Most of us tend to think that we celebrate the Fourth of July because that is the day we received our Independence from England. We are on the right track, yet not entirely correct.

Way back in the 18th century the United States was not considered the United States. In fact, what we now call states were actually called colonies. The United States was actually an extension of England. People traveled from England aboard ships to settle in America, but eventually differences in life, thought, and interests began to develop which caused a rift between Britain and America.
When the colonies were first settled they were allowed to pretty much develop freely without hardly any interface from Britain, but things abruptly changed in 1763. Britain suddenly decided that they needed to take more control over the colonies. Britain decided that the colonies needed to return revenue to the mother country and they needed to pay for the colonies defense, which was being provided by Britain. But the colonies did not agree with these new rules at all. They felt that since they were not represented in Parliament that they shouldn’t have to pay any kinds of taxes to the mother country, hence the saying “no taxation without representation”?. When Britain continued to tax, the colonies formed the First Continental Congress to persuade the British government to recognize their rights. When this didn’t work a war was declared, which is known as the American Revolution.

After the First Continental Congress failed to persuade Britain to recognize the colonies’ rights, and war was declared, things began to heat up. Many people who were both considered moderates and radicals had decided that enough was enough and that any kind of taxation without representation was considered tyranny. People such as John Adams, Samuel Adams, and Ben Franklin, as well as a group called the Sons of Liberty decided that it was time to unite all of the colonies and to stand together against Britain.

During the course of the American Revolution a second Continental Congress was formed. It is this group that adopted the final draft of the Declaration of Independence. The Declaration of Independence was drafted by John Adams, Ben Franklin, Thomas Jefferson, Robert R. Livingston, and Roger Sherman. After the first draft was written by Thomas Jefferson, it was revised by Ben Franklin, John Adams, and Thomas Jefferson before it was sent to Congress for approval. All thirteen colonies stood behind the Declaration of Independence and adopted it in full on July 4, 1776.
This is where the Fourth of July holiday comes in. The Fourth of July is known as Independence Day because that is the day that the Second Continental Congress adopted the full and formal Declaration of Independence. Even though we had declared that we were independent, the American Revolution was still being fought, which meant that we were still not independent.

Regardless of the ongoing war the following year, people in Philadelphia celebrated a muted Fourth of July.

While celebrations on July 4th during the American Revolution were modest, after the war ended in 1783 the Fourth of July became a holiday in many places. The celebrations included speeches, military events, parades, and fireworks. To this day the Fourth of July is the most patriotic holiday celebrated in the United States.
Timeline of the July 4th Holiday

1777 - Thirteen gunshots were fired, once at morning and again as evening fell, on July 4 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, toasts, 13-gun salutes, speeches, prayers, music, parades, troop reviews, and fireworks. Ships were decked with red, white, and blue bunting.

1778 - General George Washington marked July 4 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.

1779 - July 4 fell on a Sunday. The holiday was celebrated on Monday, July 5.

1781 - The Massachusetts General Court became the first state legislature to recognize July 4 as a state celebration.

1783 - Moravians in Salem, North Carolina, held a celebration of July 4 with a challenging music program assembled by Johann Friedrich Peter. This work was titled "The Psalm of Joy".

1791 - The first recorded use of the name "Independence Day" occurred.

1820 - The first Fourth of July celebration was held in Eastport, Maine which remains the largest in the state.

1870 - The U.S. Congress made Independence Day an unpaid holiday for federal employees.

1938 - Congress changed Independence Day to a paid federal holiday.

When was July 4th “legalized” as a holiday?
To get the Fourth of July established as a national holiday, numerous legislations were passed. But what is really surprising is how much federal legislation was passed to get the Fourth of July recognized as a federal holiday.

**Timeline federal legislation passed to make July 4th a national holiday**

1870 – Senator Hannibal Hamlin introduced a Senate Bill titled “Legal Holidays in the District”. This bill was designed to establish the Fourth of July as a holiday for federal employees and the District of Columbia, but it was not to be a paid holiday.

1938 –“The Fourth of July was legislated as a federal holiday with pay for federal employees by a joint resolution of Congress.

1941 –“Robert Ramspeck, Chairman, Committee on the Civil Service of the House of Representatives, brought to Congress’ attention that the legislation that was passed in 1938 failed to specify that employees of the Government of the District of Columbia would have the day off with pay. So in 1941 a “Holiday Leave for Per Diem Employees of the District of Columbia” amendment was added to the law that was passed in 1938.

1959 –“Congress passed an act that stated if the Fourth of July holiday occurred on a Saturday that the day before the holiday would be considered the public holiday and employees of the federal government and the District of Columbia were to get the preceding day off with pay.

1991 –“Congress through the years has passed legislation or introduced bills that designated certain Fourth of July holidays with patriotic themes, such as “July 4th Family Celebration Day”.
Notice that all of the laws that were passed only talked about federal employees and employees of the District of Columbia. State employees or regular employees weren’t mentioned in the new laws that declared the Fourth of July as a federal holiday. The reason for this is that in the United States there is no such thing as a national holiday; a national holiday would be a holiday that is observed in all fifty states. The President and Congress can only legally establish an “official” holiday for its “federal” employees and the District of Columbia.

So how come all of the different states observe the Fourth of July holiday if the federal government is only responsible for establishing holidays for the federal government and the District of Columbia? The answer to this is that our our states still retain their independent sovereignty where each state and municipalities are free to adopt holidays that are celebrated by the federal government and they can create their own. So in order to establish the Fourth of July as a holiday the states had to establish it as a holiday.

There are several ways that a state can establish a holiday:

• Enactment of a law issued by a state legislature or by an executive proclamation, which is an order from a state governor.
• An act of confirmation
• City may enact an ordinance regarding the celebration of the Fourth of July
Although there is a federal law that has been passed stating that if the Fourth of July falls on a Saturday it will be observed the preceding day, which is Friday, there is no law that has been passed about what day the holiday will be celebrated if it falls on a Sunday. Because no law has ever been passed about this topic different cities and states will celebrate the Fourth of July on a Monday, while others will celebrate it on Monday.

How Did Fireworks Become a 4th of July Tradition?

Fireworks have actually been a large part of the 5th of July ever since the first Independence Day in 1776.

The practice of firing fireworks at important events started long before the founding of the 4th of July.
The Chinese were the first to invent fireworks, sometime between the years 960 and 1279 AD. The Chinese thought the loud sounds and sparkling colors warded off evil spirits, and they often shot them at important events such as Emperor’s birthdays and other Chinese holidays. Fireworks are credited with being brought to Europe by Marco Polo sometime in the 1200s. After their introduction, the English often used fireworks to celebrate birthdays and other special events.

The first time fireworks were used to celebrate July 4th was on July 8th, 1776. According to History.com, some of the fireworks used may have been used mockingly, because in England fireworks were used as a birthday celebration for the kings and queens. Firing the fireworks to celebrate the separation of the colonies from England was to some the celebration of the "death" of the king's power over them.

The next year, on July 4th, 1777, the first official July 4th celebration was held. This day was celebrated with the firing of guns, cannons, bonfires and fireworks. Philadelphia was the first city to celebrate July 4th in this manner (which was the capitol of the United States at the time). Other cities soon took up the practice of firing guns and fireworks on July 4th as well.
July 4th was not declared an official federal holiday until 1941. Before then the 4th of July was still celebrated around the country but in a less official capacity. Once July 4th was named a federal holiday, more people than ever started using fireworks as a part of their Independence Day celebrations.

Today, nearly everyone celebrates July 4th with fireworks of some kind. Almost every city in the country has its own special July 4th fireworks displays. Families use sparkers and firecrackers at their own homes to celebrate our nation's independence. Firework stands are typically only open two times during the year: once around January 1st and once around July 4th.

For a Safer Fireworks

Try to attend public fireworks displays. The shows are safer and are meant for better displays than what might be achieved at your home.

For a list Albuquerque public displays see: http://events.kob.com/default.aspx?ct=r&q=fireworks

However, if you must use fireworks, be sure to follow certain safety rules.

Remember:

**New Mexico is under a fireworks ban due to a severe drought and existing wildfires.** So, the first thing you should do is to check out with the fire department if the fireworks are legal in your community.

Each year people suffer burns, loss of eyesight, burst eardrums and other injuries, and property is damaged because of fireworks.

**Words of caution:**

Common fireworks are explosives and must be handled with care and respect to prevent injury and property damage.

If fireworks are allowed in your community, know the rules to be followed (no bottle rockets, etc) and some common sense do’s and don'ts:

**The Do's**
July 4th A Day to Reflect - Continued

• Obey your city or town ordinance on the use of fireworks.
• Always purchase high quality fireworks from reliable sources.
• Follow the printed instructions carefully, and use common sense.
• Never use fireworks in glass or metal containers.
• Never point or throw fireworks at another person.
• Use fireworks outdoors only in a clear area away from houses and buildings.
• Light only one item at a time, then move back quickly once the fuse is ignited.
• Keep all other fireworks at a safe distance from where they are being discharged.
• Never experiment with homemade fireworks.
• Make sure adults supervise the firing of all fireworks.
• Always wear safety goggles when using fireworks.

The Don'ts:

• Never try illegal explosives.
• Never experiment or make your own fireworks.
• Never give fireworks to small children (below 12).
• Never throw or point fireworks at other people.
• Never re-light a "dud" firework (wait 15 to 20 minutes and then soak it in water).

• Have an adult supervise the use of all fireworks.
• Always read and follow label directions.
• Have an adult present.
• Buy from reliable sellers.
• Use outdoors only.
• Make sure to have all flammable and combustible materials removed from the area of shooting and landing.
• Always have water handy (a garden hose and a bucket).
• Light only one firework at a time.
• Use a "punk", instead of the lighters and matches, for a safer ignition.
• If necessary, store fireworks in a cool, dry place. And, away from any source of fire.
• Soak the burnt out fireworks in water and dispose of them in a trashcan.
• Make sure to wear eye protection while shooting.
• Stay away from illegal explosives.

• Never have any part of the body over the firework.
• Never carry fireworks in your pocket.
• Never shoot fireworks in metal or glass containers.
• Never ignite aerial fireworks near, or, below a tree, overhead wires, or anything that may obstruct the flight.
• Never ignite aerial fireworks near an opening, e.g. a door, a window. ENJOY!

A 4th of July Quiz
1. When did the Continental Congress actually pass a resolution of Independence?

   a) July 1  
   b) July 2  
   c) July 3

2. Who was on the committee assembled to draft the declaration?

   b) Samuel Adams, Ben Franklin, Thomas Jefferson, Robert Livingston, and John Hancock.  
   c) John Adams, Ben Franklin, Thomas Jefferson, Robert Livingston, and Roger Sherman.

3. What was one of the reasons that Adams told Jefferson, the youngest man on the committee, to draft a declaration?

   a) Jefferson was from Massachusetts, a politically powerful state.  
   b) Adams knew that he was unpopular and considered obnoxious by many delegates. In order for the declaration to be accepted, he had to keep a low profile.  
   c) Adams wanted to challenge Jefferson to improve his writing skills by drafting an important document.

4. Which of the following was something Congress cut out of Jefferson's draft of the declaration?

   a) They removed all references to slavery.  
   b) They removed all references to women.  
   c) They removed a paragraph written in Latin.

5. Which two key players in the history of Independence died on the fiftieth anniversary of the declaration?

   a) Thomas Jefferson and John Hancock  
   b) Thomas Jefferson and John Adams  
   c) Benjamin Franklin and John Adams

Answers at the end of this document
Lest we forget the struggle and sacrifice it took so we may celebrate today...

Most Gracious and Loving Creator,

We thank you for the beauty that is all around us. Your Holiness lays hold of our hearts and minds by what we see and we give you thanks and praise. We thank you, Lord GOD, for the joys of life and the ties of Love that exist among your church family. On this day that we call Independence Day - A day when we remember the Declaration of Independence - defend, O Lord, this graciously given land from misuse of power, distrust of neighbor and stranger, corruption in commerce and goods, and the illusions of wealth. Lord, GOD, give unto our Government a due respect for your sovereign rule over all nations. Enter their hearts that they may govern by compassion for peoples everywhere.

May we never forget that our first allegiance is to you and your Holy word. As we come before your table of grace and mercy this morning, let us hold thanksgiving at Christ's feast and give praise for the bread and the wine. And
Lord, GOD, let us rejoice as we are in a country where we are free to worship you in spirit and truth.

There is no greater feeling of liberation than to experience this freedom from sin and death that you have provided for me through Jesus Christ. Today my heart and my soul are free to praise you. For this I am very thankful.

On this Independence Day I am reminded of all those who have sacrificed for my freedom, following the example of your Son, Jesus Christ. Let me not take my freedom, both physical and spiritual, for granted. May I always remember that my freedom was purchases with a very high price. My freedom cost others their very lives.

Lord, today, bless those who have served and continue to give their lives for my freedom. With favor and bounty meet their needs and watch over their families.

Help me to live my life in a way that glorifies you, Lord. Give me the strength to be a blessing in someone else's life today, and grant me the opportunity to lead others into the freedom that can be found in knowing You.

AMEN

http://nethugs.com/independence-day/our-independence-day/

4th of July Trivia & Facts
The major objection to being ruled by Britain was taxation without representation. The colonists had no say in the decisions of English Parliament.

In May, 1776, after nearly a year of trying to resolve their differences with England, the colonies sent delegates to the Second Continental Congress. Finally, in June, admitting that their efforts were hopeless; a committee was formed to compose the formal Declaration of Independence. Headed by Thomas Jefferson, the committee also included John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, Philip Livingston and Roger Sherman. On June 28, 1776, Thomas Jefferson presented the first draft of the declaration to Congress.

Betsy Ross, according to legend, sewed the first American flag in May or June 1776, as commissioned by the Congressional Committee.

Independence Day was first celebrated in Philadelphia on July 8, 1776.

July 4, 1776 - Continental Congress approved the Declaration of Independence.

July 8, 1776 - First celebration of Independence Day in Philadelphia, PA, at with a reading of the Declaration of Independence in public at Independence Hall.

June 14, 1777 - Continental Congress officially adopted the national flag.

July 4, 1804 - First 4th of July celebration at the White House.

July 4th, 1805 - Lewis & Clark observed the first Independence Day west of the Mississippi at Independence Creek.

July 4, 1826 - Death of both John Adams and Thomas Jefferson.

1941 - July 4th declared a Federal holiday by Congress.

30 American towns or cities have liberty in their names

11 town or city names contain the word independence

5 towns or cities use the term freedom in their official names

5 towns or cities use the term in their official names

1 town in Indiana is called, simply, Patriot
July 4th A Day to Reflect - Continued

- The United States Declaration of Independence is an act of the Second Continental Congress.
- The United States Declaration of Independence was adopted on July 4, 1776.
- The United States Declaration of Independence declared that the Thirteen Colonies in North America we “free and independent states.”?
- The Declaration explained the justifications for separation from the British crown.
- It was also an expansion of Richard Henry Lee’s Resolution which had been passed on July 2.
- The Declaration of Independence is on display in the National Archives and Records Administration in Washington, D.C.
- The Declaration of Independence is considered to be the founding document of the United States of America.
- Americans celebrate Independence on July 4 which was the day that the Declaration was adopted.
- John Hancock was the first and only person to sign the Declaration on July 4, 1776.
- John Hancock was the President of the Continental Congress at the time of the signing of the Declaration of Independence.
- The remaining 54 delegates did not sign the Declaration until August 2, 1776.
- The Second Continental Congress formed a committee known today as “The Committee of Five. It consisted of John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson, Robert R. Livingston, and Roger Sherman.
- The Committee of Five was to come up with a draft for the Declaration. The Committee decided that Jefferson would write the Declaration.
- The Committee of Five first presented the document to Congress on June 28, 1776.

Thomas Jefferson and the Declaration House

- Jefferson was born in to a wealthy family in the United States owning many slaves.
- Although he John Adams and Benjamin Franklin helped Jefferson with the Declaration, Thomas Jefferson is the actual author of the Declaration of Independence.
- In 1776 he was part of a Virginia delegation that planned to ask the Second Continental Congress to sever ties from Great Britain.
- Jefferson did not like being in the middle of the city, so he found a room at Jacob Graff’s home.
- Jacob Graff was a bricklayer who had built his house on the outskirts of town.
• Thomas Jefferson wrote the Declaration of Independence in under three weeks.
• The original Graff House was torn down in 1883, but has since been restored and is part of the National Park Service.
• In 1776 Jefferson proposed a motto for the United States Seal. It read, “Rebellion to tyrants is Obedience to God.”? He suggested that the seal image should be something from the Biblical Hebrews being rescued by God via the Red Sea.
• Thomas Jefferson died on July 4, 1826 which was the 50th anniversary of the adoption of the Declaration of Independence.
• Thomas Jefferson left his home “Monticello” to the United States to be used as a school for orphans of navy officers.
• His tombstone read, “Here was buried Thomas Jefferson, Author of the Declaration of Independence, The Statue of Virginia for Religious Freedom, And Father of the University of Virginia.

Modern

• At least 150 million hot dogs are expected to be eaten this 4th of July (about 1 per every 2 Americans)
• There will be more than 74 million bar-b-cues (lots of those hot dogs will be grilled)
• In 2010, the United States imported $3.2 million of American flags; about $2.8 million worth from China
• A great deal of our fireworks also originate in China at the explosive cost of $190.7 million (2010 figure).
• July 4, 2011 - U.S. Population estimate = 311.7 million (compared to just 2.5 million in July, 1776)
Have you ever wondered what happened to the 56 men who signed the Declaration of Independence?

- Five signers were captured by the British as traitors and tortured before they died.
- Twelve had their homes ransacked and burned.
- Two lost their sons in the Revolutionary Army, another had two sons captured.
- Nine of the 56 fought and died from wounds or the hardships of the Revolutionary War.

They signed and pledged their lives, their fortunes, and their sacred honor.

**What kind of men were they?**

- Twenty-four were lawyers and jurists.
- Eleven were merchants, nine were farmers and large plantation owners, men of means, well educated.

**But they signed the Declaration of Independence knowing full well that the penalty would be death if they were captured.**

- Carter Braxton of Virginia, a wealthy planter and trader, saw his ships swept from the seas by the British navy. He sold his home and his properties to pay his debts, and died in rags.
- Thomas McKeam was so hounded by the British that he was forced to move his family almost constantly. He served in Congress without pay, and his family was kept in hiding. His possessions were taken from him and poverty was his reward.
- Vandals or soldiers, or both, looted the properties of Ellery, Clymer, Hall, Walton, Gwinnett, Heyward, Rutledge, and Middleton.
• At the battle of Yorktown, Thomas Nelson, Jr. noted that the British General Cornwallis had taken over the Nelson home for his headquarters. The owner quietly urged General George Washington to open fire. The home was destroyed, and Nelson died bankrupt.

• Francis Lewis had his home and properties destroyed. The enemy jailed his wife, and she died within a few months.

• John Hart was driven from his wife's bedside as she was dying. Their 13 children fled for their lives. His fields and his grist mill were laid to waste. For more than a year he lived in forests and caves, returning home to find his wife dead and his children vanished. A few weeks later he died from exhaustion and a broken heart.

• Norris and Livingston suffered similar fates.

Such are the stories and sacrifices of the American Revolution. These were not wild-eyed, rabblerousing ruffians. They were soft spoken men of means and education. **They had security, but they valued liberty more.**

Standing tall, straight, and unwavering, they pledged:

"For the support of this declaration, with the firm reliance on the protection of the Divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other, our lives, our fortunes, and our sacred honor."

Is it no wonder then, that Samuel Adams said:

"If you love wealth more than liberty, the tranquility of servitude better than the animating contest of freedom, go home from us in peace. We ask not your counsels or arms. Crouch down and lick the hands which feed you. May your chain be set lightly upon you and may posterity forget ye were our countrymen."

What then, is freedom worth to you? And what will you do to pay back the debt we owe to those who sacrificed their lives, their fortunes, and their sacred honor?

Did they die in vain, or in Honor? That decision rests in our actions, as to what we do with this precious gift known as the Constitution, and the Bill of Rights.

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**Quiz Answers**

1. The correct answer is (B) On July 2nd, the Lee-Adams resolution of independence was adopted, and many thought that would be the date celebrated as America’s birthday.
2. The correct answer is (C) John Adams, Ben Franklin, Thomas Jefferson, Robert Livingston, and Roger Sherman. John Adams, Ben Franklin, Robert Livingston of New York, and Roger Sherman of Connecticut were all on the committee. Thomas Jefferson was also selected because Virginia was so politically powerful.

3. The correct answer is (B) Adams knew that he was unpopular and considered obnoxious by many delegates. In order for the declaration to be accepted, he had to keep a low profile. There were three main reasons that factored into Adams’ decision: First, the thirty-three-year-old Jefferson was a Virginian. “Virginia was the largest, richest, and most politically powerful of all the colonies,” elaborated author Kenneth C. Davis. “He [Adams] understood there were some public relations to be done.”

Second, Adams knew that he himself was unpopular and considered obnoxious by many delegates. “[Adams] was a very smart man, but it didn’t take a genius to figure out that he wasn’t popular in the summer of 1776. In order for [the Declaration of Independence] to be acceptable to people, he had to be low-profile,” says Davis. Finally, Adams said Jefferson could “write ten times better than I can.”

Explains Davis: “Adams did write some wonderful things over the course of his life, but Jefferson was a bit more poetic.”

4. The correct answer is (A) They removed all references to slavery. The Congress made 86 changes, which eliminated 480 of Jefferson’s words. Most important was the removal of all references to slavery, “the execrable commerce,” which Jefferson, a slaveholder himself, had blamed on King George.

5. The correct answer is (B) Thomas Jefferson and John Adams. Thomas Jefferson and John Adams both died within hours of each other on July 4, 1826. Benjamin Franklin died on April 17, 1790, and John Hancock died on October 8, 1793.