



Declaring Independence: Then & Now

Re-Enactments Breathe Fresh Meaning Into U.S. Declaration of Independence at Events Throughout Independence Week in Massachusetts

What: A forty-minute public performance piece in which a narrator and five costumed re-enactors bring to life the Declaration of Independence

When: June 27 through July 4, 2017

Where: American Antiquarian Society, Worcester (6/27 at 7 p.m.), Longfellow's Wayside Inn, Sudbury (6/29 at 6 p.m.), First Parish Church, Fitchburg (7/1 at 7 p.m.), Old Sturbridge Village, Sturbridge (7/1-4 at 10 a.m. and noon), Old North Church and Historic Site, Boston (7/2 at 1, 3 and 5 p.m.), The Depot, Lexington (7/4 at 7 p.m.)

For further information visit: www.freedomsway.org

During the week surrounding the July 4th holiday, a series of public performances will invite reflection on the significance of the Declaration of Independence for today's world. A narrator and five costumed re-enactors will bring to life the nation's founding document, followed by audience discussion. Sponsored by Freedom's Way National Heritage Area and the American Antiquarian Society, the series will take place at historical and cultural venues throughout eastern and central Massachusetts.

"Too often the Declaration of Independence is reduced to the single line, "We hold these truths to be self-evident..." notes historian Mary Fuhrer. "Yet the document is rich with meaning on many levels and expressed what many Americans by 1776 had come to believe: that Britain's king and Parliament had violated our fundamental rights, that we were justified in abolishing such a flawed government, and that we were entitled – and determined – to create a new and better nation. It also asserted truths that transcend time: that governments secure their power from the people, with the purpose of securing their liberty and guaranteeing their equality. The history of our nation has been, and continues to be, the story of our struggle to redeem those promises for all."

In each public reading, five costumed re-enactors will render the words of the Declaration line by line, assisted by a narrator who sets these words in their rich historical context. Some lines will be familiar to all; others – especially the many grievances that justified altering an ancient government – will receive background and commentary. As the re-

enactors dramatize these 18th century words and ideas, the narrator will draw out their meaning and challenge the audience to consider their relevance and power for today.

Declaring Independence: Then & Now is part of a multi-year joint initiative of Freedom's Way National Heritage Area and the American Antiquarian Society to engage citizens in the ideas and transformative potential of the Declaration of Independence. This initiative includes researching the ways in which independence was conceived and debated within colonial communities in the years leading up to 1776; tracing how the Declaration's role evolved in American communities; and considering the challenges and potential of this living document for Americans today.

From June 27 through July 4, the presentations will take place at historical venues including the American Antiquarian Society (Worcester), Longfellow's Wayside Inn (Sudbury), First Parish Church (Fitchburg), Old Sturbridge Village (Sturbridge), Old North Church and Historic Site (Boston), The Depot (Lexington).

Most of the events are free and suitable for ages 8 and up. For further details, please go to www.freedomsway.org or contact (978) 772-3654.

About Freedom's Way National Heritage Area:

The 994-square-mile Freedom's Way National Heritage Area (FWNHA) includes forty-five towns and cities in Massachusetts and Southern New Hampshire and is home to over 750,000 people. FWNHA connects people, places and communities through educational and interpretive initiatives that protect and promote shared resources and encourage residents and visitors to explore its landscape, history and culture.

About the American Antiquarian Society

Recipient of the 2013 National Humanities Medal, the American Antiquarian Society (AAS) is a learned society and a national research library housing the largest and most accessible collection of printed materials from the colonial period through 1876 in what is now the United States, Canada, and the West Indies. The Society sponsors a broad range of programs for constituencies ranging from school children and their teachers through undergraduate and graduate students, postdoctoral scholars, creative and performing artists and writers, and the general public. The Society's web address is www.americanantiquarian.org.

