John Adams, signer of the Declaration of Independence, spoke fervently on behalf of independence at meetings of the Continental Congress in the summer of 1776. On July 2 when Congress voted unanimously to declare independence, Adams was among the first to acknowledge the importance of that day and that July 2 would be celebrated in the future as a national anniversary. He expressed those sentiments on the following day, July 3, 1776, in two letters he wrote to his wife Abigail. One of the letters was written in the morning, the other in the evening. He noted the importance of the resolution voted on and how “succeeding generations” would celebrate July 2 as the day of independence. Although Abigail relayed the news contained in her husband’s letters to friends in their hometown of Quincy, Massachusetts, both she and John probably had no idea that portions of the narrative of those letters would be disseminated throughout the United States with numerous printings in newspapers along the Eastern Seaboard.

Following are the two letters written on July 3 that describe Adams’ thoughts and exactly how Americans would celebrate July 2. The sections blocked off by asterisks in both letters are my insertions and delineate the portions in the text that were reprinted in the newspapers and other sources examined.

Philadelphia July 3, 1776

Your Favour of June 17 [Abigail to John, 17 June 1776] dated at Plymouth, was handed me, by yesterdays Post. I was much pleased to find that you had taken a journey to Plymouth, to see your Friends in the long Absence of one whom you may wish to see. The Excursion will be an Amusement, and will serve your Health. How happy would it have made me to have taken this journey with you?

I was informed, a day or two before the Receipt of your Letter, that you was gone to Plymouth, by Mrs. Polly Palmer, who was obliging enough in your Absence, to inform me, of the Particulars of the Expedition to the lower Harbour against the Men of War. Her Narration is executed, with a Precision and Perspicuity, which would have become the Pen of an accomplished Historian.

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1 The word “myth” borrowed from Charles Warren who first used the term to describe the “incorrect popular belief” for over a more than 100-year period that American independence from the British Crown was declared on July 4, 1776. Charles Warren, “Fourth of July Myths,” *William and Mary Quarterly*, Third Series, 2/3 (July 1945), 237-72.

2 Adams commented on these specific letters when he wrote to “Judge Dawes,” on February 16, 1819: “Inclosed are copies of two letters written by me to my Wife, one in the morning, the other in the evening of the 3d of July, 1776, the day after the vote of Independence was passed in Congress. In those days my principal correspondent was my wife who was then surrounded by many of the principal [?] of the age, such as Gen. James Warren, Plymouth, and his lady—Dr. Cotton Tufts, of Weymouth—my brother Richard Cranch, of Braintree—many others who were constantly enquiring of her the news from Congress. Whatever related merely to public affairs, she read to them, or suffered them to read.” At head of letter as printed in the following newspapers: “The following letter was not intended for publication, but we cannot resist a desire we feel—for reasons which will be obvious to the reader—to record the document in our files, and apologize to our fellow citizen for the liberty we have taken.” *Columbian Centinel*, 3 July 1819, 1; *National Register, a Weekly Paper*, 3 July 1819, 8; *National Aegis*, 7 July 1819, 2; *Baltimore Patriot*, 8 July 1819; 2; *National Intelligencer*, 9 July 1819, 2; *City of Washington Gazette*, 10 July 1819, 2; *Salem Gazette*, 13 July 1819, 2.
I am very glad you had so good an opportunity of seeing one of our little American Men of War. Many Ideas, new to you, must have presented themselves in such a Scene; and you will in future, better understand the Relations of Sea Engagements.

I rejoice extremely at Dr. Bulfinches Petition to open an Hospital. But I hope, the Business will be done upon a larger Scale. I hope, that one Hospital will be licensed in every County, if not in every Town. I am happy to find you resolved, to be with the Children, in the first Class. Mr. Whitney and Mrs. Katy Quincy, are cleverly through Innoculation, in this City.

I have one favour to ask, and that is, that in your future Letters, you would acknowledge the Receipt of all those you may receive from me, and mention their Dates. By this Means I shall know if any of mine miscarry.

The Information you give me of our Friends refusing his Appointment, has given me much Pain, Grief and Anxiety. I believe I shall be obliged to follow his Example. I have not Fortune enough to support my Family, and what is of more Importance, to support the Dignity of that exalted Station. It is too high and lifted up, for me; who delight in nothing so much as Retreat, Solitude, Silence, and Obscurity. In private Life, no one has a Right to censure me for following my own Inclinations, in Retirement, Simplicity, and Frugality: in public Life, every Man has a Right to remark as he pleases, at least he thinks so.

*Yesterday the greatest Question was decided, which ever was debated in America, and a greater perhaps, never was or will be decided among Men. A Resolution was passed without one dissenting Colony “that these united Colonies, are, and of right ought to be free and independent States, and as such, they have, and of Right ought to have full Power to make War, conclude Peace, establish Commerce, and to do all the other Acts and Things, which other States may rightfully do.” You will see in a few days a Declaration setting forth the Causes, which have impell’d Us to this mighty Revolution, and the Reasons which will justify it, in the Sight of God and Man. A Plan of Confederation will be taken up in a few days.*

When I look back to the Year 1761, and recollect the Argument concerning Writs of Assistance, in the Superiour Court, which I have hitherto considered as the Commencement of the Controversy, between Great Britain and America, and run through the whole Period from that Time to this, and recollect the series of political Events, the Chain of Causes and Effects, I am surprised at the Suddenness, as well as Greatness of this Revolution. Britain has bee fill’d with Folly, and America with Wisdom, at least this is my judgment.—Time must determine. It is the Will of Heaven, that the two Countries should be sundered forever. It may be the Will of Heaven that America shall suffer Calamities still more wasting and Distresses yet more dreadfull. If this is to be the Case, it will have this good Effect, at least: it will inspire Us with many Virtues, which We have not, and correct many Errors, Follies, and Vices, which threaten to disturb, dishonour, and destroy Us.—The Furnace of Affliction produces Refinement, in States as well as Individuals. And the new Governments we are assuming, in every Part, will require a Purification from our Vices, and an Augmentation of our Virtues or they will be no Blessings. The People will have unbounded Power. And the People are extremely addicted to Corruption and Venality, as well as the Great [The letterbook copy of this letter includes the following sentence: I am not without Apprehension from this Quarter.]—But I must submit all my Hopes and Fears, to an overruling Providence, in which, unfashionable [as] the Faith may be, I firmly believe.

Philadelphia July 3d. 1776

Had a Declaration of Independency been made seven Months ago, it would have been attended with many great and glorious Effects. . . We might before this Hour, have formed Alliances with foreign States.—We should have mastered Quebec and been in Possession of Canada. . . . You will perhaps wonder, how such a Declaration would have influenced our Affairs, in Canada, but if I could write with Freedom I could easily convince you, that it would, and explain to you the manner how. Many Gentlemen in high Stations and of great Influence have been duped, by the ministerial Bubble of Commissioners to treat. . . . And in real, sincere Expectation of this Event, which they so fondly wished, they have been slow and languid, in promoting Measures for the Reduction of that Province. Others there are in the Colonies who really wished that our Enterprise in Canada would be

3 Designated as section 1 in Examples 1-3 below.
defeated, that the Colonies might be brought into Danger and Distress between two Fires, and be thus induced to submit. Others really wished to defeat the Expedition to Canada, lest the Conquest of it, should elevate the Minds of the People too much to hearken to those Terms of Reconciliation which they believed would be offered Us. These jarring Views, Wishes and Designs, occasioned an opposition to many salutary Measures, which were proposed for the Support of that Expedition, and caused Obstructions, Embarrassments and studied Delays, which have finally, lost Us the Province.

All these Causes however in Conjunction would not have disappointed Us, if it had not been for a Misfortune, which could not be foreseen, and perhaps could not have been prevented, I mean the Prevalence of the small Pox among our Troops. . . . This fatal Pestilence completed our Destruction.—It is a Frown of Providence upon Us, which We ought to lay to heart.

But on the other Hand, the Delay of this Declaration to this Time, has many great Advantages attending it.—The Hopes of Reconciliation, which were fondly entertained by Multitudes of honest and well meaning tho weak and mistaken People, have been gradually and at last totally extinguished.—Time has been given for the whole People, maturely to consider the great Question of Independence and to ripen their Judgments, dissipate their Fears, and allure their Hopes, by discussing it in News Papers and Pamphletts, by debating it, in Assemblies, Conventions, Committees of Safety and Inspection, in Town and County Meetings, as well as in private Conversations, so that the whole People in every Colony of the 13, have now adopted it, as their own Act.—This will cement the Union, and avoid those Heats and perhaps Convulsions which might have been occasioned, by such a Declaration Six Months ago.

*But the Day is past. The Second Day of July 1776, will be the most memorable Epocha, in the History of America. I am apt to believe that it will be celebrated, by succeeding Generations, as the great anniversary Festival. It ought to be commemorated, as the Day of Deliverance by solemn Acts of Devotion to God Almighty. It ought to be solemnized with Pomp and Parade, with Shews, Games, Sports, Guns, Bells, Bonfires and Illuminations from one End of this Continent to the other from this Time forward forever more.*

*You will think me transported with Enthusiasm but I an not.—I am well aware of the Toil and Blood and Treasure, that it will cost Us to maintain this Declaration, and support and defend these States.—Yet through all the Gloom I can see the Rays of ravishing Light and Glory. I can see that the End is more than worth all the Means. And that Posterity will triumph in the Days Transaction, even although We should rue it, which I trust in God We shall not.*

Charles Warren who was among the first to study dissemination of the letters in detail, aptly stated, “it was by a curious turn of fate—almost by an accident—that the celebrations thus so confidently described should mark, not the anniversary of the event to which he was referring, but rather the anniversary of another day—that of the adoption of the Declaration on July 4.” Although the resolution was voted on July 2, the written Declaration of Independence was not yet finished and according to Warren, Congress had made no provision “for an official announcement of the vote to the states.” Two days later when the text was finished and agreed to, John Dunlap, a local Philadelphia printer, was asked to print enough copies of the Declaration to be issued to the commanding American generals in the field and also for distribution to the states. It was either Dunlap’s idea or from orders given to him by representatives of Congress, that July 4, the day of adoption of the written declaration, be printed at the top of the document. This so-called Dunlap edition was circulated widely across the states and it

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4 Designated as section 2 in Examples 1-3 below.
5 Designated as section 3 in Examples 1-3 below. Some of the original spellings of Adams’ choosing were corrected in many of the subsequent printings of the letter. The Book of Abigail and John: Selected letters of the Adams Family, 1762-1784 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), 140-42.
was accordingly July 4 and not July 2 that the public and future generations recognized as the anniversary date of independence. “And naturally the stirring and magnificent text of the latter entirely wiped from the public mind the high significance and importance of the original action of Congress in voting for independence.”

Beginning in the early 1790s and for the next 100 years Adams’ letters were reprinted numerous times in newspapers across the country, as a way of encouraging others to celebrate the founding of the country and to bring attention to patriot’s role helping to establish the new nation. These re-printings reflected the popularity of Adams and his vision for the future of the Fourth. However, many newspapers that reprinted the text of the letter changed the date he wrote the letters, July 3, to July 5 and thereby designating Adams’ anniversary date as July 4, not July 2, so as to coincide with the date on the Dunlap edition of the Declaration. Hence the myth had been created.

Through the years newspapers that printed the incorrect dates influenced other newspapers to perpetuate the error. Some newspapers were aware of the misrepresentations and provided accurate dates, some with explanations. Research indicates the legend began in 1792. Adams’s letter no. 2 was printed in the Universal Asylum and Columbian Magazine in May that year along with a preface written probably by the editor of that newspaper. The issue was circulated widely and the letter with the preface was duplicated in the July issues of Dunlap’s American Daily Advertiser (Philadelphia), Columbian Centinel (Boston), and Herald of Vermont or, Rutland Courier. (See Example 1, 1792) However, Thomas Adams, editor of Boston’s Independent Chronicle and the Universal Advertiser who had copies either of the Columbian Magazine or the Columbian Centinel reprint (July 19) or both chose to issue a reprinting of the letter but changed Adams’ dates.

From 1795-1798 all of the portions of the Adams letters printed in newspapers had the correct dates. On July 4, 1799, John Russell, editor of Russell’s Gazette (Boston), became the second person to issue portions of the letters with incorrect dates, followed by Oliver Farnsworth, editor of the Weekly Companion (Newport, Rhode Island) on July 6.

On June 30, 1819, the Baltimore Patriot & Mercantile Advertiser issues portions of both letters with incorrect dates and followed up on July 8 with printings of entire letters 1 and 2 but with correct dates. On June 28, 1820, the Massachusetts Spy had published the letter with the incorrect dates but followed two weeks later on July 19 with a correction and offered proof that the Adams letter (no. 2) was “written and dated in Philadelphia July 3d, 1776.” The writer noted that the “the Declaration of Independence having been passed the 4th day of July, that year, it was thought to have been dated before the event it announced had occurred, and it has been altered and published, as having been written on the 5th of July. The Democratick Press of Philadelphia has shown from the Journals of Congress, that the first date was correct.” The author follows his statement with a timeline of events leading up to July 4 as taken form the Journals as proof. Another example of multiple printings by a newspaper occurred on July 13, 1826, when the Essex Register of Salem, Massachusetts, issued portions of both letters

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7 Ibid., 242.
8 See, for example, Federal Gazette & Baltimore Daily Advertiser, 12 July 1800, 3.
9 “Resolution and Declaration of Independence,” Massachusetts Spy, or Worcester Gazette, 19 July 1820, 2.
with incorrect dates, but followed on July 17 with a printing of the entire letter number 2 with correct dates. On July 4, 1826, at least one of Adams’ letters was publicly read “and listened to with deep interest” at a celebration held at the court house in Easton, Maryland. By the 1840s and after, the letters were mentioned in a number of sources. In 1841 Charles Francis Adams, younger son of John Quincy Adams, published the correspondence of John Adams titled The Letters of John Adams Address to His Wife. A review of the work published in the Christian Examiner and General Review that year noted “The practice has been to celebrate the 4th of July, the day upon which the form of the declaration of Independence was agreed to, rather than the 2d, the day upon which the resolution making that declaration, was determined by the Congress.” In the following year, William Bacon Stevens published a “History of the Declaration of Independence,” in Magnolia; or Southern Monthly (Savannah, Georgia), in which he included the letter and at the end had incorrect dates. On July 4, 1860, Edward Everett presented an oration in Boston “before the municipal authorities” in which he distinguished between the 2nd and 4th of July. Although the Declaration was not adopted by Congress till the fourth of July, (which has therefore become the day of the Anniversary,) the Resolution, on which it was founded, passed on the second instant. On the following day accordingly, John Adams, in a letter to his wife, says, “Yesterday the greatest question was decided that was ever debated in America, and greater perhaps never was not will be decided among men. A resolution was passed without one dissenting Colony, that these United States are and of right ought to be Free and Independent States.”

B.C. Whitman presented an oration at Theater Hall in Carson City, Nevada, on July 4, 1876, in which he cited the correct dates of the letter. In 1883, William L. Stone mentions the correct date as July 2 in Harpers’ Magazine. Again the distinction between the dates was made by John H. Hazelton in 1906 in his history The Declaration of Independence, Its History when he stated: “The 2d of July, and not the 4th, therefore was the day upon which America declared her independence.” Also in 1906 it was

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10 Republican Star and General Advertiser, 11 July 1826, 3.
11 2 vols (Boston: Little & Brown, 1841). Adams (1807-1886) was a frequent participator in Fourth of July celebrations having given no less than 5 orations on these separate occasions: Boston (1843, 1856, and 1872), Fall River, MA (1860), and Taunton, MA (1872). For additional information on Adams and his Independence Day activities, see James R. Heintze, The Fourth of July Encyclopedia (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, 2007), 6.
13 Magnolia; or Southern Monthly (May 1842):277.
14 Edward Everett, Oration Delivered before the City Authorities of Boston, on the Fourth of July, 1860 (Boston: Geo. C. Rand & Avery, 1860), 8. See also, “Mr. Everett’s Oration,” New York Times, 7 July 1860, 1-2.
reported that Paul Leland Haworth in *Harpers' Magazine* cited the date as 2nd July and referred to both letters.\(^{18}\)

By the early 1900s a number of publications were issued that helped to convince readers concerning the correct dates.\(^{19}\)

**Example 1. Adams' Letters Reprinted in Newspaper with Correct Dates**

1792

*Universal Asylum and Columbian Magazine* (May 1792): 313-14. [Full copies of letters 1-2]


*Dunlap's American Daily Advertiser* (Philadelphia), 5 July 1792, 3.\(^{20}\) [Sections 2-3]

*The Diary, or Loudon's Register* (New York), 7 July 1792, 3. [Sections 2-3]

*United States Chronicle: Political, Commercial, and Historical*, 12 July 1792, 2.

*Columbian Centinel* (Boston), 14 July 1792, 142.\(^{21}\) [Sections 2-3]

*Litchfield Monitor* (Litchfield, CT), 18 July 1792, 2. [Sections 2-3]

*Herald of Vermont, or, Rutland Courier*, 23 July 1792, 3.\(^{22}\) [Sections 2-3]

1795

*Columbian Centinel* (Boston), 1 July 1795, 1.\(^{23}\) [Sections 1-3]

*Oracle of the Day*, 4 July 1795, 3.


\(^{20}\) At head of letter: "Sixteen years have elapsed since the United States took their rank in the scale of nations. Sixteen years experience have verified the predictions contained in the following extract of a letter, dated July 3, 1776, written by John Adams, a principal agent in the great work, and now Vice-President of the United States. (See *Universal Museum*, for May, 1792)."

\(^{21}\) At head of letter: "Sixteen years have elapsed since the United States took their rank in the scale of nations. Sixteen years experience have verified the predictions contained in the following extract of a letter, dated July 3, 1776, written by John Adams, a principal agent in the great work, and now Vice-President of the United States. (See *Universal Museum*, for May, 1792)."

\(^{22}\) Preceding the letter: "Sixteen years of experience have verified the predictions contained in the following extract of a letter, dated July 3, 1776, written by John Adams, a principal agent in the great work, and now vice president of the United States."

\(^{23}\) Reported in Charles Warren, "Fourth of July Myths," *William and Mary Quarterly*, Third series, 2/3 (July 1945): 238. "For the Columbian Centinel." At head of letter: "Mr. [Benjamin] Russell, the fourth of July is the day, which Americans have hitherto celebrated as the anniversary of their independence; but I incline to think it ought rather to be the second day. It is true that the declaration was published in Philadelphia, on the fourth, but the glorious and memorable resolution was passed in Congress, on the second; as will appear by the following extracts of two letters, from Mr. John Adams (now Vice-President of the United States) to a friend, dated, Philadelphia, July 3d, 1776."
The Medley, or Newbedford Marine Journal (New Bedford, MA), 10 July 1795, 1.24
[Sections 1-3]
The Herald: A Gazette for the Country (New York), 18 July 1795, 4.25

1796
Gazette of the United States (Philadelphia), 24 November 1796, 3.26 [Section 1 from letter one; sections 2-3 from letter 2]
Polar Star and Boston Daily Advertiser (Boston), 6 December 1796, 2. [Sections 2 and 3]

1798
Gazette of the United States (Philadelphia), 29 June 1798, 3. [Section 1 from letter 1; sections 2-3 from letter 2]

1804
Albany Centinel (Albany, NY), 10 July 1804, 3.27 [Sections 1-3]
Columbian Centinel (Boston), 21 June 1804,28 try 23 June
Courier of New Hampshire (Concord, NH), 4 July 1804, 1.29

24 “From the Columbian Centinel.” At end of letter: “To ______. The above furnished sufficient evidence, that it is the second, and not the fourth of July, which of right ought to be celebrated as the day of American Independence; and as a friend to propriety, I could wish to see the alteration take place. [Signed] An American.”
25 “From the Columbian Centinel.” At the head of the letter: “Mr. [Benjamin] Russel [sic], the fourth of July is the day, which Americans have hitherto celebrated as the anniversary of their independence; but I incline to think it ought to be the second day. It is true that the declaration was published in Philadelphia, on the 4th, but the glorious and memorable resolution was passed in Congress on the 2d. as will appear by the following extracts of two letters from Mr. John Adams (now Vice-President of the United States) to a friend, dated, Philadelphia, July 3d, 1776.” Following the letter: “The above furnishes sufficient evidence, that it is the second, and not the fourth of July, which of right ought to be celebrated as the day of American Independence; and as a friend to propriety, I could wish to see the alteration take place. [signed] An American.”
26 At head of letter: “Mr. [John] Fenno, You are requested to publish the following Extracts of two letters [sic] from Mr. John Adams, (now Vice-President of the United States) dated”
27 “From the Boston Centinel.” At the head of the letter: “Mr. [Benjamin] Russell, the friends of Washington and Adams administrations, have no new stimulus to excite them to a due celebration of Independence. Every page of the history of our country, since 1776, will shew their zeal, gratitude, and fidelity. The democrats never gave any proofs of their attachment to Independence, until since Mr. Jefferson has been elected President. And now they come forward with all the fury of converts; and pretend that Mr. Jefferson is entitled, almost exclusively, to the credit of the declaration. We have no evidence of the fact, but their bare word, which will go but little way. I will admit, that Mr. Jefferson was of the Committee of Congress, appointed after the subject had been fully discussed in Congress, and the Great Question decided, to draw up the Declaration of that decision. But it is also a fact, that Mr. John Adams—who is now so much calumniated by the Jeffersonian party—was also of the Committee; and must have had his voice in the instrument. But he has given more positive evidence of his agency in the affair as will appear by the following letter to a friend.” Following the letter the author writes, “Here is better evidence that John Adams was an efficient agent in this glorious work, than any thing which can be drawn from the adventitious circumstance of penning a bill, after the principles have been decided upon, the necessity demonstrated, and the causes detailed.”
28 Reported in Warren, 238, but unlocated.
29 “From the Boston Centinel.”
Editor's note: "We know not—on this eve of our great National Anniversary—of an offering more interesting and more worthy, than the following authentic articles." At head of letter: "Two letters from President Adams, written one in the morning the other in the evening of the 3d July, 1776. Mr. Editor, Some years ago having seen in your paper a brilliant paragraph from a letter of the Hon. John Adams to a Friend, not however for the first time, it having appeared before on many a Fourth of July, I was curious to learn from its venerable author who was that Friend, and also such anecdotes concerning the subject of the letter as he might be willing to communicate. He gratified my curiosity with his accustomed energy on a transaction in which he had taken so distinguished a part. After the death of Mrs. Adams, the accomplished friend to whom the letter was addressed, he was pleased to send me a copy of it, and of another written to her on the same third of July. It is probable that after the loss of such a companion a review of their epistolary correspondence brought to his recollection the inquiries I had made, and the subsequent conversation, though years had elapsed. Those letters I present to the public, but not without permission; believing that they will be read with much interest on the Forty-Third Anniversary of the grand event which they announced. Thomas Dawes. Boston, July 3, 1819." Dawes and the editor correctly printed the correct date as provided by Adams in the latter’s phrase "The second day of July, 1776, will be a memorable epochs in the History of America" in the second letter. A number of newspapers copied the letter from the Columbian Centinel but replaced the "the second day of July" with "the fourth day of July."

"From the Centinel." At head of letter: "Two letters from President Adams, written one in the morning the other in the evening of the 3d July, 1776. Mr. Editor— Some years ago having seen in your paper a brilliant paragraph from a letter of the Hon. John Adams to a Friend, not however for the first time, it having appeared before on many a Fourth of July, I was curious to learn from its venerable author who was that Friend, and also such anecdotes concerning the subject of the letter as he might be willing to communicate. He gratified my curiosity with his accustomed energy on a transaction in which he had taken so distinguished a part. After the death of Mrs. Adams, the accomplished friend to whom the letter was addressed, he was pleased to send me a copy of it, and of another written to her on the same third of July. It is probable that after the loss of such a companion a review of their epistolary correspondence brought to his recollection the inquiries I had made, and the subsequent conversation, though years had elapsed. Those letters I present to the public, but not without permission; believing that they will be read with much interest on the Forty-Third anniversary of the grand event which they announced. Thomas Dawes. Boston, July 3, 1819." Includes the correct date as provided by Adams in the latter’s phrase "The second day of July, 1776, will be a memorable epochs in the History of America" in the second letter.

At head of letter: "Boston, July 2. American Independence. We know not—on this eve of our great National Anniversary—of an offering more interesting and more worthy, than the following authentic articles—Centinel. Two Letters from President Adams, written one in the morning the other in the evening of the 3d July, 1776. Mr. Editor, Some years ago having seen in your paper a brilliant paragraph from a letter of the Hon. John Adams to a Friend, not however for the first time, it having appeared before on many a Fourth of July, I was curious to learn from its venerable author who was that Friend, and also such anecdotes concerning the subject of the letter as he might be willing to communicate. He gratified my curiosity with his accustomed energy on a transaction in which he had taken so distinguished a part. After the death of Mrs. Adams, the accomplished friend to whom the letter was addressed, he was pleased to send me a copy of it, and of another written to her on the same third of July. It is probable that after the loss of such a companion a review of their epistolary correspondence brought to his recollection the inquiries I had made, and the subsequent conversation, though years had elapsed. Those letters I present to the public, but not without permission; believing that they will be read with much interest on the Forty-Third anniversary of the grand event which they announced. Thomas Dawes. Boston, July 3, 1819." Includes the correct date as provided by Adams in the latter’s phrase "The second day of July, 1776, will be a memorable epochs in the History of America" in the second letter.
Essex Register (Salem, MA), 10 July 1819, 1-2.34 [Entire letters 1 and 2 printed]
Salem Gazette (Salem, MA), 13 July 1819, 1-2.35 [Entire letters 1 and 2 printed]
Vermont Intelligencer and Bellows' Falls Advertiser (Bellows Falls, VT), 9 August 1819, 2

1820
P.P.F. DeGrand's Boston Weekly Report (Boston), 29 July 1820, 1.36

1823
Salem Gazette (Salem, MA), 4 July 1823, 3.37 [Entire second letter printed]
New-Hampshire Patriot & State Gazette (Concord, NH), 14 July 1823, 1.38 [Letters 139 and 240]
North Star (Danville, VT), 5 August 1823, 1-2. [Letters 141 and 242]

1826
Essex Register (Salem, MA), 17 July 1826, 2-3.43 [Entire letter 2 printed]

33 "From the Boston Centinel, of July 3." Includes the correct date as provided by Adams in the latter’s phrase “The second day of July, 1776, will be a memorable epoch in the History of America” in the second letter.
34 "From the Centinel of Saturday last."
35 "From the Centinel." Includes the correct date as provided by Adams in the latter’s phrase “The second day of July, 1776, will be a memorable epoch in the History of America” in the second letter.
36 Printed: “July 2, 1776, is the day on which the resolve passed in Congress, declaring the U.S. a free, sovereign & independent people. July 3, 1776, is the day on which John Adams wrote the letter; which has been printed as dated July 5. July 4, 1776, is the day on which the Declaration was adopted in Congress, founded on the resolve of July 2. This information, confirmatory of what has lately been published, I have derived, within a few days, from John Adams himself. After penning the above, I have submitted it to the venerable John Adams, and in his letter in reply he states to me, “that it is true and conformable to the Journals of Congress and to the original letter.” P.P.F. Degrand.
37 At head of the letter: “Declaration of Independence. The following letter was written by Pres. Adams to his wife, on the evening of the 3d July, 1776: having written one in the morning of the same day, announcing the Declaration of Independence.”
38 “July 2” was deleted from the text.
39 Begins with section 1 (“Yesterday the greatest question...”) and completes the letter.
40 “But the Day is past. The Second Day of July 1776, will be the most memorable Epocha, in the History of America” is replaced with “But the day is past, and will be a memorable epocha in the history of America.”
41 Begins with section 1 (“Yesterday the greatest question...”) and completes the letter.
42 “But the Day is past. The Second Day of July 1776, will be the most memorable Epocha, in the History of America” is replaced with “But the day is past, and will be a memorable epocha in the history of America.”
43 At end of letter: “It will be seen by the foregoing correspondence, that the letter which has been so often published and read with admiration, was composed of extracts from two different letters written by Mr Adams, dated on the 3d of July, 1776, and having reference, not to the adoption of the formal instrument of a Declaration of Independence, (which took place on the 4th of July) but to the Resolution in favor of Independence, which was adopted by Congress on the 2d of July. It was then that ‘the die was cast.’ The solemn determination of Congress, after much deliberation, doubt and debate, to declare the ‘colonies free and independent States’ was the great event which filled Mr Adams with joy and enthusiasm, and inspired him such prophetic anticipations of its consequences. These letters breathe the confidence and ardor of a patriot, ‘ready to lay down his life[”] at any moment for the cause he had espoused. His predictions, have become history, and on his head have beamed and will beam the unfading ‘rays of light and glory.”’
"Baltimore Patriot" (Baltimore), 22 July 1826, 2. 44 [Entire letter 2 printed]
"Norwich Courier" (Norwich, CT), 2 August 1826, 2. 45 [Extract of letter 1 printed; entire letter 2 printed]

1840
"National Intelligencer" (Washington, D.C.), 4 July 1840, 3.

1857
"Christian Observer" (Louisville, KY), 9 July 1857, 111. 46

1910
"Outlook" (New York), 4 June 1910, 271.

Example 2. Adams’ Letters Reprinted in Newspaper with Incorrect Dates

1792
"Independent Chronicle and the Universal Advertiser" (Boston), 19 July 1792, 2. 47 [Sections 2 and 3]

1799
"Russell’s Gazette" (Boston), 4 July 1799, 3. [Sections 1-3]
"Weekly Companion" (Newport, RI), 6 July 1799, 3. 48 [Sections 1-3]

1800
"Massachusetts Mercury" (Boston), 4 July 1800, 2. [Sections 1-3]
"Newburyport Herald" (Newburyport, MA), 4 July 1800, 3. [Sections 1-3]

44 The "Baltimore Patriot" had printed the letter with incorrect dates a week prior on July 10 and perhaps this printing on July 22 was to correct the error. See Ex. 2 below. At end of letter: “It will be seen by the foregoing correspondence, that the letter which has been so often published and read with admiration, was composed of extracts from two different letters written by Mr Adams, dated on the 3d of July, 1776, and having reference, not to the adoption of the formal instrument of a Declaration of Independence, (which took place on the 4th of July) but to the Resolution in favor of Independence, which was adopted by Congress on the 2d of July. It was then that ‘the die was cast.’ The solemn determination of Congress, after much deliberation, doubt and debate, to declare the ‘colonies free and independent States’ was the great event which filled Mr Adams with joy and enthusiasm, and inspired him such prophetic anticipations of its consequences. These letters breathe the confidence and ardor of a patriot, ‘ready to lay down his life[‘] at any moment for the cause he had espoused. His predictions, have become history, and on his head have beamed and will beam the unfading ‘rays of light and glory.’”

45 At head of letter: “Mr. Adams to Mrs. Adams.”

46 Reprinted from the Public Ledger. Discusses the differences between the dates of the July 2nd resolution and July 4 and that Adams wrote his letters on July 3. Noting the discrepancy in practice, the article states: “His prophetic recommendation has been followed, only the 4th has been substituted for the 2d.”

47 At head of letter: “Sixteen years experience have verified the predictions contained in the following extract of a letter, dated July 5, 1776, written by John Adams, a principal agent in the great work; and now Vice-President of the United States. (See Universal Museum, for May, 1792.)”

48 At the head of the letter: “On the auspicious Anniversary, we cannot omit the reiterated publication of sentiments at once so prophetic and noble as the following; they will be read by our children, as they have been by our Sires, with pleasure and exultation.”
"By this day's mails" as published in Boston.

At head of letter: “Boston, July 2. From the frequent mention that Jefferson was the author of the Declaration of Independence—ignorant people might be led to doubt whether others, who were esteemed patriots, approved of the measure. If Jefferson penned the declaration, it probably was an accidental honor in the arrangement of committees, and every other member of congress would have been proud of the task—The following letter from the person who is now the president of the United States was written the day after that declaration was made. The fervour of sentiment and language, would authorize a strong presumption of the constant fidelity of the writer to his principles.”

At head of letter: “We are happy to see the spirited exertions that are making in various places to celebrate the Anniversary of American Independence.”

At head of the letter: “The following Letter, by the late President of the United States, deserves to be read at least once every year, whilst the memory of Independence shall be grateful to Americans.”

At head of letter: “The following letter by the late President Adams, deserves to be read at least once every year, whilst the memory of independence shall be grateful to Americans.”

At head of letter: “The following Letter, written the day after the great act of Independence was signed in Congress, by the late President Adams to his friend in Massachusetts, evinces the ardent patriotism which glowed in the bosoms of the sages of that day at the contemplation of this auspicious event, and is well calculated to renew and perpetuate the sacred flame in those of their descendants.”
Sentinel of Freedom (Newark, NJ), 17 July 1810, 3. [Sections 1-3]
The Hornet, or, Republican Advocate, 18 July 1810, 1. 60
Enquirer (Richmond, VA), 20 July 1810, 3. 61 [Sections 1-3]
Farmer's Repository (Charlestown, WV), 20 July 1810, 3. 62 [Sections 1-3]
Independent American (Ballston Spa, NY), 24 July 1810, 3. 63 [Sections 1-3]
Carthage Gazette, and Friend of the People (Carthage, TN), 27 July 1810, 3. 64 [Sections 1-3]

1812
The Columbian (New York), 3 July 1812, 3. 65 [Sections 1-3]
American Watchman (Wilmington, DE), 4 July 1812, 3. [Sections 1-3]
American Mercury (Hartford, CT) 8 July 1812, 3. 66

1813
Baltimore Patriot (Baltimore), 24 June 1813, 3. [Sections 1-3]
The Columbian (New York), 3 July 1813, 2
New-Hampshire Patriot (Concord, NH), 13 July 1813, 3. 67 [Section 2]
Weekly Register, 3 July 1813, 281. [Sections 1-3]

1814
Baltimore Patriot & Evening Advertiser (Baltimore), 4 July 1814, 3. 68 [Section 2]

59 "From the Boston Patriot. The following letter, by the late President Adams, deserves a perusal at least once a year, while we continue Americans!—When we shall cease to venerate those principles which gave birth to this day, we cease to be Americans, and its reading may be dispensed with” Philadelphia, July 5, 1776.”

60 “From the Boston Patriot.”

61 “From the Boston Patriot.”

62 “From the Boston Patriot.” At the head of the letter: “The following letter, by the late President Adams, deserves a perusal at least once a year, while we continue Americans! When we shall cease to venerate those principles which gave birth to this day, we cease to be Americans, and its reading may be dispensed with.”

63 At head of letter: “the following, by the late President Adams, deserves the perusal at least once a year, while we continue Americans! When we shall cease to venerate those principles which gave birth to this day, we cease to be Americans, and its reading may be dispensed with.”

64 "From the Boston Patriot. The following letter, by the late President Adams, deserves a perusal at least once a year, while we continue Americans?—When we shall cease to venerate those principles which gave birth to this day, we cease to be Americans, and its reading may be dispensed with: Philadelphia, July 5, 1776.”

65 At the head of the letter: “The following letter, by the late President Adams, deserves a perusal, at least once a year, while we continue American! When we shall cease to venerate those principles which gave birth to this day, we cease to be Americans, and its reading may be dispensed with.”

66 At head of letter: “The following letter, by the late President Adams, deserves a perusal, at least once a year, while we continue Americans! When we shall cease to venerate those principles which gave birth to this day, we cease to be Americans, and its reading may be dispensed with.”

67 At head of letter: “Communications, Republican Celebration at Salisbury, July 5, 1813. The venerable John Adams, in a letter dated at Philadelphia, July 5, 1776, observes--.”

68 At head of letter: “National Jubilee. ‘No jocund health that freemen drink this day, /But the great cannon to the clouds shall tell it.’ The venerable John Adams, in a letter dated Philadelphia, July 5, 1776, (the day after the declaration of Independence) observes--.”
Adams' letter dated “Philadelphia, July 6, 1776.”

At head of letter: “We are requested to publish the following letter, which was written the day after the Declaration of American Independence—this day 40 years ago.”

Before the letter: “The following letter from John Adams, on the day succeeding the Declaration of Independence, will evince the feelings of our countrymen at that moment. How true—how just—how really American are the sentiments contained in this letter and after a lapse of forty years, we may add—how prophetic!!”

At head of letter: “We are requested to publish the following letter, which was written the day after the Declaration of American Independence—this day 40 years ago.”

At head of letter: “Independence. Mr. Munroe—'The time now fits the purpose' to republish the celebrated letter of the venerable John Adams, dated July 5, 1776. It certainly comports with the true republican spirit of the Baltimore Patriot, and it certainly comports with the patriotism of Baltimore.—The copy of the letter is here enclosed. [signed] A Republican.”

At head of letter: “We are indebted to Nile’s Register for the following letter from the pen of Mr. Adams, which we republish as introductory to the Declaration of Independence.”

“From the Baltimore Patriot of 1st inst.” At the head of the letter: “Last year you were induced to republish the celebrated letter of the venerable patriot John Adams, on the subject of our National Independence; and as a good act cannot be too often repeated, particularly when it is for the instruction of the rising generation, it is hoped you will give it a conspicuous type in the Baltimore Patriot, on or before the 4th of July. Speaking of the Declaration of Independence, Mr. Jefferson say—'John Adams was the pillar of its support on the floor of Congress, its ablest advocate and defender against the multiform assaults it encountered.’ [Signed] A Republican of Old Times.”

At head of letter: “The following letter was written by the Hon. John Adams, on the 5th July, 1776, the day after the passage of the memorable Declaration of Independence.”

At head of letter: “Independence. the following letter from the venerable John Adams, should be published on the anniversary of American Independence. ‘Es to perpetua.’ It breathes all that fire of patriotism which burned with so much purity and force while in the vigour of years, and which even now,
in the decline of a well spent life, sheds a clear and steady light on the independence of our country. He was the pillar of liberty, as he is now its brightest ornament."

78 Letter is correctly dated as July 3, but “The fourth day of July” inserted incorrectly in text.
80 At head of letter: “The following letter written this day 43 years ago, will be read with pleasure.”
81 At head of letter: “The following letter was written by the Hon. John Adams, on the 5th of July, 1776, the day after the passage of the memorable Declaration of Independence.”
83 At head of letter: “Fourth of July. The following letter was written by the Honorable John Adams, on the 5th of July, 1776, the day after the passage of the memorable Declaration of Independence.”
84 At head of letter: “Fourth of July. The following letter was written by the Honorable John Adams, on the 5th of July, 1776, the day after the passage of the memorable Declaration of Independence.”
85 At head of letter: “Fourth of July. The following letter was written by the Honorable John Adams, on the 5th of July, 1776, the day after the passage of the memorable Declaration of Independence.”
86 At head of letter: “Fourth of July. The following letter was written by the Honorable John Adams, on the 5th of July, 1776, the day after the passage of the memorable Declaration of Independence.”
87 At head of letter: “Fourth of July. The following letter was written by the Honorable John Adams, on the 5th of July, 1776, the day after the passage of the memorable Declaration of Independence.”
88 At head of letter: “Fourth of July. The following letter was written by the Honorable John Adams, on the 5th of July, 1776, the day after the passage of the memorable Declaration of Independence.”
89 At head of letter: “Fourth of July. The following letter was written by the Honorable John Adams, on the 5th of July, 1776, the day after the passage of the memorable Declaration of Independence.”
90 At head of letter: “Fourth of July. The following letter was written by the Honorable John Adams, on the 5th of July, 1776, the day after the passage of the memorable Declaration of Independence.”
Providence Patriot (Providence, RI, 8 July 1820, 3.91 [Sections 1-3]

1821
Richard Enquirer (Richmond, VA) 19 June 1821, 2.92
New-Hampshire Patriot & State Gazette (Concord, NH), 2 July 1821, 3.93 [Sections 1-3]
Essex Register (Salem, MA), 4 July 1821, 2.94 [Sections 1-3]
Providence Patriot (Providence, RI), 4 July 1821, 2. [Sections 1-3]

1822
Independent Chronicle & Boston Patriot (Boston), 6 July 1822, 1.95 [Sections 1-3]

1823
Baltimore Patriot (Baltimore), 7 July 1823, 2.96 [Sections 1-3]

1824
Newburyport Herald (Newburyport, MA), 5 July 1824, 2. [Sections 1-3]
Baltimore Patriot (Baltimore), 6 July 1824, 2.97 [Sections 1-3]
Portsmouth Journal of Literature and Politics (Portsmouth, NH), 10 July 1824, 3.98 [Section 2]

91 At head of letter: “Fourth of July. The following sublimely prophetic production, though often published, will undoubtedly be new to many of our readers. Its complete verification in every succeeding year, renders it the more interesting.”
92 Text borrowed from the Washington City Gazette.
93 At head of letter: “Fourth of July! We cannot better express the feelings which ought to be manifestly by all our countrymen, on the return of our great national festival, than by copying the following letter written immediately after the Declaration of Independence, by the venerable Adams.”
94 Note following the letter: “The event which was to call forth such an ebullition of patriotism has indeed been realized but the gratitude with which successive generations was to hail the remembrance of it, has fallen short of the eloquent and patriotic prediction. We hope, however, that better times are coming, and that succeeding years will show an increasing ardor, until the letter of the prophecy shall be fulfilled, and the mighty event only be measured by the magnitude and universality of the sentiment it excites. We indulge this hope with the more reason, as we perceive that the national government is alive to the influence of example, and will manifest that interest at Washington, which should be felt through the Union.—Statesman.”
95 At head of letter: “4th of July. The day, which is hailed by millions of freemen, was noticed in Boston and throughout our Commonwealth with the usual demonstrations of joy. The people of Massachusetts have never been backward in obeying the injunction of their venerable and beloved fellow citizen, John Adams, who, in 1776, a few hours after the adoption of the Declaration of Independence wrote to a friend in the following language.”
96 “From the Richmond Compiler. Almost prophetic seems to have been the following letter, which was written on the day of the Declaration of Independence. It is so appropriate, that nothing can be better selected or composed to suit the occasion. One of the best Eulogies on the subject was written on the day which produced it. What was prophecy in ’76, has turned out to be history.”
97 At head of letter: “The following letter written 48 years ago, by the venerable John Adams, deserves an annual republication.”
98 At head of letter: “American Independence. the anniversary of the declaration of American Independence has this year been celebrated in most parts of our country with unusual harmony and zeal. The prediction made by the venerable John Adams, forty eight years ago, has been thus far fulfilled. ‘The day is passed’—(he wrote to a friend on the 5th of July, 1776).”
1824

Knoxville Register (Knoxville, TN), 30 July 1824, 2.

1825

Independent Chronicle & Boston Patriot (Boston), 6 July 1825, 1. 99 [Sections 1-3]
Vermont Gazette (Bennington, VT), 12 July 1825, 3. [Sections 1-3]
Christian Register (Boston), 23 July 1825, 116. 100 [Sections 1-3]

1826

Vermont Gazette (Bennington, VT), 27 June 1826, 3. [Sections 1-3]
Boston Commercial Gazette (Boston), 3 July 1826, 2.
Eastern Argus (Portland, ME), 4 July 1826, 2.
New-Hampshire Gazette (Portsmouth, NH), 4 July 1826, 3. 101
Providence Patriot & Columbian Phenix (Providence, RI), 4 July 1826, 2. 102 [Sections 1-3]
Middlesex Gazette (Middletown, CT), 5 July 1826, 2. 103 [Sections 1-3]
New-Hampshire Sentinel (Keene, NH), 7 July 1826, 3. [Sections 1-3]
Baltimore Patriot (Baltimore), 10 July 1826, 2. 104 [Sections 1-3]
Album and Ladies' Weekly Gazette, 12 July 1826, 5.
Essex Register (Salem, MA), 13 July 1826, 3. 105 [Sections 1-3]
Niles' Weekly Register (Baltimore), 15 July 1826, 345. [Sections 1-3]

1827

Norwich Courier (Norwich, CT), 20 June 1827, 3. [Sections 1-3]
Portsmouth Journal of Literature and Politics (Portsmouth, NH), 30 June 1827, 3. [Sections 1-3]
Genius of Universal Emancipation (Baltimore), 4 July 1827, 5. 106 [Sections 1-3]

99 At head of letter: “4th July, 1776. Extract from a letter to a friend in Quincy, written by the venerable and reverend patriot John Adams, on the day subsequent to the adoption of the Declaration of Independence by the Continental Congress.”
100 At head of letter: “Extract of a letter to a friend in Quincy, written by the venerable and revered partier John Adams, on the day subsequent to the adoption of the Declaration of Independence, by the Continental Congress, dated, Philadelphia, July 5th, 1776.”
101 Extract of narrative preceding the letter: “The day, therefore, should not be passed in silence, but celebrated in the manner, recommended in a letter, written by the venerable Ex-President Adams, who was one of the framers and signers of the Declaration of Independence.”
102 At head of letter: “The following letter, although it has been often published, will not be uninteresting at the present time. The writer lives to see his predictions fulfilled.”
103 Addressed “Sir.”
104 At head of letter: “We cannot at this moment pay a more appropriate homage to the memory of John Adams, than by re-publishing the letter written by him on the day succeeding that on which the Declaration was signed. It breathes, says the New York American, the spirit of a prophet—the confidence of a patriot, and the determination of one ready at any moment to lay down his life for the cause he had espoused. Its predictions have become history—and on his head has beamed and will beam the unfading ‘rays of light and of glory.’ The letter follows.”
105 At head of letter: “The day subsequent to the adoption of the Declaration of Independence by the Congress of 1776, the following memorable letter was written by Mr. Adams:—Philadelphia, July 5, 1776.”
106 At head of letter: “The following was written, as will be seen from the date, immediately after the great event, by one who took a very active part in bringing it about, and who bid adieu to this world on its fiftieth anniversary, amidst the general hilarity of the occasion.”
Extract of narrative at head of letter: “And when it is considered what an awful responsibility the members of the Old Congress assumed, when they passed the resolution declaring that these United States 'ought to be free and independent states'—what glory must follow such a declaration. It is no wonder that the actors of this day should feel as its venerated advocate felt, when he penned the following.”

At head of letter: “Remember the 4th of July.—It is emphatically a political day, and as such it should on each anniversary be honored; it was a day of deliverance, and as such, it should be regarded; here are no kings, emperors, popes, or prelates, with power to interdict the simple joys of freemen, for our fathers' ate sour grapes, and their children's teeth are set on edge.”

At head of letter: “Adams' Letter. The following letter, written by the father of the present Chief Magistrate of our Union, to his wife, on the day succeeding the adoption of the Declaration of Independence, is remarkable for the spirit of prophecy, or, to say the least, the clear perception of the future with which its author seems to have been inspired. It has been well described by his biographer, as 'a true and unartificial effusion of ardent, enlightened and disinterested patriotism.' And we are of opinion, with an Eastern editor, that, next to the reading of the Declaration itself, the perusal of this letter, would be no inappropriate exercise, at the celebrations of our national festival.”

At head of letter: “Remember the 4th of July. It is emphatically a political day, and as such it should on each anniversary be honored; it was a day of deliverance, and as such, it should be regarded; here are no kings, emperors, popes, or prelates, with power to interdict the simple joys and gratitude of freemen.”

At head of letter: “Fourth of July. On the 5th of July, 1776, John Adams, then a member of the Continental Congress sitting at Philadelphia, wrote thus, to a friend in Massachusetts.”

At head of letter: “The following letter should be read every Fourth of July—Letter from John Adams to his wife, written on the 5th day of July, 1776.”
Example 3. Adams Letters Reprinted in Newspapers with Brief Excerpts Only

1802
*Republican, or Anti-Democrat* (Baltimore), 18 June 1802, 3.
*Newburyport Herald* (Newburyport, MA), 9 July 1802, 3.
*Connecticut Sentinel* (Norwich, CT), 13 July 1802, 3.

1821
*Woodstock Observer* (Woodstock, VT), 17 July 1821, 3.

1822
*Boston Commercial Gazette* (Boston), 4 July 1822, 2.
*Christian Philanthropist* (New Bedford, MA), 9 July 1822, 34.

1823
*Haverhill Gazette, and Essex Patriot* (Haverhill, MA), 21 June 1823, 3.

1825
*New-Hampshire Patriot & State Gazette* (Concord, NH), 11 July 1825, 2.

1826
*Richmond Enquirer* (Richmond, VA), 11 July 1826, 2.

1828
*Vermont Gazette* (Bennington, VT), 5 August 1828, 3.

1854
*Pittsfield Sun* (Pittsfield, MA), 29 June 1854, 2.

1876
*New York Observer and Chronicle*, 6 July 1876, 213. [Excerpts from letter 1 and section 3]

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113 At head of letter: "How the Fourth should Be Celebrated—John Adams, eighty-two years ago, in prophetic language, gave the manner in which the 4th of July ought to be celebrated:"

18
Additional Sources for Further Reading

Davis, Charles L. “The Fourth of July or the Second?” *Potter’s American Monthly* (December 1875): 911.

Makes the case that Adams wrote the letter on July 5 and not July 3.


See “Communication. A Candid and Cautionary Criticism on Mr. Dexter’s Oration,” *Independent Chronicle and Boston Patriot*, 17 July 1819, 4, in which the author mentions Adams’ letter with incorrect dates, referring back to Dexter who included that information in his oration.


“Independence,” *Columbian Centinel*, 4 July 1804, 2.

On July 4, 1804, a stanza published in a Boston newspaper titled “Independence” heralding the Fourth of July refers to Adams’ letter:

With sports, parade, and jacund play!
Adams bids us hail the day;
When our dawning Glory shone;
Freemen! Mark it --’tis your own.


At head of article: “Letter from John Adams to his wife, written on the 5th day of July, 1776.”


On July 4, 1861, Rev. L. Merrill Mellen delivered an oration title “The Spirit of Our Fathers: A National Hope,” in which he quoted from both Adams’ letters [sections 1-3].

Has correct dates for letter and the following note: “John Adams was mistaken in one prediction. It is the Fourth of July, not the Second, which has been accepted by Americans as ‘the most memorable epocha.’ This is one of the many illustrations of the fact that words as well as deeds are needful, since a great act may seem incomplete until it has been put into a fitting form of words. It was the vote of July 2d that changed the thirteen colonies into independence States; the Declaration of Independence only promulgated the fact and assigned its reasons.” Includes sections 2-3.