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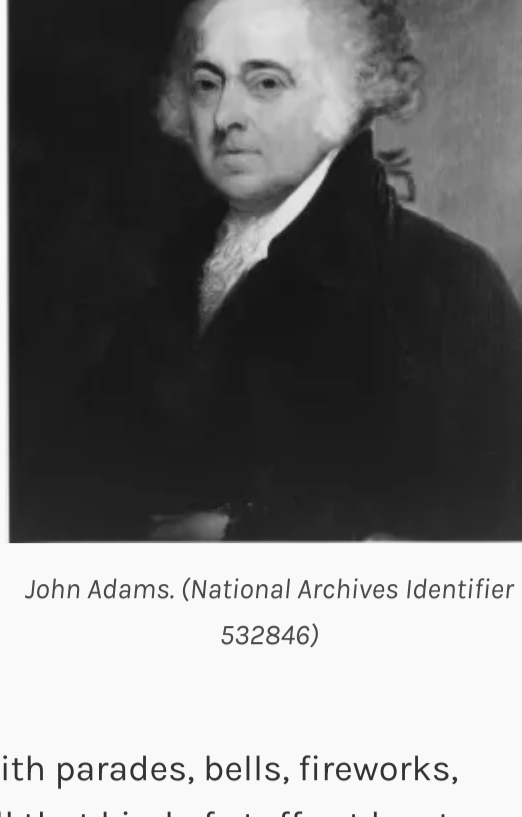
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John Adams’s vision of July 4 was July 2

July 2, 2014 By Jessie Kratz, Posted In Presidents

By Jim Worsham

Today—July 2—was supposed to have been the big day of



John Adams. (National Archives Identifier 532846)

celebrations, with parades, bells, fireworks, festivals and all that kind of stuff—at least that’s how John Adams envisioned it.

After all, on July 2, 1776, the Continental Congress ended its debate and approved the [resolution proposed on June 7 by Richard Henry Lee of Virginia](#) and seconded by Adams:

Resolved: That these United Colonies are, and of right ought to be, free and independent States, that they are absolved from all allegiance to the British Crown, and that all political connection between them and the State of Great Britain is, and ought to be, totally dissolved.

The newspapers of the day treated the action as the colonies’ definitive word on the break with Great Britain. And in Adams’s mind, approval of the resolution was worth celebrating, year after year. He was so excited, [he wrote one of his many letters to his wife, Abigail](#), back home in Massachusetts:

The Second Day of July 1776, will be the most memorable Epocha, 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.

Alas, it was not to be. But Adams was close.

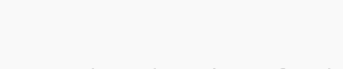
Adams had been appointed to the Committee of Five to write a document—a declaration—that told the world why the colonies cut ties with Britain. Thomas Jefferson had been working on a draft, which he gave to Adams and Benjamin Franklin for their review. Then he incorporated their changes into the draft, and submitted that draft to Congress. The delegates debated it, took out passages critical of the English people and of slavery, and adopted it—on July 4, the day that, every year, we celebrate our independence.

Postscript

The [Declaration of Independence](#) was not signed by any of the delegates until early August, after being engrossed on parchment by Timothy Matlack, a Philadelphia beer bottler who had fine penmanship. Most delegates gathered to sign the parchment copy on August 2, but a few others signed it later. Eventually, 56 delegates would put their names on it.

This is the copy that is on permanent display in the [National Archives Building](#) in downtown Washington, DC. It can be viewed on July 2 or July 4 or any day of the year except Thanksgiving Day and December 25.

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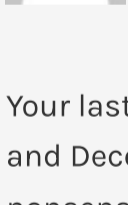
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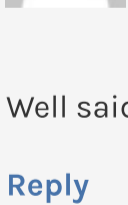
2 THOUGHTS ON “JOHN ADAMS’S VISION OF JULY 4 WAS JULY 2”



IRY
june 20, 2023 at 11:50 am

Your last line, “except Thanksgiving Day and December 25,” is a pure revisionist nonsense. It should read “except Thanksgiving Day and December 25.” By act of congress on June 28, 1870, President Grant signed Christmas into law as a Federal Holiday. It was not called December 25, it was and is called Christmas. Just as Thanksgiving is not called the 4th Thursday in November, but rather Thanksgiving. In addition, you really should stop calling Independence Day, the 4th of July. Call it by its proper name: Independence Day!

[Reply](#)



Jerrold C. Willis, M.D.
july 5, 2023 at 11:06 pm

Well said!

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