet remain to form a link, as it were, with revolutionary times, to come together and recall the simple story of what our fathers and mothers did and suffered that we, their children, might be free. It binds us still stronger to the spot that gave us birth, to know that its history is not unworthy of awakening a feeling of something like a generous pride. If there be those who, without the sympathy of birth or parentage with these scenes, have honored us with their presence, they will hardly expect an apology, under the call by which we have been convened, though, upon a national holiday, we may indulge in a detail of local incidents or personal anecdote.