

**AN ANNIVERSARY DISCOURSE,  
DELIVERED BEFORE THE NEW-  
YORK HISTORICAL SOCIETY, ON  
THURSDAY, DEC. 13, 1827 . 5-49**

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An Anniversary Discourse, Delivered Before the New-York Historical Society, on Thursday,  
Dec. 13, 1827 . 5-49 by Joseph Blunt

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**JOSEPH BLUNT**

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ON

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BY JOSEPH BLUNT.

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1828.

NEW-YORK HISTORICAL SOCIETY, }  
Jan. 15, 1828. }

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY, *That the thanks of this Society be presented to JOSEPH BLUNT, Esq. for the Discourse lately delivered by him before the Society; that a copy be requested for publication, and that Dr. J. W. FRANCIS and CHARLES KING, Esq. be a committee to carry this resolution into effect.*

[Extract from the Minutes.]

FREDERIC DE PEYSTER, JUN.

*Corresponding Secretary.*

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## ANNIVERSARY DISCOURSE.

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*Mr. President, and Gentlemen of the Historical Society,*

WE live in an extraordinary age. It may emphatically be denominated an age of improvement. Mechanical inventions, scientific discoveries and advances in political knowledge, are daily bringing about great changes in the condition of society; and scarcely have we time to contemplate these changes, and to speculate concerning their probable effects, ere our anticipations are realized, and our attention is occupied by new improvements, whose results are beyond the grasp of the most vivid imagination.

The community in which we live, remarkably exemplifies these striking characteristics of the age. It comprehends within its bosom many, who have seen its day of small beginnings, and who within their own lives have witnessed the rapid growth of a few provincial dependencies into this powerful confederacy. These considerations cannot be overlooked by any



person familiar with American History; and yielding to their influence, I propose, in discharge of the duty assigned to me by the Historical Society, to review the history of the European settlements in America, and their influence upon the condition of the civilized world.

By contemplating the condition of Europe at the time of the first migration to this continent; by reviewing the motives which induced its early settlers to leave their native land for a savage wilderness; by setting forth the principles by which they were governed, and the course of conduct they pursued, we are enabled justly to estimate the extent of their sacrifices, the value of the inheritance which has been transmitted to us, and the nature of our duties towards those who are to follow us. In this manner we associate ourselves with those who precede us in the march of existence; we constitute ourselves a part of those who give character to a nation; we share in their adversity and in their prosperity; we partake of their labours; we rejoice in their success; we identify ourselves with the cause for which they suffered, and at once live with our ancestors and for our posterity.

Such a review has important uses. It compels us to reflect upon the nature of our institutions, the

manner in which they have been built up ; and by recurring to their foundations we add new strength to the principles by which they are sustained. We are animated to fresh exertion in our national career, by going back to the original fountains from which American freedom and prosperity have been derived.

History is experience teaching by example ; but it is not by ordinary examples that her wholesome lessons are taught. The mean and selfish motives, which so often enter into the inducements to glorious achievements, are forgotten in the lapse of ages. The petty intrigues and personal quarrels which so often influence the fate of empires, pass to oblivion with those by whom they were fomented ; and the character of the age, marked by its prominent moral and intellectual qualities, alone remains to animate or to warn succeeding generations.

The distinctive marks of the period, from which we date the commencement of American history, are easily ascertained. The obscurity which hangs over the origin of other nations, and which affords ample opportunity for the erection and demolition of plausible theories, does not darken the period in which the European settlements in America were established. Science and learning shed their full

light upon the communities, from which they migrated. Their motives and actions were exposed to the spirit of inquiry which distinguished the age. The peculiar characteristics of the early colonists are fully detailed and faithfully preserved by their contemporaries, and we are not left to conjecture for the materials of American history.

In examining the annals of the settlements, now composing the North American confederacy, our attention is not attracted, nor a feverish excitement produced, by a series of brilliant military achievements. No splendid conquests nor murderous battles, in which myriads of the human race were sacrificed, to extend a boundary line, or perpetuate a dynasty, enliven the matter-of-fact history of the American people. The tinsel decorations of martial renown are not the appropriate ornaments of our national annals. They have a more real and solid interest. They come down to us adorned with their triumphs; but they are not the triumphs of physical force. They are the triumphs of intellect, of liberty political and religious. They are the triumphs of an enlightened policy over the prejudices of a scholastic and bigotted age; of free institutions over the abuses of the feudal system; of the right of conscience over persecution; of freedom over despotism and slavery. These are victories over which the philanthropist