

A Speech Given By Hon. Isaac Montgomery

Isaac Montgomery (1776-1861) was member of the Indiana State House of Representatives. This speech was a rebuttal to one given by the Hon. E. M. Chamberlain, "which was offensive to the Whig party." It was delivered at the State Capitol at Indianapolis, on January 8th, 1841, and is published in William Cockrum's Pioneer History of Indiana, pp. 523-25, as well as the Indiana History Bulletin, Vol. 33, p. 124.

Gentlemen: I am an old man and no great speaker, having but little learning. I was raised in a time and country where there was a bad chance to get learning. I was raised partly, gentlemen, in the State of Kentucky. Yes, gentlemen, I was there in an early day when the Indians were as thick as seed ticks and we had to fort up and get along the best way we could for a long time before we got rid of them. There was no time nor chance, gentlemen, to get schooling. But gentlemen, if I am no great speaker, I know one thing. I am as true a Whig as ever breathed the breath of life and in an early day I moved to this state, then a wilderness territory, in 1805 with my wife and a few little children and I brought with me all the way here in my pocket a recommendation from Col. Crockett, my mother's brother, to General Harrison, then the governor of this territory calling on him to give me some assistance in purchasing a piece of land. I showed my recommendation to the General (then Governor) and he promised that he would give me some help when the land came into market but through my own integrity and strict economy, yes, gentlemen, by my own sweat and labor I procured enough money to buy me a quarter section of land near where I now live, and have raised a large family, six sons and with one exception all larger men than I am. Yes, gentlemen and every one of them honest men and as true Whigs as ever walked on earth or ever the sun shown upon and who are ready and willing at any time to lift up their hands high to heaven and swear by Him who lives forever and ever, that they would do nothing wrong. No, gentlemen, nothing wrong, there is nothing of it with them. As old as I am I am now ready and willing to march out in defense of my country. Gentlemen, we have heard a great deal said about the battle of Tippecanoe and about the Indians choosing General Harrison's camping ground. Now, gentlemen, I was there myself, on that same spot, and I know all about it. I know there have been a great many things said that are not so. Now, gentlemen, I can tell you all about this matter. General Taylor and General Clark are the very men who picked out that camping ground. General Harrison sent them ahead about one hour by the sun in the evening. Now, gentlemen, I know this to be so for I was with General Harrison and by his side at the time. These men, after being gone ahead about a half an hour returned and reported that they had found a very suitable place to camp, and a prettier or more suitable place could not have been found, I know. So we went into camp and it was a dark, drizzly night. Yes, gentlemen, you could not see your hand in front of you, only as the burning of the powder gave light from the guns of the enemy's fire, which was squirting and streaming out in almost every direction, and they would just as soon have shot us right in the head as any other place. Yes, gentlemen, there was no time there for dodging. Many brave and good men there fought and died in defense of these principles which we now advocate and defend. Yes, gentlemen, the very identical things which we as a Whig party now hold to.

Note: William Henry Harrison, the Whig candidate, became the ninth president of the United States on March 4, 1841. His campaign, which featured the slogan "Tippecanoe and Tyler Too," has been called one of the most ridiculous in American history. Harrison was portrayed as a rough frontiersman and military hero who lived in a log cabin and drank hard cider. He died after only a month in office.