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FOLDER

109

July 4th Celebrations

1910-1912

February 16, 1910.

SIR:

I have considered the matter to which you invited my attention, namely, the order of your predecessor on the last day of his incumbency of the office forbidding the retail sale of fireworks in this city between June 10th and July 10th in each year with a view to preventing fireworks in the city on July 4th. I have a strong feeling in favor of the boys having their fire crackers, etc., on July 4th, for it is a great comfort to them. In fact I am as fond of firecrackers now as I was when a boy, and I believe that is the case with nearly every man you meet. Nevertheless, if the damage to life, limb and property from fireworks is so great as to outweigh the pleasure they give, I suppose the order should stand. Suppose you collect the statistics on the subject, and also in respect of whether there be such a prohibition in other cities. Also let us submit the matter to public sentiment, for as a rule that ought to govern.

Very truly yours,

Rhinelanders Waldo, Esq.,
Fire Commissioner.

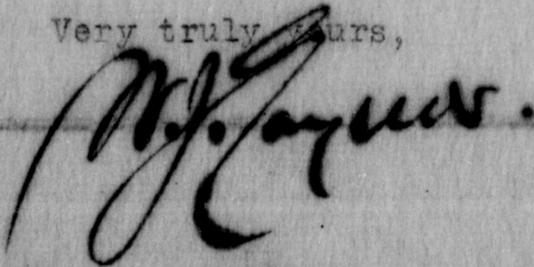
W. J. Sawyer
M a y o r.

March 16, 1910.

My dear Mr. Cromwell:

Your favor of March 14th enclosing that of Mr. Egbert is at hand. Last year the Fire Commissioner adopted a by-law or rule that no fireworks should be sold at retail in the city between June 10th and July 10th of each year. The question recently came up whether that should be repealed. A large amount of literature on the subject has been collected, showing the loss of life, maiming and destruction of property which takes place. It would rather seem that the ordinance should be allowed to stand, but I should be very glad to have any suggestion on the subject.

Very truly yours,



Hon. George Cromwell,
President of the Borough of Richmond,
New Brighton, S. I.

May 19, 1910.

Dear Mr. Mead:

I have received many letters expressing a wish to see a real, old-time, celebration of Independence Day in this city this year, with a view to the revival of the spirit of Americanism, and now comes your letter conveying to me the same wish of the Merchants' Association. I have an exceeding strong wish to see such a celebration, and write this to you to ascertain public opinion on the subject. We shall find it running high, if many of us are not much mistaken. The board of aldermen have already passed a resolution for such a citizens' celebration. We can have a grand parade made up of our National Guard, contingents from the United States Army and Navy, from the Police and Fire Departments, and also of all civic, Patriotic, historic, charitable and industrial organizations which will join in. It may be the school boys and girls of suitable age may also participate. And at night we could, it may be, have a grand display of fireworks. The mayor will be glad to appoint a committee of citizens to carry out the

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project, as you suggest, if the public desire it.

Very truly yours,

M. J. Hayes

S. C. Mead, Esq.,
Secretary Merchants' Association
of New York.

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July 1, 1910.

To Governor Hughes,
Albany, N. Y.

Private - Trust you will not interfere with parade July Fourth. Route all cleared and everything ready. Had letter from General Roe this morning about a final detail. I served term on National Guard. They are overwhelmingly in favor of taking part in the patriotic celebration. Stands nearly up and everything nearly complete. Committee reported to me yesterday.

Similar celebrations are being had this year all across the continent. There are a few objectors.

W. J. Gaynor, Mayor.

July 4, 1911.m

to the School Children:

Why do we celebrate this day? Lest we forget that this is a free country; that we threw off despotism and became a free country; that no official in this country, however high, can exercise any arbitrary power whatever; that our public officials can only do what the laws empower them to do; that the people of this country make their own laws by the representatives they send to the Legislatures, or else, as they often do, by their own direct vote at the polls, and then elect officials to keep within them and carry them out; that ours is a government of laws and not of men - which means that those put into office by the people cannot do as they like, but only as the laws prescribe.

There is no more dangerous man in this free country than the official who thinks he is better than the laws, or can do as he likes regardless of the laws. If this notion should become general, and officials should act arbitrarily throughout the country, namely, outside of the laws, that would be the end of our free government and going back to despotism instead.

The good man in office, or the man in office who thinks he is good, should be most careful not to set a bad precedent for his bad successor.

Now do you understand that we celebrate this day year after year so that we may not forget the principles and safeguards of free government and, by forgetting, lose them?

Sincerely yours,

M. J. Layton,
Mayor.

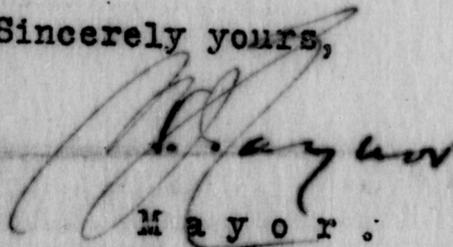
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July 5th, 1911.

Dear Mr. Ridder:

In behalf of the people of the city the Mayor wishes to thank your Committee for the way in which it organized the celebration of Independence Day. There was no part of the city in which the day was not duly celebrated. Last year when we inaugurated the celebration of the day without the promiscuous use of fire-arms and explosives, much opposition was encountered, as is generally the case in all changes, however meritorious. This year there was no opposition, and it is now a thing established, not only here, but apparently throughout the country, that Independence Day is to be hereafter celebrated without causing so much loss of life and property, and so many physical mutilations.

Sincerely yours,



Mayor.

Herman Ridder, Esq.,
Chairman Fourth of July Celebration Committee,
182, William Street,
New York City

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
THE CITY OF NEW YORK
OFFICE OF
THE CITY SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS
500 PARK AVENUE

F WHM

June 26, 1912



Dear Sir:

Will you please write a letter which may be read at all our school celebrations on July four?

There will be more than two hundred of these celebrations. In many cases at least one thousand persons will be present. Probably the average attendance will not be less than five hundred: so that, you see, your words of counsel will be widely disseminated.

Our plan will be, if you send me the letter in time, to have it mimeographed and sent to each principal to be read as a prominent feature of the exercises.

I need not say that all connected with the education department will feel honored and grateful if you will write the letter I request.

Very truly yours,

H. H. Newhall
City Superintendent of Schools.

Hon. William J. Gaynor,

Mayor of The City of New York.

To the school children of the City of New York on Independence Day, 1912:

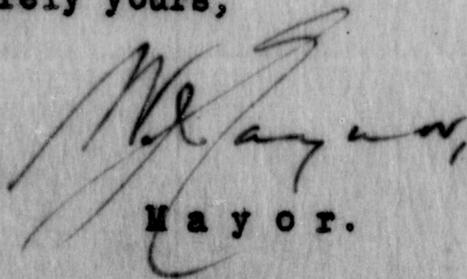
Our country is a free country. Our government is a democracy. Democracy is the rule of the people by themselves. The way this is done is as follows: The people enact their own laws. These laws prescribe how they shall be governed. Then the people elect their own officials to carry out or execute these laws. If the number of the whole people were small enough, they could meet in one place, in a big hall or in a field, and enact their laws by their own votes. But as our numbers are too great for that, we divide ourselves up into sections or districts, and each district elects representatives, and all of these representatives meet in what we call the Legislature, and enact our laws. That is a representative democracy. If our laws do not suit us it is because we do not elect persons who carry out our will in the Legislature. That is our own fault, namely, through ignorance or negligence we elect unfit men. And if we elect unfit men to office to carry out or execute our laws, that is in the same way our own fault. The only way, therefore, to have good laws, and good officials to execute them, is by the intelligence and virtue of the people. We therefore spend

immense sums to educate the people. The object is to make them fit to vote. If the people are themselves intelligent and virtuous, they will vote right, and the result will be good laws, good officials of all kinds, and good government. But if the people are not intelligent and virtuous, the result will be the reverse, namely, bad laws, bad officials, and bad government. Now you see why your parents are paying large taxes to educate you. If you and the generations who come after you should lack the necessary intelligence and virtue, then our form of government must come to its downfall. I hope our common schools will postpone indefinitely that fatal hour. The downfall of the rulership of the people by themselves means a return to despotism. Under that form of government which we call despotism, the ruler does as he likes without regard to the people. He arrests them, he locks them up, he takes their lives, he takes their property, to suit himself. We must therefore be vigilant of every little approach of despotism, however little it may be. We must see to it that those whom we elect to office do not go outside of the laws, or set themselves up above the laws, and do as they please. It always has been the case throughout the world that the officials who did this did it on the plea that the laws were not good enough -- that they could do better than

the laws prescribed. Beware of all such officials. We do not want officials who have any lust of power. We want officials who are very careful about exercising power. We want officials who are careful to exercise no power except that given to them by the people by their laws. There is no more dangerous man in a free country, in a democracy, than an official who thinks he is better than the laws. The good man in office should be most careful not to set a bad example or precedent for his bad successor, for the bad successor will come along sooner or later.

On every recurring Independence Day we should seriously consider these things, and consecrate ourselves anew, even upon our knees, to God's will, in the full conviction that His will is that the people shall by their ever growing intelligence and virtue continue to rule themselves, better and better, year after year, forever.

Sincerely yours,


Mayor.