

**THE KENTUCKY
RESOLUTIONS OF 1798:
AN HISTORICAL STUDY**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649621620

The Kentucky Resolutions of 1798: An Historical Study by Ethelbert Dudley Warfield

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ETHELBERT DUDLEY WARFIELD

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AN HISTORICAL STUDY

BY

ETHELBERT DUDLEY WARFIELD, A.M., LL.B.

BARRISTER-AT-LAW

NEW YORK & LONDON

G. P. PUTNAM'S SONS

The Knickerbocker Press

1887

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PREFACE.

THIS little work was first suggested several years ago by a sense of the inadequacy of the historical accounts of the Kentucky Resolutions of 1798. This feeling has steadily increased ever since, and its correctness must be apparent to every one who has remarked the great influence these Resolutions have had upon our constitutional and political history. While they have been the cause and occasion of much debate and transitory discussion, there is no connected account of the causes and circumstances of their adoption, and their relation to the subsequent history of this country, except such as under many limitations is to be found in the histories of the United States under the Constitution. None of these are calculated to make the subject plain to the average reader, and there is scarcely one that is not positively in error as to some important fact.

The original documents, many of which have always been accessible, have been singularly neglected, and misstatements that at first crept in by inadvertence or unwarranted assumptions, not only have never been corrected by recourse to the sources,

but have been repeated till they became the seed of error, later writers competing with each other in reiterating the mistakes of all those who preceded them.

The materials used in this book, while no printed work treating of the subjects embraced in its purview has been intentionally neglected, are chiefly the original sources—the newspapers of the day and the written accounts of actors upon the stage, but especially the letters and manuscripts of the time, and of the men who were the leaders in the movements against the Alien and Sedition laws. Of all the sources consulted none can be compared for interest and importance to the hitherto almost untouched store of manuscripts forming the Breckinridge papers and containing John Breckinridge's literary remains.

Some part of the contents of this volume has already been published in a series of articles in the *Magazines of American and Western History*, but in a very abridged form and rather for the sake of provoking criticisms which might lead to a full and complete treatment of the questions connected with the Resolutions than as a permanent contribution to American history.

It is hoped that the evidence herein set out may be regarded as justifying a final judgment upon the important and somewhat mooted points of the real mover of the Resolutions in the Kentucky legislature and their true text. It is, perhaps, too much to hope that any final solution of the problems of authorship and interpretation is now, or ever will

be reached. Some new light has been found even upon these difficult questions, and some advance towards a final statement of all the evidence may have been made, even though the desired end has not been attained. If no other good is accomplished, yet if some part of the credit that is justly due to John Breckinridge, the mover and responsible author of these Resolutions be recovered, this work has not been written in vain.

Thanks for aid and encouragement are due to many friends, who have added so much to the accomplishment of my task that I cannot deny myself the public recognition of their assistance. Chief among these, are Prof. Alexander Johnston, Hon. Wm. C. P. Breckinridge, Col. R. T. Durrett, Pres. James C. Welling, and Hon. James Schouler.

ETHELBERT D. WARFIELD.

GRASMERE, NEAR LEXINGTON, KY.,

Mid-Summer, 1887.

