

UNCLE SAM'S BIRTHDAY

1776

JULY 4TH
1918



**142 YEARS YOUNG
AND GOING STRONG!**



4th of July

“Fourth of July” and “4th of July” redirect here. For the date, see July 4. For other uses, see [Independence Day](#) (disambiguation). For other related material, see [Fourth of July](#) (disambiguation).

Independence Day of the [United States](#), also referred to as **Fourth of July** or **July Fourth** in the U.S., is a federal holiday commemorating the adoption of the [Declaration of Independence](#) on July 4, 1776, by the [Continental Congress](#) declaring that the [thirteen American colonies](#) regarded themselves as a new nation, the [United States of America](#), and no longer part of the [British Empire](#).^[1] Independence Day is commonly associated with fireworks, parades, barbecues, carnivals, fairs, picnics, concerts, baseball games, family reunions, and political speeches and ceremonies, in addition to various other public and private events celebrating the history, government, and traditions of the [United States](#). Independence Day is the [National Day](#) of the [United States](#).^{[2][3][4]}

1 Background

During the [American Revolution](#), the legal separation of the [Thirteen Colonies](#) from [Great Britain](#) occurred on July 2, 1776, when the [Second Continental Congress](#) voted to approve a resolution of independence that had been proposed in June by [Richard Henry Lee](#) of [Virginia](#) declaring the [United States](#) independent from [Great Britain](#) rule.^{[5][6]} 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. A day earlier, [John Adams](#) had written to his wife [Abigail](#):

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 shows, games, sports, guns, bells, bonfires, and illuminations, from one end of this continent to the other, from this time forward forever more.^[7]

[Adams's](#) prediction was off by two days. From the outset, Americans celebrated independence on July 4, the date shown on the much-publicized [Declaration of Independence](#), rather than on July 2, the date the resolution of independence was approved in a closed session of Congress.^[8]

Historians have long disputed whether Congress actually signed the [Declaration of Independence](#) on July 4, even though [Thomas Jefferson](#), [John Adams](#), and [Benjamin Franklin](#) all later wrote that they had signed it on that day. Most historians have concluded that the Declaration was signed nearly a month after its adoption, on August 2, 1776, and not on July 4 as is commonly believed.^{[9][10][11][12][13]}

Coincidentally, both [John Adams](#) and [Thomas Jefferson](#), the only signers of the [Declaration of Independence](#) later to serve as [Presidents of the United States](#), died on the same day: July 4, 1826, which was the 50th anniversary of the Declaration. Although not a signer of the Declaration of Independence, but another [Founding Father](#) who became a President, [James Monroe](#), died on July 4, 1831, thus becoming the third President in a row who died on the holiday. [Calvin Coolidge](#), the 30th President, was born on July 4, 1872, and, so far, is the only U.S. President to have been born on Independence Day.

2 Observance

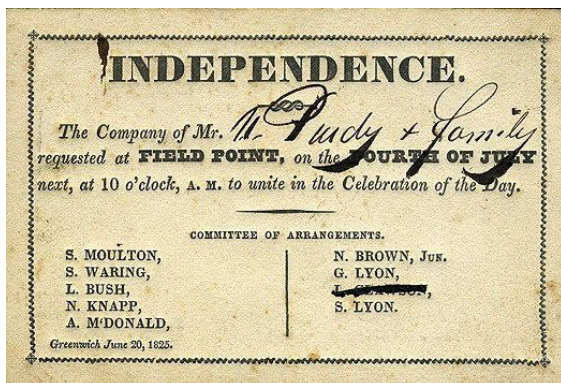
- In 1777, thirteen gunshots were fired in salute, once at morning and once again as evening fell, on July 4 in [Bristol, Rhode Island](#). Philadelphia celebrated the first anniversary in a manner a modern American would find quite familiar: an official dinner for the [Continental Congress](#), toasts, 13-gun salutes, speeches, prayers, music, parades, troop reviews, and fireworks. Ships were decked with red, white, and blue bunting.^[14]
- In 1778, from his headquarters at [Ross Hall](#), near [New Brunswick, New Jersey](#), [General George Washington](#) marked July 4 with a double ration of rum for his soldiers and an artillery salute (*feu de joie*). Across the Atlantic Ocean, ambassadors [John Adams](#) and [Benjamin Franklin](#) held a dinner for their fellow Americans in [Paris, France](#).^[15]
- In 1779, July 4 fell on a Sunday. The holiday was celebrated on Monday, July 5.^[15]



American children of many ethnic backgrounds celebrate noisily in 1902 Puck cartoon

- In 1781 the Massachusetts General Court became the first state legislature to recognize July 4 as a state celebration.^[15]
- In 1783, Moravians in Salem, North Carolina, held a celebration of July 4 with a challenging music program assembled by Johann Friedrich Peter. This work was titled "The Psalm of Joy." This is recognized as the first recorded celebration and is still celebrated there today.^[16]
- In 1791 the first recorded use of the name "Independence Day" occurred.
- In 1870, the U.S. Congress made Independence Day an unpaid holiday for federal employees.^[17]
- In 1938, Congress changed Independence Day to a paid federal holiday.^[18]

3 Customs



An 1825 invitation to an Independence Day celebration

Independence Day is a national holiday marked by patriotic displays. Similar to other summer-themed events, Independence Day celebrations often take place outdoors. Independence Day is a federal holiday, so all non-essential federal institutions (like the postal service and

federal courts) are closed on that day. Many politicians make it a point on this day to appear at a public event to praise the nation's heritage, laws, history, society, and people.

Families often celebrate Independence Day by hosting or attending a picnic or barbecue and take advantage of the day off and, in some years, long weekend to gather with relatives. Decorations (e.g., streamers, balloons, and clothing) are generally colored red, white, and blue, the colors of the American flag. Parades are often in the morning, while fireworks displays occur in the evening at such places as parks, fairgrounds, or town squares.

The night before the Fourth was once the focal point of celebrations, marked by raucous gatherings often incorporating bonfires as their centerpiece. In New England, towns competed to build towering pyramids, assembled from barrels and casks. They were lit at nightfall, to usher in the celebration. The highest were in Salem, Massachusetts (on Gallows Hill, the famous site of the execution of 13 women and 6 men for witchcraft in 1692 during the Salem witch trials, where the tradition of bonfires in celebration had persisted), composed of as many as forty tiers of barrels; these are the tallest bonfires ever recorded. The custom flourished in the 19th and 20th centuries, and is still practiced in some New England towns.^[19]

Independence Day fireworks are often accompanied by patriotic songs such as the national anthem "The Star-Spangled Banner", "God Bless America", "America the Beautiful", "My Country, 'Tis of Thee", "This Land Is Your Land", "Stars and Stripes Forever", and, regionally, "Yankee Doodle" in northeastern states and "Dixie" in southern states. Some of the lyrics recall images of the Revolutionary War or the War of 1812.



Independence Day Parade in Washington, D.C.

Firework shows are held in many states, and many fireworks are sold for personal use or as an alternative to a public show. Safety concerns have led some states to ban fireworks or limit the sizes and types allowed. In addition to safety concerns local and regional weather conditions may dictate whether the sale or use of fireworks in an area will be allowed. Some local or regional firework sales may be limited or prohibited because of dry

weather, drought conditions, or other specific concerns. On these occasions the public may be prohibited from purchasing or discharging fireworks, but professional displays (such as may be found at sport events) may still take place provided that certain safety precautions have been taken. Illicit traffic transfers many fireworks from less restrictive states.

A salute of one gun for each state in the United States, called a “salute to the union”, is fired on Independence Day at noon by any capable military base.^[20]

In 2009, New York City had the largest fireworks display in the country, with over 22 tons of pyrotechnics exploded.^[21] Other major displays are in Chicago on Lake Michigan; in San Diego over Mission Bay; in Boston on the Charles River; in St. Louis on the Mississippi River; in San Francisco over the San Francisco Bay; and on the National Mall in Washington, D.C..

During the annual Windsor-Detroit International Freedom Festival, Detroit, Michigan hosts one of the world's largest fireworks displays, over the Detroit River, to celebrate Independence Day in conjunction with Windsor, Ontario's celebration of Canada Day.

The first week of July is typically one of the busiest American travel periods of the year, as many people utilize the holiday for extended vacation trips.^[22]

4 Celebration gallery

- In addition to a fireworks show, Miami, Florida lights one of its tallest buildings with the patriotic red, white and blue color scheme on Independence Day
- New York City's fireworks display, shown above over the East Village, is sponsored by Macy's and is the largest^[1] in the country
- Play media

Patriotic trailer shown in theaters celebrating July 4, 1940

- A festively decorated Fourth of July cake.
1. ^ Biggest fireworks show in U.S. lights up sky, USA Today, July 2009.

5 Notable celebrations

- Held since 1785, the Bristol Fourth of July Parade in Bristol, Rhode Island is the oldest continuous Independence Day celebration in the United States.
- Since 1868, Seward, Nebraska has held a celebration on the same town square. In 1979 Seward was



Originally entitled Yankee Doodle, this is one of several versions of a scene painted by A. M. Willard that came to be known as The Spirit of '76. Often imitated or parodied, it is a familiar symbol of American patriotism

designated “America’s Official Fourth of July City-Small Town USA” by resolution of Congress. Seward has also been proclaimed “Nebraska’s Official Fourth of July City” by Governor James Exon in proclamation. Seward is a town of 6,000 but swells to 40,000+ during the July 4 celebrations.^[23]

- Since 1912, the Rebild Society, a Danish-American friendship organization, has held a July 4 weekend festival that serves as a homecoming for Danish-Americans in the Rebild municipality of Denmark.^[24]
- Since 1959, the International Freedom Festival is jointly held in Detroit, Michigan and Windsor, Ontario during the last week of June each year as a mutual celebration of Independence Day and Canada Day (July 1). It culminates in a large fireworks display over the Detroit River.
- The famous Macy’s fireworks display usually held over the East River in New York City has been televised nationwide on NBC since 1976. In 2009, the fireworks display was returned to the Hudson River for the first time since 2000 to commemorate the 400th anniversary of Henry Hudson's exploration of that river.^[25]
- The Boston Pops Orchestra has hosted a music and fireworks show over the Charles River Esplanade called the “Boston Pops Fireworks Spectacular” annually since 1973.^[26] The event was broadcast na-

tionally from 1991 until 2002 on A&E, and from 2003 until 2012 on CBS (who aired the final hour of the event in primetime). In 2013, CBS dropped the Pops broadcast, with no reason given; however, executive producer David G. Mugar believed that an encore presentation of the Macy's fireworks on NBC aired at 10:00 PM ET/PT was successfully counterprogramming the Boston Pops, since the broadcast lost as much as 20% of its audience in 2012 in comparison to 2011. As it did prior to the cancellation, the full concert continues to air locally by Boston's CBS affiliate WBZ-TV and is also streamed online.^{[27][28]}

- On the Capitol lawn in Washington, D.C., *A Capitol Fourth*, a free concert broadcast live by PBS, NPR and the American Forces Network, precedes the fireworks and attracts over half a million people annually.

6 Other countries

The Philippines celebrates July 4 as its Republic Day to commemorate that day in 1946 when it ceased to be a U.S. territory and the United States officially recognized Philippine Independence.^[29] July 4 was intentionally chosen by the United States because it corresponds to its Independence Day, and this day was observed in the Philippines as Independence Day until 1962. In 1964, the name of the July 4 holiday was changed to Republic Day. In Rwanda, July 4 is an official holiday known as Liberation Day, commemorating the end of the 1994 Rwandan Genocide in which the U.S. government also played a role. Denmark also celebrates American independence on July 4. National parks in Denmark are said to hold the largest July 4 celebrations outside of the United States.^[30]

7 See also

- *1776* (musical)
- Constitution Day (United States)
- *To the Fourth of July* (1898), poem
- "What to a slave is the 4th of July?" - Frederick Douglas speech

8 References

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9 Further reading

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10 External links

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- The Fourth of July, Back in the Day – slideshow by *Life magazine*
- Fourth of July 2015 Fireworks in New York City on Youtube

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11.1 Text

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