

There will be two ceremonies in Litchfield, CT on Independence Day (Saturday, July 4th).

Starting at 12:00 Noon, the Mary Floyd Tallmadge Chapter DAR will host a ceremony that honors Gov. Oliver Wolcott, Sr. and Col. Benjamin Tallmadge at their graves in East Cemetery (on East St. / Rte. 118, just west of the Litchfield Locker meat processing building). The SAR, the C.A.R., and the First Litchfield Artillery Regiment will also participate.

Gov. Oliver Wolcott, Sr. was the 19th Governor of Connecticut and a signer of the Declaration of Independence. He was the second of three generations of Wolcotts to serve as Governor of Connecticut.

Col. Benjamin Tallmadge was a senior intelligence officer under Gen. Washington and the leader of the Culper Spy Ring. Upon learning that Maj. John André had been arrested with a pass for getting through the American lines and a set of papers detailing West Point's defenses hidden in his stocking, Tallmadge suspected Benedict Arnold to be André's accomplice. Tallmadge's actions led to the exposure of Benedict Arnold's treason. Maj. John André was found guilty of being a spy and was sentenced to hang.

Beginning promptly at 1:45 PM, the First Litchfield Artillery Regiment will perform a **Let Freedom Ring** ceremony on the Litchfield Green during which, using two cannons, they fire 13 salutes for each of the original 13 States in the order that they ratified the Constitution of the United States of America. SAR Color Guard members will carry and present each flag of the thirteen original states at same time that a cannon fires a salute to each state. At precisely 2:00 PM Eastern Daylight Savings Time, just as the smoke clears from the last cannon salute, the bells of four churches that surround the Green will begin to ring. This is timed so that bells throughout the United States of America ring simultaneously to celebrate Independence Day.

Let Freedom Ring ceremonies are now recognized by NSSAR as National Color Guard events if there are two or more SAR Color Guard members present and if they participate in a significant way. National Color Guard events count toward earning the SAR Silver Color Guard Medal. (Please refer to the section on Color Guard Medals in the NSSAR website for the specifics).

Why Litchfield, Connecticut? The ringing of bells celebrating Independence Day was foreseen by John Adams in July of 1776, when he wrote to his wife saying: *"I am apt to believe that it will be celebrated by succeeding generations as the great anniversary festival. It ought to be commemorated as the day of deliverance by solemn acts of devotion to God Almighty. It ought to be solemnized with pomp and parade, with shows, games, sports, bells, bonfires and illuminations from one end of this continent to the other, from this time forward forevermore."* In 1963, two men from this area of Connecticut, Eric Hatch and Eric Sloane, proposed the idea that bells across the nation, including the Liberty Bell, ring out at the same moment on Independence Day each year. Hatch and Sloane's idea was featured in an article entitled "Make Freedom Really Ring" which appeared in the February 17, 1963 issue of *This Week* magazine. I have a copy of that issue. The two Eric's obtained the endorsement of Connecticut Governor John N. Dempsey and Abraham Ribicoff, a U.S. Senator from Connecticut. Senator Ribicoff took their idea to Congress and the nationwide ringing of bells, now known as "Let Freedom Ring," was adopted by Congress on June 26, 1963 and recorded as Senate Concurrent Resolution 25 [S. Con. Res. 25].

see: <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/STATUTE-77/pdf/STATUTE-77-Pg944.pdf>

Also, Eric Hatch was a resident of Litchfield and one of the co-founders of the First Litchfield Artillery Regiment. In 2014, the regiment celebrated its 50th Anniversary. It was chartered as a Private Military Force of horse drawn artillery under Connecticut Statute Chapter 505, Section 27-102 in July of 1964. Coincidentally, in 1973, Eric Hatch died on Independence Day (as did John Adams and Thomas Jefferson), but not until after the regiment had finished his ceremony that day. The current commander of the First Litchfield Artillery Regiment and two more of its members are also members of the SAR.

see: <https://www.facebook.com/FirstLitchfieldArtillery>

Eric Hatch - best known for his books *1101 Park Avenue*, (which became a hit film under the title *My Man Godfrey*) and *The Year of the Horse* (which was adapted as a Disney comedy with the title, *The Horse in the Gray Flannel Suit*). He was a veteran of both WWI and WWII.

For more info on Eric Hatch see: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eric_S._Hatch

Eric Sloane - a prolific artist, author and illustrator of over 30 books, a meteorologist, and avid collector of Americana. He was an expert on early American barns, covered bridges and tools.

For more info on Eric Sloane see: <http://www.ct.gov/cct/cwp/view.asp?a=2127&q=302262>