

## In a Few Hours.... Thoughts About July Fourth

By Anna Von Reitz



In a few hours Americans will begin celebrating something that happened 248 years ago in a different world.

Contrary to what most of us believe, [July 4th](#) was not the day that The Declaration of Independence was signed; it was the day it was published and made available to the world. Due to the requirements of the various State Assemblies and the rigors involved in travel and communication, the actual signing of The Declaration by various delegations would not be complete for months after the publication.

Nothing is ever as simple as we could wish it to be.

Once The Declaration of Independence was published, it had to be published in three iterations mostly distinguishable by changes in style and the means of dating the publication, as [July 4, 1776](#), July the Fourth 1776, and Fourth of [July 1776](#).

No doubt that then as now, most people didn't notice this and other slight differences in the multiple publications and everyone but the lawyers put it down to different strokes for different printers and publishers --- but no, they were dutifully posting The Declaration of Independence in all three jurisdictions of air, land, and sea.

This would then go through more iterations and finally result in The Supreme Unanimous Declaration of Independence of the United Colonies --- a document that American schoolchildren never see, and which we wouldn't even have a copy of, if it were not for certain families and collectors.

Our thanks to them forever.

The myriad debates occurring over the three years prior would fill textbooks from sea to shining sea, and the even more robust secret debates raging on every hand would have resulted in even more interesting paper.

The Big Players were from the Big Colonies, which meant Pennsylvania, Massachusetts, Virginia, and South Carolina.

Pennsylvania, because it was by far the richest and largest colony in America in terms of land, resources, and money.

Massachusetts for its naval history and the wealth and commercial acumen of Boston.

Virginia because of its rich plantations and long history as the First Colony.

South Carolina for its rich plantations and mercantile facilities, warehouses, banks, and ports.

Each of these four played distinctive roles in the discussion leading up to the publication of The Declaration of Independence --- whichever version you read.

Pennsylvania was the most conflicted of the Colonies, in that it had both the most to lose, and both the most adamant proponents and most determined antagonists of the idea of independence.

Benjamin Franklin, by this time, an elder statesman and business mogul and inventor famous throughout the colonies --- but mainly famous for his publication of Poor Richard's Almanac, work that he considered "entertaining drivel" -- was the chief proponent and architect of American Independence.

He'd been working toward American Independence for fifty years, envisioning it from his earliest days as an apprentice, when he scraped his elbows against the British Guild System and learned Postal Law.

Franklin's chief opponent, a wealthy British landowner named John Dickenson, was younger than Franklin and less adroit in business and diplomacy, but every bit as determined against the proposition of American Independence.

Why not leave well enough alone, Dickenson argued? After all, King George was far enough away from Pennsylvania to be of relatively little concern.

Not so for the wiry and weary Mariners and Shipping Captains and Bar Attorneys of Boston, who labored all day and every day against a flood of new British taxes, tariffs and impositions of every kind impacting their ability to trade and make a profit.

It seemed to John Adams that Boston was the special target of the entire British hegemony, and that King George must stay up at night, considering what action he might take to best bollux up the Boston Traders, encumber Boston's harbor, and cut off the "life blood" flowing into the Colonies as a result of Massachusetts and its maritime trade.

Not so for the South Carolinians, who, for the most part, were content to grow their cotton and sorghum, their corn and wheat and tobacco, their pumpkins and pine trees. The British needed them as happy trading partners so the impositions placed on the Southern Planters had been mild compared to the outrages suffered in Massachusetts.

The South as a whole was unprepared for war and entertained distaste for it, but for the sake of unity would go along --- only so far and so long as their "cherished institution of black slavery" was allowed to continue.

They drew the line and insisted on that, because they knew that their entire trading advantage in the world commodity markets was a direct result of slave labor, and that they could not possibly make such excellent profits and market margins without it.

And while these sidebar discussions about money and slavery and markets and transportation and taxes and tariffs and property rights and personal freedom raged, the Virginians sat in the middle and listened to all sides of all the debates and said little or nothing outside the borders of Virginia for almost five years. They were, as they still are [today](#), close-mouthed observers, and yet....

Certainly nothing was getting past the Virginia Delegation, and it was there that North met South.

Already, the Lee Family was famous throughout Virginia and Richard Henry Lee was more than reckless enough to propose Independence, while Thomas Jefferson, another Virginia Delegate, was able to give the concept of Independence both heart and soul.

It was Jefferson's carefully crafted recitation of the wrongs inflicted by the British Hierarchy, its self-interest, brutality, dishonesty, and injustice, that galvanized the other delegates into a fever-pitch of new discussions about Independence.

Like stirring up a beehive, Jefferson noted, he was likely to get stung for his efforts, and yet, his words stirred the conscience and addressed the grievances he had heard endlessly repeated at dinner tables and hotels and pubs, in courtrooms and churches.

Thomas Jefferson, quite apart from his other extraordinary gifts, was an excellent listener. And he had heard every word from every corner of the Colonies.

In the end, a series of miraculous bits of serendipity, or as most Delegates admitted, the Hand of God, brought the whole question of American Independence to open debate and the duel that fate envisioned came down to two questions --- one, deeply personal and individual, and the other, practical and public.

Judge James Wilson was a shy and vacillating character whose dearest wish was to pass by unnoticed -- totally unremarked, acceptable, respectable, and otherwise, not present.

As John Dickenson raged against separation from England, and Ben Franklin pressed inexorably from the other side, Judge Wilson, the third and deciding member of the Pennsylvania Delegation waivered back and forth without a settled mind, seeking only to discern which position was most popular and where he might best hide himself from any criticism.

In the end, Franklin deftly engineered things so that the entire question came to rest on Judge Wilson, a position that Wilson was unable to endure.

Wilson simply couldn't face the notoriety of being the lone opposing vote, and so, he voted yes for American Independence --- based on a personal aversion to public controversy and very little else.

The other question came from South Carolina and the head of their delegation, Edward Rutledge, a young and wily plantation owner whose commitment to independence was decidedly secondary to his concern for his State's economic well-being, which he equated with the institution of slavery, and in particular, black slavery.

It was well-known at the time that anyone could be enslaved, black or white; in fact, Irish slaves were imported in vast numbers during the early colonial days and often worked to death. But for Rutledge, the best workers, and therefore, the most valuable commodities, were black slaves, and that made race-based slavery and the guarantee of its continuance the prime, and indeed, only, demand of the Southern Colonies.

The original prohibitions against slavery of any kind which Jefferson had written into the draft Declaration of Independence were Rutledge's only concern. Those prohibitions had to go, or the entire South would walk out and leave the Northern Colonies to stand against England ---if they had guts for it, without supplies and without guns from the South.

It wasn't a matter of right or wrong in Rutledge's mind. He was agreeable enough to think that freedom was the greatest good and to cherish it, but on the other side of the balance was economic survival, not only for himself, but in his mind, the survival of the entire South.

Even the black slaves would not live long or well without the institution of slavery so far as Rutledge was concerned, and so, the Southern Colonies stood behind him to the final hour, when Jefferson bowed his head and struck the prohibitions against slavery from the draft declaration.

"Mark me, Franklin," he muttered, "this is not the end of this."

Less than a hundred years later, the topic would be revisited.

Once again, the South would insist on guarantees for the institution of slavery. Once again, a genuine concern for the welfare of their black slaves and their local economy led the Southern Delegates of the Confederation's Congress to walk out.

This time, in 1861, there would be no Thomas Jefferson and the pleadings of the Federation President to settle the issue of slavery with a generous government-

sponsored settlement paying the entire cost of the slaves and their lifetime upkeep, fell on deaf ears.

It would lead to a mercenary conflict disguised as a war, and ironically, the Southern Democrats would have the last word: the institution of slavery was retained---only translated and transformed.

Private slavery was abolished, but public slavery was born, a situation enforced as the 13th and 14th Amendments to The Constitution of the United States of America.

Such is the history of the Land of the Free, where the enslavement of some people has led inexorably to the enslavement of all people, and where the dream of freedom remains a dream.

Please take a moment to consider what our Founding Fathers endured --- not as fear-mongering against what we might yet endure, but as inspiration and determination to know what freedom is worth:

<https://x.com/hodgetwins/status/1796333815083741652>

And when you have contemplated that much, consider these words of Larken Rose, delivering a quiet rant that isn't just aimed at "Conservatives", but at every thinking man and woman in this country:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vRfQ1dF64kk>

Love you and love this country!

Happy Fourth of July!

Granna

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