

Brighton and the 4th of July

Celebrating the 4th of July has a long tradition in Brighton, dating back to 1963 when the Evans Farm Tract urged the town to organize a celebration with local civic organizations. The two-hour program was held at the Brighton High School athletic field and drew what was reported to be “the greatest turnout in the town’s history.” (Brighton-Pittsford Post, 11 July 1963) Children and adults watched the Blue Angels Drill Team, the Monroe County Parks Band, and the fireworks at the end of the evening.

For many years Brighton’s annual 4th of July event continued at Brighton High School. By 1974 it was called the “Brighton Blast” with carnival booths and an antique sale on the high school grounds. Again the Monroe County Parks Band played in the evening just before the parachute jumpers. That year the fireworks display preceded a teen dance in the high school gym.

Nineteen years later, the 1993 celebration was called “the biggest Independence Day celebration ever.” (Brighton-Pittsford Post 8 July 1993). The day began with a pancake breakfast put on by the town hall staff on the field between the high school and middle school and continued with hot dogs and hamburgers for lunch, sponsored by Brighton Kiwanis, Chamber of Commerce, and the town. The Skycoasters were the musical group before the fireworks that year.

In the late 1990s, the fireworks company expressed concern about the detonations in the dense neighborhood, echoing the concern of some homeowners who were not happy about fireworks debris littering their yards so for the next few years the display moved from the high school to Meridian Center Park and back while the games and rides continued at the school. Finally, in 2004, the town board decided to move the fireworks to Meridian Centre Park permanently along with the music, rides, and food vendors. Left at the high school were the morning events like the pancake breakfast and 5K run. This seemed to be the safest arrangement without eliminating the fun of the day and it is in keeping with the wishes of the second American president.

President John Adams, in a letter to his wife, Abigail, described how Independence Day should be celebrated going forth.

“The Second Day of July 1776 will be the most memorable Epoch, in the History of America. – I am apt to believe that 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.”

(In his letter he expected the day of celebration of the Declaration of Independence to be July 2, the day the resolution was approved by the Continental Congress but the delegates didn’t adopt it until July 4.)

And so Brighton will celebrate again this year with festivities at Meridian Centre Park, ending with the “Illuminations” we call fireworks, two hundred and forty-six years later.

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