

# *Primary Directions and the Horoscope of the United States*

by **Kenneth Bowser**

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## **By Kenneth Irving**

To some people, including the writer of this review, mundane astrology is in many respects more certain and steady than natal astrology. Even if we look backward at a person's life it is not necessarily easy to match actual events with planetary activity during key moments in a person's life. Add to this an uncertain or misstated birth time, and then the astrologer has problems to deal with. When we apply astrology to the world around us, we can focus on public events, and in modern times that means happenings timed to the minute, often recorded from multiple angles by multiple reporters (professional or amateur) and published widely in print, on television, and on the Internet.

It is, though, difficult when mundane astrology is applied to a nation or to a great city. There is rarely a first cry for a country, but more often there are multiple cries, a good example of which is the U.S. chart, contending dates for which range from approximately 1775 to 1788. The most popular date, obviously, is the one emblazoned on the version of the Declaration of Independence publicly circulated in July of 1776: July 4, 1776. A useful date, but at what time on that day? While the founding fathers kept careful records of the proceedings of the Second Continental Congress, they weren't thinking of us astrologers, so we are left with historical guesswork to settle the question of time.

This is the particular area in mundane astrology that at times produces some of traditional astrology's best literature. A writer like Kenneth Bowser has to be not simply someone who does charts, but also a historian and a mathematician. *Primary Directions and the Horoscope of the United States* is a good example of what is required, and of what the result can be, as it is clearly written and based on a fact stated clearly in the introduction: "The destiny of a nation as viewed through the lens of its horoscope is out of focus with a horoscope that is wide of its mark." Laying out the known historical and astrological facts that support a specific chart is, then, what this book is about.

That phrase "wide of its mark" is based on the observation that all proposed times for U.S. horoscopes based on the date mentioned above are essentially conjecture, and that documentation makes the difference. The horoscope he has chosen for study, called the Hazelrigg chart, may share a lack of "incontrovertible

documentary support” with other candidates, but it is distinguished from the others by the possibility that it may have been based on an account by an eyewitness. I should point out quickly here that Hazelrigg was not himself the eyewitness, as he was born in 1860.

No matter, as the apparent eyewitness account is found in an article in *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* for July of 1851. In the article, “Our National Anniversary,” author Benson Lossing says: “At a little past meridian on the Fourth of July 1776, a unanimous vote of the thirteen colonies was given in favor of declaring themselves free and independent states.” Bowser then works through the astronomical arithmetic necessary to show that this statement matches the time (plus a minute) offered by John Hazelrigg for his version of the chart. Before going on to test the chart, the author takes a brief step back to look at two other popular contenders, those of Ebenezer Sibly (circa 5:10 p.m. LMT) and Howard Herndon (2:17 a.m. LMT). The short version of his conclusions are that the Herndon chart is unsourced and the time is an unlikely one, while the mathematical work associated with Sibly's chart (similarly unsourced) is full of errors.

Having dealt mainly, though not entirely, with the historical aspects of the three charts mentioned above, the real work of the book begins, and it depends mostly on the technique mentioned in the book's title: primary directions. As one of the comments on the back of the cover (from Bruce Scofield) points out, “primaries” are not much in use these days. This is especially true in the U.S., where astrologers have an unfortunate tendency to favor techniques that don't require too much knowledge of math or astronomy. Sorry, but I just had to say that.

Ken Bowser not only makes the case for why primaries are particularly necessary when dealing with the U.S. chart problem, but also explains them in a way that I think most readers can understand. After he has done this, the rest of the book is a chapter-by-chapter presentation of the planets, Sun, and Moon, in which he shows important primary directions and “mundane” aspects involving each throughout U.S. history. Despite his focus on primaries, his discussion is well-rounded and historically detailed.

If the reader is thinking at the point that the book requires study, that's absolutely true, as is the fact that the study will be well worth it. Kenneth Bowser's *Primary Directions and the Horoscope of the United States* is a sustained, reasoned defense of a U.S. chart that has, at least recently, been consigned to second-tier status by many astrologers. As this book makes the rounds of reviewers, professional astrologers, and students, that status could well begin to change.

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