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**SONS OF UNION VETERANS OF THE CIVIL WAR**

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**Independence Day – July 4 First observed on July 4, 1777**

July 4, 1776 is the momentous American date when John Hancock, the President of the Continental Congress, signed the Declaration of Independence. This declaration of sovereignty was a result of many preceding incidences including the Boston Massacre, Townshend Acts, Boston Tea Party, and Battles of Lexington, Concord, and Bunker Hill between the British and the independent minded Americans. In the beginning of 1776, Thomas Paine wrote a pamphlet entitled Common Sense encouraging the independence movement.

On April 12, North Carolina became the first state to instruct its delegates to move towards independence. Other colonies followed suit helped by the strong encouragement of patriots like James Madison and Patrick Henry. In June, Richard Lee of Virginia offered a resolution to dissolve the political connection with Great Britain but it faced opposition still. Nevertheless, the Continental Congress selected a committee to draft a declaration of independence to support Lee's resolution. The committee consisted of John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson, Robert Livingston, and Roger Sherman. Jefferson was appointed as author.

When the Continental Congress resumed sessions on July 1st, the Declaration of Independence was complete and a test vote was taken. Nine colonies were in favor of the resolution. On July 2, the official Independence vote was taken and twelve colonies supported the notion with New York abstaining. The Declaration of Independence, as written by Jefferson, was approved by Congress on July 4th, 1777. On that same day, it was printed and signed by John Hancock, the President of the Continental Congress, and Charles Thomson, secretary. A few days later, New York cast it's vote in favor of the resolution thus making the independence movement unanimous among the thirteen colonies.

On August 2, the Declaration of Independence was signed by Congress with all but seven delegates signing the document. The remaining seven delegates did eventually sign the document as well.

**Franklin Thompson, Female Civil War Master Spy**

One of the most effective Union spies during the Civil War was named Franklin Thompson. Thompson was an expert at disguise. In fact, even Franklin Thompson was a disguise. For "he" was actually a "she"!

Sarah Emma Edmonds originally, from Canada, had moved to the United States before the Civil War. When the war began she disguised herself as a man. Adopting the name Franklin Thompson she enlisted as a male nurse in the 2nd Michigan Volunteers in the Spring of 1861. The regiment soon joined what became the Army of the Potomac, at Washington. In the late Winter of 1862, the army asked for volunteers to serve as spies. "Thompson" studied everything available about the geography of northern Virginia and the military situation, and then volunteered. Allan Pinkerton found Private Thompson highly qualified, and hired "him" immediately (As Pinkerton was a devotee of phrenology, perhaps the bumps on the young soldier's head were the clinching argument).

On her first mission Edmonds disguised herself as a young black man named "Cuff," darkening her skin with silver nitrate and wearing a wig. For a couple of days she helped build Confederate fortifications and later served as a cook in the Centreville area. Then she escaped back to Union lines, bringing valuable information. Even when she was interviewed by General McClellan she concealed the fact that she was really a woman. A short time later she undertook another mission, suitably padded to pass a fat Irish lady peddler. Edmonds was able to sell some of her goods in a Confederate camp, while gathering information. To escape, she stole a horse, getting away in a hail of bullets, one of which wounded her in the arm.

Over the next year Edmonds - whom everyone still believed was a man - undertook several more missions behind Confederate lines, in northern Virginia, the Shenandoah Valley, and Kentucky. She sometimes disguised herself as "Cuff," at others as a young white man or an old black woman. In Louisville, Kentucky, she reportedly masqueraded as an rich pro-Southern young man, in order to spy on the activities of people secretly supporting the Confederacy. Altogether she undertook eleven spy missions.

Between missions, Edmonds continued to work as a nurse. By the Spring of 1863 she was serving as a nurse with Union forces at Vicksburg, Mississippi. A problem arose when she contracted malaria. If she entered a hospital, her true identity would be discovered. So Edmonds deserted.. Resuming woman's attire, she entered a civilian hospital. When she recovered, she could no longer return to the army, since Franklin Thompson was listed as a deserter, so she enlisted under her real name in the new woman nursing service, working for the rest of the war in Washington.

After the Civil War she wrote two volumes of memoirs, *Unsexed, or the Female Soldier and Nurse and Spy in the Union Army*, in which she tended to inflate some of her adventures, painting the lily as it were, so that it is sometimes difficult to tell whether some of her adventures were quite as spectacular as others. Edmonds later married and bore three children. In 1884 Congress awarded her a military pension, which continued until her death in 1900.