

# WallBuilder Report



SUMMER 2006

*Celebrating  
America's  
Birthday*

*plus*  
**Famous  
July Fourth  
Orations**

“Blessed is the nation, whose God is the Lord.” Psalm 33:12

## Celebrating America's Birthday

**T**his Fourth of July, America will celebrate its 230th birthday. Neither our closest allies nor our fiercest enemies have experienced the stability with which we have been blessed. In fact, during the time that America has flourished under the Declaration of Independence, France has had fifteen different governments. And Brazil has had seven since 1822; Poland, seven since 1921; Afghanistan, five since 1923; Russia, four since 1918; and the story is similar for other nations throughout Europe, Africa, South America, and the rest of the world.

Some describe this remarkable achievement as “American

Exceptionalism” – a term coined in 1831 by Alexis de Tocqueville, a famous French visitor to America who penned the classic, *Democracy in America*. As De Tocqueville expressed it:

The position of the Americans is quite exceptional, and it may be believed that no democratic people will ever be placed in a similar one.

However, such a description should never be a cause for any sense of American superiority. On the contrary, Psalm 75:6-7 indicates that such achievements are from the Lord and therefore should be a cause for an appreciative humility. As President John Adams rightly observed:

It must be felt that there is no national security but in the nation's humble acknowledged dependence upon God and His overruling providence.

Understanding this truth, earlier generations frequently incorporated thankfulness to God as an integral component of Independence Day celebrations. In fact, on the original Independence Day in 1776, John Adams had recommended:

**John Adams**



[This day] ought to be commemorated as the day of deliverance, by solemn acts of devotion to God Almighty.

America regularly celebrated Independence Day with a recognition of our gratitude to God Almighty. For example, on July 4, 1837, some sixty-one years after the Declaration of Independence was first issued, John Quincy Adams delivered an oration in which he noted that America's two most popular holidays (Christmas and the Fourth of July) were inseparably intertwined:

In the chain of human events, the birthday of the nation is indissolubly linked with the birthday of the Savior. It forms a leading event in the progress of the Gospel dispensation. The Declaration of Independence first organized the social compact on the foundation of the Redeemer's mission on Earth [and] laid the cornerstone of human government on the first precepts of Christianity.

Does the Declaration of Independence actually embody what Adams described as “the first precepts of Christianity” – does it truly



John Quincy Adams

incorporate Biblical principles?

To answer that question, consider the philosophy that undergirds the Declaration. Where did the signers find the ideas of God-given inalienable rights, religious freedoms, liberty of conscience, individualism, limited government, full republicanism, etc. – ideas that have now made the Declaration the most successful government document in the history of the world?

James Otis (the mentor of both Samuel Adams and John Hancock)

identified the source of many of the signers' ideas when he declared:

The authority of Mr. Locke has . . . been preferred to all others.

John Locke (1632-1704) was an English theologian and political philosopher, and Declaration signers such as John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Rush, and many others sang his praises. John Quincy Adams even affirmed:

The Declaration of Independence [was] . . . founded upon one and the same theory of government . . . expounded in the writings of Locke.

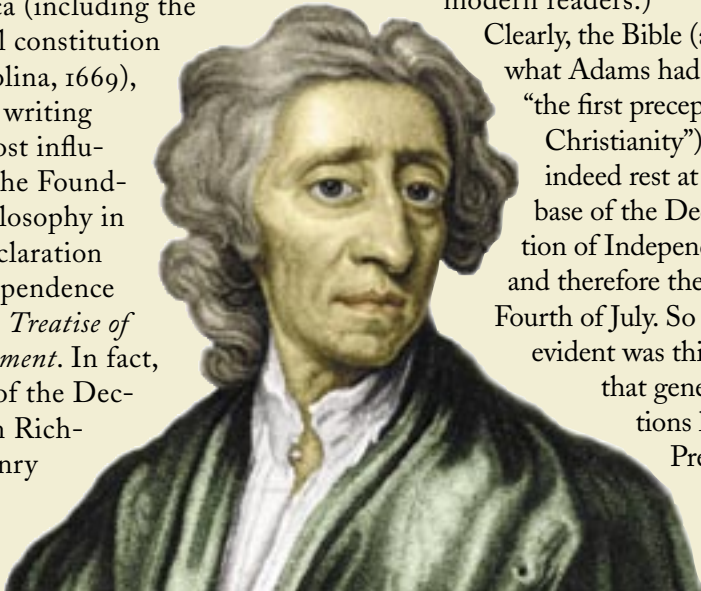
Locke authored numerous works that influenced America (including the original constitution of Carolina, 1669), but his writing that most influenced the Founders' philosophy in the Declaration of Independence was his *Treatise of Government*. In fact, signer of the Declaration Richard Henry

Lee declared that the Declaration was "copied from Locke's *Treatise on Government*."

Locke's *Treatise* (actually two separate treatises combined into one book) is less than 400 pages long; but in the first treatise, Locke invoked the Bible in 1,349 references; in his second treatise, he cited it 157 times. Imagine! In the primary work influencing the Declaration of Independence, Locke referred to the Bible over 1,500 times to show the proper operation of civil government. No wonder the Declaration has been such a successful document!

(Locke's *Two Treatises of Government* is still available today from most major booksellers; I highly recommend this work for modern readers.)

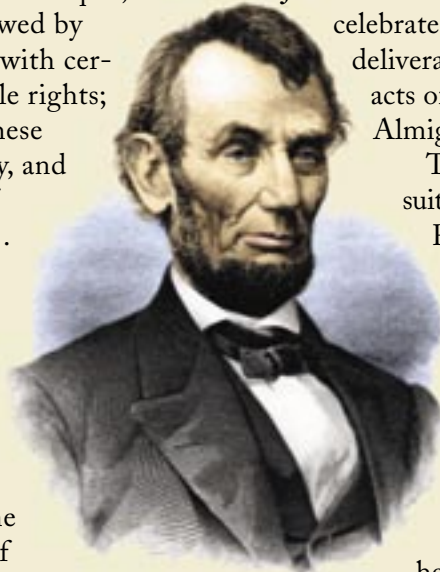
Clearly, the Bible (and what Adams had called "the first precepts of Christianity") did indeed rest at the base of the Declaration of Independence, and therefore the Fourth of July. So self-evident was this fact that generations later, Presi-



John  
Locke

dent Abraham Lincoln reminded the nation:

These communities, by their representatives in old Independence Hall, said to the whole world of men: "We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men 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." . . . [T]hey established these great self-evident truths that . . . their posterity might look up again to the Declaration of Independence and take courage to renew that battle which their fathers began, so that truth and justice and mercy and all the humane and Christian virtues might not be extinguished from the land. . . . Now, my countrymen, if you have been taught doctrines conflicting with the great



landmarks of the Declaration of Independence . . . let me entreat you to come back. . . . [C]ome back to the truths that are in the Declaration of Independence.

As we commemorate this year's Fourth of July, let's remember

John Adams' admonition to celebrate it "as the day of deliverance, by solemn acts of devotion to God Almighty."

To aid in that pursuit, President Ronald Reagan once offered a prayer request that is still worth honoring this Fourth of July:

"Let us ask that God's light may illuminate the minds and hearts of our people and our leaders so that we may meet the challenges that lie before us with courage and wisdom and justice. In prayer, let us recall with confidence the promise of old that if we humble ourselves before God and pray and seek His face, He will surely hear and forgive and heal and bless our land." ■

## A Few Famous July Fourth Orations

### 1793 • *Elias Boudinot*

*During the Revolution, Boudinot was in charge of securing the release of captured American soldiers from the British; he then became President of the Continental Congress. Also, he was a Member of the first federal Congress where he helped frame the Bill of Rights, the first attorney admitted to the US Supreme Court bar, a noted theologian, and the first president of the American Bible Society.*

Who knows but the country for which we have fought and bled may hereafter become a theatre of greater events than yet have been known to mankind? May

these invigorating prospects lead us to the exercise of every virtue – religious, moral, and political. May we be roused to a circumspect conduct – to an exact obedience to the laws of our own making – to the preservation of the spirit and principles of our truly invaluable Constitution – to respect and attention to magistrates of our own choice. . . . And may these great principles in the end become instrumental in bringing about that happy state of the world when – from every human breast joined by the grand chorus of the skies – shall arise with the profoundest reverence that divinely celestial anthem of universal praise: “Glory to God in the highest! Peace on earth! Good will towards men!” [Luke 2:14].

### 1794 • *Dr. David Ramsay*

*Ramsay was a noted physician, a member of the Continental Congress during the American Revolution, and a famous historian.*

We ought, in the first place, to be grateful to the all-wise Disposer of Events Who has given us so great a portion of political happiness. To possess such



Elias Boudinot



Dr. David Ramsay

a country with the blessings of liberty and peace together with that security of person and property which results from a well-ordered, efficient government is – or ought to be – [a] matter of constant thankfulness.

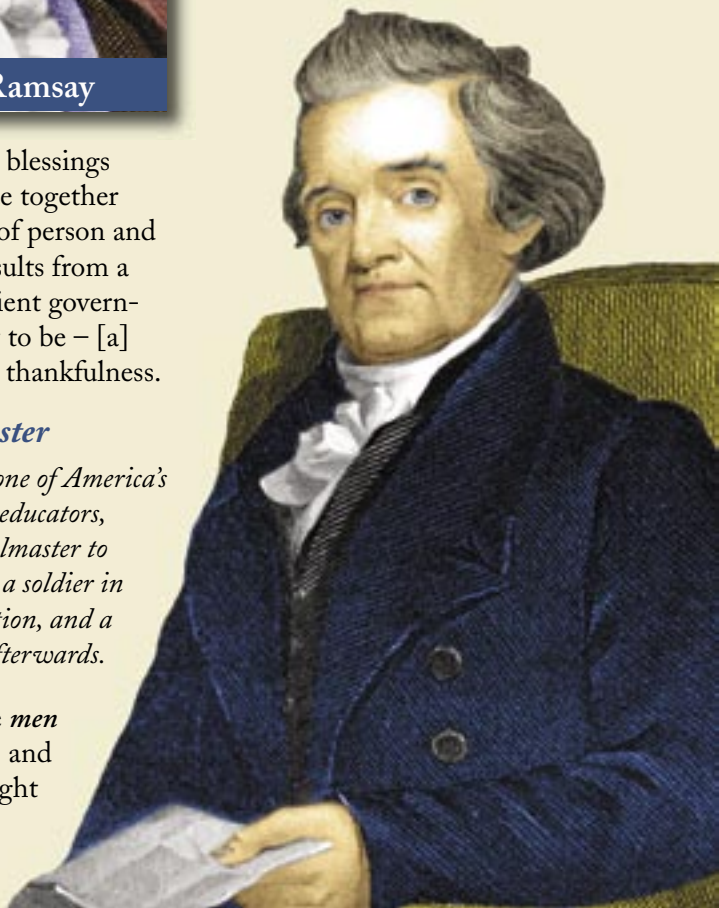
### 1798 • Noah Webster

*Webster is considered one of America's three most significant educators, being titled the "Schoolmaster to America"; he was also a soldier in the American Revolution, and a legislator and judge afterwards.*

[O]ur fathers were *men* – they were heroes and patriots – they fought

Noah Webster

– they conquered – and they bequeathed to us a rich inheritance of liberty and empire which we have no right to surrender. . . . Yes, my fellow freemen, we have a rich and growing empire – we have a lucrative commerce to protect – we have indefeasible [inalienable] rights – we have an excellent system of religion and of government – we have wives and children and sisters to

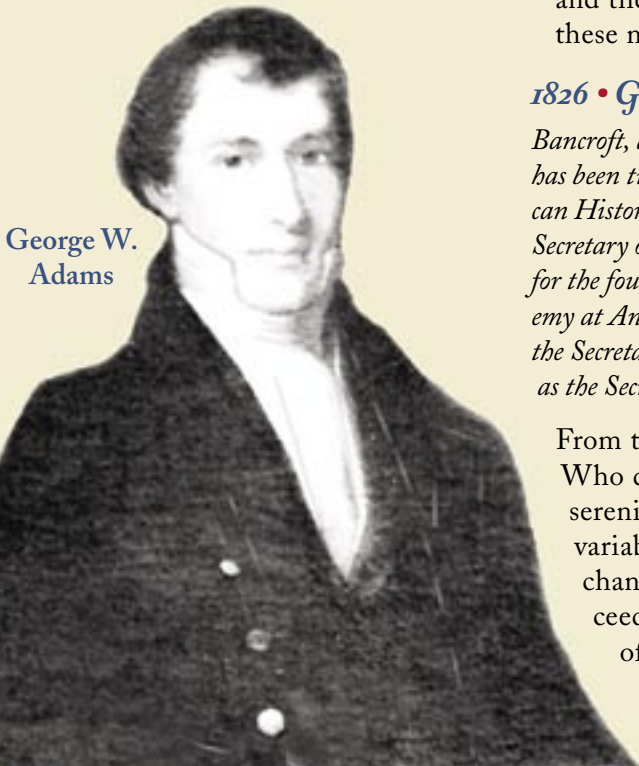


## ■ A Few Famous July Fourth Orations

defend; and God forbid that the soil of America should sustain the wretch who [lacks] the will or the spirit to defend them. Let us then rally round the independence and Constitution of our country, resolved to a man that we will never lose by folly, disunion, or cowardice what has been planned by wisdom and purchased with blood.

### 1824 • *George W. Adams*

*George Washington Adams was the son of John Quincy Adams and grandson of John Adams.*



George W.  
Adams

The effects of this Declaration are now everywhere visible. Look through the country and behold our accumulated blessings: see nature robed in beauty, fertile in rich luxuriance; see health and plenty everywhere around you; see a dense and settled population stretching from the cold regions of the North to the exuberant [rich] valleys of the South, from the prolific intervals of the East to the flourishing prairies of the West; see your shores washed by two oceans and the soil your own. Are not these motives for rejoicing?

### 1826 • *George Bancroft*

*Bancroft, a distinguished historian, has been titled “The Father of American History”; he also served as the Secretary of the Navy, was responsible for the founding of the Naval Academy at Annapolis, and then served as the Secretary of War – known today as the Secretary of Defense.*

From the omnipotent Power  
Who dwells in the unclouded  
serenity of being, without  
variableness or shadow of  
change [James 1:17], we proceed  
as from the Fountain  
of Good, the Author

of Hope, and the Source of Order and Justice, now that we assemble to commemorate the revolution, the independence, and the advancement of our country! . . . The festival which we keep is the festival of freedom itself – it belongs not to us only but to man. All the nations of the earth have an interest in it, and humanity proclaims it sacred! . . . Trusting in the Providence of Him, the Universal Father, let the country advance to the glory and prosperity to which – mindful of its exalted privileges – it aspires! Wherever its voice is heard, let it proclaim the message of liberty and speak with the divine energy of truth [and let] the principles of moral goodness [be] consistently followed in its actions! And while the centuries – as they pass – multiply its population and its resources, let it manifest in



George Bancroft

its whole history a devoted attachment to public virtue, a dear affection for mankind, and the consciousness of its responsibility to the God of nations!



The following two proclamations are applicable to this Fourth of July. The first, issued in 1988 by President Ronald Reagan for that year's National Day of Prayer, contains senti-

## ■ A Few Famous July Fourth Orations

ments that befit the Fourth of July. The second, issued in 2003 by Texas Governor Rick Perry, also is appropriate. Enjoy!

### *1988 • Ronald Reagan*

“Americans in every generation have turned to their Maker in prayer. In adoration and in thanksgiving, in contrition and in supplication, we have acknowledged both our dependence on Almighty God and the help He offers us as individuals and as a Nation. In every circumstance, whether peril or plenty, whether war or peace,

whether gladness or mourning, we have searched for and sought God’s presence and His power, His blessings and His protection, His freedom and His peace, for ourselves, for our children, and for our beloved land.

That was surely so at the very beginning of our Nation, in the earliest days of our quest for independence and liberty. It could only be thus, for a people who recognized God as the Author of freedom; who cherished the ancient but ever new words of Leviticus [ch. 25, ver. 10], ‘Proclaim liberty throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof’ and who cast those words where they would ring out forever, on the Liberty Bell; who affirmed along with Thomas Jefferson that the God Who gave us life gave us liberty as well.

So did they believe, those who gathered in Carpenters’ Hall in Philadelphia in 1774, the members of the First Continental Congress. They had come together, in times that tried men’s souls, to deliberate in the united interests of America and for our ‘civil and religious liberties.’ John Adams later



Ronald Reagan



*The First Prayer in Congress*

wrote his wife Abigail about what followed: ‘When Congress first met, Mr. Cushing made a motion that it should be opened with prayer.’ Some delegates opposed the motion, citing differences in belief among the members; but Sam Adams, that bold lover of liberty and our country, arose to utter words of healing and unity. ‘I can hear the prayer,’ he said, ‘of anyone of piety and virtue who is . . . a friend to his country.’ He went on to suggest that a clergyman

of a persuasion other than his own open the First Continental Congress with prayer.

And so it happened. Because Sam Adams gave voice to all the goodness, the genius, and the generosity that make up the American spirit, the First Continental Congress made its first act a prayer – the beginning of a great tradition.

We have, then, a lesson from the Founders of our land, those giants of soul and intellect whose courageous pledge of life

## ■ A Few Famous July Fourth Orations

Courtesy Architect of the Capitol



### *The Signing of the Declaration of Independence*

and fortune and sacred honor, and whose ‘firm reliance on the protection of Divine Providence,’ have ever guided and inspired Americans and all who would fan freedom’s mighty flames and live in ‘freedom’s holy light.’ That lesson is clear that in the winning of freedom and in the living of life, the first step is prayer.

Let us join together, Americans all, throughout our land. Let us join together, in factories and farms, in homes and offices, in places of governance and places

of worship, and in outposts everywhere that service men and women defend us. Let us, young and old, join together, as did the First Continental Congress, in the first step – humble, heartfelt prayer. Let us do so for the love of God and His great goodness, in search of His guidance and the grace of repentance, in seeking His blessings, His peace, and the resting of His kind and holy hands on ourselves, our Nation, our friends in the defense of freedom, and all mankind, now and always. . . .”

2003 • *Rick Perry*

“*Whereas*, the words of President George Washington ring true now as they did more than 200 years ago, ‘Almighty Father. Bless us with Thy wisdom in our counsels and with success in battle, and let our victories be tempered with humanity. Endow, also, our enemies with enlightened minds, that they become sensible of their injustice, and willing to restore our liberty and peace. Thy will be done. Amen.’; and

*Whereas*, as these words show, prayer has been a vital part of our

shared national life since before the founding of our nation and state, providing comfort and direction in times of crisis and conflict, and reminding us of the calm assurance that God cares for us . . .

*Whereas*, many brave and courageous men and women of the United States Armed Forces who have been deployed in the Middle East and around the world to keep freedom and protect liberty now find themselves in harm’s way and in need of our prayers and petitions to God on behalf of their safety and wellbeing; and



*United States Troops in Iraq*

## ■ A Few Famous July Fourth Orations

*Whereas*, it seems right and fitting that the people . . . should join with the soldiers in their foxholes, the pilots in their planes, and the sailors on the seas and stand in solidarity with them through prayer for their safe return and the resumption of peace in the region and throughout the world;

*Now, Therefore*, I . . . [urge] prayers and petitions for peace and safety on behalf of our troops deployed in the Middle East and around the world, that they may return home safely to the care and comfort of their families and that we may return to our daily lives of peace and calm.” ■



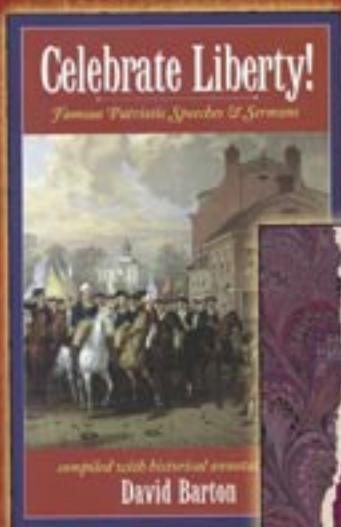
Governor Rick Perry

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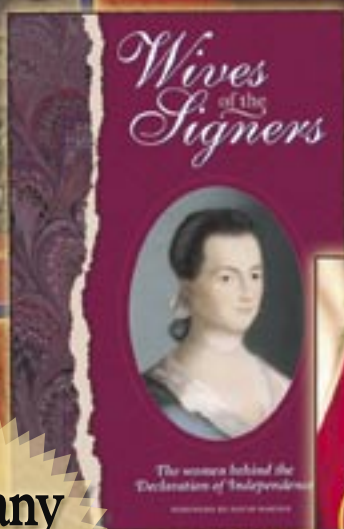


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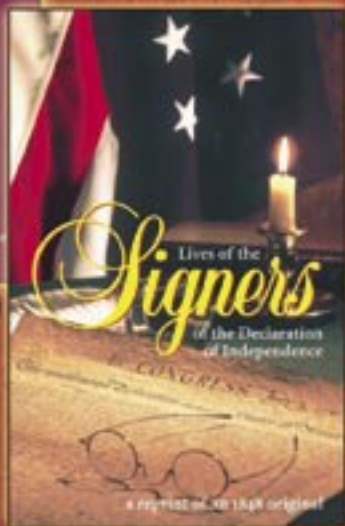


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All men . . . are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights - that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.  
- Declaration of Independence, 1776



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