

# National Patriotic Instruction

## Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War

### July 2024

Why do we place such reverence on those places and things associated with our Union ancestors? As we prepare to celebrate Independence Day, let us consider an item associated with our nation's birth. The following comes from the website of the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History:

In 1776 Thomas Jefferson wrote the Declaration of Independence on this portable desk of his own design. It features a hinged writing board and a locking drawer for papers, pens, and inkwell.



By the summer of 1776 members of the Second Continental Congress prepared to declare their independence from Great Britain. They assigned the task of drafting the declaration to Thomas Jefferson, a delegate from Virginia. Jefferson would later write that rather than aiming for originality, "it was intended to be an expression of the American mind." On July 4, 1776 the Continental Congress amended and adopted the declaration. Its words not only established the guiding principles for the new nation, it has served to inspire future generations in America and around the world.

The desk continued to be Jefferson's companion throughout his life as a revolutionary patriot, American diplomat, and president of the United States. While the drafts of the Declaration of Independence were among the first documents Jefferson penned on this desk, the note he attached under the writing board in 1825 was among the last: "Politics as well as Religion has its superstitions. These, gaining strength with time, may, one day, give imaginary value to this relic, for its great association with the birth of the Great Charter of our Independence."

On November 14, 1825, Thomas Jefferson wrote to his granddaughter Eleanora Randolph Coolidge to inform her that he was sending his "writing box" as a wedding present. Jefferson's original gift of an inlaid desk had been lost at sea and his portable writing desk was intended as a replacement. The desk remained in the Coolidge family until April 1880, when the family donated it to the U.S. government.

In his letter, Jefferson wrote: "Mr. Coolidge must do me the favor of accepting this [gift]. Its imaginary value will increase with years, and if he lives to my age, or another half-century, he may see it carried in the procession of our nation's birthday, as the relics of the Saints are in those of the Church."

*IMAGINARY VALUE?!* It's almost hard to say those words considering the monumental connections of the desk. The preservation of places and items associated with historical events naturally resonate with people. They give us a physical connection to the past. Over time their "imaginary value" becomes immeasurable! This is why we revere those places and things associated with our Union ancestors and why we continue to fight to keep green their memory!

In Fraternity, Charity, and Loyalty,

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