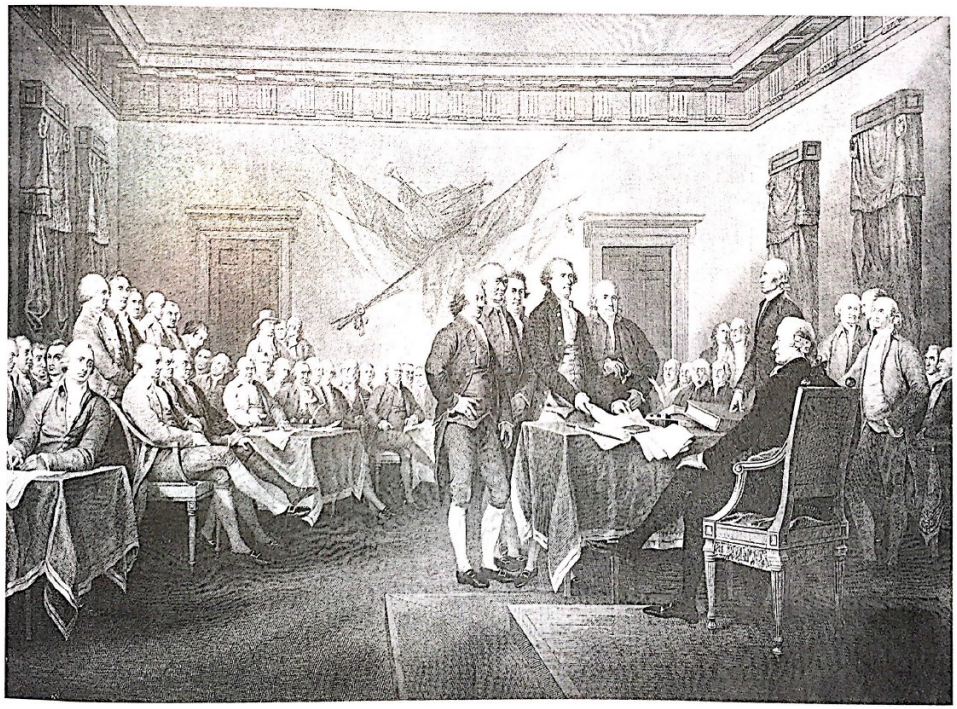
The Sources: Documents and Images Portraying Fourth of July Observations, 1819–1903

1 *Declaration of Independence, July 4, 1776*

Painting. John Trumbull, 1819

John Trumbull, renowned for his paintings of historical subjects, was commissioned by the federal government to complete several works for the rotunda of the Capitol building in Washington, D.C. This work depicts the presentation of the Declaration of Independence by the committee that drafted it—John Adams, Roger Sherman, Robert Livingston, Thomas Jefferson, and Benjamin Franklin—to the president of the Second Continental Congress, John Hancock. In creating this iconic scene, Trumbull compressed several distinct events into a single, more dramatic one. The committee actually presented its work on June 28, and members of the Congress signed a copy specially prepared for them several weeks later. What actually happened on July 4 was Congress's vote to approve the document, which led to its proclamation and publication the following day.

Source: New York Public Library.



2 *Independence Day in Center Square*

Painting. John Lewis Krimmel, 1819

Unlike his contemporary John Trumbull, John Lewis Krimmel was a "genre painter," an artist who took as his subject scenes of everyday life rather than great historical events. In this popular work, he depicted an Independence Day celebration in Center Square, Philadelphia. At the center of the scene, an army officer and a naval officer draw each other's attention to the decorations on the tents to their left and right, depicting scenes of U.S. victories from the War of 1812, a portrait of George Washington, and the U.S. and Pennsylvania flags. Other revelers enjoy drink, food, music, and dancing while militiamen try to organize for a parade in the background. In the lower right corner, a woman does her best to distribute temperance pamphlets.

Source: Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

3 *Adams and Jefferson*

Speech. Daniel Webster, August 2, 1826

Thomas Jefferson and John Adams both died on July 4, 1826, the fiftieth anniversary of American independence. News of their deaths traveled quickly and had a profound effect on the national mood as people celebrated the jubilee year. The prominent New England politician Daniel Webster delivered the most famous eulogy to Adams and Jefferson. Although not technically a Fourth of July oration (it was delivered about one month after their deaths), the speech was written in that style, and Webster's reputation as a gifted speaker was based in part on his experience in delivering Fourth of July orations.

ADAMS and JEFFERSON are no more. On our fiftieth anniversary, the great day of national jubilee, in the very hour of public rejoicing, in the midst of echoing and reechoing voices of thanksgiving, while their own names were on all tongues, they took their flight together to the world of spirits.

If it be true that no one can safely be pronounced happy while he lives, if that event which terminates life can alone crown its honors and its glory, what felicity is here! The great epic of their lives, how happily concluded! Poetry itself has hardly terminated illustrious lives, and finished the career of earthly renown, by such a consummation. If we had the power, we could not wish to reverse this dispensation of the Divine Providence. The great objects of life were accomplished, the drama was ready to be closed. It has closed; our patriots have fallen; but so fallen, at such age, with such coincidence, on such a day, that we cannot rationally lament that the end has come, which we knew could not be long deferred.

Neither of these great men, fellow-citizens, could have died, at any time, without leaving an immense void in our American society. They have been so intimately, and for so long a time, blended with the history of the country, and especially so united, in our thoughts and recollections, with the events of the Revolution, that the death of either of them would have touched the chords of public sympathy. We should have felt that one great link, connecting us with former times, was broken; that we had lost something more, as it were, of the presence of the Revolution itself, and of the act of independence, and were driven on, by another great remove from the days of our country's early distinction, to meet posterity and to mix with the future. Like the mariner, whom the currents of the ocean and the winds carry along until he sees the stars which have directed his course and lighted his pathless way descend one by one, beneath the rising horizon, we should have felt that the stream of time had borne us onward till another great luminary, whose light had cheered us and whose guidance we had followed, had sunk away from our sight.

Source: Rev. B. F. Tefft, ed., *The Speeches of Daniel Webster and His Master-Pieces* (Philadelphia: Porter and Coates, 1854), 183–224.

But the concurrence of their death on the anniversary of Independence has naturally awakened stronger emotions. Both had been President, both had lived to great age, both were early patriots, and both were distinguished and ever honored by their immediate agency in the act of independence. It cannot but seem striking and extraordinary, that these two should live to see the fiftieth year from the date of that act, that they should complete that year, and that then, on the day which had fast linked for ever their own fame with their country's glory, the heavens should open to receive them both at once. As their lives themselves were the gifts of Providence, who is not willing to recognize in their happy termination, as well as in their long continuance, proofs that our country and its benefactors are objects of His care?

ADAMS and JEFFERSON, I have said, are no more. As human beings, indeed, they are no more. They are no more, as in 1776, bold and fearless advocates of independence; no more, as at subsequent periods, the head of the government; no more, as we have recently seen them, aged and venerable objects of admiration and regard. They are no more. They are dead. But how little is there of the great and good which can die! To their country they yet live, and live for ever. They live in all that perpetuates the remembrance of men on earth; in the recorded proofs of their own great actions, in the offspring of their intellect, in the deep-engraved lines of public gratitude, and in the respect and homage of mankind. They live in their example; and they live, emphatically, and will live, in the influence which their lives and efforts, their principles and opinions, now exercise, and will continue to exercise, on the affairs of men, not only in their own country but throughout the civilized world. . . .

No two men now live, fellow-citizens, perhaps it may be doubted whether any two men have ever lived in one age, who, more than those we now commemorate, have impressed on mankind their own opinions more deeply into the opinions of others, or given a more lasting direction to the current of human thought. Their work doth not perish with them. The tree which they assisted to plant will flourish, although they water it and protect it no longer; for it has struck its roots deep, it has sent them to the very centre; no storm, not of force to burn the orb,[1] can overturn it; its branches spread wide; they stretch their protecting arms broader and broader, and its top is destined to reach the heavens. We are not deceived. There is no delusion here. No age will come in which the American Revolution will appear less than it is, one of the greatest events in human history. No age will come in which it shall cease to be seen and felt, on either continent, that a mighty step, a great advance, not only in American affairs, but in human affairs, was made on the 4th of July, 1776. And no age will come, we trust, so ignorant or so unjust as not to see and acknowledge the efficient agency of those we now honor in producing that momentous event. . . .

. . . It cannot be denied, but by those who would dispute against the sun, that with America, and in America, a new era commences in human affairs.

[1] The earth.

This era is distinguished by free representative governments, by entire religious liberty, by improved systems of national intercourse, by a newly awakened and unconquerable spirit of free inquiry, and by a diffusion of knowledge through the community, such as has been before altogether unknown and unheard of in America. America, our country, fellow-citizens, our own dear and native land, is inseparably connected, fast bound up, in fortune and by fate, with these great interests. If they fall, we fall with them; if they stand, it will be because we have maintained them. Let us contemplate, then, this connection, which binds the prosperity of others to our own; and let us manfully discharge all the duties which it imposes. If we cherish the virtues and the principles of our fathers, Heaven will assist us to carry on the work of human liberty and human happiness. Auspicious omens cheer us. Great examples are before us. Our own firmament now shines brightly upon our path. WASHINGTON is in the clear, upper sky. These other stars have now joined the American Constellation; they circle round their centre, and the heavens beam with new light. Beneath this illumination let us walk the course of life, and at its close devoutly commend our beloved country, the common parent of us all, to the Divine Benignity.[2]

[2] God.

4 *Declaration of Rights of the Trades' Union of Boston and Vicinity,* 1834

Long before the establishment of Labor Day, U.S. workers regarded the Fourth of July as their holiday. Employers learned to give their employees the day off (or face impromptu strikes instead), and artisans and mechanics proudly marched in Fourth of July parades displaying the tools and products of their crafts. During the 1820s and 1830s, workers organized the first U.S. labor unions and used the Fourth of July and the Declaration of Independence to promote their cause. In several cities, workers established "general trades' unions" to bring together smaller unions associated with particular crafts or industries. The Boston Trades' Union organized in 1834 and issued this Declaration of Rights shortly before the Fourth of July holiday that year.

When a number of individuals associate together in a public manner for the purpose of promoting their common welfare, respect for public opinion, the proper basis of a republic form of government, under which they associate, require that they should state to their fellow citizens, the motives which actuate them, in adopting such a course.

Source: Philip S. Foner, *We, the Other People: Alternative Declarations of Independence by Labor Groups, Farmers, Woman's Rights Advocates, Socialists, and Blacks, 1829–1975* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1976), 52–54.

Now we, the Delegates of the General Trades' Union of Boston and its vicinity, deploring the humiliating state of degradation, into which the producing or working class of other countries are reduced; and fearing that in our own beloved country, unless timely arrested, the same unhappy state of society will finally prevail. We already behold the wealthy fast verging into aristocracy, the laboring classes into a state of comparative dependence, and considering that this is owing to the want of union, among Mechanics and Working men, and to their apathy and indifferences in almost entirely resigning to the not-producers, the business of legislation.

We, therefore, by and with the advice of our constituents, do declare that our object in this uniting is to give to the producing or working classes their just standing in society, by constitutional, peaceable and legal means. We expressly disavow and denounce any tendency to disorganization or anarchy. We will accomplish our objects by promoting among the working class intelligence, morality, good feelings to each other, and a just sense of their rights and duties as citizens.

With the Fathers of our Country, we hold that all men are created free and equal; endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness; and we hold, that to secure to each individual, the possession of those rights, should and ought to be the principal object of all legislation; consequently, that laws which have a tendency to raise any peculiar class above their fellow citizens, by granting special privileges, are contrary to and in defiance of those primary principles.

We hold, that labor, being the legitimate and only real source of wealth, and laboring classes the majority and real strength of every country, their interest and happiness ought to be the principal care of Government and any laws which oppose or neglect those interests, ought not to exist.

Our public system of Education, which so liberally endows those seminaries of learning, which from peculiar circumstances, are only accessible to the wealthy, while our common schools (particularly in the country towns) are so illy provided for, that few who can afford to pay for their children at a private school will send them to the public one. Thus even in childhood, the poor are apt to think themselves inferior. The youth of genius is discouraged—he beholds the higher branches of learning placed out of his reach, he exerts himself but to acquire the mere rudiments of education, the science of government and legislation leaves to the more favored children of fortune, and this perpetuates those distinctions which give to wealth an undue ascendancy. . . .

We hold that it is the right of workmen, and a duty they owe to each other, to associate together and regulate the price and terms of labor, and we consider the use by our opponents of the word combination, making it synonymous with insurrection, a gross perversion of language.

To secure the working class fair remuneration and prompt payment for their labor, shall be with us a primary object. We hold that according to the immutable principles of justice the debts of actual labor should take precedence of all others, and unreasonably delaying to pay a mechanics bill ought to subject the defaulter to legal damages.

Now we as representatives of the Traders' Union, do pledge ourselves to each other, to use our utmost efforts, to support the principles of our Union, and to obtain for the working class that standing in the community to which their usefulness entitles them. Let it not be said that we are exciting the poor against the rich. We seek not to excite the passions of any, we appeal to their understandings, we invite a calm, a thorough, and candid investigation of our motives; and trusting in the justice of our cause, we persevere in it with undiminished zeal, until we behold our young men aspiring to the character and title of virtuous and intelligent mechanics, as the most certain means to obtain the respect and confidence of their fellow citizens.

5 Excerpt from *Diary in America, with Remarks on Its Institutions*

Memoir. Frederick Marryat, 1837

Frederick Marryat was a British sea captain and writer who toured Canada and the United States in 1837–1838. He published his description of the trip in *Diary in America, with Remarks on Its Institutions* (1839), which included this description of the 1837 Fourth of July celebration in New York City.

The 4th of July, the sixty-first anniversary of American independence!

Pop—pop—bang—pop—pop—bang—bang—bang! Mercy on us! How fortunate it is that anniversaries come only once a-year. Well, the Americans may have great reason to be proud of this day, and of the deeds of their forefathers, but why do they get so confoundedly drunk? why, on this day of independence, should they become so *dependent* upon posts and rails for support?—The day is at last over; my head aches, but there will be many more aching heads to-morrow morning!

What a combination of vowels and consonants have been put together! what strings of tropes, metaphors, and allegories have been used on this day! what varieties and graduations of eloquence! There are at least fifty thousand cities, towns, villages, and hamlets, spread over the surface of America—in each the Declaration of Independence has been read; in all one, and in some two or three, orations have been delivered, with as much gunpowder in them as in the squibs and crackers.[1] But let me describe what I actually saw.

The commemoration commenced, if the day did not, on the evening of the 3d, by the municipal police going round and pasting up placards, informing the citizens of New York, that all persons letting off fireworks would be taken into custody, which notice was immediately followed up by the little boys proving their independence of the authorities, by letting off squibs, crackers, and bombs; and cannons, made out of shin bones, which flew in the face of every passenger, in the exact ratio that the little boys flew in the face of the authorities. This continued the whole night, and thus was ushered in the great and glorious day, illumined by a bright and glaring sun (as if bespoken on purpose by the mayor and corporation), with the thermometer at 90° in the shade. The first sight which met the eye after sunrise was the precipitate escape, from a city visited with the plague of gunpowder, of respectable or timorous people in coaches, carriages, wagons, and every variety of vehicle. "My kingdom for a horse!" was the general cry of all those who could not stand fire. In the mean while, the whole atmosphere was filled with independence. Such was the quantity of American flags which were hoisted on board of the vessels, hung out of windows, or carried about by little boys, that you saw more stars at noon-day than ever could be counted on the brightest night.

On each side of the whole length of Broadway, were ranged booths and stands, similar to those at an English fair, and on which were displayed small plates of oysters, with a fork stuck in the board opposite to each plate; clams sweltering in the hot sun; pineapples, boiled hams, pies, puddings, barley-sugar, and many other indescribables. But what was most remarkable, Broadway being three miles long, and the booths lining each side of it, in every booth there was a roast pig, large or small, as the centre attraction. Six miles of roast pig! and that in New York City alone; and roast pig in every other city, town, hamlet, and village in the Union. What association can there be between roast pig and independence? Let it not be supposed that there was any deficiency in the very necessary articles of potation on this auspicious day: no! the booths were loaded with porter, ale, cider, mead, brandy, wine, ginger-beer, pop, soda-water, whiskey, rum, punch, gin slings, cocktails, mint juleps, besides many other compounds, to name which nothing but the luxuriance of American-English could invent a word. Certainly the preparations in the refreshment way were most imposing, and gave you some idea of what had to be gone through with on this auspicious day. Martial music sounded from a dozen quarters at once; and as you turned your head, you tacked to the first bars of a march from one band, the concluding bars of Yankee Doodle from another. At last the troops of militia and volunteers, who had been gathering in the park and other squares, made their appearance, well dressed and well equipped, and, in honour of the day, marching as independently as they well could. I did not see them go through many manoeuvres, but there was one which they appeared to excel in, and that was grounding arms[2] and eating pies. . . .

I was invited to dine with the mayor and corporation at the City Hall. We sat down in the Hall of Justice, and certainly, great justice was done to the dinner, which (as the wife says to her husband after a party, where the second course follows the first with unusual celerity) "went off remarkably well." The crackers popped outside, and the champaigne popped in. The celerity of the Americans at a public dinner is very commendable; they speak only now and then; and

[1] Fireworks.

Source: Frederick Marryat, *Diary in America, with Remarks on Its Institutions* (New York: Wm. H. Colyer, 1839), 31–33.

[2] Resting their guns on the ground so as to free their hands.

the toasts follow so fast, that you have just time to empty your glass, before you are requested to fill again. Thus the arranged toasts went off rapidly, and after them, any one might withdraw. I waited till the thirteenth toast, the last on the paper, to wit, the ladies of America; and, having previously, in a speech from the recorder, bolted Bunker's Hill and New Orleans,[3] I thought I might as well bolt myself, as I wished to see the fireworks, which were to be very splendid. . . .

There is something grand in the idea of a national intoxication. In this world, vices on a grand scale dilate into virtues; he who murders one man, is strung up with ignominy; but he who murders twenty thousand has a statue to his memory, and is handed down to posterity as a hero. A staggering individual is a laughable and, sometimes, a disgusting spectacle; but the whole of a vast continent reeling, offering a holocaust of its brains for mercies vouchsafed, is an appropriate tribute of gratitude for the rights of equality and the *levelling spirit* of their institutions.

[3] An Englishman, Marryat notes that Fourth of July speeches make reference to the battles of Bunker Hill (1775) and New Orleans (1815), when outnumbered Americans put up surprising resistance to British troops.

6 *Declaration of Sentiments,* from the Woman's Rights Convention, 1848

The most famous alternative declaration of independence was the result of the first women's rights convention, held at Seneca Falls, New York, in 1848. Led by Lucretia Mott and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, the delegates at the convention protested the disabilities women suffered under the rules of coverture in U.S. law (see Chapter 7) and initiated the movement for women's suffrage, which culminated in the ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution seventy-two years later.

When, in the course of human events, it becomes necessary for one portion of the family of man to assume among the people of the earth a position different from that which they have hitherto occupied, but on to which the laws of nature and of nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes that impel them to such a course.

We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men and women are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness; that to secure these rights governments are instituted, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed. Whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of those who suffer from it to refuse allegiance to it, and to insist upon the institution of a new government, laying its foundation on such principles, and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their safety and happiness. Prudence, indeed, will dictate that governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes; and accordingly all experience hath shown that mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they were accustomed. But when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same object evinces a design to reduce them under absolute despotism, it is their duty to throw off such government, and to provide new guards for their future security. Such has been the patient sufferance of the women under this government, and such is now the necessity which constrains them to demand the equal station to which they are entitled.

The history of mankind is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations on the part of man toward woman, having in direct object the establishment of an absolute tyranny over her. To prove this, let facts be submitted to a candid world.

He has never permitted her to exercise her inalienable right to the elective franchise.

He has compelled her to submit to laws, in the formation of which she had no voice.

He has withheld from her rights which are given to the most ignorant and degraded men—both natives and foreigners.

Having deprived her of this first right of a citizen, the elective franchise, thereby leaving her without representation in the halls of legislation, he has oppressed her on all sides.

He has made her, if married, in the eye of the law, civilly dead.

He has taken from her all right in property, even to the wages she earns.

He has made her, morally, an irresponsible being, as she can commit many crimes with impunity, provided they be done in the presence of her husband. In the covenant of marriage, she is compelled to promise obedience to her husband, he becoming, to all intents and purposes, her master—the law giving him power to deprive her of her liberty, and to administer chastisement.

He has so framed the laws of divorce, as to what shall be the proper causes, and in case of separation, to whom the guardianship of the children shall be given, as to be wholly regardless of the happiness of women—the law, in all cases, going upon a false supposition of the supremacy of man, and giving all power into his hands.

After depriving her of all rights as a married woman, if single, and the owner of property, he has taxed her to support a government which recognizes her only when her property can be made profitable to it.

He has monopolized nearly all the profitable employments, and from those she is permitted to follow, she receives but a scanty remuneration. He closes against her all the avenues to wealth and distinction which he considers most

Source: Philip S. Foner, *We, the Other People: Alternative Declarations of Independence by Labor Groups, Farmers, Woman's Rights Advocates, Socialists, and Blacks, 1829–1975* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1976), 78–81.

honorable to himself. As a teacher of theology, medicine, or law, she is not known.

He has denied her the facilities from obtaining a thorough education, all colleges being closed against her.

He allows her in Church, as well as State, but a subordinate position, claiming Apostolic authority for her exclusion from the ministry, and, with some exceptions, from any public participation in the affairs of the Church.

He has created a false public sentiment by giving to the world a different code of morals for men and women, by which moral delinquencies which exclude women from society, are not only tolerated, but deemed of little account in man.

He has usurped the prerogative of Jehovah himself, claiming it as his right to assign for her a sphere of action, when that belongs to her conscience and to her God. He has endeavored, in every way that he could, to destroy her confidence in her own powers, to lessen her self-respect, and to make her willing to lead a dependent and abject life. Now, in view of this entire disfranchisement of one-half the people of this country, their social and religious degradation—in view of the unjust laws above mentioned, and because women do feel themselves aggrieved, oppressed, and fraudulently deprived of their most sacred rights, we insist that they have immediate admission to all the rights and privileges which belong to them as citizens of the United States.

In entering upon the great work before us, we anticipate no small amount of misconception, misrepresentation, and ridicule; but we shall use every instrumentality within our power to effect our object. We shall employ agents, circulate tracts, petition the State and National legislatures, and endeavor to enlist the pulpit and the press in our behalf. We hope this Convention will be followed by a series of Conventions embracing every part of the country.

7 *What to the Slave Is the Fourth of July?*

Speech. Frederick Douglass, July 5, 1852

Frederick Douglass was an escaped slave and abolitionist, the most famous African American of the nineteenth century. As the author of a best-selling slave narrative and publisher of an abolitionist newspaper, he frequently gave speeches and acquired a reputation as a masterful orator. In 1852, he was invited to deliver a Fourth of July oration in Rochester, New York, where he lived and published his newspaper.

Fellow-citizens, pardon me, allow me to ask, why am I called upon to speak here to-day? What have I, or those I represent, to do with your national independence? Are the great principles of political freedom and of natural justice, embodied in that Declaration of Independence, extended to us? and am I, therefore, called upon to bring our humble offering to the national altar, and to confess the benefits and express devout gratitude for the blessings resulting from your independence to us? . . .

But such is not the state of the case. I say it with a sad sense of the disparity between us. I am not included within the pale of glorious anniversary! Your high independence only reveals the immeasurable distance between us. The blessings in which you, this day, rejoice, are not enjoyed in common. The rich inheritance of justice, liberty, prosperity and independence, bequeathed by your fathers, is shared by you, not by me. The sunlight that brought light and healing to you, has brought stripes and death to me. This Fourth July is yours, not mine. You may rejoice, I must mourn. . . .

. . . My subject, then, fellow-citizens, is American slavery. I shall see this day and its popular characteristics from the slave's point of view. Standing there identified with the American bondman, making his wrongs mine, I do not hesitate to declare, with all my soul, that the character and conduct of this nation never looked blacker to me than on this 4th of July! Whether we turn to the declarations of the past, or to the professions of the present, the conduct of the nation seems equally hideous and revolting. America, is false to the past, false to the present, and solemnly binds herself to be false to the future. Standing with God and the crushed and bleeding slave on this occasion, I will, in the name of humanity which is outraged, in the name of liberty which is fettered, in the name of the constitution and the Bible which are disregarded and trampled upon, dare to call in question and to denounce, with all the emphasis I can command, everything that serves to perpetuate slavery, the great sin and shame of America! "I will not equivocate; I will not excuse";[1] I will use the severest language I can command; and yet not one word shall escape me that any man, whose judgment is not blinded by prejudice, or who is not at heart a slaveholder, shall not confess to be right and just. . . .

For the present, it is enough to affirm the equal manhood of the Negro race. Is it not astonishing that, while we are ploughing, planting, and reaping, using all kinds of mechanical tools, erecting houses, constructing bridges, building ships, working in metals of brass, iron, copper, silver and gold; that, while we are reading, writing and ciphering, acting as clerks, merchants and secretaries, having among us lawyers, doctors, ministers, poets, authors, editors, orators and teachers; that, while we are engaged in all manner of enterprises common to other men, digging gold in California, capturing the whale in the Pacific, feeding sheep and cattle on the hill-side, living, moving, acting, thinking, planning, living in families as husbands, wives and children, and, above all, confessing and worshipping the Christian's God, and looking hopefully for life and immortality beyond the grave, we are called upon to prove that we are men!

Would you have me argue that man is entitled to liberty? that he is the rightful owner of his own body? You have already declared it. Must I argue the wrongfulness of slavery? Is that a question for Republicans?[2] Is it to be settled

Source: Philip S. Foner, ed., *Life and Writings of Frederick Douglass*, 4 vols. (New York: International Publishers, 1950–1955), 2:181–204.

[1] Douglass is quoting here from abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison's newspaper, *The Liberator.*

[2] The Republican Party was established in the 1850s to advance the antislavery cause.

by the rules of logic and argumentation, as a matter beset with great difficulty, involving a doubtful application of the principle of justice, hard to be understood? How should I look to-day, in the presence of Americans, dividing, and subdividing a discourse, to show that men have a natural right to freedom? speaking of it relatively and positively, negatively and affirmatively. To do so, would be to make myself ridiculous, and to offer an insult to your understanding. There is not a man beneath the canopy of heaven that does not know that slavery is wrong for him. . . .

At a time like this, scorching irony, not convincing argument, is needed. O! had I the ability, and could reach the nation's ear, I would, to-day, pour out a fiery stream of biting ridicule, blasting reproach, withering sarcasm, and stern rebuke. For it is not light that is needed, but fire; it is not the gentle shower, but thunder. We need the storm, the whirlwind, and the earthquake. The feeling of the nation must be quickened; the conscience of the nation must be roused; the propriety of the nation must be startled; the hypocrisy of the nation must be exposed; and its crimes against God and man must be proclaimed and denounced.

What, to the American slave, is your 4th of July? I answer; a day that reveals to him, more than all other days in the year, the gross injustice and cruelty to which he is the constant victim. To him, your celebration is a sham; your boasted liberty, an unholy license; your national greatness, swelling vanity; your sounds of rejoicing are empty and heartless; your denunciation of tyrants, brass fronted impudence; your shouts of liberty and equality, hollow mockery; your prayers and hymns, your sermons and thanksgivings, with all your religious parade and solemnity, are, to Him, mere bombast, fraud, deception, impiety, and hypocrisy—a thin veil to cover up crimes which would disgrace a nation of savages. There is not a nation on the earth guilty of practices more shocking and bloody than are the people of the United States, at this very hour. Go where you may, search where you will, roam through all the monarchies and despotisms of the Old World, travel through South America, search out every abuse, and when you have found the last, lay your facts by the side of the everyday practices of this nation, and you will say with me, that, for revolting barbarity and shameless hypocrisy, America reigns without a rival. . . .

. . . Allow me to say, in conclusion, notwithstanding the dark picture I have this day presented, of the state of the nation, I do not despair of this country. There are forces in operation which must inevitably work the downfall of slavery. "The arm of the Lord is not shortened," and the doom of slavery is certain. I, therefore, leave off where I began, with hope. While drawing encouragement from "the Declaration of Independence," the great principles it contains, and the genius of American Institutions, my spirit is also cheered by the obvious tendencies of the age.

8 *Speech,* John Wannuaucon Quinney, July 4, 1854

John Wannuaucon Quinney was a Mahican Indian from Wisconsin. The Mahicans originally lived in the Hudson River Valley. During the colonial era, some Mahicans amalgamated with other Algonquian peoples in that region and became known as the Stockbridge Indians, named after the town in western Massachusetts that they established. After the American Revolution, the Stockbridge Indians removed to central New York and then again to Wisconsin, where Quinney represented them in negotiations with the U.S. Congress to prevent further removals west. In 1854, the people of Reidsville, New York, invited him to deliver their Fourth of July oration.

It may appear to those whom I have the honor to address, a singular taste, for me, an Indian, to take an interest in the triumphal days of a people, who occupy by conquest, or have usurped the possession of the territories of my fathers, and have laid and carefully preserved, a train of terrible miseries, to end when my race shall have ceased to exist. But thanks to the fortunate circumstances of my life, I have been taught in the schools, and been able to read your histories and accounts of Europeans, yourselves and the Red Man; which instruct me, that while your rejoicings to-day are commemorative of the free birth of this giant nation, they simply convey to my mind, the recollection of a transfer of the miserable weakness and dependence of my race from one great power to another.

My friends, I am getting old, and have witnessed, for many years, your increase in wealth and power, while the steady consuming decline of my tribe, admonishes me, that their extinction is inevitable—they know it themselves, and the reflection teaches them humility and resignation, directing their attention to the existence of those happy hunting-grounds which the Great Father has prepared for all his red children.

In this spirit, my friends (being invited to come here), as a Muh-he-con-new [Mahican], and now standing upon the soil which once was, and now ought to be, the property of this tribe, I have thought for once, and certainly the last time, I would shake you by the hand, and ask you to listen, for a little while, to what I have to say. . . .

Two hundred and fifty winters ago . . . the Muh-he-con-new, for the first time, beheld the "pale-face." Their number was small, but their canoes were big. In the select and exclusive circles of your rich men, of the present day, I should encounter the gaze of curiosity, but not such as overwhelmed the senses of the Aborigines, my ancestors. "Our visitors were white, and must be sick. They asked for rest and kindness, We gave them both. They were strangers, and we took them in—naked, and we clothed them." The first impression of astonishment and pity, was succeeded by awe and admiration of superior art, intelligence and address. A passion for information and improvement possessed the Indian—a residence was freely offered—territory given—and covenants of friendship exchanged.

Source: Lyman Copeland Draper, ed., *Collections of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin* 4 (1859), 314–20.

Your written accounts of events at this period are familiar to you, my friends. Your children read them every day in their school books; but they do not read—no mind at this time can conceive, and no pen record, the terrible story of recompense for kindness, which for two hundred years has been paid the simple, trusting, guileless Muh-he-con-new. I have seen much myself—have been connected with more, and, I tell you, I know all. The tradition of the wise men is figuratively true, "that our home, at last, will be found in the West"; for, another tradition informs us, that "far beyond the setting sun, upon the smiling, happy lands, we shall be gathered with our Fathers, and be at rest."

Promises and professions were freely given, and as ruthlessly—intentionally broken. To kindle your fires—to be of and with us, was sought as a privilege; and yet at that moment you were transmitting to your kings, beyond the water, intelligence of your possession, "by right of discovery," and demanding assistance to assert and maintain your hold.

Where are the twenty-five thousand in number, and the four thousand warriors, who constituted the power and population of the great Muh-he-con-new Nation in 1604? They have been victims to vice and disease, which the white man imported. The small-pox, measles, and "strong waters" have done the work of annihilation. . . .

Let it not surprise you, my friends, when I say, that the spot on which we stand, has never been purchased or rightly obtained; and that by justice, human and divine, it is the property now of the remnant of that great people from whom I am descended. They left it in the tortures of starvation, and to improve their miserable existence; but a cession was never made, and their title has never been extinguished.

The Indian is said to be the ward of the white man, and the negro his slave. Has it ever occurred to you, my friends, that while the slave is increasing, and increased by every appliance, the Indian is left to rot and die, before the humanities of this model *Republic!* You have your tears, and groans, and mobs, and riots, for individuals of the former, while your indifference of purpose, and vacillation of policy, is hurrying to extinction, whole communities of the latter.

What are the treaties of the general Government? How often, and when, has its plighted faith been kept? Indian occupation forever, is, next year, or by the next Commissioner, more wise than his predecessor, re-purchased. One removal follows another, and thus your sympathies and justice are evinced in speedily *fulfilling the terrible destinies of our race.*

My friends, your holy book, the Bible, teaches us, that individual offences are punished in an existence, when time shall be no more. And the annals of the earth are equally instructive, that national wrongs are avenged, and national crimes atoned for in this world, to which alone the conformations of existence adapt them.

These events are above our comprehension, and for wise purposes. For myself and for my tribe, I ask for justice—I believe it will sooner or later occur—and may the Great and Good Spirit enable me to die in hope.

WANNUAUCON, *the Muh-he-con-new*

9 Excerpts from *A Philadelphia Perspective: The Diary of Sidney George Fisher Covering the Years 1834–1871,* Diary. Sidney George Fisher, 1864, 1866

Sidney George Fisher was a wealthy Philadelphia lawyer who kept a diary intermittently during his adult life. Like many urban elites, he preferred to get out of town on the Fourth of July so as to avoid the crowds and noise in the city.

JULY 4, 1864

It is the great anniversary of the birth of democracy in the western world, & is very appropriately celebrated by license & brute noise—guns, pistols, crackers, & squibs thro the day, fireworks, drunkenness & brawls at night. As a general rule, 30 or 40 houses are set on fire in town every 4th of July, and the constant noise of crackers, etc., is enough to drive a nervous person frantic. Out here,[1] we hear something of the uproar & thro the day the reports of guns were heard all around us. It was very bearable, however, compared with our experience in town, which I remember with horror.

JULY 4, 1866

The most hateful day of the year, when the birth of democracy is celebrated by license & noise. Every respectable person that can leaves town on this popular holiday, when the streets are given up to the rabble who appropriately express their joy by riot & brute noise. All the previous night, all day, & all the next night, there is an incessant roar of cannon, musquets, pistols, & crackers in the streets, enough to drive a nervous person mad. It was bad enough out here. All last night & all of today, the sound of guns & crackers around us never stopped. It is difficult to feel patriotic on the 4th of July.

[1] Fisher was at his country home in the Philadelphia suburbs.

Source: Sidney George Fisher, *A Philadelphia Perspective: The Diary of Sidney George Fisher Covering the Years, 1834–1871,* ed. Nicholas B. Wainwright (Philadelphia: Historical Society of Pennsylvania, 1967), 476, 518.

10 Excerpt from *The Fire of Liberty in Their Hearts: The Diary of Jacob E. Yoder of the Freedman's Bureau School, Lynchburg, Virginia, 1866–1870,* Diary. Jacob E. Yoder, 1866

Jacob E. Yoder was a Pennsylvanian who moved to Lynchburg, Virginia, after the Civil War to teach African Americans in a school sponsored by the Freedmen's Bureau. His diary of the experience included this passage about his first Fourth of July in the postwar South.

WEDNESDAY, 4 JULY 1866

A remarkable day in the history of this country. This is a day of rejoicing not only to the white people of this vast country but also to the late slaves of the Southern States. They seem to be generally inclined to select this day as an anniversary day to celebrate their emancipation. If ever it was appropriate for any people who were oppressed by a yoke like that which oxen wear, and who now are translated into the regions of civil liberty, with a sure promise that they shall have soon unlimited American political liberty of the 19th century.

I have, however, no doubt but they will do this. Their past history in slavery is noble. Why should they not do equally well in the enjoyment of partial liberty. No class of people on the face of the earth would have submitted to the outrages *they* have endured. In their present condition they need more education and independence. Ignorance and sin are their dangerous foes. If they are strong enough to conquer these then all will be right. Then the historian can with pleasure, paint a long and glorious existence among the nations of the world for them.

May this Fourth of July remind afresh every citizen of the Land of the value of our free institutions, and more especially of the duties he owes to it.

Source: Jacob E. Yoder, *The Fire of Liberty in Their Hearts: The Diary of Jacob E. Yoder of the Freedmen's Bureau School, Lynchburg, Virginia, 1866–1870,* ed. Samuel L. Horst (Richmond: Library of Virginia, 1996), 55–56.

11 *Fire-Works on the Night of the Fourth of July*
Cartoon. Winslow Homer, 1868

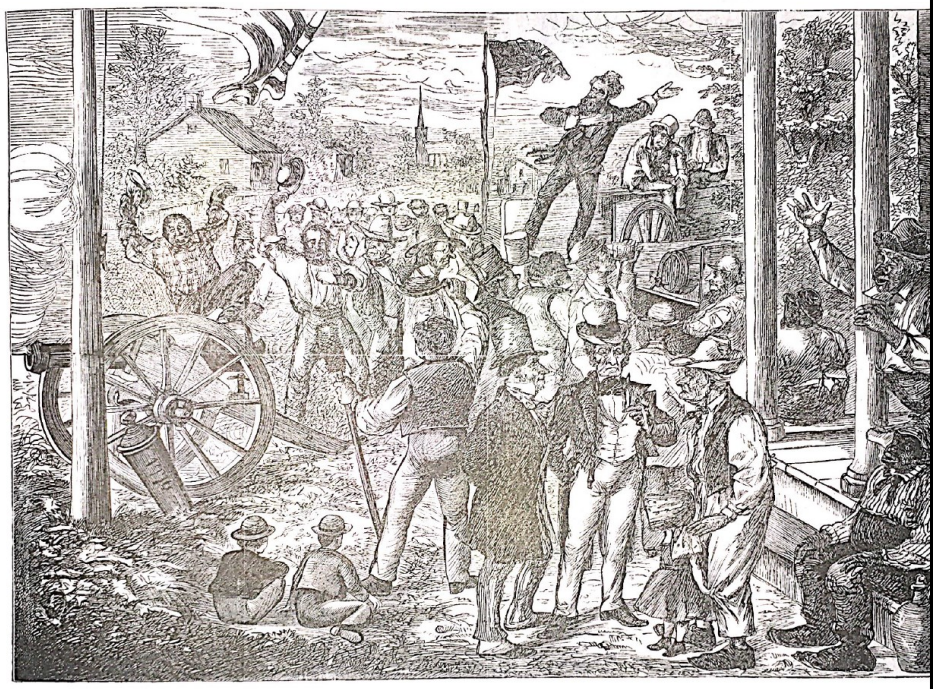
This cartoon and the one on the next page appeared in the same issue of a popular national magazine. In a brief comment, the editors noted their contrasting views of Fourth of July celebrations "in the town and in the country—in the North and in the South."

Source: Harper's Weekly, July 11, 1868, 445.

12 *The Fourth of July in the Country*

Cartoon. Thomas Worth, 1868

Source: Harper's Weekly, July 11, 1868, 448.



13 *The Freed Slave* in Memorial Hall

Engraving. Fernando Miranda, 1876

The Centennial Exposition in 1876 generally ignored recent U.S. history, especially the Civil War and Reconstruction, but one exhibit in Memorial Hall called visitors' attention to these topics. European artist Francesco Pezzicar's *The Freed Slave* depicted a slave clad in a loincloth, holding aloft the Emancipation Proclamation, and displaying his broken chains. Not everyone was impressed by the work (one critic complained that the subject looked too much like a "Frenchy negro"), but according to contemporary reports, the sculpture drew crowds of African American viewers. This engraving by Fernando Miranda, published in the popular periodical *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*, depicts the sculpture being viewed by an appreciative and solemn audience.

Source: Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper, August 5, 1876.

14 Excerpt from *Lemon Swamp and Other Places: A Carolina Memoir* [of the 1890s]

Memoir. Mamie Garvin Fields, 1983

Mamie Garvin Fields grew up in Charleston, South Carolina, as Jim Crow laws formalized racial segregation in the post-Reconstruction South. During the 1970s, she recorded memories of her girlhood, which her granddaughter Karen Fields helped her publish in 1983.

"Aristocrats" lived on the Battery.[1] Some were English, some French, some Scottish, what-not. I never knew what made them "aristocrats"; maybe they just gave that name to themselves. But it was said that from Broad Street south to the Battery was where the "fine" white families lived. These families were supposed to be finer than those living other places. . . .

I don't believe the Battery was ever segregated because of a real law. That was one of the unwritten laws Charleston had. Unwritten or not, however, the policeman would come and enforce it. Or one of the black servants might even serve as the "policeman" of unwritten segregation in that part of town. . . .

Another unwritten law, or "custom," used to give the Battery over to blacks one day each year, the Fourth of July. Later on, we were allowed there no time of year. But when I was a child, oh, my, but the Fourth was a big day—although not for everybody. The old-time Southerners considered the Fourth of July a Yankee holiday and ignored it. So the white people stayed home and the black people "took over" the Battery for a day. The people were happy to be there, able to do what they felt like. I don't think the Battery was ever so alive as on the Fourth. We had food. We had music. We had a program that the children especially used to prepare for. We had all our friends. So glad to get down to where they were allowed only once a year, the mothers and grandmothers cooked up a storm, and they would bring everything for a barbecue and picnic. Some even brought fresh fish, which tasted sweetest cooked outdoors. Right up to today a "fish-fry" is a favorite Charleston version of a barbecue.

After dinner we had our program. My brother Herbert used to perform with a children's group called "the Bottle Band." That's what it really was. They would fill up bottles of different shapes and either beat them or blow across the top. Then they had "bone," beef ribs cleaned and polished until they were smooth and shiny, which they worked between their fingers. It is surprising how much music those children got out of such simple things. You could understand the songs they were playing, and they played lovely rhythms: "Toto-toto-tatee-tee-tee, Toto-toto-tatee-tee-tee!" Pretty soon the other children would get up to dance and clap or sing with the band. The Bottle Band warmed up the audience. Then the trios and quartets came on, vying with each other in those performances. Certain songs, like "The Battle Hymn of the Republic," people would be asked to join in. That often introduced the speeches. One of our dignitaries generally offered a message.

The Emancipation Proclamation was always read out or some child would have it memorized for the occasion. Other children would have their "pieces" to say from Abraham Lincoln and, above all, from Frederick Douglass. On the Fourth of July many of our parents were actually celebrating their own freedom. So there were special parts of Douglass' antislavery speeches which were always said and which many people knew by heart. And then there was James Weldon Johnson's poem set to music, "Lift Ev'ry Voice and Sing."

> Till earth and heaven ring,
> Ring with the harmony of Liberty.
> Let our rejoicing rise,
> High as the list'ning skies,
> Let it resound loud as the rolling sea—
> Sing a song full of the faith that the dark past has taught us;
> Sing a song full of the hope that the present has brought us.
> Facing the rising sun of our new day begun,
> Let us march on till victory is won.

When we got through singing, we would hum, and someone recited from Douglass until everybody was really moved. You know, Douglass made a speech once despising the Fourth of July. "What to the Negro is the Fourth of July?" he said, before emancipation. Long years after emancipation, this special picnic was the Fourth of July to us.

[1] An upper-class neighborhood in Charleston, South Carolina.

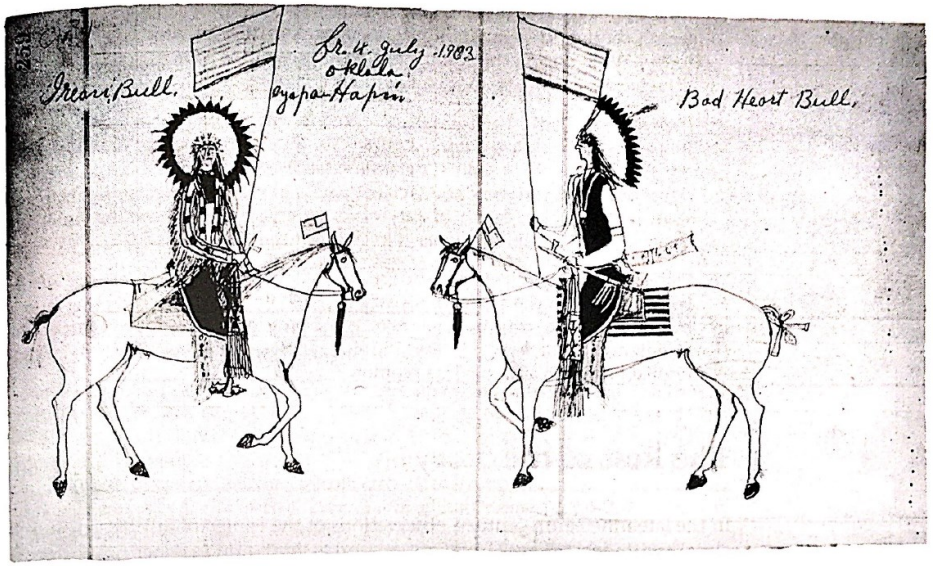
Source: Mamie Garvin Fields with Karen Fields, *Lemon Swamp and Other Places: A Carolina Memoir* (New York: Free Press, 1983), 53–57.

15 *4. July. 1903* (opposite page)

Drawing. Amos Bad Heart Bull, 1903

Amos Bad Heart Bull was an Oglala Sioux who lived in South Dakota. A boy at the time of Custer's Last Stand, he came of age as his people were adjusting to lives on reservations. During the 1890s, he began drawing a pictorial record of life on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in a ledger book. Despite the efforts of federal agents to eradicate native culture, the Indians at Pine Ridge adopted the Fourth of July as an occasion for parading in their warrior regalia and engaging in traditional feasting and dancing. In this scene, two chiefs, Iron Bull and Bad Heart Bull (the artist), are dressed and on horseback, ready to lead a procession. A note in the Lakota language translates to "The Oglalas are still celebrating the Fourth of July in the old way."

Source: Amos Bad Heart Bull and Helen H. Blish, *A Pictographic History of the Oglala Sioux* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1967), plate no. 373.



Analyzing Sources on Fourth of July Observations

1. Where in these sources do you see evidence of nineteenth-century Americans redefining the ideas and principles expressed in the Declaration of Independence in 1776? What evidence of conflicting interpretations of those ideas and principles among nineteenth-century Americans do these sources present?

2. Which aspects of Fourth of July celebrations stayed the same and which changed over the course of the nineteenth century? How did such observations differ across class and race lines? How did groups traditionally excluded from public celebrations of the Fourth, such as African Americans and Native Americans, create their own?

3. Which of these sources offer evidence of how women experienced and participated in Fourth of July observations? Of the five types of sources presented in this chapter (speeches, alternative declarations, images, diaries, and memoirs), which do you think would be the best suited for studying gender differences in Fourth of July observations?

4. Compare these sources with your own experiences with the Fourth of July. What has changed and what has remained consistent in the way present-day Americans observe this holiday? Did the Fourth of July holiday in the nineteenth century serve any political or cultural functions that it no longer serves today? What do you think some of the authors of the sources you have read in this chapter would say about modern observations of Independence Day?