

Oberlin's Independence Day



As you're firing up your grill or lighting your sparklers this Fourth of July, ask yourself: what does freedom really mean? Before the Civil War, many Oberlin residents believed that their own freedom was not right or complete because so many other human beings, primarily African-American slaves, were not granted their rights to freedom. Until all American people were free, they felt that it was false and hypocritical to celebrate "Independence Day" on the Fourth of July. Instead, on July 4, the town of Oberlin would hold antislavery meetings. Then, on August 1--chosen because that was the anniversary of the formal end of slavery in Jamaica--the town would celebrate Independence Day, honoring the freedom of Americans of all skin colors and ethnicities.

