

The Fourth of July – Day of Independence

John Adams (1735-1826), second President of the United States graduated from Law School at Harvard University in Massachusetts. Adams became Chief Justice in the State Superior Court. Later, he served 2-terms as Vice-President under George Washington, was elected President, appointed Ambassador to Great Britain, and chaired the American Bible Society.

After the American Revolution ended at Yorktown in 1781, Adams negotiated independence for the Continental Congress and signed the "Declaration of Independence" on July 2nd. The next day Adams wrote his wife, Abigail remarking: *"The Second Day of July 1776, will be most memorable... in the History of America. I believe it will be celebrated, by succeeding Generations, as the great anniversary Festival. It ought to be commemorated, as the Day of Deliverance by solemn Acts of Devotion to God Almighty. It ought to be solemnized with Pomp and Parade, with Shews, Games, Sports, Guns, Bells, Bonfires and Illuminations from one End of this Continent to the other from this Time forward forever more."*

Adams added that the Day should be: *"accompanied with" the ringing of the Liberty bell which was emblazoned with the inscription on its side: 'Proclaim liberty throughout the land...'"* – a phrase taken from the Book of Leviticus, the 4th Book of the Bible.

In 1870, Congress officially recognized the **Fourth of July** as a national holiday to celebrate "without pay".

The following are some of the national songs of the United States often heard on **Independence Day**:

- **The Star-spangled Banner**, written by Francis Scott Key (1814) during the War of 1812 against the British became the National Anthem in 1931.

*Oh, say can you see by the dawn's early light
What so proudly we hailed at the twilight's last gleaming?
Whose broad stripes and bright stars through the perilous fight,
O'er the ramparts we watched were so gallantly streaming?
And the rocket's red glare, the bombs bursting in air,
Gave proof through the night that our flag was still there.
Oh, say does that star-spangled banner yet wave
O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave?*

- **The Battle Hymn of the Republic**, by Julia Ward Howe (1862)

*Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord,
He is trampling out the vintage where the grapes of wrath are stored.
He has loosed the faithful lightning of His terrible, swift sword,
His truth is marching on.*

*Glory, glory hallelujah! Glory, glory hallelujah!
Glory, glory hallelujah! His truth is marching on.*

- **America, the Beautiful**, by Katherine Lee Bates (1893)

*O beautiful for spacious skies,
For amber waves of grain,
For purple mountain majesties
Above the fruited plain!
America! America!
God shed His grace on thee
And crown thy good with brotherhood
From sea to shining sea!*

- **The Stars and Stripes Forever**, by John Philip Sousa (1896)