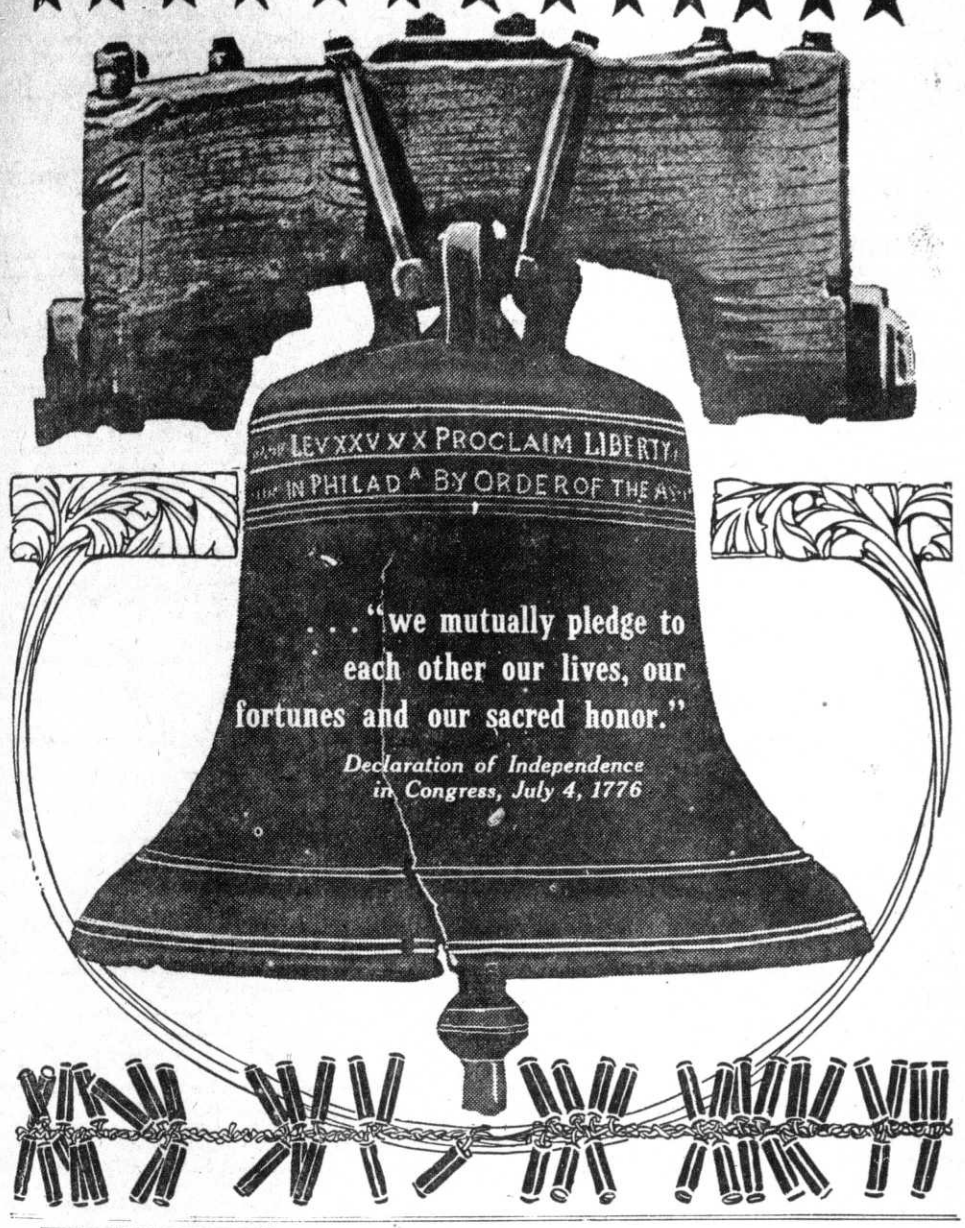
Proclaimed Day of Liberty



Men of Immortal Memory

Father of the Fourth

Jefferson Ever Friend of Liberty and the Enemy of All Forms of Despotism

By ROBERTUS LOVE.

The Father of His Country was George Washington, but the Father of the Fourth of July was Thomas Jefferson. Jefferson wrote the Declaration of Independence, which was adopted and signed on the fourth day of July, 1776. Forever thereafter that day was and will be "the Glorious Fourth." The Declaration of Independence was a special plea for the rights of the individual. The whole life of Thomas Jefferson was a protest against the old-time tyranny which sought to limit the development and action of individual man. Jefferson loved liberty and despised despotism. He was the principal pioneer of democracy in all the world. On this account all that he did and said and wrote, his manner of living and working, his home and his surroundings, are of interest to the world.

So far as real human interest goes, the home of Jefferson was and is more fruitful of entertaining anecdote and reminiscence than the home of Washington. Both homes are in Virginia. Jefferson's home, which he called Monticello divided with Mount Vernon the reverence and homage of Americans who have inherited the priceless blessings of Republican government for which Washington fought with his sword and Jefferson with his pen.

Sacred to Lovers of Liberty.

Monticello is one of America's shrines of pilgrimage. The house, shown below, is three miles from the town of Charlottesville, Albermarle county, 115 miles from Washington. Fewer persons visit it, because it is much more remote from the main-traveled roads than is Mount Vernon, almost within sight of the national capital.

At Monticello Jefferson lived nearly sixty years. Within a stone's throw he spent his entire life, for he was born on the estate, and though he was absent for several years in France as American minister, and for eight years as president of the United States, and also in the occupancy of other offices, that was always his home. He loved it above all other spots on earth, from the cradle to the grave. There was rocked his cradle and there his grave was made, when after 83 years of labor for the rights of man he died on the Fourth of July, exactly 50 years after the signing of the Declaration of Independence. It was given to him to experience half a century of the fruits of his own efforts toward a more equitable form of government, something new to human society.

History of Monticello.

In 1769 Jefferson began the construction of his mansion on the mountain above Charlottesville. On New Year's day of 1772 he took thither his bride, the beautiful young Widow Skelton, whose husband, Bathurst Skelton, had died when she was in her nineteenth year, leaving her a considerable fortune. She was about twenty-three when Jefferson married her. Mrs. Jefferson was a singularly beautiful woman, with auburn hair to match the red locks of her famous husband. She lived only about ten years after her second marriage. Jefferson never took another wife. His daughter was the mistress of Monticello and likewise the mistress of the Executive Mansion when Jefferson was president of the United States. Jefferson survived his wife 44 years.

For the last 50 years of his life Jefferson was hopelessly insolvent. From time to time his precious estate and home were in imminent danger of being sold over his head. His debts were due to various causes. For one thing, he put his name on notes for friends and was held responsible for large sums. Then he was an extravagant entertainer. His house was perhaps the most commodious and manorlike in America. He was famous in two continents. Every person of distinction who came from Europe to visit the United States made Monticello his chief objective point. He must see "the Sage." It cost the Sage money, of course.

The chambers occupied by Mr. and Mrs. Jefferson are most interesting. Jefferson, a radical in all things, a progressive in an age that was not particularly progressive, had ideas of his own with regard to household furniture. Heretofore people had slept in massive, cumbersome beds, with great posts or frames at the foot and head. Jefferson changed this, for himself and wife. He built two rooms, connected by a wide archway. In this archway he placed the Jeffersonian bed, which was merely a large couch of simple design, minus the unnecessary foot and head work. The bed closed up the archway, there being no other communication between the two rooms. In one of the chambers Mrs. Jefferson made her boudoir. In the other Thomas Jefferson studied and wrote. When Mrs. Jefferson was ready to retire she disrobed in her boudoir and climbed into the bed from her side. When Mr. Jefferson sought the refreshment of Morpheus he disrobed in his study and climbed into the bed from his side. It was all very handy.

Jefferson's Monument.

The epitaph on the original monument over Jefferson's grave was written by Jefferson himself. It reads:

"Here was buried Thomas Jefferson, author of the Declaration of Independence, of the Statute of Virginia for Religious Freedom, and Father of the University of Virginia."

It thus appears that Jefferson was more proud of these three achievements than of being president of the United States, as he does not even mention the latter distinction.

From a hilltop near Monticello one may see the birthplaces of three men whose work and wisdom added to the United States nearly one-half of its present territory on this continent. These men were Jefferson, George Rogers Clark and Meriwether Lewis. Through the efforts of Clark the states of Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Wisconsin and part of Michigan were added to our domain. Meriwether Lewis, with a younger brother of George Rogers Clark, was sent by Jefferson on the famous trip of exploration and discovery which, many years later, resulted in giving Uncle Sam title to the Pacific Northwest.

Spirit of '76

Remains an Inspiration to the Youth of the Land

By CHLOE ARNOLD.

It happened rather oddly that the day Bill Cumming went away I discovered the monument. After all, that day was quite like a Barrie play: so humorous, and pathetically sweet that it left one feeling like laughing and crying at the same time.

Bill was the first boy from Ridgefield to enlist in 1917, when his country called on her sons, and he was going into camp at Niantic, Conn. In an American household from Scotland, such as this is, of course the "meenister" came to supper that Sunday night. That was as inevitable as quotations from Burns' poems at table, for Burns is a hero here, just as Roosevelt and Joffre are.

Everybody talked a great deal and ate little. The minister told of how a descendant of Hannah Dutton, that heroine dear to the hearts of all young readers of history, had helped serve meals in a Rhode Island summer hotel, where he had spent his vacation. Bill talked about automobiles.

Then the time came for him to go. He had said beforehand that he wanted to take his bag to the station alone. He had seen the departure of his company from the Bridgeport armory the day before, and he saw that a farewell cannot be too quiet.

Just as he went off the veranda the minister took his hand. "God bless you, Bill," he said, very low, but we all heard it. And it made the moment a little more solemn than we could have liked. There was a mist in Bill's eyes for a moment. But nobody noticed that any more than they did how his mother went into the house very suddenly. However, those who understand will understand all about how this was.

Just then I set out for the post office. For those who love rustic air and the mild monotony of the night insects' songs few walks afford more quiet delight than the saunter down for the evening mail. It is a broad thoroughfare arched with maples whose leaves are silver in the moonlight. You may meet some townsman you know, perhaps, a driver of some delivery automobile, and he will pass with you a staccato greeting. Smooth, flowing conversation seems somehow out of place at this time of day.

ABOUT two hundred yards from the Danbury road, which turns abruptly from the main street in Ridgefield and winds among the hills out of sight, the monument has been erected.

It stands so unobtrusively by the roadside that the village folk who pass it every day would hardly have noticed it; whereas those who pass in their long, steady journeyings to the mountains by motor would never dream that the little hillock was once the scene of a bloody battle.

The monument is inserted in an old gray stone fence which was put in place by the patient hands of the colonists in the stern old times. And it sturdily defends intruders from its inclosure to this day. The carved letters seemed to stand out more on this particular Sunday evening, and I read:

In Defense of American Independence at the Battle of Ridgefield, April 27, 1777,
Died
EIGHT PATRIOTS
who were laid in these grounds
Companioned by
SIXTEEN BRITISH SOLDIERS,
Living their enemies, dying their guests.
In Honour of Service and Sacrifice,
This Memorial is Placed
For the Strengthening of Hearts

Until five years ago the battle of Ridgefield was unmarked and existed only on one of the seldom-looked-at pages in the histories, though the ancient and well-conditioned hickory tree designated the graves. And by it Miss Mary Olcott reckoned where to place the monument.

When this battle was fought most of the men of military age were away with Washington, Lafayette and other generals. They had no home guard such as parade in full rig about the station grounds of a Friday afternoon. Indeed some historians say that most of the six hundred were men seeking adventure under Benedict Arnold. For he was then a popular hero, and he directed the principal defense against the British.

No one has ever known the names of the Eight Patriots. And perhaps some English mother in 1777 wondered at just what spot in the wilderness somewhere in America they had buried her boy. The British were all buried in one grave, the Americans in another. The tablet pays equal honor to each. And it is placed only "For the Strengthening of Hearts."

On that Sunday morning in April, 1777, the colonists needed some definite sign of success in their struggle with the enemy and with the stubborn wilderness from which they had to hew their homes. Indeed it was but three years afterward that Washington was inquiring whom he could trust.

GOVERNOR TRYON, who for personal reasons had no love for the "rough" dragoons of Connecticut, was chosen to lead the British expedition against Danbury. He knew the country, and he still remembered how the Connecticut troops had upset the type for his paper all over the streets of New York. So with 2,000 men he disembarked from the 27 ships the British sent to Compo beach, near Westport, and went off to Danbury, where the colonists had collected their supplies.

While Tryon was passing through Redding (where Mark Twain's house still stands) he shot up a church by way of something to do. But when he met Arnold in Ridgefield he was not hard put to it for pastime for a while at least.

The British had 2,000 men, the Americans but 600, but Arnold's men held out against them and they could not get through until they sent General Agnew around with 200 men and attacked the Americans from the rear. Arnold gave orders to his men to retreat. Aided by General Bell, he fought on until his horse was shot. His foot became entangled in the stirrup and a Tory rushed up.

"You are my prisoner!" he yelled. "Not yet," Arnold said. He shot the man dead, remarking that one live soldier was worth ten dead ones. He then ran to Israel Putnam's camp, now Putnam park, twelve miles away, after astonishing the British by his reckless courage.

The British marched on up the village streets, which are now as they were then. But the wounded of both sides were taken into Miss Sarah Stebbins' house and tenderly cared for. Her house stood near where Miss Mary Olcott's does now, and the old buttery door, pierced by many shots and a cannon ball, is at the Olcott house. The soldiers who died on the field or of their wounds were the ones to whom the stone was raised.

Tryon knew that he was not popular with the most of the Ridgefield villagers, so he plundered a good many of them, taking everything they had, and they had to appeal to the general assembly for help. His men also burned the Keeler grist mill and set fire to several houses.

In that day the old Keeler tavern was the favorite inn on the way to Boston. Tryon heard, moreover, that the patriots were making ammunition in it. So he mounted his guns in the Episcopal church and fired at the tavern.

FOR a while it fared ill with the tavern; but, as Innkeeper Keeler said later, it was saved by the grace of God and the strong north wind. A Tory's house stood directly south of it, which commenced to burn merrily. This man got Tryon's permission to put out the fire, but when he told Keeler whom he could thank for saving his house Keeler attributed his good fortune to other sources.

Just as the cannon balls commenced to fly gayly through the tavern a man was coming downstairs. He howled that he was a dead man; that he was killed. But like all who make such spirited declarations of their death he was unhurt and ran away to hide with the rest.

For a long time after 1777 the Keeler tavern was kept and continued in favor with travelers. Washington and Lafayette are supposed to have stayed there, though there is nothing to prove it. However, for one old house it has distinction enough, for certainly Pickering, Comte de Rochambeau, duc de Laucun-Biron, Oliver Wolcott and Lieutenant Governor Treadwell, also Jerome Bonaparte did enjoy its hospitality.

Altogether the old tavern's fortunes are enviable. For it is now where Cass Gilbert, the architect, spends his summers. It is called "Cannon Ball house," and the main part is unchanged, even to the partition on the second floor which they used to put up to make a large ballroom. A wing is added in the rear and a fountain from Gilbert's hand makes more beautiful the end of that fine old street.