

4th of July



National Day of the United States of America

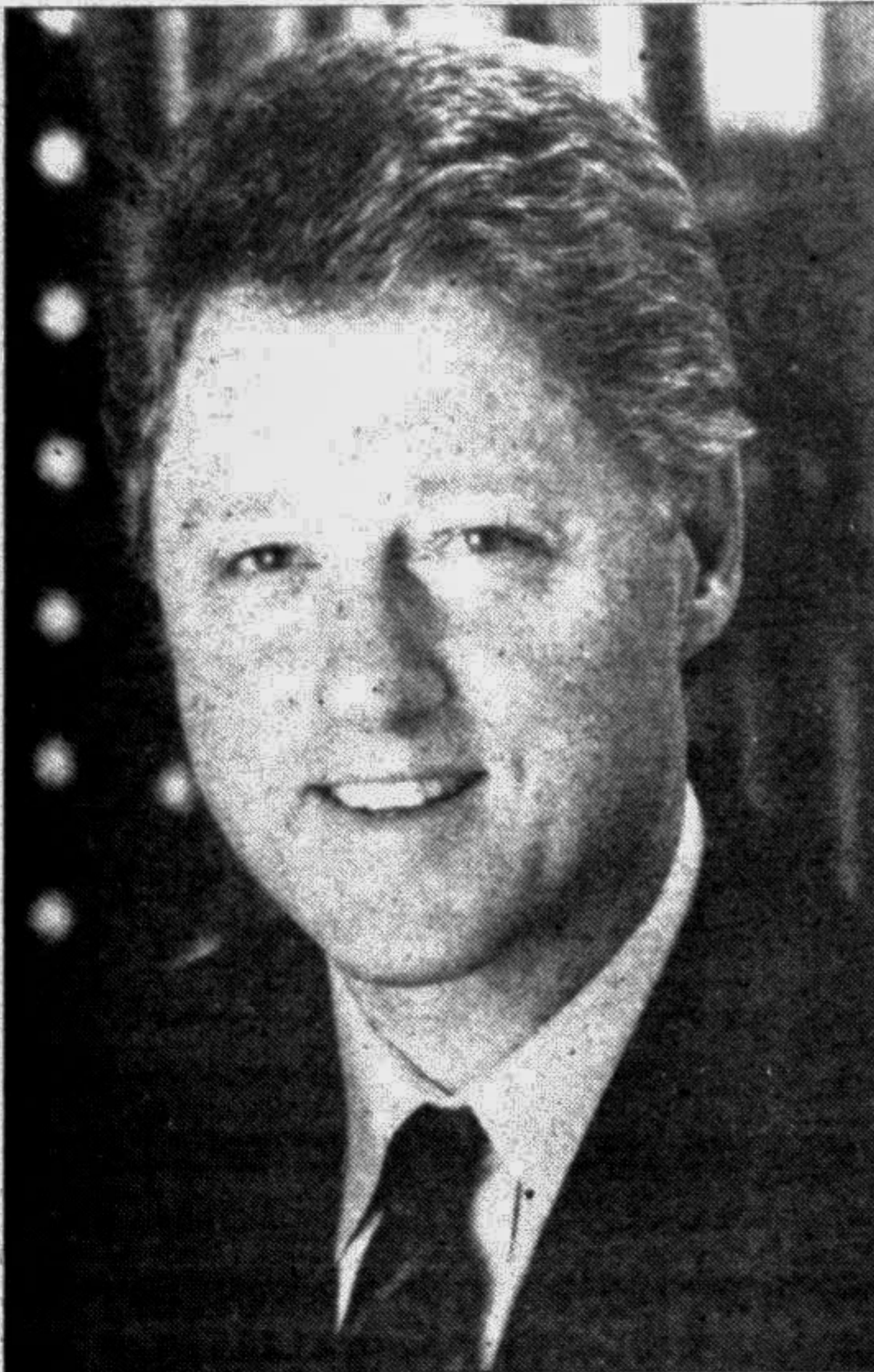
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Glorious Fourth: Celebrating America's Birthday

by Peggy Robbins



President Bill Clinton

"THE Second of July, 1776, will be the most memorable epoch in the history of America. I 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 and sports, guns, bells, bonfires and illuminations, from one end of this continent to the other, from this time forward, forevermore." So wrote John Adams to his wife — the next day, July 3. Of course, he was wrong.

America's schoolchildren have always been taught that July 4, 1776 — when the Second Continental Congress, meeting in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, adopted the Declaration of Independence from England — is America's birthday. That tends to oversimplify the matter, as only one signature was placed on the document that day — that of John Hancock, president of the Congress. The Declaration of Independence, as a completely executed document, was not the work of a day.

The actions in the Congress relating to signing a document of independence extended from June 7 to August 2. On June 7, Richard Henry Lee, Leader of the Virginia delegates to the Congress, introduced three resolutions. The first and most important declared 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." John Adams of Massachusetts immediately seconded Lee's motion. A very spirited debate followed, as many delegates still hoped for a peaceful reconciliation with the mother country.

Three days later, Congress appointed a committee of five — Thomas Jefferson, John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, Roger Sherman and Robert Livingston — to draft a formal declaration of independence. Jefferson wrote a document, and for three weeks the committee members and then the Congress worked over it, making minor changes. Then, on July 2, before the members quite got to the act of approving the declaration, Lee's first resolution was debated briefly and approved: This was the impetus for Adams' excited letter to his wife. As it turned out, Lee's resolution was treated as only a preface for the adoption of the Declaration — on Thursday, July 4, when John Hancock signed it "by order of and on behalf of the Congress." The opening words of the document were "In Congress, July 4, 1776."

The Declaration had not yet been properly prepared — "engrossed on parchment by an expert penman" — to receive signatures and become an enduring document. It was not until August 2 that an official copy was signed by all members of Congress present; the signatures of those absent that day were added later, the last signature in 1781. Official copies were delivered to all states in January 1777. One signer — Richard Stockton of Princeton, New Jersey — renounced his signature because the British had threatened to burn his fine home.

Philadelphia waited only until the Monday following John Hancock's July 4 signing to observe the adoption of the Declaration. There was a mass meeting in State House Yard (later to be called Independence Square), and the Declaration was read from an old platform erected seven years earlier by the American Philosophical Society. According to John Adams, who was present: "Three cheers rent the welkin [heavens]. Battalions paraded on the Common and gave us the few de jole, notwithstanding the scarcity of powder. Bells rang all day and almost all night. Even the Christ Church chimed away." (The rector of Christ Church was a staunch royalist.)

Other contemporary accounts of the event that July 8 in Philadelphia differ somewhat from Adams': "I was in

the old State House Yard when the Declaration of Independence was read," wrote one citizen, "and I noted that there were very few respectable persons present." And a lady who lived in a house facing the square wrote that "the first audience of the declaration was neither very numerous nor composed of the most respectable class of citizens."

The next day, July 9, on order of General George Washington, the Declaration was read to his Continental troops in City Hall Park in New York. As the news spread to other towns and to the remote areas of the colonies, loyal patriots celebrated.

Independence Day Takes Shape

John Adams may have been wrong when he said that July 2 would forever be celebrated as Independence Day, but he certainly was right in predicting that America's birthday would be honored annually "with pomp and parade" and a great variety of celebratory activities.

On the first anniversary, in 1777, cities and towns celebrated spontaneously. There were parades everywhere — quite elaborate ones in Philadelphia; Charleston, South Carolina; and Boston, Massachusetts. Streets were decorated, cannon boomed, bells rang, bonfires were lit and fireworks (imported from England) spangled the night skies. Colonial soldiers at Morristown were given an extra gill of rum that day, and, reportedly, a favourite individual activity in several towns was to drink — or attempt to drink — 13 toasts to the 13

states. The General Court of Massachusetts urged citizens to "make every Preparation for drinking Success to the Thirteen United States."

In Philadelphia, a Hessian band that had been captured at Trenton, New Jersey, was required to play in the streets and at a mid-afternoon dinner attended by notables. John Adams, after walking around Philadelphia that night and seeing lighted candles in most windows, wrote his young daughter: "It was the most splendid illumination I ever saw ... I was amazed at the universal joy and alacrity, considering the lateness of the design and the suddenness of the execution, and at the brilliancy and splendor of every part of the day's exhibition." Adams did not tell his daughter that some patriots threw rocks through the windows of several houses that were not illuminated, but several of his contemporaries recorded that fact.

A Philadelphia editor summed up the celebration: "Thus may the Fourth of July, that glorious and ever memorable day, be celebrated through America by the sons of freedom from age to age, till time shall be no more." That was the origin of that enduring appellation, the "Glorious Fourth."

After the Revolution and the adoption of the Constitution, the July 4 celebration grew and spread. Many disbanded soldiers went west and occupied land in or near small settlements, and they gathered on Independence Day to discuss their part in the struggle for freedom. In 1788, Philadelphia, then the new nation's capital, staged one of the



Vice President Al Gore

longest and most enduringly talked-about Independence Day parades in American history. Called "the Great Federal Procession," it was only a part of the celebration, which honored both the signing of the Declaration and adoption of the Constitution.

As the years passed, celebration of the Glorious Fourth spread through every state and territory. By 1810, there were elaborate observances in all the major cities. That year the official celebration in Boston, held

in the morning at the Old South Meeting House, was preceded by a huge military parade from the statehouse through the main streets of the city. The address was delivered by Boston's noted Reverend William Ellery Channing. In the afternoon, a second parade was staged by the Bunker Hill Association and the Young Republicans, followed by a dinner served to 600 persons in Faneuil Hall. That evening on the common.

Continued on page 11

Message

Americans celebrate our nation's birth on the 4th of July. On that date in 1776, the members of the Second Continental Congress signed the Declaration of Independence, proclaiming that the thirteen British colonies on the North American shore "are, and of right ought to be, free and independent states." From those thirteen original states on the Atlantic coast, the United States has grown to 50 states, spread across a continent and beyond, to the Pacific.

In the United States, the 4th of July holiday is a time for family gatherings, picnics and sports. Patriotic parades are a feature of the holiday in small towns and big cities. The 4th of July typically ends with fireworks in red, white and blue.

Since 1776, the path of American history has had twists and turns. Yet we are confident that the war of independence set in motion progress toward higher ideals:

- democratic government under a written constitution.
- religious freedom.
- equality before the law.
- the gradual expansion of the franchise and the sway of civil liberties.

The frame of government established by the American founders also laid the foundations for enterprise and economic growth. The freedoms and economic opportunity attracted millions to our shores, making Americans, over time, a new people. Our names mark origins from every continent. And on days of worship, Americans, inspired by all the world's great faiths, pray for continued blessings.

The democracy we celebrate today is an ideal our nation shares with Bangladesh. In my first months here I have come to appreciate the many sacrifices Bangladesh has made to attain its present democracy. The United States shares the ideals of many Bangladeshis in hoping that the institutions of representative government in Bangladesh will continue to grow and flourish.

The ties between our countries are strong and steady. In economic fields, the United States continues to be the largest market for garments made in Bangladesh. As the business climate improves, US businesses will look increasingly at Bangladesh as a place for investment and commercial opportunities.

Our development partnership remains central to the relationship between the United States and Bangladesh. Since 1971 the United States has provided over three billion dollars in development assistance to Bangladesh. Among the many positive results of this assistance

we can count rural electrification, lower population growth rates, improved maternal and child health, and higher crop yields and food availability per capita. This truly is a partnership. Americans and Bangladeshis working together to improve living conditions in this country.

The Declaration of Independence mentions "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." Americans hope that our contributions in health, nutrition, and agricultural productivity give a fuller and richer life to more Bangladeshis. Our support for democratic development, we believe, will make the blessings of liberty more real, here as in our own country. We believe that economic growth will lay the foundations for a more widespread human happiness.

My wife and I extend to the American community, and to all our Bangladeshi friends, our wishes for a happy 4th of July.



David N Merrill
Ambassador of the United States of America in Bangladesh

United States Development Assistance to Bangladesh

THE United States, through the US Agency for International Development (USAID) has assisted Bangladesh substantially since its independence in 1971. Immediately following independence, in 1972 the US provided emergency food aid to cope with the post-war famine. Project assistance began in 1973 with a major programme of reconstruction and rehabilitation of basic infrastructure. As peace time conditions returned to Bangladesh, agricultural production stabilized and basic infrastructure needs were met. US assistance evolved from relief and rehabilitation to economic development.

The goal of the current US assistance to Bangladesh is to effect a sustainable increase in the proportion of Bangladeshis living above the poverty line through encouraging a pattern of sustainable economic growth based on efficient use of resources, improving and protecting the human capital base and enhancing popular access to institutions of democratic governance.

To reach this goal, USAID programmes support four objectives: reduced fertility and infant, child and maternal mortality; increased productivity and competitiveness in agriculture, finance and industry; increased capacity of the poor to participate in and benefit from a productive economy; and increased accountability of democratic institutions.

Food aid: To assist with food shortages over the years, USAID has provided grants of food aid as well as loans for food procurement. Since 1972, over seven million metric tons of wheat have been provided to Bangladesh, in addition large quantities of rice, and edible oils.

Population and Health: Support for family planning is intended not only to sustain economic growth. In a country where poor families cannot

support additional children, family planning is an important way to improve maternal and child health.

In the past 18 years, as a result of AID's leadership in this sector, a nationwide network of private voluntary organizations, the private sector, and Bangladesh Government agencies have brought the contraceptive prevalence rate up from 7% to 41%. Population growth will decrease as the prevalence rate steadily increases.

USAID led efforts to establish the Cholera Hospital, now called the International Center for Diarrheal Diseases Research, Bangladesh (ICDDR,B). USAID provided financial support to pioneering research programmes on cholera prevention and treatment, including the development of life-saving oral rehydration therapy.

Agriculture: The Bangladesh

Government established the goal of foodgrain self-sufficiency. With US Government support, to and through the private sector, Bangladesh became self sufficient in rice at the end of 1993.

Fertilizer use in Bangladesh has increased by more than 80% since 1985, urea fertilizer has become relatively cheaper, and the Government is now saving approximately Tk 5.5 billion every year which was needed earlier for fertilizer subsidies. This is one of USAID's major success stories in Bangladesh.

USAID assistance has paid for importing approximately 507,000 tons of fertilizer, technical assistance to develop an improved fertilizer marketing system, for initiating an in-kind credit programme and construction of warehouses to store 210,000 metric tons of fertilizer. A current emphasis is privatization of fertilizer distribution, first in-country and now import channels as well.

Agricultural research projects, the first of which started

Warmest Congratulations to the People of The United States of America in their celebration of 218 years of Independence



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