

**Our Lady of Prompt Succor Nursing Home
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C'est la Vie Apartments
News-Notes ~ July 2010**

Independence Day

In the United States, Independence Day, commonly known as the Fourth of July, is a federal holiday commemorating the adoption of the Declaration of Independence on July 4, 1776, declaring independence from the Kingdom of Great Britain. Independence Day is commonly associated with fireworks, parades, carnivals, fairs, picnics, concerts, games, political speeches and ceremonies celebrating the history, government, and traditions of the United States. Independence Day is the national day of our United States and its history is rich in the heroism and courage of our national ancestors.

During the American Revolution, the legal separation of the American colonies from Great Britain occurred on July 2, 1776. On this day the Second Continental Congress voted to approve a resolution of independence that had been proposed in June by Richard Henry Lee of Virginia. After voting for independence, Congress turned its attention to the Declaration of Independence. The Declaration was a statement explaining this decision which had been prepared by a "Committee of Five" with Thomas Jefferson as its principal author. Congress debated and revised the Declaration and finally approved it on July 4th.

Earlier in the week, John Adams had written to his wife Abigail:

The second of July, 1776, will be the most memorable epoch in the history of America. I am apt to believe that it will be celebrated by succeeding generations as the great anniversary festival. It ought to be commemorated as the day of deliverance by solemn acts of devotion to God Almighty. It ought to be solemnized with pomp and parade, with shows, games, sports... and illuminations from one end of this continent to the other, from this time forward forever more.

The prediction of John Adams was off by two days. From the beginning, Americans celebrated independence on July 4th, the date shown on the much-publicized Declaration of Independence, rather than on July 2nd, the date the resolution of independence was approved in a closed session of Congress.

One of the most enduring myths about Independence Day is that Congress signed the Declaration of Independence on July 4, 1776. The myth had become so firmly established that, decades after the event and nearing the end of their lives, even the elderly Thomas Jefferson and John Adams had come to believe that they and the other delegates had signed the Declaration on July 4th. In fact, most delegates actually signed the Declaration on August 2, 1776.

In a remarkable series of coincidences, both John Adams and Thomas Jefferson, two founding fathers of the United States and the only two men who signed the Declaration of Independence to become President, died on the same day: July 4, 1826. Their deaths occurred on the 50th anniversary of the United States of America! As we commemorate this day, let us remember the people who gave their lives for our national independence.

Notable First Celebrations of July 4th:

In **1777**, thirteen gunshots were fired, once in the morning and again as evening fell, in Bristol, Rhode Island.

Philadelphia celebrated the first anniversary in a manner a modern American would find quite familiar: an official dinner for the Continental Congress, glasses raised in a toast, a 13-gun salute, speeches, prayers, music, parades, troop reviews, and fireworks. Ships were decked with red, white, and blue bunting.

In **1778**, General George Washington marked July 4th with a double ration of rum for his soldiers and an artillery salute.

Across the Atlantic Ocean, ambassadors John Adams and Benjamin Franklin held a dinner for their fellow Americans in Paris, France.

In **1779**, July 4th fell on a Sunday. The holiday was celebrated on Monday, July 5th.

In **1781**, the Massachusetts General Court became the first state legislature to recognize July 4th as a state celebration.

In **1791** the first recorded use of the name "Independence Day" occurred.

In **1820** the first Fourth of July celebration was held in East Port, Maine which remains the largest in the state.

In **1870**, the U.S. Congress made Independence Day an unpaid holiday for federal employees. In 1938, Congress changed Independence Day to a paid federal holiday and as the saying goes – “*the rest is history!*”

Excerpt from the Declaration of Independence – July 4, 1776

“...We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness. That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed, That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness. Prudence, indeed, will dictate that Governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes; and accordingly all experience hath shewn, that mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed. But when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same Object evinces a design to reduce them under absolute Despotism, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such Government, and to provide new Guards for their future security. Such has been the patient sufferance of these Colonies; and such is now the necessity which constrains them to alter their former Systems of Government. The history of the present King of Great Britain is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations, all having in direct object the establishment of an absolute Tyranny over these States....”

And for the support of this Declaration, with a firm reliance on the protection of Divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes, and our sacred Honor.”

In 1776, our forefathers struggled for independence. Today we struggle to live in *inter-dependence*. May we have their courage to pledge *our lives, our resources, and our sacred honor* to make our world a sacred space where all can live together in peace and harmony.

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