

**SPEECH OF GENERAL J.  
WATSON WEBB, AT THE GREAT  
MASS MEETING ON THE BATTLE  
GROUND OF TIPPECANOE**

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Speech of General J. Watson Webb, at the Great Mass Meeting on the Battle Ground of  
Tippecanoe by James Watson Webb

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**JAMES WATSON WEBB**

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WATSON WEBB, AT THE GREAT  
MASS MEETING ON THE BATTLE  
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[CAMPAIGN DOCUMENT.]

S P E E C H

OF

GENERAL J. WATSON WEBB,

AT THE

GREAT MASS MEETING ON THE BATTLE GROUND  
OF TIPPECANOE.

60,000 FREEMEN IN COUNCIL.

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## S P E E C H .

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I thank you, fellow-citizens, very sincerely, for this greeting—for this more than welcome. Not that I have the vanity to apply it to myself personally, because I have done nothing to merit such a reception; but I receive it as it is intended—a grateful tribute to the cause in which we are laboring, and to the triumph of which I shall cheerfully, if need be, devote the remainder of my days. I feel that it is good to be here; but I also feel, that I want words to express the emotions of my heart, at witnessing, and being a participator in, this great ovation to Liberty. It has been said, that the most beautiful and the most wonderful scenes, which it is permitted man to behold, are, the tempest-tossed ocean and the rising of that glorious orb which gives heat, and light, and vitality to all the world; and by his presence, certifies to man the existence of the Deity and His love to our race. But permit me to say, that there is in the scene now presented to my view, a sublimity and a moral grandeur, which far exceed anything which the imagination of the poet has conceived, or which the pencil of the painter can portray. I have witnessed the rising of the sun from the loftiest peaks of the Alps; and in various passages across the Atlantic, I have seen the ocean in its

calmest moods and when lashed into fury by the storm, obedient only to His will, in whose hands is the destiny of nations, and who alone, raises the whirlwind and directs the storm; but never have I witnessed the *moral sublime* so perfectly delineated, as in this spontaneous uprising of a whole people, to vindicate and secure to their children, the great inheritance of civil and religious liberty, won by the valor and consecrated by the blood of their fathers. The greatest earthquake in the natural world, sinks into insignificance, when compared with this spontaneous uprising of a people animated solely by the love of Liberty, and unalterably resolved to punish all those who have conspired against their constitutional rights.

When I look around upon this vast assemblage, and permit my mind to turn back upon the period when I first stood upon this far-famed battle ground, and remember *where* it was then situated, and what was then the condition of the great North-West, I want language to express my wonder and astonishment. Thirty-six years ago, I was one of a Court-Martial ordered to assemble at *Terre Haute*; and thirty-five years ago, I constituted one of the garrison of Fort Dearborn, at Chicago. All west from this point, was then one vast wilderness, inhabited solely by the Red Man and a handful of soldiers, whose duty it was, to protect the scattered population of our frontier settlements. The nearest residence of a white inhabitant to our garrison, was at Fort Wayne, where we sent once a fortnight for our mail. Here, where we now stand, was then the very confines of the white man's home; and now west of this spot, in that then trackless wilderness, are to be found the happy and prosperous



homes, of nearly five millions of Freemen. My old garrison, Chicago, then more than a hundred miles in advance of the most adventurous white man's home, now contains a population of more than a hundred thousand souls; and untold villages and cities, and the most active and thriving farming population on the face of the Globe, now dwell and prosper, where so recently, the death-like silence of the wilderness, had never been broken by the busy hum of civilization. Only thirty-six years have passed since the period of which I speak. I then stood here in the vigor of youthful manhood. I stand before you to-day, having numbered but little over half a century of the years allotted to man—still in my prime and able as ever to do battle in the cause of Liberty—and yet I may lay claim among the millions, who inhabit the great North-West, to be that mysterious person of whom everybody has heard, but who is so rarely seen—"the oldest inhabitant." When Rip Van Winkle awoke from his twenty years' sleep in the caverns of the Catskills, he knew not the faces of the neighbors with whom he supposed he had parted on the previous day; and in like manner, when I wake as from my sleep of more than a third of a century, I look in vain for the old landmarks of my hunting grounds, and the familiar faces of my companions of the hunt and the mess-room. All, all have been gathered to their rest; but I find in their stead, millions of people, in whose stalwart forms and smiling faces, I perceive at once, the evidences of universal prosperity, and a manly, fearless independence, which delights in honest labor, and reaps its never-failing rewards. Your faces are all unknown to me; but God has planted his image there; and I know that in the

heart of every man in this vast assemblage, there dwells a spirit of Liberty which will never succumb to any power which seeks to undermine the free institutions bequeathed us by those who pledged "their lives, their liberties, and their sacred honor" in support of freedom of thought, freedom of action, freedom of speech, freedom of the Press, and freedom for man. And yet I cannot help exclaiming, whence came this army of freedom?

Come ye from the sunny South? No. Man there is taught that labor belongs solely to bondsmen and to slaves—that it is beneath the dignity of freemen; and, of course, ye came not thence. But ye have come from the Free North, offshoots of that noble band of Pilgrims who planted the Tree of Liberty on the Rock of Plymouth and the Banks of the Hudson, and watered its roots with their blood, freely spilt on the fields of Concord, of Lexington, and of Bunker Hill, until its branches have overshadowed a vast Continent, and given dignity to labor and freedom, and civil and religious liberty to a mighty people. But you are not alone in this work of causing the wilderness to blossom as a rose. I perceive everywhere, standing around and amid you, children of another clime, who have been driven from the despotisms of the old world, to find a home and freedom and prosperity in the land of WASHINGTON, and under laws which have their foundations in the everlasting truths of revealed religion and the principle of equal rights to all who bear the image of our Maker. We welcome all such to a free and full participation in the blessings of our free institutions; and may God, in his infinite goodness, teach them, one and all, that they

can best exhibit their gratitude for the liberty and prosperity which they now enjoy, but which were not their birthright, by devoting all their energies, to the preservation of the glorious constitution which secures to us the institutions, in which they have been permitted so freely to participate.

Men of the North-West—freemen of the soil—descendants of the Pilgrim Fathers; and ye who have proved your love of freedom by forsaking your Faderland to dwell in this, “the land of the free, and the home of the brave,”—what is it that brings you here to-day? What is it that has brought together here, in the very presence of the spirits of those who laid down their lives in their country’s service, such a vast concourse of the bone and sinew of our land? Need I reply? Does not the heart of every man leap to his tongue, ready to exclaim, “We come in the cause of Freedom and to vindicate the Constitution and the institutions of the country, against those who would trample both under foot, and establish in their stead an odious oligarchy, the very existence of which pre-supposes the presence of *slavery* with all its attendant demoralization, in a region where free white labor is now honored and respected, and gives law and order, and peace and prosperity, to the land.” Such, fellow-citizens, is the purpose of your assembling in council on this occasion; and would to God that I were more capable of placing vividly before you, the momentous crisis at which we have arrived in our nation’s history. But my vocation is to write and not to speak; and although I could not but obey the call to be with you to-day, I well knew that I should find here good soldiers and