

The State of New Jersey

by Hon. Joseph S. Frelinghuysen

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[Address delivered by Hon. Joseph S. Frelinghuysen, March 17, 1917, before the Friendly Sons of St. Patrick, at Montclair, in response to the toast, "The State of New Jersey"].

Mr. Toastmaster and Gentlemen: I feel deeply honored in that you have accorded me the distinction of replying to this toast, the State of New Jersey. I shall attempt - though I shall doubtless fail - to do justice to this inviting theme the Commonwealth of our loves and hopes.

Of this splendid Commonwealth, we, her sons, are everlastingly proud. Yet it has ever seemed to me that we, and our forefathers before us, have been almost cruelly negligent in our duty in proclaiming to the world the paramount services of the citizens of New Jersey in the formation and development of the nation. We have played no minor role in empire building, yet we have been unduly modest, or criminally remiss, in demanding from our sister-States a full recognition of our place in the scheme of evolutionary development as a nation.

Unfortunately, we are sandwiched in between two great Commonwealths, and two great cities of those Commonwealths. Repeatedly, the achievements of our distinguished men have been, in the course of time, obliterated, or at least obscured by methods employed by New York and Pennsylvania chroniclers, to blazon to the world the deeds of their own sons, at the expense of those of New Jersey, not one wit less eminent or less forceful factors in history-making. This has been our own fault, and from henceforth let us refuse to take a back-seat at the behests or as a result of the methods of our neighbors across the North and the Delaware rivers.

First, let us not forget that New Jersey was not only settled years before Pennsylvania, but the first Europeans to locate on our own home soil arrived here at least two years prior to the landing of the Pilgrims on Plymouth Rock. Do not forget that, men of New Jersey, though we have had no Longfellows, Whittiers, or Lowells to laud in verse the beginnings of our dearly loved State.

It was in 1618, a quarter of a century before William Penn was born, that the first European settlers established themselves in the wilds of what is now Bergen County. These original colonists were members of the little band of Dutch pioneers, who had located in what is now New York State about four years previously.

As it was not my good fortune to be born of Irish lineage - if I had been consulted in the matter the result might have been different - I am proud of the fact that I came of the same stock which originally peopled our much-beloved State.

In 1623, five years after the colonization of North Jersey, another band of Dutch pioneers located in South Jersey, under the leadership of Captain Cornelius Jacobsen Mey, after whom Cape May takes its name.

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The ablest of all of New Jersey's historians, the late William Nelson, of Paterson, describes the early Dutch emigrants as "the first settlers of our State, the sturdy pioneers who here planted the original banner of civilization, of religious and political liberty; who offered free asylum to all men and all women without questioning their views; who respected every man's religious faith as a matter between himself and his God."

Such were the founders of the Commonwealth, and we should ever thank God that from such an inspiration our State had its birth.

Following the Dutch in 1638 - and this, too, was prior to the birth of William Penn, the founder of Pennsylvania - came the Swedes, who settled on both sides of the Delaware, their colony extending from Capes May and Henlopen to the point where is now located our State Capitol.

The Swedes, like the Dutch, were a simple-minded, industrious, law-abiding, religious people. Governor Printz, who came over in 1643, engaged to keep the new settlement safe from foreign and domestic enemies, to preserve amity, good neighborhood and reciprocity with foreigners, with his own people and with the savages, and, to employ the phraseology of that day, "to render justice without distinction so that there may be no injury to any man."

It was in 1664 that the English assumed jurisdiction of the territory now embraced within the limits of New Jersey, under the joint control of Lord John Berkeley and Sir George Carteret, and from them we derived our first Constitution, which embraced this notable clause:

"That no person qualified as aforesaid within the said Province at any time shall be in any ways molested, punished, disquieted or called in question for any difference in opinion or practice in matters of religious concerns, who do not actually disturb the civil peace of the said Province: but that all and every such person and persons may, from time to time, and at all times, freely and fully have and enjoy his and their judgments and consciences in matters of religion throughout the said Province, they behaving themselves peaceably and quietly, and not using their liberty to licentiousness, nor to the civil injury or outward disturbance of others; any law, statute or clause contained, or to be contained, usage or custom of this realm of England to the contrary thereof in anywise notwithstanding."

Twelve or thirteen years later, in 1677, came the settlement of the Quakers in South Jersey, or West New Jersey, as it was called, at Burlington, who were governed under a new Constitution, promulgated in London, before the first Colonists sailed. This second historic document contained this memorable provision:

"That no man, nor number of men upon earth, hath power or authority to rule over men's consciences in religious matters; therefore it is consented, agreed and ordained, that no person or persons whatsoever, within the said Province, at any time or times hereafter shall be any ways, upon any pretence whatsoever, called in question, or in the least punished or hurt, either in person, estate or privilege, for the sake of his opinion, judgment, faith or worship towards God, in matters of religion; but that all

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and every such person persons may from time to time, and at all times, freely and fully have and enjoy his and their judgments, and the exercise of their consciences, in matters of religious worship throughout all the said Province."

Thus, two centuries and a half ago, were laid the foundations of civil and religious liberty, which have made our Commonwealth notable among the sisterhood of colonies and States, and thus were sown the seeds which have ever since brought the fruition of universal freedom of thought and speech whereby we are today a free and happy people.

In all the crises of our history since, as a Province and a State, forgetting not their noble heritage, the sons of New Jersey have ever been alert, vigilant, patriotic, and on the firing line when duty has invoked the intelligent service of true Americans.

New Jersey took the lead when the agitation over the Stamp Act began in 1765. New Jersey was at the front when the necessities of the situation demanded militancy rather than pacifism, in 1774 and 1775. Certain of her sons were conspicuous in the Continental Congress. In the persons of Lord Stirling, of General William Maxwell, of General Joseph Reed, of General Philemon Dickinson, etc., others of her sons rendered heroic service in the field. Within her borders three of the most splendid victories of the Revolution were won. Upon her soil Washington's Army was encamped for more than half the period of the entire war.

Thus, I say to you, men of New Jersey, we need not hang our heads when we hear spoken of the heroic services of America's nation-builders in the early days of our Western civilization, or the achievements of the country's statesmen and soldiers in the later days of stress and trial, for among these dominating figures upon the public stage were strong men from our own State, who played major parts in the drama of national development.

When, the war being over, and the citizens of the thirteen infant States found themselves governed, or misgoverned, by an inadequate, haphazard system of executive and legislative control, it was New Jersey which came to the front with suggestions eventuating in the Federal Constitution of 1787. And it fell to her lot to be the third State to ratify that immortal document, being only six days behind Pennsylvania and twelve days behind Delaware.

As upon all other occasions, our sires helped blaze the way for a better, ampler, safer form of government, a guide for all republics which have since come into being.

Passing by the three-quarters of a century which intervened, during which formative period the statesmen of this Commonwealth were leaders in thought and action, we come to the great crisis of 1861, when destiny forced the nation to face the most ominous tragedy in our history. And what was New Jersey's part in that amazing crisis? Fort Sumter was fired upon April 12, 1861; President Lincoln issued his call for troops April 15. On April 16, Company A., National Guard, of Trenton, was under arms. New Jersey was never a laggard. She had not been in 1775. She was not in 1861.

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The State furnished during the war thirty-seven regiments of infantry, three regiments of cavalry, and one regiment of artillery: all told, she supplied 76,814 troops. Upon every battlefield her soldiers were found. In every emergency they responded to duty's call bravely and well. Undying laurels were won by them, for themselves and for their native State.

The most celebrated soldier produced by New Jersey during the Civil War was Major General Philip Kearny, who was killed by a Confederate bullet. General Winfield Scott denominated him: "The bravest man I ever knew, and the most perfect soldier." You are all, I know, proud of the fact that he was of splendid Irish lineage. Next in ability and eminence, among New Jersey's military heroes, was Judson Kilpatrick, Major General of Volunteers, who, like Kearny, was of Irish ancestry, a fact of which he was always proud.

New Jersey, during her existence as a State, has, from her citizenship, made many notable contributions to the nation at large: commanding figures upon the public stage. First, should be named the present occupant of the White House, Woodrow Wilson, the only incumbent of this post who was a citizen of New Jersey when chosen. However, Grover Cleveland, though a resident of New York when elected to the Presidency, was a native of our own State, having been born in Essex County. We have every right to call this heroic character, whose robust Americanism no man ever questioned, a son of New Jersey, for he was not only born within our borders, but died here and now rests in New Jersey soil.

The third Vice President of the United States, Aaron Burr, was a native of New Jersey; and so was the much loved Garret A. Hobart, chosen to that high office in 1896, with the sainted McKinley.

Two Vice Presidential nominees have been Jerseymen, Theodore Frelinghuysen, who ran on the Whig ticket with Henry Clay in 1844 - and who also served six years in the United States Senate - and William L. Dayton, the colleague of General John C. Fremont on the first Republican ticket, in 1856; Dayton also having served nine years in the United States Senate.

Among Cabinet officers have been Frederick T. Frelinghuysen, who was Secretary of State from 1881 to 1885, and who likewise served in the United States Senate. New Jersey has also furnished three Secretaries of the Navy Samuel L. Southard, 1823 to '29; Mahlon Dickerson, 1834-'38; and George M. Robeson, 1869-'77. Southard, also for a time, served as Secretary of the Treasury ad interim, and Secretary of War ad interim; was Governor of the State in 1832-'33; a Senator of the United States upon two occasions, and at one time President pro tempore of the Senate. Dickerson was also Governor in 1815 to 1817, and served in the United States Senate from 1817 to 1833, a longer period than any other citizen of the State.

The most distinguished diplomatic post offered to a son of New Jersey was the British mission, tendered to Frederick T. Frelinghuysen in 1870, but which he declined. William L. Dayton, previously referred to, was Minister to France from

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1861 to 1864. William Walter Phelps, who served several terms in Congress, was Minister to Austria from 1881 to 1882. Peter D. Vroom was Minister to Prussia from 1853 to 1857. Judson Kilpatrick twice represented the United States as Minister to Chile, from 1865 to 1870 and again in 1881. New Jersey's latest contribution to diplomacy was Henry Van Dyke, recently Minister to the Netherlands.

Two Speakers of the National House of Representatives have come from the State of New Jersey: Jonathan Dayton, who presided over the fourth and fifth Congresses, and likewise served in the United States Senate from 1799 to 1805, and William Pennington, who was Speaker of the thirty-sixth Congress.

Three citizens of New Jersey have occupied seats on the United States Supreme bench: William Paterson, from 1793 to 1806; Joseph P. Bradley, from 1870 until his death; and Mahlon Pitney, one of the present justices.

Some of the nation's most celebrated naval heroes have been Jerseymen. Among these was Richard Somers, who, in 1804, commanded the "Intrepid," fitted out as a bomb vessel, which was sent into the harbor of Tripoli, Africa, to destroy the enemy's ships, but which was itself destroyed with all on board: this being the most notable exploit in the history of the United States Navy aside from Hobson's performance at Santiago, Cuba.

Another famous officer from New Jersey was Captain James Lawrence, a native of Burlington, who died as the result of wounds in action between his vessel, the "Chesapeake," and the "Shannon," in 1813, and won everlasting fame by his dying injunction, "Don't give up the Ship."

Still another son of New Jersey, who achieved distinction at sea, was Commodore Robert Field Stockton, who conquered California in 1846. Later, in 1851 to 1853, he sat in the United States Senate, as did his father, Richard Stockton, and his son, John Potter Stockton.

New Jersey has produced numerous men of letters, who have won world-wide distinction in the domain of literature. Chief among these was the celebrated novelist, James Fenimore Cooper, a native of Burlington.

And what can be said of New Jersey of more recent years? How has her influence been exerted in the manifold civilizing processes which have made the nation great, powerful and prosperous beyond comparison?

Of our Courts of justice we Jerseymen have every right to be proud. Throughout the land the term "Jersey justice" is employed to symbolize the highest type of efficiency in civil jurisprudence.

In the ennobling cause of education New Jersey has always held a front rank in the forward march of events. With two Universities which antedate the Revolution, and with a common school system which has been a model for other commonwealths, we point with pardonable pride to our achievements in this field of endeavor.

In industrial progress no other State, unless it may be Pennsylvania, has

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outstripped us. For our factories, our mills and our potteries we are famous throughout the world, and our products are found in the marts of every nation beneath the sun.

With a soil whose variety and fertility cannot be excelled, New Jersey may be denominated one of the richest garden-spots of the nation. From the arms of lavish nature we receive the choicest of products, which we pour into the lap of the expectant world. Our farmers take high rank in the ever-widening domain of agriculture by reason of their intelligence, industry and progressiveness.

America was slow to awaken to the necessity for modern highways. In this great movement New Jersey blazed the way, and set the pace for her sister States. Recognizing the need for even a larger measure of progress along this line, our State officials are now formulating plans for a system of up-to-date highways which will gratify our citizens, and win the plaudits of the nation at large.

New Jersey has likewise been a leader in the higher phases of sociological development. She was first to heed the outcry for humane legislation for the betterment of the condition of the men, women and children who toil. Our workmen's compensation law became a model for other States, and our child labor laws have received the approval of our humanitarians and publicists.

What need to proceed further with this catalogue. Perhaps I have wearied you already with the recital.

But, as a Jerseyman, to the manner born, and a lover of my native heath, my heart has burned within me, not once but many times, because of the failure of Americans as a whole to recognize the distinguished services of our notable men in all fields of endeavor, and to concede us preeminence in the sisterhood of States. Let us here highly resolve tonight that, henceforth, we owe a duty to ourselves and to our Commonwealth to exact that degree of recognition to which we of New Jersey are entitled, by reason of our merits and our achievements as a free and progressive people.

There is not a fairer State in the Union than New Jersey. From Colonial days she has stood for the eternal precepts of Liberty and Religious freedom. During the Revolution she was the battleground of the Republic. The battlefields of Trenton, Princeton and Monmouth can never be effaced from the annals of history.

When Lincoln called, her sons answered the call, and her citizens contributed of their treasure and life-blood in order that the Union might be preserved. Her coat-of-arms reflects her sentiments and emotions. Emblazoned on the shield are three ploughshares, showing that she prefers the acts of peace and agriculture, yet willing to forge the ploughshare into a sword to defend the national honor, as is expressed on the scroll beneath: "Liberty and Prosperity."