



# THE ADDITIVE

## The History and Tradition of Independence Day in America

June 2016

Independence Day on the Fourth of July is one of the biggest holidays in America. It is a federal holiday commemorating the adoption of the Declaration of Independence on July 4, 1776, by the Continental Congress declaring that the 13 colonies regarded themselves as a new nation and were succeeding from the British Empire.



During the American Revolution, the separation of the 13 Colonies from Great Britain actually occurred on July 2, 1776, when the Second Continental Congress voted to approve a resolution of independence that had been proposed by Richard Henry Lee of Virginia. After voting for independence, Congress turned its attention to the Declaration of Independence, 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 wording of the Declaration, finally approving it on July 4.

Coincidentally, both John Adams and Thomas Jefferson, the only signers of the Declaration to become Presidents, died on July 4, 1826, which was the 50th anniversary. Another Founding Father who became a President, James Monroe also died on July 4th in 1831.

July 4th is a federal holiday where all government offices, banks, institutions and most businesses are closed. It is marked by summer-themed events, with fireworks, parades, barbecues, carnivals, fairs, picnics, concerts, baseball games, family reunions, and patriotic ceremonies. These celebrations often take place outdoors, with families gathering together to watch parades in the morning, hold picnics in the afternoon and see the local fireworks displays in the evening.

In 2009, New York City had the largest fireworks display in the country, with over 22 tons of pyrotechnics exploded near the Statue of Liberty. Another massive display is in Washington D.C., where people come from all over the country to see the fireworks over the National Mall with the Washington Monument and Jefferson Memorial in the background. Other major celebrations are held in Chicago on Lake Michigan; in Boston on the Charles River; in San Diego over Mission Bay; in St. Louis on the Mississippi; and in San Francisco.

In our hometown of Seattle, many communities have fireworks displays, but the ultimate freedom celebration is downtown at the Seafair Summer Fourth held at Gas Works Park, with a spectacular display of fireworks over Lake Union.



Wherever you choose to celebrate the founding of our great nation, we hope you and your family have a fun, safe and memorable holiday.