

# THE INDEPENDENT DEMOCRAT

≈ June 1, 1900 ≈

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## OUR BRAVE DEAD

### HUNDREDS DO HONOR TO OUR FALLEN HEROES.

**Lombard Post, W.R.C., M.W.A., School Children and Others in Line.  
APPROPRIATE EXERCISES HELD AT BEAUTIFUL GREENWOOD.**

**Memorial Address was Delivered by Benjamin H. Halstead.**

Memorial Day opened gloomily in Petoskey, and it was feared that rain might interfere and spoil the well arranged plans of those in charge. About the time the parade started, however, the sun came out and the clouds were dispersed. Most business houses on the line of march were decorated with flags and bunting. At 10 o'clock Chief Marshall Labadie gave the order and the column moved, headed by the drum corps and the Modern Woodmen of America. The large showing of Lombard Post was especially noticeable, and the Relief Corps was out in full force, carriages having been provided for them. The public school children under Supt. Andrus, and the parish children directed by Father Columban, all bearing flags, made an impressive appearance.

At the cemetery all gathered around the monument, and the memorial service, beautiful in its solemnity, was performed by Commander W.F. Lawton and Chaplain M. Burch. "Taps" were given by comrade Avery Brown. A double quartette, consisting of Misses Caskey, Wingate and Baker, and Mrs. Gertrude Braun, and Messers. Howe, Parks, Andrus and Pennabaker, sung two beautiful and appropriate selections. The oration, which was delivered by Mr. Benj. H. Halstead, and reflects great credit on the young barrister's ability as a public speaker, was as follows:

Members Grand Army of the Republic, ladies of the Relief Corps, and fellow citizens:

The people of the state of Michigan, through their legislature, have provided that the fourth day

of July and the thirtieth day of May shall be treated and considered as public holidays.

These days are both commemorative of events in our career as a nation. The former recalls to our minds the scenes, familiar to all, which were enacted in Independence Hall nearly a century and a half ago, where as Abraham Lincoln said in his great Gettysburg address, "a nation was conceived in liberty and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created free and equal."

The latter brings to mind events of but a few years ago, when the descendants of these patriots who gathered in Independence Hall fought to preserve what their fathers had created—an indissoluble union of indestructible states.

It is proper, therefore, that as we devote one day of each year to ceremonies in honor of those who assisted at the birth of our nation, we should also make one day of each year sacred to the memory of those who, later, in the last tribunal known to sovereign states, contended for what they believed to be the doctrine upon which their nation was founded.

This day is not observed as commemorating the victory of the north over the south—may there never be a day devoted to that purpose—but, as its popular appellation signifies, as a day upon which we may pay especial honor to those who engaged in that great contest. And, I take it, on this day we meet to do honor to those who fought on the southern side no less than to those from the north. All were Americans, and all displayed American valor.

Today, then, while we offer a prayer of thanksgiving for the success of the northern arms, let us all drop a tear of sorrow for the heroic followers of Lee and Stonewall Jackson.

The American nation has a duty to perform—a duty to itself, to its posterity, and to the whole world, a responsibility greater than was ever borne by any preceding or contemporary form of government.

It may not be amiss, then, that we should take some thought of the problem before us that we may have a clear conception of what it is that we have to do and how best to do it. The more definite the plans of the workman the more effective his execution.

Governments were instituted for the protection of lives and the peaceable enjoyment of property. Just what form of government would best secure these ends has been a matter of national discussion through all the pages of history. Enlightened men of all ages have devoted their talents to the solution of the question. They have differed, as men do on all matters of policy, and their differences have been honest.

We have been brought to believe that the perfect form is that in which the governed are themselves the governors. Acting on the same belief, our forefathers, when they had severed the last tie which bound them to the monarchical form, set up a government “of the people, by the people and for the people”—representative democracy, or republic.

A republican form of government, in contradistinction to the aristocratic, theocratic, monarchical and patriarchal, is one in which the ultimate management of all political affairs is vested in the individual members of the state—the people. Every citizen has an equal right and an equal responsibility with every other citizen. Being a government by the people, it necessarily follows that there can be no distinctions of class in political affairs. So soon as special privileges are granted to some and the rights of others by that much abridged, a departure is made from the true form which first departure makes other and more radical departures the more

readily accepted and acquiesced in. Liberty and equality are the distinguishing tenets of republics.

We shall at this time limit our discussion to the consideration of the proposition to which our nation was dedicated and which is, as we have seen, of such importance in our form of government, namely, that all men are created free and equal. We shall note briefly its development and extensions.

The idea is not new. It was the firm belief in this idea that wrung from King John in 1215 the provisions of Magna Charta. It was to the continued belief in its integrity that Magna Charta was followed by its several confirmations and extensions. It was an unalterable conviction of its truth that sustained the American colonists in resisting the encroachments of the British crown. And when the hour for further submission had passed, and dissolution of the ties which bound them to the mother country had been decreed, this maxim was placed as the foremost plank of the platform upon which they stood and appealed to the Supreme Judge of the world for the rectitude of their intentions. In that immortal document—the American Magna Charta—the colonist declared this: “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.”

The American revolution gave a fresh impetus to the force of the doctrine under consideration. The immediate effect of that war was the acknowledgement of the independence of the United States of America.

A second time in our history this doctrine came into prominence, and this time many of you who hear me today had a part in its application. The immediate purpose of the civil war was the preservation of the union. Secession had been attempted, and all the efforts of the administration were directed towards its prevention. President Lincoln declared repeatedly that it was not the intention of the government to interfere directly or indirectly with the institution of slavery in the states. Only a month previous to the issuance of the emancipation proclamation he wrote to a friend as follows: “My

paramount object is to save the union, and not either to save or destroy slavery.”

During the progress of the war, however, it had become evident that the abolition of slavery was necessary in order to accomplish the paramount object. He, therefore, issued his proclamation of emancipation. By that act, made good, as it was, by the outcome of the war, another great impetus was given to the cause of freedom and equality. An extension was made of the fundamental principle so broad that millions of persons were brought under its beneficent influence.

The founders of the American nation have done their duty. You veterans of the civil war have done your duty, by placing what they had established upon a more solid and substantial foundation. It now remains for us of the younger to do our duty—to maintain in its pristine purity our fundamental doctrine, and, as our conception of its meaning becomes more clear, to extend and enlarge its application.

As a man progresses in civilization and his faculties develop, old and commonplace things take on a hitherto unsuspected meaning. Christians consequently find new beauties and truths in those sublime words which have been read and pondered by so many generations. Shakespeare seems ever new to his most devoted student.

This doctrine that all men are created free and equal seems trite enough to us now. No doubt it seemed equally trite to Thomas Jefferson and his

compatriots when they announced it as their guiding star. Yet, as we have seen, in less than a century from its formal promulgation by our fathers, a new significance and a new application were discovered, the effects of which were second in importance only to its first application in our history.

We marvel that an institution so at odds with the professions of the revolutionists as was the institution of slavery should have been allowed to flourish for one instant after colonial freedom was assured. By the same token, in less than another century, we or our successors may find new and further significance in this most munificent principle.

It behooves us to be ever on guard against encroachment upon the ground already gained, and to be constantly alert for opportunities to make further advances. May we ponder well this principle; may science, philosophy, law and religion combine to probe the doctrine to its full depth, and when new ways of application shall be discovered, may we be as ready and willing to assist in that application as you now old soldiers were in 1861. And when at last, the experimental stage has passed and popular government has been found worthy, by the force of our example we shall spread the benefits of republican government to the oppressed of all the world. Then, old soldiers, will it be realized what was wrought by the conflict in which you were actors, and grateful recipients of the results of your labors will reserve a niche in the temple of the benefactors of the human race for the Grand Army of the Republic.

**Benjamin Howard Halstead  
1876-1943.**

According to his obituary he was one of the “outstanding legal minds in Northern Michigan.” He attended Michigan State College, Indiana University and the University of Michigan, receiving his LLB degree from that school in 1899. He began his legal practice in Petoskey that same year. This speech was given within a year of returning to Petoskey at the age of 24.



Alexandria National Cemetery at Alexandria, Virginia  
Originally named Soldiers' Cemetery  
From National Archives