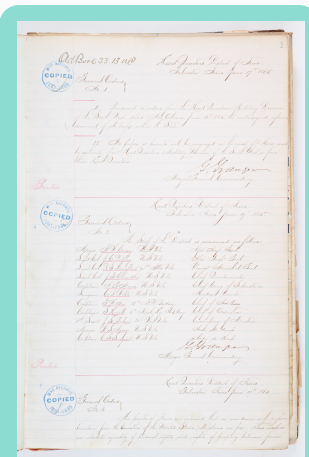




Imagine living in a time where accessing information was not instantaneous. In the late nineteenth century, the [information superhighway](#) consisted of someone on [horseback](#), carrying a satchel full of letters and papers. By the time these letters and papers reached their destination, the news was weeks, sometimes months old. Now, think about a regiment of soldiers making their way across the southeastern United States immediately following the end of the Civil War to share news of its end and the end of slavery in the South. This announcement happened in the small coastal town of Galveston, Texas. On June 19, 1865, two months after Confederate General Robert E. [Lee surrendered](#) to Union General Ulysses S. [Grant](#), Union General Gordon Granger announced to the last group of enslaved people that they were free. This day is largely celebrated as Juneteenth.

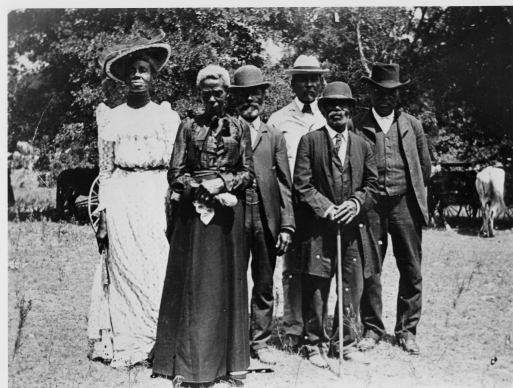
Upon his arrival in Galveston, General Granger read [General Order #3](#):

The people of Texas are informed that, in accordance with a proclamation from the Executive of the United States, all slaves are free. This involves an absolute equality of personal rights and rights of property between former masters and slaves, and the connection heretofore existing between them becomes that between employer and hired labor.



General Order 3 from the
National Archives

This order reflects the [Emancipation Proclamation](#), which declared that slaves were free. It is important to remember, however, the Emancipation Proclamation [only applied](#) to states that seceded from the Union (the 12 Confederate states). It was not until December 1865 that slaves in the border states of Kentucky and Delaware were freed with the ratification of the [13th Amendment](#).



PICA 05476, Austin History Center, Austin Public Library

Picnic at Emancipation Day Celebration, June 19, 1900
from the Austin History Center

One year after General Granger read the order, on June 19th, 1866, the freedmen of Texas celebrated the first Juneteenth in recognition of their freedom and the end of slavery. Even with this positive beginning, discriminatory practices would continue with the implementation of [Jim Crow](#) and [voter suppression laws](#) in the South. [Despite this](#), many Black communities continued to recognize and celebrate Juneteenth as the end of slavery.

Since then, states have recognized Juneteenth as a state holiday, with Texas being the first to do so.

[Currently](#), 49 states and the District of Columbia recognize Juneteenth as a holiday or observance, or have legislation awaiting a governor's signature. On June 14 and 16, 2021, both chambers of Congress followed suit, with the United States [Senate](#) and the United States [House of Representatives](#) passing legislation declaring June 19, "Juneteenth National Independence Day," as a federal holiday. President Biden signed

this [bill into law](#) on June 17th, 2021. Juneteenth National Independence Day now joins July Fourth as a day when all Americans can celebrate the unalienable rights to life, liberty, and pursuit of happiness promised by the [Declaration of Independence](#).

To Think and To Do: In what way does Juneteenth represent the struggles and the successes that the United States has experienced living up to the promises of its [Founding Documents](#)?

LEARN MORE. Free registration may be required.

- [Art Installation and Storytelling Space](#), from Juneteenth Legacy Project
- [Juneteenth](#), from National Museum of African American History & Culture
- [National Archives Safeguards Original Juneteenth General Order](#), from National Archives
- [Emancipation Day](#), from Austin History Center



President Joe Biden signs the Juneteenth National
Independence Day Act (AP Photo/Evan Vucci)

