

RESOLVED

That these United Colonies are, and of right ought to be, free and independent States.

So said the resolution presented before the Second Continental Congress on June 7, 1776. The Revolutionary War was already raging, but this simple statement set wheels turning that changed forever the lives of two men whose fondest dream was to have a country to serve. One would live another fifty years. The other, another three months.

Both would become immortals in the eyes of history.

June 1776 – Philadelphia

Not everyone agreed with the idea that the colonies should be independent. Most everyone, however, would agree the idea had no more fervent a supporter than John Adams.

For months, this Massachusetts lawyer had worked fervently to convince his colleagues that America was *already* independent. British tyranny, he claimed, had already caused “a complete dismemberment of the British Empire.” But many in Congress had not been authorized to even consider independence. It took speech after speech, debate after debate, for Adams (among others) to build support for the cause.

“All the Colonies must confederate together, in some solemn Compact. The Colonies must be declared free and independent states. When these things shall be finished, I shall think that I have answered the End of my Creation.” - John Adams¹

Adams couldn't know it, but far away, a young Connecticut teacher was having similar thoughts.

September 1776 – Harlem Heights, near New York City

The war was not going well for the colonies. The Continental Army, under George Washington, had just been defeated by the British at the Battle of Long Island. Washington retreated to the northern end of Manhattan Island, ceding New York City itself to the British. In desperation, Washington sent out a call for help. Would someone volunteer to sneak behind enemy lines and report back on what the British were planning to do next?

Several officers were summoned, but the request was met with silence. Understandably, no one seemed anxious to volunteer. In war, there are few things more dangerous than spying. Every man understood that if they were caught, they would be executed. One soldier summed it up when he said, “I am willing to be shot, but not to be hung.”

Then, this young Connecticut teacher stepped forward. “I will take it,” he said. “I wish to be useful, and every kind of service necessary to the public good becomes honorable by being necessary.”²

June 1776, Philadelphia

Adams could see the finish line. Congress had adopted the resolution of independence, causing him to say that, "This day the Congress has passed the most important resolution that ever was taken in America." The next step was to draft a formal declaration. Adams was one of the four men who assisted Thomas Jefferson in writing it. When finished, they laid it on the desk before the whole of Congress for it to be either accepted or rejected.

Half a century later, the great Senator Daniel Webster imagined Adams' final, desperate push for independence went something like this:

*"We may not live to the time when this declaration shall be made good. **We may die ignominiously and on the scaffold.** Be it so. If it be the pleasure of Heaven that my country shall require the poor offering of my life, the victim shall be ready, at the appointed hour of sacrifice, come when that hour may. But while I do live, **let me have a country.**"*³

Adams words, if he said them, were prophetic. But not for him.

September 1776, New York City

On September 12, the young Connecticut teacher slipped behind British lines, pretending to be looking for work. Unfortunately, it was little over a week later when he was recognized. He was quickly captured and interrogated, like all spies were. With great bravery and dignity, this young man, only twenty-one years old, promptly stated his name and rank: Captain Nathan Hale.

Then, he was sentenced to death.

*"On the morning of his execution," one British officer later said, "Captain Hale entered [my station]. He was calm, and bore himself with gentle dignity. He asked for writing materials, which I furnished him. He wrote two letters, one to his mother and one to a brother officer. He was shortly summoned to the gallows. Only a few persons were around him, yet his dying words were remembered."*⁴

'I only regret that I have but one life to lose for my country.'

These two men, Adams and Hale, never knew each other. One lived a long life; the other, short. But both knew what was at stake. Both were prepared to die on the scaffold. And it's this commitment, I think, to the *idea* of independence that truly made us a country. Even more than words on paper, even more than all the great speeches and debates, it was the willingness to actually *live*, and if necessary, *die*, that cemented the idea.

On July 4, 1776, our forefathers declared America to be free and independent.

On September 22, 1776, the death of one martyr truly made it so.

July 2017, United States of America

This year, as we sit on blankets and lawn chairs to watch the fireworks, as we listen to patriotic music and enjoy a day off with our families, let us always remember that it's not just the flag, or the national anthem, or even the amazing words written on a piece of paper that make our country what it is. Those things are all symbols. Important symbols, yes, but still just symbols.

What really matters is our actions. It's the things we do, or are willing to do, that make us an actual nation. Think about it: what if, after the Declaration was announced, no one had bothered to pay any attention? What if no one was willing to serve, to starve, to suffer, to *die* for that Declaration? I'm not just talking about those who picked up muskets. I'm talking about the men and women who waited with clutched hands for their loved ones to come home, knowing they were away for a just cause. I'm talking about the people who labored long hours under candlelight, stressing over every detail about just how this new nation would work. I'm talking about those who bothered to grow food, forge steel, hew wood, write pamphlets, or travel from town to town, spreading badly-needed news.

It was all those people, people just like us, that truly made the colonies free and independent states.

The actions of John Adams, Nathan Hale, and others set wheels in motion. Wheels that continue turning today. Wheels that move us all ever closer to ideals like liberty and freedom. Today, it's our job to keep those wheels turning. It's our job to say, "While we do live, let us have our country."

I'm so grateful that I *have* a country. I'm grateful for all those who labored to make it what it is today. It may not be perfect, but it's mine.

On behalf of all of us here at Hudock Capital Group, LLC, we wish you and yours a happy Independence Day!

Sincerely,

Barbara B. Hudock, CIMA®, CPM®
Chief Executive Officer
Founding Partner

Michael J. Hudock, Jr., CPM®
President and Founding Partner
Wealth Consultant