

JULY 1776-2026 AMERICA 250

THIS MONTH IN AMERICAN HISTORY

- July 4, 1776**
The Continental Congress approves the Declaration of Independence, formally announcing the creation of the United States and the separation of the colonies from Great Britain.
- July 21, 1861**
The Battle of Bull Run becomes the first major land battle of the Civil War.
- July 1, 1862**
President Abraham Lincoln signs the Revenue Act of 1862, which creates the Internal Revenue Service and the first progressive federal income tax.
- July 4, 1863**
One day after the North claims victory in Gettysburg, forces led by Ulysses S. Grant capture Vicksburg, Miss.
- July 6, 1892**
A labor dispute between Carnegie Steel Company and its workers — the Homestead Strike — turns violent. The dispute ends as a major loss for labor unions after Pennsylvania Gov. Robert Emory Pattison calls in the National Guard.
- July 10, 1925**
Teacher John Scopes is tried for teaching evolution during the first day of the Scopes “Monkey” Trial.
- July 26, 1948**
President Harry S. Truman integrates the military.
- July 27, 1953**
The Korean War Armistice is signed, officially ending one of the most significant conflicts of the Cold War.
- July 29, 1958**
NASA is established.
- July 24, 1974**
The U.S. Supreme Court rules against President Richard Nixon in a decision that leads to the release of the Watergate tapes. Three days later the impeachment process against Nixon begins.
- July 20, 1976**
NASA’s Viking I lands on Mars, the first successful U.S. landing on another planet. The lander sends back the first photos of the surface of Mars.
- July 28, 1984**
The 1984 Summer Olympics official open in Los Angeles, California. The games were highlighted by American Carl Lewis winning four gold medals.
- July 26, 1990**
President George H.W. Bush signs the Americans with Disabilities Act.
- July 17, 1996**
TWA Flight 800 explodes off Long Island, N.Y., killing all 230 aboard, including 16 students and five chaperones from the Montoursville High School French Club.
- July 19, 1996**
The 26th Summer Olympic Games open in Atlanta, Georgia. The games are marred by a pipe bomb explosion at Centennial Olympic Park in Atlanta that kills one person and injurs more than 100 others.

U.S. ANNOUNCES INDEPENDENCE

The United States of America announced its independence on July 2, 1776.

John Adams expected that date to become a national holiday.

Two days later, on July 4, 1776, the newly independent country formally adopted the Declaration of Independence, a document that captured the entire theory of U.S. government and had global repercussions.

The concept of a declaration of independence was novel.

It spread across the Americas in the next decade, then into Europe starting in the 1820s.

The document had three parts, the preamble, the sins brought upon the colonies by King George III and the declaration of independence from Great Britain.

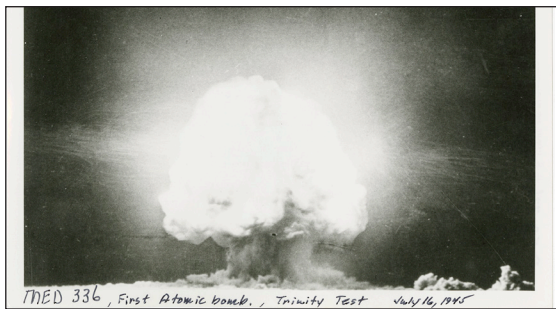
It was written primarily by Thomas Jefferson and the Committee of Five, of which he was the chairman.

America’s independence was recognized quickly, including in a treaty with France, which acted as an ally in the United States’ eight-plus-year Revolutionary War against Great Britain.



This print by John C. McRae after Johannes A. Oertle shows men with the “Sons of Freedom” using ropes to pull down the statue of King George III at the Bowling Green, City of New York, July 1776 as a crowd of men, women and children watch.

BY THE NUMBERS: THE TRINITY TEST



Los Alamos National Laboratory

The world’s first atomic bomb was detonated July 16, 1945. The fast-rising incandescent cloud illuminated the skies.

On July 16, 1945, the Manhattan Project succeeded in initiating the first nuclear explosion during the Trinity Test near Alamogordo, New Mexico.

Here is the explosion by the numbers:

14,710 F	13	24.8
Temperature reached during the blast. The surface of the sun is 9,940 F.	Pounds of weapons-grade plutonium used in “The Gadget,” the device detonated in New Mexico. Only three pounds was necessary.	Latest estimate (2025) in kilotons (TNT equivalent) of the power of the explosion. For comparison, the bomb that destroyed Nagasaki, Japan, was 21 kilotons.
0.5	250 by 200	
Millirems of radiation exposure per hour for current visitors at the Trinity site. A chest X-ray is 10 millirems or 20 times more dangerous.	Area in miles of radioactive fallout that descended to the northeast of the detonation site. Scientists tracked part of the fallout pattern to the Atlantic Ocean.	



National Archives

UNION FORCES WIN AT GETTYSBURG

On July 3, 1863, Union forces prove victorious in the three-day Battle of Gettysburg, halting Robert E. Lee’s invasion of the North during the Civil War.

The victory is largely considered the turning point in the war.

Here are five facts you may not know about the Battle of Gettysburg, according to American Battlefield Trust:

1 Roads led to Gettysburg. Gettysburg, population 2,000, boasting three newspapers, two institutes of higher learning, several churches and banks. Ten roads leading into a town on the rise bring the armies to Gettysburg.

2 The Second Day, including Devil’s Den, Little Round Top, the Wheatfield, Culp’s Hill, and others, are the largest and costliest at Gettysburg. At least 100,000 soldiers are involved, with 20,000 killed, wounded, captured or missing. The second day in itself ranks as the 10th bloodiest battle of the Civil War — with far more casualties than the much-larger Battle of Fredericksburg.

3 Nine of the 120 generals present at Gettysburg are killed or mortally wounded during the battle, five Confederate and four Union. Each side loses a general post-battle. No other battle claimed as many officers.

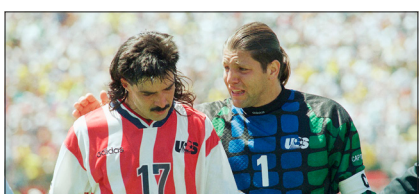
4 The U.S. awards 64 Medals of Honor to Union soldiers from wartime into the 21st century for their actions at Gettysburg. Eight were awarded July 1, 28 for July 2 and 29 for July 3. In 2014, President Barack Obama posthumously awards Alonzo Cushing with a medal for heroism.

5 The Battle of Gettysburg is not the largest battle of the Civil War but it proves the costliest. There are 160,000 troops present at the battle, 25,000 fewer than at Fredericksburg. But Gettysburg’s three days each rank in the top 15 bloodiest battles of the war.

AMERICANS BORN THIS MONTH

- John Quincy Adams, July 11, 1767
- Henry David Thoreau, July 12, 1817
- Elias Howe, July 9, 1819
- John D. Rockefeller, July 8, 1839
- George Eastman, July 12, 1854
- Calvin Coolidge, July 4, 1872
- E.B. White, July 11, 1899
- Ernest Hemingway, July 21, 1899
- Thurgood Marshall, July 2, 1908
- Nelson Rockefeller, July 8, 1908
- Ginger Rogers, July 16, 1911
- Milton Friedman, July 31, 1912
- Gerald Ford, July 14, 1913
- George Steinbrenner, July 4, 1930
- David McCullough, July 7, 1933
- Bill Withers, July 4, 1938
- Goose Gosage, July 5, 1951
- Robin Williams, July 21, 1951
- Andre Dawson, July 10, 1954
- Tom Hanks, July 9, 1956
- Roger Craig, July 10, 1960
- Tom Cruise, July 3, 1962
- Will Ferrell, July 16, 1967
- Barry Sanders, July 16, 1968
- Brandi Chastain, July 21, 1968
- Jennifer Lopez, July 24, 1969
- Lisa Leslie, July 7, 1972
- Michelle Kwan, July 7, 1980
- Damian Lillard, July 15, 1990
- Post Malone, July 4, 1995

WORLD CUP IN THE U.S.



The Associated Press

The United States’ Marcello Balboa, left, and captain Tony Meola after being eliminated July 4, 1994.

The 1994 FIFA World Cup Final was played July 17, 1994, at the Rose Bowl in Pasadena, Calif. The first World Cup tournament hosted by the United States broke attendance records.

LBJ SIGNS THE CIVIL RIGHTS ACT

Eleven months after the March on Washington and Martin Luther King Jr.’s “I Have a Dream” speech, on July 2, 1964, President Lyndon Johnson signed the Civil Rights Act, outlawing racial segregation and discrimination nationwide.



The Associated Press

President Lyndon Johnson signs the Civil Rights Act of 1964 in the East Room of the White House in Washington, D.C.

ROOSEVELT’S ‘GREAT DAY’

During the Spanish-American War, on July 1, 1898, Theodore Roosevelt led a series of charges up Kettle Hill toward San Juan Heights in Cuba while the Rough Riders followed on foot. Riding up and down the hill, Roosevelt ordered his men to “march.”

The Rough Riders and other regiments took the city, raising the American flag.

Roosevelt called it “the great day of my life.” He returned a war hero and national celebrity, igniting his political career.

PG-13 RATING



Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Studios Inc.

The Motion Picture Association of America introduced the PG-13 rating on July 1, 1984, in reaction to blood and gore in “Gremlins” and “Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom.” “Red Dawn” is the first PG-13 movie.