

HEADQUARTERS OF THE DEPARTMENT COMMANDER



DEPARTMENT OF NEW YORK



SONS OF UNION VETERANS OF THE CIVIL WAR

Honoring the memory of the Grand Army of the Republic &
The Men from New York who saved the Union from 1861 to 1865

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July 4, 2024

Independence Day Message

Today as we celebrate the 248th year of our Independence, we remember the twin victories of July 4th 1863 with Meade in the east and Grant in the west. Three days of combat in a small rural town in south Pennsylvania have forever inscribed its name in the national consciousness: Gettysburg. The morning of July 4th 1863, found that the "Old Snapping Turtle" General George G Meade was triumphant there as Lee and his band of enslavers slithered back south of the Mason-Dixon Line. Meanwhile, at Vicksburg, the last Confederate stronghold on the Mississippi, fell on the 4th as the months long siege came to a triumphant end. General Ulysses S Grant and the Army of the Tennessee accepted the surrender of the fortress and 29,445 rebels. New Yorkers were on both fields and added to the blood and sweat that ensured our national victory.

George Washington wrote in his farewell address in 1796 that "Freedom is a light for which many men have died in darkness". Washington's words get to the heart of our national character, that we always band together to ensure the light of liberty keeps shining. President Eisenhower echoed these sentiments when he said "Americans, indeed, all free men, remember that in the final choice a soldier's pack is not so heavy a burden as a prisoner's chains." To this, was what our patriot forebearers pledged their lives and fortunes. A new identity unburdened by despots in crowns and the old enmities of our mother countries.

As our nation faced the crisis of the Rebellion, our ancestors marched to war to preserve the Union, to ensure that our experiment with representative democracy, our republic whole and inseparable, could be passed down to the generations of today. With the words "As He died to make men holy, let us die to make men free" on their lips our ancestors marched also for liberation. The Union Army marched with the Jubilee as enslaved men, women and children found freedom in their wake. Liberated as well were loyal southern Unionists who had been wrenched from the Union against their will.

I wish you all a Happy Independence Day and hope that this evening you see some of the rocket's red glare.

William P Stump
NY Department Commander