

Greg Carter, PCC
National Patriotic Instructor

Monthly Patriotic Instruction
February, 2015

The month of February has four distinctly patriotic holidays. Several of them we know well, because frequently they are assigned days off of work or school. One is not celebrated much in this country: **National Freedom Day**.

National Freedom Day is a United States observance on February 1 honoring the signing by Abraham Lincoln of a joint House & Senate resolution that later became the 13th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. President Lincoln signed the Amendment outlawing slavery on February 1, 1865, although it was not ratified by the states until later.

Major Richard Robert Wright Sr., a former slave, believed that there should be a day when freedom for all Americans is celebrated. While living in Philadelphia towards the end of his life, he invited local and national leaders to meet to organize a movement for a national holiday to commemorate Lincoln's signing of the 13th Amendment. The resulting National Freedom Association proposed having a memorial date to call attention to the continuing struggle for freedom for African-Americans. Since President Lincoln had signed the 13th Amendment on the first day of February, that date was chosen to celebrate National Freedom Day. The first commemoration took place on February 1, 1942, at Independence Hall. As it has every year since, the remembrance included laying a wreath at the Liberty Bell. On June 30, 1948, President Harry Truman signed a bill proclaiming February 1 as National Freedom Day. Wreath-laying at the Liberty Bell has also been a tradition to mark National Freedom Day for many years.

This is one holiday where we can all be a little jealous of our brothers who live within reach of Philadelphia, since they can visit the Liberty Bell and potentially place a wreath. Lacking a Liberty Bell here in my hometown, I am placing a wreath at the Scholten Bell, a memorial at my college honoring a graduate who was killed in Vietnam. Does your community feature a former school, church or fire bell? Perhaps in a park or public square? Take a wreath and lay it accordingly in the spirit of the original celebration.

Additional Patriotic Holidays in February:

1 February: National Freedom Day

12 February: Union Defender's Day/Lincoln's Birthday

16 February: President's Day

22 February: George Washington's Birthday