

Devotion, Week of June 23, 2024
Rev. Jeanne Simpson

Our church Independence Day celebration picnic is coming up this Sunday, and I'm looking forward to a good hot dog. I haven't had one yet this summer. I hope we have good baked beans and slaw and potato salad to go with those good hamburgers and hot dogs that Fred and Jim and crew cook for us. Can you tell I'm hungry? In addition to food, we will celebrate our family members who served in the military in all of our U.S. conflicts. We will especially remember those who served in the war for independence from Great Britain. I think of my three ancestors - John Duckworth, John Swink, and Samuel Hoffman, who fought in that war. All had only been in this country for 30-40 years, but they knew that being an independent country with the ability to make one's own decisions regarding taxation and government was important.

I have read a lot about the War of Independence, and visited a number of battlefields. I think about these early settlers who came to America to spread out and have more land and to make a better living. Many of them came from England – including John Duckworth, whose family came over from Lancastershire. And yet, they developed a huge resentment from being taxed by a government “across the pond” that didn't seem to really care about them except as a source of cash. My German ancestors – Swinks and Hoffmans and Kellers – just wanted to be able to farm and be left alone with their Lutheran religion. They were tired of Catholic/ Protestant battles among the independent German states. Only the eldest son could inherit an estate, so in their large families, other children yearned for land elsewhere to settle on. My Groce ancestors were persecuted in southern France because they were Protestant Huguenots, so they came to the new World for religious freedom. That is why many came – Quakers and Anabaptists and Methodists and Presbyterians.

So as we remember our independence as a country, we should give thanks for the ability to worship freely – something our ancestors fought hard for. May we all be proud of that heritage as we worship together.

Jeanne