

Clarence's Connection to America's 250th Anniversary

As our nation prepares to celebrate the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence this Fourth of July, it is worth reflecting on what that milestone means here in Clarence.

When the Declaration was signed in 1776, there was no Town of Clarence, no Erie County, and no City of Buffalo. The land that would eventually become our community was largely wilderness, home to Native American tribes, particularly the Seneca Nation. The roads, farms, businesses, churches, and neighborhoods that define Clarence today would not arrive for many years.

Yet the story of America's founding is deeply connected to our town's history.

Although Clarence was not officially established until 1808, many veterans of the Revolutionary War eventually made their homes here. Following the war, some soldiers received land as compensation for their service. Drawn by the fertile farmland and opportunity found in Western New York, many settled in what would become Clarence, helping transform a frontier wilderness into a thriving community.

Thanks to the research and dedication of Town Historian Joseph McGreevy, we know that more than twenty Revolutionary War patriots lived in Clarence after helping secure our nation's independence. Their contributions did not end on the battlefield. They became farmers, merchants, mill operators, public servants, and community leaders whose efforts helped lay the foundation for the town we know today.

Among them was Francis Carr, who operated a sawmill in what is now Clarence Hollow and later served as Clarence's first Town Supervisor. Asa Harris operated a tavern along Buffalo Road, a building that still stands today. David Hamlin established a gristmill and served as a Justice of the Peace. John Felton operated one of Clarence's earliest general stores. Nathaniel Fairchild served as Town Clerk, while Ephraim Derrick was a member of the Town Council and is believed to have been Clarence's first Postmaster.

Others left equally lasting legacies. Benjamin Bowman, a store owner and blacksmith, founded what became Bowmansville. Nathaniel Gallop and his family were active in local and national government. Josiah Mansfield operated a store and sawmill near Hunts Corners. Abraham Carmer worked as a tanner in Clarence Center. Jonathan Blount settled in Clarence Hollow. The descendants of Jacob Cummings, who lived near Hunts Corners, can still be found in the region today.

These men came to Clarence after serving their country, but their greatest contribution may have been helping build a community where future generations could prosper. Their work established businesses, created local institutions, and shaped the character of Clarence during its earliest years.

Every Memorial Day, we honor the generations of Clarence residents who have served and sacrificed in defense of our nation. This year's observance was especially meaningful as we

welcomed longtime Clarence resident and Gold Star Father David Byers as our featured speaker at the Clarence Veterans Memorial. David's powerful remarks reminded us that the freedoms we enjoy today have always come at a cost and that the sacrifices made by our service members and their families should never be forgotten.

As we celebrate the 250th anniversary of American independence this Fourth of July, it is fitting to remember the Revolutionary War veterans who eventually called Clarence home. Their service helped create a nation, and their work helped build the community we cherish today.

The story of Clarence is intertwined with the story of America. From the earliest settlers who arrived after the Revolutionary War to the generations of veterans who have served since, our town has been shaped by individuals who believed in service, sacrifice, and community.

As we begin commemorating our nation's 250th birthday, I hope residents will join us for one of Clarence's favorite traditions, Fireworks in the Park, on Monday, June 29th. It will be a wonderful opportunity for neighbors and families to come together, celebrate our community, and reflect on the remarkable history that has brought us to this milestone anniversary.

A special thank you to Town Historian Joseph McGreevy for his continued work preserving and sharing the history of our community. His efforts ensure that the stories of those who came before us are never forgotten.