

The Glorious Fourth!

If John Adams' will had prevailed, we might be observing July 2 as Independence Day in the United States. In a letter to his wife, Abigail, on July 3, 1776, John Adams wrote that "The Second Day of July 1776, will be the most memorial Epocha, in the History of America." He was two days off because he was basing his euphoria on the July 2nd adoption by the Continental Congress of Richard Henry Lee's motion for independence. On July 4, 1776, John Adams joined his fellow delegates in approving the actual Declaration of Independence.

John Adams went on to tell Abigail that he believed that the day *"...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. You will think me transported with Enthusiasm but I am not. I am well aware of the Toil and Blood and Treasure, that it will cost Us to maintain this Declaration, and support and defend these States. Yet through all the Gloom I can see the Rays of ravishing Light and Glory. I can see that the End is more than worth all the Means."*

The Declaration of Independence was taken to cities in each of the colonies and read to the people. Patriots cheered and celebrated. On the following Fourth of July, 1777, bells in Philadelphia did indeed ring and bonfires lit the sky but until Revolutionary War's end in 1783, the annual celebrations were subdued. After the war, July 4th became a holiday in some communities. It wasn't until 1941 that the United States Congress voted to make it a federal holiday.

We in Brighton continue the tradition of celebrating the 4th of July in keeping with John Adams' suggestions. Meridian Center Park is the location for shows, games, sports, and illuminations (fireworks) along with modern additions such as live music and picnics. Information about individual events is on the town's website, www.townofbrighton.org.

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