

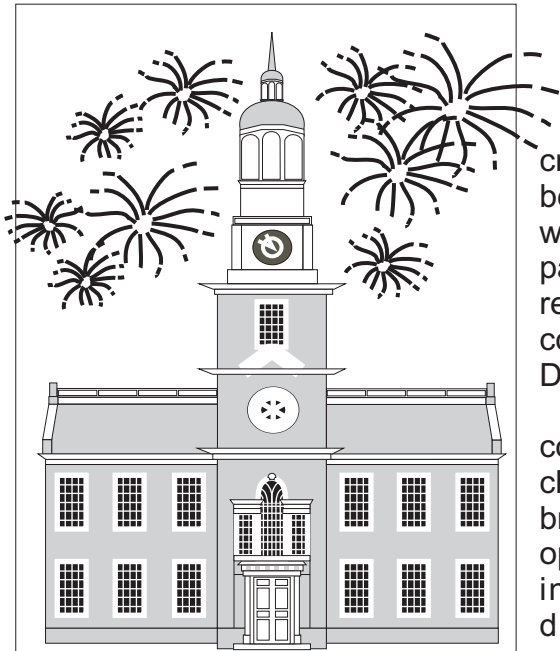


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HISTORY



INDEPENDENCE HALL

There is a day for all Americans when age, creed, race, and gender are laid aside and we all become “AMERICANS” in the proudest sense of the word! The Fourth of July comes once each year stirring patriotism in one and all! On this day, there is an annual renewal of faith, loyalty, and national pride in our country that was established by the signers of the Declaration of Independence.

It is because of these men that our lives and our country, as we know it today, are full of individual choices and the freedom to make those choices. These brave men banded together to stave off the tyranny and oppression of a rule by a country who had become increasingly controlling governmentally, yet disassociated emotionally from their fellow countrymen in the colonies.

Americans have often fought and died to protect the right to freedom of choice in all aspects of their lives; they are proud of their heritage, their ancestry, their traditions, their flag, and their country. As such, on each Fourth of July, they are often found watching a parade with pounding drums, blaring horns, squealing fifes, flapping flags, and the measured tread of uniformed marchers proceeding with precise military tempo down the main streets of America. Their “oooohing” and “aaaahing,” and stretched necks craned to watch dazzling aerial displays of fireworks with pulses accelerated, testifies to a continued sense of the glorious delight it is to be an American!

Yet, how much do we know about the fifty-six men who were the actual signers of the Declaration of Independence? How much do we know about their sacrifices, their values, their backgrounds, and their unshakable faith? While each man was being prepared to climb the mountain of independence and walk through the valley of persecution, what events were preparing a growing group of colonialists to become a new nation?

A NEW LIFE

In the early seventeenth century, hundreds of people seeking freedom to live, work, and worship as they chose, braved wide and uncharted seas in the hope that they would find somewhere else to pursue their lives and work. They came from such countries as England, Ireland, Scotland, Germany, and others. For those who survived the journey, they first stepped unsteadily ashore into a new world inhabited by untamed savages and wild beasts unknown to European man.

They came with little -- a paucity of belongings which would ill-prepare them for their new life. They were destined for an adventure which would prove to be harder and more beset with perils than anything they might have experienced in their native lands. Enough survived