

**ORATION, OF MASSACHUSETTS,  
APRIL 7, 1888. AT THE  
CELEBRATION OF THE CENTENNIAL  
OF THE FOUNDING OF THE  
NORTHWEST, AT MARIETTA, OHIO.**

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Oration, of Massachusetts, April 7, 1888. At the celebration of the centennial of the founding of the Northwest, at Marietta, Ohio. by George F. Hoar

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**GEORGE F. HOAR**

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DELIVERED BY

**GEORGE F. HOAR,**

OF MASSACHUSETTS.

APRIL 7, 1888.

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AT

**MARIETTA, OHIO.**

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## ORATION.

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THERE are doubtless many persons in this audience who have gathered here as to their Father's house. They salute their Mother on her birthday with the prayer and the confident hope that the life which now completes its first century may be immortal as liberty. If we were here only to do honor to Marietta—to celebrate the planting of this famous town, coeval with the Republic, seated by the beautiful river, her annals crowded with memories of illustrious soldiers and statesmen—this assemblage would be well justified and accounted for.

But there is far more than this in the occasion. The states which compose what was once the Northwest Territory may properly look upon this as their birthday rather than that on which they were admitted into the Union. The company who came to Marietta with Rufus Putnam April 7, 1788, came to found, not one state, but five, whose institutions they demanded should be settled before they started by an irrevocable compact. These five children, born of a great parentage and in a great time, are, as we count the life of nations, still in earliest youth. Yet they already contain within themselves all the resources of a great empire. Here is the stimulant climate of the temperate zone, where brain and body are at their best. Here will be a population of more than fifteen millions at the next census. Here is an area about equal to that of the Austrian Empire, and larger than that of any other country

in Europe except Russia. Here is a wealth more than three times that of any country on this continent except the Republic of which they are a part—a wealth a thousand times that of Massachusetts, including Maine, a hundred years ago; one-third larger than that of Spain; equal to that of Holland and Belgium and Denmark combined; equal now, I suppose, to that of Italy; already half as great as that of the vast Empire of Russia, with its population of more than a hundred millions, whose possessions cover a sixth part of the habitable globe. Below the earth are exhaustless stores of iron, and coal, and salt, and copper. Above, field, and farm, and forest can easily feed and clothe and shelter the entire population of Europe, with all her empires, kingdoms, and republics.

The yearly product and manufacture of these five states is estimated by the best authorities at from twelve to fifteen hundred millions of dollars. Everything needed for a perfect workshop in all the mechanic and manufacturing arts has nature fashioned and gathered here, within easy reach, as nowhere else on earth. These states had, in 1886, forty-one thousand eight hundred and ninety-three miles of railway; equal, within two hundred miles, to that of Great Britain and France combined; nearly three times that of Austria or Russia, and about twice that of Germany; while mighty rivers and mightier lakes already bear along their borders a commerce rivalling that of the ports of the Old World, to fair cities and prosperous towns, each one of which has its own wonderful and fascinating story. And above all this, and better than all this, man, the noblest growth this soil supplies, descended of a great race, from which he has inherited the love of liberty, the sense of duty, the instinct of honor, is here to relate and celebrate his

century of stainless history. Whatever of these things nature has not given is to be traced directly to the institutions of civil and religious liberty the wisdom of your fathers established; above all, to the great Ordinance. As the great jurist and statesman of Ohio said more than fifty years ago: "The spirit of the Ordinance of 1787 pervades them all." Here was the first human government under which absolute civil and religious liberty has always prevailed. Here no witch was ever hanged or burned. No heretic was ever molested. Here no slave was ever born or dwelt. When older states or nations, where the chains of human bondage have been broken, shall utter the proud boast, "With a great sum obtained I this freedom," each sister of this imperial group—Ohio, Michigan, Indiana, Illinois, Wisconsin—may lift her queenly head with the yet prouder answer "But I was free-born."

They were destined, also, to determine the character and decide the fate of the great Republic of which they are a part, and, through that, of constitutional liberty on earth. In saying this I speak with careful consideration of the meaning of the words. I wish, above all things, on this occasion, to avoid extravagance. I hope that what is said here may bear the examination of students of history in this most skeptical and critical age, and may be recalled on this spot, without a blush, by those who shall come after us, for many a future centennial.

There is no better instance than this of the effect of well-ordered liberty on the fortune of a people. Nature is no respecter of persons in her bounty. The buried race who built yonder mound dwelt here for ages, under the same sky, on the bank of the same river, with the same climate and soil. We know not who



they were. Their institutions and government, their arts and annals, have perished in a deeper oblivion than that which covers the builders of the Pyramids—which moved Sir Thomas Browne to his sublimest utterance: “History sinketh beneath her cloud. The traveller, as he paceth amazedly through these deserts, asketh of her, Who builded them? and she mumbleth something, but what it is he heareth not.” The Indian and the Frenchman dwelt here, but could not hold their place. The growth of city and town and country, the wealth of the soil and the mine, the commerce of lake and river, the happiness and virtue of the fireside, the culture of the college, the three million children at school, the statute book on whose page there is no shame, are due to the great and wise men who gave you, as your birthday gift, universal liberty, universal suffrage, equal rights, and inviolable faith.

There is no obscurity in the date or in the transaction. History pours upon the event its blazing sunlight. We see it, in all its relations, more clearly than it was seen by those who took part in it; more clearly than we behold the events of our own time. No passion disturbs our judgment, leading us either to exaggerate or depreciate. There is room for no feeling in our bosoms to-day but an honorable pride in our ancestry and an honorable love of our country. “It is a tale brief and familiar to all; for the examples by which you may still be happy are to be found, not abroad, men of Athens, but at home.”

History furnishes countless examples in every age of heroic achievement and of great enterprise in war and peace, wisely conducted to successful issue. But the events which men remember and celebrate, which become the household words and stirring memories of

nations, the sacred Olympiads by which time is measured, and from which eras take their date, are those which mark the great advances of Liberty on to new ground which she has held. Such, by unanimous consent of the race to which we belong, are the enactment of Magna Charta, the compact on board the Mayflower, the Declaration of Independence, the adoption of the Constitution of the United States, and later, in our own day, the Proclamation of Emancipation. I believe the event which you celebrate is not behind either of these, whether in good fortune as to time, in the character of the actors, in the wisdom which guided them, or in the far-reaching beneficence of the result.

I am speaking to men who know their own history. I can but repeat—we gather on such occasions but to repeat—familiar stories—

“ Our lips must tell them to our sons,  
And they again to theirs.”

You know better than I do the miracle of history which brought the founders of the Northwest to this spot at the precise time when alone they could bring with them the institutions which moulded its destiny. A few years earlier or a few years later and the great Ordinance would have been impossible.

Look for a moment at the forty-eight men who came here a hundred years ago to found the first American civil government, whose jurisdiction did not touch tide-water. See what manner of men they were; in what school they had been trained; what traditions they had inherited. I think you must agree that of all the men who ever lived on earth fit to perform that “ancient, primitive, and heroic work,” the founding of a State, they were the fittest. Puritanism, as a dis-

unct, vital, and predominant power, endured less than a century in England. It appears early in the reign of Elizabeth, who came to the throne in 1558, and departs at the restoration of Charles II. in 1660. But in that brief time it was the preserver, and may almost be called the creator, of English freedom. The Puritans created the modern English House of Commons. That House, when they took their seats in it, was the feeble and timid instrument of despotism. When they left it, it was what it has ever since been, the strongest, freest, most venerable legislative body the world had ever seen. When they took their seats in it, it was little more than the register of the King's command. When they left it, it was the main depository of the national dignity and the national will. King, and minister, and prelate, who stood in their way they brought to the bar and the block. In that brief but crowded century they had made the name of Englishman the highest title of honor upon earth. A great historian has said "the dread of their invincible army was on all the inhabitants of the Island." He might have added, the dread of their invincible leader was on all the inhabitants of Europe.

Puritanism had not spent itself as a force in England when it crossed the sea with Bradford and Winthrop. What a genius for creating the institutions of liberty and laying deep the foundations of order was in that handful of men who almost at the same instant framed the first written constitution that ever existed and devised the New England town, that unmatched mechanism of local self-government, which has survived every dynasty in Europe and existed for two centuries and a half almost without a change.

The forty-one men who landed from the Mayflower