



1776

to

2026



AMERICA

250th Anniversary

JULY 1776 · THE BIRTH OF A NATION

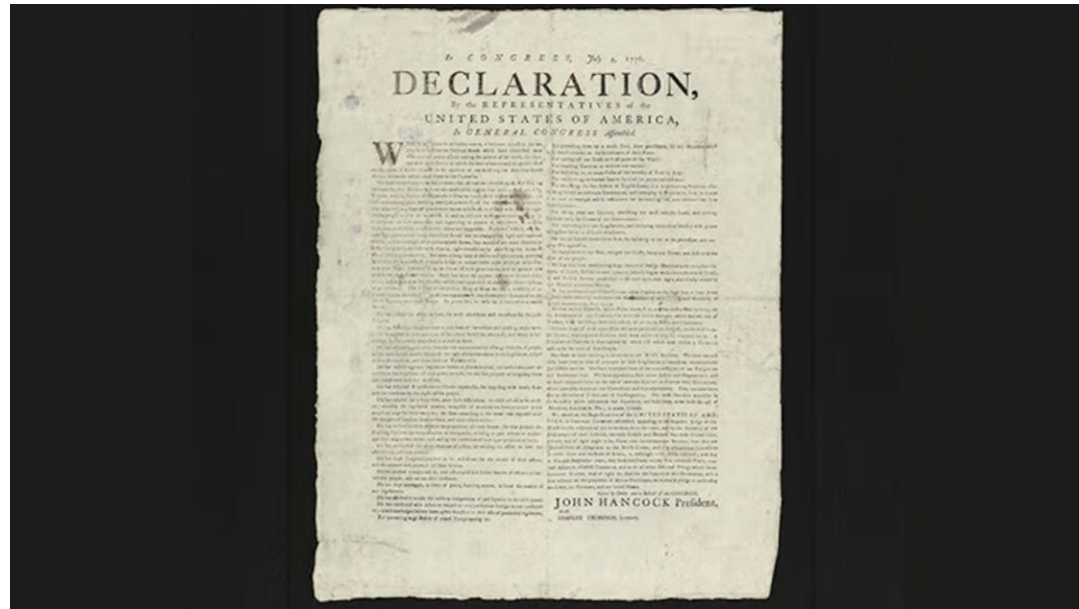
In the summer of 1776, fifty-six delegates gathered in Philadelphia and set in motion the most consequential act of self-governance in human history. This presentation honors those events — and the enduring ideals they bequeathed to the world.

Semiquincentennial Commemoration | United States of America

Rare Copy of the Declaration of Independence Going to Auction

<https://www.popsoci.com/science/declaration-of-independence-auction/> and
<https://goldin.co/item/the-declaration-of-independence-the-july-1776-exeter-broadside9pdxk?queryId=eyJjYXJkSW5kZXgiOjJ9>

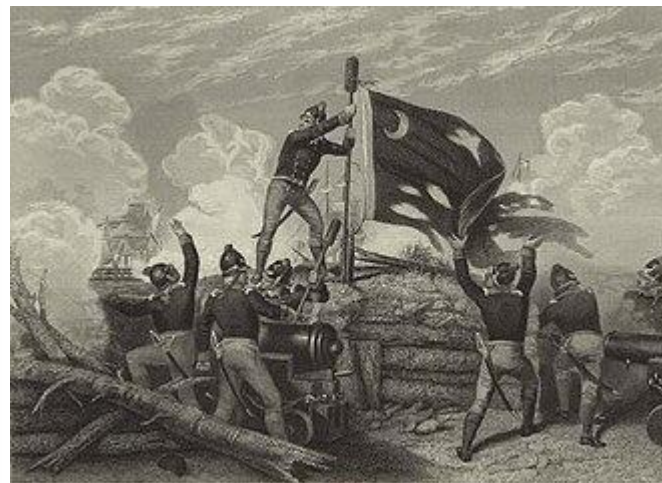
A rare copy of the Declaration of Independence Broadside (i.e. print copy) will be auctioned off beginning this May. Last copy brought \$5.7M at the last auction held. You can read more at the links above.



THE BATTLES FOR Sullivan's Island & Fort Moultrie

1776 · 1779 · 1780

From palmetto log fortress to three sieges — the pivotal Southern theatre engagements that shaped the American Revolution and the War of 1812.



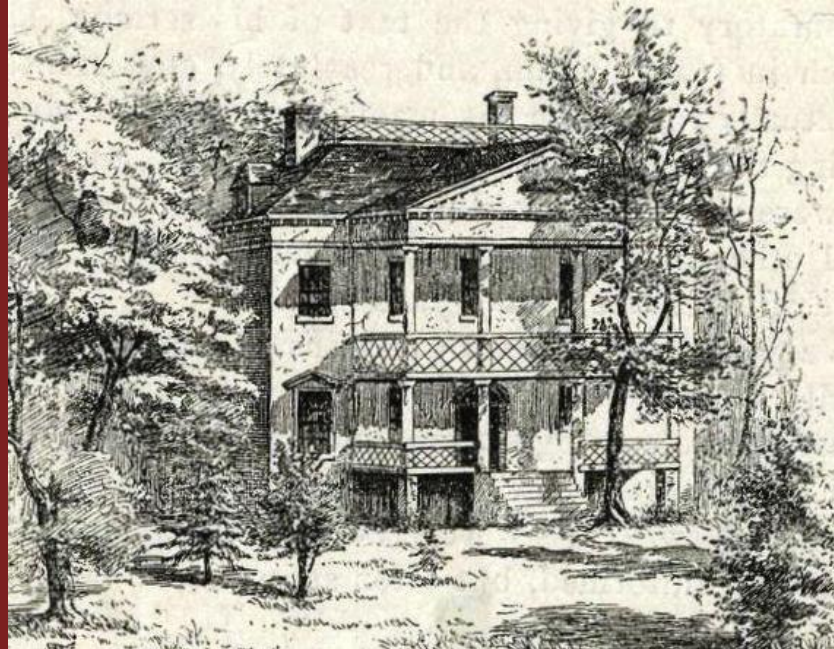
Sergeant [William Jasper](#) raising [the flag](#) over the fort, painted by [Johannes Adam Simon Oertel](#), 1858

JUNE 21 – JUNE 28, 1776

The Hickey Assassination Plot

- Thomas Hickey, a member of Washington's own Life Guard, was found guilty of mutiny and sedition.
- The plot allegedly involved poisoning Washington's food — the plan was reportedly exposed by his housekeeper. **(Mostly Myth & Lore)**
- Hickey was hanged publicly on June 28 — 20,000 New Yorkers witnessed the execution.
- Governor Tryon of New York and several British officers were suspected of orchestrating the conspiracy.

Source: Papers of George Washington, LOC (public domain)



Washington's Headquarters -
Richmond Hill (built c. 1760,
demolished 1849)

<https://www.frauncestavernmuseum.org/summer-of-76>

JUNE 21 – JUNE 28, 1776

Key Conspirators and Planners

Thomas Hickey: A private in Washington's elite Life Guard who was arrested for counterfeiting and subsequently bragged about his involvement.

William Tryon: The British-appointed royal governor of New York who directed and funded the scheme from aboard a British ship in the harbor.

David Mathews: The Loyalist Mayor of New York City who acted as a key intermediary, passing British funds to recruiters.

Gilbert Forbes: A Broadway gunsmith who helped recruit men for the British cause.

Source: Papers of George Washington, LOC (public domain)



Washington's Headquarters -
Richmond Hill (built c. 1760,
demolished 1849)

<https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/plot-kill-george-washington-180970729/>

JUNE 29 – JULY 12, 1776

The Great Armada Arrives in New York

⚓ June 29: Gen. Howe's fleet of 100 ships arrived off Sandy Hook, NJ — eyewitnesses described masts like 'a forest of pines.'

⚓ July 2: British troops began landing on Staten Island unopposed.

⚓ July 12: Admiral Lord Howe (brother of Gen. Howe) arrived with 82 more ships.

⚓ By August: over 400 ships and 32,000 troops assembled — the largest British expeditionary force in history.



*The British landing at Kip's Bay,
New York Island, 15 September
1776*

Robert Cleveley, 1777

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Landing_at_Kip%27s_Bay

THE WAR FOR INDEPENDENCE — JULY 1776

THE STRATEGIC SITUATION

- Battle of Sullivan's Island (June 28) — first major American victory — boosts morale as Congress votes.
- Washington's Continental Army of ~19,000 men hastily fortifies Brooklyn and Manhattan.
- British General Howe's fleet — 130 ships, 32,000 troops — arrives off New York Harbor in late June/July.
- Congress declares independence knowing full military confrontation is imminent.
- The war had been ongoing since April 1775; July 1776 marks the formal ideological commitment.

KEY COMMANDERS

AMERICAN

Gen. George Washington

Commander-in-Chief; held army together through early defeats.

BRITISH

Gen. William Howe

Led the largest British expeditionary force in history to New York.

AMERICAN

Gen. Charles Lee & Col. William Moultrie

Defended Charleston harbor; provided crucial early victory.

BRITISH

Gen. Henry Clinton

Commanded failed assault on Sullivan's Island, June 28, 1776.

AMERICA'S 250TH ANNIVERSARY

JULY 4, 2026 — THE SEMIQUINCENTENNIAL



*"The tree of liberty must be refreshed from time to time with the blood of patriots
and tyrants. It is its natural manure."*

— Thomas Jefferson, 1787

A Living Document

The Declaration's ideals inspired independence movements worldwide — from France (1789) to Latin America to modern democracy advocates globally.

Expanding the Promise

Each generation has extended the founding promise: abolition (1865), women's suffrage (1920), civil rights (1964), marriage equality (2015).

America at 250

In 2026, over 330 million Americans celebrate 250 years of constitutional self-governance — the longest-running democratic republic in history.

America at 250 • July 4, 2026 • "1776–2026: Enduring the Promise"

THE VALUES THAT FOUNDED A NATION

Liberty

Freedom from tyranny and the right of every person to live without unjust interference from government.

Equality

All men are created equal — a revolutionary promise that each generation is called to more fully realize.

Self-Governance

Power derives from the consent of the governed. Citizens hold the ultimate authority over their own destiny.

Rule of Law

No person stands above the law. Justice is impartial, written, and applied equally to all.

Individual Rights

Unalienable rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness are gifts of nature, not of government.

E Pluribus Unum

Out of many, one. Unity forged from diverse backgrounds, beliefs, and origins into a single republic.

"We hold these truths to be self-evident..." — Declaration of Independence, July 4, 1776

JULY 1776 — MONTH OF INDEPENDENCE

July 1

Continental Congress votes on independence; nine colonies in favor, two opposed, one divided.

July 2

Congress officially votes for independence. John Adams predicted this date would be celebrated forever.

July 4

Congress adopts the Declaration of Independence. The document is signed by John Hancock and Secretary Charles Thomson.

July 8

Declaration is read publicly in Philadelphia for the first time; the Liberty Bell rings to call citizens to hear it.

July 9

General Washington orders the Declaration read aloud to Continental Army troops in New York City.

July 19–Aug 2

Congress orders an engrossed parchment copy; 56 delegates sign throughout August.

JULY 2, 1776

The Vote for Independence

- ▶ Two days before the famous Declaration was signed, the Second Continental Congress voted to formally separate from Britain.
- ▶ New York initially abstained — but later ratified the decision on July 9th.
- ▶ John Adams wrote that July 2nd would be 'the most memorable Epocha in the History of America' — he was off by two days.
- ▶ The vote fulfilled Richard Henry Lee's June 7th resolution that the colonies 'are free and independent States.'



Congress voting the Declaration of Independence

Creator(s): Savage, Edward, 1761-1817, engraver

Related Names:

Pine, Robert Edge, 1730?-1788, artist

Date Created/Published: [Boston : between 1800? and 1900?]

<https://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2008678323/>

IN CONGRESS,
July 4, 1776

*The Declaration
of the thirteen United
States of America*

"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."

— Preamble, Declaration of Independence

56 Signers • 13 Colonies • 1 Nation

THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE

Preamble

Establishes the philosophical foundation — natural law, unalienable rights, and the purpose of government as serving the people.

Grievances

Lists 27 specific charges against King George III, documenting the colonists' case for separation with specific acts of tyranny.

Declaration Proper

Formally announces that the colonies are 'Free and Independent States,' dissolved from British allegiance.

The Signatures

56 delegates signed — from New Hampshire to Georgia. John Hancock's signature was largest; he reportedly wanted the King to read it without spectacles.

ARCHITECTS OF INDEPENDENCE — JULY 1776

Thomas Jefferson

Primary Author of the Declaration

- Age 33 in 1776 — the youngest principal drafter
- Wrote initial draft in 17 days at a portable writing desk
- Congress made 86 changes to his original text
- Later served as 3rd President (1801–1809)

John Adams

Champion of Independence

- Nominated Jefferson to draft the Declaration
- Predicted July 2 would be the celebrated date
- Called 'The Atlas of Independence' by Jefferson
- Later served as 2nd President (1797–1801)

Benjamin Franklin

Statesman & Elder Sage

- Age 70 — oldest signer of the Declaration
- Made key revisions: 'sacred & undeniable' → 'self-evident'
- Secured vital French alliance beginning in 1778
- Inventor, diplomat, and founding polymath

John Hancock

President of Congress

- First and largest signature on the Declaration
- Presided over the Congress during the vote
- His name became synonymous with 'signature'
- Contributed £100,000 of personal wealth to the cause

THE THIRTEEN COLONIES — VOTE FOR INDEPENDENCE



Voted Yes (9)



Abstained (1)



Opposed then joined (2)



Not yet present (1)

New Hampshire

Josiah Bartlett

Strong Patriot delegation

Massachusetts

John Adams

Heart of the Revolution

Rhode Island

Stephen Hopkins

*First colony to renounce
Crown (May 1776)*

Connecticut

Roger Sherman

*Only man to sign all 4
Founding documents*

New York

(Instructions unclear)

Approved independently July 9

New Jersey

Richard Stockton

*New delegation seated last
minute*

Pennsylvania

Benjamin Franklin

*Switched after key delegates
withdrew*

Delaware

Caesar Rodney

*Midnight 80-mile ride to cast
deciding vote*

Maryland

Charles Carroll

*Wealthiest signer of the
Declaration*

Virginia

Thomas Jefferson

*Jefferson drafted the
Declaration*

North Carolina

William Hooper

*First colony with formal
independence instructions*

South Carolina

Edward Rutledge

*Initially opposed; switched
July 2*

Georgia

Button Gwinnett

*Signed the engrossed copy in
August*

THE THIRTEEN COLONIES — VOTE FOR INDEPENDENCE

While the resolution was officially approved on July 2, 1776, the vote was counted by colonies (one vote per colony) rather than individual delegates, and unanimity was not achieved. The specific voting dynamics were as follows:

- The Vote (July 2):** Twelve of the thirteen colonies voted in favor of the independence resolution. However, the New York delegation abstained because they had not yet received authorization from their provincial government. (New York officially voted to support it on July 9).
- Individuals in Opposition:** Several individual delegates strongly opposed independence. For example, Pennsylvania's delegates were deeply divided, and prominent figures like John Dickinson actively voted against it.
- The Abstentions:** Some delegates who opposed the measure, like Pennsylvania's Robert Morris, intentionally absented themselves from the vote on July 2 so their colonies could still register a "yes" without them.

THE THIRTEEN COLONIES — VOTE FOR INDEPENDENCE

Actively Refused to Sign (Opposed to Independence)

These delegates were ideologically opposed to a premature separation from Great Britain and actively chose not to sign:



John Dickinson (Pennsylvania): The most prominent dissenter, Dickinson believed the colonies were unprepared and lacked vital foreign alliances. He voluntarily left Congress because he knew his refusal would hurt the appearance of a unified front.



John Alsop (New York): A staunch moderate who favored reconciliation with Great Britain. He resigned his seat in Congress on July 4 rather than support the decision.

Charles Humphreys (Pennsylvania): He voted against independence on July 2 and was replaced in the Pennsylvania delegation before the August signing ceremony. [\[1\]](#)



Thomas Willing (Pennsylvania): Like his colleague Humphreys, Willing voted against independence and was removed from his state's delegation before he could sign. [\[1\]](#)

THE THIRTEEN COLONIES — VOTE FOR INDEPENDENCE

Did Not Sign Due to Absence or Duties (Supported Independence)

These delegates supported the American cause but were away from Philadelphia on official business when the physical document was signed on August 2, 1776:

Robert R. Livingston (New York): Ironically, Livingston was a member of the "Committee of Five" that drafted the Declaration. However, he was recalled to New York to help establish his state's new government before the signing ceremony.

•**George Clinton (New York):** He voted for independence but left Congress to serve as a general in the New York militia before the signing date.

•**Henry Wisner (New York):** He voted in favor of independence but was away attending to duties in New York by August.

•**John Rogers (Maryland):** He voted for the independence resolution on July 2 but left Congress shortly after and was no longer a delegate by August 2.

JULY 9, 1776

The King's Statue Falls

★ After the Declaration was read aloud in New York City, a crowd of patriots and Continental soldiers marched to Bowling Green.

★ They pulled down the gilded equestrian statue of King George III — it weighed 4,000 lbs of lead.

★ The lead was melted down into 42,088 musket balls for the Continental Army — a fitting rebuke.

★ John Holt printed 500 broadside copies of the Declaration the same day, urging residents to hang them in their homes.



PULLING DOWN THE STATUE OF GEORGE III.

BY THE LORDS OF FREEDOM

At the Bowling Green City of New York July 3rd 1776.

Credit: [Library of Congress Prints & Photographs Division](#)

Original Author: John C. McRae, engraver; based on a painting by Johannes A. Oertel

Created: Engraving ca. 1875; painting ca. 1859

Medium: Engraving

Publisher: Library of Congress Prints & Photographs Division

<https://encyclopediavirginia.org/756hpr-f9dbb3e06697bdb/>



Dragging Canoe,
Cherokee War Chief

<https://www.americanindianmagazine.org/story/demand-blood-cherokee-war-1776>

JULY 1776

The Cherokee Uprising

- ◆ Allied with the British, the Cherokee nation launched coordinated raids on the Carolina and Virginia frontiers in July 1776.
- ◆ Dragging Canoe, a young Cherokee war chief, led the resistance against colonial expansion following years of land seizures.
- ◆ The militia response was devastating: thousands of troops burned over 50 Cherokee towns and villages.
- ◆ By 1777, treaties forced the Cherokee to cede vast territories — the conflict shaped the Southern backcountry for generations.

Source: LOC, Papers of the Continental Congress (public domain)

Primary Sources & Archival References

National Archives (NARA)

- Journals of the Continental Congress, 1774–1789 — M247, Record Group 360
- Continental Congress Papers — M332 (LOC custody, digitized at memory.loc.gov)
- Founders Online: founders.archives.gov — full-text letters of Jefferson, Adams, Franklin, Lee
- Washington Papers, Series 3B, June 1776 dispatches

State Archives & Institutions

- Virginia State Library & Archives: George Mason Papers, Convention Records June 1776
- South Carolina Dept. of Archives: Moultrie Papers, Council of Safety records
- Massachusetts Historical Society: Adams Family Papers, June 1776 letters
- Independence National Historical Park, Philadelphia: Committee of Five artifacts

Library of Congress

- Manuscript Division: Thomas Jefferson Papers, LOC MSS11879
- Prints & Photographs: LC-USZ62 series — portraits, battle scenes, maps
- Geography & Map Division: Revolutionary War period maps (G3700–G3910)
- Chronicling America (newspapers): Virginia Gazette, Pennsylvania Evening Post, June 1776

Key Published Primary Sources

- Moultrie, William. *Memoirs of the American Revolution*. 1802. [Public domain, Internet Archive]
- Journals of Congress, Vol. V (1776). Worthington Ford, ed. 1906. [HathiTrust, Google Books]
- Jefferson, Thomas. '[Rough Draught](#)' of the Declaration. LOC facsimile, 1943 ed.
- Force, Peter. [American Archives](#), Series 4, Vol. VI (June 1776). [Internet Archive]

Pennsylvania Evening Post – July 6, 1776

Resolved, That this Congress highly approve of the foregoing resolutions, and recommend it to the good people of **Pennsylvania** to carry the same into execution, with the same laudable readiness, which they have hitherto manifested in supporting the injured rights of their country.

By order of Congress,

JOHN HANCOCK, President.

It was agreed in the Conference at the State-House on Friday morning last, that the five battalions of militia of this city and liberties should be requested to meet on Monday afternoon precisely at five o'clock, in order to have read to them the Resolutions of the Conference between the Delegates of New-York, New-Jersey, and **Pennsylvania**, the Committee of Safety of this province, the Committee of Inspection, &c. for this city and liberties, and the Field Officers of the five battalions, on the most expeditious mode of marching the militia of this province to New-Jersey; and it is hoped that every Associator will attend at that hour.

Excerpt (Image #4) from the Pennsylvania Evening Post, Library of Congress.

Created / Published

Philadelphia, Pa., July 6, 1776

<https://www.loc.gov/resource/sn83025894/1776-07-06/ed-1/?dl=page&q=pennsylvania+evening+post&sp=4&st=image&r=-0.651,-0.132,2.301,0.943,0>

Where are your ancestors?

Key locations and databases to search include:

- **National Archives (NARA)**: Access *Compiled Service Records* and *Revolutionary War Rolls* through the online catalog, or explore digitized collections on Fold3 and FamilySearch.
- **State Department of Archives and History**: Search original state agency documents and historical military records.
- **DAR Ancestor Database**: Verify individual patriot service and access lineage applications via the Daughters of the American Revolution. Also the SAR database too!
- **Historical Collections**: Examine primary source accounts, correspondence, and soldier papers held in State Libraries.

Extra Reading

The Atlantic Magazine: It Wasn't Just the Founders

<https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/2026/07/american-revolution-history-founders/687800/>

Whether you agree or not, opinions about what is in store for the next 250 years.

<https://www.politico.com/news/magazine/2026/07/04/america-250-round-up-00981023>



1776 – 2026

Two Hundred and Fifty Years of Liberty

From fifty-six signers who pledged their lives, fortunes, and sacred honor — to 330 million Americans who carry that promise forward — the American experiment endures.

Happy 250th Birthday, United States of America.

Wrapup

QUESTIONS?