

The spirit of Independence

THE EDITORS AND LINDA BARTH

It was a town where the trails started and the buck stopped. Home to a President and an outlaw, it made room for both.

As you drive in from Kansas City, Independence doesn't look as if it has much to offer. The two-lane highway rolls away from the interstate in gentle waves, but the landscape is littered with fast-food restaurants and discount stores. It isn't until you've reached downtown Independence that you notice the change. The neat blocks of glass-fronted two-story buildings, the streets that seem to trail off into the Missouri prairie, and the orderly calmness bring on a sudden sense to trail off into the Missouri prairie, and the orderly calmness bring on a sudden sense of nostalgia. It's as if you've returned to a time when life revolved around the town square, which, as it happens, is the case with Independence.

The center of town looks much as it did around the turn of the century, when Harry S. Truman worked at the local drugstore. Back before the Civil War this was the spot where wagon trains would line up for their westward departure; it was also the site of the area's slave auctions. The square is dominated by the Jackson County Courthouse, built in 1836, and there you can visit the office where Truman made the transition from bankrupt haberdasher to public servant when he was elected county judge in 1922. According to legend, it was at the courthouse that he picked up from another local political what later became his famous catch phrase about heat and kitchens.

Independence has a surprisingly rich history for a place with such a small-town feel. Founded in 1827, it soon became known as the Queen City of the Trails because of the throngs of people who arrived to join westward wagon trains. The National Frontier Trails Center, about a

mile from downtown, stands on the site of the trailhead for three of the overland routes most vital to the settlement of the West: the Santa Fe, the Oregon, and the California. A short film gives a good overview of the history of the overland trails, and a comprehensive collection of period artifacts makes it all the more immediate. The exhibits quote

extensively from trail diaries, offering modern visitors a chance to relieve the arduous journey west through the words of those who made the trip.

Not everyone who went to Independence intended to keep moving. The founder of the Mormon Church, Joseph Smith, arrived in 1831 while proselytizing in the Midwest. He declared

the town the new promised land and selected a spot that is today known as the Temple Lot as the site of a new church. His followers began migrating to the area in such numbers that by 1833 the local residents were beginning to resent their presence, forcing them to relocate just north of Independence and then burning their homes. In

1838 Missouri's governor, Lilburn Boggs, issued his "Extermination Order," mandating that Mormons be driven from the state or killed.

Today a small memorial on the Temple Lot commemorates the moment when Smith declared this patch of Independence promised land. In fact, some followers of the

church still believe that at the moment of the Apocalypse, Jesus Christ will appear simultaneously in Jerusalem and Independence. The church headquarters are certainly worth a visit. Helpful tour guides give you a quick history lesson, but the real interest lies in the building itself. It sits on the edge of town, rising three hundred

feet above the lush Missouri plains, a polished silver-colored spiraling dome that looks almost like the top of a soft-cream cone.

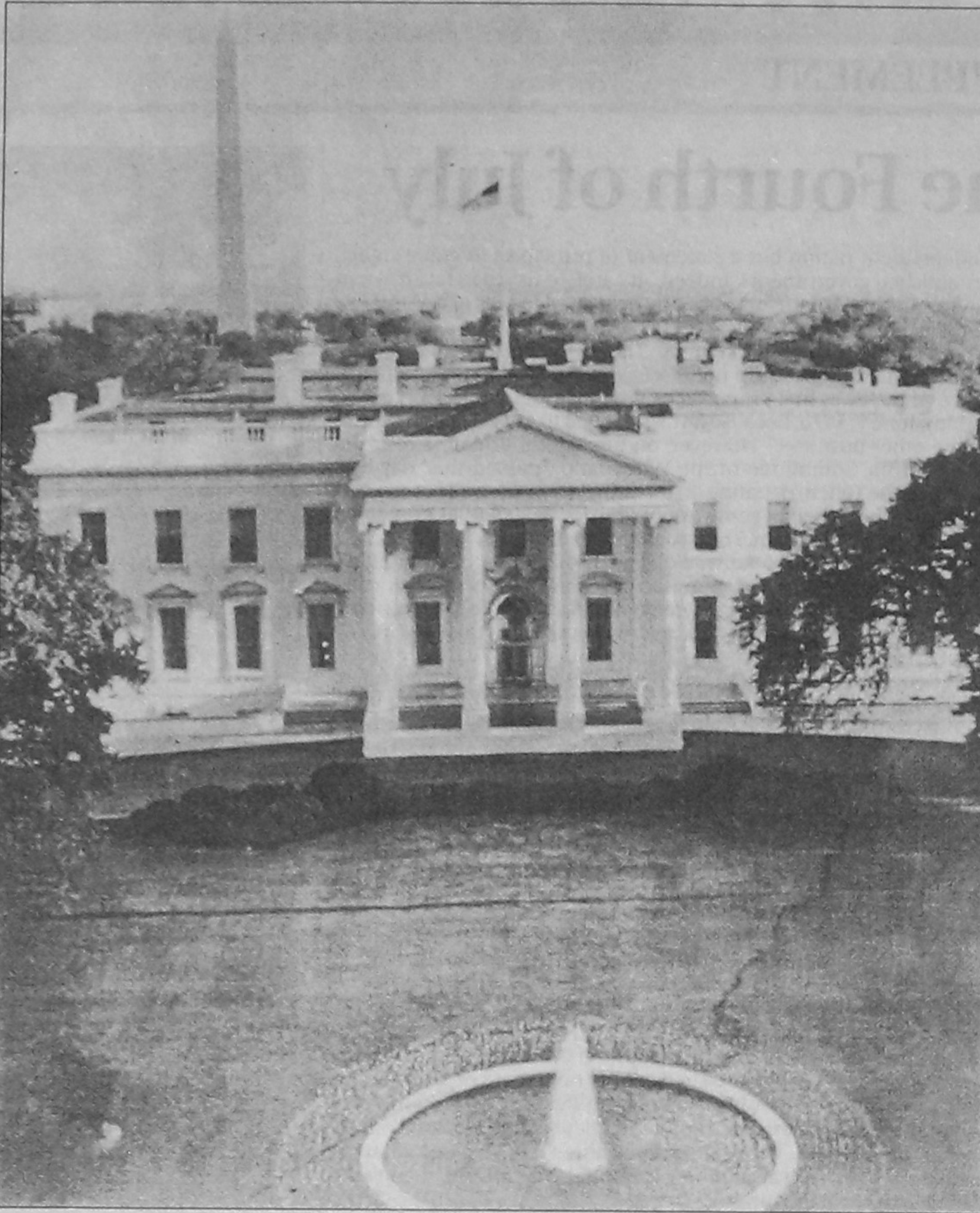
Mormons were not the only source of controversy in Independence. The battle over slavery hit here with particular force. Under the Missouri Compromise of 1820, Missouri

was a slave state, but when Congress in 1854 decided to let Kansas vote on whether their state would be free or slave, many Missourians felt threatened. Pro-slavery forces rushed into Kansas from border towns like Independence to menace abolitionists and to elect a pro-slavery legislature. The 1859 Jail, Marshal's Home and Museum, just off Independence Square, examines this grim chapter of independence history. The brick compound has been restored to its Civil War-era appearance, when it housed abolitionist raiders (jayhawkers) from Kansas and occasionally an overzealous pro-slavery Missourian. During the Battle of Independence, in 1862, William Quantrill, who had already earned a name for himself leading raids into Kansas from Independence, stormed the prison and released all the Confederate prisoners in it.

After the war the jail mostly held petty criminals. Frank James, the brother of Jesse and erstwhile second-in-command of the by then defunct James Gang, who had also earned a reputation as a Border Ruffian, spent time at the jail in the winter of 1882-83 after turning himself in to authorities. His brother had been killed, and the popular press had gone from portraying the gang as folk heroes to calling them hardened criminals. Frank James turned in his gun belt, saying, "I'm handing you something no other man has touched in twenty years." His cell has been restored, and it looks quite cozy, with a rug on the floor, a quilt on the bed, and a sampler on the wall that reads, "God is our Refuge and strength."

The James Gang had managed to avoid the law for two years, according to the museum's director, Joe Kelley, with the help of town residents who were frustrated by what they saw as Radical Republicanism run amok in the years after the Civil War. But by 1879 the gang's luck was beginning to wear thin because, in Kelley's words, "it was no longer a revolution anymore, but simply crime."

For all its other charms,
CONTINUED ON PAGE 19



The White House



Washington Monument

WARMEST FELICITATIONS ON THE OCCASION OF
THE INDEPENDENCE DAY OF U.S.A

DRESSER
Waukesha

WAUKESHA 1000 RPM GAS ENGINE GENERATOR

Manufactured quality:

Waukesha Engine, Dresser, Inc. U.S.A. is dedicated to quality manufacturing at its U.S. and European plants. State-of-the-art manufacturing equipment assures this quality in components—crankshafts, camshafts, pistons, liners and cylinder heads—for both production engines and genuine service parts. Manufacturing precision contributes to Waukesha engines long and effective service life.

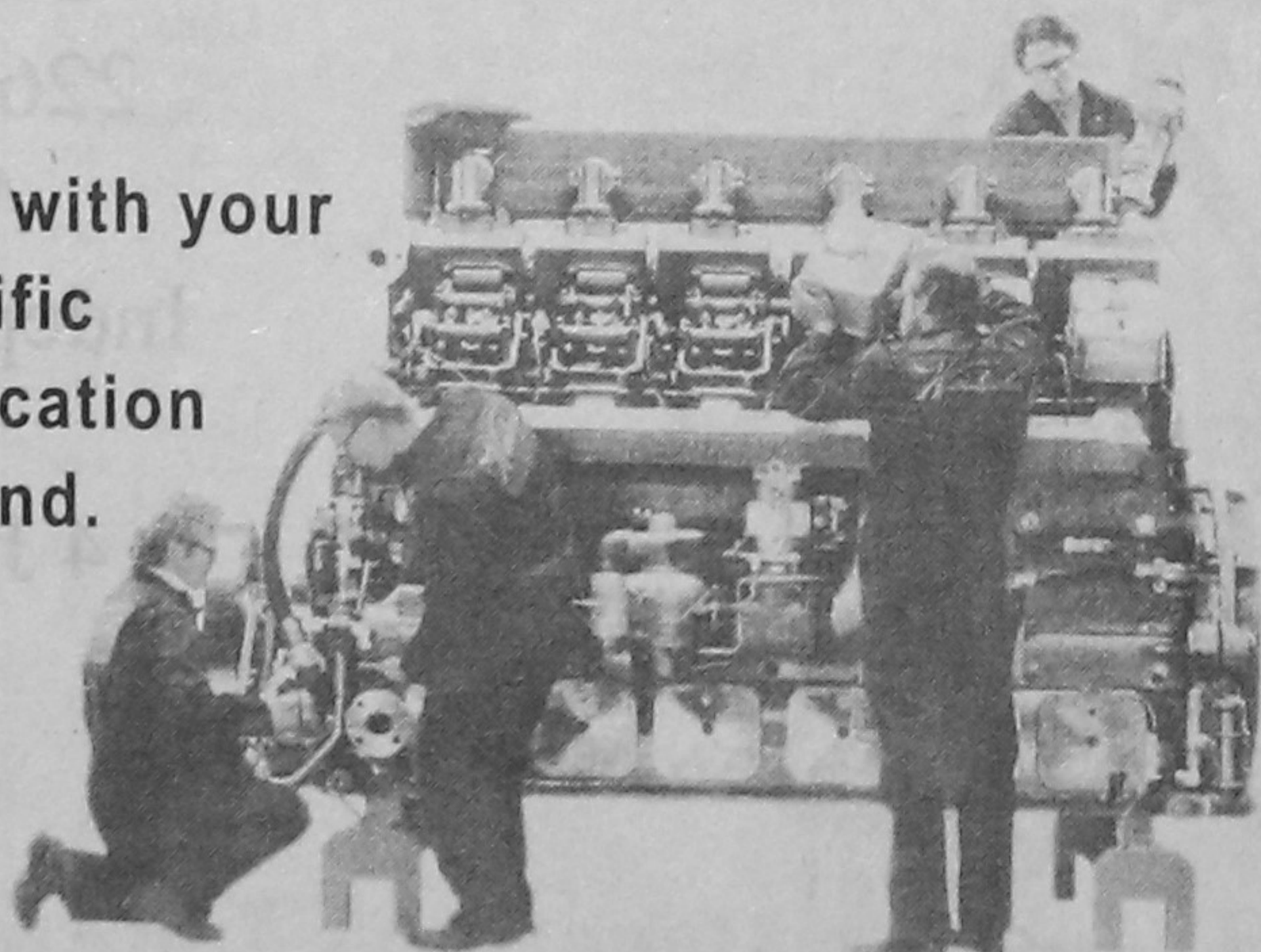
Cost effective:

Waukesha designs and builds the Engine-Generator to be cost-effective whatever the application. In power generation application Waukesha Engine makes efficient use of every cubic foot of fuel.

Durability:

Outstanding durability and minimal downtime are key reasons why customers specify Waukesha engines for continuous duty in critical installations such as continuous electric power generation, pumping stations, air compressors, blowers, chillers etc.

Built with your
specific
application
in mind.



Around 250 Waukesha Generators running nationwide.

Distributor in Bangladesh

di Dana Engineers International Ltd.

Tower Hamlet (3rd Floor) 16 Kemal Ataturk Avenue, Banani, Dhaka-1213, Bangladesh. G.P.O Box No. 914, Dhaka-1000, Bangladesh
Tel: (880)-2-9882225, 9882263, 9882265, Fax: (880)-2-8813108 E-mail: danaengr@agni.com

Making sense of the Fourth of July

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 17

delegates. By June 28, when the Committee of Five submitted to congress a draft declaration, only Maryland and New York had failed to allow the delegates to vote for independence. That night Maryland fell into line.

Even so, when the Committee of the Whole again took up Lee's resolution, on July 1, only nine colonies voted in favour (the four New England states, New Jersey, Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, and Georgia). South Carolina and Pennsylvania opposed the proposition, Delaware's two delegates split, and New York's abstained because their twelve-month-old instructions precluded them from approving anything that impeded reconciliation with the mother country. Edward Rutledge now asked that Congress put off its decision until the next day, since he thought that the South Carolina delegation would then vote in favour "for the sake of unanimity." When congress took its final tally on July 2, the nine affirmative votes of the day before had grown to twelve. Not only South Carolina voted in favour, but so did Delaware -- he arrival of Caesar Rodney broke the tie in that delegation's vote -- and Pennsylvania. Only New York held out. Then on July 9 it, too, allowed its delegates to add their approval to that of delegates from the other twelve colonies, lamenting still the "cruel necessity" that made independence "unavoidable."

Once independence had been adopted, Congress again formed itself into a Committee of the Whole. It then spent the better part of two days editing the draft declaration submitted by its Committee of Five, rewriting or chopping of large sections of text. Finally, on July 4, Congress approved the revised Declaration and ordered it to be printed and sent to the several states and to the commanding officers of the Continental Army. By formally announcing and justifying the end of British rule, that document, as letters from Congress's president, John Hancock, explained, laid "the Ground and Foundation" of American self-government. As a result, it had to be proclaimed not only before American troops in the hope that it would inspire them to fight more ardently for what was now the cause of both liberty and national independence but throughout the country, and "in such a Manner, that the people may be universally informed of it."

Not until four days later did a committee of Congress -- not Congress itself -- get around to sending a copy of the Declaration to its emissary in Paris, Silas Deane, with orders to present it to the court of France and send copies to "the other Courts of Europe." Unfortunately the original letter was lost, and the next failed to reach Deane until November, when news of American independence had circulated for months. To make matters worse, it arrived with only a brief note from the committee and in an envelope that lacked a seal, an unfortunately slipshod way, complained Deane, to announce the arrival of the United States among the powers of the earth to "Old and powerful states." Despite the Declaration's reference to the "opinions of mankind," it was obviously meant first and foremost for a home audience.

As copies of the Declaration spread through the states and were publicly read at town meetings, religious services, court days, or wherever else people assembled, Americans marked the occasion with appropriate rituals. They lit great bonfires, "illuminated" their windows with candles, fired guns, rang bells, tore down and destroyed the symbols of monarchy on public buildings, churches, or tavern signs, and "fixed up" on the walls of their homes broadside or newspaper copies of the Declaration of Independence.

The adoption of independence was, however, from the beginning confused with its declaration. Differences in the meaning of

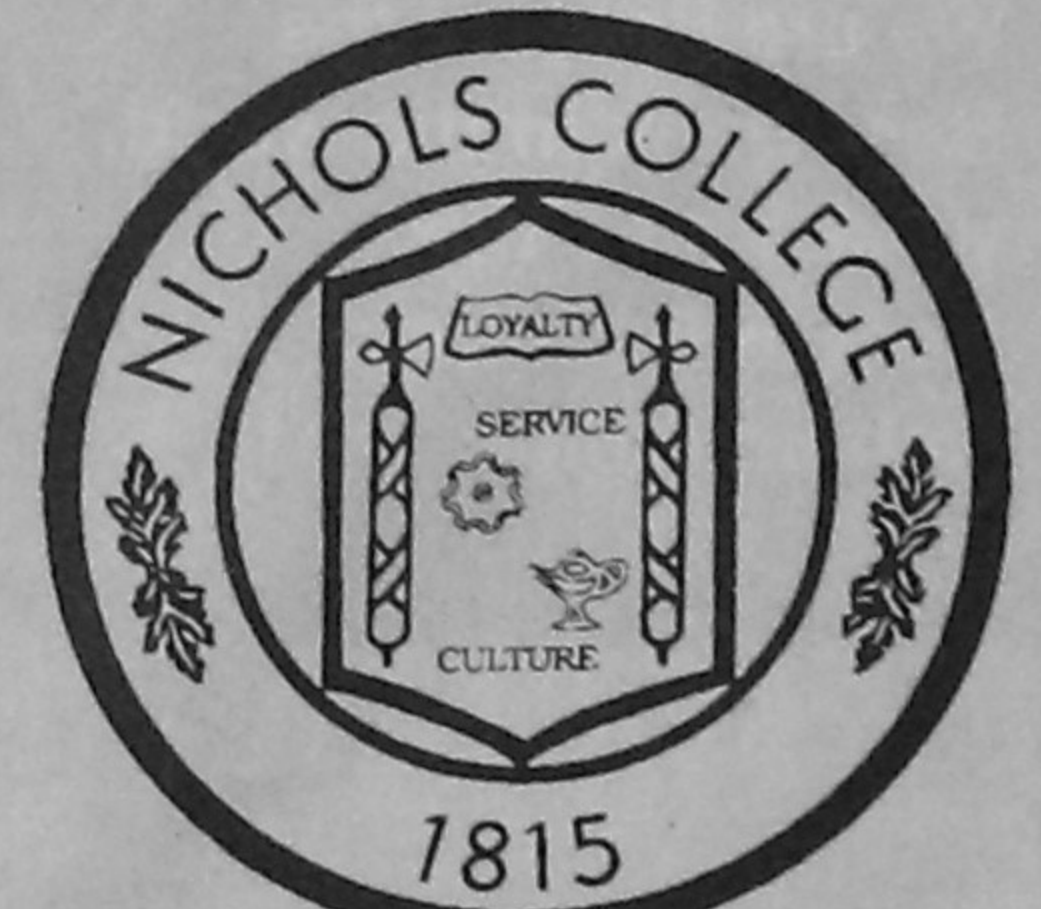
the word declare contributed to the confusion.

Before the Declaration of Independence was issued -- while, in fact, Congress was still editing Jefferson's draft -- Pennsylvania newspapers announced that on July 2 the Continental Congress had "declared the United Colonies Free and Independent States," by which it meant simply that it had officially accepted that status. Newspapers in other colonies repeated the story. In later years the "Anniversary of the United States of America" came to be celebrated on the date Congress had approved the Declaration of Independence. That began, it seems, by accident. In 1777 no member of Congress thought of marking the anniversary of independence at all until July 3, when it was too late to honour July 2. As a result, the celebration took place on the Fourth, and that became the tradition. At least one delegate spoke of "celebrating the Anniversary of the Declaration of Independence," but over the next few years references to the anniversary of independence and of the Declaration seem to have been virtually interchangeable.

On Independence Day, then, Americans celebrate not simply the birth of their nation or the legacy of a few great men. They also commemorate a Declaration of Independence that is their own collective work now and through time. And that, finally, makes sense of the Fourth of July.

Pauline Maier is William Rand Kenan, Jr. Professor of American History at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. This article is adapted from her book *American Scripture: Making the Declaration of Independence*, published by Knopf on July 4, 1997.

HAPPY INDEPENDENCE DAY



Massachusetts
www.nichols.edu

BANGLADESH CAMPUS
US Joint Venture Education Project
US Department of Education recognized
Business Degrees Programs now available in
Dhaka: MBA and BSBA (MIS)

Asian Center for Management and
Information Technology ACMIT
H 34, Road 6, Block C, Banani, Dhaka 1213
Email: info@acmit.org Phone: 8822729, 8826685
www.acmit.org Your Success Is Our Business