

AN  
ORATION.

PRONOUNCED

JULY 4, 1811.

AT THE REQUEST OF THE INHABITANTS  
OF THE TOWN OF GUILFORD.

IN COMMEMORATION

OF THE

ANNIVERSARY

OF

AMERICAN INDEPENDENCE.

By John Phelps, Esq.

“ IN every nation, originally, Democracy was the first form of Government. Absolute Monarchy, contradictory to the liberty that all men should enjoy in every government, can never be established but by force.—*Sketches of the History of Man, by Lord Kames, Vol. II.*”

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BRATTLEBOROUGH :

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1811.

*Carroll*  
*Stark*  
*Thayer*

# ODE,

*For the 4th July, 1811.—By J. Phelps, Esq.*

**HAIL!** hail the day of Freedom's birth!  
Wake every livelier note to mirth!  
"To Freedom lend this days employ,"  
United Millions shout with joy.  
No other land, "where'er the sun  
Doth his successive journeys run"—  
No other land that feels his rays,  
Can raise to Freedom songs of praise.

Behold on Europe's plains, afar,  
Forever rage the flames of war;  
There fell ambition's iron reign  
Sweeps from the earth the rights of men;  
Two potent nations swoln with pride,  
Confusion spread o'er land and tide;  
While France obeys the God of War,  
Fierce Albion rides in Neptune's Car.

O'er the vast main Britannia lowers;  
Her flag unconquer'd dreads no pow'r—  
Oppressing all, to none the friend,  
Rude Power her aim, and Spoil her end.  
Nations remote her power obey,  
Ages have groaned beneath her sway—  
And neutral nations driven far,  
Must yield their rights, or bleed in war.

Behold where France her pow'r maintains,  
See captive nations led in chains;  
Where'er Napoleon rolls his car,  
There rage the fiery dogs of war.  
O'er fields laid waste must Europe mourn—  
From parent's arms their sons are torn,  
And forced to distant realms they bear  
The ruthless weight of savage war.

But fair Columbia's happier climes  
Unite the joys of better times;  
Here friend meets friend, convulsions cease,  
And no rude shock disturbs our peace.  
From State to State the Arts extend,  
And State with State their int'rests blend;  
Each State supports the gen'ral cause,  
Pledg'd to Religion and the Laws.

Here States, united, peaceful, lie,  
Outstretching Europe's breadth of sky;  
And rivers flow through wilds unknown,  
Which soon our Eagle's sway shall own.  
Here savage tribes, their nature chang'd,  
Forget the woods where erst they rang'd—  
Forget the chase—to scalp forbear—  
Forget the Tom hawk—whoop of war.

While over all our laws extend,  
Where rivers flow or forests bend—  
Where mountains raise their cliffs on high,  
Where vallies sink, or cities lie.  
To crown these joys has heaven sent,  
Good Madison our President;  
And ages hence, we hope, may see,  
Rulers as wise, as just as he,

**ODE,**  
*Addressed to the Revolutionary Patriots*  
*of 1776.*

Sires of Freedom, fam'd in story,  
Hail ye noble, hoary band ;  
In your youth, your deeds of glory,  
From the Tyrant, freed our land.

Not British threats, nor British power,  
Nor the Tyrant's cruelty,  
Could appal in that dread hour,  
Men resolv'd t' be free or die.

Not the cannon's dreadful rattle,  
Hessian force, or Savage foe ;  
When you, in the shock of battle,  
Laid the sceptr'd Tyrant low.

Independence from your brav'ry,  
Like the splendid orb of day,  
Rose, dispell'd the clouds of slav'ry—  
Rose, and never shall decay.

Now an independent nation,  
By your valour, we've become ;  
Long you live in exultation  
Of the Freedom you have won.

Age, alas ! has pall'd your vigour,  
Sunk your cheeks, and dimm'd your eyes ;  
Soon pale death, with ruthless rigour,  
Calls you to your native skies.

On the verge of life resplendant,  
Ah, we hear you mourn and sigh ;  
Lest your children and descendants  
Lose your Freedom when you die.

Cease to grieve, ye Patriot mourners,  
View with joy each growing son ;  
Who'll maintain our country's honors,  
Who'll maintain what you have won.

*[Here a Procession of Youths, with the Declaration of  
Independence, &c. entered.]*

See approach this fair procession—  
Parents view this infant band ;  
They hold their birthright in possession,  
Bear the charter of our land.

Then cease to grieve ye Patriot mourners,  
View with Pride Columbia's Sons—  
They'll maintain our country's honors,  
They'll maintain what you have won.

When in silent grave we moulder,  
Men and mothers they become ;  
They will rear the Patriot soldier,  
They'll maintain what you have won.

Cease to grieve, ye Patriot mourners,  
Our Country's Glory is begun ;  
A Patriot race shall bear your honours,  
They'll maintain the rights you've won.

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*Guilford, July 4, 1811.*

SIR,

IT is with pleasure that I have the honour to make to you the compliments of the Committee of Arrangements—To tender to you their thanks for the eloquent and spirited Oration this day pronounced, and request of you a copy for the Press.

SAMUEL SHEPARDSON, *For Committee.*

JOHN PHELPS, Esq.

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*Guilford, July 4, 1811.*

SIR,

THE expressions of kindness and of applause you have been pleased to communicate, from the much esteemed Gentlemen whom you represent on this occasion, are peculiarly grateful to me. To deserve well of my Republican brethren is the end of my ambition—For in serving them, I know that I contribute my feeble powers to serve the best interests of my country.

I am, sir, with great consideration,

Your obedient servant,

JOHN PHELPS.

HON. SAMUEL SHEPARDSON, Esq.

AN  
ORATION.

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MOSES, the Jewish law-giver, when he had brought out from Egyptian bondage, the chosen people, ordained one day in the year to be kept as an anniversary festival, to perpetuate to succeeding generations of that people, the remembrance of that divine event. The Moseses and Joshuas of our Revolution also, looking back upon the dangers and trials which surrounded them while passing the Red-Sea of our Independence, and contemplating their wonderful deliverance, by their great example recommended to the people of this rising empire, to celebrate to the latest ages, the anniversary of their deliverance, by suitable demonstrations of patriotism and joy.

The Abbé Raynal, also—who, in the early period of the French Revolution, attempted to recall the people of that nation to a knowledge of their rights, in his *Reflections* on the American Revolution, written immediately after the close of it, he exhorts the people of this rising Republic to celebrate each anniversary of its birth, by Military Evolutions, Processions, Orations, and Songs—by illuminations, firing of guns, and ringing of bells. Therefore, in celebrating this day, my brethren, as a great political and national Jubilee, we are animated and encouraged by the authority of the sacred scriptures, by the examples of the good, and by the counsels of the wise.

FELLOW CITIZENS,

IN the eye of the Philosopher and the Philanthropist, the American Revolution was the most superb and stupendous scene ever exhibited on the

theatre of human action. Other nations, indeed, had witnessed the storms and tempests of Revolution and War, had been invaded by foreign enemies, and ancient institutions had been overthrown by the irruptions of Savages and Vandals.—But an infant people, under colonial subjection, thinly scattered over an expansive continent, in separate communities, rendered jealous of each other by the policy of the parent state—rising at once, throwing off rivalship and jealousy—uniting like brothers against the disciplined legions of the most powerful monarch on earth, sent on purpose to enslave them—meeting them on that very soil, which, in happier times, they had peaceably cultivated, and which they were determined to defend to the last extremity—and finally wading through blood and slaughter to victory and independence—was a spectacle as new as it was sublime.

As much, however, as the valor which achieved the American Revolution might astonish the world, that astonishment was doubly increased by the magnanimity and wisdom displayed by the American people in forming and supporting a system of government, at once the terror and the envy of nations.

When the British Ministry first set about enforcing their illegal duties upon the Americans, the Americans were represented by that Ministry as a feeble, timid, helpless race of beings, totally incapable of ever becoming soldiers; so easy were they to be intimidated, that the bare uniform of a British regular, it was said would dishearten them, no motives could induce them to encounter the fatigues and dangers of a campaign, and even the bare smell of gun-powder was represented as being fatal to them—Two Regulars, in their estimation, would chase an hundred Americans, and an hundred put ten thousand to flight. After the deeds of bloody note, however, performed by the Americans on

Bunker Hill, and the other well-fought actions of the war, the Ministry were pleased to change their tone ; and the Americans, far from being that cowardly race of beings they had been represented, had now become bold, daring, ferocious, and cruel, partaking of the natures of the savage and the serpent, like the fabled soldiers of Cadmus, they would, they said, when left to themselves, fall upon each other and glut their innate thirst of blood in the destruction of their fellows. Such was the consoling prophecy of the British Ministry when they were compelled to withdraw their shattered regiments from our shores ; and all Europe stood aloof in anxious expectation to realize the fulfilling it. But, thanks to the saving spirit of the American liberties, those prophecies were vain—The armies of the Revolution broke up, and the individuals of which they were composed, retired to the bosoms of their respective families as orderly as any civil association.

Our freedom and the right to self-government was thus obtained, it remained to be secured.

The old federal compact, formed in the hour of common danger, was found barely sufficient to keep the confederated States together, while that danger continued ; and, when that danger was removed, the necessity of a more perfect union was early discovered —“ In order to form which, establish Justice, ensure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defence, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty to themselves and their posterity, The people of the United States established their Constitution.”

And here, the goodness of Providence is observable in the predisposition of causes necessary to produce that form of Government, the most wisely constructed and happily balanced of any that ever God in his infinite mercy was pleased to establish over the most favored people. Even that rivalry and local jealousy between the respective colonies, which the policy of Great-Britain had encouraged,

became, in the course of Providence, one of the most powerful agents in providing for, and maintaining that balance of power and local sovereignty which is so happily guaranteed by the federal constitution.

In that Convention which produced our form of Government, State jealousy was very active: And indeed, to establish the boundaries between National and State sovereignty, was a very delicate point. Men of commanding talents were found in that body, to whom, a National Government, containing within itself a number of other independent governments, appeared a many headed monster, totally incapable of control. A consolidated Government, in which the sovereignty of each individual State should be merged in that of the United States, was contended for with the most lively animation: It was contended for as ensuring more strength and energy, as well as a greater duration to the government. At the head of those who supported the principles of consolidation, was the late celebrated Gen. Hamilton—And from hence the appellative distinction of “Federalist.” On the other hand, it was contended, with equal ability, that the State Governments were fully adequate to all the purposes of domestic policy: That the United States embraced a vast extent of territory, the remote parts of which would languish from the absence of the due application of the powers of government, adequate to their wants: That Republican Governments seemed peculiarly adapted to small territories; and that a vast consolidated Republic would decline into despotism. These views finally obtained in the Convention, and our present admirable Constitution and form of Government was adopted. And now, my Fellow Citizens, after 22 years experience, we can look back and contemplate with pleasure the correctness of these views. When the Federal Constitution came into operation, our thin and scattered population, extended from the



shores of the Atlantic westward but little beyond the Allegany mountains ; but even then, that system of domestic policy which would answer all the purposes of government on the seaboard and the longer settled parts of the Republic, would be found incompetent to meet the wants of the young and rising States of the west. From hence arises the wisdom of leaving to certain portions of our territory, whose productions are the same, the genius and manners of whose people are similar, the right and the liberty of modifying their little republic in their own way, entirely independent in their local concerns of the general Government. It is this peculiar trait in the form of our Government, which distinguishes the American from that of any other Republic, ancient or modern.

Ancient Rome, when circumscribed within a narrow territory, flourished with true Republican vigour ; but when she had carried her arms abroad, and subjugated distant nations, those nations by not feeling a common interest in her glory, were ever ready to revolt against her power. Hence the necessity to which she was subjected of constantly maintaining military force in her distant provinces, to awe by the terror of her arms, that respect which ought to have been inspired by the equity of her laws—To the people of her remote provinces she ought to have extended all the far famed privileges of her own “ Roman Citizens” ; but this important act of justice was overlooked in her policy, and Rome, by extending her power, extended her oppression ; and, by neglecting to form a well regulated Republic, on equal principles, whose object and end was peace, laid the foundation of a vast military despotism, as terrible to surrounding nations as it was fatal to itself.

Not so the more enlightened policy of the United States. Embracing a territory more extensive than that of Rome, in the most exalted period of her power, the United States extend all the blessings of government, liberty, and protection to

every citizen, whenever within its jurisdiction he may be settled, or whenever he may roam.

States which may hereafter arise, and which, at no far distant day, will arise in those vast fertile regions drained by the Mississippi and its innumerable tributary streams, will feel a national pride and satisfaction in acknowledging the same general head, have extended to them the same powerful protection, contribute, in their turn, their proportionate supplies, and enjoy all the blessings of liberty, peace, and union, in common with the more populous members of the national family, which rise and flourish on the Atlantic shores. All the objections which have been urged that a widely extended territory is unfavourable to the genius of republics, is done away by the admirably peculiar form of ours. Every district of our territory as soon as it shall have obtained a certain population, is authorized to form an independent State. The people of such district then associate together, establish a constitution on Republican principles, embracing all their wants and all their necessities. From this moment no other State is suffered to interfere in their local concerns, nor do they intermeddle with the concerns of others. Each State is an independent Republic—Of territory circumscribed to Republican simplicity—founded on Republican principles of Economy : And the National Government is not established over, but grows out of these Republics, for the purpose of bringing their united force and counsels to bear on foreign aggression or on domestic wrong. The doctrine then lately taught that our territory is becoming too extensive for Republican safety, is a sophistry not so well calculated to convince great minds, as to alarm weak ones. The United States, in their separate capacities, contain within themselves, according to the strictest definition of Montesquieu, all the virtue, all the Justice, and all the fidelity of the most perfect Democracy ; while in their united, confederated capacity, they carry within themselves all the wisdom and energy, and we

trust, the stability and the power of the most absolute Monarchy.

FELLOW CITIZENS,

FROM the earliest discovery and settlements of the vast continent on which we live, even unto the present moment, a visible Providence has hung over, and like the pillar of cloud by day and of fire by night, has directed the destinies of these States.

At that memorable period when God in his Providence was about to shake and overthrow that stupendous power, erected by the Church of Rome on ignorance, bigotry, and superstition, and which had thrown a shade of infernal blackness over the whole christian world for more than 1000 years—contemplating the trials and sufferings his chosen people would have to encounter in their struggles with the “beast,” he provided for them an asylum in this distant land, the existence of which, at the dawn of the reformation, was announced to the world. While the demon of persecution raged in Europe, Christian pilgrims flying from the rack and the Inquisition, sought, in this then distant wilderness, that personal safety and that liberty of conscience which was denied them at home. Great-Britain, the first among the powers of Europe to throw off the Papal yoke, became the parent and guardian of these infant settlements. Under her protection they increased and multiplied and grew in strength—until the parent State, growing jealous of their power, attempted to abridge them of their rights. A revolution ensued. And he must be more than an infidel, who discovers not, in the struggle between the parent State and her colonies, That the race was not to the swift nor, the battle to the strong. The period too, when that revolution was accomplished. Could weak short-sighted man have calculated a season so favorable? Could any being short of that infinite intelligence, whose ken surveys the past, present, and to come, have foreseen that within six years from the close of the American Revolution, the old world was to be shaken with political convulsions,

unparalleled in the annals of time. In this revolutionary hurricane, which has raged and swept Europe for near 30 years, Great-Britain has been doomed to act a fatally conspicuous part : And unless they had been separated from her power, the United States must have been linked to her destinies. Consider then for one moment, Americans ! the woful condition to which you must have been reduced, had you been united to either of the European belligerents, during the tempest which has shaken and nearly subverted every ancient government. Reflect, I say, one moment upon the convulsions, you must have felt in this general shock of empire, and acknowledge and adore that Providence, whose benevolent arm had kindly placed you beyond the sphere of their influence. Away, then, with your little paltry cavils—your enmity to your own liberties—your murmurings against your own government—all as offensive to common sense, and common honesty, as odious to the eye of heaven.

### FELLOW CITIZENS,

RECLINING, as we do, in the very lap of liberty. Protected, within and without, by the most powerful agencies. Living in an age emphatically the age of Literature and Science, having the page of History, and the volume of divine inspiration to guide and direct us—Let us in some measure live up to the high destinies to which we seem to be called. Our government has been in operation 22 years. In that period we have outrun many, and nearly overtaken others of the most powerful nations of Europe. France has existed a distinct government since the first establishment of her Monarchy under Clovis, full 1300 years. England, since her power became consolidated and directed by Chiefs of the Norman line, has run through the lapse of eight centuries. And Russia, since Peter the Great first lighted the lamp of civilization and science in her vast benighted regions, has accumulated the strength of 129 years : Yet these of all the powers of Europe

are the only ones which can justly claim preeminence, in any sense of the word, to the United States — And to either of these nations can the United States hold a justly proud, if not an equal comparison. But comparisons, even if the United States were sinking, like the nations of the old world, in venality and corruption, would be invidious ; as the case now stands, comparison is odious. From what we have been called to witness of the policy of Europe for the last 20 years, so far from imitating, it becomes us to render ourselves as much unlike them as possible. In separating us from the European world by a vast waste of waters, it should seem that Providence designed that our true interests and occupations should be distant and local ; that we should neither partake with her her prosperity, nor share with her her adversity. If at any time the commerce of Europe has been necessary either to the wants or to the wealth of these States, every day is now abridging the necessity of such commerce. The most lasting benefits often grow from the greatest apparent evils : And the difficulties into which the mad policy of Europe has thrown all commercial enterprise, is directing American industry to other sources of wealth. The vast range of climate which the United States embraces, and its diversity of production, will forever give a spring to the elasticity of homeborn enterprise.— Hence the North will cultivate a lasting intercourse with the South, and the Atlantic States will supply their wants from the superabundance of those fertile regions watered by the great rivers of the west : And an entire desertion of the influence of the American Stars, from the ports of every eastern kingdom that has wantonly violated our rights, will be the consequence of their own ill-timed injustice. A few more years experience of that system of burning and sinking, of plunder and confiscation, which past years have presented to us, will instruct our merchants to preserve their capitals from the certain destruction that awaits them on the seas, without

the restriction of an embargo : And that total disregard of the most solemn engagements—that contempt of treaties—that sheer political immorality and commercial turpitude, if persisted in, will supersede the necessity of enforcing non-intercourse by law. It will be done by common consent. Then will the energies of the American people be left free to build up, and consolidate a real independence. Then will the exhaustless treasures of raw materials, of which our country every where abounds, be sought out, and wrought into perfection for social uses. Then will the rivers, penetrating every part of our continent, be cleared of their obstructions, and inland navigation be facilitated. That wealth, which European folly would squander in building and equipping fleets, and in levying and marshaling armies, a wiser policy will appropriate to more humane purposes. Instead of a perishable Navy forever tempting the cupidity of faithless nations, we shall have an imperishable supply of whatever the eastern world might furnish us, drawn from the productions of our own country, and wrought into perfection by our own artists. Conquest and war, so grateful to despots, will be odious to us. Conquest, as it can never be necessary to the American Government, so never can it enter into the views of its policy ; For God in casting our lot on earth has bountifully enlarged to us our domain, so as to furnish room enough for ourselves, and for our posterity, to the thousandth generation. All our resources and energies then may be directed to the expansion, and not to the subtraction of the human race. All our ingenuity and skill may be employed in lessening the wants, and enlarging the comforts of this expanded population. Already has the protecting genius of our country, pointed to us the true road to national prosperity and glory. Already have we begun to follow the direction. A manufacturing spirit has gone forth, and all ranks of men, regardless of sect or party, seem inspired with its zeal. Many of our most worthy and wealthy merchants, withdrawing

their capitals from the uncertain tenure which they feel they hold on the ocean, are more profitably, and more patriotically employing them in manufactures at home—Factories, in which goods of almost every description are wrought, increase and multiply among us; and an infinite variety of ingenious machinery has been invented, improved, and brought in aid of manual labour. A few years has witnessed a great increase in the culture and growth of Cotton. This valuable raw material, the staple of our southern brethren, promises to this nation an exhaustless source of wealth as well as great political consequence.—And the elegant and perfect machinery now in operation, for reducing this material to all the neat and useful purposes of which it is susceptible furnishes another evidence of the superiority of American talent and invention. Real Merino wool, of superior fineness, is now shorn from our own flocks, fed upon our own mountains. No longer shall we be indebted for cloth of this material, manufactured in Great-Britain of wool imported thence from Spain; but the time, perhaps, is not far distant, when cloth of this description, manufactured at home, may be offered in our own ports for exportation \* \* \*. Time would fail were we to enumerate a thousandth part of the natural advantages which are united in this our beloved country-

*O! fortunatus nimium sua si bona norint.*

## FELLOW CITIZENS,

EXALTED, as we are, even to heaven, in point of privileges, let us render ourselves worthy of the vocation to which we are called. The eyes of nations are turned upon us. Kings and Princes are eager to wrest from us our liberties, and good men throughout the world, while they admire the perfection of our freedom, feel anxious for its preservation. Should we lose this freedom—Should we wantonly sport with our rights—Should we suffer our liberties to be wrested from us, and this fair Republican edifice, erected by our own hands to be

overthrown, either by our own supineness and want of attention to Republican duties, or by the rude hand of lawless force—Consequences would follow, woful to ourselves, and worthy of eternal regret to the world.

In the melancholy histories of the ancient Republics we fear we read what may one day be our own. Ancient Greece once was virtuous, once was free, once was a Republic—And where is she now? Alas! modern slavery looks quietly at the despot, on the very spot where Miltiades fought, where Leonidas expired. Ancient Rome brings to our recollection the cradle and the nurse, the mother and the patroness of Liberty and the Arts.—And where now is Rome? Alas! a degenerate, nerveless race, tremble before some miserable instrument of despotism, on that very soil which was once defended by your free-born Brutuses and Catos. Hence we may learn that Liberty is not to be retained without constant care and watching. 'Foes to our liberty, within and without, watch for our halting. If we continue free, we must be vigilant and active. We are embarked with our liberties upon a stiff and turbid stream; and, rely upon it, we shall ever have to hold our course against an adverse current; rely upon it, if the popular spring does not continue firm and elastic, a short interval of debilitated nerve, and broken force, will send us down the stream again, and reassign us to the condition of Colonies.' This consideration ought to impress us with the deepest anxiety. Let us, this day, choose wisely whom we shall serve; or rather let us resolve to serve no mortal. Let the laws, equitably executed, be our only Sovereign. Let us disdain to be used as the tools of ambition, or to bow our necks as a "stool for the foot of lawless usurpation"—But let us keep the "even tenor of our way" right onwards in the direct path of Republican Independence.

"And God and good Angels will speed us as we go."