



FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT

*President of the United States*

*"The principles of the ORDINANCE of 1787 served as the highway,  
broad and safe, over which poured the westward march of our civilization.  
On this plan was the United States built."*

FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT.

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ADDRESS OF THE PRESIDENT  
Marietta, Ohio  
July 8, 1938, 9.30 A.M.

GOVERNOR DAVEY, SENATOR BULKLEY, CHAIRMAN WHITE AND YOU, THE PEOPLE  
OF THE NORTHWEST TERRITORY:

A long time ago in Washington, two old friends of mine  
came to the White House, Bob Bulkley and Bob Seacrest, to ask me to  
come to Marietta in 1938. It seemed a long way off, but I promised  
them I would come if I possibly could. So here I am.

Long before that famous year of 1788 there were white men  
here, white men, to use a Biblical phrase, "spying out this land of  
Canaan." An intrepid outpost breed they were -- the scouts and the  
skirmishers of the great American migration. The sight of smoke from  
a neighbor's chimney(s) might have worried them a great deal. But the  
Indians and the redcoats did not.

Long before 1788, at Kaskaskia and Vincennes, with scant  
help from the Seaboard, they had held their beloved wilderness for  
themselves -- and for us -- held it with their own bare hands and  
their own long rifles. But their symbol is Vincennes, not Marietta.

Here, with all honor to (the) those scouts and (the) skir-  
mishers, we are (celebrate) celebrating the coming of a different  
type of men and women -- the first battalions of that organized army  
of occupation which transplanted from (over) across the Alleghenies  
whole little civilizations that took root and grew. They were giv-  
ing expression to a genius for organized colonization, carefully  
planned and ordered under law.

The men who came here before 1788 came as Lief Erickson's  
men did to Vineland, in a spirit all of adventure. But the men and

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women of the Ohio Company who came to Marietta came rather like the men and the women of the Massachusetts Bay (Company) Colony to Boston, an organized society, unafraid to meet temporary adventure, but serious in seeking permanent security for men and women and children and homes. Many of them were destined to push on; but most of them came here intending to stay. (Such) People like that may not be the first to conquer the earth, but they will always be the last to possess (it) the earth.

Right behind them, the men and women who established Marietta one hundred and fifty years ago, moved that instrument of law and order and cooperation -- the instrument of government. A representative of the National Government entered Marietta to administer the Northwest Territory under the famous Northwest Ordinance. And what we are celebrating today is this establishment of the first Civil Government west of the original thirteen states.

Three provisions of (the Northwest) that Ordinance I always like to remember.

It provided that "no person demeaning himself in a peaceable and orderly manner shall ever be molested on account of his mode of worship or for religious sentiment in the said territory."

And it provided that "religion, morality and knowledge being necessary to good government and the happiness of mankind, schools and means of education shall forever be encouraged."

And it provided, finally, for the perpetual prohibition of slavery in the Territory.

Free, educated, God-fearing men and women -- that is what the thirteen states hoped that the new West would exemplify.

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(It) And the new West has well fulfilled that hope.

Every generation meets substantially the same problems under its own different set of circumstances. Anyone speculating on our great migration westward is struck (with) by the human parallel between the driving force behind that migration and the driving force behind the great social exploration that we are carrying on today.

Most of the people who went out to Ohio (in 1788) in the early days and who followed wave on wave for another hundred years went to improve their economic lot. In other words, they were following the same yearning for security (which) that is driving us forward today.

At the end of the wagon ruts there was something worth the physical risks. The standard of life in a log cabin amid fields still blackened with half-burned stumps was not high, but it was fairly certain. A family, or at most a township, could be a whole self-(sufficing) satisfying, self-sufficient economic system -- plenty of food to eat if a man would but reach out and shoot it or cultivate it; plenty of warm clothes if the women of the family were willing to spin; always a tight roof over the family's head if the little community would respond to the call for a roof-raising.

Whatever he used was a man's own; it belonged to him; he had the solid joy of possession -- of owning his home and owning his own means of livelihood. And if things did not pan out there was always an infinite self-sufficiency beckoning further westward -- to new land, new game, new opportunity.

Under such conditions there was so much to get done (which)

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that men could not get done alone, that the frontiersmen naturally reached out -- to Government -- as their greatest single instrument of cooperative self-help with the aid of which they could get things done. To them the use of Government was but another form of the cooperation of good neighbors.

Government was an indispensable instrument of their daily lives, of the security of their women and (their) children, (and) of their homes and (their) opportunities. They looked on Government not as a thing apart -- as a power over (our) people. They regarded (it) Government as a power of the people, as a democratic expression of organized self-help like a frontier husking bee, only on a bigger scale.

There were worried legalists back in the Seaboard towns who were sure it was unconstitutional for the Federal Government to help (to) put roads and (railroads) railways and canals through these new territories -- who were sure that the Nation would never get back the money that it was plowing into development of the natural and human resources of the Northwest Territory.

But Abraham Lincoln, who incarnated the spirit of the people who were actually living in the states making up the Northwest Territory, summed up their attitude when he said: "The legitimate object of government is to do for a community of people whatever they need to have done, but cannot do at all, or cannot do so well, for themselves, in their separate and individual capacities."

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And so today under new conditions, as a whole nation, the American people, the original thirteen states and all the West and

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South that has grown out of them, (is) they are on a mental migration, dissatisfied with old conditions, seeking like the little band that came to Marietta, seeking to create new conditions -- of security. And again the people see an ally in their own Government.

Many a man does not own his cabin any more; or the house or the flat that he lives in. His possessions may be some furniture and perhaps (are) a bank deposit.

Scarcely any man can call his neighbors (to raise his roof any more) to help him build his home any more. Today he pays a contractor cash and has to have mortgage financing to find the cash. And if that financing is of the wrong kind or goes bad -- he may need help to save his home from foreclosure.

Once upon a time old age was safe because there was always something useful (which) that men and women, no matter how old, (might) could do to earn an honorable maintenance. That time is gone; and some new kind of organized old-age insurance has to be provided.

In these perplexities, what happens? The individual turns, as he has always turned, to the collective security of the willingness of his fellows to cooperate through the use of Government to help him and each other. The spirit of the frontier husking bee is found today in carefully-drafted statutes -- statutes insuring bank deposits; statutes providing mortgage money for homes through the (F.H.A.) Federal Housing Administration; statutes providing help through (H.O.L.C.) the Home Owners' Loan Corporation for those in danger of foreclosure. The cavalry captain of the old days, who protected the log cabins of the Northwest is now supplanted by legislators, men like Senator Bulkley, toiling over the drafting of such

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statutes and over the efficiency of Government machinery to administer them so that such protection and help of Government can be extended to the full.

Yes, on a thousand fronts Government -- State Government, (and) Municipal Government, County Government, as well as Federal-- is playing the same role of the insurer of security for the average man, woman and child that the Army detachments played in the early days of the old Northwest Territory. When you think it through, at the bottom of most of the great protective statutes of today (are) there is the fact that in essence they are mutual insurance companies, and our recent legislation is not a departure from but a return to the healthy practices of mutual self-help of the early settlers of the Northwest.

Let us not be afraid to help each other -- let us never forget that Government is ourselves and not an alien power over us. The ultimate rulers of our democracy are not a President, (and) not Senators and Congressmen and Government officials. (but the voters of this country) The ultimate rulers of our democracy are the voters of the country itself.

I believe that the American people, not afraid of their own capacity to choose forward-looking representatives to run their Government, want the same cooperative security and that they have the same courage to achieve it, in 1938 as in 1788. (Applause) And I am sure that they know that we will always have a frontier -- a frontier of social problems and economic problems -- and that we must always move in to bring law and order to (it) the solution of these problems. In that confidence -- in that confidence I do not think I have to tell

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you that I am pushing on. And I am sure (you) that the people of  
the Nation will push on with me. (Prolonged applause)

And now I understand that somebody is going to pull a  
string and I hereby dedicate this great monument commemorating one  
hundred and fifty years of Americanism.

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Address of the President in Marietta, Ohio, 07/08/1938

Franklin D. Roosevelt Library (NLFDR), 4079 Albany Post Road, Hyde Park, NY 12538-1999 PHONE: 845-229-8114, FAX: 845-229-0872, EMAIL: roosevelt.library@nara.gov

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