

The American Pioneer

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generation laid the foundation of our government and our traditions and ideals, for no government and no ideals and no traditions can long exist unless the corner stone for them has been laid firm and true. You are the men who laid the corner stone. You are the builders of the ark. It is for us to take the torch from your hand and carry on—and then to leave it with credit and luster and honor to those who will follow on. That is what you have accomplished for the state of Iowa, and we are here today to do you honor and to thank you for your accomplishment, and to wish you many more years of health and prosperity and happiness.

The gavel was then turned over to former governor George W. Clarke, who presented as the principal speaker for the association former senator C. H. Van Law.

THE AMERICAN PIONEER

By C. H. VAN LAW

The American Pioneer commands the admiration and merits the appreciation of our civilization for the distinctive contribution he has made in the conquest of a continent and in the upbuilding of a nation of the first order. No difficulties to him were deemed insurmountable, no dangers unnerved him, no hardships deterred him. The comforts of the old established fireside were as dear to him as to any, but the lure of the great, undeveloped lands which lay in the course of the setting suns mastered him and inspired his soul for the conquest of the wilderness, the untilled prairies of a continent teeming with the fertility of a virgin soil and the hidden wealth of its mountain wastes. With the challenge to do for generations yet unborn ringing in his soul, and with freedom in his every action, independence and high purpose possessed him as he sought out the tasks of his day and builded for the future. His masterful character knew no distinction of nationality in his companionship and lay claim to no distinction of class, save in comradeship of task and purpose. His soul had been born beyond the seas. When Abraham dreamed his dreams and turned his face toward the promises of a glowing west in high hope and in quest of a homeland, was the soul of the pioneer brought forth and was its westward way taken up. Since that far-off day has its "westward ho" sung, its vibrant challenge to kindred spirits and lured the courageous beyond seas, over mountain fastnesses, through forests, across desert wastes to the lands of promise, with home and country as its goal, and the satisfaction of achievements attained as its reward.

Through the cycling centuries men have purposed to do, and in doing they have found courage to die. Through the ages have men dreamed and have gone to an early grave in an effort to make their dreams come true. So long as the human heart shall yearn to know, so long shall the will of man dare to enter into the unknown. What of the peril to body if the conquest of the infinite is advanced! What of the domination of

men in high places, if the lowly of earth be exalted! What of the wrack upon the way to liberty if men are but made free! What of the ignominy and ridicule of the pretentious bigot, if the ignorance of the masses be abolished. As, through the ages of darkness and superstition, truth has triumphed over the false, tolerance over intolerance, judgment over passion, fraternity over class prejudice, learning over ignorance; it has been the courage of his soul that has led the way.

In the onward march of the achievements of our civilization, the greed of gain and power have ever and anon winnowed the weak elements from the ranks of men. In the progress of the race the pioneer has ever followed closely the skirmish line of civilization, to become indeed the pioneer of progress. Since the dawn of time, whence men emerged from the mysterious past, the spirit of his genius has led him westward through the cycling ages, and ever to a higher realization of his majesty and power and domain over the resisting environments with which he has contended. Seas and mountains, tempest-tossed and storm-beaten, have baffled the imbecile only to send forth into the wilderness and to far-off lands the courageous and indomitable elements of the race. It has ever been the Trojan spirit, inspired by an unconquerable courage and purpose, that has broken the ties of native land to build in untrammelled freedom institutions under the sway of which man might realize an unfettered liberty. An Aeneas gazes upon the ruins of his native land, and the memory of its departed heroes stirs within him the high and noble purpose to build beyond the seas an empire that will conquer and rule the world. The band of heroes that gathered about him fear not the dangers of the way, and less heed the adversities of fortune. The accident opens to them as the broad gateway of opportunity, a gateway bow-crowned with its promises. Cherishing the traditions of a highborn race, they launch forth to lay the foundations of the seven-hilled city, the mistress of the ancient world.

Ages roll on and from a civilization builded upon the revivals of that magical Roman power, reinforced by the customs of a freedom-loving race—a pilgrim band takes its course in a frail bark to the shores of a new continent and to a larger freedom than man had yet known. As the curtain thus lifted upon a new world the fire of hope burned anew upon the altars of progress and awakened the yearnings of men for a larger freedom and a clearer field. Bewildered by feudal lord to dominance in servitude and a despotism that shackled the conscience as a nightmare, the pioneer souls of men took on a new vision. Pilgrim and Huguenot, Cavalier and Covenanter counted not the costs in hardships and perils of sea, nor privations and dangers of wilderness to seek out the shores of this great continent in quest for a new land and new opportunity. True to the ideals which moved them, inspired them, bade them hold fast and endure, the foothold of a new nation was established on these American shores.

The compact formed within the hold of a lone wanderer of the sea proclaimed in the western world a new political and religious status for

man. Generation upon generation, epoch follows epoch, triumph and defeat, and, at last, triumph. That compact of limited application in a little more than a century and a half—amplified and systematized—had become a great political compact, under the sway of which has arisen the Great Republic of the world, extending its protecting power over a broad continent and to distant islands of the sea until the emblem that symbolizes its sovereignty has become to the races of liberty-seeking men a pillar of fire by night and a pillar of cloud by day. Slowly but surely the scroll unrolls, a nation is born, a people is established and America is a reality. Homes, schools, churches, comfort and solace, tasks and inspiration for the tasks. The American Pioneer has come into his own. It is his crowning achievement, his eternal glory, his lasting reward.

We contemplate broad, expanding, fertile fields, fruitful and bounteous in the service of man, thriving cities and teeming life. Wealth in the establishments of industry, comforts and conveniences in the mechanism of ingenious man; enlightenment for all through schools and universities; sustaining power through the ministries of a gospel of brotherhood, faith and love; liberty and law, guarantees in person and property, freedom of conscience, equality of opportunity and liberty in action. These full-rounded achievements for the supreme happiness of our day and generation have been bought for a price. A heritage that is ours to keep!

Pride in achievement—industrial success—inventions that amaze, and minister to our convenience beyond comprehension and appraisal of value. Triumphs over time and space. Understanding born of learning; happiness in home and community life; aspirations to still further penetrate the mysteries of the Infinite; freedom of thought and action, friendship and tolerance; all for one and one for all; one level of life and opportunity, equality, fraternity, justice.

The American Pioneer has led the way, has championed the cause, has furthered the development and wrought far better than from his humble horizon he may have assumed to dream. His day and succeeding decades have each brought their trophies along the way to lay them in the hand of their successors, to carry on.

Their triumphs come to us as our obligation, their efforts and unstinted sacrifice invoke our pledge of devotion to the responsibilities of our time.

No words of praise can compass the obligation of that pledge. No faltering can answer the call of tomorrow. It remains alone for each succeeding generation of America's children to reflect the fortitude, endurance, high purpose and love of liberty of their ancestry and work out through the succeeding years the works they, the American Pioneers, have so nobly advanced.

Civilizations have hitherto come forth to grandeur, comforts and luxuries, wrought from necessity and frugality. The havoc of indolence and debauchery have worked their ruin, and the abiding places of these

scenes and successes have been succeeded by desolation and despair—their lonely haunts echo through their silent remains the wail of departed glory. The winds of time have scattered the ashes of those who joyed and sorrowed in triumph or defeat. The admonition of their story hangs across the pathway of the generations of men. The cycle of the ages murmurs a warning of the destinies of the nations as empires crumble and pass, and in passing leave only the tracery of their greatness in the processes of the suns.

So long as the vestal fires burned in pristine brightness upon the hearthstone of the Roman home, so long could a Livy write of the achievements of the Roman eagle—symbol of the dominion of the Empire extended from the golden milestone of her Forum to the uttermost parts of the civilized world—so long could the eloquence of a Cicero and the lyrics of a Virgil stir the soul of a nation. But when the putrid vice of a luxurious life wrought its desolation and decay of the home ideals of the nation, her greatness faded and her dominion passed from her. May the admonition of her fate and fortune bear its full measure of significance to the nations of earth in these days of vaunted achievement.

Are we patriotic—do we scan the horizon of the time to discover the storms that may wreck our fortunes and to discover the hidden rocks that may bring disaster to the “charge to keep we have”? Then let the dedication of our lives to the tasks of our time bring to the altar of our country’s service, virtue, love and faith. Virtue in a preserved vigor and resourceful manhood, love in our devotion to duty, and faith in the Providence over all and in all for an abiding good, the doing of righteousness, the establishment of justice and the realization of a world-wide, far flung fraternity of men and nations. In this let the American home, the object of primal devotion of the American Pioneer, be the threshold and harbinger of the nurtured innocence of childhood and the bulwark of a matured manhood. Let the American public school and its accessories, kindergarten and university be the handmaid of enlarged and realized opportunity and progress. Let the institutions of conscience and devotion to sacred ideals be the guide and companion, comforter and inspiration of the lives of men. Then will the American Pioneer have found worthy successors in his posterity and these institutions have served their mission in the guidance and inspiration of a great people to a lasting civilization.

A continent replete with resources, resplendent in the possibilities of service—a people self-controlled and sustained in all things good, meting out to the generations of men as they come and go a happiness earned, a goal of lasting peace.

May the ideals our pioneer fathers cherished be held sacred, the aspirations they nurtured become our inspiration, and the institutions they developed and the industrial progress they achieved become and abide our trust as they are our heritage!

To the American Pioneer we thus pay our tribute of praise and ap-

preciation and accept the commitment of the tasks unfinished, as we seek to carry on. And if we would pay lasting honor to his memory, may such be found in our loyal devotion to his ideals and an unstinted measure of effort in the consummation of his dreams that remain unrealized.

Fortunate our lot who have found home and opportunity within this great mid-continent valley—the scene of so much of the labors of the American Pioneer and within which lies so much of possibility in the onward march of our civilization!

Its countryside and urban centers teem with life, born of the soul of those pioneers who here laid the foundations of our institutions and initiated the fruition of its resources. With loyalty to their unfinished tasks, may we take up the labors of our day and preserve that which they established for good, and carry on to consummation and larger realization that which they so well began. Commonplace things may engage our thought, but let us not overlook the fact that many of these commonplace factors are as they were cardinal elements of strength in the processes of our progress.

The home of our childhood is the anchorage of our manhood. Refinements and luxurious appointments may embellish the place where we live, but such do not and cannot supplant the vitalizing power of the home ties born of affection. Home is the cradle of youth and the comfort of advancing years, within which circle in companionship men and women may build a miniature nation in orderly living and mutual services for time and eternity—a dwelling place where motherhood reigns supreme and where childhood awakens to life's responsibilities. Where mother's kitchen is not limited to the use of a can opener, but where the oft-replenished cooky jar, or a mound of warm, fresh doughnuts extend their invisioned appeal out to the street—to the school ground or to other places of boyhood rendezvous, and draw with magic potency to that home. The anticipated joy, the enraptured shout of realization—mother's larder has not been neglected. "Mother, may I have two?" "Yes, son, you may have two." "Mother, may I have three?" "Now, son, why three?" "Well, mother, Bud is outside—he don't have a mother at home to make cookies for him." "Well, son, take four." Home, home, sweet home! Like bands of steel the cords of affection stretch across the years to bind men to home and mother. And the blessings of mother send her boy across the threshold of her home to bear her generosity and helpfulness to his companions in life and bridge the chasm of human need through his services to his fellow man.

"There's a spot in his heart which no colleen may own,
There's a depth in his soul never sounded or known;
There's a place in his memory, his life, that you fill—
No other can take it—no one ever will."

May God bless the home for which the pioneer toiled and for the protection of which he even dared to die. And may God save to us and for us and for this great nation the home life of the pioneer,

The public school, where the morning roll call makes summons to its precincts of youthful democracy the childhood of succeeding years, and lays the foundations of equality in living and arouses ambitions to achieve, provides a bulwark for liberty and fosters a fitting appreciation of the institutions under which our blessings of life are made secure. In the training of our youth, in the democratic atmosphere of our public schools, lies the assurance of an enlightened citizenship, competent to deal with the problems of state and to promote the enterprises upon which the successes of our industrial and commercial life must rely. That system furnishes a common meeting ground for the citizens of tomorrow and goes far in the erasure of all lines of class distinction. Prejudice there disappears, and self-respect and mutual confidence take their place. The friendships of the classroom and playground extend down through the years as a cement to bind together in one structure the templed citizenship of succeeding generations. Buttressed by these influences, the problems of life and of state find solution in mutual councils in the body politic. Where understanding prevails reason holds sway and judgment is enthroned.

To the public school, then, may we be ever found bringing that loyalty of support which was a dominant reflection in the life of our pioneer fathers. Supplemented by our institutions of higher learning and through their advantages, may there be realized the open door of opportunity, swinging with equal freedom to all; and with an allure-ment to all who would enter upon the larger realizations of life through the training these institutions afford. A training for usefulness, that will command by its results the provisions we are making for the ever-expanding call for enlarged facilities. Never before in our history has the call seemed so urgent, as never before has the need of better equipment for life seemed so necessary. These calls for training merge into the needs and demands of our political and social life and of the industrial world that is never satiated in its urge for conservation of wastes hitherto neglected and of economies and untouched resources hitherto unknown.

With an oncoming citizen body thus nurtured in home and trained in school, our political fortunes and industrial development face a future filled with promises of contribution to human progress and human comfort. Time will not permit the details of achievements which find display in the show window of our industrial activities. Nor would patience endure replete references to the archaic accomplishments of yesterday. The dross and wastes of today await the touch of the discoverer to reveal the sources of wealth and utilities they hold for tomorrow. Our amazement gives way to acceptance as of commonplace, as we turn to greet the announcement of new discoveries in the progress of our times.

These passing comments are but fragments of the possibilities and problems of the great civilization ushered into this western world by the pioneer life of the days that are gone. We do well to contemplate

the prospect they afford and ponder the obligations they impose; to the end that succeeding generations may review the record we may make and find that we, of this day and generation, have neither faltered nor failed in the contribution we may have made to the advancement of a civilization which represents the crowning achievement of a worthy race of pioneer men.

Former representative E. C. Roach was called and spoke as follows:

SPEECH BY E. C. ROACH

Mr. Speaker, Members of the Forty-third General Assembly: When we reflect back over the forty-one and forty-three years that have passed since the people up in Lyon County made the mistake of sending me down here there are many things for contemplation. As the ages go the interests become so complex and complicated that the legislator has a problem before him always. In those times we struggled here with the question of woman suffrage—whether the women of this commonwealth should be allowed to vote at the elections, and objection was made that if they could vote then they would be entitled to hold the offices and become legislators and executives—but now it's a pleasure to greet and congratulate the honorable member from Jackson, who is here laboring with you people. That's progress. That's evolution.

And so we say often that there are too many laws. I think that's true—but with all these various institutions that must be regulated the laws must multiply rather than diminish. There is no other way of regulating the affairs of communities and societies but by legislation—by statute—and it is for the legislator to do the best he can with the things that come before him upon which he must legislate. And then we provide judges and supreme courts to tell the people whether the legislature knew what they were doing when they passed the law.

I thank you very much for the pleasure and the honor of greeting you here this afternoon, and I say to you that you are doing better than we could do, because you have more of the progress and education and enlightenment that has come to you as you come here to perform the duties of the great commonwealth.

Senator Klemme: Mr. President, in looking over this front row of silver haired pioneer lawmakers I find one amongst the group that I served with in the Twenty-eighth and Twenty-ninth general assemblies, and it would be a great pleasure for me to listen to him once more if he is permitted to say a few words before this vast audience. His name I will give later on if he is permitted. The man's name is Van Houten—he's the man I want to hear.

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