

The McClintock Letter

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July 4, 1776



Last Sunday, July 4th, 2010, we, the people of the United States of America, celebrated our nation's 234th year as a sovereign nation independent of the British Empire.

But wait. Did we do this birthday thing correctly? Let's see.

On the streets of America, if you were to ask, "What is the true meaning of July 4, 1776?" the vast majority of those you meet would reply that it is the day "they" signed the Declaration of Independence.

July 4, 1776, was a Thursday. The weather was a bit cooler than the preceding days, and it was a cloudless, sunny day. One of the most enduring myths in American history is that the document that proclaimed our freedom from the British monarchy was signed on that day. The full text of the Declaration of Independence was read to the members of the Continental Congress that day and they finally adopted the text and agreed that it was time to vote on the wording, but no one signed any papers that day.

Then you ask, "Who were they; the signers?" The answers will be, George Washington, Benjamin Franklin, and all those guys. Do you know that George Washington did not sign the Declaration of Independence? Franklin did. Thomas Jefferson did and so did John Adams. The New Jersey signers were: Abraham Clark, John Hart, Francis Hopkinson, Richard Stockton and John Witherspoon. Those from Delaware were George Read, Caesar Rodney and Thomas McKean. Pennsylvania signers were George Clymer, Benjamin Franklin, Robert Morris, John Morton, Benjamin Rush, George Ross, James Smith, James Wilson and George Taylor. In all 56 men signed; the first was John Hancock of Massachusetts, who according to legend signed his name in very large script and quipped, "There, that should be large enough for old king George to read." The youngest to sign was Edward Rutledge, only 24 years old, from South Carolina. The oldest, aged 70, was Ben Franklin.

Your next question should be, "Are you sure they signed the Declaration on July 4th?" Those who are confident will say yes, but most will shrug their shoulders and say, "I think so." You are certainly not likely to find anyone who will tell you, "... it was signed on August 2nd, almost a month after the text was finalized."

August 2, 2010
Our nation's 234th birthday!

Yeah, maybe, but who's counting?

Then you ask, "Do you know where they signed the Declaration of Independence?" Almost everyone will say, Independence Hall in Philadelphia. They will be correct. Maybe there's hope after all.

And finally, the last question should be, "What happened next?" This is where the jury is still out, but conjecture would suggest that only history scholars will tell you that later in the day of July 4th, John Hancock, who was the president of the Continental Congress ordered the printer John Dunlap to print 24 copies of our first federal document. Later known as *Dunlap Broadides* two copies were dispatched immediately to New Jersey and Delaware. The next day messengers carrying two copies each were sent to the other ten colonies. On July 6th, the *Pennsylvania Evening Post* published the first newspaper version, and on July 8th the first public reading took place on the steps of Independence Hall. Then on July 9th, General Washington ordered the Declaration of Independence be read to the American army in New York.

Great debate ensued.

Almost without hesitation, Loyalists began to package their belongings for their return to England or their escape to Canada. The new Americans began to stockpile goods and munitions for what they instinctively knew would be the fight of their lives.

It had been 440 days since the "shot heard round the world" was fired in Massachusetts, but the fight had just begun – a staggering 2,617 days would go by before John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, and John Jay (representing the United States) and David Hartley (a member of British Parliament representing the monarch, King George III) would sign the Treaty of Paris on September 3, 1783.

Naturally there are no real-time postcards of the Revolutionary War, but there are many of the sites, i.e., the card of Independence Hall, above, and others where the war was battled by the bravest of our patriot ancestry. We should thank them every day

(over)

Some Postcard Images of the Revolutionary War

This modern postcard shows the *Minute Man* statue by Daniel Chester French, located in Concord, Massachusetts. The phrase "The Shot Heard Round the World" is inscribed at the base of this statue where it enjoys its most public airing. Commonly associated with the beginning of the American Revolutionary war, it is part of the *Concord Hymn* (1837) by Ralph Waldo Emerson.



This Tuck's postcard is a copy of an etching entitled *A Day at Lexington* by Francois Godefroy, who with Nicolas Ponce created a series that depicted all the major events of the American Revolution. The colonials claimed total victory that day. The colonials sustained 88 killed or wounded, but the British suffered over 300 casualties; thus was the first day of the Revolutionary War.

"Red Coats" (seen right) was the term used to refer to the British regulars. They did battle in the way of other Europeans – lines of infantry at a slow march. The British commanding officers also regaled themselves in red coats, adorned with gold braid and buttons, causing them to be totally conspicuous in public places. Sir William Howe, dubbed by the colonials "Sir Billy" spent the war's winter months in Philadelphia, a strategy that came into question when General Washington took up camp in Valley Forge.



In the white-border era of postcards, the American Postcard Company published a set of cards that pictured American Military Leaders. Men like Washington, Nathanael Greene, Horatio Gates, Friedrich Wilhelm von Steuben, and Marquis de La Fayette all appeared in the first series along with the man pictured here. Thaddeus Kosciuszko. Kosciuszko was born in Poland in 1746 and received his elementary education in Lubieszow, his military training in Warsaw, and then completed a full regimen of engineering studies in Paris. By the time Kosciuszko arrived in America in 1776, he was a skilled engineer who came to offer his services to the American colonies in their struggle for independence. On October 18, 1776 Kosciuszko was commissioned as Colonel of Engineers by the Continental Congress and began his outstanding service of fortifying battle sites, many of which became turning points in America's fight against the British.



Fourth of July greetings are usually bright and colorful. There are many silk cards of flags and interestingly many of these greetings show children, drawn by artists such as Bunnell and Clapsaddle, beating drums or tooting horns. An exploding fire-cracker is also a popular theme.



The Tuck's Company made a large series (circa 1908 to 1912) of heavily embossed cards, usually done by in-house artists, one of which is rather famous: an embossed card of Lady Liberty emerging from the smoke of a bonfire fueled by fire-crackers. The card here, left, is rare in that it shows



soldiers in battle. Another in the same series, right, shows General Washington, astride his horse, pointing his finger toward the horizon as an instruction to his men who have just captured several British red coats.



The famous painting, left, shown on a modern card, is by the American artist Benjamin West. It was meant to portray the signing of the Treaty of Paris between the new sovereign nation of the United States of America and the monarch of Britain, HRH King George III. It remained unfinished because the British delegate refused to pose for the picture. David Hartley mused that he was too ugly to be included, but scholars have learned that he was instructed, by his superiors, to refuse the offer.

The Americans shown include, John Jay, John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, Henry Laurens, and William Temple Franklin, the grandson of Benjamin, who served as the delegation's aide.

It was at the close of the signing ceremony that Franklin's remark, "there has never been a good war or a bad peace" was made.

There is a Delaware Valley connection to this painting. In 1944 it was acquired by Henry Francis du Pont (1880-1969) and it is currently on public view at the Winterthur Museum on Route 52 (5105 Kennett Pike) in Winterthur, Delaware.