At Old State House, tears and patriotism for Declaration of Independence reading

By Kellen Browning and Alyssa Lukpat Globe Correspondents, July 4, 2019, 12:16 p.m.

Like a giant, living American flag, hundreds of people decked out in their best red, white, and blue surrounded Boston’s Old State House on Thursday morning for patriotic observances and celebration.

Shortly after 10 a.m., the Captain Commanding Nicholas Schiarizzi of the Ancient and Honorable Artillery Company recited the Declaration of
Independence from the Old State House balcony, an annual tradition since 1776.

“It is my great honor to deliver the Declaration of Independence to the people of Boston as it has been done every year by the captain of this company for 243 years at this very location,” Schiarizzi said to the throngs assembled on the street.

The solemn moment — the highlight of a morning parade that began at City Hall — brought tears to some observers’ eyes.

“I’ve been crying — I’m so emotional about this kind of thing,” said Tina Mathews, a Californian visiting New England with her family for Independence Day. “We’re so proud of our country.”

Her husband, Cody, wore a Declaration of Independence T-shirt and a tricorn hat popular during the Colonial era, and their 3-year-old daughter, Alani, displayed Benjamin Franklin’s “Join or Die” political cartoon on her shirt.

The family has been touring various New England landmarks, like the sites of the battles of Lexington and Concord, but Mathews said the goal was always to spend Fourth of July in Boston, “the most patriotic city in America.”

Earlier, onlookers watched as the parade, which included members of the Billerica Colonial Minute Men and London’s Honourable Artillery Company, made its way from City Hall to the Granary Burying Ground.

“We marched because some of our people came over and started the Ancient Artillery Company,” said David Griffith, of London. “We come every year, and it’s terrific.”

It was scheduled to end at noon, at the Paul Revere Mall, according to the Greater Boston Convention and Visitors Bureau.