

For immediate release
Monday, April 26, 1976

THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary to Mrs. Ford

TEXT OF MRS. FORD'S REMARKS AT UNVEILING OF THE "STONE PLATE"
ENGRAVING OF THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE IN PHILADELPHIA
April 26, 1976

It's really a treat for me to be here today, because I have always been interested in the Declaration of Independence and the 56 signers---who pledged "their lives, their fortunes and their sacred honor."

Several years ago, this interest prompted my collecting a proof set of coins of all the signers. Just last month, I received the last coin. It's really been fascinating, because I've learned so much more about these brave men. I really admire those Philadelphians who wanted to have the original document back here for the Bicentennial, because I share your pride in Philadelphia's important role in the making of our Revolution.

Although the original is too fragile to move, I'm so happy to be here for these ceremonies bringing two special copies back to the Declaration's home town.

As I visited this excellent restoration of Benjamin Franklin's home and ship, I was thinking what marvelous stories Franklin could tell about those signers---who came to Philadelphia as colonials and left as Americans.

I imagine Franklin and all the signers would be interested in this ceremony. As a printer, Franklin would be fascinated with the copper plate, struck from the original Declaration in 1823, and with the copy made from that plate earlier this month especially for Philadelphia. But as a writer and philosopher, Franklin, and the other signers would most like to know what happened to the ideas of the Declaration.

We could tell them: "The Declaration lives in the hearts of free men everywhere and America derives its just powers from the consent of the governed---just as they envisioned so long ago in Philadelphia."

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