

EXTRACTS *from*
ADDRESS
OF
PRESIDENT COOLIDGE

BEFORE THE

*Norwegian Centennial
Celebration, at Minnesota
State Fair Grounds
June 8, 1925*

Because of a profound appreciation of that contribution and of its truly national value I have found it an especial pleasure to come here and join in this commemoration. In the midst of loyalties that are all beyond possibility of question, it may be difficult to choose among the many national and racial groups that have sought out America for their home and their country. We are thankful for all of them, and yet more thankful that the experiment of their common citizenship has been so magnificently justified in its results. If one were seeking proof of a basic brotherhood among all races of men, if one were to challenge the riddle of Babel in support of aspirations for a unity capable of assuring peace to the nations, in such an inquiry I suppose no better testimony could be taken than the experience of this country. Out of the confusion of tongues, the conflict of traditions, the variations of historical setting, the vast differences in talents and tastes there has been evolved a spiritual union accompanied by a range of capacity and genius which marks this Nation for a preeminent destiny. The American people have commanded the respect of the world.

It is a good thing that anniversaries such as this are so widely commemorated. The next few years will be filled with a continuing succession of similar occasions. I wish that every one of them might be so impressively celebrated that all Americans would be moved to study the history which each one represents. I can think of no effort that would produce so much inspiration to high and intelligent patriotism. Occasions of this nature bring to our attention whole regions of the past that would otherwise remain unexplored, tend to be forgotten even by scholars, and pass entirely from the public mind. These incentives to special examination of particular historical phases teach us better to understand our country and our countrymen. Anyone who will study the institutions and people of America will come more and more to admire them.

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One reason that moved me to accept the cordial invitations to come here to-day was the hope of directing some measure of national attention to the absorbingly interesting subject of the social backgrounds of our country. The making of such a country is not to be told in any mere category of dates, battles, political evolutions, and partisan controversies. Back of all these, which are too often the chief material of history, lies the human story of the unsung millions of plain people whose names are strangers to public place and fame. Their lives have been replete with quiet, unpretentious, modest but none the less heroic virtues. From these has been composed the sum of that magnificent and wondrous adventure, the making of our own America. Somewhere in the epic of struggle to subjugate a continent there will be found a philosophy of human relations that the world will greatly prize. If we could seize and fix it, if we could turn it over, examine and understand it, we would have taken a long step toward solving some of the hardest problems of mankind.

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These Northmen, one of whose anniversaries we are celebrating to-day, have from their first appearance on the margin of history been the children of freedom. Native to a rigorous climate and a none too productive soil, they had learned the necessity for hard work and careful management. They were

