

Independence, 1776

Independence was declared by the British colonies of North America on July 4, 1776, but the events leading up to and following that date should not be forgotten.

Initially, the general population did not have a quarrel with the British monarch, rather a deepening mistrust of the British Parliament. On June 26, 1774, at a Norfolk, Conn. town meeting they wrote: "Taking into consideration the truly alarming and threatening acts of British Legislature respecting our liberties, and in a word all that is dear both with regard to ourselves and all British America...." The voters of Norfolk further stated: "We will forthwith contribute welfare of our poor and distressed brethren at Boston by affording such necessaries and sustenance as they shall stand in need of and our infant state shall admit."

In the fall of 1774 the legislature of the Colony of Connecticut passed a resolution which said in part: "In the first place, we do most expressly declare, recognize and acknowledge His Majesty King George the third to be the lawful and rightful king of Great Britain and all other of his Dominions and Countries and that it is the indispensable duty of the people of this colony as being part of His Majesties Dominion always to bear faithful and true allegiance to his majesty..." etc.

Up to and including the Acts and Laws passed by the legislature in Hartford or New Haven, (We had dual capitols in those days,) on Dec. 14, 1774, each session's enactment began with the following phrase, the one we're talking about here read: "Made and passed by the General Court or Assembly of His Majesty's English Colony of Connecticut, in New England, in America on the fourteenth day of December, in the sixteenth year of the reign of our Sovereign Lord GEORGE the Third, King of Great Britain, etc. *Annoque Domini*, 1775.

Five months later these same Acts and Laws were entitled: "Made and passed by the General Court or assembly of the English Colony of Connecticut, in New England, in America, holden at Hartford, in said Colony, on the second Thursday of May, Anno Dom. 1776." Contained within the laws passed on that date is one that reads: "In the future all writs and processes in law or equity, shall issue in the name of the Governor and Company of the Colony of Connecticut, instead of 'his Majesty's name'and that no writ or process shall have or bear any date, save the Year of our Lord Christ only; any law, usage or custom to the contrary notwithstanding."

In October of 1776, the wording was further modified to read "Made and passed by the General Court or Assembly of the State of Connecticut, in New England, in America..." This session begins "Whereas George the Third, King of Great Britain, hath unjustly levied war against this and the other United States of America, declared them out of his protection, and abdicated the Government of this State, whereby the good people of this State are absolved from their allegiance and subjection to the Crown of Great Britain. And whereas the representatives of the said United States in General Congress assembled, have published and declared that these United States are, and of right ought to be free and independent States, and that they are absolved from all allegiance to the British Crown."

This is immediately followed by an "Act for prescribing and enjoining an Oath of Fidelity to the State", which reads in part: "All members of the General Assembly, and all other officers, civil and military, and Freemen within this State of Connecticut, shall

take the following oath: *You, ___ do swear by the everliving GOD, that you will truly and faithfully adhere to, and maintain the government established in this state under the authority of the people, agreeable to the laws in force within the same; and that you believe in your conscience that the King of Great Britain hath not, nor of right ought to have any authority or dominion in or over this state; and that you do not hold yourself bound to yield any allegiance or obedience to him within the same; and that you will to the utmost of your power, maintain and defend the Freedom, Independence and Privileges of this state against all open enemies or traitorous conspiracies whatsoever. So help you GOD.*”

There had to have been much confusion early on with one's allegiances. Initially we thought of ourselves as British subjects, exactly as our forefathers and relatives who remained back in the home country. Then we began experiencing difficulties with Parliament, and only after all other efforts failed did we divest ourselves from the thought of the British King as our titular head of state. Parliament was wrong, and there were those in England as well as some members of Parliament who were attempting to rectify the situation, but the efforts came too little and too late. The result had only one course to follow: total and complete independence for the former British North American Colonies.

Patriotism and appreciation of freedom are concepts that we all hold within ourselves 365 days a year; it's only their birthday that we celebrate on the Fourth of July.

Historic Bytes
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