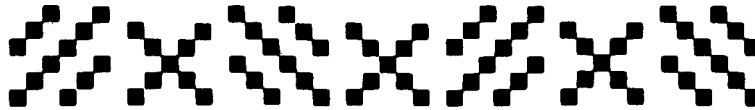


*An Oration, Pronounced at Hindostan,
Martin Co. (I[ndian]a)
on the 45th Anniversary of
American Independence*

Dr. M. A. Ward

*Edited by
William Barlow and David O. Powell**



During the intensely nationalistic era that followed the War of 1812, even the most remote frontier area found time to nurture its patriotism on the Fourth of July. This was the case in 1821 in Hindostan, an Indiana pioneer community located on the east fork of the White River near present day Shoals in Martin County. Founded in 1819, the settlement flourished briefly but was stricken by a "great sickness" which led to its demise by 1828. The Independence Day oration printed below is one of the few surviving documents of its brief existence.¹

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¹ The most accurate and complete history of Hindostan is Ruby Hotz Stiles, "A County in the Making," *Shoals News*, November 4, 18, December 30, 1949, January 13, 1950. Also see Carlos T. McCarty, "Hindostan—A Pioneer Town of Martin County," *Indiana Magazine of History*, X (June, 1914), 55-62; Harlow Lindley, ed., *Indiana As Seen By Early Travelers (Indiana Historical Collections, Vol. III; Indianapolis, 1916)*, 237, 256; Harry Q. Holt, *History of Martin County, Indiana* (2 vols., Paoli, 1953), I, 28-29, 51; John Scott, *The Indiana Gazetteer or Topographical Dictionary (Indiana Historical Society Publications, Vol. XVIII; Indianapolis, 1957)*, 75, 86, 128. Other than scattered records in the Martin County Courthouse, Shoals, Indiana, relatively few primary sources concerning Hindostan have been discovered. With the exception of the dim childhood recollections of two of its citizens, personal reminiscences are almost nonexistent. An example of one available reminiscence is George R. Wilson, ed., "Hindostan, Greenwich and Mt. Pleasant. The Pioneer Towns of Martin County.—Memoirs of Thomas Jefferson Brooks," *Indiana Magazine of History*, XVI (December, 1920), 285-302. Only one letter postmarked from the village has been found. Josiah Doane to John Tipton, July 17, 1820, in Nellie A. Robertson and Dorothy Riker, eds., *The John Tipton Papers (Indiana Historical Collections, 3 vols., Vols. XXIV-XXVI; Indianapolis, 1942)*, I, 221. Malthus A. Ward's printed oration appears to be the only significant surviving document written by a mature, educated adult who actually lived in the town during its early years.

The orator was one of the town's first doctors, Malthus A. Ward. Born into a destitute farm family in Haverhill, New Hampshire, in 1794, Ward somehow managed to attend the local academy, take classes at Middlebury College in Vermont, apprentice himself to a physician, and complete a course of lectures at the Medical Institution at Dartmouth. Because of a surplus of practitioners in New England, the hope of undertaking his chosen profession near home was not promising. In 1815, therefore, he departed for the West. Failing to establish a practice in New York, he settled in western Pennsylvania, first at Kittanning and later at Pittsburgh.²

During his stay in Pennsylvania, Ward considered the possibility of moving on to Ohio or Indiana. He was reluctant to do so, however, because of the lack of reliable information. He was scornful of newspaper accounts and published letters from "*uninterested* gentlemen to their eastern friends" which he viewed as the "production of crafty land speculators and others possessing large tracts in the vicinity of the places they eulogize." "Success in Ohio or Indiana," he felt, "would depend upon being at hand to seize the fortunate moment of occupying the place of some eminent practitioner just dead or removed from the country."³ Hindostan must have appealed to Dr. Ward as a tempting prospect, for it was a growing village in need of doctors. His source of information about Hindostan was probably Josiah Doane, an early resident who had migrated from Pittsburgh where his brother Henry and Ward were fellow Masons. When Ward arrived in 1819, he was a unique settler because he planned to remain only long enough to further his "pecuniary interests." He wanted to make sufficient money to enable him to return to his native New England, finish his medical education, and pursue a lucrative and successful career in the more congenial atmosphere of the East.⁴

² "Death of Dr. M. A. Ward," *Southern Cultivator* (Augusta, Georgia), XXI (July-August, 1863), 97; Malthus A. Ward to Ezra Bartlett, September 21, November 27, 1815, Bartlett Family Papers (New Hampshire State Library, Concord, New Hampshire); Ward to Bartlett, August 12, December 23, 1816, February 2, 1818, May 24, 1819, Papers of the Bartlett Family (Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.).

³ Ward to Bartlett, August 12, 1816, Bartlett Papers (Library of Congress).

⁴ *Ibid.*; Robertson and Riker, eds., *Tipton Papers*, I, 221; Register of Members, Lodges nos. 2 to 190, 1789-1823 (Grand Lodge F.&A.M. of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania). Josiah Doane is described in a legal document dated 1820 as "late of the city of Pittsburgh" and "now of the town of Hindostan." Deed Record, I, March, 1819—April, 1832, Martin County Courthouse. Only one reference to Ward was found in the Martin County records. In February of 1822, he was paid \$6.00 by the county clerk for unspecified services rendered. Records, Clerk's Office, Martin County Courthouse.

Ward was a prolific writer, and his long and meticulous letters from western Pennsylvania provide a vivid picture of frontier medicine and society. Unfortunately, a careful search of the Library of Congress and other depositories where his correspondence is located failed to reveal any letters written from Hindostan. After returning to New England in 1823, he earned an M.D. degree at the Medical College of Maine and began practice at Salem, Massachusetts, where he became a prominent civic leader.⁵ There he inserted into a volume, bound by the city Athenaeum and grandly titled *Historical Discourses*, a copy of the oration which he had delivered in Hindostan.⁶

Ward's speech is important as it relates to the history of printing in Indiana. The copy in the Salem Athenaeum is apparently the only one extant. It is not recorded by the compilers of Indiana imprints, and its printer, Blackman of Vincennes, is not listed among the publishers of the state. Only ninety-one items listed in published bibliographies of Indiana imprints bear an earlier publication date. Moreover, most of the imprints prior to 1821 are government documents, political and business announcements, and religious and fraternal literature. Ward's oration is one of the few early publications which reflects something of the social and economic concerns of the day.⁷

The speech is typical of Independence Day orations of the period. Mirroring the prevailing nationalistic spirit of the early 1820s, Ward's patriotic fervor was unbounded. He compared the young Republic's past and future to the triumphs of Rome and Greece and lauded the Declaration of Independence and Constitution as the "fountain" from which the nation's "prosperity and happiness calmly, but continually flows." He devoted considerable time to the country's military history, particularly the "heroic achievements" of the War of 1812, which "evinced the ability of our government to defend itself against foreign aggression, and to retort upon the proud oppressor his contumely and wrongs. . . ." Having won respect from abroad and isolation from the "destructive vortex into which other nations may be

⁵ *General Catalogue of Bowdoin College and the Medical School of Maine: A Biographical Record of Alumni and Officers 1794-1850* (Brunswick, 1950), 438.

⁶ *An Oration, Pronounced at Hindostan, Martin Co. (IA.) on the 45th Anniversary of American Independence. By Dr. M. A. Ward* (Vincennes, 1821), in *Historical Discourses* (3 vols., Salem [1826?]), III.

⁷ Mary Alden Walker, *The Beginnings of Printing in the State of Indiana* (Crawfordsville, 1934); Douglas C. McMurtrie, *Indiana Imprints, 1804-1849* (*Indiana Historical Society Publications*, Vol. XI; Indianapolis, 1937), II, 307-393; Cecil K. Byrd and Howard H. Peckham, *A Bibliography of Indiana Imprints, 1804-1853* (Indianapolis, 1955).

drawn," the blessings of freedom could now be enjoyed in a period of unprecedented tranquility. In this domestic political "Era of Good Feelings," Ward attributed the apparent lack of partisanship to the "conciliatory spirit and amiability" of President James Monroe as well as to the "diffusion of literature and useful knowledge amongst us." Even the "uncommon hardness of the times" resulting from the Panic of 1819 did not dim Ward's roseate forecast. An invaluable role would continue to be played by pioneer women, not only as mothers but as contributors in "turning a desert into a garden. . . ." Ward saved his final hosanna for the symbol of the country's past and future greatness, George Washington.

The document is also of interest regarding the history of Hindostan. Ward's reference to the "ravages of that dreadful mortality" during the previous year substantiates other sources that a "strange plague" brought about the town's ultimate collapse. Echoing contemporary medical theory, he blamed the "nauseous swamps" of the vicinity for having caused the "pestilence and death." Anticipating an abundant harvest, he congratulated the citizens on the "encouraging . . . prospects before you." His hopes were in vain. Perhaps less than one half of the peak population of five hundred remained by 1824. After Ward's removal, there was no resident doctor to care for those stricken with disease, and by 1828 the site was virtually abandoned. Hindostan was not to share in the future growth of the state and nation as Ward had predicted in his speech of July 4, 1821.⁸

⁸ Wilson, "Pioneer Town," 285-86, 292; McCarty, "Hindostan," 60-61. There has been some dispute among historians of Martin County as to the date and duration of the "great sickness." Ward's statement that "that dreadful mortality; which within the past year, has made such desolation in your houses. . . ." corroborates the view of Ruby Hotz Stiles that the disease was largely confined to the late summer and fall of 1820. His optimism in 1821 also supports her contention that the residents had not "all fled the town in fear of their lives" but rather that the decline of Hindostan was a gradual process culminating in the transfer of the county seat to Mt. Pleasant in 1828. Stiles, "A County in the Making," *Shoals News*, January 13, 1950.

FELLOW CITIZENS,

There is no country that has not cherished the commemorative celebration of important events in its history. It is the spontaneous dictate of public feeling. It is native love for ourselves carried back to those who have gone before us, and denotes our pride and our gratitude. Religion has thrown its consecrated mantle over this custom: Indeed, it was in the service of religion that it had its origin; and there is no sect of its professors, whether Christian, Mahometan or Pagan, which does not observe with punctilious regard, and ostentatious ceremonies, the annual return of certain festivals. This usage was at length extended to remarkably happy political epochs, and at last even to matters of mere individual concern, such as marriages, birth days, &c.

Of its propriety and utility there can be no doubt. Had Greece thrown a veil over each transaction as it transpired, posterity might have admired some short gleams of lustre, insulated stars in her vast horizon, but we should have looked in vain for the galaxy of glory, which made her the mistress of the world while she existed, and commands the homage of the world now that she has ceased to exist.

When Rome enlisted in her service the same energies that had made Greece immortal, her most efficient engine on the present generation, was to present to it the mirror of the past—The conqueror claimed his ovation and triumph, and his country gave a new existence to his glory, by celebrating its annual return.

It was natural and honorable that such a country as ours should follow these brilliant examples. Bound together as we are, by common will, and not by force, and relying solely, as we do, for the overcoming of assaults, by drafts on individual patriotism, we cement our union by the celebration of a glorious achievement, the common property of us all, and repay patriotism by its best means of gratitude.

In compliance with a custom thus sanctioned by our predecessors, and salutary to ourselves, have we this day assembled. It is a meeting fraught with the most interesting recollections, with the most powerful emotions. We have not come together, in compliance with an arbitrary command, to hallow the native day of a prince, perchance a tyrant, who came into the world merely in conformity to the same law of nature which produces a peasant,—to assume the outward appearances of gladness while our hearts are sad, and smile upon our chains while we feel their galling ignominy; but we have voluntarily followed

the spontaneous impulse of our hearts, and joyfully united to hail the nativity of a free, a powerful, and happy people, the emersion from the waters of oppression, of our extensive and delightful land, where Liberty could take up her undisturbed abode, and dispense her rich blessings to millions of happy intelligences—in a word, to celebrate the BIRTH DAY OF OUR NATION!

Forty five years have rolled away since that momentous event, and never has its anniversary returned, whether in the bright sunshine of prosperous peace, or in the gloomy hour of perilous war, but it has been greeted with joyful acclamations; and at each successive return have its blessings been commemorated with undiminished fervour, and by increasing numbers of happy freemen. No longer confined to the borders of the Atlantic, the seat of its birth, the voice of freedom is responded from the West—where late the savage occupant of this extensive region fixed his precarious abode, or prowled abroad in all the ferocity of his native wildness. Throughout this immense expanse, wherever the Genius of our Republic extends her protecting wings, are all hearts inspired, and all voices raised on this mighty theme.

Our Independence has been a subject so fruitful of comment, and a topic so often and so ably expounded, that in the few remarks I have to make, it will hardly be supposed that I can pretend to much originality: I however, freely trust myself to your candour and liberality, in full confidence that you will accept my sincerity and zeal in compensation for my deficiency in elegant of diction and brilliancy of style.—

The document which has just been read to you in so feeling and handsome manner, pronounced us "*a free and sovereign people*." "There is probably no state paper, of equal conciseness, in the records of empires, that declares in such energy of language, such purity of composition, and felicity of expression, the great and unalienable rights of our nature."—"In the whole course of our historical reading, and indeed throughout the variety of governments which the ingenuity of man has instituted for ameliorating the social condition of the human race, we find no instance combining such excellencies, and distributing so many benefits, as that production of wisdom, the Constitution of these States."—I have chosen this eulogy on the declaration of our rights and the Grand Charter of our liberties, because in estimating the favoured privileges and immunities we enjoy as freemen, these documents naturally present themselves as the fountain whence this stream of prosperity and

happiness calmly, but continually flows:—and in so doing I have adopted the sentiments and language of a distinguished ornament of our country, whose learning and judgment, equally profound, add weight to his opinion, and ought, if possible, to increase our veneration for those admirable instruments—to enhance the value of their possession, and strengthen the determination to preserve them.

"We declare that we are, and of right ought to be, a free, sovereign, and independent nation."—Who, with such a text, can be at a loss for something to say? and even if it should be but a bare repetition of what has been said a thousand times before, who, that is an American, can be tired of so grateful a topic as the independence of his country?—Save only the Being and attributes of the Deity, and the Immortality of our own souls, a more sublime, interesting, and inexhaustible subject cannot occupy the human mind, nor can there be a time better adapted to call forth all its powers than the present occasion.

*"Is there an hour more dear on earth,
More welcome to the patriot's soul,
Than that which gave his country birth,
And bade her standard sheet unroll?
When Freedom, from her hill of cloud,
Flash'd on each breast her warrior glow,
And wove a pure and starry shroud,
For those whom carnage had laid low!*

*Oh! no—for 'tis an hour when age
Forgets his hoary sprinkled hair:
When soul surmounts the body's cage,
To roam in heaven with glory there!
When thoughts of battles long gone by,
And buried in the lapse of years,
Float bright before fond memory's eye,
All wet with holy patriot tears."*

You are all well acquainted with the causes which led to *the production and adoption of the declaration* of our Independence. Nor is it necessary that I should detail to you the grand events of our revolutionary struggle by which it was, I trust, perpetually secured to us, or the enviable state of prosperity and peace we enjoyed after its close—hoping to keep aloof from the troubles and commotions of the nations of Europe. You know also how that hope was disappointed; and we were doomed to confirm that truth which the experience of ages had

established,—that “peace is not always to be secured by justice, nor safety the result of unmolested forbearance.” Goaded by contumely and wrongs, the injuries of one nation making the arguments and excuse for those of the other, this country was again compelled to embark upon the tempestuous ocean of war, and with manly firmness to demand by force that redress which was denied to justice. How that war was conducted—what vicissitudes we encountered—how the ancient American spirit animated our breasts and nerved our arms, and how successfully it terminated, are facts of recent occurrence, and known to you all.

The names of those gallant spirits who covered themselves with a shroud of glory in those terrific conflicts, as well as of the scenes of their heroic achievements have been given to the voice of fame—have been registered on the tablet of historic renown. We should ever cherish them in our hearts, but by making them too familiar on our tongues, we in some measure detract from their sanctity of character, and weaken that effect which they might otherwise produce, when the time of need should come for such powerful auxiliaries. Should ever the dark cloud of war and peril again enshroud our land, (which heaven avert!) the bare pronouncing of the names of PUTNAM, and GREENE, and GATES, of JACKSON and SCOTT and M'COMB—of *Saratoga* and *Trenton* and *York*, of *New Orleans* and *Erie* and *Plattsburgh*, would arouse, like a shock of heaven's electricity, the patriotic spirit in every breast, and stimulate to deeds of highest enterprise; and the recital of the exploits of DECATUR and HULL, of PERRY and M'DONOUGH, would be the most efficient means of ensuring a repetition of their triumphs.

The *Romans* had a maxim that the assistance of a god should never be invoked, but on occasions worthy the interference of a god; and in these times of peace and tranquility it is, perhaps, best to let our martial ardour, and the more turbulent of our patriotic emotions remain in quiet repose, and thus gain new strength against the hour of needful exertion. Let us rather indulge those sympathies, equally patriotic and dear to the sensitive heart, which invite us to wreath with laurel and cypress the tombs of WARREN and MONTGOMERY and PIKE; and to pour the tear of grateful remembrance on the cold urns of LAWRENCE and BURROWS. War, cruel, bloody, iron-hearted war, however splendid in its career, or fortunate in its termination, is always fruitful in distress, and justly denominated the most dreadful scourge of nations—The last one, though comparatively short and confessedly glorious, cost our nation a hundred millions of money, and covered a hundred

thousand of our citizens with weeds of mourning and grief for the loss of friends and brothers, and husbands and fathers, slain or destroyed by hardship and disease.

While thus contemplating the tremendous price at which our liberties have been purchased and maintained, how feelingly ought we to appreciate the blessings of the peace we enjoy!—how ought we to thank and support that government which has secured it to us!—Happy at home and respected abroad—too powerful to invite, and too noble to inflict injury—our friendship, once spurned, is now eagerly sought by all the nations of the earth. Having evinced the ability of our government to defend itself against foreign aggression, and to retort upon the proud oppressor his contumely and wrongs—having proven that our friendship is as much to be desired as our enmity is to be dreaded, we may confidently hope to escape in future the destructive vortex into which other nations may be drawn:—And, to crown all, I believe there never was a time when we have had so little to apprehend from internal commotion. There has been no period in the annals of our politics, which has evinced so much unity of feeling, and been so productive of harmony and mutual forgiveness, as that which has characterized the present administration of our government. A great deal of this good temper is no doubt the effect of the well known conciliatory spirit and amiability of manner of our worthy chief magistrate; but at the same time, this olive branch, which so happily shows itself throughout the union, is, in a great degree, attributable to the more extended diffusion of literature and useful knowledge amongst us—enlightening, expanding, and liberalizing the public mind, thereby hastening its gradual march towards a true sense of the benefits our happy constitution affords, and the ability and impartiality with which its provisions are dispensed.

MY FRIENDS,—as citizens of the United States, permit me most heartily to congratulate you that these things are so; and to wish you many opportunities of celebrating the 4th of July. As citizens of Indiana, I congratulate you, that notwithstanding the embarrassment under which we labour from the general depression of business and uncommon hardness of the times, our State is rapidly increasing in population, in wealth and in public importance. As citizens of Martin County, I congratulate you on the encouraging aspect of the prospect before you. Hitherto a great degree of healthiness has prevailed. The general progress of the season has been favorable, and the present flourishing state of vegetation promises, not only an abundant harvest to the husbandman, the rich reward of his

toil, but seems to impart an earnest assurance that you will not be again exposed to the ravages of that dreadful mortality, which within the past year, has made such desolation in your houses, and in your bosoms.—The goodly number who are here assembled to greet each other on this joyful anniversary, and to sit down in friendship and harmony at the same festive board, is a spectacle which must be highly grateful to the genius of neighborly love and social order. The spirit with which you have come forward to celebrate the day, evinces that the cause of Independence and Liberty is still dear to your bosoms, and that you intend to impress upon the minds of the rising generation the high value you set on those privileges, which you are resolved to transmit to them. You behold in each other, those on whose industry and perseverance you repose your hopes of seeing, within a few years, a fair and fertile portion of the state rescued from the condition of a dreary wilderness, where nothing was formerly heard but the howling of the wolf—where no living creature cheered the eye, except, perchance, a bounding deer, a rude bear, or a ruthless savage;—men, who will convert the gloomy woods into fields waving with luxuriant harvests, and change the nauseous swamps, emitting pestilence and death, into rich meadows clothed with thick and verdant herbage.

In deeds like these consists the purest patriotism. However the sense of the term may have been changed by the corrupt and unwarrantable uses to which it has too often been applied, the word *patriot* simply means *a man who loves his country*. Now I contend that the man, who, with a liberal regard to the interest of his neighbors, and a spirit to maintain the sacred principles of the rights of man, expends the energies of his mind and body in these simple employments, thereby enriching his country as well as himself, is as truly a *patriot*, and as well entitled to the applause of the world, as he who by his eloquence supports the people's cause in the senate, or by his valour defends it in the field—And I have the authority of the celebrated Dean Swift for saying that "He who makes two ears of corn, or two blades of grass grow upon the spot where but one grew before, deserves better of his country than the whole race of politicians put together."

There is still one more subject for pleasing congratulation—the number and respectability of the females who have honoured our meeting with their presence and polite attention—many of them have left the comforts and elegancies of refined life—have bade adieu to their relations, their early companions, and the scenes of their youth, endeared by a thou-

sand tender recollections—rupturing the ligaments of many a heart-woven attachment, to accompany you to the forests. All of them share your privations and your toils, ameliorate your sufferings, divide your cares, soothe your sorrows, and inspire you with joyful hopes—thus contributing immensely towards the great work of turning a desert into a garden, and constituting the very soul and vital energy of your patriotism;—for it is *they* who make you love your home and your country.

It is for you, ladies, that I have reserved the repeating of a name, at the sound of which every American bosom beats with a prouder swell, and without which every 4th of July oration must be defective and insipid—the name of him who was “first in war, first in peace, and first in the hearts of his countrymen”—to you, in the revered characters of wives and mothers, a most important, a most pleasing task is assigned. It is you who watch over and direct the first shoots of the infant mind, as it gradually expands beneath your fostering guardianship. That direction which you then impress upon it, is the one which it will ever after retain. It is you who form the character for life. The natural affections are the first which develope themselves, and are the first which should be gratified—The *first* name which your child lisps, is that of his *father*—The social feelings then begin to come in play, and I beg that the *second* name which you teach your son to utter, may be that of the Father of his country. Make his illustrious character and example the standard after which you endeavor to model him, and you may rest assured, that in proportion as you make your son resemble that great man, exactly in the same proportion will he be the pride and comfort of your declining years, a blessing to society, and an honor to his country—Instil into his infant mind the sacred principles of religion, and the great moral lesson it inculcates—Next to his God, instruct him in his duty to his country—Show him, as his capacity for instruction increases, the intimate and necessary connexion between those sacred relations—Read to him the declaration of Independence and let its golden truths, its sacred principles be deeply impressed upon his mind—Let the example of HANCOCK and ADAMS, of FRANKLIN and JEFFERSON, of KUSCIUSCO and LA FAYETTE, and the host of worthies whose names illumine the pages of our history, be ever held up to him for imitation—Tell him of their patriotic zeal and firmness in the senate, of their heroic valour and fortitude in the field—And, finally, for a consummation of all that can dignify the hero, the patriot, the statesman, the sage, and the Christian, name to him—WASHINGTON!