



KEVIN O'NEILL / STAFF ARTIST

HAPPY BIRTHDAY, USA!

Website provides historical context for Independence Day

Put 234 Roman candles on the cake tomorrow because it's America's birthday again. There will be bombs bursting in the air, burgers burning on the grill and beverages being downed all around. Friends and family will gather with flags flying all over the country to celebrate. For many of us it's the highlight of the summer; if not the year.

Of course, there's more to the holiday than a long weekend of fun in the sun. Most Americans are familiar with the story of the summer of 1776, when the Continental Congress met in Philadelphia to decide if the American colonies should challenge one of the greatest powers on Earth in a bid for independence. It was an audacious move, fraught with risk, but somehow, against overwhelming odds, the country won its freedom.

If you want to learn more about the events leading up to the American experiment, and the pivotal players involved, visit **Founding.com**. The Web site is an impressive assemblage of historical documents, biographies, events, writings and analysis. It's a project of the Claremont Institute, which has a self-proclaimed conservative tilt, and much of the historical analysis on the site reflects this. However, it is not a rabid, far-right distortion of history.

Politics aside, most of the information, such as the text of the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution, writings and quotes of Founding Fathers, or timelines of events leading up to the revolution, are presented straight from the historical record.

If you click on a link to the Declaration of Independence it will take you to a page with additional links:

- The full text of the document
- An explanation of the founding principles of the authors
- A historical context section that explains the reasons for specific sections of the Declaration
- A glossary to explain terminology

The Constitution link takes you to the full text of the Constitution and all of the amendments. Unfortunately, it doesn't have the supplemental explanations like the Declaration sec-

tion does. They would be helpful, but even without them, the document is written with such clarity and brevity that it's easier to read than any credit card contract I've ever received. I guess that just proves the genius of the Founding Fathers, they could write the instruction manual for the greatest nation on Earth with less ink than it takes VISA to spell out the terms of my charge card.

There is a section labeled "Founders' Library" that has half a dozen subsections:

- American Political Figures
- Court Decisions
- Founders' Writings
- Government Documents
- Philosophical Sources of the Founding
- Preachers' Pen

There is a timeline on the site that details the major events leading up to the Revolutionary War, the Declaration of Independence and the U.S. Constitution. The descriptions of the events are well written and laced with familiar names from grade-school history, such as, George Washington, Paul Revere, cousins John and Sam Adams, Thomas Jefferson and many more. There are short biographies of the major figures mentioned in the timeline. The description of Patrick Henry delivering his famous "give me liberty or give me death" speech is sure to get any patriot's heart pounding.

The "Alphabets of Freedom" section has essays and definitions related to economic and political freedom. There's also a subsection called "The Founders' Tea Party" that has links to resources that can be downloaded for free or purchased. Finally, there's a "Resources" section with more links to related subject matter.

The site is well written and designed, and technically sound. The history is a little antiseptic, lacking some of the more interesting details about the Founders that humanize them. You won't learn about Jefferson's indiscretions with his slaves, or Franklin's womanizing, but it's a good resource for school-age kids who want to learn more about the history of our nation.

KEVIN O'NEILL is a graphic artist for The Times-Tribune. Contact him at koneill@timeshamrock.com with links to your favorite websites.

Thomas Jefferson made a Freudian slip

Library of Congress officials say Thomas Jefferson made a Freudian slip while penning a rough draft of the Declaration of Independence.

In an early draft of the document, which is kept under lock and key in one of the Library's vaults, Jefferson referred to the American population as "subjects," then replaced it with the word "citizens," a term he used frequently throughout the final draft.

A copy of the rough draft of the Declaration can be viewed online at www.myLOC.gov.

— ASSOCIATED PRESS

Fireworks

- **HONESDALE CENTRAL PARK:** today, 5:30 p.m., featuring music and children's games; fireworks at dusk; rain date, July 6.
- **TUNKHANNOCK ROTARY CLUB:** today, Tunkhannock Area High School Memorial Field.
- **MINISINK LIONS OF NORTH POCONO:** today, 6 p.m., North Pocono High School Football Stadium, Moscow. Rain date Sunday.
- **NEWTON LAKE:** today, Greenfield Twp. Rain date Monday.
- **SCRANTON-WILKES-BARRE YANKEES GAME FIREWORKS:** today, following the game, which starts at 7:05 p.m., PNC Field, Moosic.
- **MOUNT AIRY CASINO:** today, 9:30 p.m., Mount Pocono.
- **LAKE WALLENPAUPACK:** Sunday, 9:15 p.m.; rain date, July 5.
- **FREE CONCERT AND FIREWORKS:** NEPA Philharmonic, Sunday, begins 7:30 p.m., Kirby Park, Wilkes-Barre.
- **15TH ANNUAL FAMILY DAY:** featuring live entertainment and vendors, Monday, begins 7 p.m.; fireworks at 9:30 p.m., Veterans Memorial Stadium, Jessup.