

THE VISION OF AMERICA FOR CHILDREN:
Nationalism in Eighteenth Century
Schoolbooks

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"The mind of the child is like the soft wax to receive an impression but like the rigid marble to retain it." So wrote many an American textbook author in the late eighteenth century.¹ With this exalted view of their role, these authors set about the task of transmitting to the "rising generation" the values of their own generation, lest the hopes and ideals that were theirs be lost to mankind.

The American textbook for elementary learning is a phenomenon of the late eighteenth century.² Though still very largely a compilation of English selections, it contained enough American selections to respond to the temper of post-Revolutionary America. The emphasis on national character and the nurturing of nationalism is especially dominant in these books.

America had an exalted vision of herself in the wake of independence. She saw herself a nation in her own right which could and would someday be great. Her people would be God-fearing and law-abiding, full of integrity and prosperity, working only in the interests of the nation and the national purpose. She had fought a revolution against the mother country, a revolution which had sprung from her own consciousness of being a different people. And indeed she was a different people, in heritage English, but by experience American. Now

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¹ E.g. Daniel Fenning, *The Universal Spelling Book*, (Philadelphia, 1799), p. 157.

² For more information on early schoolbooks see Charles Carpenter, *History of American Schoolbooks* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1963); Clifton Johnson, *Old Time Schools and Schoolbooks* (London: Macmillan, 1917); John A. Neitz, *Old Textbooks* (Pittsburgh; University of Pittsburgh Press, 1961); and Monica Kiefer, *American Children Through Their Books, 1700-1835* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1948).

she found herself a nation set apart.³ Once free, she sobered a bit, and reflected seriously on the destiny of this new nation.

The quest for national character was on the minds of many. Crèvecoeur's question is probably the best remembered: "Who is this American? . . . a new man, who acts upon new principles, who must therefore entertain new ideas, and form new opinion."⁴ Comments on national character came from such various sources as the high partisanship rising from the beginnings of the party system and from addresses at educational commencements. George Eacker, for example, an intense party man himself, made comments similar in content to writers such as Crèvecoeur in his address to the Tammany Society in 1798. Pointing to the differences of the New Englander, the Pennsylvanian and the Southerner, he trusted that "patriotism will erase the distinctions." He praised the achievements of Americans: Rittenhouse in science, Franklin in letters, Jefferson in government and Washington in the field. "What nation," Eacker asked, "is superior to us in dignity of sentiment, in obedience to laws, in our love of liberty and of our country?"⁵ Andrew Dexter was just as sure when he predicted in his oration at the commencement of Rhode Island College (1798) that "Americans shall become one great family of brothers, all animated with the same virtue, [and] with the same patriotism."⁶ The publication of *Essays on National Pride*, translated from the German in 1799 by Samuel Willcocke, re-

³ See for example, Carl Bridenbaugh, *The Spirit of '76: The Growth of American Patriotism before Independence* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975); Paul A. Varg, "The Advent of Nationalism, 1758-1776," *The American Quarterly*, 16 (Summer, 1964), 169-181; Russell B. Nye, *This Almost Chosen People: Essays in the History of American Ideas* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1966), 43-103; Max Savelle, *Seeds of Liberty: The Genesis of the American Mind* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1948), 564-581.

⁴ Michel Guillaume Jean de Crèvecoeur, *Letters from an American Farmer*, Letter III: "What is an American?"

⁵ George Eacker, *Observations on the National Character of Americans*, An Oration, (New York, 1798).

⁶ Andrew Dexter, *An Oration on the Importance of Science and Religion Particularly to American Youth* (Providence, 1798).

flects this same interest in national identity.⁷

Interestingly enough, it was a Frenchman, Lafitte, a schoolmaster in this country for a number of years, who recognized a connection between the formation of national identity and the education of youth. He saw American youth of both sexes as "absolutely neglected." Added to the fact that they were undisciplined and lazy, there was "no uniform and durable rule to which all students are subject." His conclusion: America had no national character, "nor does it have any public establishments which announce a nation." It needed an institution of national education whereby, beginning in earliest infancy, national character could be formed.⁸ In the public arena, men like Jefferson and Hamilton shared this concern for national identity. Each had a vision for America; each bespoke an ideology for national greatness, sometimes in agreement, often in disagreement. Yet, both were striving for a great and honorable nation.⁹

Jefferson looked to the individual to determine what kind of public institutions were needed to develop an American personality. He considered the people the only safe depositories to preserve their inalienable rights. A *natural* aristocracy should be the true nobility of a republican government.¹⁰ The national government, restricted only to those powers absolutely necessary, should be a "wise and frugal government," safeguarded by freedom of speech and of the press, and by rotation in office.¹¹ Jefferson was first and foremost the moral and political philosopher whose values lay with the rights of man, the pursuit of life, liberty and happiness and the preser-

⁷ Johann G. Zimmermann, *Essays on National Pride* (New York, 1799).

⁸ Amable Louis Rose de Lafitte du Courteil, *Proposals to Demonstrate the Necessity of a National Institution in the United States of America for the Education of Children of Both Sexes* (Philadelphia, 1797).

⁹ Ralph L. Ketcham, *The Jeffersonian and Hamiltonian Traditions: "Visions" of National Purpose*, Heidelberg College Lecture in American Studies, November, 1968.

¹⁰ Letter to John Adams, October 18, 1814.

¹¹ First Inaugural Address, March 4, 1801; letter to Francis W. Gilman, June 7, 1816; letter to James Madison, December 20, 1787.

vation of the freedom gained in independence. He preferred to be remembered more for his authorship of the *Declaration* and his interest in education than for his presidency. The integrity and vitality of the common people would be preserved by their participation in local and state government.

Hamilton, too, envisioned "a splendid nation." He valued a strong efficient government, chosen by the people. He had an inviolable respect for the Constitution and the laws of the nation, encouraging authority by law lest in its absence authority by force take over.¹² Stability in government he highly prized, with strong leaders to direct the country to true greatness.

Both these statesmen believed in education. Jefferson favored popular education in order to cultivate at the grass roots the virtue necessary to republican government. Hamilton, more of an elitist, showed greater interest in educating leaders to be the officials of the strong government he advocated.

Readers for children and youth entered into these attitudes. While the child's text seldom spoke of national character or the vision of America as such, the nationalism found in these books had the forming of the American or Republican mind well in view.

The adult generation of Revolutionary America, educational theorists as well as textbook writers, was conscious of the need to instill such values into the rising generation. Children were the "hope and strength of the nation."¹³ They would soon be the legislators of the nation, the judges of the courts, the generals of the armies, and the pastors of the churches. "The rising generation will soon step in and fill up the gap we shall presently make," Enos Hitchcock suggested. Since these children, left alone to support knowledge, truth and religion, would bear the burden of transmitting the same to those who

¹² New York Ratifying Convention, June 21, 1788, Vol. V. p. 43; Harold C. Syrett, editor, *Papers of Alexander Hamilton* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1972); "Tully" 1794, XVII, pgs. 159-160.

¹³ Enos Hitchcock, *Discourse on Education*, (Providence, 1785). See also Issac Watts, *A Discourse on the Education of Children and Youth*, Introduction (Exeter, 1793).

would come after them, it behooved the present generation to give them proper values now. Neglect of education would lead only to "rudeness, barbarity, and ignorance,"¹⁴ and freedom would degenerate into licentious independence. Children, Williston remarked, are apt to be viewed as unimportant members of the community, "those little unthinking creatures who are soon to become the risen generation."¹⁵ Education was considered the means of transmitting these values, and the textbook played a vital part in this process.

Reverence For Government

Famous textbook author Matthew Carey, in the preface of his reader explicitly asked: "Should not endeavors be used to impress on the rising generation a respect and reverence for the forms of government under which we live?" He continued: "There are advantages in giving youth passages tending to show in the strongest light the advantages of liberty, peace and good order."¹⁶ The general diffusion of knowledge would "secure the rights and liberties of each individual," would protect the nation from tyranny which is based on ignorance, and would bring about an "enlightened nation which is always most tenacious of its rights."¹⁷ Education, especially the reading of history and biography, would "settle the judgment," by establishing a set of political principles and teaching the love of liberty and of country.¹⁸ It would "render our youth most useful . . . to the state of which they are members, and enable

¹⁴ See Clark Brown, *The Importance of Early and Proper Education of Children*, (New Bedford, 1795); Andrew Dexter, *Oration*; Levi Hart, *The Importance of Parental Fidelity in the Education of Children*, Sermon, (Norwich, 1792); Hitchcock, *Discourse*; Tristram, Gilman, *The Right Education of Children*, (Boston, 1789); Seth Williston, *Address to Parents on the Importance of Religious Education of their Children*, (Suffield, Connecticut, 1799).

¹⁵ Williston, *Address to Parents*.

¹⁶ Matthew Carey, *The School of Wisdom or the American Monitor*, Preface, (Philadelphia, 1800). See also John Wood, *Mentor*, "On America," p. 353.

¹⁷ Clark Brown, *Importance of Early and Proper Education*; Simeon Doggett Jr., *A Discourse on Education*, (New Bedford, 1797), Samuel Smith, *Remarks on Education*, (Philadelphia, 1798).

¹⁸ James Burgh, *Thoughts on Education*, (Boston, 1749), p. 15.

us to fill with dignity the offices of a republican government.”¹⁹ In short, youth would become enlightened and good citizens. “The dye on which the future grandeur, prosperity, and happiness of America is cast, is the education of youth.”²⁰

Basic to true liberty and freedom was submission to the authority of government.²¹ Reverence for *any* authority, especially that of parents and teachers was expounded in educational essays, in sermons, and in textbooks. The Primer in numerous editions told the child to learn by heart: “I will obey my superiors; I will submit to my elders.” The “good boy” was described as one who was dutiful to his father and mother, obedient to his master. The elder child was told to appreciate the rules and restraints of authority: “it will assist in strengthening you.”²² John Witherspoon encouraged parents to “establish as soon as possible an entire and absolute authority over children,” while Kames told the parent directly: “The authority of the magistrate succeeds to that of the parent; and the submission paid to the latter is readily transferred to the former.”²⁴

There is, of course, a practical necessity to inculcate submission, especially to the authority of government. What, after all, is to control the spirit of liberty and freedom, in a nation in which within the lifetimes of most of the population its citizens were praised for their refusal to obey British authority? Or at a time when Shay’s Rebellion and the Whiskey Rebellion were

¹⁹ John Hobson, *Prospectus on a Plan of Education*, (Philadelphia, 1799), p. 15.

²⁰ John Wood, *Mentor*, “On America,” p. 353.

²¹ Burgh, *Thoughts on Education*; Joseph Dana, *A New American Selection*, (Boston, 1792); Dexter, *Oration*; Hobson, *Prospectus*.

²² Dana, *New American Selection*, “Address to a Young Student,” p. 111.

²³ John Taylor, *The Value of a Child or Motives and the Good Education of Children*. (Philadelphia, 1753); John Witherspoon, *Letters on Education*, Letter III, Reprint; Wilson Smith, *Theories of Education in Early America 1655-1819*, (New York: Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1973), p. 198.

²⁴ Lord Kames, *Loose Hints upon Education, Chiefly Concerning the Culture of the Heart*, (Edinburgh, 1781). Although Kame’s book was not published in America, he was widely read here and influenced such men as Jefferson in their theories on education. Reprinted in Smith, *Theories of Education*.

current events. Liberty and freedom were lauded by men of this age, and considered a value to be transmitted to the rising generation, but true liberty and freedom, it was emphasized, were defined within the limits of established authority.

No effort was spared to give the child, through his readers, a knowledge and reverence for liberty, freedom and equality. Liberty was "the birthright of man . . . stamped [with] the seal of omnipotence."²⁵ The concept of liberty embraced many aspects: equality of mankind, liberty of the press, of conscience, and of property are just a few. The readers frequently used the concept of the rights of man, embodied in the Declaration of Independence and the state constitutions, as reading selections for the young person.²⁶ Accounts relative to the causes for taking up arms and to the taxation of the colonies by Britain also served the purpose of emphasizing the importance of freedom and liberty to Americans.²⁷

Matthew Carey explicated to the child more than others the many facets of liberty. Freedom, he told the child, is a blessing and a benefit; people are happy in proportion to their freedom; freedom of conscience is guaranteed by national and state documents; liberty of the press is essential to the security of freedom and ought to be inviolably preserved. Under the caption "Liberty and Property" he instructed the child:

Liberty, that dearest of names and property, that best of characters, give additional, and inexpressible charm to every delightful object . . . Such a refinement of our domestic bliss is property, such an improvement of our public privilege is liberty . . . In a state of liberty every man learns to value himself as man, to consider himself as of importance in the system which he himself has approved and contributed to establish; and therefore resolves to regulate his own behaviour consistently with its safety and preservation. He feels as a proprietor, not

²⁵ Alexander Thomas, *The Orator's Assistant*, John Maxcy, "Oration," (Worcester, 1797), p. 204.

²⁶ Matthew Carey, *School of Wisdom*, "The Rights of Man," p. 272; John Wood, *Mentor*, p. 232.

²⁷ Noah Webster, Jr., *American Selection or Lessons in Reading and Speaking*, (Hartford, 1798), p. 146; Daniel Staniford, *The Art of Reading*, (Boston, 1800), p. 59; See also President Adams' Speech in Staniford.

as a tenant. He loves the state because he participates in it . . .²⁸

Alexander Thomas invoked freedom of the press as a preserver of liberty: "Freedom of the press, so essential to the preservation of liberty is here enjoyed in its greatest latitude . . . [it] converts United America into an enlightened Congress of politicians. How can our liberty be subverted while the people are universally acquainted with the conduct of their representatives?"²⁹ Matthew Carey considered good order, submission to authority a preserver of liberty. Under the lesson "Riots" the child learned that "they are truly dreadful and to be avoided with utmost care by the lovers of liberty. Peace, good order, and security to all ranks are the natural fruits of a free constitution."³⁰

America, in the late eighteenth century, was in the throes of living out her recent blow for freedom and liberty. To establish a new government and understand the limits of its power, to cope with the confusion of a French Revolution begun in liberty and finished in excess, to face the rise of party factions spawned from differing interpretations of the documents of liberty made some citizens fear the loss of that precious birthright for which the War had been fought. The reading books for youth reflect these sentiments; the concern that an appreciation of liberty and freedom be given to the youth of the rising generation is more than amply evident.

Respect for the American system of government was carefully inculcated into the child. The republican form was duly praised, while selections on aristocracy, despotism and tyranny heralded the inadequacy of other forms. Alexander Thomas, in the words of Judge Ellsworth, instructed the child that Americans have a government entitled to affection as well as to support, a government that is legitimate in its origins and free in its principles. "If we look on it as it is, the palladium of American liberty, and ground of national hope, our solicitude for its

²⁸ Carey, *School of Wisdom*, "Liberty and Property," p. 208.

²⁹ Thomas, *Orator's Assistant*, p. 207.

³⁰ Carey, *School of Wisdom*, "Riots," p. 282.

preservation will increase.”³¹ Andrew Dexter told the child “to thank the great Parent of nature that he was born in America . . . we shall gaze upon the American Constitution with rapture and astonishment . . . we shall exclaim, blest, thrice blest is America.”³² Selections from Dr. Ramsey’s “Address to the Citizens of America,” used in a number of readers, told American children:

You have a well balanced Constitution established by general consent; which is an improvement on all republican forms of government heretofore established. It possesses the good qualities of monarchy, but without its vices, the wisdom and stability of an aristocracy, but without the insolence of hereditary members, the freedom and independence of a popular assembly acquainted with the wants and wishes of the people, but without the capacity of doing those mischiefs which result from uncontrolled power in one assembly . . .³³

Thus was the child’s lesson in comparative government, with his own without doubt the best.

The child learned that the federal form is a government in which “a number of integral republics (states), each claiming and exercising all the powers of internal sovereignty, within the limits of their respective jurisdictions, formed into one general government, with powers of legislation for all national purposes, and the power of executing all their laws, within the several states, on the individual citizens, and that independently of the local authority.”³⁴ Quite a complicate sentence for the young person to understand; nonetheless, it was a short lesson in the federal form of government, pointing to the powers of each segment, the state and the national government. Noteworthy is the inclusion of the right of the national government to act on the state and on the individual. The necessity of this lesson is better understood when one realizes that

³¹ Thomas, *The Orator’s Assistant*, “Charge of Judge Ellsworth to the Grand Jury in New York,” p. 165.

³² Dexter, *Oration*, p. 3.

³³ Wood, *Mentor*, “Address to the Citizens of America,” by Dr. Ramsey, p. 370.

³⁴ Carey, *School of Wisdom*, “Government,” p. 146.

the Articles of Confederation, the government of the country until 1789, lacked precisely these two powers.

The child was exhorted to love and support such a government; he was encouraged to discuss political matters; he was told that "every man is of importance to himself . . . and to others." He learned that rotation in office was a value to cherish, since "long continuance in office is dangerous to liberty." The "best and ablest" should rule by which was meant, not the aristocracy, but the *natural* aristocracy, "men of honest, upright and benevolent hearts, of virtuous, well informed, well exercised understanding."³⁵

From another perspective he learned that despotism is "horrible and absurd to the last degree, most abominable and disgusting of all bad governments . . . the most formidable enemy of the public." Lords were characterized as a lazy, proud, and unprofitable crew; courtiers were full of idleness, flattery and "too often varnished, fictitious persons, whom God and nature never made." No one in this country should be nobler born than another; the only distinction should be virtue, personal merit, usefulness and generosity.³⁶ Aristocracy, according to Carey, was really despotism; while it gave a "fallacious idea of liberty," it made the people slaves and kept them in subjection.³⁷

The political atmosphere of eighteenth century America was one of strengthening in every way possible the national government established by the Constitution. The states had been sovereign under the Articles during the 1780s, and now had to acknowledge and accede to the power of the national government. The Federalist Party, in power until 1800, was convinced of the necessity of the central government, and committed to the cause of convincing the people. Little wonder then that such forceful selections on federal/republican government found their way into these readers. Those "little, unthinking

³⁵ Carey, *School of Wisdom*, "Natural Aristocracy," p. 242.

³⁶ Carey, *School of Wisdom*, "Nobility," p. 239; *An Alphabet in Prose Containing Some Important Lessons in Life*, (Worcester, 1798).

³⁷ Carey, *School of Wisdom*. "Aristocracy and Despotism," p. 47.

creatures who would soon be the risen generation" had to have a proper appreciation for the established form of government. It is clearly a value which the adult population wanted transmitted.

Heroes for Americans

Heroes are a must when one exhorts another to patriotism, and these textbook authors played them to the hilt. The child heard Scipio encouraging his army to valour against the enemies of Rome. He listened to the General of the Caledonians tell his army that "Caledonia has kept liberty from the Romans, preserved only by your valour."³⁸ These, and many other classical heroes, passed before the child several times through the course of his education.³⁹ It mattered little that they were not American, or that the ideals of some of these nations were a far cry from American republican government. Taken out of context, they provided an exemplification of the ideals of America selectively chosen.

From contemporary history, the example of Pitt stood out in great prominence in these books. William Pitt was a man bigger than his times. "The secretary stood alone," one selection reads, "modern degeneracy had not reached him. Upon the whole there was something in this man that could create, subvert, or reform; an understanding, a spirit, and an eloquence . . ." ⁴⁰ Pitt had spoken out for the freedom of the colonies in the recent war. He questioned the activity of England in their regard, the right of England to levy taxes on the colonies. He labeled virtual representation "the most contemptible idea that ever entered into the head of man," and stated that Americans had been driven to madness by injustice.

³⁸ Thomas, *Orator's Assistant*, "Scipio to the Roman Army," p. 166; "Address of the General of the Caledonians to his Army," p. 190.

³⁹ See for example Caleb Bingham, *The Columbian Orator*; William Enfield, *The Speaker*, (Boston, 1795); Thomas, *Orator's Assistant*; Webster, *American Selection*; Wood, *Mentor*.

⁴⁰ Bildad Barney, *An Introduction to the Art of Reading* (Hudson, New York: 1796), p. 18; Staniford, *The Art of Reading*, p. 60.

Little wonder that there is at least one selection from Pitt's speeches in almost every reader of the day.⁴¹

Above all, American heroes were included for the child's emulation. Military deeds of valor, such as the adventures of General Putnam and the description of the funeral of General Fraser were two favorites.⁴² But largely, praise of American heroes went to a host of others who had achieved great things in this new country. No one is forgotten in Joseph Perkins' "The Oration of Genius." Franklin is unrivalled in the present century, our self-taught Rittenhouse is second to none, our philosophic Winthrop is a star of the first magnitude in science, while Trumbull, Savage, and Copley, with West, bear off the "first honors of the pencil in England." He cites as well Jay, Jefferson, Hamilton and Adams in politics, along with our greatest boast, George Washington.⁴³

The adult generation believed David McClure who in his oration on early education credited "men of superior talents and enlightened genius" for the freedom and independence gained "under the auspicious smiles of providence." The young man who would become a statesman should look to the example of Adams, Franklin, Hancock, Jefferson, and most of all to the great Washington: "Keep at heart the country's cause . . . Man's sacred rights with zeal maintain, and history will record your fame."⁴⁴ Most frequently used and easily memorized was "The Description of the First American Congress" from the *Vision of Columbus*. Looking down the years Columbus saw Penn's thronged city "cast a cheerful gleam," majestic Randolph, great Washington, sage Franklin, Nash, Rutledge, Jefferson "in council great," Jay, Laurens, Livingston, Lee and Houston, fathers of the land, and lastly Adams: "Crowds rose to vengeance while his accents rung, and inde-

⁴¹ Bingham, *The Columbian Orator*, p. 58.

⁴² Webster, *An American Selection*, p. 47.

⁴³ Thomas, *Orator's Assistant*, p. 211.

⁴⁴ Donald Fraser, *Young Gentlemen and Ladies Assistant*, (New York, 1796), "Hints to a Young Statesman," p. 153.

pendence thundered from his tongue."⁴⁵ Indeed the authors of the readers took Burgh's theory to heart and provided the kind of reading that would "settle the judgment," namely history, biography and the lives of eminent persons.

Washington the Great

In a category all by himself was the example of "the great Washington." No child could escape the example of this almost divinized figure, especially since no book was without one or more selections by or about him in prose or in verse. Washington's address on leaving the command of the army, his resignation from the presidency, and his first address to Congress are favorites. Washington expressed his privilege of serving the people of the nation, his adulation for America and its government, and his trust in the great Arbiter of the Universe. Besides his speeches there is a large segment of literature in these readers written by his contemporaries which began the apotheosis of the Father of our country. He was universalized in verse: "O Washington, thou hero, patriot, sage; Friend of all climes, pride of every age."⁴⁷ He was hailed as Saviour: "Great Washington leaves the shades of retirement, draws the sword of death and points to victory."⁴⁸ He was given to aspiring statesmen as example: "Keep the great Washington in view; like him be brave, honest, good and you'll be great."⁴⁹ This was only the beginning. Washington's death in 1799 occasioned a new outpouring of selections in his praise. Staniford, for example, includes "Lines to Washington," "An Ode to Washington," a "Eulogy on George Washington," but the Senate says it best in their letter of condolence to President Adams. The man they describe is larger than life;

⁴⁵ Bingham, *The Columbian Orator*, "Description of the First American Congress," from *The Vision of Columbus*; Also found in Carey, *The School of Wisdom*, p. 73.

⁴⁶ See Barney, *Introduction*; Bingham, *The Columbian Orator*; Alexander, *Instructor*; Thomas, *Orator's Assistant*: Wood, *Mentor*.

⁴⁷ Thomas, *Orator's Assistant*, p. 153.

⁴⁸ Dexter, *Oration*, p. 7.

⁴⁹ Fraser, *Young Gentlemen's and Ladies Assistant*, p. 153.

“favored of heaven, he departed without exhibiting the weakness of humanity. Washington yet lives on earth in his spotless example; his spirit is in heaven.”⁵⁰

The florid style of eighteenth century verse pulls out all the stops for this hero. The versifier of “Columbia’s Guardian Sleeps in the Dust”, in six lengthy stanzas praised Washington as Patriot, Hero, Friend, Chief, Sage and General.⁵¹ The parent was enjoined in training the child: “Begin with the infant in his cradle; let the first word he lisps be *Washington*.”⁵² Gone were the less glorious memories of the War—the lack of support for the commander-in-chief, army desertions, retreats from battle engagements. Washington’s death only increased the devotion of the people worshipping at his altar. Actually Washington was not remembered as much for his presidency as for his leadership of men and nation, his preservation of liberty and freedom while general of the army. Although we had an impressive and extensive list of genius in this country, “our greatest boast, brightest ornament, pride of Columbia, delight of mankind, richest gem in the cabinet of humanity is WASHINGTON.”⁵³

Independence and the Mission of America

The most lauded event in these readers is Independence Day. This, too, becomes larger than life, and divinized. The child reads in Carey’s book:

Hail, Independence, hail. Heaven’s next best gift

To that of life and an immortal soul.⁵⁴

Numerous July 4th orations praised independence and embodied almost every aspect of American nationalism. They extolled the blessings it brought the peoples of this nation, the form of government under which we live, distinction of merit

⁵⁰ Staniford, *Art of Reading*, “Letter of Condolence from the Senate to the President,” p. 72.

⁵¹ Staniford, *Art of Reading* “Columbia’s Guardian Sleeps in the Dust,” p. 233.

⁵² *The Child’s Library*, Part 2, (Salem, 1800), p. 9.

⁵³ Thomas, *Orator’s Assistant*, “Oration on Genius,” by Joseph Perkins, p. 211.

⁵⁴ Carey, *The School of Wisdom*, “Independence,” p. 179.

rather than of birth, the impartiality of the nation's laws, and the praise of Washington as savior of America. "May that period be yet far distant that shall rob the world of its ornament and America of its Saviour."⁵⁵ July 4th was a day religiously devoted to the consecration of our independence, a day on which it behooved its citizens as "the votaries of freedom, as friends of the rights of man," to consider the sufferings undergone to achieve this.⁵⁶ Recollection of this event "swells every heart with joy and fills every tongue with praise."⁵⁷ Thomas Dawes in his oration of 1787 accepted as commonplace that education was one of the deepest principles of independence: "Enlightened minds and virtuous manners lead to the gates of glory." And further:

Independence fits the soul of her residence for every noble enterprise of humanity and greatness. Her radiant smile lights up celestial ardor in poets and orators, who sound her praises through all ages; in legislators and philosophers, who fabricate wise and happy governments as dedications to her fame; in patriots and heroes, who shed their lives in sacrifice to her divinity.⁵⁸

Only later would the nation celebrate the fourth day of July with much external celebration, but in pre-1800 America the day scarcely went by each year without an oration in its honor. Children's books, notably the readers, reflected this cultural phenomenon remarkably.

America had always had a sense of mission from her very inception. Hers was a great future due largely to her own merit, her cultivation of virtue, aided always by Divine Providence. Yet mission took a new approach in post-Revolutionary America. Her independence, her tenacious fight for the preservation of liberty, gave her the prerogative of taking these gifts over the continent of this new land. She would be the ex-

⁵⁵ Thomas, *Orator's Assistant*, "Oration," by Joseph Allen, July 4, 1795, p. 172.

⁵⁶ Bingham, *Columbian Orator*, "Oration" by Francis Blake, July 4, 1796, p. 234; also found in Thomas, *Orator's Assistant*, p. 175.

⁵⁷ Thomas, *Orator's Assistant*, "Oration," by Johnathan Maxcy, p. 204.

⁵⁸ Bingham, *American Preceptor*; "Oration," by Thomas Dawes, July 4, 1787, p. 107.

ample to the European nations who, in the eyes of Americans, were the hotbed of oppression. Progress would be the mark of the nation: "The hatchet of industry, wielded by the strong arm of freedom, shall resound from the shores of the Atlantic to the banks of the Mississippi.⁵⁹ America would then increase in wealth, Bingham told the young student, "she will as far surpass all other nations on the globe in virtue, learning, and abilities; and will as much distinguish herself for humanity, nobleness of sentiment, attachment to government, and love of liberty as the towering cedar in the woods."⁶⁰ Because she has striven for the right, for liberty, for independence, and because of her vastness of resources, she "will soon fill your extensive territory with inhabitants, and give you command of such ample capitals, as will enable you to run the career of national greatness, with advantages equal to the oldest kingdoms of Europe."⁶¹ Or stated another way, "the tree of liberty will shoot its top to the sun", will "catch like electric fire fluid among the long oppressed inhabitants of the European nations," even to Asia, to the Indies, and to Africa.⁶² Columbia's genius would wrest from monarchical Spain the holdings she had on this continent, "where Spanish indolence inactive lies . . . ignobly great and poor amid their gold." America would be the harbinger of peace to the whole globe: "Plenty and peace shall spread from pole to pole, Till earth's grand family possess one soul."⁶³

America was impressed too with her mission as asylum to the poor and oppressed of other nations. Poor Richard already in 1752 had noted that this country is the place

⁵⁹ Dexter, *Oration*, p. 6.

⁶⁰ Bingham, *American Perceptor*, "On the Importance of Studying the English Language Grammatically," p. 156.

⁶¹ Wood, *Mentor*, "Address of Dr. Ramsey to the Citizens of America," p. 370.

⁶² Thomas, *Orator's Assistant*, "Freedom of the Press," p. 207; Josiah Clark, *Parent's Monitor* (Boston, 1794), p. 5.

⁶³ Bingham, *Columbian Orator*, "A General Description of America in Poetry," p. 237.

⁶⁴ Savelle, Quoted in *Seeds of Liberty*, p. 567.

Where the sick Stranger joys to find a Home
Where casual ill, maim'd labour, freely come;
Those worn with age, Infirmary or Care,
Find Rest, Relief, and Health returning fair . . .⁶⁴

The July 4th orations also lauded America's mission: "... our commonwealth will flourish, our land will become the land of liberty and AMERICA an asylum for the oppressed." Or again: "Here in America stands the asylum for the distressed and poor of all nations . . . founded on a rock, it will remain unshaken."⁶⁵

Dwight capsulized it well in verse. In five lengthy stanzas, two of which are given here, he sentimentalizes:

Columbia, Columbia, to glory arise
The queen of the world and child of the skies
Thy genius commands thee with rapture behold
While ages on ages thy splendor unfold
Thy reign is the last and the noblest of time
Most fruitful thy soil, most inviting thy clime
Let the crimes of the East ne'er encrimson thy name
Be freedom and science and virtue thy fame.
To conquest and slaughter let Europe aspire
Whelm nations in blood and wrap cities in fire
Thy heroes the rights of mankind shall defend
And triumph pursue them and glory attend
A world is thy realm for a world by thy laws
Enlarged as thy empire and just as thy cause
On freedom's broad basis thy empire shall rise
Extend with the main, and dissolve with the skies.⁶⁶

Conclusions

An analysis of the readers for children and youth in the latter eighteenth century produces a number of conclusions. Young people were encouraged to support the political status

⁶⁵ Bingham, *Columbian Orator*, "Oration," by J. Mayhew, July 4, 1780; Thomas, *Orator's Assistant*, "Freedom of the Press," p. 207.

⁶⁶ Bingham, *American Preceptor*, "Columbia," p. 43; Found also in Dana, *New American Selection*, p. 291.

quo. The readers inculcated into the young person a reverence for authority—parents, teachers, elders, and the established government. They endeavored to teach the student to love the ideals of the nation, inundating him with the advantages of living in this country, under a republican form of government. Never are the weaknesses of the nation investigated; never is the child led to question anything about this government. No mention is made of such problems of the new government as Shays Rebellion in the 1780s and the Whiskey Rebellion of the 1790s, both instances of dissatisfaction of the common people with the power and execution of government. Nor is mention made of the fact that the first government under the Articles of Confederation proved to be transitional, that a new frame of government became necessary due largely to the problem of distribution of power. Those who fought the Revolution of 1776 were heroes who stood up for freedom, liberty and the rights of man. But, according to the readers, there was no longer room for revolution in the context of this new nation.

The readers do not as yet include the tangible emblems of patriotism. The flag, the eagle, the national anthems of the nineteenth century are noticeably absent in these eighteenth century books. Washington as hero and the ideal of independence are the two most prominent symbols, if we can call them that. These were all but divine, beyond the ordinary level of human living.

We are frequently led to believe that Jeffersonian ideals of education were paramount in the educational theories of the eighteenth century. While this was indeed true in many respects, we must not fail to see the Hamiltonian values inculcated into the young citizen through the school. Jefferson's concepts of the inalienable rights of man set forth in the *Declaration* are everywhere present in the readers. Natural aristocracy, freedom of speech and the press, rotation in office, all Jeffersonian ideals, are fully evident as values for the child to learn. Yet there were significant Jeffersonian concepts not present, indeed contradicted. The republican form of government is certainly lauded, but little stress is laid on local government.

Rather, the student learned to look to the national government, to respect its authority and to pledge his support. The right of revolution, which Jefferson at least expounded in theory, is totally absent in these texts. Riots are denounced as harmful to the existence of true liberty. Noteworthy too, is the fact that participation in government by such means as the ballot is never mentioned. There is something of an elitism which runs through these concepts. The emphasis on the leaders of the people, Hamiltonian in tone as it is, bespeaks a small group responsible for government. Even in the matter of educational values, there is not a clear understanding that education is for everyone. Rudiments of education perhaps, but these readers for youth depict many scenes pertinent to upper classes only.

The vision that eighteenth century Americans had of themselves stands out clearly in these readers. Clear, too, is the fact that America of the late eighteenth century was conscious of its duty to transmit these attitudes to the "rising generation" so that this vision inculcated into the youth would be carried on when they themselves had departed. Patriotic, national-minded citizens, worthy of the ideals of the Revolutionary generation could make the vision of America a reality. Education, and more specifically the textbook, was an important vehicle in achieving this ideal.

十八世紀美國教科書中之國家主義

(摘要)

寇 默 爾

本文探討在十八世紀末期，美國起而反抗英國時，其教科書中所表現的國家主義。教科書一般被視為上一代將其認定有價值之觀念事物傳給下一代的媒介。同時亦可視為當代之索引。美國在十八世紀末期已能意識出其新國格，也因此進一步地關心起對其國家特質之了解。

本文顯示十八世紀美國教科書之作者，已刻意反映此新興國家之思潮趨勢，並著力灌輸愛國情操之美德於新興的一代。這些美德包括有下列諸信念：

- 一、尊敬共和政府所提出之自由，民主，平等等觀念；
- 二、尊重權威並順從之；
- 三、聯邦政制之價值觀；
- 四、讚揚國家的英雄，特別是參預革命及新政府之建立者；
- 五、對國家的獨立及美國的使命感到驕傲。