

THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE

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To be delivered by the representative of the
Bandana school at the fair Nov. 20

There is something of sublimity in the beginning of every great state. All the great institutions made for the protection and the government of man have an intensely interesting history. The reason is not difficult to perceive. It is their importance as a factor in human affairs that gives them this character. Indissolubly connected with the administration of a government is its greatness as a state, and the happiness of its people.

It is because of this that the American people like to dwell upon the circumstances of our birth. It is eminently proper that we should do this. Ours is not the foolish worship of old customs and men that are no more. It is rather the sincere tribute we pay to great men.

The declaration of independence, formed as it was by these small colonies, was a great and a significant event. As the Athenians of old rolled back the tide of Persian invasion, and saved the learning and the liberty of the world for a thousand years, so the colonists turned back the British tyrants and gave the world a new era of liberty. Europe had groaned for ages beneath the weight of rigid military governments and excessive burdens. The growth of knowledge had awakened the sleeping powers of men. In the natural course of human events a crisis was at hand.

The time had indeed come but who to arise as the champion of the people? Spain was ruined France was defeated and her spirit broken. Germany Holland and Sweden were at the feet of Great Britain. England appeared in the forum of the nations as the advocate of taxation without representation. It seemed as if nothing could resist the onward sweep of this mighty Göttergötter.

But the cause of liberty was destined to triumph. From the crowded streets of Boston from the gloomy pine forests of Maine the spirit of liberty reigned in the hearts of the people. The news of the first battle was carried on the wings of the wind. It sped like the fiery cross that called together the clans of Scotland's rugged mountains.

And so America took her grievances to the final arbiter between nations.

"By the rude bridge that arched the flood
Their flag to April's breeze unfurled
Here once the embattled farmers stood
And fired the shot heard round the world"

The American people casting off the chains of insolent authority declared themselves the eternal foes of injustice, and the advocates of human rights.

The continental congress was the ruling power of the nation then. In the summer of 1776 they were holding their sessions in the city of brotherly love. The rebellion had actually begun. These men had met to decide whether or not they were to sever the ties which bound them to the paternal state. Sirs! The Roman senate that met when Hannibal thundered at the gates of the eternal city, had no more momentous question to decide than had these men. Upon their decision rested the fate of an empire.

Let us friends in our imagination roll back the dark curtain of the intervening years and enter that assembly. Let us pause upon the threshold and gaze with awe at these great men. They are worn with long days and weary nights of deliberation. They are oppressed with the sense of their great responsibilities. These are the men, who have dared to oppose their hitherto untried strength to the terrible fury of the British lion; and now will they dare to take the last dread step. The step which means either the dark oblivion

of a rebels grave/or the bright glory of a nations founders?

Yonder in the chair sets John Hancock, grave and stern. See! There in the dlegation from Virginia are Thomas Jefferson and Richard Henry Lee. Here among the members from Massachusetts are the two Adams and Robert Treat Paine. On this side of the hall Benjamin Franklin is the chief of the Pennsylvania members.

But while we **STAND** with uncovered heads the sage printer of Boston rises to speak. He is not like the majority of his compeers in the bloom of youth. His great powers have been developed by the experiences of many years. His naturally strong mind and sound intellect have been matured by constant use. He speaks, and in words of wisdom declares for the resolution. As we gaze on his dignified ~~and stately~~ figure, his ~~kindly~~ face, and sit under the spell of his personality we involuntarily utter great Shakespeares words:

~~so mixed in him that nature might stand up~~
 "His life was gentle and the elements
 so mixed in him that nature might stand up
 to all the world and say "this was a man"

And now a speaker who opposes the declaration takes the floor. He dwells upon the ties of filial love which bind them to the mother state. He reminds them of the difficulties to be encountered. The well trained, the fleets of England Her wealth, her abundant commerce. He pictures to them the death on the scaffold, that will be thier lot if they fail. He ends by appealing to thier judgement and thier fears not to take the final step, To pause before it be too late.

But look! Who is this that arises from among the Mass. members? That uplifted hand quivering with eagerness, that resolute figure that lofty brow, can belong to no other than John Adams. Behold! His whole body quivers with emotion, Hark his voice rings out loud and clear! Mingled with its pure notes we seem to hear the subdued murmur of the oppressed millions.

Held listen! The great son of Virginia rises. Under the spell of Jeffersons logic, we can see the centuries of oppression. We see liberty lost in the ancient world under the despotic Caesars. We see it regained in the new world its progress slow at first but ever moving foward. With him as our guide we wander past the treacherous pitfalls and the tortuous winding of the English law and, emerge at last into the beautiful fields of human liberty.

The debating is over and the declaration is to be voted on. Upon this moment the histories of later years will shed thier light. This spot will be a shrine to all pesterity. all ages shall turn hither in search of instruction and **INSPIRATION**. What is passing in the minds of the members? Are they musing of the difficulties before them? No! I think a brighter vision is thiers. I think the master artist hope touches the canvas of the future. I believe he paints with the colors of the rose the panst and the summer sunset. These men dream of America as she will be.

The votes are counted and the declaration has passed. Ah Ben Franklin! You now knew that the sun you have watched so long and so anxiously is a rising sun. You know that a victory has been won here. Great **TRIVMPHS** have been **GAINED ON** the battlefields of the world; but the field of a Marathon a Zama or an Austerlitz afford no parallel to this! The political principles enunciated in that document will become the ~~maxims~~ maxims of future ages.

This, friends, was the tale of that day. We feel our unfitnes to describe it. We lament our inability to give utterance to the emotions which agitate us here. But, Sirs, may it never, never be said of us that ~~our patriotism has grown so feeble that we~~ in the pride of our manhood, we forget the cradle of our youth that our patriotism has grown so feeble that we have not ~~##~~ A tear of grateful memory to drop on yhe green turf that hides thier hallowed clay. Let us repeat the story of thier virtues from generation to generation; and when at last America will have as all nations will shrunk to a small island. may the last lingering tradition of its few inhabitants be the tale of ~~that~~ this days work.

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We should rehearse the story of ~~that~~ days work with reverence and honor. It has rightfully earned it. But there is a higher duty yet. Holding firm to the traditions of our fathers we will prove ourselves to be men. We will rest assured that our work will not go unrewarded; that coming generations will sing as we sing;

My country tis of thee!
Sweet land of liberty of thee I sing
Land of the pilgrims pride, land
land where my fathers died
From every mountain side
Let freedom ring.

FINIS.

The speech was man on delivery; not on subject matter.

BERKSHIRE LINEN

U.S.A.

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The first prize speech at the county
high school oratory contest.

