



The Declaration of Independence

Date  
1823

Primary Maker  
William J. Stone

Medium  
Parchment

Description  
The <i>Declaration of Independence</i>, William J. Stone, 1823. Copperplate engraving on parchment, with "Engraved by W.I. STONE for the Dept. of State by order/ of J.Q. ADAMS Secy of State July 4th 1823" at top. Framed with a beige mat and gold leaf frame. The original

<i>Declaration of Independence</i> was adopted by the Second Continental Congress on July 4, 1776, and served as the founding document of the United States of America. The official copy was printed that day, known as the Dunlap broadside, and was different from the engrossed copy that was signed by Congress. This 1823 copy is a reproduction of the engrossed document. In 1820, Secretary of State John Quincy Adams sought to preserve the image of the original engrossed copy of the <i>Declaration of Independence</i>. In the four decades since the original's signing, it had begun to fade. Adams obtained Congressional approval to commission William J. Stone to engrave a copper plate to make exact copies. Stone took three years to create his copper plate, by either tracing or press copying the original. The Stone copy was the most exact copy of the original engrossed <i>Declaration</i>, with almost the same dimensions, and 200 were created at first pressing. In May 1824, Congress passed a resolution that detailed the distribution of the 200 engravings. The Stone engravings were to be sent to official repositories, significant officeholders, and the surviving signers of the <i>Declaration</i>, including Thomas Jefferson and John Adams For future generations, the Stone engraving became more recognizable than the original document. The original's browning and faded signatures did not allow for quality reproductions to be made. The Stone engraving was selected for reproduction as souvenirs and in illustrations for scholarly work. Stone's copper plate used to create this document is held in the collection of the National Archives.

Dimensions  
Frame: 43 1/2 x 38 1/4 x 2 1/4 in. (110.5 x 97.2 x 5.7 cm)