

Freedom's Feast INDEPENDENCE DAY

On-line resources to get the most out of your AMERICAN holiday Celebrations.

Young Dreamers & Doers

THE STORIES OF TWO PATRIOTS WHO PURSUED LIBERTY.

He chose America twice.

James Forten lived a life filled with risks, unwavering patriotism, and selfless actions. One of two hundred freed African-Americans in Philadelphia in the mid-1700s, Forten joined the Continental Navy at age 15 against his widowed mother's strong objections. He took on the most dangerous job on the Royal Lewis ship as a "powder boy," and carried ammunition during battle. He was captured during an attack and taken aboard a British ship where Forten defeated the Captain's son in a game of marbles. His talent impressed the Captain, who offered to pay for Forten's education in England if he severed his allegiance with America. Forten refused the offer and boarded a prison ship in New York Harbor for seven months. He almost died but survived to become one of Philadelphia's most successful business owners and a leading voice against slavery. When offered the presidency of Liberia, Forten once again chose America and rather than becoming a head-of-state lobbied instead for the full rights of African Americans in the Americas. He died at the age of 75 in 1842.



1766-1842

She chose Learning and Liberty.

Deborah Sampson always challenged the status quo. Born into a family that became impoverished, Deborah's single mother sent her to live with neighbors because she had too many children to feed. Deborah spent her early years as an indentured servant, working on farms and attending to her masters' needs. When one master told her she could not receive an education, Deborah borrowed textbooks from local schoolchildren, studied them at night, and returned them to the students on their way to school the next day. She went to live with another farm family who allowed her to attend school for a few hours every day. At age 16, she was the oldest student in the classroom but learned quickly and was soon assisting the teacher. She dreamt of joining the revolutionary militia, but knew that she could not because of her gender. So she saved up money, sewed a man's suit, cut her hair, left her farm family, and joined the Fourth Massachusetts militia in 1782. She took on the name "Robert Shurtliffe" and became one of the most distinguished soldiers in the Revolutionary War. After being injured in battle, a doctor discovered her secret and made sure that she was honorably discharged. She was awarded a congressional pension, land, and received a letter of appreciation from President Washington. She married, went on to become the mother of three, a schoolteacher, and in 1802 embarked on a year long lecture tour to share her story of courage and resilience with citizens across the newly-formed United States.



1760-1827

For more information about Forten, Sampson, and other young heroes in U.S. history, read "[We Were There, Too!](#)" by Phillip Hoose.



Independence Day

★ TRIVIA ★

1. Who was the first and only delegate to sign the Declaration of Independence on July 4, 1776?
2. Which two presidents (and signers of the Declaration), both died on July 4, 1826?
3. What animal did Benjamin Franklin want as our national symbol? (John Adams and Thomas Jefferson outvoted him and chose the Bald Eagle).
4. What year did Congress declare July 4th a National Holiday?
5. What are the three "unalienable rights" that are listed in the Declaration?

Answers:

1. John Hancock. Most of the other 55 delegates signed on August 2, 1776 and a few later that fall.
2. John Adams & Thomas Jefferson.
3. Turkey.
4. 1941.
5. Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness.