

Colonial Unrest to Modern Celebrations: The History of the 4th

By Chris Sykes

The history of the Fourth of July dates back to the American Revolutionary War and the events leading up to the adoption of the Declaration of Independence. Here's a detailed look at the key historical moments and developments:

Prelude to Independence

Colonial Unrest: Throughout the 1760s and early 1770s, the American colonies experienced growing unrest due to British policies, including taxation without representation, the Stamp Act, and the Townshend Acts. These measures sparked widespread protests and resistance among the colonists.

First Continental Congress: In 1774, representatives from the colonies convened the First Continental Congress to address grievances against British rule and to organize a coordinated response. This was a significant step toward unity among the colonies.

Outbreak of War: The conflict escalated into open warfare in April 1775 with the battles of Lexington and Concord, marking the beginning of the American Revolutionary War.

Declaration of Independence

Second Continental Congress: In May 1775, the Second Continental Congress convened in Philadelphia. As the war continued, the push for complete independence from Britain gained momentum.

Drafting the Declaration: In June 1776, the Continental Congress appointed a committee to draft a declaration of independence. Thomas Jefferson was chosen to write the first draft, with input and

revisions from John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, Roger Sherman, and Robert R. Livingston.

Adoption of the Declaration: On July 2, 1776, the Continental Congress voted in favor of independence. Two days later, on July 4, 1776, the Declaration of Independence was formally adopted, announcing the colonies' separation from Britain and outlining the principles of individual liberty and government by consent of the governed.

Early Celebrations

First Celebrations: The first celebrations of independence began in 1777, with Philadelphia holding an official dinner, parades, and fireworks. Similar celebrations took place in other cities.

Continental Army Morale: General George Washington had the Declaration read to his troops to boost morale and reaffirm the

cause for which they were fighting.

Evolution of the Holiday

State Recognitions: Over the following years, various states began to recognize July 4th as a holiday, with celebrations including public readings of the Declaration, patriotic speeches, and community events.

Federal Holiday: In 1870, almost a century after the Declaration of Independence, Congress made the Fourth of July a federal holiday. It was further established as a paid holiday for federal employees in 1941.

Modern Celebrations

National Holiday: Today, the Fourth of July is celebrated across the United States with a wide range of festivities, including fireworks, parades, concerts, barbecues, and family gatherings. It is a day for Americans to express their

patriotism and reflect on the nation's history and values.

The Fourth of July remains a symbol of American freedom and independence, honoring the founding principles and the enduring spirit of the nation.

Here are some interesting facts about the Fourth of July:

John Adams' Prediction: John Adams, a key figure in the push for independence, believed that July 2nd, the day the Continental Congress voted for independence, would be celebrated as the nation's birthday. He famously wrote to his wife, Abigail, predicting that July 2nd would be celebrated "by succeeding generations, as the great anniversary festival."

Declaration Copies: After the adoption of the Declaration of Independence, it was printed and distributed to the colonies.

The first public reading of the document occurred on July 8, 1776, in Philadelphia's Independence Square.

Founding Fathers' Deaths: Both Thomas Jefferson and John Adams, two of the signers of the Declaration of Independence and former presidents, died on July 4, 1826, the 50th anniversary of the Declaration's adoption. James Monroe, the fifth president, also died on July 4, five years later in 1831.

Largest Fireworks Display: The Macy's Fourth of July Fireworks in New York City is one of the largest and most famous fireworks displays in the United States, attracting millions of viewers both in person and via broadcast.

National Anthem Connection: The tune of "The Star-Spangled Banner," the national anthem of the United States, was origi-

nally a drinking song from a British social club.

Flags and Decorations: Approximately \$1 billion is spent on fireworks each year in the United States. Additionally, Americans purchase millions of American flags, bunting, and other patriotic decorations to celebrate the holiday.

13-Gun Salute: The United States military observes Independence Day by firing a "Salute to the Union," a 50-gun salute, one for each state, at noon on July 4th at military bases.

Oldest Fourth of July Celebration: The oldest continuous Independence Day celebration in the United States is the Bristol Fourth of July Parade in Bristol, Rhode Island, which began in 1785.

Colonial Inspired Recipes: Many tradition-

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