

❧ October 16, 1958 ❧

BICENTENNIAL OF NOAH WEBSTER

American Lexicographer, Editor, and Author
(1758 - 1843)

Noah Webster is remembered whenever we say, "Look it up in Webster," because *Webster* and *dictionary* now have the same meaning. His labors helped in large measure to make the dictionary the most useful deskbook for every person who wishes to write correctly, speak precisely, and read with understanding.

The American form of the English language owes much to the guiding genius of Noah Webster. He laid down the principles of spelling which are still followed. His Spelling Book, of which nearly 100 million copies were studied between 1783 and 1900, led to a uniformity of pronunciation and spelling throughout the United States. He gave Americans a sense of national pride in their native words. His great American Dictionary of 1828, with its simply written definitions and full word histories, was the best book of its kind in the world.

Noah Webster, who started life on a Connecticut farm, did much else for the United States. His forceful essays led the way toward state-supported public schools for all children. His textbooks laid the foundation for better instruction. More than any other man of his time Noah Webster

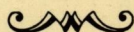
directed the schoolroom into becoming an important agency in our national progress.

Almost single-handed, Noah Webster secured the passage of our earliest copyright laws. By lectures in every important town he created a climate of opinion favorable to the writing of the Constitution in 1787 and to its ratification in 1788. As the editor of a daily newspaper in New York City from 1793 to 1798 he helped the United States remain neutral when the European wars threatened to engulf the Western World.

Noah Webster advocated scientific agriculture, made researches into epidemic diseases, and urged the formation of insurance companies. A practical scholar, he served in the legislatures of Connecticut and Massachusetts.

Noah Webster was America's pre-eminent early schoolmaster. Beginning in a one-room country schoolhouse, he rose in stature until the whole nation sat in his schoolroom. He taught the importance of implementing good ideas with proper words in one's daily activities. It is altogether fitting that he should now stand silently beside our desks as we use that indispensable reference book, the dictionary.

— HARRY R. WARFEL, author of *Noah Webster: Schoolmaster to America*



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