

AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

Steven Bellavia for the Master of Arts
(Name of student) (Degree)
in History presented on January 31, 2014

Title: Fanning the Flames of Patriotism: The American Bicentennial Celebration

Abstract approved: _____
(Thesis Advisor Signature)

This thesis explores how the Bicentennial worked to re-forge a fracturing American society, to recreate a sense of American identity and to reinforce important conceptions of American civil religion. The Bicentennial utilized various ways to accomplish these tasks. The celebration itself became the primary vector for accomplishing this task, through the creation of a common framework, as communities both big and small celebrated. Bicentennial events such as the American Freedom train brought American civil religious icons to the American population reinforcing what it meant to be an American. Finally, popular culture especially mass media was used as a way of getting the Bicentennial message out. It provided both an introduction to and it reinforced those American civil religious icons deemed important. The Bicentennial celebration was able to re-forge, recreate and reinforce American civil religious icons, which was aimed at healing the divisions in American life.

Keywords: American Revolution Bicentennial, Schoolhouse Rock, Popular Culture, American Freedom Train, Freedom Train, 1776, 1976, Mass media, Nixon, Ford, Carter, American civil religion, Keying, Bicentennial Minute, Valley Forge, George Washington, John Jakes, Thomas Jefferson, Ben Franklin, Mount Rushmore, Patriotism

Fanning the Flames of Patriotism:
The American Bicentennial Celebration

A Thesis
Presented to
The Department of Social Sciences
EMPORIA STATE UNIVERSITY

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

by
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May 2014

Approved by the Department Chair

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The path to this point has been a long and winding road that I would not have been able to complete without the help of many people.

First I would like to thank Dr. Gregory L. Schneider, for his invaluable help in the crafting of this document, Dr. Michael Smith, for his input on my thesis, Dr. Deborah Gerish, for her input and help in editing my thesis. The finished product is much better thanks to your input.

Secondly I would like to thank the faculty and staff of the Emporia State Social Science department. In addition to the above named I would like to thank Jacque Fehr for always having ready answers and helping to solve whatever issues I brought to her. Dr. Brian Miller, for making me dig down and prove to myself that I could do this. Dr. Ellen Hansen, for the long conversations in her office, on a myriad of topics, and her patience with a brand new graduate teaching assistant. Dr. Amanda L. Miracle, for pushing me outside of my comfort zone, words alone cannot convey how much I owe my experience to her tutelage, and how much I have grown in the classroom because of her. While I will never be able to “channel my inner southern woman” like she does, I will endeavor to find my own classroom persona, though she has created a tough act to follow. I would also like to thank my fellow graduate teaching assistants and friends in the graduate teaching office.

Last and most certainly not least, there is absolutely no way that I could have succeeded without the support of my family. Jeny, Samantha, Alexandria, Anthony, William, Christine, Frank and Juanita. Thank you from the bottom of my heart for supporting me and allowing me to follow my dreams.

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Introduction

“The State of our union is not good,” Gerald Ford said in his State of the Union address on January 15, 1975.¹ In this one sentence Ford summed up the woes of America during his presidency. Ford’s comment spoke about small concerns, but also to the larger fracturing of American society as a result of the upheavals of the 1960’s and 1970’s. Generational disputes, race relations, class warfare, a growing lack of faith in American exceptionalism, a miserable economy and in the Cold War showed an America that was no longer united.

The means by which American society fractured is debated by scholars, but not the fact concerning its breakup. Daniel T. Rodgers, in *The Age of Fracture*, and Robert Putnam in *Bowling Alone*, examined the causes of this fracturing, and while they disagree on the specific reasons behind it, they do both agree that the events of late 1960s and early 1970’s were the cause. Racial unrest from Black Power radicals, America’s stunning withdrawal from Vietnam, the horror of 1968 at the assassinations of Robert Kennedy and Martin Luther King, Jr., the worsening economic conditions including rampant inflation and the OPEC oil embargo, and the Watergate scandal, all put pressure on American society. Cracks started to form, and America was pulled in a myriad of directions as a result, leading away from the common identity which had formed the basis for the postwar world. The Bicentennial celebration looked to return the United States to a cohesive identity.²

¹ Gerald R Ford, State of the Union Address, January 15, 1975, The American Presidency Project, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=4938#axzz2fZbSjWa2> (Accessed October 15, 2012); Christopher Capozzola, “It Makes You Want to Believe in the Country” in *America in the 70s* ed. Beth Bailey and David Farber, (Lawrence KS: University Press of Kansas, 2004), 29.

² Daniel T. Rodgers, *The Age of Fracture* (Cambridge MA: Belknap Press Harvard University Press, 2011); Robert D. Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (New York:

How then could the torn fabric of American society be mended? It might require that large numbers of a diverse American population be able to identify with one another and re-forge a common identity. How could a nation with a citizenry as diverse as the United States recreate a common identity? Civil War historian James M. McPherson argued that it took a bloody Civil War to help mold the diverse groups into a singular unified nation. He argued that it was only in the time period after the Civil War that the United States ceased being a plurality and became a singular unified nation.³

This idea of a unified nation is what the concept of American civil religion builds and reinforces. Throughout the twentieth century American civil religion and patriotism have been used as a means to build a common national identity. This idea became especially important during the Cold War fight against communism.

American civil religion was brought to national attention in 1967 by sociologist Robert Bellah, who wrote in *Daedalus, The Journal of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences* that American civil religion is not the deification of America, but rather its grounding in the “American Experience.” American civil religion is the great unifier in that it crosses denominational and religious barriers.⁴

Though Bellah is credited with introducing the concept of American civil religion to academia, the idea was not new. The idea of civil religion has been around for a long time. While the term civil religion is generally accepted, what this term means is a matter

Simon & Schuster, 2000); Edward Berkowitz, *Something Happened; A Political and Cultural Overview of the Seventies* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006); Jefferson Cowie, *Staying Alive: The 1970s and the Last Days of the Working Class* (New York: The New Press, 2010); Peter Carroll, *It Seemed like Nothing Happened: America in the 1970's* (New Brunswick NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1990); Bruce J. Schulman, *The Seventies* (New York: The Free Press, 2001); These books examine this turbulent times each examining different facets of the period.

³ Tom Engelhardt, *The End of Victory Culture* (Amherst MA: University of Massachusetts Press), 28; James M. McPherson, *The Atlas of the Civil War*. (New York: Macmillan Publishing 1994), 214.

⁴ Robert N. Bellah, “Civil Religion in America,” *Daedalus* vol.117, no. 3 (Summer 1988): 97,115; Originally published in vol. 96 no. 1 (Winter 1967).

for debate. Jean-Jacques Rousseau first put the idea of civil religion forward in 1762 in his essay *The Social Contract*. Rousseau stated that “Each state having its peculiar cult as well as its own form of government, did not distinguish its gods from its law.” When pagan religions were the norm, Rousseau saw the State and religion as inseparable and as such tied the state and religion together so that they performed the same function for the population.⁵ Emile Durkheim brought the idea of public religion back to the public consciousness at the beginning of the twentieth century. Durkheim wrote in France during the turbulent times of World War I, and recognized both the good and evil that strong nationalism could engender. Bellah synthesized a new definition for the concept of civil religion, using Rousseau and Durkheim, among others.⁶

Civil religion’s reintroduction to academia launched a firestorm of debate. The debate over American civil religion was not limited to those who believed that American civil religion existed and those who did not. Even among those who supported the idea of American civil religion, a debate raged over what it meant. These debates led to a fracturing of the definition of the term.⁷ For the purpose of this paper American civil religion can be defined as the underlying principle that helps to unify and identify a population with a national identity.

⁵ Ronald Beiner, “Machiavelli, Hobbes, and Rousseau on Civil Religion.” *The Review of Politics* vol. 55, no. 4 (Autumn 1993): 617; Jean Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract* trans. by Charles Frankel (New York: Hafner Publishing Company, 1947), 115, 123.

⁶ Ruth A. Wallace, “Emile Durkheim and the Civil Religion Concept.” *Review of Religious Research* vol. 18, no. 3 (Spring, 1977): 287-8, 288.

⁷ Gail Gehrig, *American Civil Religion: An Assessment*. (Storrs, CN: Society for the Scientific Study of Religion, 1981), 5; Beiner, 919; Wallace, 288; Ronald C Wimberley, et al. “The Civil Religious Dimension: Is It There?” *Social Forces* vol. 54, no. 4 (June 1976): 890-1; John Markoff and Daniel Regan, “The Rise and Fall of Civil Religion: Comparative Perspectives.” *Sociological Analysis* vol. 42, no. 4 (Winter 1981): 333; Gail Gehrig, “The American Civil Religion Debate: A Source for Theory Construction.” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* vol. 20, no. 1 (March 1981): 51.

One way that this unification and identification could be accomplished was through the creation of a common framework. The Bicentennial celebration seemed like a perfect way to repair America's fractured society and to reassert the founding principles to the population and the rest of the world. According to the American Bicentennial Revolution Administration's *American Revolution Bicentennial Symbol: Guidelines for Authorized Use*, "the goal of the Bicentennial [was] to forge a new national commitment, a new Spirit for '76...a spirit which will unite the nation."⁸ It was believed that the Bicentennial could heal the nation's wounds. With this goal in mind the Bicentennial worked to re-forge a fracturing American society, and to recreate a sense of American identity and to reinforce important conceptions of American civil religion.

There are various ways to assess how Bicentennial events were able to unite people during the celebration. Its ability to double or triple the size of a town, the willingness of people to wait in line for sixteen or more hours, even with the knowledge they might not be able to gain admittance to that particular event, showed the popularity of the Bicentennial celebration. Forty years after the introduction of *Schoolhouse Rock*, the ability of the now grown children who watched it, to recall the lyrics and consistently pick the same video as an iconic representation of the series shows that *Schoolhouse Rock* did indeed succeed in capturing the imagination of and in teaching the youth of America during the Bicentennial.

It is responses like these that helped to bring the nation together by creating a common framework due to common experiences. This is the concept that Social

⁸ American Bicentennial Revolution Administration, "American Revolution Bicentennial Symbol: Guidelines for Authorized Use" Washington D.C.; Government Printing Office, 1973), 4.

Psychologists call priming.⁹ Priming triggers automatic thinking based on previous experiences. People exposed to similar experiences have similar reactions. It is this unconscious reaction, the creation of similar thought patterns that worked at creating a unity of thought and helped to stop the fracturing of American society.

In this thesis I will explore how the Bicentennial accomplished these tasks through various pathways. The celebration itself became the primary vector for accomplishing this task, through the creation of a common framework, as communities both big and small celebrated. Bicentennial events such as the American Freedom train brought American civil religious icons to the American population, reinforcing what it meant to be an American. Finally, popular culture, especially mass media, was used as a way of getting the Bicentennial message out. It provided both an introduction to and it reinforced those American civil religious icons deemed important. The Bicentennial celebration was able to re-forge, recreate and reinforce American civil religious icons, which was aimed at healing the divisions in American life.

⁹ Eliot Aronson, Timothy D. Wilson, and Robin M. Akert, *Social Psychology 6th edition* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Person Prentice Hall, 2007), 65.

Chapter 1: It's a Party

One way for the country to re-forged a sense of national unity was to celebrate the Bicentennial of the founding of the United States. John Bodnar, in *Remaking America*, argued that the Bicentennial celebration was a way of closing the door on the tumultuous 1960s. The Bicentennial celebration allowed the nation *en masse* to reaffirm its belief in and support for the country. According to Bodnar, some planners believed that the celebrations of the Centennial of the Civil War and the Bicentennial of the American Revolution were not a way to celebrate the upheavals these events caused, but rather they were a way to reinforce citizen loyalty to the government and to reaffirm the belief that the American system was the correct form of government.¹⁰

To accomplish this ideal the Bicentennial celebration would have an uphill battle. Historian Christopher Capozzola stated that "...the Bicentennial prompted debates over the meaning of American history and American identity, the political turmoil of the previous decade made national celebration a challenge."¹¹ The mood of the country put the festivities in a more subdued light, especially when compared to the Centennial celebration.¹² Even though the Bicentennial was more subdued than the Centennial celebration, the Bicentennial succeeded in renewing the nation's sense of a common identity and reinforced those things important to the American mythos. It helped to change Americans' perception of the United States and in the words of one Peorian, "it

¹⁰ John Bodnar, *Remaking America: Public Memory, Commemoration, and Patriotism in the Twentieth Century*. (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992), 227; Bodnar, 226-7.

¹¹ Christopher Capozzola, "It Makes You Want to Believe in the Country," in *America in the 70s* ed. Beth Bailey and David Farber, (Lawrence KS: University Press of Kansas, 2004), 34.

¹² Capozzola, "It Makes You Want to Believe in the Country," 29.

ma[d]e you want to believe in this country.”¹³ The old axiom “if it will play in Peoria it will play anywhere” seemed to be borne out with the celebration of America’s founding.

Planning for the American Bicentennial celebration began as early as 1957.¹⁴ On July 4, 1966 the American Revolution Bicentennial commission (ARBC) was founded, when President Lyndon B. Johnson signed a bill authorizing its creation. With its creation the celebration was planned at the national level. One proposal the ARBC considered was an international exposition along the lines of the world’s fair that would be hosted by Philadelphia in 1976. The ARBC was hoping for a trifecta of celebrations in 1976. The trifecta would be complete if the United States could successfully win the right to host both the summer and winter Olympic Games. This would allow America to show its preeminence on the world stage.¹⁵ However this goal was not met.

By the start of the 1970s, the ARBC was in trouble. David J. Mahoney, the head of the ARBC, recognized that all was not right. In a news conference Mahoney “expressed his concern” that the nation was not engaged in celebrating America’s Bicentennial. Mahoney then entreated those in the halls of power to “take advantage of the opportunity afforded by the 1976 event.” Mahoney’s plea was not strong enough to overcome the systemic problems of the ARBC.¹⁶ As the ARBC began its descent into

¹³ American Revolution Bicentennial Administration, *Bicentennial of the United States: A Final Report to the People* vol. 1 (Washington D.C: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1977), 21; Capozzola, “ It Makes You Want to Believe in the Country,” 30.

¹⁴ American Revolution Bicentennial Administration, *Bicentennial of the United States: A Final Report to the People* vol. 1 (Washington D.C: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1977), 58; Capozzola, “ It Makes You Want to Believe in the Country,” 31.

¹⁵ Creation of American Revolution Bicentennial Commission, Public Law 49,1 89th Cong. (July 4, 1966); Capozzola, “ It Makes You Want to Believe in the Country” , 31; American Revolution Bicentennial Administration, *Bicentennial of the United States: A Final Report to the People* vol. 1 (Washington D.C: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1977), 55,57; Bodnar, 229.

¹⁶“76 Commission Head Says All Should Join Celebration,” *New York Times*, December 11, 1971.

oblivion, the grandiose dreams that the ARBC envisioned were dead.¹⁷ Gone was the ARBC's planned exposition proposed by the Philadelphia Bicentennial commission.¹⁸ This led Philadelphia planners to scale back, but not to abandon, their plans for a national celebration. ARBC chairman Mahoney told Philadelphia that the city "would play an 'important role' in the commemoration."¹⁹ Eugene Meyer in an October 1972 *Washington Post* article hinted that the exposition was cut to help finance the ARBC's plan for 50 Bicentennial Parks. However, by May 1973, 60 percent of the ARBC voted against the recommendation of its executive committee proposing the creation of a Bicentennial Park in each state with the understanding that the state would gain control of its park once the festivities were over.²⁰

What exactly were the problems faced by the ARBC? One problem was the lack of a mandate on what to do and how to celebrate the Bicentennial. Some saw the grandiose world-fair type celebration as the way to go. Others believed that the Bicentennial was a way for communities to improve their surroundings, with improvements to both the landscape and infrastructure, that way they could continue to enjoy the benefit after the Bicentennial had passed. Washington D.C.'s subway was an example of that idea. The construction of the system was set to be completed in time for the influx of visitors the nation's capital expected to see for the Bicentennial celebration; however, this new construction would continue to benefit the citizens of Washington D.C. long after the fête was over.²¹

¹⁷ "'76 Commission Head Says All Should Join Celebration,'" *New York Times*, December 11, 1971.

¹⁸ "Bicentennial Rejects Expo Idea," *Chicago Tribune* May 17, 1972.

¹⁹ Eugene L Meyer, "Bicentennial Group Cuts Back Festivity," *Washington Post Times Herald*, October 27, 1972.

²⁰ "Bicentennial Panel Rejects \$1.3-Billion Plan for Parks," *New York Times*, May 16, 1973.

²¹ "Your Neighborhood in 1976," *Washington Post Times Herald*, June 8, 1972; "Subway to Be Late for Bicentennial Fete," *Los Angeles Times*, August 5, 1975; Bodnar, 229.

Lack of direction was not the only problem faced by the ARBC. Historian Christopher Capozzola pointed to economic reasons for the ARBC's demise. The lack of funds plagued Bicentennial committees at every level of American society. Carey Roberts, who became the head of the Montgomery County Maryland's Bicentennial commission, was told "we have a plan, you're the executive director, and we have no money." Roberts was expected to borrow space and supplies from other county agencies. Roberts was able to overcome these hurdles and with true American ingenuity and persistence she was responsible for the Montgomery County Bicentennial commission acquiring its own office space and was even able to hire paid workers.²²

Even though Roberts' and the Montgomery county's story was a success, at the national level the ARBC did not enjoy the same monetary windfall. While there was the implication that the ARBC would have access to federal funds, the funds for the grandiose plans never really materialized. According to Capozzola, even though President Nixon signed a bill giving the ARBC a budget of \$450,000 in October 1969,²³ by 1971, Nixon had decided "that the exposition was little more than a democratic boondoggle." As the economic situation worsened, the first programs to be trimmed by Republicans were Democratic fat.²⁴ According to *The Bicentennial of the United States: A Final Report to the People* by the American Revolution Bicentennial Administration, almost a year and a half passed from the creation of the committee until it finally received

²² "Bicentennial," *Washington Post*, July 3, 1975.

²³ Nixon Signs 1976 Bill," *New York Times*, October 14, 1969; "The Spirit of '76," *Washington Post Times Herald*, May 15 1971.

²⁴ American Revolution Bicentennial Administration, *Bicentennial of the United States: A Final Report to the People* vol. 1 (Washington D.C: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1977), 225; Capozzola, "It Makes You Want to Believe in the Country", 32.

federal funds.²⁵ With the war still raging in Vietnam, it seemed Congress was being frugal with its apportionment of funds.

While Capozzola believed that economics played a big role in the demise of the ARBC, historian John Bodnar pointed to personnel issues. On August 12, 1971, President Nixon and the ARBC came under criticism. At this center of the criticism was the Democratic National Committee (DNC) via its newsletter "Fact." The DNC claimed that Nixon was "stealing the American Revolution" by packing the ARBC with Republicans. Both the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* ran articles with the headlines of "President Criticized on 1776 Celebration" and "Nixon 'Stealing' the Revolution" respectively. While the *Post's* article was dated a day later on August 13, 1971 and went into more detail than the *Times's* August twelfth Associated Press newsfeed, both articles referenced the DNC newsletter "Fact," which claimed that "the original commissioners" appointed by Johnson "were quietly 'persuaded' to resign." The *Post* article goes on to state that "Fact" claimed it only "took Nixon six months to appoint [new] members." It also contended that the ARBC was not representative of the heterogeneity of the American population and lacked differing viewpoints.²⁶

It was almost a year later that the ARBC was fending off charges of fiduciary irresponsibility and seeing another change in the makeup of its membership. According to Bodnar, the ARBC was "led by a succession of prominent individuals."²⁷ One such individual was Jack I. LeVant, who resigned as the Senate Judiciary committee opened

²⁵ American Revolution Bicentennial Administration, *Bicentennial of the United States: A Final Report to the People* vol. 1 (Washington D.C: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1977), 242; Bodnar, 229.

²⁶ "Nixon Stealing the Revolution," *Washington Post Times Herald*, August 13, 1971; "President Criticized On 1776 Celebration" *New York Time*, August 13, 1971; Eugene L Meyer, "Bicentennial 'Attacks' Decried by Republicans," *Washington Post Times Herald*, August 19, 1972.

²⁷ American Revolution Bicentennial Administration, *Bicentennial of the United States: A Final Report to the People* vol. 1 (Washington D.C: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1977), 242-245; Bodnar, 229.

hearings on the activities of the ARBC. This investigation led Representative Emanuel Celler to propose a bill that limited how much funding the ARBC would get. This new reduced budget, rather than providing the ARBC the full year funding as had originally been planned, only covered six months.²⁸

This was not the only controversy facing the ARBC in August 1972. Quickly following on the heels of LeVant's resignation and instigation of the Senate hearings, Democrats started lambasting the ARBC again. Such notable Democrats as presidential candidate George McGovern took shots at the ARBC. Senators Ted Kennedy and Fred Harris also joined in criticizing the ARBC. The attacks got so bad that John Pastore, a Democratic senator from Rhode Island, resigned his seat on the ARBC. Pastore said that "I don't like the general smell of the thing" casting even more aspersions on the ARBC and using it to attack Nixon's "cronyism." While partisanship in politics is to be expected, the difficulty experienced by the ARBC showed the underlying systemic problems found in the larger American society.

The *Bicentennial of the United States: A Final Report to the People*, written by the American Revolution Bicentennial Administration, cited personnel issues; others pointed to the ineffectiveness of the ARBC as the reason for its demise. In a speech in 1971, Senator Charles Mathis, Jr. who originally helped create the ARBC in 1966, expressed dismay that the ARBC had "accomplished virtually nothing." Mathis went on to lambaste the ARBC for not creating something capable of "arousing or involving the entire nation." Mathis pointed out how plans and ideas had been offered to the ARBC and that those unsolicited but well-thought-out ideas had been completely ignored by the

²⁸ Eugene L. Meyer, "Probe of Bicentennial Commission is Slated," *Washington Post Times Herald*, September 13, 1972; "Bicentennial Gala Director Resigns Post Under Fire," *Wall Street Journal* August 2, 1972.

committee. Another shortcoming of the ARBC, according to Mathis, was that the ARBC did not speak to the minority parts of the American population. Mathis believed that to address this the ARBC needed to be expanded, to include youths, African-Americans, Hispanics, the working class and all other facets of society that were underrepresented.²⁹ Four years later Robert Sherrill, an investigative journalist, looked back at the planning of the upcoming celebration, and voiced similar ideas. Sherrill believed that the 50-member ARBC was “incompetent.” Sherrill believed that the ARBC’s failure was not due to its inability to attain the lofty heights it aspired to, but rather because it became mired in the muck of politics.³⁰

In 1973 the ARBC was dissolved and the idea of a unified national celebration, like the idea of a unified national identity, seemed to disappear in a puff of smoke. What at the turn of the decade, was imagined as a unifying event, was making very little headway against the leftover resentment from the 1960s. In order to succeed and bring the nation together, the Bicentennial had to address and overcome the dissonance endemic in American society. It would be an uphill battle.³¹

Replacing the ARBC was the American Revolution Bicentennial Administration (ARBA). A December 1972, *Washington Post* article by staff writer Eugene Meyer publicized the House Judiciary report. Meyer cited a finding in the report where committee members said, “as now constituted the [ARBC] has not and cannot by 1976 provide the nation with a ‘meaningful’ Bicentennial commemoration.” The report also

²⁹ “Bicentennial Where is the Commitment,” *Washington Post, Times Herald*, December 10, 1971.

³⁰ Robert Sherrill, “Dispirit of ’76: A Bicentennial Divided against Itself...” *New York Times*, March 23, 1975.

³¹ “BICENTENNIAL: The U.S. Begins Its Birthday Bash,” *Time* April 21, 1975 vol. 105 no. 16 <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,917323,00.html#ixzz1YY4cTOea> (accessed September 15, 2011).

castigated the ARBC by using such phrases as “failed to consistently generate tangible program for the Bicentennial,” “startling lack of concrete programs,” and as a final blow the report stated “the ARBC has failed to give direction either to itself or to its staff.” The House Judiciary report writers felt that the ARBC was too busy trying to figure out what exactly it was supposed to be doing and this uncertainty meant it was unable to function. This committee had a list of complaints that it leveled at the ARBC and they believed a change was needed.³² The report called for the reorganization of the ARBC and the creation of a specific mission for it to follow. The report writers believed that the new mission of the ARBC should be to “stimulate and encourage public and private groups” to operate Bicentennial programs.

In February 1973, both the *Washington Post* and the *New York Times* ran stories about how President Nixon was going to propose legislation to “abolish the unwieldy 50 member” ARBC and replace it with an administrator appointed by, and answerable to, the president. This ‘independent’ American Revolutionary Bicentennial administration was to be a completely new entity. Besides being under the control of the president, the new ARBA would be much smaller and have no congressional representation. It was exempt from normal government rules regarding employment and purchases. The ARBA was also limited on the amount of compensation that its administrator received. The new entity was to be overseen by a “eight-member bipartisan congressional oversight committee,” which reported its activities but had no other control.³³ Even though the

³² Eugene L. Meyer, “Bicentennial Committee Hit in Report by House Unit Staff,” *Washington Post Times Herald*, December 30 1972.

³³ “President Proposes a New Unit to Plan U.S. Bicentennial,” *New York Times*, February 2, 1973; Eugene L. Meyer, “Nixon to Change Bicentennial Setup,” *Washington Post Times Herald*, February 1, 1973.

ARBC days were limited, on March 17, 1973 Nixon signed a bill to keep it active while Congress debated his recommendations.³⁴

On December 11, 1973 the ARBC was disbanded and the ARBA was officially created.³⁵ The new legislation closely followed President Nixon's recommendations and set an annual limit on how much the ARBA could spend. The bill still put the burden of coordination and funding for the celebration on the federal government.³⁶ On March 13, 1974, John Warner was confirmed by the Senate as the head of the new ARBA.

According to President Richard M. Nixon, Warner, who was the Secretary of the Navy was chosen because he had provided "superb leadership to the[Navy]...during a difficult period of [change]" and which proved his ability to provide vision and guidance to the troubled celebration.³⁷

This new committee rather than overseeing a centralized celebration as the ARBC had tried to do, instead worked out a decentralized celebration as a way of increasing the amount of citizen participation. By increasing citizen participation the ARBA could insure that the multiple sections of society could be formed into a cohesive force for national celebration. Besides trying to increase citizen involvement the ARBA also encouraged corporate support of Bicentennial events. This new message was reinforced by Warner in June 1974, when he spoke at a couple of gatherings in Los Angeles. During his speeches Warner said "the Bicentennial celebration truly belongs to the people" not

³⁴ "Bicentennial Bill Signed by Nixon," *Washington Post Times Herald*, March 17, 1973.

³⁵ Creation of American Revolution Bicentennial Administration and for other purposes, Public Law 93-179, 93rd Cong. (December 11, 1973).

³⁶ American Revolution Bicentennial Commemorative Reprints, *Bicentennial Times*, vol. 1 no. 2., 9.

³⁷ American Revolution Bicentennial Commemorative Reprints, *Bicentennial Times*, vol. 1 no. 4., 25, 31.

the ARBA. He cited the creation of the ARBA as a congressional response to “the will of the people” placing control where it belonged, at the state and local levels.³⁸

Historian Christopher Capozzola believed the motivation for the ARBA shift was more for financial reasons; however this does not diminish the ARBA commission’s desire that the Bicentennial celebration be by the people and for the people. In decentralizing the planning of the celebration, it could bring all of the people of a community together for the planning and the celebration of the American Bicentennial, thereby creating a common framework which the cherished American ideal of individuality could still operate and yet still fulfill a higher purpose.³⁹

In a *Los Angeles Times* article which discussed Warner’s visit, Michael Seiler described how Warner believed that “Uncle Sam” should not be the “main financier” of the celebration. His solution was for private corporations and businessmen to step up to create the nation’s Bicentennial events. Warner argued that the Bicentennial was just what the country needed to get over the tragedy of Watergate. He believed that the dark cloud of Watergate had a silver lining, in that many more people were seeking solace in America’s founding documents. Warner believed that by consulting these documents, Americans’ faith in the system was restored. He argued that the Bicentennial was a way to reaffirm a belief in America, stating that if the Bicentennial was only a parade or fireworks, a great opportunity would be lost.⁴⁰

³⁸ American Revolution Bicentennial Commemorative Reprints, *Bicentennial Times*, vol. 1 no. 9. 71; Michael Seiler, “Bicentennial by the People, For the People” *Los Angeles Times*, June 27, 1974; American Bicentennial Revolution Administration, “Questions and Answers about the Bicentennial,” (Washington D.C.; Government Printing Office, 1975), n.p.

³⁹ American Revolution Bicentennial Administration, *Bicentennial of the United States: A Final Report to the People* vol. 1 (Washington D.C: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1977), 9; Capozzola, “It Makes You Want to Believe in the Country,” 32.

⁴⁰ Michael Seiler, “Bicentennial by the People, For the People,” *Los Angeles Times*, June 27, 1974.

Even though the ARBC was gone, some of its ideas lived on to become part of the ARBA's Bicentennial celebration. These ideas were seen in the overarching themes that the ARBA used. The ARBC introduced the "themes of 'Heritage 76', 'Festival USA', and 'Horizons 76'"⁴¹ to the celebration planning which the ARBA ultimately used. These themes were introduced with the idea of examining how America had made it through the first 200 years of nationhood, to celebrate the accomplishment of achieving nationhood, and finally to make the citizens of the United States want to contribute something to the legacy of American society.

According to the pamphlet "Question and Answers about the Bicentennial" put out by the ARBA, each of these three things were meant to evoke certain feelings in the American population. According to the pamphlet, "Heritage 76" was meant to reconnect the American population to the founding fathers and the "three great documents."⁴² "Festival USA" was meant to celebrate "the richness of our diversity [and] the vitality of our culture." Including this theme in the Bicentennial celebration allowed the committee to use Americans' love of individuality to promote the larger program, by celebrating their diversity, while at the same time unifying the population in their sense of individuality and diversity.⁴³

Finally "Horizon 76" was included so that the American population could plan to create a better tomorrow. This could be accomplished "by drawing inspiration from the innovations of today, [and] by seeking the blessings of liberty for ourselves and others."

⁴¹ American Bicentennial Revolution Administration, "Questions and Answers about the Bicentennial," (Washington D.C.; Government Printing Office, 1975), n.p.

⁴² These three documents are the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, and the Bill of Rights, and are the primary documents of American civil religion.

⁴³ American Bicentennial Revolution Administration, "Questions and Answers about the Bicentennial," (Washington D.C.; Government Printing Office, 1975), n.p.

This theme not only had the American population looking ahead but also reaffirmed that the American way of life was the correct way and that it was their duty to go out and spread the word of American grandeur.⁴⁴

These three themes helped to create a common framework that allowed Bicentennial celebrations in Anchorage, Alaska, Miami, Florida and all points in between to identify with each other. During the Bicentennial celebration no matter where they were located, participants were suppose to know that throughout the land of the free and the home of the brave, others were enjoying similar experiences.

As stated earlier, the problems faced by the ARBC were part of a larger problem reflecting the fractures within society; it was these fractures that the ARBA would have to overcome. Some people recognized that Americans unity was tenuous at best. Max Lerner wrote in the *Los Angeles Times*, “why not just cancel the American Bicentennial?” Lerner argued that there were several problems with the Bicentennial celebration. The root cause, at the top of Lerner’s list, was that Americans were focused on the last twenty years of American history and that depressing time period, overshadowed the generally positive outlook of America’s 200 years of history. Lerner believed that America was in crisis and that rather than celebrating, America needed to do some self-actualization and find itself.⁴⁵

Like Lerner, not everyone was enamored of the Bicentennial celebration. An article in the African-American newspaper *The Chicago Defender* examined the “hypocrisy” surrounding the Bicentennial. The article pointed out that one of the founding fathers Thomas Jefferson “personifies the 200 years unresolved contradiction in

⁴⁴ American Bicentennial Revolution Administration, “Questions and Answers about the Bicentennial” (Washington D.C.; Government Printing Office, 1975), n.p.

⁴⁵ Lerner, “Why Not Just Cancel America’s Bicentennial?” *Los Angeles Times*, April 13, 1975.

America.” It also argued that while the ideals gained from the American Revolution should be changed, the Declaration of Independence, the document that put forth those ideals needed to be brought back to the prominent place in American society in an effort to stop society’s moral decay.⁴⁶

The fracturing of American society meant that it was perfect for subversion. According to a *Los Angeles Times* article, the Bicentennial was a perfect venue to engage in acts of terrorism. The goal of the terrorists, according to the article, was to separate Puerto Rico from U.S. possession. The article goes on to claim the K.G.B. and the Cuban government were hatching the plot.⁴⁷

Others worried that the Bicentennial was the path to moral decay. In the *Christian Leader*, a Mennonite speaker asked “are we guilty of too much influence and consumption?” The article went on to ask if the Mennonite brethren had failed the country by failing to monitor their purity. Extolling its readers, it asked whether the Bicentennial provided the Mennonite Church a way to “clarify” their mission. The churches could accomplish this by recognizing the proper place of secular and spiritual entities. While the article “affirm[ed] that which is good in the nation” it also showed the “evil” which has been done by American society. For the Mennonite Brethren the Bicentennial represented a danger to their members. This danger was that it promoted America and Americana. The members needed to remain diligent that America did not overtake God’s place in the hierarchy of importance. The article argued that by serving God, the brethren could make America a better place. However if they allowed patriotic fervor to gain importance, the moral decay that America was experiencing would

⁴⁶ “Hypocrisy Seen in Bicentennial,” *Chicago Defender*, July 26, 1975.

⁴⁷ “Leftist Plan to Disrupt Bicentennial Told,” *The Nation*, *Los Angeles Times*, November 28, 1975.

continue. The Brethren feared that the Bicentennial reinforced the secular decadence of American society, and that its members would be swayed by the pageantry and the larger societal expectation that the members conform to the celebration.⁴⁸

While the Mennonite Brethren concerned themselves with social decay, U.S. citizens also expressed their dismay with the Bicentennial. Laura A. Dobbs in July 1975 said that “I am so sick of the Bicentennial I could throw up.” Instead of catching Bicentennial fever, Dobbs got the Bicentennial flu. One reason that Dobbs and others were sick of the Bicentennial was that the celebration was seen as having sold out to corporate greed.⁴⁹

As stated earlier the shift in who financed the celebration came with the demise of the ARBC and the creation of the ARBA. According to the ARBA’s, *Bicentennial of the United States: A Final Report to the People*, \$38.9 million was contributed by 250 companies in support of its official programs.⁵⁰ John Warner, in the same speech in Los Angeles where he said that financial support for the celebration should come from the private sector, acknowledged that there was a “fine line” between sponsorship and commercialization. Warner warned that there would be companies that put the word Bicentennial on their products in order to boost sales while lamenting that they could not control the use of the word Bicentennial since it was in the public domain, and even

⁴⁸ Faith and Life Commission Southern District Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches “A Bicentennial Statement for Mennonite Brethren,” United States Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches. 1937. *Christian Leader*. Hillsboro, KS: Mennonite Brethren Pub. House, (January 20, 1976), 7.

⁴⁹ Laura A. Dobbs, “Letters to the Editor,” *Los Angeles Times*, July 18, 1975.

⁵⁰ American Revolution Bicentennial Commemorative Reprints, *Bicentennial Times*, vol. 1 no. 12. 97; American Revolution Bicentennial Administration, *Bicentennial of the United States: A Final Report to the People* vol. 1 (Washington D.C: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1977), 253, 264, 265; Capozzola, “It Makes You Want to Believe in the Country,” 33.

though they could not control the word Bicentennial they could however control a trademark symbols. (see Appendix, Figure 1)

The symbol could be placed on officially sanctioned licensed products. This symbol, according to the pamphlet *Question and Answers about the Bicentennial*, was created using components of the flag. The symbol was a white star outlined with blue white and red stripes surrounded by the words American Revolution Bicentennial 1776 – 1976.⁵¹ According to the *Q&A Pamphlet* the design was created by Chermayeff and Geismar Associates and was a “contemporary design” used to mirror the “forward-looking goals of the Bicentennial celebration.” This was done so that “new national commitment, a new spirit of 76” would be “forged” and the newly created spirit would, in turn, “unite the nation in purpose and dedication to the advancement of human welfare as [the country] move[d] into its third century.”⁵²

The Symbol began under the auspices of ARBC. However, in 1972 the ARBC “declared a moratorium on the matter of commercial participation.” The moratorium was to last until 1974. Nevertheless, even with the moratorium, *New York Times* reporter Leonard Sloane said that a couple of hundred companies had written in asking for permission to use the symbol. According to Sloane the ARBC response was simple; the symbol could not be “used in connection with the sale of any item in the broad field of commercial enterprise.” An ARBC spokesman said that if the ARBC licensed the symbol it would be to companies and events that showed the American ideals of innovation and

⁵¹ American Bicentennial Revolution Administration, “Questions and Answers about the Bicentennial,” (Washington D.C.; Government Printing Office, 1975), n.p.

⁵² American Bicentennial Revolution Administration, “American Revolution Bicentennial Symbol: Guidelines for Authorized Use” Washington D.C.; Government Printing Office), 4; American Bicentennial Revolution Administration, “Questions and Answers about the Bicentennial,” n.p.

creativity. According to Sloane this was done to prevent the public from becoming burned out on the Bicentennial.⁵³

Had the ARBC continue its existence and followed its plan Americans like Dobbs would not have been ready to throw up. While the ideals behind the creation of the Bicentennial symbol sounded great, cynics pointed out that the symbol was something that the ARBA could control, and that ARBC noble plan gave way to the crass commercialization policies of the ARBA.⁵⁴

Corporate sponsorship was not the only way the ARBA made money. They also collected license fees, from those companies they let use the symbol the amount of the fee varied based on the product being licensed. According to Historian Christopher Capozzola, “Between four and 15% of the sales of licensed products” made its way back to the ARBA, which expected to make about “\$3 million in fees.” Capozzola’s numbers might be a bit skewed since the ARBA’s *Second Report to Congress* stated that the typical licensing royalty was 5% of the wholesale price, the report accounted for \$1 million dollars in the twenty months preceding the report and stated that another “\$1 million [was] expected” by the time the contract ran out, though Capozzola did have the advantage of being able to look at the final figures for the celebration.⁵⁵

Companies such as Franklin Mint, Olympia Records, and Montgomery Ward helped to promote the Bicentennial through licensed products, such as collectible

⁵³ Leonard Sloane, “Advertising: The Symbol of ‘76,” *New York Times*, August 17, 1972.

⁵⁴ Laura A. Dobbs, “Letters to the Editor,” *Los Angeles Times*, July 18, 1975.

⁵⁵ “Display Ad 729 –No Title,” *New York Times* May 4, 1975; Gail Bronson, “The Spirit of (19)76: Is it a Bicentennial or a Buy-Centennial,” *Wall Street Journal*, April 15, 1975; “Bucks From The Bicentennial,” *Time* 106, no. 13 (September 29, 1975): 85. *Academic Search Premier*, EBSCOhost (accessed September 22, 2012); American Revolution Bicentennial Administration, *Bicentennial of the United States: A Final Report to the People* vol. 1 (Washington D.C: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1977), 208, 263 ; American Bicentennial Revolution Administration, “2nd Report to Congress Pursuant to Public Law 93-179” vol. 1 (Washington D.C.; Government Printing Office, 1976), 27; Capozzola, “It Makes You Want to Believe in the Country,” 33.

Bicentennial ingots, sheet music and furniture. These products joined clothing manufacturers, flag manufacturers, and manufacturers of other sundry goods on the Bicentennial marketing bandwagon. There were six separate flag manufacturers who were licensed to produce flag displaying the Bicentennial symbol. The ARBA final report had a list of almost 100 different vendors that produce various Bicentennial licensed items.⁵⁶

Even those companies that did not officially licensed their products jumped on the Bicentennial bandwagon. Toys, food, liquor manufacturers, and strippers all joined in and created products that celebrated America and its founding turning the Bicentennial into “buy – centennial.” The *Wall Street Journal* addressed these concerns about the plethora of Bicentennial themed items that were flooding the marketplace, The paper asked whether the overt commercialization will lead “to a \$925 sword or an ‘*Uncle Samwhich*’” The sword, at the point of the paper’s derision, was a copy of George Washington’s 1787 inaugural sword, it was limited to only 1000 copies. The manufacturer reported high three figured sales. The ‘*Uncle Samwhich*’ was a product of Penn Dairies and was an ice cream sandwich that joined such Bicentennial treats as ‘*Paul Revere Rounds*’ and ‘Redcoats.’ These flavors from a small dairy joined those of Baskin-Robbins who added Bicentennial flavors such as “*Betsy Ross Twirl*” and “*George Washington Cherry Tree*.” It was not just food manufacturers that joined the Bicentennial celebration. Beverage makers also adapted their products for the celebration.⁵⁷

⁵⁶ American Revolution Bicentennial Administration, *Master Register of Bicentennial Projects* (Washington D.C: U.S. Government Printing Office, February, 1976), 1—184 – 1—187.

⁵⁷ “Is it a Bicentennial or a Buy-Centennial,” *Wall Street Journal*, April 15, 1975; Laura A. Dobbs, “Letters to the Editor,” *Los Angeles Times*, July 18, 1975; Howard Serbin, Letters to the Times, *Los Angeles Times*, August 2, 1975; Eugene L. Meyer, “Red, White, Blue – Green” *Washington Post, Times Herald*, August 15, 1972.

Beverage manufacturer 7-Up released a set of collectible cans that showcased all 50 states, in a collection titled *United We Stand*. In the collection each can had the states outline, when it entered the union, and other basic facts about the state. When these fifty cans were assembled in a specific order and stacked into a pyramid they created a portrait of Uncle Sam. This was not the only time the drink manufacturers put out collector cans that promoted American identity. In 1979, the drink manufacture released another set of 50 cans. This collection was called “*America’s Turning*” and centered around an outdoor activity found in the specific state highlighted on the can. Once the collection was assembled again in a specific order, an outline map of the lower 48 states was created. These types of collectibles both reinforced the idea that America was unified and that certain icons needed to be given priority in the American mythos.⁵⁸

7-Up was not the only beverage maker to tap into the Bicentennial and have their containers highlight the states and couple them with a patriotic theme. Bourbon distiller Early Times released a set of limited edition decanters. Each decanter contained a state name and a patriotic scene on the front, the back contained a short synopsis of the iconic image located on the front. The decanters included such famous pictures as the signing of the Declaration of Independence, Washington Crossing the Delaware, and the Spirit of ‘76. Accompanying these well known icons were images of Paul Revere’s ride and various other depictions of revolutionary soldiers.⁵⁹ In an ad for their decanters, Early

⁵⁸ Popcan.org, “7up United We Stand / Uncle Sam (1976),” <http://popcan.org/set-7upsam.html> (accessed November 14, 2012); Sodacancollection.blogspot.com, “America’s Turning 7 up” <http://sodacancollection.blogspot.com/2011/10/americas-turning-7-up.html> (accessed November 14, 2012); Davide Andreani, Davide Andreani Coco-cola Homepage, “7UP,” <http://www.ad-informatica.com/davideandreani/7up.htm> (accessed November 14, 2012).

⁵⁹ “Display Ad 8 – No Title,” *Los Angeles Times*, September 5, 1975; These Decanters were found for sale on the internet using a search parameter of “early times Bicentennial limited edition decanter” in Google. They were on Auction sites like eBay “Early Times Decanter” <http://www.ebay.com/bhp/early-times-decanter> (accessed September 22, 2013) and sales sites such as

Times warned that the bottles would not be reproduced, as the molds were going to be destroyed saying that “The Spirit of ‘76 [was] brought to life again.”⁶⁰ A *New York Times* article said commemorative decanters with a Bicentennial theme “were proving extremely popular with buyers.” According to the article, while these decanters did not receive official sanction, New Jersey State senator Matthew Feldman said that “liquor played a major role in the nation’s history” citing Washington’s troop’s reliance on rum, and the Whiskey Rebellion of 1794, and as such they were part of the celebration.⁶¹

Joining with Early Times, other distilleries also released Bicentennial commemorative decanters. In addition to the state decanters, Early Times released decanters in the shape of the Liberty Bell, the American Eagle, the Washington Monument, and also decanters in the shape of iconic images of Washington Crossing the Delaware, and the Spirit of ’76.⁶² Other decanters portrayed iconic moments of the revolution. Old Rip Van Winkle Distillery released a collectible decanter titled *New Jersey Crossroads of the Revolution*. (see Appendix, Figure 2) On the decanter pictures of Washington Crossing the Delaware, and Molly Pitcher involved with the battle of

Etsy, http://www.etsy.com/listing/119623150/sale-early-times-1976-Bicentennial?utm_source=google&utm_medium=product_listing_promoted&utm_campaign=vintage_mid&gclid=CJa_xLma37kCFUdo7AodMFYAcw (accessed September 22,2013).

⁶⁰ “Display Ad 8 – No Title,” *Los Angeles Times*, September 5, 1975; Again the Liberty Bell decanter can also be found on Both Ebay “Liberty Bell Whiskey Decanter” <http://www.ebay.com/bhp/liberty-bell-whiskey-decanter> (accessed September 21,2013) and Etsy http://www.etsy.com/listing/122916988/vintage-collectible-commemorative?utm_source=google&utm_medium=product_listing_promoted&utm_campaign=vintage_low&gclid=CMWz5OKd37kCFeHm7AodzQYAdw (Accessed September 22, 2013) utilizing the search term “Liberty Bell Bicentennial limited edition decanter” in Google; “Liquor Bottles Get Bicentennial Theme,” *New York Times*, December 21, 1975.

⁶¹ “Liquor Bottles Get Bicentennial Theme,” *New York Times*, December 21, 1975; “Display Ad 10 – No Title” *Wall Street Journal*, November 25, 1975.

⁶² “Liquor Bottles Get Bicentennial Theme,” *New York Times*, December 21, 1975; eBay “Early Times Decanter” <http://www.ebay.com/bhp/early-times-decanter> (accessed September 22,2013).

Monmouth, are just two of the images that reinforced the prominence of icons in the American mythos.⁶³ (see Appendix, Figure 3)

Even Tiffany Crystal Company got into act partnering with the American headquarters of the Seagram's distillery. Tiffany Crystal Company created a crystal decanter designed in the colonial style. The collectable decanter came in its own box with a cloth carrying bag (see Appendix, Figure 4); a card attached to the decanter that proclaimed "A tribute to a very Special Occasion..." said that "'1776 by Seagram' was a special kind of whiskey" that was Seagram's way of celebrating the American Bicentennial and that this special whiskey deserved a special decanter.⁶⁴ Bourbon distiller Jim Beam also released six commemorative decanters featuring *Saturday Evening Post* covers in Bicentennial cartons.⁶⁵ Even those distillers that did not have collectible decanters joined in the celebration, liquor manufacture Dewars had a half gallon of White Label blended scotch whiskey that they priced at \$17.76 for the Bicentennial.⁶⁶ Even though the youths of American society were too young to imbibe in these beverages, and were busy collecting the 7-Up cans, their parents were collecting these decanters and in collecting these decanters, reinforced the who and the what that was important in being American and major parts of the American mythos.

This reinforcement of American icons could also be found throughout the house, in both collectible and mundane items. In the kitchen the youth of America might start their day pouring syrup over their pancakes out of a Log Cabin bottle graced by the

⁶³ Colton Weber photographer, "New Jersey Crossroads of the Revolution," photograph Chicago from private collection November 22, 2012.

⁶⁴ Steven Bellavia photographer, "Tiffany Crystal Decanter," photograph Chicago from private collection December 27, 2012; "Liquor Bottles Get Bicentennial Theme," *New York Times*, December 21, 1975.

⁶⁵ "Display Ad 24 – No Title," *Los Angeles Times*, January 26, 1976.

⁶⁶ "Display Ad 12 – No Title," *Los Angeles Times*, January 6, 1976; "Display Ad 7 – No Title," *Los Angeles Times*, January 20, 1976.

images of the Liberty Bell, the Spirit of '76, or the American Eagle, while using a Liberty Bell pepper grinder to pepper their eggs, drinking Tang that came out of collectible jars containing Bicentennial images, eaten off a Lexan plate containing Raggedy Ann and Andy or Mickey Mouse celebrating America's 200th birthday. With breakfast finished they grab their lunchbox, graced with a cartoon version of the Spirit of '76 and decorated with in the red white and blue color scheme. (see Appendix, Figure 5) All across the country this ritual was repeated daily.⁶⁷

The Bicentennial celebration also saw an increased interest in colonial style furniture. *The Chicago Defender* told how the 1973 international home furnishing market had a plethora of Bicentennial themed furniture awaiting those who attended. According to the *Defender* "the Bicentennial craze can be seen everywhere" clocks, chests, chairs, beds, and hutches to be purchased either in the colonial style or with Bicentennial themes present. The *Los Angeles Times* said that modern furniture such as the Barca lounge had roots in the American past linking the Barca lounge to Ben Franklin's invention of the rocking chair. While these items did not specifically promote American Icons they did harken back to the Days of the founding Fathers many of whom were prominent American civil religious icons.⁶⁸

All of these contributions were the functional and mundane parts of American lives; various other types of collectibles joined liquor decanters gracing American home.

⁶⁷ EBay, "Vintage Limited Edition Schmid Walt Disney Mickey Mouse Bicentennial Plate," <http://www.ebay.com/itm/Vintage-Limited-Edition-Schmid-Walt-Disney-Mickey-Mouse-Bicentennial-Plate-/121147903122> (accessed September 22 2013); "Display Ad 18—No Title" *New York Times*, December 8, 1975; Douglas Johnston, "Letters to the Editor," *Los Angeles Times*, December 31, 1975; Steven Bellavia photographer, "Spirit of '76 Lunch Box," photograph Lawrence KS from authors private collection January 28, 2013).

⁶⁸ "Off and Running 'America' at the Mart!" *Chicago Daily Defender*, January 9, 1973; "American Revivals," *New York Times*, September 28 1975. ; "Clocks to Honor 200th Birthday," *Los Angeles Time*, September 28, 1975; Is it a Bicentennial or a Buy-Centennial," *Wall Street Journal*, April 15, 1975; "Bicentennial Salute to American Design," *Los Angeles Time*, November 15, 1975.

The Franklin Mint made \$307 million in 1976 selling collectibles, including an American colonies spoon collection, which consisted of “13 superbly sculpted commemorative spoons minted in fine pewter.” The collection would only be issued once and only available by advance subscription. An advertisement stated that “once all subscribers had received the final piece of their collection the molds would be destroyed” ensuring the uniqueness of the collection. For only \$182, plus tax, any American citizen could get all thirteen pewter spoons and a “free pine spoon rack custom crafted in an authentic colonial style.” To keep the American population from balking at the price tag the Franklin Mint made it so the collectors could pay fourteen dollars a month for each spoon.⁶⁹

Along with the collectible spoons the American Bicentennial saw large releases of collectible medals. The Federal government, state governments, and private entities, like the Franklin Mint, all issued collectible medals. Some of these Bicentennial medals were produced into the 1980s. The Capitol Historical Society absorbed people who worked with both the ARBC and the ARBA and it continued the tradition of releasing Bicentennial commemorative medals until the early 1990s. Though the Bicentennial celebration brought American revolutionary themed medals to a prominent position of attention, as the years advanced they continued to ebb and flow into the consciousness of American society.⁷⁰

⁶⁹ “The Franklin Mint announces the American Colonies Spoon Collection,” *Los Angeles Times Home Magazine* September 14, 1975, 53; “Display Ad 353 – No Title” *Los Angeles Times*, October 8, 1972; Nancy Yoshihara, “A Word From the Sponsor” *Los Angeles Time*, July 15, 1980.

⁷⁰ Ed Reitter, “Numismatics,” *New York Times*, September 9, 1979; “Bicentennial Medals Approved,” *New York Times*, March 18, 1980; “Display Ad 325 —No Title,” *Los Angeles Times*, June 15, 1975; “Display Ad 1108 —No Title,” *New York Times*, January 5, 1975; “Display Ad 32 —No Title,” *Wall Street Journal*, January 13, 1976.

Cities and local governments such as Azusa, California also issued commemorative medals. These medals were used to help fund events in Azusa. Other medals commemorated Bicentennial events. One such event was the American freedom train medal produced by the Medallic Art Company, the medal came in three editions; gold and silver available through mail order from the mint and a bronze medallion that could only be purchased at the train for \$2.50. On the front was a relief of the Southern Pacific steam engine that pulled the American freedom train, on the back were depictions of the colonial Minuteman and an astronaut each carrying a time appropriate American flag. Like the Azusa medallion, the American freedom train medal was used to defer the cost of the Bicentennial event.⁷¹

While the American freedom train medal's \$2.50 price tag was reasonable and within the grasp of most Americans young and old, the three-inch solid gold official Bicentennial medal's \$4,000 price tag placed it out of the reach of most Americans. Even though one skeptic according to the numismatics column of the *New York Times* said they would be lucky to sell ten, citing that the gold value of the medal was less than half of the cost of the medal. A column dated July 4, 1976 said that the Treasury Department had received 228 orders by early June, and with a month left to go before the order window closed, the almost \$1 million that had already been raised made it seem like even in economic difficult times the idea of America sold.⁷²

To go along with the Franklin Mint's spoon collection the U. S. Bicentennial Society offered a set of 12 patriotic plates. While the \$1,200 price tag might seem a bit steep the cost is justified, according to Sue Grubbs of the organization, because the run is

⁷¹ "Azusa Selling Bicentennial Medallions," *Los Angeles Times*, October 2, 1975.

⁷² Herbert C. Bardes, "Numismatics," *New York Times*, July 4, 1976.

limited to 2,500 sets and included a cabinet to display the plates.⁷³ Other memorabilia straddled both the worlds of mundane and collectibles. Mugs and plates were both sold by “local” commissions. The souvenirs could be used as decoration or put to actual use.⁷⁴ It was not only household items that saw this creation of Bicentennial themed items; leisure time also saw an introduction of the Bicentennial into playtime. One hobby that saw a surge of patriotic themed items was model railroading.

Model train manufacturers such as Lionel, Bachmann, Lifelike, AMT, and Tyco, all released model trains with Bicentennial themed trains. These trains could be found in the popular scales of O and HO, plus the relatively new gauge of N. These trains celebrated various aspects of America. Whether it was Lionel’s O scale train that according to the box, was “a great new line up of rolling stock designed especially for the Spirit of 76,” (see Appendix, Figure 6) or Micro-Trains 1975 N scale train cars that celebrated the original 13 colonies these trains reinforced the idea of American-ness. In comparison to the Lionel cars that contained an original American flag, a map of the state, the state’s flag, motto, flower, tree, and demographic data, the Micro-Train cars contained less demographic details about each state. The Micro-Train cars had a map of the state, the state motto, state capital and the primary industry of the state, all surrounding a Bicentennial emblem. (see Appendix, Figure 7) Both sets played to the idea that America started in just thirteen small colonies and from those colonies an exceptional nation was born.⁷⁵ Bachmann's HO scale train titled "*Bicentennial Set*" took a different approach it celebrated American icons. George Washington, Ben Franklin, the

⁷³ Emma E. Pullen, “Money Motif Edging into Bicentennial,” Commercial *Los Angeles Times*, July 6, 1975.

⁷⁴ “Bicentennial Mugs Sales,” *Los Angeles Times*, September 21, 1975; “Bicentennial Plates Offered in Bergen,” *New York Times*, November 16, 1975.

⁷⁵ Author's private collection.

Liberty Bell, and the Declaration of Independence all graced cars of the Bachmann set reinforcing these important pieces of American civil religion.⁷⁶ Lionel also created a train with iconic images each car decorated in the red white and blue theme of the American flag, contained to iconic images. The *Spirit of '76*, along with the Liberty Bell, George Washington superimposed over the Declaration of Independence, along with the seal of the United States were just two of the cars pulled by the Liberty Special engine.⁷⁷ (see Appendix, Figure 8) A model of the American freedom train was even produced by Lionel in HO scale which Toys “R” Us sold in December 1975 for \$48.97. The set contained two display cars, the two showcase cars and the red white and blue Alco engine. This allowed the aspiring engineer to not only see the original but to run a scale model on their own tracks.⁷⁸ Tyco and Bachmann each released sets that showcased their “*Spirit of 76*” engines, and cabooses with standard railroad cars in between while less patriotic than the Bicentennial themed sets, these sets also cost less. The same Toys “R” Us ad that sold the American freedom train set for fifty dollars, sold the Tyco set for twenty dollars.⁷⁹

What this meant was that aspiring engineers at the time could run their model trains while drinking the beverage of their choice, all the while having the importance of the United States and its creation being stealthily reinforced.

It was not just model railroaders who could get into the revolutionary spirit other hobbyists could also experience the Bicentennial fervor. Along with model trains

⁷⁶ These trains can still be found for sale today one such place is Amazon.com “Bachmann HO Train 6 Car Set Independence Bicentennial GE U36B Diesel Loco NIB,” <http://www.amazon.com/Bachmann-Train-Independence-Bicentennial-Diesel/dp/B00A2E8NSK> (Accessed September 30, 2013); Another is on E-Bay <http://www.ebay.com/itm/BACHMANN-N-SCALE-BICENTENNIAL-ELECTRIC-TRAIN-SET-IN-ORIGINAL-BOX-/161109461294> (Accessed September 30, 2013).

⁷⁷ Author's private collection.

⁷⁸ “Display Ad 106 —No Title,” *Los Angeles Times*, December 10, 1975.

⁷⁹ “Display Ad 106 —No Title,” *Los Angeles Times*, December 10, 1975.

enthusiasts both Philatelists (stamp collectors) and Numismatist (coin collectors) saw the Bicentennial year bring new opportunities to add to their respective collections.

Coin collectors saw American money add revolutionary and iconic images to the back of coins and even the reintroduction of a new denomination of paper currency. The revolutionary drummer, Independence Hall, and the Liberty Bell all replaced the traditional backs of the quarter, half dollar, and dollar coins. Gone were the American Eagle on the back of the quarter, the modified presidential seal on the back of the half-dollar, and the Apollo 11 mission insignia on the back of the Eisenhower dollar. Instead, the mint struck new coinage in celebration of the special year. The mint planned to strike a huge number of coins; approximately 865 million coins were to be released by the federal government, according to an article in the *Los Angeles Times*. Mary Brooks, the director of the Mint recognized the collectability of the Bicentennial coinage, and as such production of the new coins was increased to meet the expected demand.⁸⁰ The large number of coins released meant that many of these coins are still in circulation more than thirty years later.⁸¹

The new coinage design was the result of a decision by the Treasury Department. The coins would circulate “for at least 18 months” and run through the end of 1976.⁸² The half-dollar was the first coin to be released into circulation on the weekend of July 4, 1975; the quarter and dollar coins would be released in August and October respectively. The new quarter was to be the most widely released coin of the three with the Treasury

⁸⁰ “Coins Honoring Bicentennial to Circulate Soon,” *Los Angeles Times*, July 4, 1975; “First Bicentennial Coins to be Available Today” *Los Angeles Times*, July 7, 1975; Roger Boye, “Two-bit Designer’ Rides the Bicentennial Waves” *Coins Chicago Tribune*, August 24, 1975.

⁸¹ “Photo Standalone 3—No Title,” *Chicago Tribune*, May 17, 1975; Photo Standalone 5—No Title,” *Chicago Tribune*, August, 19, 1975.

⁸² “Bicentennial Design of Coins to Win \$5,000,” *New York Times*, October 29, 1973.

bumping up production to 1.6 billion quarters alone. The winning design produced by Jack Ahr of Arlington Heights, Illinois was chosen out of “almost 1,000 entries” in a national contest that earned the designer \$5,000. The design change of the coins was a big deal; this was the first time in United States history that circulating coins were ever released to commemorate an American celebration.⁸³

The collectability of those coins minted on the anniversary of American independence was recognized early. However, this forethought led to a problem. Silver dollars minted in 1883 and 1884, and packaged as a Bicentennial mementos complete with a note from President Nixon, who was supposed to be completing his second term in office, were no longer salable. A massive cash outlay would be required to rectify the problem. Even uncirculated collector sets released for the Bicentennial would eventually forced extra work for the Treasury Department. Even as late as 1979, when the price of these collector sets fell below the market value of the silver in the coins , and the Treasury Department discontinued selling them, collectors could purchase a piece of Americana and proudly bask in America’s achievement.⁸⁴

In addition to the changes to America’s hard currency, the Treasury also planned to redesign and re-release a new denomination of paper money, the two-dollar bill. This bill celebrated the founding of America. On the front of the bill was Thomas Jefferson, who finally rejoined other American icons, Washington and Lincoln, on American paper currency, now all three of these civil religious icons could be found on both paper and hard currency. On the reverse side of the bill was the signing of Jefferson’s Declaration

⁸³ Roger Boye, “Two-bit Designer’ Rides the Bicentennial Waves,” *Coins Chicago Tribune*, August 24, 1975.

⁸⁴ “Coins Packaged for Bicentennial Have a Problem,” *Los Angeles Times*, August 5, 1977; “Coin Sale Stopped,” *New York Times*, September, 21, 1979.

of Independence. *The Washington Post* said the bill appealed to America's sense of patriotism, which encouraged Americans to use the bill.⁸⁵ The bill, which had been discontinued in 1966 due to lack of use, was resurrected for the Bicentennial celebration. William East Simon, Secretary of the Treasury, confirmed that the new bill had a Bicentennial theme, replacing the older version's Monticello on the back of the bill, with John Trumbull's iconic painting of the signing of the Declaration of Independence. The head of the Bureau of Engraving, James Conlon, stated just days before the official announcement that even though the two dollar bill "would probably have a Bicentennial theme" the bill was here to stay and was intended as a "permanent bill."⁸⁶

Philatelists also saw the Bicentennial spark new interest in their hobby, with an influx of American iconic images to collect. New and old collectors needed a way to collect and display their stamps and H.E. Harris obliged. They had the choice of either the two-volume *Liberty Album* or the smaller *Independence Album*, which was geared towards beginners. On the cover of these albums were iconic symbols of American mythology: the Statue of Liberty on the *Liberty Album* and the Liberty Bell on the *Independence Album*.⁸⁷ In addition to the Liberty Bell on the front cover, were red white and blue fireworks creating the impression of the Fourth of July (see Appendix, Figure 9); on the back cover was a image titled *Soliloquy of the Postage Stamp*. This soliloquy

⁸⁵ Carole Shifrin, "Old Friend Returns: The \$2 Bill," *Washington Post*, November 4, 1975.

⁸⁶ "\$2 Bill is Expected to Make Comeback in Bicentennial Year," *New York Times*, November 1 1975; Carole Shifrin, "Old Friend Returns: The \$2 Bill," *Washington Post*, November 4, 1975; Treasury will Resurrect \$2 Bill Next April," *Wall Street Journal*, November 4, 1975 ; Herbert C. Bardes. "\$2 Bill Coming in 1976," *Numismatics New York Times*, November 9, 1975.

⁸⁷ "Display Ad 442 —No Title," *New York Times*, November 25, 1973; H.E. Harris Ed. *Independence United States Postage Stamp Album*, (Boston: H.E. Harris & Co., 1973), 28 – 29.

was printed on a graphic of parchment to mimic the Declaration of Independence.⁸⁸ (see Appendix, Figure 10)

1971 saw the first in a series of Bicentennial stamps issued. The first stamp issued on the Fourth of July was *The Great American Bicentennial Revolution Symbol* stamp, which contained the official Bicentennial symbol and the date 1776 – 1976. The stamp introduced America to the ARBC symbol.⁸⁹ This stamp was followed by *Colonial Craftsmen* in 1972, the *Boston Tea Party* and *Communications in Colonial Times* in 1973.⁹⁰ The *Independence Album* not only displayed these 1973 Bicentennial stamps with the other stamps that were released that year but it also contained a dedicated page showcasing the eight Bicentennial stamps of the year. The eight stamps of 1973 were followed with 1974's *Continental Congress* four-stamp commemorative set and 1975's ten Bicentennial themed stamps. As the number of stamps increased, so did the likelihood that the American Bicentennial and the ideas it represented would be seen on a daily basis as the mail arrived. Along with the specific Bicentennial themed stamps, the Post Office also released an Americana series, which showcased icons like the Capitol dome, the Liberty Bell, the Eagle and shield, and the colonial drum, interspersed with images such as the old North Church made famous in the story of Paul Revere.

In 1975 the Postal Service planned to release seven Bicentennial themed commemorative sets including: 50 state flags, and a 32-stamp set that showed the Declaration of Independence. Joining these large sets were to be iconic images of the

⁸⁸ H.E. Harris Ed. Back cover.

⁸⁹ Franklin R. Brims Jr., "First 200th Anniversary Stamp to be Issued" *Washington Post, Times Herald*, February 28, 1971; "Article 5—No Title," *Los Angeles Times*, December 14, 1975; H.E. Harris Ed. 71 – 72.

⁹⁰ "Bicentennial First Day Cover," *Stamps, New York Times*, June 11, 1972; "Photo Standalone 1 – No Title," *Chicago Tribune*, August 3, 1972; "Photo Standalone 1 – No Title," *Chicago Tribune*, April 7, 1973.

Spirit of '76, and the signing of the Declaration of Independence in three- and four-stamp sets respectively. To round out the year's commemorative releases, the Post Office also released four commemorative sheet sets, containing five stamps each. The sheets portrayed such important moments as *Washington Crossing the Delaware*, *Washington at Valley Forge*, *The Signing of the Declaration of Independence*, and the *British surrender at Yorktown*. The souvenir sheets not only displayed the famous paintings that memorialized these events but also bore the ARBA's stamp of approval.⁹¹

Of the over one hundred planned stamps, not all ended up making it onto the pages of the *Independence Album*. The 32-stamp set of the Declaration of Independence was eventually pulled by the Postal Service. Collectors raised concerns about the size and appearance of the stamps after they were separated from the sheet. After listening to the concerns and consulting with the ARBA, the Postal Service decided to pull the proposed set. In contrast, when the 50 state flag set was printed the Swiss Bank Corporation, offered collectors a "unique Bicentennial gift never before [seen] in philatelic history." The set was mounted in the order states were admitted to the union and had each stamp hand-canceled in the Capitol of each state. The set could be had for the low price of \$650 plus shipping, a pittance for this "heirloom" that would be "prized" for years.⁹²

The Franklin Mint also cashed in on the increased desire to collect both stamps and coins by offering collectible sets that fulfilled each hobbyist's desire. The ARBA went one step further when it offered a combined collection of a first-day cover set and a

⁹¹ F.R. Burns Jr., "To Commemorate a Bicentennial," *Washington Post*, August 17, 1975; Michael Orenstein, "Stamps Chronicle Historical Events," Bicentennial *Los Angeles Times*, July 4, 1975; Samuel A. Tower, "Bicentennial Trio, The Spirit of '76,'" *Stamps New York Times*, December 14, 1975; "Stamps Marks 1775 Battle," *New York Times*, April 20, 1975.

⁹² "Controversial Stamp Issue is Killed," *Wall Street Journal*, December 2, 1975; H.E. Harris Ed. *Independence Album*, n.p.; "Display Ad 32 —No Title," *Wall Street Journal*, January 13, 1976.

collectible medal.⁹³ The increased presence of the Bicentennial theme in both money and stamps helped reinforce the importance of American mythology at both the conscious and subconscious level. This reinforcement helped to build a foundation of what was important to the American way of life and also about what was important about being an American.⁹⁴

While the merchandise of the Bicentennial played an important part in helping to disseminate iconic images to large portions of the American population, the event itself also brought back American ideals in society. The ARBA shifted the ARBC's planned larger national celebration to smaller community-based ones. According to the *Bicentennial Times*, in October 1975 there were 6,600 state events listed in the master calendar and they were being added at nearly a rate of 1,000 a month, bringing the expected total for the January 1976 release of the comprehensive calendar to be over 10,000 events.⁹⁵ According to the master calendar of the Bicentennial commission, on 1 January 1975 there were over 18,000 Bicentennial projects. By January 1, 1976, 3,000 projects had terminated leaving over 15,000 still active. Some projects were carried out on the national scale, while others were strictly local. According to the calendar there were 263 international projects, 1,161 national projects, 2,230 state projects, 481 projects that involve multiple states, and a whopping 11,436 local projects.⁹⁶

⁹³ According to the United States Post Office "First Day Covers (FDCs) are envelopes bearing new stamps postmarked on the first day of sale. For each new issuance, the U.S. Postal Service generally selects one location, usually related to the stamp subject, as the place for the first day dedication ceremony and the first day postmark." Usps.com, United States Post Office. <https://about.usps.com/corporate-social-responsibility/stamp-collecting.htm#asc8> (accessed February 8, 2014).

⁹⁴ "Display Ad 32 —No Title," *Wall Street Journal*, January 13, 1976; "The Bicentennial Collection of the Treasures of American Art," *New York Times*, October 19, 1975.

⁹⁵ American Revolution Bicentennial Commemorative Reprints, *Bicentennial Times*, vol. 2 no. 11, 205.

⁹⁶ American Revolution Bicentennial Administration, *Master Register of Bicentennial Projects*, (Washington D.C: U.S. Government Printing Office, February, 1976), 3—1.

Where these projects occurred could be surprising. California's 879 projects were not unanticipated considering the size and population of the state. Given New York's population its 878 projects were also not unexpected. However Indiana's 937 projects were the most numerous of all the states, and Montana's 870 projects showed that population or geographic size were not deciding factors on how many events were planned. On the other end of the spectrum, Georgia--one of the original thirteen colonies--had only eight, barely beating out Vermont, which had only seven projects planned, and American Samoa, which had only five projects planned. Typically most states hosted between 150 to 400 events, meaning that most members of American society had an event nearby.⁹⁷

On the local level, projects covered a wide range of subjects. The official Bicentennial project presentation had a list of 44 subject headings, 32 different types of presentation, in 19 demographic backgrounds leading to almost infinite possible combinations of projects.⁹⁸ Some projects were set up for a very narrow audience: Northern Illinois University, in DeKalb, Illinois, created an American Revolution special course, or Illinois State University, in Normal, Illinois, created eight courses in six university departments that related to the Bicentennial.⁹⁹ Projects such as Clifton, New Jersey's Bicentennial Park or Rockaway, New Jersey's patriotic concert were aimed at the entire community.¹⁰⁰ Other projects were aimed specifically at the younger

⁹⁷ American Revolution Bicentennial Administration, *National Calendar of Bicentennial Events* (Washington D.C: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1975), 1—1; American Revolution Bicentennial Administration, *Master Register of Bicentennial Projects* 3—1.

⁹⁸ American Revolution Bicentennial Administration, *Master Register of Bicentennial Projects* 3—8.

⁹⁹ American Revolution Bicentennial Administration, *Bicentennial of the United States: A Final Report to the People* vol. 3 (Washington D.C: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1977), 374, 394.

¹⁰⁰ American Revolution Bicentennial Administration, *Bicentennial of the United States: A Final Report to the People* vol. 4 (Washington D.C: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1977), 375; American

generation, such as Middlesex County, New Jersey's essay contest, or Worth, Illinois' literature and craft contest, both of which were aimed at students.¹⁰¹ Some projects only had a cursory connection to the Bicentennial such as Bowen, Illinois' new swimming pool or Orangeville, Illinois' new parking lot. While these projects arguably could speak to community beautification, their completion in 1976 was all that made them even remotely Bicentennially themed. These examples are just a small sample of the projects listed in the Bicentennial master calendar.¹⁰²

As stated earlier, the ARBA wanted local communities to take the lion's share of the Bicentennial celebration. To facilitate this, the ARBA put out two workbooks to help in the planning of Bicentennial projects. The first handbook *Horizons on Display* was designed to increase community involvement *Horizons on Display* was a program under the *Horizon 76* theme that was at the core of the Bicentennial celebration and consisted of 10 central "action areas" within its pages. The handbook told how the "200 national horizons on display program" were chosen and the criteria used to evaluate them.¹⁰³ Some of the national projects could be found in a third ARBA publication titled *Horizon 76 Idea Book*. According to the ARBA, each community that created a horizon project would reap the benefits of brand recognition through the use of common graphics, names, and themes. Each project allowed those viewing the horizon 76 display in one state to

Revolution Bicentennial Administration, *Master Register of Bicentennial Projects 2—204*; American Revolution Bicentennial Administration, *Master Register of Bicentennial Projects 2—207*.

¹⁰¹ The Middlesex County listing could be found listed under New Brunswick, New Jersey's heading; American Revolution Bicentennial Administration, *Master Register of Bicentennial Projects 2—206*; American Revolution Bicentennial Administration, *Bicentennial of the United States: A Final Report to the People* vol. 3, 409.

¹⁰² American Revolution Bicentennial Administration, *Bicentennial of the United States: A Final Report to the People* vol. 3, 363, 396.

¹⁰³ American Bicentennial Revolution Administration, "Horizons on Display," (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1976), 2.

identify with citizens viewing a display in another state.¹⁰⁴ Some horizon programs crossed state boundaries. Reading Is Fundamental (RIF) was one such program: With “over 300 locally operated and funded programs in 46 states,” the organization was aimed at elementary school children. The RIF organization wanted to make sure that future generations would not join the “21 million Americans who could not read the Declaration of Independence,” believing that “the enlightened and inform citizenry of tomorrow begin with the children of today.”¹⁰⁵ Other programs like Bicentennial bikeways, the program created by Fairfax County, Virginia, morphed into bikecentennial,¹⁰⁶ which in turn can be seen as the basis for the Rails to Trails Conservancy program founded in 1986. These events could be found influencing the local level and were used as examples for creating other events.

The second publication put out by the ARBA for helping communities to create local events was the *American Revolution Event Planning Workbook*, which according to the foreword was created as a way of “facilitating” “successful Bicentennial programs.” The workbook was created from the experiences of the office of the Boston Bicentennial commission which provided local communities a “basic research and resource tool.”¹⁰⁷ While the Bicentennial celebrated the 200th birthday of the United States, the introduction cautioned event planners not to limit their events to the revolution, but rather “to consider the entire history of our country and highlight all of the people, places, and events which have made [the United States] what it is today.” Commenting favorably on a lack of American tradition, the workbook went on to say that the “only limitation is [the

¹⁰⁴ American Bicentennial Revolution Administration, “Horizons on Display,” 10.

¹⁰⁵ American Bicentennial Revolution Administration, “Horizons 76 Idea Book,” 19.

¹⁰⁶ American Bicentennial Revolution Administration, “Horizons 76 Idea Book,” 15.

¹⁰⁷ American Bicentennial Revolution Administration “Event Planning Workbook,” (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1976) ii.

planners] imagination.”¹⁰⁸ The workbook was divided into three sections: plan it, do it, clean it up. Along with offering advice on how to make the event a success, the appendix offered calculations for various technical details such as visitor circulation, parking, food, and sanitation.¹⁰⁹ The ARBA felt that by following this workbook, local Bicentennial planning groups could create a successful and memorable event that contributed to America’s celebration of the Bicentennial. Even though the 1,161 national events were a comparatively small percentage of the Bicentennial celebration projects (only around 10%), some of these national projects had a larger impact on American society than others.

On December 31, 1976 at 11:59:50 as the ball in Times Square dropped, not only was it a signaling the end of 1976 but it signaled the end of the Bicentennial celebration.¹¹⁰ Though the celebration was over, a framework of a common identity had been created, the importance of certain American civil religious icons had been shown, and for a brief period the fracturing of American society had been halted.

¹⁰⁸ American Bicentennial Revolution Administration “Event Planning Workbook,” 1.

¹⁰⁹ American Bicentennial Revolution Administration “Event Planning Workbook,” 10–6.

¹¹⁰ American Bicentennial Revolution Administration, “Questions and Answers about the Bicentennial,” n.p.

Chapter 2-Building National Unity One Community at a Time

Arguably, the American Freedom Train had a larger impact on American society than any other Bicentennial project because it was both a local event and a national event. The American Freedom Train helped to re-forge a fractured American society and recreate a sense of common identity, through the promotion of American civil religious icons.

To understand why these icons are important an more in depth look at American civil religion is required. Even though American civil religion is not a theological religion it still has some of the same trappings as one. American civil religion has its prophets (Washington, Jefferson, and Franklin); its martyrs (Lincoln, Kennedy, and Martin Luther King Jr.); its sacred places (the Capitol, the White House and Mount Rushmore); its holy days (the Fourth of July, President's Day, and Thanksgiving); its holy symbols (the flag, the Statue of Liberty, and Uncle Sam); and it even has its holy texts: the Constitution, the Declaration of Independence, and the Gettysburg Address). The similarity of these things to a theological religion is what gives a civil religion its name. Lawyer and author, Michael Madigan has argued that American civil religion, even though it is called a religion, could have just as easily been called "civil mythology." He further argued that it is more about "national self identity" rather than ceremonial deism. It is the creation of a unifying national identity that would allow some anthropologists to classify American civil religion as a religion.¹¹¹ Barbara Miller in *Cultural Anthropology in a Globalizing*

¹¹¹ Rhys H. Williams and Susan M. Alexander, "Religious Rhetoric in American Populism: Civil Religion as Movement Ideology," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 33, no. 1 (March 1994): 4; Michael Angrosino, "Civil Religion Redux," *Anthropological Quarterly* 75, no. 2 (Spring 2002): 246; Michael M. Maddigan, "The Establishment Clause, Civil Religion, and the Public Church," *California Law Review* 81, no. 1 (January 1993): 317; Maddigan, 317, 337.

World, defines religious beliefs as ideas that are “shared by a group sometimes by millions of people and are passed on through the generations.” These beliefs are transferred between generations in two main ways: through stories (myths) and direct statements (doctrine) about the beliefs. It is in the transmission of these myths and doctrine that American civil religion establishes itself.¹¹²

These symbols and rituals are what create a common frame of reference for society. David Glassberg, in his article “Public History and the Study of Memory” stated, “It is myths and symbols that hold the divisive elements of society together.” It is this common framework that allows people, places and events to transcend the mundane and become sacred. A person, event, or place can help unify society by making these transitions. Sociologist Barry Schwartz labels the connection of past and present “keying.” Keying is a way for society to deal with crises, or to elevate a current event by comparing it to a previous event’s positive attributes. Every year, the Fourth of July is keyed to the signing of the Declaration of Independence, thereby giving society a way to connect with all the American civil religion prophets that are the founding fathers.¹¹³

The Constitution and the Declaration of Independence are two symbols that reflect American ideals and are highly prominent in American society. These two documents are the bedrock of American society and thus are given a prominent place in

¹¹² Barbara Miller, *Cultural Anthropology in a Globalizing World*, 2nd ed. (Saddle River NJ: Prentice Hall, 2008), 213.

¹¹³ He showed this by pointing to Benedict Anderson’s idea that it is not only what we commonly remember that is important, but also what we commonly forget as well, allowing us to create an “imagined community.”; Barry Schwartz, “Memory as a Cultural System: Abraham Lincoln in World War II,” *American Sociological Review* 61, no. 5 (October 1996): 910; Barry Schwartz and Howard Schuman, “History, Commemoration, and Belief: Abraham Lincoln in American Memory, 1945-2001,” *American Sociological Review* 70, no. 2 (April 2005): 184; Schwartz, “Memory as a Cultural System,” 911; David Glassberg, “Public History and the Study of Memory,” *The Public Historian* 18, no. 2 (Spring 1996): 11; Schwartz, “Memory as a Cultural System,” 911; Arthur G. Neal, *National Trauma and Collective Memory: Extraordinary Events in the American Experience*, (Armonk NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2005), 7.

American civil religion. Other national symbols such as the eagle and the Statue of Liberty do not enjoy the same level of notoriety as the flag and the founding documents, but are still very recognizable to an American citizen in that they symbolize what America represents.

The idea of a common identity became especially important during the Cold War. Twice during the Cold War, the ideals of America were promoted. In both cases the promoters turned to the railroads to get the message out. In 1947 during the administration of Harry S. Truman, America saw the launch of the Freedom Train; almost thirty years later a new initiative, the American Freedom Train was launched during President Gerald R. Ford's administration as part of the Bicentennial celebration. In both instances these events showcased the importance of American civil religious icons and helped produce a common framework for the country.

One important aspect of American civil religion is how these icons and symbols are brought to public consciousness. Both the Freedom Train and the American Freedom Train utilized American civil religion's core ideals to bring the icons and symbols of American civil religion to the public. Both of these trains allowed the public to key into past events that helped to make America "great," while at the same time establishing a common social framework for those Americans who viewed either train. The promoters of the 1976 American Freedom Train were not only able to learn this lesson from the earlier train, they also benefited from being part of the Bicentennial celebration.

The 1947 Freedom Train began life as an idea of William Coblentz. Coblentz worked for the U.S. Justice Department. In April 1946 Coblentz visited the National Archives on his lunch break, and formed an idea that would impact millions of American

citizens. Coblenz's idea was that if people would not or could not go to see the important documents of American liberty, then the important documents should go to them.

Coblenz's idea made it to Tom C. Clark, the United States Attorney General. Clark liked Coblenz's idea and presented it to President Truman, who also got on board.

Though it was Coblenz who had the original idea for the train some have credited Clark as the originator of the Freedom Train. Mimi Clark Gronlund, author of a biography of her father, credits Clark's experience seeing the Liberty Bell's 1915 trip through Dallas as the impetus for the Freedom Train. Gronlund also said that Clark's motivation for the Freedom Train was to fight juvenile delinquency. Cultural historian Michael Kamman said in his book *Mystic Chords of Memory* that Clark told a congressional committee that he saw the Freedom Train as a way of fighting against "subversive elements." This confusion over who had what role in the Freedom Train creation was probably the result of Clark's exuberance in supporting and championing the Freedom Train project. Historian David Hackett Fischer, who discussed the Freedom Train in his book *Liberty and Freedom*, gave credit to Coblenz for creating the idea. However, he identified Clark as the one with the plan to take the documents to the people. The idea of a traveling exhibit of America's sacred documents received support from the highest levels of the Truman administration. The president himself told Clark to "make it happen."¹¹⁴

¹¹⁴ Wendy Wall, *Inventing the American Way: The Politics of Consensus from the New Deal to the Civil Rights Movement*, (New York : Oxford University Press, 2008), 202; Mimi Clark Gronlund, *Supreme Court Justice Tom C. Clark: A Life of Service*, (Austin TX. : University of Texas Press, 2010), 100-1; "The Route Back to Philadelphia" ushistory.org <http://www.ushistory.org/LibertyBell/essay/stop27.htm> (accessed October 24, 2013); Richard M. Fried, *The Russians Are Coming! The Russians Are Coming!: Pageantry and Patriotism in Cold-War America*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 19; Michael G. Kammen, *Mystic Chords of Memory: The Transformation of Tradition in American Culture*, 1st ed. New York: Knopf, 1991, 574; Wall, *Inventing the American Way*, 217; Fried, *the Russians*, 29; "Freedom Train Tour Launched," *The Chicago Defender*, September 27, 1947; David

What would become the final configuration of the Freedom Train, and the initial idea, were two different things. Coblenz envisioned “a single refurbished train car [that] would carry documents, prints, and photographs telling the story ... of the rights and freedom that belonged to each American citizen.” The exhibit car containing copies of America’s sacred documents would travel around the country for “3–4 months piggybacking on to existing freight trains.” Instead, what Americans saw during the sixteen-month Freedom Train tour was a seven-car train pulled by a dedicated locomotive containing over 100 original documents costing more than the original estimate of \$25,000. Even this modest sum was financially difficult for the Justice Department or any federal agency.¹¹⁵ The Freedom Train project also faced opposition from Republicans who saw the train as an election year ploy to keep Truman and the Democrats in power. Clark, responding to Republican criticism, rescheduled the planned exhibit to dates after the midterm elections. Though the timing of the exhibit was an important factor, it is the monetary issues that had the most impact on the change in the Freedom Train exhibit. Usually ideas are scrapped when faced with financial difficulties, especially within the federal government. This was not the case with the Freedom Train. According to Stuart Little, it was not until September 16, 1946 that funding became an issues for what at that time was still being referred to as the “Bill of Rights” exhibit. After six months of work, Coblenz was told the project was being put on hold while Clark secured funding and placated the Republican concerns.¹¹⁶

Hackett Fischer, *Liberty and Freedom*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 568; Wall, *Inventing the American Way*, 203.

¹¹⁵ Wall, *Inventing the American Way*, 203.

¹¹⁶ Willard Edwards, "Clark Is Raked Over Coals On 'Freedom Train': He Denies It's Going on a Political Toot." *Chicago Daily Tribune*, June 19, 1947; Wall, *Inventing the American way*, 203; Stuart Jon Little, “*The Freedom Train and the Formation of National Political Culture, 1946-1949*” (*Master’s thesis University of Kansas, History, 1989*), 11; Willard Edwards, "A Vote Buying Plot Scented In

In October 1946 a group of Paramount Pictures Corporation executives worked to privatize this government program, and formed the American Heritage Foundation which produced a “more costly, creative and probably more successful” Freedom Train.¹¹⁷ The foundation wanted the train to travel for a year and to carry original documents rather than the originally planned facsimiles. The American Heritage Foundation also requested that Clark, and the Federal government, create a national media blitz for the train.¹¹⁸

Heeding the call of the American Heritage Foundation, Clark turned to the Advertising Council to get the message out. With the help of advertising executive Thomas D’Arcy Brophy, Clark persuaded the Advertising Council to promote the upcoming Freedom Train exhibit as a public service campaign. The Advertising Council released a media blitz in support of the Freedom Train tour, “prepar[ing] 50 newspaper advertisements, scores of radio scripts and announcements, promoted window displays and other materials and arranged for local support by outdoor and car card industries.”¹¹⁹

In addition to this media blitz, there were incursions of the Freedom Train into popular culture. Irving Berlin wrote, and Bing Crosby and the Andrews sisters recorded, a song called “the Freedom Train”. In addition the Freedom Train had its own theme song written by Richard Maxwell with music by Thomas J. Filas.¹²⁰ Another facet of

'Freedom Train': Clark Faces House Quiz on 'Patriotic' Project," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, May 28, 1947.

¹¹⁷ The executives included Barney Balaban president of Paramount pictures, Y Frank Freeman vice president of Paramount, and Balaban’s assistant Louis Novins, among others.; Wall, *Inventing the American Way*, 204.

¹¹⁸ Little, 12; "Clark Explains Funds for 'Freedom Train'." *New York Times*, June 19, 1947; Wall, *Inventing the American Way*, 204.

¹¹⁹ Wall, 205; Wall, 207; “Drive to Raise Citizenship Level in U.S. Announced,” *Los Angeles Times*, August 21, 1947; John Vianney McGinnis. *The Advertising Council and the Cold War*, (PhD diss., Syracuse University), 76.

¹²⁰ "Song For 'Freedom Train': Irving Berlin Composes a Tune for Tour of 300 Cities," *New York Times*, August 25, 1947 ; Jeffrey F Meyer, *Myths in Stone: Religious Dimensions of Washington, D.C.*, (Berkeley CA: University of California Press, 2001), 93; “The Freedom train Song,” The Lincoln Highway National Museum & Archives <http://www.lincoln-highway-museum.org/FT/FT-04-Song->

popular culture that the Freedom Train occupied was in the comics. Mickey Mouse, Blondie, Popeye, and Li'l Abner, among others, could be found in the funny papers celebrating the Freedom Train. Around the same time Fawcett Publications released a *Captain Marvel* comic book in which Captain Marvel must save the Freedom Train from a time traveling scientist out to destroy America's sacred documents.¹²¹ This comic book would become important in Evelyn Coleman's children's book *Freedom Train*.¹²² National magazines were also part of the blitz. *Readers Digest*, *Life*, and *National Geographic* were just a few of the approximately 250 magazines that did their part in getting the word out about the Freedom Train.¹²³

In addition to popular culture references, there were also many "Freedom" activities centered around the train in which the public could participate. Before entering the train, visitors could sign Freedom Scrolls showing their support of the Freedom Train ideals. There was a Freedom pledge that was printed onto cards or published in newspapers so large groups could recite them or so the participant could recite it at other times. There was even a Freedom prayer. Another item that the Advertising Council put out was a pamphlet entitled "Good Citizen," that told of the rights and responsibilities of an American citizen. All the good publicity generated by this media blitz continued after the Freedom Train tour was over. The documents that the train carried would eventually become the book *Heritage of Freedom: the History & Significance of the Basic*

[Index.html](#) (Accessed August 15, 2011); "Freedom Train theme song," The Lincoln Highway National Museum & Archives <http://www.lincoln-highway-museum.org/FT/FT-03-FSong-Index.html> (Accessed August 15, 2011).

¹²¹ Meyer, 93; "Comic 1 -- No Title," *Los Angeles Times*, September 9, 1947; "Comic 2 -- No Title," *Los Angeles Times*, December 22, 1947; "Comics," The Lincoln Highway National Museum & Archives <http://www.lincoln-highway-museum.org/FT/FT-10-Comic-Index.html> (Accessed August 15, 2011); "Captain Marvel and the Freedom Train," Freedomtrain.org <http://www.freedomtrain.org/freedom-train-m-comic-captain-marvel-adventures.htm> (Accessed October 24, 2013).

¹²² Evelyn Coleman, *Freedom Train*, New York: Margaret K. McElderry Books 2008.

¹²³ Meyer, 94.

Documents of American Liberty by Frank Monaghan. A television series was also created to showcase the documents.¹²⁴

Though the American Heritage Foundation billed the Freedom Train as “financed by John Q. Public,” in reality only ten percent of the funds did not come from either corporations or rich individuals. DuPont, General Electric, Standard Oil, U.S Steel, Kodak, RJ Reynolds, the major film studios and J.D. Rockefeller contributed over \$100,000 to American Heritage Foundation for the Freedom Train exhibit. For their contribution they received no preferential treatment other than knowing they had contributed to the civic good.¹²⁵

Railroad companies also contributed to the civic good, but rather than donating money to the American Heritage Foundation and the Freedom Train they would instead donate materials and personnel. According to a *New York Times* article, fifty-two railroads had agreed to take turns operating the Freedom Train for the American Heritage Foundation. Along with the train engineers, mechanical services were also volunteered to help to keep the Freedom Train running. In addition to allowing personnel to help the Freedom Train, various railroads also donated the rolling stock that made up the train. The railroads also donated the use of their tracks, both as a means of moving the train from city to city and as a place for the American Heritage Foundation to set up the

¹²⁴ “The Freedom Pledge,” The Lincoln Highway National Museum & Archives <http://www.lincoln-highway-museum.org/FT/FT-07-Pledge-Index.html> (Accessed August 15, 2011); The Lincoln Highway National Museum & Archives <http://www.lincoln-highway-museum.org/FT/FT-Index.html> (Accessed August 15, 2011); McGinnis, 76; “Display Ad 4 -- No Title,” *The Washington Post*, November 22, 1947; “Display Ad 9 -- No Title,” *Wall Street Journal*, September 25, 1947; The Lincoln Highway National Museum & Archives <http://www.lincoln-highway-museum.org/FT/FT-Index.html> (Accessed August 15, 2011); “Book of Freedom Papers Proposed,” *The Washington Post*, December 2, 1947; Jack Gould, “Historical Documents of 'Freedom Train' to Be Dramatized by WNEW, Starting Oct 26,” *New York Times*, October 18, 1947.

¹²⁵ In this case preferential treatment would include exclusive advertising or product licenses; Wall, *Inventing the American Way*, 207.

display. Even though the railroads donated the use of the tracks they were required by ICC rules to impose “a token charge” for the actual movement of the cars. The complex routing of the Freedom Train tour was handled by Association of American Railroads. The Association had the unenviable task of making sure that the Freedom Train hit every state and the major population centers in each state.¹²⁶

Promoting civic good and a sense of common heritage was the Freedom Train’s goal though the project still had not acquired the Freedom Train moniker even as late as May 1947. Until that time the train was known as the “Bill of Rights” exhibit. Eventually the American Heritage Foundation changed the goals of the “Bill of Rights” exhibit. Originally the exhibit touted the strength of democracy. However due to the fact that the meaning of democracy had fractured among various population subgroups, the initial slogan was changed to, “Freedom is Everybody’s Job” and with that the Freedom Train was born.¹²⁷

After the American Heritage Foundation privatized the exhibit the number of display cars went from one to three. In fact, the entire train configuration changed from a single tag-along car to three display cars, the previously mentioned locomotive and three sleeper cars donated by the Pullman company to house the complement of 27 Marines who were guarding America’s precious documents.

Once the configuration of the cars had been decided, what to put on display in each of the cars needed to be determined. One thing that the American Heritage

¹²⁶ "52 Roads Promise Freedom Train Aid: Assistance Outlined for Year's Tour of Exhibit of American Historical Documents," *New York Times*, August 17, 1947; Ward Allan Howe "Rail Notes: GM Train," *New York Times*, October 5, 1947; Stanley Roberts, The Courier's Public Relations Director, "The Freedom Train Is a 'Moving Symbol': The Story Behind The Freedom Train...," *The Pittsburgh Courier*, December 6, 1947.

¹²⁷ For a good commentary as to why democracy was a hot button phrase see Wall’s *Inventing the American way*, p 209-11.

Foundation wanted to do was to create an exhibit that the entire country could get behind without worrying about offending any one side, enabling it to fulfill the Freedom Train's goal of fostering a sense of national unity. With the idea of national unity in mind, the documents that the American Heritage Foundation chose to display were ones that are now considered sacred documents by those studying American civil religion. Original copies of the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, and the Bill of Rights were displayed alongside non-American documents touting freedom like the Magna Carta and the United Nation's Charter. The United Nations Charter was also tied in to World War II documents which, according to Fischer, made up a large part of the exhibit. Throughout the Freedom Train exhibit, the stated goals of the American Heritage Foundation was to create a sense of unity and community among America's citizens.¹²⁸

The biggest obstacle facing the American Heritage Foundation and the Freedom Train exhibit was how to deal with the race problem when the Freedom Train headed to the South. The South's policy of segregation was at odds with the stated goals of the American Heritage Foundation. Their goal of proclaiming unity among American citizens would be shown false if they allowed segregation to occur.¹²⁹

Initially the American Heritage Foundation dodged the mounting pressure of race. However as the train turned South the problem of segregation could no longer be ignored. The problem of race came to a head when the mayor of Memphis, Jim Pleasants, said that when the Freedom Train arrived in Memphis the viewing schedule would be divided in

¹²⁸ Fischer, 569; Meyer, 94.

¹²⁹ "Miffed, Freedom Train Group Vows Anti-Bias Policy," *The Chicago Defender*, September 20, 1947; "No Jim crow on Freedom Train In Atlanta, Ga.," *Los Angeles Sentinel*, December 18, 1947; "Freedom Train Won't Show Under Jim Crow," *The Washington Post*, October 26, 1947; "Letters, Oct. 20, 1947," *Time* October 20, 1947 vol. 50 no. 16 <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/0,9263,7601471020,00.html#ixzz1YY0w0H6X> (accessed September 15, 2011).

half, one six and a half hour block for “Whites” and the other for “Blacks.” After Pleasants’ announcement, the American Heritage Foundation decided to cancel the Memphis stop. The decision was widely acclaimed as the right thing to do both in the North and the South. Many southern mayors made statements to assure the American Heritage Foundation that there would be no segregation when the Freedom Train came to their town. Though some southern towns were supportive of the American Heritage Foundation policy, not all were. The American Heritage Foundation was so worried about the ramifications of the race problem that Brophy, the national director of the American Heritage Foundation, told the people working to prepare the towns for the Freedom Train’s arrival, to use the code name “Problem D” when transmitting racial information out of the South.¹³⁰

The cancellation of the Memphis stop also had the American Heritage Foundation rethinking its segregation policy. Ultimately the American Heritage Foundation would reject the idea of allowing small groups of people to be “regulated” as they entered the Freedom Train. Even with the controversy over the Memphis cancellation, only one other southern town had their Freedom Train visit revoked. Eugene T “Bull” Connor and the other members of the Birmingham City Commission planned to admit visitors to the Freedom Train in segregated groups of twenty individuals. This policy was in direct contravention of the American Heritage Foundation policy that the Freedom Train not be segregated, although it did mirror the segregation policy that the American Heritage Foundation considered and then rejected after the Memphis cancellation. The American Heritage Foundation policy of not segregating the train went a long way towards promoting national unity in both “black and white” citizens. The pull of the train was so

¹³⁰ Wall, 235-6.

powerful that Edward Crump, the power behind Pleasants, lost his control of Memphis politics over the Freedom Train fiasco.¹³¹

The documents, coupled with the Advertising Council's media blitz, brought a strong sense of patriotic loyalty to the public not seen in later generations. Fischer's narrative history of the Freedom train explained how the Marine guards thought someone had removed a white stripe from the train only to realize that a high school girl kissing the train had smeared her lipstick on it making it blend in to the red above. Eventually 4,000 other girls kissed the train leading the white strip to become "a scarlet ribbon of adolescent affection."¹³² After the completion of the Freedom Train tour, it was deemed a complete success in that it had accomplished its mission of reinforcing the iconic status of the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution. The Freedom Train tour was, "one of the most elaborate ideological undertaking of the early post war years." It has been claimed that the Freedom Train was "one of the if not *the* greatest patriotic campaign in American history."¹³³

¹³¹ "Negro Concern Mounts Over Freedom Train," *The Chicago Defender*, August 16, 1947; "Freedom Train Promoters Fail To Tell Dixie Policy," *Defender* New York Bureau, *The Chicago Defender*, September 13, 1947; Wall, 233; "Memphis Bans 'Bill Of Rights': Derails Freedom Train With Jim Crow Decision Historic Documents Will By-Pass City; Others Beg For Date," *The Chicago Defender*, November 29, 1947; "Memphis Racial Stipulation Bars Freedom Train," *The Washington Post*, November 18, 1947; "Races: Freedom & Bowlegs," *Time* vol. 50 no. 22 December 1, 1947 <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/0,9263,7601471201,00.html#ixzz1YXzV4y2b> (accessed September 15, 2011); "Atlantans Awaiting Freedom Train Visit," *The Chicago Defender*, November 22, 1947; "Freedom Train Welcome Everywhere But Memphis," *The Chicago Defender*, November 29, 1947; "Freedom Train Barred: Hattiesburg, Miss., Insists on Segregation as Memphis Did," *New York Times*, November 20, 1947; "No Jim crow on Freedom Train In Atlanta, Ga.," *Los Angeles Sentinel*, December 18, 1947; "South In Uproar :Bias in Memphis Scored Atlanta Mayor Is Praised for His Stand Against Dixie Segregation," *The Courier Atlanta* Correspondent, November 29, 1947, City Edition; Fischer, 571; Wall, 236; "Miffed, Freedom Train Group Vows Anti-Bias Policy," *The Chicago Defender*, September 20, 1947; "Birmingham Is Ruled Out," *New York Times*, December 25, 1947; "Birmingham Plan of Freedom Train Segregation Has NAACP Opposition," *Cleveland Call and Post*, December 20, 1947; "Birmingham to Separate Races at Freedom Train," *Afro-American*, December 20, 1947; "Birmingham's Racial Plan to Hold for Freedom Train," *Afro-American*, December 20, 1947; Fischer 571, Wall, 239.

¹³² Fischer, 571.

¹³³ Meyer, 92, Emphasis original.

As stated earlier, one way that the unifying nature of American civil religion was utilized was to provide a symbol around which Americans could rally. On September 13, 1947 the American Heritage Foundation did just that. On that day the “Spirit of 1776” a red white and blue Alco PA-1 locomotive pulled into Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; the first stop on a sixteen-month journey through all forty-eight states. Besides pulling the Freedom Train, the Spirit of 1776 had the distinction of being the only locomotive to operate in all forty-eight contiguous states.¹³⁴

During the Freedom Train tour people waited in line for hours. Even when the line was so long that the approximately 16,000 people the Freedom Train could accommodate would not see the end of the line make it through the exhibit, they continued to wait in line. Some people, like Winston Luck, got into line at four a.m, six hours before the exhibit opened, just to make sure he would be able to go through. People waited in line in all kinds of adverse weather conditions for their chance to board the Freedom Train. This type of dedication can only be called a success no matter how one would define success.¹³⁵

This success would be repeated almost thirty years later in the form of the American Freedom Train. The American Freedom Train was the brainchild of Ross E. Rowland, Jr., a commodities broker from New York. Rowland had been involved with the “Golden Spike Limited,” a celebratory train excursion that celebrated the centennial

¹³⁴ Marty Jezer, *The Dark Ages: Life in the United States 1945-1960*, (Boston MA: South End Press 1982), 85; Lori Lyn Bogle, *The Pentagon's Battle for the American Mind: The Early Cold War*, 1st ed. (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2004), 86-7; Wendy Wall, *Inventing the American Way: The Politics of Consensus from the New Deal to the Civil Rights Movement*, (New York : Oxford University Press, 2008), 201; Stuart Jon Little, “The Freedom Train and the Formation of National Political Culture, 1946-1949” (Master’s thesis University of Kansas, History, 1989), 154.

¹³⁵ “Freedom Train Finds Two Fans of Democracy Up Very Early,” *The Chicago Defender*, December 20, 1947; “Article 6 -- No Title,” Special to THE NEW YORK TIMES. *New York Times*, September 23, 1947; Sam Stavisky, “Exhibit to Be Open For Second Day at D.C.'s Union Station,” *The Washington Post*, November 28, 1947.

anniversary of America's joining by rail. Rowland felt that a train touring the country loaded with exhibits of Americana was one way for the American public to "enjoy the bicentennial celebration."¹³⁶ To accomplish this Rowland established the American Freedom Train Foundation. He approached corporate America soliciting donations to get the American Freedom Train running. After finding it difficult to acquire corporate sponsors, a fortuitous meeting between Rowland and Donald M. Kendall, the chairman of the board of PepsiCo, led to the foundation receiving its first million dollars of support, and Rowland's vision moved closer to reality. PepsiCo would eventually be joined by Kraft Foods, General Motors and Prudential Insurance Company of America. These four companies each contributed equally to the American Freedom Train Foundation giving the foundation \$4 million. Though Rowland faced many naysayers, on April 1, 1975-- almost thirty years after the original Freedom Train-- the American Freedom Train began its own twenty-one month journey through the forty-eight contiguous states.¹³⁷

The American Freedom Train was pulled by four different locomotives, three steam and one diesel, and consisted of twenty-six separate cars. Of the twenty-six cars, twelve were display cars. Ten of the twelve display cars were home to the American Freedom Train exhibits. It was in these exhibition cars that the public was reintroduced to trappings of what it meant to be an American. The responsibility to decide what was to be exhibited fell under the auspices of Ruth Packard, the Vice President of Artifacts for the American Freedom Train Foundation, and a former docent at the Smithsonian. She

¹³⁶ American Freedom Train Foundation, *All aboard: America the American Freedom Train*, (Washington D.C.; American Freedom Train Foundation, 1976), 4; Bob Wiedrich, "The Man behind Freedom Train" *Chicago Tribune*, July 31, 1975.

¹³⁷ American Freedom Train Foundation, *All aboard: America the American Freedom Train*, (Washington D.C.; American Freedom Train Foundation, 1976), 4; Bob Wiedrich, "The Man behind Freedom Train" *Chicago Tribune*, July 31, 1975; Bob Wiedrich, "A ticket to history and Bicentennial," *Chicago Tribune*, February 7, 1975; American Freedom Train Foundation, 4; American Freedom Train Foundation, 4; "American Memorabilia is Big Attraction," *New Journal and Guide*, April 12, 1975.

worked from a list of possible artifacts developed by scholars from several universities. Initially the American Freedom Train foundation had trouble convincing the owners of these various artifacts to lend them to the American Freedom Train Foundation. This setback ended when the National Archives offered the foundation George Washington's copy of the Constitution to exhibit on the American Freedom Train. After the foundation had acquired this historic document, it was inundated with offers of historical artifacts. Once this initial difficulty was overcome, the cramped space of the refurbished baggage cars required careful consideration of how to display America's greatness. Rather than making a chronological display, designer Barry Howard decided to take a thematic approach thus allowing each car to reinforce the American spirit in various settings.¹³⁸

The American Freedom Train's ten display cars were set up under the thematic headings.

- | | |
|---------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1. "The Beginning" | 6. "Human Resources" |
| 2. "Exploration" | 7. "Sports" |
| 3. "Growth of the Nation" | 8. "Performing Arts" |
| 4. "Origins" | 9. "Fine Arts" |
| 5. "Innovations" | 10. "Conflict and Resolution." |

On the outside of each exhibit car were picture boxes displaying 200 years of history in ten-year increments. The ten exhibit cars were joined by two glass-encased display cars

¹³⁸ American Freedom Train Foundation, 6; American Freedom Train Foundation, 6-7; "Women's Contribution Noted," *The Day*, New London Connecticut, August 5, 1976 http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=1915&dat=19760805&id=wesgAAAIBAJ&sjid=CHIFAA_AAIIBAJ&pg=2069,873453 (Accessed October 24, 2013).

that showcased American technological innovation and artifacts too big to fit in the exhibit cars.¹³⁹

Each of the display cars had three sections visible through big picture windows allowing those who visited the train or saw it travel by to experience those artifacts. The first display car showed a model of one of the first locomotives, an antique fire engine from a volunteer fire dept “established by George Washington,” and a 1904 Oldsmobile scout. The second car displayed a test unit of the lunar rover, a map of the American Freedom Train route, and the Freedom Bell, a 2:1 exact scale replica of the Liberty Bell. The display cars and the photo boxes on the outside of the exhibition cars allowed people who were unable to visit the train to enjoy the splendor of America’s history and accomplishments as the train traveled slowly by.¹⁴⁰

The artifacts presented in the display cars helped to reinforce America’s exceptionalism by playing up America’s accomplishments. The Oldsmobile and the lunar rover both spoke to America winning a race. The Oldsmobile that was chosen for the train trip was the vehicle that won the first transcontinental race. The lunar rover symbolized America’s technological superiority over the Soviet Union and the rest of the world by rekindling thoughts of America’s successful completion of the space race, by being the only country to explore another planetary body. This also had the added benefit

¹³⁹ American Freedom Train Foundation, 7, 10, 64; “The Nation: History on the Rails,” *Time* November 25, 1974 vol. 104 no. 22 <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/0,9263,7601741125,00.html#ixzz1YY5wiI45> (accessed September 15, 2011); Tom McComas, *I love Toy Trains*, Number 12, DVD, (Austin TX : Big Kids Production, 2002); American Freedom Train Foundation, 42-3, 46, 52, 60, 89, 92, 107, 114.

¹⁴⁰ American Freedom Train Foundation, 11,126; “Freedom Bell arrives on Freedom Train,” *Chicago Defender*, July 16, 1975.

of reinforcing the frontiersmen spirit that was so prevalent in the original settlers of America and those who settled the American west.¹⁴¹

Inside the exhibition cars were artifacts that were also designed to speak to America's greatness. The exhibition cars held 510 original historical documents, art, and memorabilia, along with twelve exact replicas and facsimiles.¹⁴² These pieces of Americana came from 285 lenders from all over the country. The choice of what to include in each display car was done in such a way as to increase the public's identification as Americans. In the first train car with the theme of beginnings, there was a copy of the Declaration of Independence, Benjamin Franklin's hand-written draft of the Articles of Confederation, George Washington's copy of the Constitution with hand-written notes, and Delaware's ratification of the Bill of Rights. As stated earlier, the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution are considered sacred documents in American civil religion, and the Bill of Rights also enjoys a position as one of the premier American document. With this trio of documents the American Freedom Train keyed its viewers to remember America's struggle against the odds to win its freedom from a larger and more experienced opponent. Even the Articles of Confederation, was resurrected in the public consciousness and given importance by the fact that it was the hand written copy of one of America's founding fathers Benjamin Franklin. Alongside

¹⁴¹ Wayne Dunham, "Tempo/Happenings-Food," *Chicago Tribune*, July 16, 1975.

¹⁴² These replicas and facsimiles covered the gamut from a replica of the golden spike from the joining of the nation by railroad to more mundane items such as gas lamp. Various models could also be found among the exhibit cars such as First American Naval submarine "Holland" to models of the first domestic satellite and rockets. A list of exhibit items and their contributors can be found in *All aboard: America the American Freedom Train* by the American Freedom Train Foundation on pages 124-6.

these documents, exhibit car number one also contained weapons and other artifacts of the American Revolution.¹⁴³

American identity was an important theme of the American Freedom Train. Car number four “Origins” was more intimately tied to the idea of American identity than the other cars. This car examined the human component of the United States. Billed as “tracing the ethnic, religious and geographical origins of contemporary Americans,”¹⁴⁴ it was filled with mannequins that used the “talking head” technique. This talking head technique projected heads on to the mannequins, to deliver the message about the diverse cultural heritage and the contributions different ethnic groups made to America. By playing up the different ethnicities, the American Freedom Train showed that even though citizens might have a different background, they were still unified in that they were all Americans. The differences were not negative; rather, they helped to show that the parts made the whole stronger. It portrayed U.S. society as a vibrant picture painted with a full palate of colors.¹⁴⁵

Cars number five “Innovations,” six “Human Resources,” seven “Sports,” eight “Performing Arts,” and nine “Fine Arts” all celebrated American triumphalism in these various categories. Whether celebrating pioneering American inventors like Edison or the Wright brothers, lauding American sports heroes like Knute Rockne, showcasing American pop culture with the likes of John Wayne or Charlton Heston, or displaying iconic paintings like Archibald M. Willard’s “Spirit of 76” or Thomas Hart Benton’s

¹⁴³ American Freedom Train Foundation, 127; American Freedom Train Foundation, 124-6; “Display Ad 128--No Title,” Advertising Supplement *The Washington Post*, September 24, 1976; “The Nation: History on the Rails,” *Time* November 25, 1974 vol. 104 no. 22 <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/0,9263,7601741125,00.html#ixzz1YY5wiI45> (accessed September 15, 2011).

¹⁴⁴ “Display Ad 129 -- No Title,” Advertising Supplement *The Washington Post*, September 24, 1976.

¹⁴⁵ American Freedom Train Foundation, 10, 124; “Display Ad 129 -- No Title,” Advertising Supplement *The Washington Post*, September 24, 1976.

“Independence and the Opening of the West,” all showed exceptional facets of American society. They also demonstrated that American ingenuity and determination could overcome any problem and that American creativity could inspire and entertain. These artifacts reinforced the idea that no matter what Americans put their minds to, they could accomplish lofty things.¹⁴⁶

The final cars, number two “Exploration and Expansion,” three “Growth of a Nation” and ten “Conflict and Resolution,” dealt with America’s growing pains, both good and bad. Treaties with Native Americans, and the original Louisiana and Gadsden Purchase documents, spoke of Americans fulfilling their manifest destiny. Roosevelt’s war message to congress, Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation and Martin Luther King, Jr.’s pulpit all spoke to America’s need to fight the good fight. Though America began as thirteen small colonies on the eastern seaboard it had matured and by its 200th birthday it was preeminent among nations.¹⁴⁷

Another way that the American Freedom Train was a positive role model, was that it inspired a sense of community. The large map of its route was one way to do so. People seeing the map could know that people in Peoria, Chattanooga, Los Angeles and New York had all experienced the same thing, seen the same artifacts, thus giving a widely dispersed population a way to identify with each other through a common experience. A second way it built this sense of community was by inspiring people to volunteer. All across the United States Boy Scout troops volunteered to help with the American Freedom Train exhibit. These scouts could identify with scouts all over the

¹⁴⁶ American Freedom Train Foundation, 126; “Display Ad 136 -- No Title,” Advertising Supplement *The Washington Post*, September 24, 1976.

¹⁴⁷ American Freedom Train Foundation, 126; “Display Ad 136 -- No Title,” Advertising Supplement *The Washington Post*, September 24, 1976; “King exhibit rides Freedom Train,” *Chicago Defender*, March 15, 1975.

United States, knowing that when the train was at another city other boys would be doing the exact same thing, thus creating and strengthening yet another bond between these young men.¹⁴⁸

The American Freedom Train was so successful in building community that even small communities grew when the freedom train came to visit. The town of Archibald, Ohio, with a population of just under 3,200 people, grew to a community of 40,000 people, though some estimates went as high as 100,000, when the American Freedom Train made its two-and-a-half-day layover there.¹⁴⁹

Like its predecessor the Freedom Train, the American Freedom Train was not without its detractors. During its run there were complaints and even protests. One complaint focused on how the Train was managed. There was criticism of the admission price and amount of time given in the display cars. Even the American Freedom Train Foundation business practices were called into question, with claims that the train was hemorrhaging money and funds mismanaged. In Alexandria, Virginia, protesters from the People's Bicentennial Commission visited the American Freedom Train to protest what they saw as a decline in U.S. society and the mounting economic problems, with lines like "Jobs not circuses" or "No inflation without representation." Even though Ronald Reagan said in a radio address that after visiting the train a "group of protestors became supporters," there is no evidence that the train changed the group's thinking as a

¹⁴⁸ Stan Pashko, "Making the Scene," *Boys Life* March 1977 vol. 67 no. 3, <http://books.google.com/books?id=aukjFPeLokQC&lpg=PA18&dq=%22Freedom%20train%22&pg=PA18#v=onepage&q=%22Freedom%20train%22&f=false> (accessed August 28, 2011).

¹⁴⁹ Ronald Reagan and Martin Anderson, *Reagan, In His Own Hand: The Writings of Ronald Reagan That Reveal His Revolutionary Vision for America*, (New York : Free Press, 2001), 231; "AMERICAN NOTES: Whither the Freedom Train?" *Time* vol. 106 no. 4 July 28, 1975; Charles Hillinger, "900,000 View Freedom Train: Bicentennial Spirit--U.S. Steaming at Full Throttle Nation's Bicentennial Spirit," *Los Angeles Times*, June 26, 1975; James T .Wooten, Special to The New York Times. "Bicentennial Plans Meeting Setbacks," *New York Times*, July 5, 1975.

whole. Another mark against the American Freedom Train was that economically the United States was in dire straits and some questioned the appropriateness of celebrating the American Freedom Train and the bicentennial when so many were unemployed.¹⁵⁰

Yet despite criticism, The American Freedom Train could be considered a huge success. Official estimates said that almost seven million people visited the American Freedom Train. These visitors coupled with another thirty million who made trackside visits, meant that approximately thirty-seven million American citizens, almost twenty percent of the population at the time, had a common frame of reference and a common experience. The American Freedom Train was so successful that when the tour of America was over, fifteen of the cars were sold to the national museum of Canada to become the “Discovery Train,” a Canadian version of the American Freedom Train. The Canadians hoped to emulate the success that Rowland and the American Freedom Train enjoyed during the Bicentennial. Another way the American Freedom Train’s success was measured was that both during and after the American Freedom Train’s tour, a large number of American Freedom Train memorabilia was sold, to commemorate its historic trip. This memorabilia allowed the viewing public to key back into their experience with

¹⁵⁰ “AMERICAN NOTES: Whither the Freedom Train?” *Time* vol. 106 no. 4 July 28 1975 <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/0,9263,7601750728,00.html#ixzz1YY6J4eyq> (accessed September 15, 2011); Margot Hornblower, “Americana in Peoria,” Washington Post Staff Writer *The Washington Post*, July 21, 1975; Carrol N. Atchley, “Freedom Train,” *Los Angeles Times*, December 30, 1975; “AMERICAN NOTES: Whither the Freedom Train?”; “Freedom Train Dispute Eased On Financing,” *The Washington Post*, May 31, 1975; Nancy L. Ross, “Better Business Bureau Criticizes Many Big Charities Over Handling of Money,” *Los Angeles Times*, August 24, 1976; Margot Hornblower, Washington Post Staff Writer. “Ford Talks About Train For Freedom :American Freedom Train Praised by Ford at Ceremony,” *The Washington Post*, December 20, 1974; “Freedom Train,” *Chicago Tribune*, July 29, 1975; Reagan , 231; “A Full Employment Crusade,” *Ebony* October 1975 vol. 30 no. 12; Hornblower, “Ford Talks About Train For Freedom.”

the train and also allowed them to remember what the American Freedom Train said it meant to be an American.¹⁵¹

For the millions of American citizens who saw either the Freedom Train or the American Freedom Train, the experience was memorable beyond compare, a once in a lifetime experience. There were enough differences that even those who had the good fortune to visit both the Freedom Train and the American Freedom Train had two uniquely moving experiences.

The most notable difference between the two tours was in the way they dealt with race. During the 1947 Freedom Train tour, the South's policy of segregation had the ability to divide rather than unify the visitors to the Freedom Train; however, the American Heritage Foundation forced the Freedom Train to be an exception. By the time of the American Freedom Train tour, the Civil Rights movement had occurred nominal desegregation had been achieved. The Civil Rights movement even gained a place of honor within the American Freedom Train exhibit.

While each tour accomplished the goal of instilling the viewing public with a sense of community in America's greatness, the tours differed in the tone of how they accomplished this.¹⁵²

¹⁵¹ Bob Wiedrich, "A Rolling Museum Heads for Canada," *Chicago Tribune*, August 18, 1977; "American Freedom Train to Start Last Journey," *New York Times*, August 23, 1977; Peter Reich, "Followup," *Chicago Tribune*, February 20, 1978; "Article 1 -- No Title," *New York Times*, August 24, 1977; Bob Wiedrich, "Discovery Train Pride of Canada," *Chicago Tribune*, July 18, 1978; Gail Bronson, Staff Reporter of The Wall Street Journal. "The Spirit of (19)76: Is It a Bicentennial or a Buy-Centennial: The Pursuit of Happiness May Lead to a \$925 Sword or to an 'Uncle Samwich,'" *Wall Street Journal*, April 15, 1975; "The U.S. Begins Its Birthday Bash," *Time* April 21, 1975 vol. 105 no. 16 <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,917323,00.html#ixzz1YY4cTOea> (accessed September 15, 2011); Hornblower, "Americana in Peoria," "Display Ad 12 -- No Title," *Los Angeles Times*, January 6, 1976.

¹⁵² "Black Americans Represented In American Freedom Train," *Atlanta Daily World*, May 9, 1976; "Model of King's Pulpit Shown In Freedom Train," *Atlanta Daily World*, May 6, 1976; "Bicentennial Exhibit Takes To U.S. Rails," *Atlanta Daily World*, April 4, 1975; "'Freedom Train' makes a local stopover," *Chicago Defender*, July 19, 1975.

Where the 1976 American Freedom Train tour had a more carnivalesque atmosphere, the 1947 Freedom Train tour was more reserved. This is not to say that the Freedom Train did not have a pageantry all its own. Where the Freedom Train had the Advertising Council's media blitz, the support of the railroads, and the backing of the Truman administration, the American Freedom Train had to generate the media frenzy on its own.

The sense of fulfilling one's patriotic duty by helping the Freedom Train tour was much greater than with the American Freedom Train tour. Where the Freedom Train tour received assistance from the railroads in the form of personnel, materials, and right of passage, the American Freedom Train tour did not. The American Freedom Train did not enjoy the benefit of free company engineers when it was not driven by Rowland. There were no material donations by the railroads. Instead of receiving a brand new locomotive like the Freedom Train tour did, the American Freedom Train foundation rebuilt the primary steam engine from a display in a Portland Oregon park. The other steam locomotives also required extensive restoration. Moreover, the American Freedom Train tour had to pay the railroads \$4.50 a mile to operate the train on their track where as during the Freedom Train tour, the railroads allowed the train to run free of charge. Another difference between the two tours was that during the Freedom Train tour the federal government provided a detachment of twenty-seven Marines who guarded the national treasures around the clock. The American Freedom Train tour did not enjoy this level of protection even though they were transporting equally valuable national treasures. The American Freedom Train tour did not enjoy the same level of government

sanction that the Freedom Train tour did, and the American Freedom Train did not have a Tom Clark championing its cause.¹⁵³

While the tone of each train was different, without the success of the Freedom Train tour the American Freedom Train would not have enjoyed a solid foundation on which to make its own tour a success. The American Freedom Train tour benefited from the lessons learned by the Freedom Train's growing pains. The long lines and disappointed fans who were unable to visit the Freedom Train were addressed by the American Freedom Train Foundation when they installed moving walkways on the train to move visitors through the train, which was over three times longer than the 1947 train, in a more timely fashion. After receiving complaints about the rapid speed at which the walkways were moving people through the exhibit, the foundation slowed the walkway down so that the trip through the exhibit took twenty-three minutes to complete. Even with the improvement of moving people through the exhibit more quickly, people were still doomed to wait in line for hours.¹⁵⁴

In both cases the Freedom Train and the American Freedom Train revived in American citizens a patriotic fervor, and allowed its audience to identify and connect with the other visitors of the trains. This feeling of community created during the Freedom Train tour was strong enough to overcome race issues in the South and the American Freedom Train enjoyed a similar sense of community. It is that power to bind people together, to give them a common frame of reference, to see a common heritage

¹⁵³ "I love toy trains.," "Locomotive and Equipment of American Freedom Train," <http://www.freedomtrain.org/american-freedom-train-consist-main.htm>; "52 Roads Promise Freedom Train.," Wiedrich "A Rolling Museum Heads for Canada.," Peter Reich, "Followup," *Chicago Tribune*, February 20, 1978.

¹⁵⁴ American Freedom Train Foundation, 7, 5; "AMERICAN NOTES: Whither the Freedom Train?" *Time* July 28, 1975 vol. 106 no. 4. <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/0,9263,7601750728,00.html#ixzz1YY6J4eyq> (accessed September 15, 2011); Hillinger, "900,000 View Freedom Train."

that is the foundation of American civil religion. Both the Freedom Train and the American Freedom Train did the job admirably. These two events reinforced American civil religion core values on their nationwide tour of the country. Though their respective tours started nearly thirty years apart and under different circumstances, the unifying force of the tours helped to bring the nation through a period of change to become "...one nation ... indivisible...."¹⁵⁵

The American Freedom Train was able to take the lessons learned from the Freedom Train and within the context of the Bicentennial it was able to re-forge America's fracturing society, recreate in the population an American identity, while it reinforced those American civil religious icons that American society deemed important.

¹⁵⁵ "Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America," Public Law 83- 396 68, 83rd Cong. 2d sess. (June 14, 1954).

Chapter 3: A Message for the Masses

Popular culture allowed the Bicentennial to reconnect the different parts of American society, to recreate a common frame of reference and a common identity. It accomplished this by presenting through mass media those American civil religious icons, that American society valued.

No conduit for disseminating information is as useful as popular culture. Why is popular culture such a useful tool for unification? To understand one needs to understand what popular culture is. While there is a debate over what exactly it is, for the purpose of this paper, popular culture must provide either intrinsic or extrinsic value to a large sector of society, and by doing this it reflects the cultural trends of society.¹⁵⁶

As society's priorities and values change, popular culture evolves to reflect this change. Although each generation shapes the underlying culture, there are some constants that cross generational boundaries. One facet of popular culture that does this is mass media. Mass media is also a component of mass communication which is designed to disseminate messages widely, rapidly, and consistently; to arouse intended meanings in large diverse and selectively attentive audiences. This is done in the attempt to influence them in a variety of ways.¹⁵⁷ "Media along with friends, family, school, and religion" are how values are transmitted to those establishing themselves as members of society such

¹⁵⁶ Melvin L. Defleur and Everette E. Dennis, *Understanding Mass Communication*, 6th ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1998), 283; Oxford English Dictionary online http://buzzin.emporia.edu/cp/render.UserLayoutRootNode.uP?uP_tparam=utf&utf=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.emporia.edu%2Flibs%2Fdatabases%2F (Accessed June 30, 2013).

¹⁵⁷ Jean Folkerts, Stephen Lacy and Lucinda Davenport, *The Media in Your Life: An Introduction to Mass Communication*, (Boston; Allyn and Bacon, 1998) 9; Defleur, 281; Defleur, 22.

as the young or immigrants.¹⁵⁸ This is what makes popular culture a useful tool in unifying society.

No medium could accomplish this as well as television. Television could present a uniform message, it could unite the American population without contradiction.¹⁵⁹ Television was able to do this because it utilized many of the rules for successful communications.¹⁶⁰

In 1975 in conjunction with the American Bicentennial, *Schoolhouse Rock* introduced a patriotic and historical component, “America Rocks,” to its Saturday morning lineup. *Schoolhouse Rock* premiered in 1973, and was a mini cartoon segment that was inserted in between regularly scheduled Saturday morning programming on ABC television. *Schoolhouse Rock* has been called “the most powerful example of Saturday morning’s influence on culture.”¹⁶¹ Conceived by David B. McCall, the president of an advertising agency, *Schoolhouse Rock* reflected McCall’s belief that music increased the ability to retain information and he wondered if it could be used for educational purposes. After an unsuccessful initial attempt, the first *Schoolhouse Rock* song was created and tested well in both urban and suburban schools. Using visuals along with music, McCall showed the concept to Michael Eisner, then a “young vice-president

¹⁵⁸ Ralph E. Hanson, *Mass Communication: Living in a Media World*, (Boston: McGraw-Hill, 2005), 28.

¹⁵⁹ Douglas Field, ed. *American Cold War Culture*. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005) , 147.

¹⁶⁰ Frank Luntz, a prominent pollster, addressed the crafting of the messages in his book *Words that Work*. Luntz’s argument was that, the message was, not as important as what the person hearing the message heard. Luntz pointed the President Jimmy Carter’s “Crisis of Confidence” speech which is commonly known as his “National Malaise” speech. Luntz acknowledged that what Americans took from Carter’s speech was not his intended message, but that the message they heard led Carter’s ouster from the White House. Luntz believed that there were ten rules for successful communication: simplicity, brevity, credibility, consistency, novelty, that sound and texture matter, inspire, visualize, ask a question, provide context and explained relevancy; Frank Luntz, *Words that Work; It’s Not What You Say, It’s What People Hear*,(New York: Hyperion, 2007), xiii – xiv.

¹⁶¹ Timothy Burke and Kevin Burke, *Saturday Morning Fever*, (New York: St. Martin’s Griffin, 1999), 92; Tom Yohe and George Newall, *Schoolhouse Rock Official Guide*, (New York; Hyperion, 1996), ix.

of children's programming," at ABC and a deal was struck.¹⁶² According to Tom Yohe and George Newell, two of the originators of *Schoolhouse Rock*, *Schoolhouse Rock* was designed around advertising principles, and as such these short snippets utilized many of the hallmarks of successful communication.¹⁶³ Coming in under five minutes in length, these brief lessons used visual symbols and catchy jingles with repeating refrains to teach various lessons. The "America Rocks" segments introduced the children of America to various events in American history and to the workings of American government. An added benefit of "America Rocks" was that it reinforced the importance of certain American civil religious icons.

"America Rocks" was introduced in 1975. The first three videos (*I'm Just a Bill*, *The Preamble*, and *No More Kings*) looked at the legislative process, the Constitution, and American independence respectively. *I'm Just a Bill* is one of the best-known *Schoolhouse Rock* segments coming in a close second to 1973's *Conjunction Junction What's Your Function*. In *Just a Bill*, most of the action took place on the steps of the Capitol building as the bill described the process of becoming a law. While this political segment only showed the Capitol and the White House, additional installments utilized other important civil religious icons. By showing the process of how a bill becomes a law, this episode not only reinforced important American civil religious places like the Capitol and the White House but it also educated young people on what made America exceptional and created the foundation for American identity, through a demonstration of the legislative process. The short also showed two congressmen fighting and even though

¹⁶² Yohe, xii.

¹⁶³ Yohe, xi-xiii.

they oppose each other eventually the two warring sides come together and the bill is made into law.¹⁶⁴

The second video of 1975 was *The Preamble*. The video started with the American flag being created by Betsy Ross. The scene then faded to Independence Hall in Philadelphia while the accompanying song spells out what the Constitution set out to do. An early American homesteading family raised the American flag, the scene then changes to the Capitol building and a group of school children staring at the Constitution adoringly. As the song repeats the scenes from earlier in the video, a new set of images from the twentieth century is shown.¹⁶⁵ Showing images from both an earlier period, that of America's founding, and from the present is a classic example of keying. By being able to identify the present images any children watching the video could also identify with the creation of one of American civil religion's holy texts.¹⁶⁶ The video also used the sacred places of American civil religion to teach the viewers to recognize just how important some places are to American identity.

When talking about *Schoolhouse Rock* it is not uncommon to hear a child who grew up during that time say "*Schoolhouse Rock* is how I learned the preamble to the Constitution." The fact that almost forty years after the release of these two videos, they can still elicit such strong memories proves that as a way of bringing people together television was extremely successful and it succeeded in creating a common framework for unifying at least one segment of American society. The fact that these videos were

¹⁶⁴ Schoolhouse Rock- "I'm Just a Bill," 1975. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mEJL2Uuv-oQ&feature=youtube_gdata_player. (Accessed September 10 2010); Yohe, 64-6.

¹⁶⁵ School house Rock – "The Preamble," 1975. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q_TXJRZ4CFc&feature=youtube_gdata_player. (Accessed September 10 2010); Burke, 92; Yohe, ix, 50-1.

¹⁶⁶ This also ties into Luntz's rules of consistency, novelty, sound and texture, and visualize add in simplicity and brevity, and the School House Rock segments meet over half of Luntz's rules.

released for the Bicentennial celebration showed that not only was it an important in creating a common framework but that it was also important in teaching what was important in the American myth.

The final video of the “America Rocks” series released that year was *No More Kings*. It offered, in approximately three minutes, a catchy summary of the time period leading up to the American Revolution. It accomplished this by offering images of the Pilgrims landing at Plymouth Rock, the colonial argument about taxation without representation, and the Boston Tea Party. These events have become indelibly associated with the American Revolution. As the song finished up with the line “we’re gonna run things our way (no more kings),” George Washington kicked the troll-like form of King George III. The song then says “Nobody’s gonna tell us what to do,” giving George Washington singular credit for removing the king’s influence from the colonies. As the song closed the video ended with the original American flag proudly waving over the new free country.¹⁶⁷

Though less well known than *I’m Just a Bill* and *the Preamble*, the imagery in *No More Kings* was inherently tied to the creation of America and the Bicentennial. The use of iconic places and faces meant that once again, important American civil religious icons were shown to this demographic of the American population which reinforced their importance.

In 1976, the nation’s bicentennial year, the largest addition to the America Rocks lineup occurred, with the release of four new videos covering a range of topics from the

¹⁶⁷ *School House Rock* – “No More Kings,” (*America Rock*), 1975. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p0LmYEjXNIg&feature=youtube_gdata_player. (Accessed September 10 2010); Yohe, 46-7.

Declaration of Independence, the Revolutionary War, the Louisiana Purchase and women's suffrage.

The first video *Fireworks*, which celebrated the Declaration of Independence, was filled with American civil religious icons. The video started off with red, white, and blue fireworks being ignited and forming the American flag which then transforms to the original version of the flag. A newspaper boy is holding up a newspaper with a headline reading, "liberty is declared." Underneath the caption a rough outline of John Trumbull's famous painting of the signing of the Declaration of Independence can be observed. The scene then quickly transferred to the iconic *Spirit of '76* image which was followed by the image of women presumably Molly Pitcher loading a cannon. Even Enlightenment writers like Thomas Paine are acknowledged for their contributions to America's founding, when the video talked about "Common Sense." The newspaper boy shouts, "They did it!" as Thomas Jefferson, Ben Franklin and the other framers of the Declaration of Independence stand proudly by, as fireworks explode over Independence Hall. After going through the refrain, the video looked at the ideals put forth by the Declaration of Independence, specifically life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. The newspaper boy starts to recite the Declaration of Independence and as he does he is joined by two other iconic figures, Uncle Sam and the Statue of Liberty.¹⁶⁸ This video, like *No More Kings*, showed the important events leading to the creation of the United States. Released in the Bicentennial year, the video gave children watching it a basis for understanding what America was celebrating and helped lay the foundation for later American civil religion efforts.

¹⁶⁸ *School house Rock* – "Fireworks," (*America Rock*), 1976.
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CvH7ySQi37E&feature=youtube_gdata_player. (Accessed September 10 2010); Yohe, 52-3.

The video *Shot Heard Around the World* gave a quick summary of important events of the Revolutionary War. The cartoon began with the ride of Paul Revere shouting “the British are coming the British are coming.” The battles of Lexington and Concord are then displayed and the song lyrics said “at Old North bridge we turned them back...to Boston town.” George Washington again made an appearance. Washington’s crossing of the Delaware and the winter spent at Valley Forge are used as examples of Revolutionary fortitude, as the nascent country wins the revolution. The lyrics said “the father of our country beat the British” which reinforced Washington’s deification and gave him credit for kicking the British out of the colonies. While many important American civil religious icons make appearances, the words of this episode are designed to inspire the young viewers to never give up. At various places throughout the song America is in danger of losing and the song acknowledges that “they lost some battles” but because “they showed such determination,” “finally we won,” thereby creating the “freedom” that we all enjoy while at the same time reinforcing the idea how exceptional America was.¹⁶⁹

Suffering Till Suffrage looked at the Nineteenth Amendment, which gave women the right to vote. This video was a departure from other *Schoolhouse Rock* videos: instead of cartoon animation only *Suffrage* contained photographs of famous people. It moved away from the standard American civil religious presidential icons and instead used Woodrow Wilson. Even though the video primarily used later personalities due to the time period under consideration, a connection to the founding of the country was still

¹⁶⁹ *School House Rock* – “Shot Heard 'Round the World” (*America Rock*), 1976. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AhdmDDBjco0&feature=youtu&data_player. (Accessed September 10 2010); Yohe, 48-49.

used. Images of Pilgrim women and Betsy Ross were used to key into America's founding.¹⁷⁰

Elbow Room was the final video that was released that year. It looked at territorial expansion through Jefferson's purchase of Louisiana from France and the adventure of Lewis and Clark in exploring the new territory. The song introduces the concept of manifest destiny and how if we need to we can expand to the moon if we run out of space, keying the concept of Manifest Destiny with the technological advancement of the moon landing. *Elbow Room*, like *Suffering Till Suffrage*, is more about the creation of an American identity rather than promoting American civil religious icons. In both of these episodes the viewers could see how the idea of American identity has shifted to include all facets of American society including those previously excluded. These videos would also lay the groundwork for a later video that explored the concept of America as a melting pot, another key component of American identity.

America Rocks was not the only *Schoolhouse Rock* video series to use American civil religion icons. The "Grammar Rock" video *Nouns* and the "Science Rock" video *Electricity* also used American civil religious icons, such as the Statue of Liberty and Benjamin Franklin. The use of these important icons showed that they could be utilized in the teaching of other ideas, while at the same time reinforcing the ability of those viewing the video to identify these important figures on sight.¹⁷¹

¹⁷⁰ *School House Rock* – "Sufferin' Till Suffrage," (America Rock), 1976.
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3dPF0SGh_PQ&feature=youtube_gdata_player. (Accessed September 10 2010); Yohe, 60-1.

¹⁷¹ *School house Rock* – "Noun is a Person, Place, or Thing," (Grammer Rock), 1973.
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tc-ukN1Rvb8> (Accessed September 20 2010); Yohe , 32-3;
School house Rock – "Electricity," (Science Rock), 1979.
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AbUjjeMLFS0> (Accessed September 20 2010); Yohe, 80-1.

All of these videos reinforced the sacred nature of American civil religious icons. These cartoons were a starting point for creating in the youth of America a sense of a common identity. They showed how and why icons like the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, and George Washington were important in the formation of the American identity. These cartoons also gave this segment of the population a remedial grounding in those icons that collective memory and American civil religion deemed important.

While *Schoolhouse Rock* took care of Saturday mornings, another children's show also incorporated the ideas of the Bicentennial celebration into the show. As *Sesame Street* started its seventh season on PBS, several changes in the show's format were introduced. The first change was that the show left the confines of *Sesame Street*. The first trip headed to the American Southwest. According to executive producer John Stone, these trips were carried out to support the show's "goal of teaching about different cultures." By examining America's different cultures, not only did *Sesame Street* introduce American children to cultures different than their own, it also showed how important these "other" cultures were in reinforcing the idea of America as a melting pot. This acknowledged the idea that even though there are differences, one of the things that makes America exceptional is its ability to integrate various parts into a single unified American identity.

The second change introduced to the show, was the introduction of Bicentennial themes to some of the show segments. One of the first segments had Big Bird running for president. When Big Bird wanted "rule without fear of contradiction," he was reminded that the "nation is not just made up of birds," again reinforcing the idea of the diverse

nature of America. The segment would also allow for civics lesson on the powers and limits of the presidency, a timely lesson in the post-Watergate years.¹⁷²

While *Schoolhouse Rock* and *Sesame Street* were aired during times that children were the primary viewers, prime time also showed children-friendly shows that incorporated the idea of American values. When beloved *Sesame Street* character Kermit the Frog became one of the starring members of *The Muppet Show* in 1976, Kermit was joined by Sam the Eagle. Sam was a big believer in America. While the character was portrayed as more conservative than the rest of the Muppets and unappreciated by them, he consistently preached to all that would listen about American greatness.

For older primetime viewers, television would utilize a different format. On July 4, 1974, Charlton Heston told television audiences how George Washington considered going to the aid of Boston Harbor, which had been blocked off as one of the measures of the intolerable/coercive acts issued by the British Parliament as a result of the Boston tea party.¹⁷³ Heston's narrative was the first of 732 planned *Bicentennial Minutes*. Broadcast on CBS around nine o'clock every night for the remainder of the month and during prime time for the rest of the series, America would see "notables from every walk of life... Bringing [them] both great moments and little-known incidents."¹⁷⁴ These events were all part of the inexorable advance towards American independence. Joining Heston in the first month of the series were such notables as Zsa-Zsa Gabor, Edward Asner, Jean Stapleton, Lloyd Bridges, and sandwiched between the *Odd Couple's* Tony Randall and Jack Klugman was Walter Cronkite. Topics included such mundane events as New York

¹⁷² John J. O'Connor, "'Sesame Street' Takes Some New Direction," *New York Times*, December 2 1975.

¹⁷³ Cecil Smith "Bicentennial Minutes," *Los Angeles Times*, June 29, 1975; "Display Ad 19," *New York Times*, July 2, 1974.

¹⁷⁴ "Display Ad 19," *New York Times*, July 2, 1974.

getting running water and the Kentucky territory being surveyed, to John Adams preparing for the first Continental Congress and a “fiery” Alexander Hamilton speech. Not every *Minute* was hosted by famous television stars: mayors, journalists, musicians, painters, and authors all stepped up to host a *Bicentennial Minute*.¹⁷⁵ Even the president of the American Historical Association, Richard B. Morris, presented a *Bicentennial Minute* though he does say that there was a factual error in his performance.¹⁷⁶

The Bicentennial Minute's route to production was as tumultuous as American society had been. Louis Freedman originally offered PBS the idea. PBS turned the idea down and when Freedman became head of drama at CBS, *the Bicentennial Minute* got a second chance. Eventually after CBS started showing the minutes and Shell Oil Company agreed to sponsor the minutes, PBS petitioned CBS to be allowed to rerun the *Bicentennial Minutes*, which according to *Los Angeles Times* reporter Cecil Smith, “disgusted” Freedman.¹⁷⁷

Shell Oil Company was the only corporate sponsor of *the Bicentennial Minute* and after one year of production with one year to go, estimates put at \$9-\$10 million price tag for the segment. While this might seem extreme for one company to bear, each episode made sure that the estimated “average 32 million people daily,” who saw the show knew it was sponsored by Shell Oil.¹⁷⁸ The amount of money that the Shell Oil Company put out seemed especially high considering the problems facing the

¹⁷⁵ “Display Ad 19,” *New York Times*, July 2, 1974; Smith, “Bicentennial Minutes,” “Bicentennial Minutes Celebrate Anniversary,” *The Dispatch*, Lexington, North Carolina, June 27, 1975; “Bicentennial Minute,” *Gadsden Times*, Gadsden, Alabama, October 4, 1975.

¹⁷⁶ Morris does not say what exactly this error was. The segment looked at Caesar Rodney’s ride to Philadelphia. According to Morris no one seemed to notice the slip, as “not a single letter was received” pointing out the error; Richard B. Morris, “An Academic Historian’s Effect on Public History,” *The History Teacher*, 16 no. 1(November 1982): 57.

¹⁷⁷ Smith, “Bicentennial Minutes.”

¹⁷⁸ Smith, “Bicentennial Minutes.”; “Patriot Minute,” *New York Times*, June 29, 1975.

Bicentennial Minute. In the fall of 1974 Freedman left CBS and his replacement Bob Markell inherited the program. In a meeting with Fred Silverman, Markell was offered a job at CBS as an executive producer, with the chance to revive the television drama *Playhouse 90*. The deal, however, had strings attached. According to an interview with Markell he was called into Silverman's office and told "by the way [we] have the Bicentennial minutes."¹⁷⁹ Markell was told that he had until Christmas to produce them better and cheaper or the "deal was off." Markell said one of the problems was that no one knew exactly what *The Bicentennial Minute* was supposed to be. Markell proposed that they treat the *Minute* like a regular show even though it was only a minute long. With this decision made *The Bicentennial Minute* began to follow the rules for a regular television show: it had a script, was done in three acts, and included soundtrack and a set.¹⁸⁰ The show had 38 people working behind the scenes, including writers, researchers, and production workers. Conservative estimates put production time at "60 man-hours" for each of the segments.¹⁸¹

Accompanying the initial problem of not knowing what exactly what a *Bicentennial Minute* should be, was the problem of getting people to volunteer as hosts. A year later the changes that Markell and the crew had wrought, paid off. No longer was it "tough" to get volunteers. According to casting director Marilyn Howard, by the first anniversary, they had a long list of people wanting to do the show. Markell recalled in an interview that people were begging to do a minute, even people who initially had turned

¹⁷⁹ Archives of American Television, Bicentennial Minutes, "Bob Markell Interview," part 8 of 10, FLV, 0:29:28 <http://www.emmytvlegends.org/interviews/shows/bicentennial-minutes> (Accessed October 26, 2013).

¹⁸⁰ Archives of American Television, Bicentennial Minutes, "Bob Markell Interview," part 8 of 10, FLV, 0:29:28 <http://www.emmytvlegends.org/interviews/shows/bicentennial-minutes> (Accessed October 26, 2013); "Equal Time Rule Hits 'Bicentennial Minute'," *Free Lance Star*, Frederiksberg, Virginia July 1, 1976.

¹⁸¹ Smith, "Bicentennial Minutes.": Archives of American Television.

them down. Joanne Woodward and Paul Newman had originally declined to host a *Bicentennial Minute*, but both Woodward and Newman had a change of heart, and by the first anniversary Woodward would do the anniversary minute and Newman let the show know he would “like to do one.”¹⁸² Those who hosted *the Bicentennial Minute* were not technically “volunteers.” They were paid a small fee of \$202 to appear, or the host could donate their payments “to the CBS foundation” which was setting up a “graduate fellowship in the study of American history of the revolutionary period.” The fellowships would be created at “three leading American universities.” If the host donated their fee, CBS would not only match the donation but would actually “triple the amount donated.” This three-to-one matching grant would mean that the fellowship would be funded “in perpetuity.”¹⁸³ Journalist Cecil Smith, who did an article on the anniversary of *the Bicentennial Minute*, was asked if he would like to do one, as he questioned the process of creating a minute. After going through the process, Smith’s *Minute* aired on July 5, 1975. Smith would later state that not everyone recognized the nuances of the *Minute*. His nephew proved this when he said “I saw you in that Shell commercial.” Senator Ted Kennedy may have felt, like Smith’s nephew, that the endeavor was too commercialized, since he was “one [notable] who turned the whole deal down.”¹⁸⁴ Unlike Senator Kennedy, who did not want to participate, some of those who came to host were out of this world. Set to coincide with their mission, the three Apollo astronauts going to rendezvous with the Soviet Soyuz capsule, would each host a *Minute*. These *Minutes*

¹⁸² Smith, “Bicentennial Minutes.”; Archives of American Television.

¹⁸³ Smith, “Bicentennial Minutes.”; Archives of American Television; “Patriot Minute”; “Bicentennial Minutes Celebrate Anniversary”.

¹⁸⁴ Smith, “Bicentennial Minutes.”; Cecil Smith “Bicentennial Curtain Falls” *Los Angeles Times*, December 31, 1976. ; “Patriot Minute.”

would air on the day of launch, the day of rendezvous, and the day of separation. Also joining the astronauts in presenting *Minutes* were various NASA officials.¹⁸⁵

If parody is a highest form of flattery, than the *Bicentennial Minutes* made it to the big time. The *Minutes* were acknowledged in other popular television shows. On the episode “Mike’s Move” in the show *All in the Family*, after Archie Bunker goes against his typical proclivities and argues in his own unique way for affirmative action, son-in-law Mike Stivic ends the scene with the line “I think we just heard Archie Bunker’s *Bicentennial Minute*.” Even the actors on *the Carol Burnett Show* did a skit, in which Harvey Korman narrated and Tim Conway performed a *Bicentennial Minute*.¹⁸⁶

Because of the success of *the Bicentennial Minute* CBS decided to extend its run and continue the series to December 31, 1976. As the Bicentennial year moved towards its end, President Gerald R Ford hosted the 911th minute which ended the series. Ford’s minute was not delivered during prime time as the other minutes had been, but was delivered in the final minutes of 1976. Since 1976 was an election year, Markell was unable to have his first choice, President Ford, for the July 4, 1976 *Bicentennial Minute*. President Ford, was unable to host at this time because of the equal time provision. Since Ford was campaigning for re-election, the equal time provision stated, that if he was given time to do a *Bicentennial Minute* then CBS would be forced to give the other candidates a minute too. The candidates would not be required to host a *Bicentennial Minute*, and could use their time however they wanted. Markell chose not to do this and

¹⁸⁵ Smith, “Bicentennial Minutes.”

¹⁸⁶ Youtube.com, “All In The Family-Archie Bunker's Bicentennial Minute-What Makes America Great (originally Broadcast on February 2, 1976) ‘Mikes Move’,” <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cbu0voHagbA> (Accessed October 26, 2013); Youtube.com, “The Carol Burnett Show - A Bicentennial Minute,” http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f_ffW8VCbbA (Accessed October 26, 2013).

had First Lady Betty Ford gave a talk about the signing of the Declaration of Independence. The equal time provision, forced President Ford to wait until the election was over to host one of the episodes.¹⁸⁷

Though Ford gave the 911th *Bicentennial Minute* he was only the 909th person to host. This discrepancy occurred because Walter Cronkite was the only person to host two *Bicentennial Minutes* and Kukla, Fran, and Ollie, according to Merrell, hosted the only two-part Bicentennial minute. These are not the only deviations found during the run of the show. The final *Minute* also deviated from the original plan that Merrell designed when he took over. In addition to not airing during primetime, as mentioned earlier, President Ford did not talk about the distant past, but rather only look back to the recent year's celebration. Ford reminded the American public that the series brought them together in re-examining the past while embracing the future. He closed his *Minute* with the plea that Americans keep the spirit of togetherness "alive" in the coming year.¹⁸⁸

Throughout the series, *the Bicentennial Minute* highlighted events both big and small but provided the American population the way to reconnect with one another. Each night during prime time 32 million Americans were getting grounding in what according

¹⁸⁷ "President Concludes 'Bicentennial Minute' Segments," *Lakeland Ledger*, Lakeland, Florida, December 30, 1976; Smith, "Bicentennial Minutes.,"; Smith "Bicentennial Curtain Falls.,"; "Equal Time Rule Hits 'Bicentennial Minute'," *Free Lance Star*, Fredericksburg, Virginia July 1, 1976.

¹⁸⁸ With the end of the *Bicentennial Minute* the series has passed in to obscurity. A Google search for videos of the minutes yields only four of the 911 episodes. These *Minutes* include: Jessica Tandy talking about the liberty tree, Garason Kanin talking about George Mason, Val Avery talking about Washington's visit to Boston after British left it, and part of President Ford's Final Minute; YouTube.com, "Bicentennial Minute," <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UUoto1lsX50> , (Accessed October 26, 2013); YouTube.com, "Bicentennial Minute," <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CgxOYH7fHX4> , (Accessed October 26, 2013); YouTube.com, "Bicentennial Minute - Broadcast 3/18/76 (w/Val Avery)," <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=93s5mXL0WZk> , (Accessed October 26, 2013) ;YouTube.com, "CBS: The Last Bicentennial Minute, Late 1976!! ," <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f0TB76tc5Tg> (Accessed October 26, 2013).

to President Ford was “the birth of our nation which established American Freedoms and kept its promise alive.”¹⁸⁹

If *Schoolhouse Rock* and *the Bicentennial Minute* were regular programming, television specials also played their part in introducing the American public to the ideals of the Bicentennial Celebration. Almost a year before America’s Bicentennial, television specials started to acknowledge the Bicentennial celebration. One such show was *The Great American History Test*, which aired on June 30, 1975. The show pitted children against adults in answering 25 questions on historical knowledge. The American Historical Association’s President Richard B. Morris also consulted on this show.¹⁹⁰ Two months later American television viewers were treated to a Bicentennial-themed *Miss American Pageant*.¹⁹¹ In 1975 and 1976 both dramatic and comedy specials looked at such American civil religious icons as Lincoln and Paul Revere.¹⁹²

Documentaries also looked at American civil religious icons. On December 27, 1976 *The World of Franklin and Jefferson* aired in Los Angeles. This special was based on the American Revolution Bicentennial Association’s (ARBA) exhibition of the same name, which was displayed at the Los Angeles Art Museum. The ARBA also put out two pamphlets that talked about the exhibit. The exhibit showed how important both Jefferson and Franklin were to the creation of America, proving that the men were the “architects of independence.” The exhibition designed by Charles and Ray Eames for the ARBA was only in Los Angeles for a short amount of time and by airing the television special,

¹⁸⁹ Gerald R Ford, “Recorded Remarks, CBS ‘Bicentennial Minute’,” Box 42 of the President’s Speeches and Statements: 12/10/ 76 Reading Copies at the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library <http://www.fordlibrarymuseum.gov/library/document/0122/1253127.pdf> (Accessed October, 30, 2013).

¹⁹⁰ John J. O’Connor, “TV: Great American History Test,” *New York Times*, June 30, 1975.

¹⁹¹ “Miss America Pageant Arrives With a Bicentennial Theme,” *Los Angeles Times*, August 31, 1975.

¹⁹² “Display Ad 130,” *New York Times*, January 12, 1976; “Display Ad 70,” *Los Angeles Times*, January 21, 1976.

citizens who could not get to the exhibit in person could still learn about these important American figures.¹⁹³

Animated specials also promoted American civil religious icons. *Days of Liberty* was one such special sponsored by Burger King and Beechnut Baby Food and was touted as a way to teach children that “history [was more than] remembering dates.” In this “charming and unforgettable special” the viewer was shown the monumental events of 1776 as “a nation is about to be born.” American civil religious icon George Washington was featured prominently in the cartoon. This allowed viewers to see how Washington shaped the United States, reinforcing his deification and the prominent place he enjoys in American civil religion’s hierarchy.¹⁹⁴

While television was the primary way to reach large sections of American society other forms of popular culture also contributed to getting out the ideas behind the Bicentennial celebration. Literature, comics, magazines, theater, and film all did their part to help spread the Bicentennial message.

The Bicentennial theme could be found in various forms of written works. Many books, both fiction and nonfiction, were able to tap into the excitement surrounding the Bicentennial. One nonfiction offering was *1776 a Year of Illusion* by Thomas Fleming. According to one reviewer, Fleming’s book was “The definitive work [of] the year that gave us our own nation.”¹⁹⁵ While not quite going that far, the book review in *William and Mary Quarterly* by Charles Whitmore said: “in [the] Bicentennial year... Fleming [did] us [a] good service by re-examining 1776.” He also stated that “Washington was the hero,” perpetuating the Washington myth that American civil religion relies upon and

¹⁹³ “Display Ad 77,” *Los Angeles Times*, December 27, 1976.

¹⁹⁴ “Display Ad 139,” *New York Times*, December 11, 1976.

¹⁹⁵ “Display Ad 163,” *New York Times*, October 31, 1975.

promotes.¹⁹⁶ *Kirkus Review* agreed with Whitmore, using terms like solid and delightful, though for this reviewer, perpetuation of the Washington myth was more problematic.¹⁹⁷

The fictional novel *Valley Forge* narrowly focused on the sacred site where adversity tempered George Washington. The myth surrounding Washington and Valley Forge talks about how this crucible of hardship forged Washington and the Continental Army into the force that would win the revolution.¹⁹⁸ Historian Lori Lynn Bogle argued that this combination of Washington at Valley Forge was one of the most important pieces of American civil religion to be utilized in the early Cold War period. While it has occasionally dropped out of public consciousness, whenever the “nation sought to ‘return’ to the ‘faith’ the imagery of Washington in the snows at Valley Forge was pulled out,” to help put America back on course and recreate the idea that Americans can surmount overwhelming odds.¹⁹⁹

Alongside *Valley Forge*, other fictional offerings were also released, some of these offerings looked at the founding of America. John Jakes’ *Kent Family Chronicles* was one such example. The series was also commonly known as the *Bicentennial Series*. The story chronicles one family as it moves through American history. As the family story is told they interacted with some of the Who’s Who of American history.

Washington, Jefferson, Franklin all make appearances in the pages of the series. These

¹⁹⁶ Charles P. Whitmore, “1776: Year of Illusions by Thomas Fleming,” *The William and Mary Quarterly* Third series 33 no.3 (July 1976): 552 – 3; Thomas J. Flemming, *1776 Year of Illusions*, (New York; W.W. Norton & Company Inc., 1975).

¹⁹⁷ kirkusreviews.com, “1776: Year of Illusions by Thomas Fleming,” <https://www.kirkusreviews.com/book-reviews/thomas-fleming-6/1776-year-of-illusions/> (Accessed October 27, 2013); kirkusreviews.com, “1776: Year of Illusions by Thomas Fleming,” <https://www.kirkusreviews.com/book-reviews/thomas-fleming-7/1776-year-of-illusions-2/> (Accessed October 27, 2013); Villanova University, Falvey Memorial Library, “1776 Year of Illusion,” <https://library.villanova.edu/Find/Record/580857/Reviews> (Accessed October 27, 2013).

¹⁹⁸ MacKinlay Kantor, *Valley Forge*, (New York: M.Evans and Company Inc.,1975) ; “Display Ad 114,” *New York Times*, October 29, 1975.

¹⁹⁹ Lori Lyn Bogle, *Pentagon’s Battle for the American Mind : The Early Cold War*, (College Station TX: Texas A&M University Press, 2004), 48 – 50.

founding fathers would be accompanied by other American icons such as Davy Crockett, Abraham Lincoln, and Lewis and Clark.²⁰⁰ The series would eventually reach nine novels; however by the start of the Bicentennial year, four of the novels were already stocked in bookstores.²⁰¹ This meant that Jakes was to become the first author to have three books on the New York bestsellers list in the same year.²⁰² This prominence allowed Jakes to not only tell the story to a large number of people, but also reinforced the importance of certain characters from the American myth.

Besides touting the books America was reading, newspapers also did their part to make the Bicentennial special. The Bicentennial message also made it into the funny pages. In various newspapers, American civil religious icons made appearances, whether it was a Liberty Bell being sold as a Bicentennial trinket or the idea of George Washington and Betsy Ross taking on Harry Truman and Billie Jean King in tennis. Important icons made quick appearances, showing off the prominence that American civil religious icons enjoyed, while at the same time reinforcing their recognizability by showing up in the comic pages. Even the idea of the Bicentennial as a unifier showed up in the comic pages. A character from the comic *The Now Society* stated, “We haven’t done anything Bicentennial.” With this line it is implied that by not doing this, the characters are not part of the larger society. Also implicit in the statement is the term

²⁰⁰ John Jakes, *The Bastard*, (New York; Nelson Doubleday, 1974); John Jakes, *The Rebels*, (New York; Nelson Doubleday, 1975); John Jakes, *The Seekers*, (New York; Nelson Doubleday, 1975); John Jakes, *The Furies*, (New York; Nelson Doubleday, 1976); John Jakes, *The Titans*, (New York; Nelson Doubleday, 1976) .

²⁰¹ “Display Ad 218,” *Los Angeles Times*, January 15, 1976.

²⁰² “John Jakes Biography,” John Jakes Official Website, <http://www.johnjakes.com/johnjakes.htm> (Accessed October 27, 2013).

“yet” which means it is not too late; they can join the celebration and the growing part of society that was already celebrating.²⁰³

While the Bicentennial celebration enjoyed the special attention it received in the funny pages, newspapers also promoted the event in other ways. Since July 4, 1976 was on a Sunday most newspapers had some sort of special Bicentennial edition that weekend. Both the *New York Times* and the *Los Angeles Times* planned to have special editions of their Sunday magazines devoted to the Bicentennial celebration. A pitch to potential advertisers extolled the virtues of the forthcoming magazines. The *New York Times* told potential advertisers that it would be a collectible because it was an important part of the “Bicentennial record;” however it would maintain the probative and analytical standards of the *Times*. The *Los Angeles Times* pitch was more subdued but did show the importance of this milestone of American achievement. The *New York Times* also took an additional step to highlight the importance of the Fourth of July, when it offered for \$10 plus shipping and handling a paperweight commemorating the newspaper’s historic front page for either the day that “Lindbergh Flies to Paris” or that “Men Walk On the Moon.”²⁰⁴

Newspapers and their newsmagazines were not the only print medium that had special editions commemorating the Bicentennial. The *New York Times* reported that in May 1975 that some adult magazines were not planning any “editorial features marking the Bicentennial,” which the *Time’s* believed was a “blessing.” The article however went on to say that almost one quarter of the magazines polled in a survey said they planned to

²⁰³ “Other 56—No Title,” *Los Angeles Times*, August 31, 1975; “Comic 5—No Title,” *Los Angeles Times*, April 1, 1975; “Peanutss[sic],” *the Washington Post*, December 26, 1975.

²⁰⁴ “Display Ad 151,” October 9, 1975; “Display Ad 143,” *New York Times*, November 11, 1975; “Display Ad 122,” *Los Angeles Times*, July 3, 1975; “Display Ad 525,” *Los Angeles Times*, November 7, 1976.

have a Bicentennial themed issue. The article said an undisclosed number were undecided whether to produce one or not at that time.²⁰⁵

Some magazines did not even wait until 1976 to start celebrating the Bicentennial. The *Times* said that both *American Home* and *Better Homes & Gardens* planned to begin their celebrations during the second half of 1975 and that the February 1975 issues of *House Beautiful* had its first article about the upcoming Bicentennial year.²⁰⁶ Due to the nature of these magazines, it is understandable that they were at the forefront of the Bicentennial wave, since it took time to get a home ready to show the Bicentennial spirit. While having a showcase home designed to show off one's Bicentennial spirit was possible, it was easier for most Americans to show their spirit by subscribing to the *1776 Magazine*. This massive magazine which according to the *Times* was to have a page count of "225 to 250 pages" per issue, would allow the American population to become experts on all things Bicentennial. This short run magazine of only twelve issues was a special production aimed to cash in on the Bicentennial.²⁰⁷

Mainstream magazines like *Reader's Digest* and *National Geographic* also planned special editions for the Bicentennial. The July 1976 edition of *National Geographic* utilized the "living symbol of our land," in the form of a large color photo of the American bald eagle.²⁰⁸ This issue acknowledged that American society was troubled but it beseeched its readers to "count [their] blessings," which according to former editor Gilbert Grosvenor, included "the Magnificent land itself." The land was what *National*

²⁰⁵ Philip H. Dougherty, "Advertising" *New York Times*, May 5, 1975.

²⁰⁶ Dougherty, "Advertising."

²⁰⁷ Dougherty, "Advertising."

²⁰⁸ Gilbert Grosvenor, "Introduction," *National Geographic*, July 1976, 1; Jeff Foote "Living Symbol of Our Land," *National Geographic*, July 1976, Front cover.

Geographic decided to focus on for this Bicentennial issue.²⁰⁹ Of course no issue commemorating the Bicentennial could forgo looking at George Washington and even in this issue dedicated to looking at the land, an article about Washington appears. The author does try to look at Washington the man rather than Washington the demigod. It examined Washington's human nature, beginning with the idea that Washington knew "ambition and greed and disappointment...grief and frustration...the pangs of unrequited love."²¹⁰ The article makes it known that throughout all of his tribulations he would continually triumph, and that the failures he experienced helped to shape him into the man the nation loved. The article closed with Washington's death; the author ends it with the line "church bells tolled mournfully across a nation that owed its very existence to the nobility of his nature."²¹¹ While the author took Washington off his pedestal and looked at some of the cracks that had formed in his story, in the end he put him right back on the pedestal where American civil religion had placed him.²¹²

While some magazines such as *National Geographic* incorporated the Bicentennial into their regular issues, other magazines such as *Life* and *Time* released special issues celebrating the Bicentennial.²¹³ During the Bicentennial, *Time* released two special editions. The first issue was designed to transport the reader back to 1776 and, as managing editor Henry A. Grunwald said, report the news as if *Time* was there. The production of this issue was not without problems and Grunwald acknowledged that the limitation of eighteenth-century news reporting would have hampered the creation of a

²⁰⁹ Gilbert Grosvenor, "Introduction," 1.

²¹⁰ Howard LaFay, "The Man Behind the Myths: Geo. Washington," *National Geographic*, July 1976, 90.

²¹¹ LaFay, 111.

²¹² LaFay, 90-111.

²¹³ Dougherty, "Advertising.," *National Geographic*, July 1976; "Display Ad 212," *Los Angeles Times*, January 4, 1976; "Display Ad 214," *Los Angeles Times*, January 4, 1976.

weekly edition like *Time*, so some artistic license in allowing news to be reported in a timely fashion was allowed.²¹⁴ Gracing the cover of this special edition was one of the most important founding fathers, Thomas Jefferson. Not only did this edition report the news of the time to inform the American population how America was formed, but the plan behind this issue was to bring America together in “a time when Americans [were] questioning the very meaning of their nation’s basic belief.” Grunwald believed that it would help Americans return to “[their] origins and [their] fundamental values,” thereby working to re-forge America fracturing society by creating a common framework. It tried to accomplish this task when it took America’s Declaration of Independence and showed a connection to “modern-day” issues.²¹⁵ *Time* took the subject headings found in the magazine and examine the same topics in 1776. This also lead to one of Grunwald’s caveats, that not all subject headings could make the transition back to the eighteenth century citing “television and cinema” as an obvious omission from the special editions.²¹⁶

While the magazine successfully made the transition back to the eighteenth century, advertising in the special issue ran the gamut from colonial themed to modern era and times in between. The Sears’ advertisement and the Seagram’s advertisement both celebrated the Bicentennial with ads that tied back to colonial days.²¹⁷ Even the Conoco and Pillsbury advertisements tied into that theme. Conoco, a gasoline company not established until almost 100 years after the signing of the Declaration of

²¹⁴ Henry A. Grunwald, “About This Issue,” *Time*, Special 1776 Issue, July 4 1776, vol. 105 no. 20, 3.

²¹⁵ Grunwald, *Time*, Special 1776 Issue, 3.

²¹⁶ Grunwald, *Time*, Special 1776 Issue, 3.

²¹⁷ Sears Roebuck and Co., “America’s 200th Birthday: A Time for Re-Dedication,” Advertisement, *Time*, Special 1776 Issue, 15 – 20; Seagram Distillery, “Seagram In the Spirit of ’76,” Advertisement, *Time*, Special 1776 Issue, 36 – 40.

Independence, was not only celebrating the American Bicentennial but their own centennial as well. Conoco believed that “Enterprise: [was] a Neglected Freedom?”²¹⁸ Its ad pointed to Thomas Jefferson’s idea that individual enterprise “was the foundation for the pillars of American prosperity,” and that one of the freedoms that Jefferson and the other founding fathers were fighting for was “freedom of enterprise – the freedom to develop without economic constraints imposed by England.” Conoco’s advertisement was done in response to “increasing calls for constraints on ... economic freedom.” Conoco reminded Americans that the “freedoms [were] inseparable,” “priceless and fragile” meaning that Americans needed to work to ensure that America’s legacy of freedom is maintained for the coming generations.”²¹⁹

While the Pillsbury advertisement did not preach the dangers of abridging freedoms, it did praise “freedom of choice.” It claimed that those three words were “uniquely American” and could “describe a whole way of life,” reminding Americans that the more different people embraced individuality the more similar they were. Americans could choose to “make of [our] life what [we] will.”²²⁰ The way a person chose to individualize their life could be as inconsequential as choosing whether to bake from scratch or from a mix.²²¹

²¹⁸ Continental Oil Company, “Enterprise: A Neglected Freedom?” Advertisement, *Time*, Special 1776 Issue, 46 – 47.

²¹⁹ One group that voiced thoughts like this was the People’s Bicentennial Commission. They placed an advertisement in the *New York Times* claiming “It [was] time to teach big business a few lessons about democracy.” They believed that business had too much power in America and as such should be limited. They liken these corporate giants to a tyrannical monarch; “Display Ad 581,” *New York Times*, January 18, 1976.

²²⁰ The Pillsbury Company, “The American Way with Food,” Advertisement, *Time*, Special 1776 Issue, 27 – 30.

²²¹ The Pillsbury Company, “The American Way with Food,” Advertisement, *Time*, Special 1776 Issue, 27 – 30.

While some advertisements did not harken back to colonial days they still had a nostalgic theme. The Frigidaire advertisement contained the headline “in 1918 we made the only Frigidaire refrigerators” with a period-specific photograph captioned with “we still do.” Yet the advertisement goes on to extol how “antique Frigidaire refrigerators from decades ago... [were] working away... [because they] built them to last.” This advertisement also complained that even though there is only one Frigidaire, the name had become synonymous with refrigerators. While not overtly stated and within the context of the Bicentennial celebration is the idea that what Americans make lasts. This idea could be applied to either refrigerators or in the case of the United States, a country. Frigidaire was the pinnacle in the manufacture of refrigerators and its name had become synonymous for refrigerators, so to was the United States an exceptional example of freedom and liberty.²²² Of the advertising in the special edition, only four ads did not have a Bicentennial- or colonial-themed advertisement, although one acknowledged the founding fathers, it only made a reference to that particular term. These four advertisers, in three two-page spreads and the back cover, fell into two categories: auto manufacturers and cigarette makers. Both the Chevrolet Vega and the Cadillac Seville focused on the economic value of their respective vehicles, hyping the fuel efficiency of each rather than the idea of American innovation and individuality that each could represent.²²³ The lack of historical theme in the category was not surprising; it could be understood since the automobile was a modern invention that became a prominent part of American culture in the latter half of the twentieth century.

²²²General Motors, Frigidaire, “In 1918 We Made the Only Frigidaire Refrigerator,” Advertisement, *Time*, Special 1776 Issue, 2.

²²³General Motors, Chevrolet, “Vega Wagons,” Advertisement, *Time*, Special 1776 Issue, back cover; General Motors, Cadillac, “A New Expression of Cadillac Excellence,” Advertisement, *Time*, Special 1776 Issue, 70 – 71.

Cigarette makers, and more specifically tobacco, however were a prominent part of the American economy in 1776 and neither of the two advertisements, one from Marlboro and one from Virginia Slims, acknowledged the important role that tobacco played in developing the United States. It is the Virginia Slims' ad that gave a brief acknowledgment to the idea of the Bicentennial. While the advertisement featured a doctored American civil religious icon, Mount Rushmore, in addition to the company's standard tagline of "You've come a long way baby" it also reminded Americans that the "founding fathers couldn't have been founding fathers without founding mothers." The ad's use of Mount Rushmore, an icon of icons, does tie into the American population's shared knowledge of what the mountain was supposed to look like, utilizing the common framework American civil religion.²²⁴ The Virginia Slims advertisement, like the Frigidaire advertisement, has a subtle subtext that could be seen when viewed within the context of the time period, between when the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) had been ratified in Congress and the deadline for its ratification by the states. The revolution provided a fundamental shift in how Americans viewed themselves. No longer was the colonial identity tied to the population's status as British citizens but rather to the formation of a common identity. The ERA movement in the Virginia slim advertisement, even though it would eventually be defeated, was about moving a previously alienated segment of the American population so that it became part of the common identity. This is the same idea that we saw exhibited in chapter two's discussion of the 1947 Freedom Train and racial segregation in the South.

²²⁴ Philip Morris USA, Marlboro, "Come to Marlboro Country," Advertisement, *Time*, Special 1776 Issue, inside front cover – 1; Philip Morris USA, Virginia Slims, "You've Come A Long Way Baby," Advertisement, *Time*, Special 1776 Issue, 78 – Inside back cover.

This special issue of *Time* was so popular that it “sold out so fast, that thousands of people were unable to find copies at their newsstand.” This led the publisher to offer a copy of the issue as an inducement for subscribing to the magazine at the beginning of 1976,²²⁵ but it also released a sequel issue the following year. This issue would, according to Grunwald “[conclude] the story of the events of 1776 had so gloriously [begun].”²²⁶ This special issue dated September 26, 1789 was chosen because with the ratification of the Constitution “it was only [then] that the Declaration of Independence finally came to full fruition through the birth of a truly national government.”²²⁷ The issue began like the previous one, this time moving back to 1789. It had some of the same problems moving back to 1776 had, and Grunwald followed the same established procedures from the earlier edition.

The cover of the second special edition, like the earlier edition, contained a painting of an iconic figure. This time it was George Washington who greeted the readers. While the reason and ideas behind the second special issue was the same, there were differences from the first. The main difference had to do with the nature of the advertisements in this issue. While this issue had more advertisements than the previous one, the increased number of advertisements did not show a corresponding rise in Bicentennial- or colonial-themed advertisements. In fact no advertisement in this issue was colonial-themed. In this issue, like the earlier one the main advertisers that stuck with modern ideas were again car manufacturers and cigarette makers.²²⁸

²²⁵ “Display Ad 212,” *Los Angeles Times*, January 4, 1976; “Display Ad 214,” *Los Angeles Times*, January 4, 1976.

²²⁶ Henry A. Grunwald, “About This Issue,” *Time*, Special Bicentennial Issue, September 26, 1789, vol. 107 no. 21, 3.

²²⁷ Grunwald, Special Bicentennial Issue 1789, 3.

²²⁸ General Motors, Chevrolet, “Chevette: Chevrolet’s New Kind of American Car,” Advertisement, *Time*, Special Bicentennial Issue 1789, back cover; Philip Morris USA, Marlboro, “Come to Where the

Similar to the 1776 issue the Virginia Slims' advertisement does acknowledge the context of the issue, that the magazine is the historical piece. This time the ad utilized the idea of education for women, which according to the props in the advertisement is set around the turn of the twentieth century.²²⁹

One car manufacturer, Buick, also took on a historic theme in their advertisement, but like the Virginia Slims' advertisement it displayed America at the turn-of-the-century. Both of these advertisements had the subtext of innovation, and within the context of the issue can be seen as giving a nod to the innovations that the Constitution represented in governmental systems.²³⁰

The remaining advertisers acknowledged the Bicentennial celebration. Of the remaining ads, only two specifically reference the celebration. Both Coke and the U.S. Armed Forces advertisements talked about the American Bicentennial. While the Armed Forces advertisement talked about how the Armed Forces played an important role in defending American independence, it also addressed the tarnished image that it received in the aftermath of Vietnam. It stated that it was harder to be accepted in the military than in the past. It also talked about the benefits that one received when one joined, but it declared that the "main benefit" was being in the fight to preserve the American way of

Flavor is Marlboro," Advertisement, *Time*, Special Bicentennial Issue 1789, Inside front cover – 1; General Motors, Oldsmobile, "Oldsmobile Omega Brougham," Advertisement, *Time*, Special Bicentennial Issue 1789, 56; General Motors, Cadillac, "When Should you Buy Your First Cadillac," Advertisement, *Time*, Special Bicentennial Issue 1789, 43; General Motors, Pontiac, "Your Personal Declaration of Independence," Advertisement, *Time*, Special Bicentennial Issue 1789, 2.

²²⁹Philip Morris USA, Virginia Slims, "Back Then Education Taught Men to Run the World and Women to Run the House," Advertisement, *Time*, Special Bicentennial Issue 1789, 72 – inside back cover.

²³⁰General Motors, Buick, "The Day Everything Changed," Advertisement, *Time*, Special Bicentennial Issue 1789, 24 – 25.

life, reminding the reader that the armed forces were “part of the reason we [were] still here.”²³¹

The second advertisement that talked about the Bicentennial was from Coca-Cola. On the advertisement’s title page The advertisement talked about how Coke had “been to a lot of birthday parties,” but that “the biggest one of all [was] coming up.” Within the pages of the advertisement under a title of “Happy Birthday America,” the ad gave a short history lesson of the twentieth century recapping all the trials and triumphs that America and her citizens faced. It reminded the reader that Coca-Cola was part of bringing everyone together, and that building the American dream was hard work. America would succeed however because “they always [had].” The ad reminded the reader, that Coke was a unifying force in their life, an idea reinforced by some of the images used for the advertisement.²³²

Two other advertisements worked to cash in on the Bicentennial. Both of these advertisements were selling items from *Time*’s parent company *Time–Life*. One item was *The Life History of the United States*, a “magnificent Bicentennial commemoration” of the “whole American story,” which the advertisement called “a lavishly illustrated journey through two centuries of struggle and triumph.” The advertisement also stated that “America [was] a great country! Look at our history! There [was] so much we the people [could] be proud [of].” The advertisement pointed to several events and implied that is only through working together that these events were possible; later it again implied that only because of unity in thought was America able to become “the land of

²³¹ Armed Forces of the United States, “America’s Bicentennial has been brought to you in Part by-,” Advertisement, *Time*, Special Bicentennial Issue 1789, 15 – 18.

²³² Coca Cola Company, “Happy Birthday America,” Advertisement, *Time*, Special Bicentennial Issue 1789, 34 – 37.

the free and the home of the brave.”²³³ The final ad, while mentioning the Bicentennial, actually had nothing to do with the Bicentennial celebration but rather the music of Beethoven. The power of the Bicentennial to raise the patriotic fervor meant that even the purveyors of a German composer’s music could cash in on an association with the Bicentennial.²³⁴

While the July, 1976 issue of *Playboy* did not have a special Bicentennial editorial, the *Times* article, which said adult magazines were not celebrating the Bicentennial, was wrong in that the July edition of *Playboy* did have a patriotic theme. The magazine included a cartoon of a fully clothed George Washington being reassured that in 200 years no one would care where he slept. A second cartoon had George Washington and Betsy Ross fully clothed trying to figure out some way to signal when the coast was clear, with Washington suggesting a flag.²³⁵ In all of the cartoons where Washington is featured, his motives might be questioned; however he is shown as still having morality on his side. This showed that even though George Washington could be made fun of, there were some lines that even adult magazines would not cross. Even in the first cartoon described above, the cartoon can be taken to mean that even though George Washington was offered carnal delights, Washington had not yet given into temptation. This imagery reinforced the connection between Washington’s images in

²³³ Time-Life Books, “The Life History of the United States,” Advertisement, *Time*, Special Bicentennial Issue 1789, 64 – 65.

²³⁴ Time-Life Books, “Beethoven Bicentennial Collection,” Advertisement, *Time*, Special Bicentennial Issue 1789, 69.

²³⁵ “Cartoon -No Title-- ‘George Washington Slept Here’,” *Playboy*, July 1976, 100; “Cartoon- No Title-- ‘George Washington and Betsy Ross’,” *Playboy*, July 1976, 121.

American civil religion, to that of Jesus' in standard Christian religious doctrine, by linking Washington's temptation to Jesus' temptation by the Devil.²³⁶

While not offering access to as many people as television, magazines and other forms of written work helped to reinforce the ideas that the American population should be unified by presenting it in a different format which reinforced those ideas' importance during the tumultuous time that was the 1970s.

Reaching smaller audiences than television or written work, the theater did its part to help convey the Bicentennial message across the country on various stages. The idea of America was played out when the most famous of the Bicentennial themed productions *1776* opened on Broadway.²³⁷ The play examined the events leading up to the creation and ratification of the Declaration of Independence, specifically "May, June, and July 1776."²³⁸ Eventually the play was made into a movie, ensuring that those Americans who could not get to Broadway could still enjoy the story of how Jefferson, Franklin, and Adams helped to create the United States. The authors of the play lamented that at the time of the play's production, many Americans were unsure of the "true" story of the signing of the Declaration of Independence. While they acknowledge that "it [was] presumptuous of [them] to assume *1776* [would] fill even a portion of this lamentable

²³⁶ The idea of the president as a Christ figure is offered by Donald Kraybill in his book *Star Spangled Faith* when he makes the comparison that the president in a patriotic religion is analogous to Christ in Christianity. Kraybill identified eight categories that he deems as sacred in American civil religion that have corresponding categories in traditional religions. Although the author agrees with most of Kraybill's comparison between American civil religious icons and their Christian counterparts, he disagrees with Kraybill's generalization of all presidents being analogous to Christ. Rather the author supports the idea that only two presidents: George Washington and Abraham Lincoln are the only ones that can actually be raised to this level of deification. Others would fall into categories analogous to the Christian categories of saints, prophets and priests; Donald B. Kraybill, *Our Star Spangled Faith*, (Scottsdale PA: Herald Press, 1976), 25.

²³⁷ Peter Stone and Sherman Edwards, *1776: A Musical Play*, (New York: Penguin Books, 1976), vii.

²³⁸ Stone, xii.

void” they were outraged and called it criminal that American society was not brought together in the story that “explains our own existence.”²³⁹

While 1776 was one example of the performing arts supporting and reinforcing the ideals put forth in the Bicentennial, other works also continue to do the same. On the great stage at Radio City Music Hall, playing along with the film *Bite the Bullet* was “a grand and glorious salute to the Bicentennial” called *Let Freedom Ring*.²⁴⁰ It was not only musical acts performed on a stage that celebrated the Bicentennial. The British came to Madison Square Garden and brought with them the “brilliant pomp and ceremony that the British alone could create.” They were coming to help create “one of the most memorable events in [the] Bicentennial year.” The British invasion was not by modern English rock bands but rather the Royal Marines. “In the same uniforms” that were worn here 200 years earlier, the band “over 150 strong” came to offer a “tribute to America’s 200th birthday.”²⁴¹

These large-scale productions were joined by smaller productions such as one put on by American Performance Artists Inc. which put on a show that was set to highlight Americans’ contribution to music and raise it to a new level in the American population’s cultural awareness.²⁴² The Kennedy Center in Washington D.C. also hosted a musical program that consisted of “52 free concerts” that highlighted music from each state, with the U.S. Marine Band performing John Philip Sousa marches in the final concert on New Year’s Eve.²⁴³

²³⁹ Stone, 171 – 172.

²⁴⁰ “Display Ad 90,” *New York Times*, June 28, 1975; “Display Ad 57,” *New York Times*, July 4, 1975.

²⁴¹ “Display Ad 43,” *New York Times*, January 16, 1976.

²⁴² “American Artist Group Salutes Bicentennial in Concert,” *New York Times*, September 21, 1975.

²⁴³ “1976 and Bicentennial Exit Tunefully,” *Los Angeles Times*, January 1, 1977.

It was not just on the East Coast that the performing arts celebrated the Bicentennial. Los Angeles had a musical tribute and a variety show planned. The tribute was sponsored by the Los Angeles chapter of the American harp society that the *Los Angeles Time* said highlighted “the works of four twentieth century American composers, and like the Kennedy Center concerts admission would be free.”²⁴⁴ The variety show was still in the planning stages when the *Los Angeles Times* announced the call for auditions. Not only would the winners “be spotlighted in the Buena Park All-City Bicentennial celebration” but some would also take their act to San Diego to perform there.²⁴⁵

By bringing symbols of American greatness and reinforcing the ideas put forth by the bicentennial, popular culture through mass media such as television, printed works, and the performing arts worked to re-forged the fracturing American society. It tried to accomplish this by playing up the importance of the American civil religious icons that were the founding fathers, to show that the American population they had a common foundation, and that could recreate a sense of American identity. Not only did popular culture want to bring unity back to society, but it also helped shape the time period. Each generation writes its own history and the media that each generation is exposed to shapes their history, exerting pressures on the creation of that generation’s sense of identity and how they related to the American mythos.

²⁴⁴ “Bicentennial Musical Tribute,” *Los Angeles Times*, September 21, 1975.

²⁴⁵ “Auditions Slated for Bicentennial Variety Shows,” *Los Angeles Times*, December 25, 1975.

Conclusion

As the Bicentennial year closed, it seemed like the celebration was successful in bringing American society together. While he acknowledged that 1977 would bring challenges to America and her population, President-elect Jimmy Carter said that he believed the New Year would bring in a “new spirit, a new resolve among the people of America, a determination to put old divisions behind [them] and to seek a new unity in a new commitment to our national goals.”²⁴⁶

While the Bicentennial celebration was over, the long build up to July 4, 1976 and the 200th birthday of the signing of the Declaration of Independence meant that Carter’s hope for a new spirit and resolve seemed likely. The Bicentennial had succeeded in bringing the nation together, and it looked like it had stopped the fracturing that American society had experienced due to the tumultuous 1960s and the economic crisis of the 1970s. It accomplished this task by celebrating the signing of the Declaration of Independence and highlighting various American civil religious icons associated with this time period.

American civil religion is a powerful tool for creating a sense of nationalism. It does this by creating a common frame of reference in society and then builds on this commonality. The Bicentennial reminded Americans that they did in fact share a common foundation. Even though every American has a different story, the founding of the United States meant that every citizen was linked to each other. One way these links

²⁴⁶ “1976 and Bicentennial Exit Tunefully,” *Los Angeles Times*, January 1, 1977.

were manifested was that all enjoyed the freedoms that America offered to its citizens, freedoms that started on that hot and muggy day in Philadelphia two centuries before.

No longer would the words “one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all,” be just words. Instead, Americans would be connected to each other through a greater understanding of how America was created and that the United States was truly one nation indivisible. The Bicentennial was able to create this common framework through various means.

The celebration itself brought the nation together. All around the country American communities both big and small enjoyed the pomp and pageantry that was designed to re-forge, recreate and reinforce civil religion aimed at treating the division in American Life.

Along with the Bicentennial celebration, events such as the American Freedom Train also helped to create a common framework for Americans who saw the train. The huge number of people that went and stood in line for hours in all sorts of weather knew that they were like millions of others, anxiously awaiting to immerse themselves in the American Experience. The exhibits on the American Freedom Train utilized American civil religious icons to reinforce what it meant to be an American.

While events like the American Freedom Train brought people out and immersed them in Americana, popular culture was a way of taking the Bicentennial message to the population. The use of popular culture meant that the Bicentennial mission to re-forge, recreate, and reinforce could be seen by a large percentage of the population. In the youth of America it was used to provide an introduction to why these American civil religious

icons were important. For adults it provided a reminder of American civil religious icons that were important and reinforced their prominent place within the American myths.

Three years after the Bicentennial celebration, President Jimmy Carter delivered his “Crisis of Confidence” speech, what has popularly been labeled his “National Malaise” speech. In this speech Carter talked about how the biggest threat to “American Democracy” was not aimed at our “Political and Civil liberties or being threatened by economic sanctions nor military power, but rather an idea that struck at the “very heart and soul and spirit of” our nation which according to Carter was the “growing doubt” in the country, which threatened to “destroy the social and the political fabric of America.”²⁴⁷

Carter implicitly acknowledged, American society was still suffering from the fracturing that occurred in the 1960s and early 1970s. In his speech he pointed to various American civil religious icons that worked to increase the American public’s confidence. Carter beseeched the nation to look at “all the traditions of our past, all the lessons of our heritage,” to restore “American values” which would lead to “true freedom.” For Carter the energy crisis facing the nation in 1979 was adding to the stress that was undoing the success that the bicentennial had wrought in the culmination of the 1976 celebration.²⁴⁸

Though what the Bicentennial celebration created was not permanent, for a short time American society was re-forged into a shining whole as America celebrated its Bicentennial. It was able to recreate a sense of national identity, and it reinforced

²⁴⁷ James Earl Carter, “Crisis of Confidence Speech,” July 15, 1979 <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/primary-resources/carter-crisis/> (accessed October, 14, 2012).

²⁴⁸ Transcript of published text, and video of speech. James Earl Carter, “Crisis of Confidence Speech,” July 15, 1979. Can be found at <http://millercenter.org/scripps/archive/speeches/detail/3402> (accessed November 21, 2013).

important American civil religious icons allowing at least for a little while for the phrase “one nation... indivisible” to be more than just rote recitation, but instead made it a truth for the American population. It allowed one Peorian to say “It just makes you want to believe in the country.”²⁴⁹

²⁴⁹ American Revolution Bicentennial Administration, *Bicentennial of the United States: A Final Report to the People*, vol. 1, (Washington D.C: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1977), 21; Christopher Capozzola, “It Makes You Want to Believe in the Country,” in *America in the 70s*, ed. Beth Bailey and David Farber, (Lawrence KS: University Press of Kansas, 2004), 30.

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Appendix

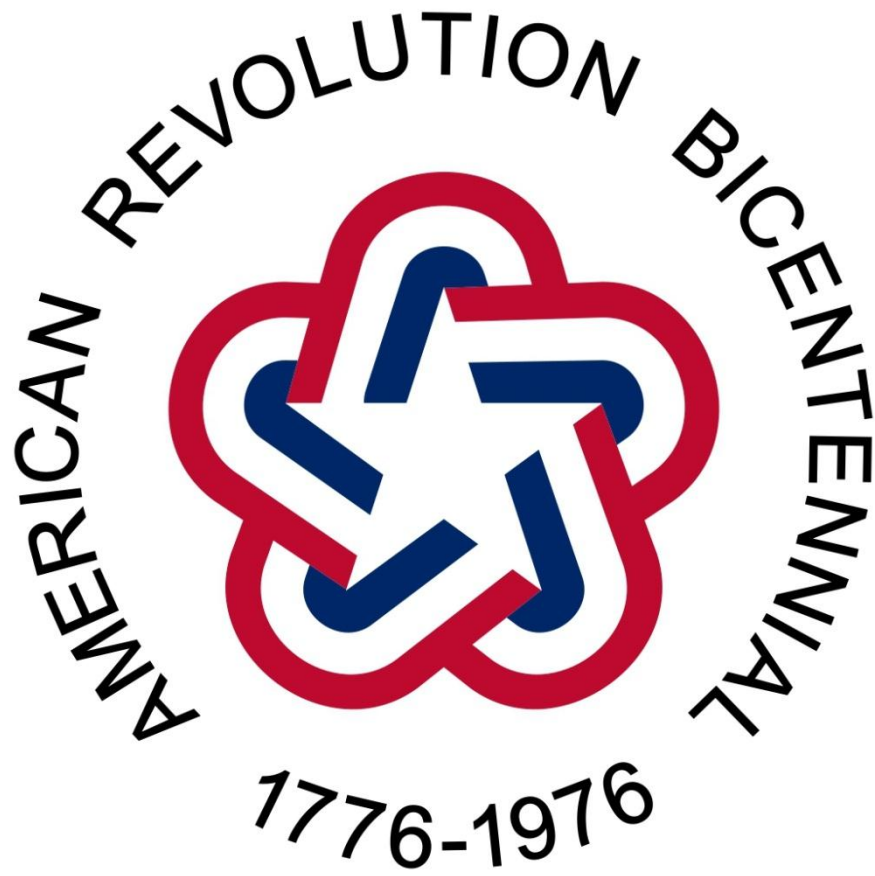
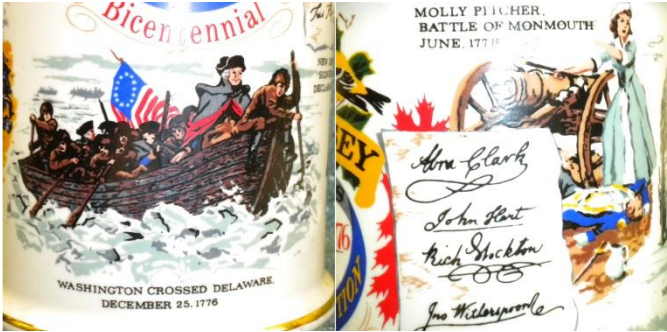


Figure 1



Photographs by Author

Figure 2



Photographs by Author

Figure 3



Photographs by Author

Figure 4



Photograph by Author

Figure 5



Photograph by Author

Figure 6



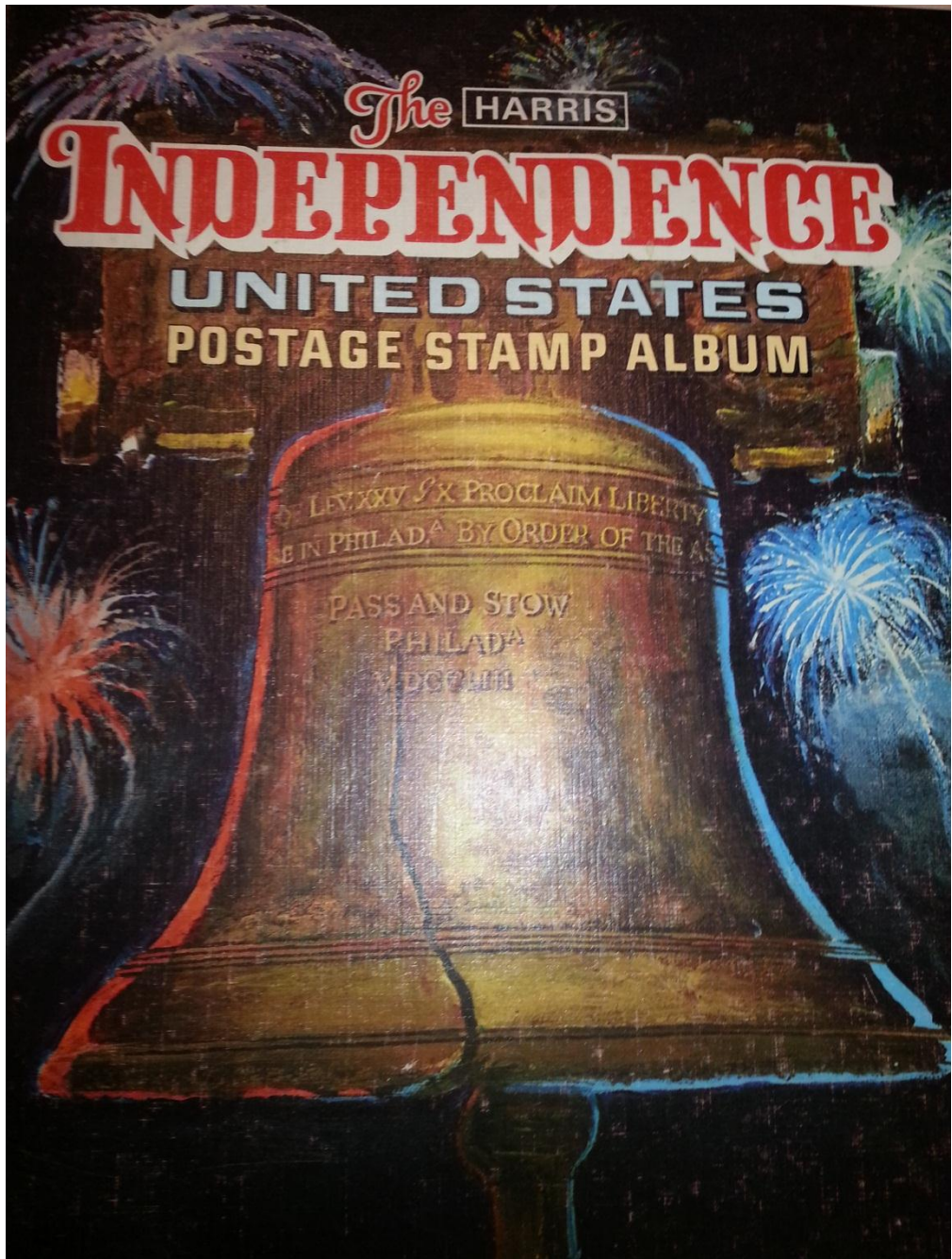
Photographs by Author

Figure 7



Photographs by Author

Figure 8



Photograph by Author

Figure 9

Soliloquy of a Postage Stamp

I am the world's greatest traveler. I've journeyed from pole to pole, and all the climes between . . . by dogsled, camel and horseback, by every land, sea and air conveyance; even by submarine, dirigible and rocket.

I am the world's greatest art and portrait gallery. The heroes and heroines of mythology pose within my borders. I portray the greats and the near-greats of all time; kings and queens, pharaohs and presidents, princes and princesses, poets and patriots, emperors and explorers, athletes, architects, aviators, artists and adventurers, tribal chieftains, inventors, moguls, musicians and martyrs, dramatists and novelists, shahs, sultans, saints and sinners. Even the vanished forms of the phoenix, dragon, centaur and unicorn appear upon my face.

I am the world's greatest picture chronicle and miniature encyclopedia. I map communities, countries and continents, and reveal views from every strange remote corner of the earth. I depict mountains, and valleys; oceans, rivers, lakes, waterfalls, geysers, harbors, bridges and dams; native canoes, sailing ships and modern ocean liners; monuments and statues; castles, cathedrals, churches, missions, mosques, temples and ruins of temples; and every type of locomotion, from automobiles to zeppelins and steamboats to space ships. I delineate all manner of sports, handicrafts, customs, sacred rites and ceremonies; and nearly every variety of bird, animal, fish, fruit and flower.

I frame the horrors of war, the blessings of peace, the hardships of emigration, the plight of indigence and the blight of famine. I illustrate the adventures of Don Quixote, the fairy tales of childhood and the legends of all civilizations. I reflect the symbols of art and culture, of natural resources and industry, of trade and commerce, of agriculture and architecture, and of all human endeavor. I commemorate the expeditions and voyages, and the inventions, discoveries and creations that make life worth living.

Millions of men, women and children are fascinated by me. Through my infinite variety they find boundless pleasure, relaxation and enchantment.

Yet . . . I am only a postage stamp!

Photograph by Author

Figure10

I, Steven Bellavia, hereby submit this thesis/report to Emporia State University as partial fulfillment of the requirements for an advanced degree. I agree that the Library of the University may make it available to use in accordance with its regulations governing materials of this type. I further agree that quoting, photocopying, digitizing or other reproduction of this document is allowed for private study, scholarship (including teaching) and research purposes of a nonprofit nature. No copying which involves potential financial gain will be allowed without written permission of the author. I also agree to permit the Graduate School at Emporia State University to digitize and place this thesis in the ESU institutional repository.

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