



"That Day Shall Be Honored"

By DANIEL WEBSTER

Thomas Jefferson and John Adams, by an awe-inspiring coincidence, passed away on July 4, 1826, the 50th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence. The Boston City Council set apart August 2d of that year for a meeting in Faneuil Hall to commemorate both men. Naturally, they chose the most eminent orator of the day—Daniel Webster—to deliver the chief oration. Inspired, he went back in imagination to the momentous days when the Declaration was being debated at Philadelphia in Independence Hall; and he re-created for his auditors some of the speeches that might have been delivered at that time

LET us, then, bring before us the assembly, which was about to decide a question thus big with the fate of empire. Let us open their doors and look in upon their deliberations. Let us survey the anxious and careworn countenances, let us hear the firm-toned voices, of this band of patriots.

Hancock presides over the solemn sitting; and one of those not yet prepared to pronounce for absolute independence is on the floor, and is urging his reasons for dissenting from the Declaration.

"Let us pause! This step, once taken, cannot be retraced. This resolution, once passed, will cut off all hope of reconciliation. If success attend the arms of England, we shall then be no longer Colonies, with charters and with privileges; these will all be forfeited by this act; and we shall be in the condition of other conquered people, at the mercy of the conquerors. For ourselves, we may be ready to run the hazard; but are we ready to carry the country to that length? Is success so probable as to justify it? Where is the military, where the naval power, by which we are to resist the whole strength of the arm of England—for she will exert that strength to the utmost? Can we rely on the constancy and perseverance of the people? or will they not act as the people of other countries have acted, and, wearied with a long war, submit, in the end, to a worse oppression? While we stand on our old ground, and insist on redress of grievances, we know we are right, and are not answerable for consequences. Nothing, then, can be imputed to us. But if we now change our object, carry our pretensions further, and set up for absolute independence, we shall lose the sympathy of mankind. We shall no longer be defending what we possess, but struggling for (Continued on page 72)

1826-1851

IN THIS quarter century, Andrew Jackson brought the West and its men into the center of government and established doctrines of democracy that deeply influenced the future of the country. He himself was called by biographer James Parton "the most American of Americans—an embodied Declaration of Independence—the 4th of July incarnate." The war with Mexico and the acquisition of additional territory during Polk's administration hugely enlarged the boundaries of our country, but also helped to emphasize the controversy that led to the Civil War: the question of slavery. The efforts of two men, who sought in vain to prevent the tragic rift from widening, were outstanding. One was the Southerner, Henry Clay, whom Lincoln called "my beau-ideal of a statesman." The other was the Northerner, Daniel Webster, of whom English essayist Sydney Smith said, "Good heavens, he is a cathedral all by himself." In the controversy over slavery the Declaration, as Lincoln once remarked, was "assailed and sneered at and construed, hawked at and torn, till, if its framers could rise from their graves, they could not at all recognize it." To Lincoln himself is attributed the remark that "none but a fool or a knave could misunderstand the statement (in the Declaration) about all men being equal." The noted lawyer Rufus Choate referred to the "glittering and sounding generalities about natural rights." Lincoln, again and again answering such attacks, spoke of "that immortal emblem of humanity—the Declaration of Independence"; and of "that sacred instrument." In this quarter century, Massachusetts set the pace for American education when it opened the United States' first public high school. Samuel F. B. Morse sent his first message over the telegraph ("What hath God wrought!"); the U.S. Naval Academy at Annapolis was opened; the first adhesive U.S. postage stamp was placed on sale.



OUR 175th YEAR OF FREEDOM

1851-1876

THE 100th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration saw the United States closer to the ideals for which Jefferson had striven. For the country, after a terrible fratricidal war, had under Lincoln established the principle of the unbreakable unity of the nation; and it had abolished slavery. The nation's population continued to move westward in great numbers, and from Europe came steady recruitments of immigrants. In 1860 almost one person in eight was foreign-born; and American culture became increasingly a blending of the contributions of many lands and diverse peoples. Sometimes the prosperity of the rambunctious young country suddenly slumped, as on the "Black Friday" of September 24, 1869, and in the disastrous "panic" of 1873. But, with recovery from these financial crises, the prosperity and wealth of the mass of the people steadily increased. To celebrate the centennial of the signing of the Declaration, a great fair was opened in Philadelphia.

Gulford Flag—1781. For North Carolina's militia

Bennington Flag—1777. For battle in Vermont

Naval Union Jack—1775. Now it has 5-point stars

Star-Spangled Banner—1814. Inspired Key at Ft. McHenry

DONT GIVE UP
THE SHIP

Perry's Ensign—1813. Legend says he flew it on Lake Erie