

Happy 238th Birthday America 2014



This July 4 Americans are getting ready for a 3-day weekend with a day of family celebrations including picnics and barbecues, parades and fireworks.

“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.”

These famous words are all that most of us remember of our Declaration of Independence. Yet how many of us know the rest of the Declaration and what it consists of? How many of us know what brought about the resolve to create a new nation separate from Great Britain?

A little background is needed here, and not just because dates are always what they seem!

The American colonies had been founded to help expand the British economy and they provided a new society where those anxious to escape from life in Europe could go. Virginia was the first, founded in 1607 and the colonization of New England by the Pilgrim Fathers followed in 1620. For a century and half, the British government largely ignored the colonies.

Around the 1760's, the British tried to tax the Americans and despite British attempts, via law and force, to make the American colonies obey, time and again the Americans refused to pay. As dissatisfaction grew, British troops were sent in to quell the early movement toward rebellion. Repeated attempts by the colonists to resolve the crisis without military conflict proved fruitless. This led to British attempts to confiscate all colonial firearms, additional taxes, imprisonment and even capturing southern slaves and returning them after they were told to raise “discourse” amongst the slaves to help the British cause.

At this time few colonists' desired complete independence from Great Britain, and those who did were considered radical. By the middle of the following year, however, many more colonists had come to favor independence, thanks to growing hostility against Britain and the spread of revolutionary sentiments such as those expressed in Thomas Paine's bestselling pamphlet “*Common Sense*,” published in early 1776.

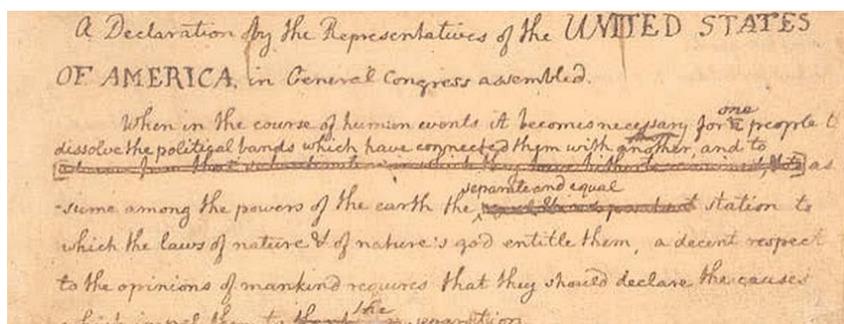
"*Taxation without representation!*" became the battle cry in America's 13 colonies, which were forced to pay taxes to England's King George III despite having no representation in the British Parliament.

On April 19th of 1775 the initial battles of our Revolutionary War broke out; starting with "*the shot heard round the world*" at North Bridge in Middlesex County, Province of Massachusetts Bay, within the towns of Lexington, Concord, Lincoln, Menotomy (present-day Arlington), and Cambridge, near Boston.

On June 7, 1776, when the Continental Congress met at the Pennsylvania State House (later Independence Hall) in Philadelphia, the Virginia delegate Richard Henry Lee introduced a motion calling for the colonies' independence. In session, Richard Henry Lee of Virginia presented a resolution with the famous words: "*Resolved: That these United Colonies are, and of right ought to be, free and independent States, that they are absolved from all allegiance to the British Crown, and that all political connection between them and the State of Great Britain is, and ought to be, totally dissolved.*" Which sparked a heated debate.



On June 11, consideration of the resolution was postponed by a vote of seven colonies to five, with New York abstaining. However, a Committee of Five was appointed to draft a statement presenting to the world the colonies' case for independence. Members of the Committee included John Adams of Massachusetts, Roger Sherman of Connecticut, Benjamin Franklin of Pennsylvania, Robert R. Livingston of New York and Thomas Jefferson of Virginia – to draft a formal statement justifying the break with Great Britain, with the task of drafting the actual document to be passed to Jefferson.



Between June 11 and June 28, 1776 Thomas Jefferson drafted the Declaration of Independence. Although the political philosophy of the Declaration was not new as its ideals of individual liberty had already been expressed by John Locke and the Continental philosophers. What Jefferson did was to

summarize this philosophy in "self-evident truths" and set forth a list of grievances against the King in order to justify before the world the breaking of ties between the colonies and the mother country.



On July 1, 1776, the Continental Congress reconvened, and on the following day, the Lee Resolution for independence was adopted by 12 of the 13 colonies, New York not voting. Discussions of Jefferson's Declaration of Independence resulted in some minor changes, but the spirit of the document was unchanged. (A copy of the original rough draught of the Declaration of Independence that Jefferson gave to Lee (courtesy of the Library of Congress) can be found @ <http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/treasures/images/uc004215.jpg>)

The process of revision continued through all of July 3 and into the late afternoon of the next day. A total of 86 changes were made to Jefferson's draft.

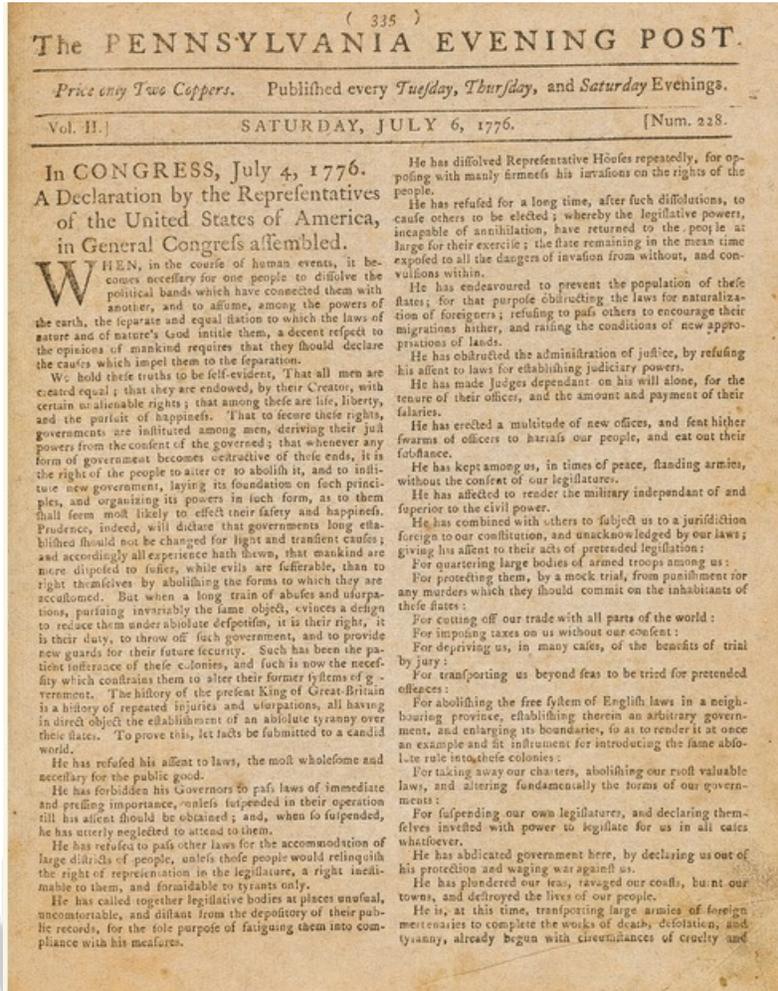


In the late afternoon of July 4, 1776 the Declaration was adopted by the Continental Congress. Of the 13 colonies, nine voted in favor of the Declaration, two -- Pennsylvania and South Carolina -- voted No, Delaware was undecided and New York abstained. When John Hancock, President of the Continental Congress, signed the Declaration of Independence, it is said that he signed his name "with a great flourish" so England's "King George can read that without spectacles!"

The Declaration of Independence was printed during the late afternoon on Thursday, July 4, by John Dunlap, a local Philadelphia printer. Congress ordered that copies be sent "to the several Assemblies, Conventions, and Committees or Councils of Safety, and to the several Commanding officers of the Continental Troops, that it be proclaimed in each of the United States, and at the head of the Army." By the next morning copies were on their way to all thirteen states by horseback.

On July 5, 1776 the German Pennsylvanischer Staatsbote, published by Heinrich Miller, became the new nations's first newspaper to announce that the Declaration had been adopted.

The following day, July 5, 1776, copies of the Declaration of Independence were distributed.



On Saturday, July 6, The *Pennsylvania Evening Post* became the first newspaper to print the full text of the Declaration.



On Monday, July 8, 1776, the Declaration of Independence was "proclaimed" (read aloud) by Col. John Nixon of the Philadelphia Committee of Safety at the State House in Philadelphia. It was also read again that evening before the militia on the Commons (Philadelphia's Independence Square). Throughout the

city, bells were rung all day. On that day as well the Declaration was publicly read in Easton, Pennsylvania, and Trenton, New Jersey.

It was these first public readings which constituted America's first celebrations of the Fourth of July. Typically in towns and cities across the nation accompanying the oral declarations were loud shouts, huzzas, firings of muskets, and the tearing down of the British emblems. In Baltimore, for example, on July 29, the town was illuminated and "*the Effigy of our late King was carted through the town and committed to the flames amidst the acclamations of many hundreds. The just reward of a Tyrant.*"

The Declaration of Independence has since become our nation's most cherished symbol of liberty.



Recap:

- 🇺🇸 April 19th of 1775 Revolutionary War commenced
- 🇺🇸 January 9 1776 Thomas Paine publishes his Common Sense pamphlet
- 🇺🇸 The Continental Congress meets on June 7, 1776 and Lee introduces a motion calling for the colonies' independence.
- 🇺🇸 June 11, 1776 Continental Congress postpones the vote on the independence motion and appoints a Committee of Five to draft a statement presenting to the world the colonies' case for independence and Thomas Jefferson begins his draft.
- 🇺🇸 Thomas Jefferson submitted the final draft to the Continental Congress on June 28th, 1776
- 🇺🇸 Continental Congress reconvenes on July 1, 1776
- 🇺🇸 On July 2, 1776, the Lee Resolution for independence is adopted by 12 of the 13 colonies.
- 🇺🇸 Revisions to the draft Declaration continue thru to July 4, 1776, which comprised 86 changes.
- 🇺🇸 Late in the afternoon of July 4, 1776 the Declaration was adopted by 9 of the 13 colonies.
- 🇺🇸 Copies of the Declaration were distributed on July 5, 1776
- 🇺🇸 On July 6, 1776 the Pennsylvania Evening Post became the first newspaper to print the Declaration
- 🇺🇸 The first public readings of the Declaration took place in Philadelphia's Independence Square on July 8, 1776
- 🇺🇸 The Declaration was signed on August 2, 1776
- 🇺🇸 The Declaration was delivered to Great Britain in November 1776
- 🇺🇸 On July 4, 1777, Independence Day in Philadelphia celebrated by adjourning Congress and celebrating with bonfires, bells and fireworks. The custom eventually spread.
- 🇺🇸 After the War of 1812 with Great Britain celebrations became even more common.
- 🇺🇸 In 1870, the U.S. Congress made July 4th a federal holiday

🇺🇸 In 1941, the provision was expanded to grant a paid holiday to all federal employees



As Jefferson drafted it, the Declaration of Independence was divided into five sections, including an introduction, a preamble, a body (divided into two sections) and a conclusion.

In general terms, the introduction effectively stated that seeking independence from Britain had become “necessary” for the colonies.

While the body of the document outlined a list of grievances against the British crown, the preamble includes its most famous passage:

“We hold these truths to be self-evident; that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable 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.”

With that in mind, on this July 4, let’s read our Declaration of Independence:



IN CONGRESS, July 4, 1776.

The unanimous Declaration of the thirteen united States of America,

When in the Course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation.

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. To prove this, let Facts be submitted to a candid world.

He has refused his Assent to Laws, the most wholesome and necessary for the public good. He has forbidden his Governors to pass Laws of immediate and pressing importance, unless suspended in their operation till his Assent should be obtained; and when so suspended, he has utterly neglected to attend to them.

He has refused to pass other Laws for the accommodation of large districts of people, unless those people would relinquish the right of Representation in the Legislature, a right inestimable to them and formidable to tyrants only.

He has called together legislative bodies at places unusual, uncomfortable, and distant from the depository of their public Records, for the sole purpose of fatiguing them into compliance with his measures.

He has dissolved Representative Houses repeatedly, for opposing with manly firmness his invasions on the rights of the people.

He has refused for a long time, after such dissolutions, to cause others to be elected; whereby the Legislative powers, incapable of Annihilation, have returned to the People at large for their exercise; the State remaining in the mean time exposed to all the dangers of invasion from without, and convulsions within.

He has endeavoured to prevent the population of these States; for that purpose obstructing the Laws for Naturalization of Foreigners; refusing to pass others to encourage their migrations hither, and raising the conditions of new Appropriations of Lands.

He has obstructed the Administration of Justice, by refusing his Assent to Laws for establishing Judiciary powers.

He has made Judges dependent on his Will alone, for the tenure of their offices, and the amount and payment of their salaries.

He has erected a multitude of New Offices, and sent hither swarms of Officers to harrass our people, and eat out their substance.

He has kept among us, in times of peace, Standing Armies without the Consent of our Legislatures.

He has affected to render the Military independent of and superior to the Civil power.

He has combined with others to subject us to a jurisdiction foreign to our constitution, and unacknowledged by our Laws; giving his Assent to their Acts of pretended Legislation:

For quartering large bodies of armed troops among us:

For protecting them, by a mock Trial, from punishment for any Murders which they should commit on the Inhabitants of these States:

For cutting off our Trade with all parts of the world:

For imposing Taxes on us without our Consent:

For depriving us in many cases, of the benefits of Trial by Jury:

For transporting us beyond Seas to be tried for pretended offences

For abolishing the free System of English Laws in a neighbouring Province, establishing therein an Arbitrary government, and enlarging its Boundaries so as to render it at once an example and fit instrument for introducing the same absolute rule into these Colonies:

For taking away our Charters, abolishing our most valuable Laws, and altering fundamentally the Forms of our Governments:

For suspending our own Legislatures, and declaring themselves invested with power to legislate for us in all cases whatsoever.

He has abdicated Government here, by declaring us out of his Protection and waging War against us.

He has plundered our seas, ravaged our Coasts, burnt our towns, and destroyed the lives of our people.

He is at this time transporting large Armies of foreign Mercenaries to compleat the works of death, desolation and tyranny, already begun with circumstances of Cruelty & perfidy scarcely paralleled in the most barbarous ages, and totally unworthy the Head of a civilized nation.

He has constrained our fellow Citizens taken Captive on the high Seas to bear Arms against their Country, to become the executioners of their friends and Brethren, or to fall themselves by their Hands.

He has excited domestic insurrections amongst us, and has endeavoured to bring on the

inhabitants of our frontiers, the merciless Indian Savages, whose known rule of warfare, is an undistinguished destruction of all ages, sexes and conditions.

In every stage of these Oppressions We have Petitioned for Redress in the most humble terms: Our repeated Petitions have been answered only by repeated injury. A Prince whose character is thus marked by every act which may define a Tyrant, is unfit to be the ruler of a free people.

Nor have We been wanting in attentions to our Brittish brethren. We have warned them from time to time of attempts by their legislature to extend an unwarrantable jurisdiction over us. We have reminded them of the circumstances of our emigration and settlement here. We have appealed to their native justice and magnanimity, and we have conjured them by the ties of our common kindred to disavow these usurpations, which, would inevitably interrupt our connections and correspondence. They too have been deaf to the voice of justice and of consanguinity. We must, therefore, acquiesce in the necessity, which denounces our Separation, and hold them, as we hold the rest of mankind, Enemies in War, in Peace Friends.

We, therefore, the Representatives of the united States of America, in General Congress, Assembled, appealing to the Supreme Judge of the world for the rectitude of our intentions, do, in the Name, and by Authority of the good People of these Colonies, solemnly publish and declare, That these united Colonies are, and of Right ought to be Free and Independent States; that they are Absolved from all Allegiance to the British Crown, and that all political connection between them and the State of Great Britain, is and ought to be totally dissolved; and that as Free and Independent States, they have full Power to levy War, conclude Peace, contract Alliances, establish Commerce, and to do all other Acts and Things which Independent States may of right do. 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.

The 56 signatures on the Declaration appear in the positions indicated:

Column 1

Georgia:

Button Gwinnett
Lyman Hall
George Walton

Column 2

North Carolina:

William Hooper
Joseph Hewes
John Penn

South Carolina:

Edward Rutledge

Column 3

Massachusetts:

John Hancock
Maryland:
Samuel Chase
William Paca
Thomas Stone

Thomas Heyward, Jr.
Thomas Lynch, Jr.
Arthur Middleton

Charles Carroll of Carrollton
Virginia:
George Wythe
Richard Henry Lee
Thomas Jefferson
Benjamin Harrison
Thomas Nelson, Jr.
Francis Lightfoot Lee
Carter Braxton

Column 4

Pennsylvania:

Robert Morris
Benjamin Rush
Benjamin Franklin
John Morton
George Clymer
James Smith
George Taylor
James Wilson
George Ross

Delaware:

Caesar Rodney
George Read
Thomas McKean

Column 5

New York:

William Floyd
Philip Livingston
Francis Lewis
Lewis Morris

New Jersey:

Richard Stockton
John Witherspoon
Francis Hopkinson
John Hart
Abraham Clark

Column 6

New Hampshire:

Josiah Bartlett
William Whipple

Massachusetts:

Samuel Adams
John Adams
Robert Treat Paine
Elbridge Gerry

Rhode Island:

Stephen Hopkins
William Ellery

Connecticut:

Roger Sherman
Samuel Huntington
William Williams
Oliver Wolcott

New Hampshire:

Matthew Thornton

Declaration Transcript URL: http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/charters/declaration_transcript.html

July 4 Fun Facts

The Celebration of July 4

For the first 15 or 20 years after the Declaration was written, people didn't celebrate it much on any date. It was too new and too much else was happening in the young nation.

By the 1790s, a time of bitter partisan conflicts, the Declaration had become controversial. One party, the Democratic-Republicans, admired Jefferson and the Declaration. But the other party, the Federalists, thought the Declaration was too French and too anti-British, which went against their current policies.

By 1817, John Adams complained in a letter that America seemed uninterested in its past.

After the War of 1812 with Great Britain, the Federalist party began to come apart and many of the new parties all considered themselves inheritors of Jefferson's Democratic-Republican principles, so they started to print and circulate or read copies of the Declaration on July 4 once again.

Celebrations of the Fourth of July became more common as the years went on and in 1870, almost a hundred years after the Declaration was written, Congress first declared July 4 to be a national holiday as part of a bill to officially recognize several holidays, including Christmas.

The deaths of Thomas Jefferson and John Adams on July 4, 1826, may even have helped to promote the idea of July 4 as an important date to be celebrated.

Observations throughout the nation became more and more common with readings of the Declaration, distribution of copies of the Declaration, bonfires and illuminations. These customs eventually spread to other towns, both large and small, and the day was marked with processions, oratory, picnics, contests, games, military displays and fireworks.

Today, communities across the nation mark this major midsummer holiday with parades, firework displays, picnics and performances of *The Star-Spangled Banner* and marches by John Philip Sousa.

An interesting and fun infographic called ***4th of July by the Numbers*** can be viewed @ <http://www.history.com/topics/holidays/july-4th/interactives/4th-of-july-by-the-numbers>

Did You Know?

One of the inspirations for the American Declaration of Independence was the Plakkaat van Verlattinghe of 1581 in which the Dutch abjured the King of Spain as their sovereign.

Did You Know?

We celebrate Constitution Day on September 17th of each year, the anniversary of the date the Constitution was signed, not the anniversary of the date it was approved. If we'd followed this same approach for the Declaration of Independence we'd be celebrating Independence Day on August 2nd of each year, the day the Declaration of Independence was signed.

Did You Know?

After leaving Washington, Thomas Jefferson spent the last two decades of his life at Monticello. He died on July 4, 1826--hours before his good friend and former political rival John Adams--on the 50th anniversary of the adoption of the Declaration of Independence.

In 1774, Jefferson wrote "*A Summary View of the Rights of British America*," in which he claimed that the colonies were tied to the king only by voluntary bonds of loyalty. Published as a political pamphlet without Jefferson's permission, this document extended Jefferson's reputation beyond Virginia, and he became known as an eloquent voice for the cause of American independence from Britain. In the spring of 1775, shortly after skirmishes broke out between colonial militiamen and British soldiers at Lexington and Concord, the Virginia legislature sent Jefferson as a delegate to the Second Continental Congress in Philadelphia.

Did You Know?

Most Americans did not know Thomas Jefferson was the principal author of the Declaration of Independence until the 1790s; before that, the document was seen as a collective effort by the entire Continental Congress.

Thomas Jefferson wasn't recognized as the principal author of the Declaration of Independence until the 1790s; until then the document was presented as a collective effort by the entire Continental Congress.

Did You Know?

John Adams believed that July 2nd was the correct date on which to celebrate the birth of American independence, and would reportedly turn down invitations to appear at July 4th events in protest. Adams and Thomas Jefferson both died on July 4, 1826--the 50th anniversary of the adoption of the Declaration of Independence.

On July 2nd, the Continental Congress voted in favor of Lee's resolution for independence in a near-unanimous vote (the New York delegation abstained, but later voted affirmatively). On that day, John Adams wrote to his wife Abigail that July 2 "*will be celebrated, by succeeding Generations, as the great anniversary Festival*" and that the celebration should include "*Pomp and Parade...Games, Sports, Guns, Bells, Bonfires and Illuminations from one End of this Continent to the other.*"

Did You Know?

In June of 1826, Thomas Jefferson sent a letter to Roger C. Weightman, declining an invitation to come to Washington, D.C. to help celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence. It was the last letter that Jefferson, who was gravely ill, ever wrote. In it, Jefferson says of the document:

"May it be to the world, what I believe it will be ... the signal of arousing men to burst the chains ... and to assume the blessings and security of self-government. That form, which we have substituted, restores the free right to the unbounded exercise of reason and freedom of opinion. All eyes are opened, or opening, to the rights of man. ...For ourselves, let the annual return of this day forever refresh our recollections of these rights, and an undiminished devotion to them."

- Thomas Jefferson
June 24, 1826 Monticello

Declaration of Independence Quiz

1. What was the actual month that the Declaration of Independence was signed?
2. What was NOT one of the "inalienable rights" proclaimed in the Declaration of Independence?
3. Is it true that the Stamp Act was passed in Britain because of the Declaration of Independence?
4. In what state did Thomas Jefferson draft the Declaration of Independence?
5. Who inspired the words that were written in the Declaration of Independence?

6. Is it true that John Hancock was the first man to sign the Declaration of Independence because he was President of the Second Continental Congress?
7. Which one of the thirteen colonies was the only colony that didn't initially vote on the acceptance of the Declaration of Independence?
8. Where was the first public reading of the Declaration of Independence held?
9. Which member of the drafting committee never signed the Declaration of Independence?
10. Where does the Declaration of Independence call its home?

Answers:

1. August, 1776. The Declaration was adopted on July 4, 1776, but no one was able to sign it until August 2, 1776. Until August 2, 1776, there was only one signature on the Declaration of Independence and that was of John Hancock.
2. Free speech. Inalienable rights are rights that are given to individuals and cannot be taken away from them. The second paragraph of the Declaration of Independence states that the inalienable rights given the Americans are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. This line is considered the preamble to the Declaration of Independence.
3. False - The Boston Tea Party and the Stamp Act occurred before the Declaration of Independence had even been drafted. The Stamp Act was the first act placed on Americans. The taxes put on Americans was one of the reasons for the Declaration of Independence. A line written in the Declaration of Independence states it was written because of the taxes imposed on Americans without their consent.
4. Pennsylvania. Thomas Jefferson was the one man in a delegation of six that wrote the Declaration of Independence. He was given the task because the other delegates told him they had other things to do. In a small room belonging to Jacob Graff, Thomas Jefferson drafted the Declaration of Independence in two weeks.
5. John Locke. Thomas Jefferson used some of the words from John Locke's writings in the Declaration of Independence. For instance, John Locke used the phrase 'life, liberty, and property' in the second chapter of his book "Second Treatise of Government". Thomas Jefferson changed the last line and wrote in the Declaration of Independence 'life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness'. George Mason, delegate for the state of Virginia, also used a line similar to John Locke's when he wrote the Virginia Declaration of Rights.
6. True - John Hancock was born in Quincy, Massachusetts on January 12, 1737. In May of 1775, John Hancock became the third president of the Continental Congress. He was the first person to sign the Declaration of Independence. He was the only person to sign the draft on July 4, 1776.
7. New York. New York didn't officially accept the Declaration of Independence on July 9th. They held out on a vote because they couldn't go against anything that would keep them from reconciliation with Britain. By August, the convention of New York finally authorized their four delegates to sign the Declaration of Independence.
8. Independence Square outside of what is now Independence Hall. According to a letter written by John Adams, the Declaration of Independence was read on the lawn of Independence Hall by John Nixon. A large crowd was gathered on the lawn on July 8, 1776 and cheered upon the reading. The names of the signers on the Declaration of Independence were released in January of 1777.
9. Robert Livingston. Robert Livingston never had the chance to sign the Declaration of Independence because he returned home before everyone officially signed the paper on August 2nd. If Robert had signed he would have signed from his home state of New York. John Dickinson from Pennsylvania and Thomas Lynch from South Carolina were also unable to sign due to personal reasons.
10. National Archives. After the Declaration of Independence had been written and traveled to different cities, the ink had begun to ruin and the document become tattered. In order to keep it from being damaged any further, the Department of State took possession of it in 1894 and kept it in a safe on the premises. In 1921, the Library of Congress took possession of it. Finally, in 1952, the U.S. National Archives took the document and placed it in a final resting place among their exhibits.

Today as we pop the cap on that cold one and start the grill, let us remember that today is a celebration to the fortitude, gumption and tenaciousness of our Founding Fathers and what they chose to do so long ago ...

God Bless America and have a Happy & Safe 4th

TNTCrazyLady

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