

**THE POWER OF
IDEALS IN AMERICAN
HISTORY [1913]**

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The Power of Ideals in American History [1913] by Ephraim Douglass Adams

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THE POWER OF IDEALS IN AMERICAN HISTORY

BY

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INTRODUCTION

The lectures hitherto given under the auspices of the *Dodge Foundation for Citizenship* have embodied the thought of distinguished men, famous in some field of public service,—in law, in state administration, or in church organization. These men, speaking from personal experience, have been able to present in didactic form, ethical standards of conduct. The teacher of American history will certainly affirm that he also has standards of conduct and he naturally turns to history itself, seeking in the experience of the past great principles of national progress. If it can be shown that the American people have been largely influenced in their development by moral principles, or by ideals, it is at least a safe presumption that ideals still animate this nation.

I wish then to recall to your remembrance certain leading ideals, powerful in their influence upon our history, in the past one hundred years. Before undertaking this, however, permit me an explanation of the reason for my choice of subject. There is today a very decided tendency to seek purely material reasons for historical development, and especially so, apparently, in American history. The causes of the American Revolution are asserted