

New York State  
American Revolution  
Bicentennial Commission

*Second Annual Report: 1970-1971*

The New York State  
American Revolution  
Bicentennial Commission

JOHN H. G. PELL  
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*Vice Chairman*

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Mildred F. Taylor  
Frederick P. Todd

LOUIS LEONARD TUCKER  
*Executive Director*

*Office:*

Office of State History  
State Education Department  
99 Washington Avenue  
Albany, New York 12224

TO HIS EXCELLENCY, NELSON A. ROCKEFELLER, Governor of the State of New York, and the Honorable Members of the Senate and Assembly:

Pursuant to the provisions of Chapter 630 of the Laws of 1968, the New York State American Revolution Bicentennial Commission hereby respectfully submits its Second Annual Report.

JOHN H. G. PELL  
*Chairman*

E. K. FRETWELL, JR.  
*Vice Chairman*

March 1, 1971



“...IT IS BEYOND DESCRIPTION  
TO CONCEIVE  
WHAT THE MEN SUFFER...”

STATE OF NEW YORK  
1970

COLONEL PHILIP VAN CORTLANDT  
2ND N.Y. REGIMENT  
IN A LETTER TO  
GEORGE CLINTON, GOVERNOR OF NEW YORK,  
FROM VALLEY FORGE ON FEB. 13TH, 1778

*Text of the new marker at Valley Forge State Park commemorating the suffering of New York troops with the Continental Army during the winter encampment of 1777-1778.*

**T**WO HUNDRED YEARS AGO the State of New York was the Province of New York, a royal colony. A British king appointed the governor, the governor appointed the judges and had a final veto over bills passed by the legislature. Defense measures and foreign relations were determined three thousand miles away by men who took responsibility for a great empire but rarely saw any part of it first-hand.

Independence for New York and her sister colonies required a long and painful struggle. That it was accomplished at all is reason enough to celebrate its anniversary. But more than the formal liberation of a new state and nation came out of that struggle. There was also a liberation of American hopes and energies—a renewed capacity for growth. Eight generations have passed since then, and if some of that youthful quality still remains, it will be evident in the way the forthcoming Bicentennial observances are conducted. It will be seen, too, whether Americans have developed the maturity in these years to look back on their history without hypocrisy, to look around without blinking, and to look ahead without fear.

It will be today's leadership above all that determines the character of the Bicentennial in this and other states. Precedents count for very little; they are too remote. The review of the Jubilee, Centennial and Sesquicentennial celebrations included later in this report is a reminder of how distant we are from the

tastes of their times, as much as we share with our predecessors in basic loyalties and aims. Indeed, at the pace of change in recent years, plans which merely accept the fashions of 1971 may well lose much of their appeal within five or six years. An avoidance of fads and an openness to ideas not yet articulated must accompany any comprehensive plan for the years ahead.

**S**UCH A PLAN IS TAKING SHAPE. In outline, it calls for three stages of activities. The first stage has begun and will continue through 1974. This is the time for laying the foundations of public attention, orientation, and education. To the extent that the Commission succeeds, it sets the tone and insures the success of the second stage, starting in 1975 and continuing through to its climax in July, 1976. In this stage, widespread public attention can be expected to peak throughout the country. This Commission and similar agencies will be judged then by what they can offer of lasting value in the eyes of a diverse and critical public.

The third stage, 1977-83, will be bracketed by the anniversaries of events with both state and national significance: the Battle of Saratoga and the adoption of New York's first Constitution in 1777, and the Treaty of Paris, coupled with Washington's farewell to his army and the evacuation of New York City in 1783. Between these years there will be occasions of special local significance. Primarily, however, the challenge will be to match the higher level of public interest in the historic sites and events of the period with improved programs of every description.

Commission activities over the past year have been directed to the immediate requirements of the first stage and preparation for the second.

**C**ARRYING OUT DECISIONS MADE IN the previous year, the Commission has filled two professional positions on its staff in Albany, appointing Richard S. Allen as program coordinator in March 1970 and Mrs. Phyllis H. Winkelman as editorial associate in July. Their contributions have supplemented the continued generous support given by Commissioner of Education Ewald B. Nyquist through the Office of State History. Because the Office's facilities and staff are at the service of the Commission, advice and assistance with minimum overhead costs remains a basic source of much of the success the Commission has enjoyed to date.

Most widely visible among the products of this past year's work is the Commission's quarterly newsletter, *The Correspondent*. First appearing in September 1970, this six-page illustrated digest of news and features has been mailed free to more than 10,000 individuals and organizations, and requests for additional copies continue to come in. Newspaper and broadcast editors have responded to invitations to reprint material from it, and readers have begun to contribute news and ideas that will enhance the value of future issues.

If the newsletter is becoming an ear as well as a voice for the Commission, the same may be said of a series of meetings held over the past year. On October 17, 1970, in Albany, thirty county historians met in an all-day session with Commission members to exchange ideas, questions, plans, and hopes for carrying the Bicentennial to the local level. This was the first concerted effort of its kind, but

## A MESSAGE FROM THE GOVERNOR TO THE NEW YORK STATE AMERICAN REVOLUTION BICENTENNIAL COMMISSION

YOU ARE TO BE CONGRATULATED on this early beginning of a newsletter on bicentennial activities. I share your confidence that newsworthy activities and ideas will continue to accumulate at an increasing rate over the next several years. Every month we see new evidence that more of our neighbors are awakening to the meaning that the two-hundredth birthday of our state and nation can have for all of us. You can expect to have only good news, but good news in quantities our editors will envy.

If there was ever a time when the pace of change in society demanded more of Americans than today, it was in those years of our nation's founding. Looking back, we can be certain that the sacrifices endured by those who faced and met the demands of that time were not in vain. Those men and women made our nation possible, and the example they made it strong. What our own descendants can do for us is largely up to us. We will be counted among the great people who came before us if we seek the inspiration of their example, we will stand the comparison better than if we do not.

Let us, then, make the bicentennial year a year of seeking as well as celebrating our heritage. Our forefathers cannot know us, but we can know them, and we can learn from their example.

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American Revolution  
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## COMMUNITY PLANS CENTER AT FALLS

LEADERS are pushing forward  
bicentennial



David J. Mahoney

## WORKER NEW CHAIRMAN

MAHONEY, Manhattan business executive, who has been named chairman of the American Revolution Bicentennial Commission, says the bicentennial should involve more than monuments and past accomplishments. "It should be a people's celebration with participation by rich, poor, black, white, young, old — and saying where they want to go in the years."

Mahoney was born and raised on Throg's Neck, East River in the Bronx. Tanned, rugged and proud of the basketball scholarship that earned him a place at the University of Pennsylvania, he interrupted his education. Emerging from the military as a captain in the infantry, Mahoney, while working in the mail room of a New York advertising agency, advertised almost two hundred miles daily for the University of Pennsylvania. This was the first rung of the ladder that brought him to top executive levels in business.

At Simon, Inc., a diversified communications company, he considers the United States his prime market. "The revolutionary spirit that has made the American system," he says, "is the key to our future. The revolutionary spirit that has never been more alive than today. The American experience is a unique one. I think we have to try to tap this revolutionary spirit, to bring people together to achieve common goals, to encourage change."

not the only or last. Both the regular annual meetings of the County Officers Association in October 1970 and the Association of Towns in February 1971 featured programs on the Bicentennial theme for county and town historians. Partly as a result of such encouragement, local interest has taken organized form at several points. New York City, Orange and Ulster counties and others have formed Bicentennial committees during the past year.

Regional forums of a more inclusive nature have begun under Commission sponsorship with one for Long Island held February 6, 1971, at Hofstra University. Advance publicity in the press, the inclusion on the program of two distinguished scholars of the Revolution and the area's history — Professor Richard B. Morris of Columbia University and Professor Myron Luke of Long Island University — attracted a gathering of fifty interested individuals and representatives of local organizations to a forum that gave both sponsors and participants a clearer appreciation of the opportunities ahead. Several additional meetings in other regions of the State will be held during 1971.

ATTENTION HAS OCCASIONALLY BEEN FOCUSED on bicentennial events outside the state, as in the case of the ceremonies at Valley Forge State Park, Pennsylvania, on November 7, 1970. The Commission and the State Education Department joined as co-sponsors of the project to erect a memorial to the soldiers from New York who endured the winter of 1777-78 with Washington's army on that site. Erecting the monument, which required special legislation, was an idea initiated by Lydenhurst teacher Mrs. Marion Evans and her students, assisted by the Fuestel-Kurdt Post of the American Legion. At Newport, Rhode Island, in June, Executive Director Louis L. Tucker and Commission member Walter Averill were among the guests at a thirteen-state convocation called by Rhode Island and addressed by Governor Frank Licht. It was held in conjunction with the anniversary of the burning of the *H.M.S. Gaspée*. In May 1970, New Jersey's Bicentennial Commission conducted a full day of hearings at Trenton on plans and views brought to it by interested parties in that state. Observers from New York's Commission staff were able to learn what activities are being considered in our sister state and at the same time to refine plans for the series of regional meetings later scheduled in New York. Vermont and New York have also established liaison through contacts between state agencies as well as through joint representation on the Champlain-Upper Hudson American Revolution Bicentennial Committee.

Three new projects launched during the past year are designed to give early encouragement to individual reading and research on the Revolution and its meaning. For scholars and advanced students, the Commission is co-sponsoring with the New York State Library a descriptive guide to that institution's fine collection of manuscripts from the period of the Revolution. When published, it will stimulate the use of the original sources and, through quotations excerpted from them, bring some of their highlights to the attention of a larger readership. A second compilation is being prepared of published sources on the Revolution in New York. It will selectively list and describe the books and articles available to the scholar and general reader as the Bicentennial decade begins. Finally, a shorter list of books primarily for children in the upper elementary grades in school is being prepared and should be ready for distribution as a separate pamphlet later this year. This will be a revised edition of a bibliography distributed to local schools by the Constitution Island Association in 1970.

Again this year, progress has been made on the editing of the papers of Philip Schuyler, a project of great potential to scholarship. Commission support supplements that of the Office of State History, which initiated it.

Among the most intriguing and imaginative literary introductions to the great questions that faced the Revolutionary generation is an essay originally written in 1926 by the late Carl L. Becker of Cornell University. *The Spirit of '76* is a brief work of serious fiction with a New York setting, inspired by the insights of one of the nation's leading historians of the period. Because it has never been separately published and is unavailable to the wide readership it deserves, the Commission is reprinting it with a new introduction by the executive director, State Historian Louis L. Tucker.



*Louis L. Tucker, Executive Director of the Commission and State Historian, addresses the forum for County Historians October 17, 1970 in Albany.*

PLANS ARE STILL BEING FORMULATED for additional projects on which commitments will be made in the near future. Among these are a film project, starting with an overview of the role of New York in the Revolution; a mobile unit to carry exhibits on Bicentennial themes across the state, a medallion commemorating the Bicentennial in a manner the Commission can endorse, and a program of grants and prizes for individual research and writing projects on appropriate themes. Also being considered is the feasibility of sponsoring a comprehensive encyclopedia of New York State to mark its two-hundredth anniversary. On these and other possible activities, consultations have been held with experts within and outside the state, including publishers, producers, public relations consultants, and officials of other state historical agencies. Meetings with officials of the State Department of Commerce and the State Council on the Arts have brought assurances of full cooperation from those agencies.



Every Commission meeting has included at some point guests representing groups with common interests to share. Members and senior staff of the federal Bicentennial Commission and the New York State Historic Trust have attended, as have spokesmen for the New-York Historical Society, the Sons of the American Revolution, and the Niagara Falls Bicentennial Commission. The latter group has been active with the Niagara Falls Gateway to America Corporation in promoting a major redevelopment plan that would enhance the historic, touristic, and economic future of that city. Their application for federal funding support was endorsed by the Commission after study of the plan had confirmed its merits.

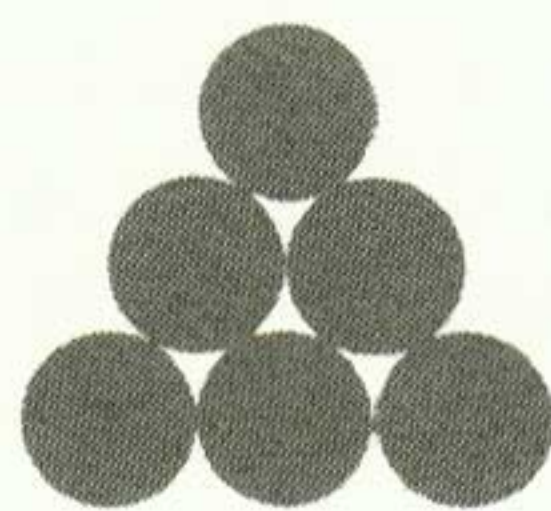
Among the historic sites of special interest in coming years, Washington's headquarters at Newburgh and New Windsor Cantonment have been noted by the Commission as having particular importance, and a resolution was passed urging that high priority be given by the state to their development. Other Revolutionary sites also need attention, including several in New York City and elsewhere. The Commission will continue its interest in supporting the work of every agency that can contribute toward the development and interpretation of Revolutionary landmarks of wide public interest.

Conscientious committee work by members as well as faithful attendance at the four quarterly meetings of the full Commission have contributed to the success the Chairman is able to record in this first full year of activity since the initial meeting in October 1969. Beginning in February 1970 an executive committee has also been called on to meet on five occasions, and they — Vice Chairman E. K. Fretwell, Walter Averill, J. Moreau Brown, General A. C. O'Hara, and Colonel Frederick P. Todd — should be singled out for special appreciation.

**F**UTURE SPECIFIC NEEDS OF THE COMMISSION are of three kinds.

1. One is for legislative appropriations commensurate with the significance of the Bicentennial for New York State. Funding has been adequate for the first stages of planning and preparation, but with the new fiscal year should come the first payments on several programs which require several years of development for their success. A detailed breakdown of items has been submitted separately in the Commission's budget request. Bills have been introduced in the Legislature regarding the remaining two needs.
2. One would create a non-profit corporation to serve as the Commission's agent in entering into projects requiring a more businesslike approach than is possible within the present structure.
3. The other bill would authorize the Commission to serve in the same capacity with regard to the Bicentennial of the creation of the State of New York (1777-1977) as it presently does with regard to the Bicentennial of the American Revolution. The two occasions are so closely related that they should normally be observed together, and it would be the Commission's purpose to assure this. In the two hundredth birthday of the state's existence, however, there is a special appropriateness to the celebration of qualities unique to its life that should not be missed.

**C**ELEBRATIONS CAN BE MORE THAN GESTURES in fun. The occasion we are approaching will be more enjoyable, in fact, if it is celebrated in a way that can also offer lasting satisfaction to an uncomplacent pride in our heritage. But to find and clear the solid ground of our common history today requires patience and effort. This is not an era of national self-satisfaction. The public media are alert to reports of new divisions among us, and there are real and serious strains to be reported. There are also, however, the stronger bonds of a shared past and future to be reported, and it will be this Commission's task to be alert to them.



## THE GREAT ANNIVERSARY FESTIVAL

“Yesterday the greatest question was decided which ever was debated in America, and a greater, perhaps, never was nor will be decided among men,” John Adams wrote to his wife, Abigail, from Philadelphia, July 3, 1776. “The second day of July, 1776 will be the most memorable epocha in the history of America. I am apt to believe that it will be celebrated by succeeding generations as the great anniversary festival. It ought to be commemorated as the day of deliverance, by solemn acts of devotion to God Almighty. It ought to be solemnized with pomp and parade, with shows, games, sports, guns, bells, bonfires and illuminations from one end of this continent to the other, from this time forward forever more.”

In the one hundred and ninety-five years since the liberty bell solemnly proclaimed the birth of a new nation, Americans have celebrated their national anniversary much as Adams predicted, though it has been July 4 (the date on which the Second Continental Congress adopted the Declaration of Independence) which has been commemorated with “pomp and parade . . . guns, bells, bonfires and illuminations.” During the early years of the republic the official celebration of Independence Day seems to have been a partisan affair, pre-empted by the political party in power, though rival groups could and did hold their own partisan observances. It was apparently not until the close of the War of 1812, in the afterglow of renewed national pride, that the Fourth of July became a truly national holiday. With the advent of the first special anniversary of the nation's birth, Independence Day became the focus of nationwide attention and observance.

The United States has celebrated three such special anniversaries: the jubilee (or semicentennial) in 1826; the centennial in 1876; and the sesquicentennial, in 1926. These observances were largely oriented toward the past, but

the manner in which the actual celebrations were carried out reflected current fashions and met the needs of Americans at the particular period in which the celebration took place. Recognizing this, Horatio Seymour, former governor of New York, in offering advice on the publication of 1877 centennial events in New York, recommended the inclusion of newspaper accounts and local color:

“The speech-makers would say about the same thing hereafter that they have said heretofore about the battles of the Revolution. But time will make great changes in the manners, customs, and social aspect of our people. Things that seem commonplace now will be curious and interesting in the future.”

The jubilee of American independence, as it evolved, did indeed have “curious and interesting” aspects. The year 1826 found John Quincy Adams president. Eleven states had been added to the original thirteen, and from 1790 to 1820 the population had more than doubled, to over nine million persons. The infant republic had matured into an independent nation, and the mood of Americans as they approached this fiftieth milestone was one of growing national pride.

There was no official national or New York celebration in 1826. President John Quincy Adams attended the jubilee observance in the national capital on July 4; Governor De Witt Clinton of New York participated in the festivities in New York City. Celebrations were local, and the emphasis was on the Declaration of Independence and on honoring those, living and dead, who had created the new nation.

To many Americans in 1826 the Revolution was still a living memory. No general officers of the Continental Army were still alive, though some junior officers and other veterans of the conflict survived to participate in the festivities. A New York City editor paid tribute to these old soldiers: “Not the least interesting and affecting spectacle of the day [July 4] will be the scattered and tottering remnant of that heroic band, who half a century ago first drew their swords for freedom.”

Conspicuous among the survivors of the Revolutionary generation in 1826 who lived to share the fruits of their sacrifices were three signers of the Declaration: Thomas Jefferson, 83; John Adams, 90; and Charles Carroll of Carrollton, 88. As the jubilee approached, the thoughts of the nation turned to these last great patriots. In Washington, D.C., Mayor Roger Weightman, chairman of the thirteen-man committee charged with planning the jubilee celebration in the national capital, extended invitations to the three signers to attend the simple ceremony in the House chamber on July 4. Former presidents Madison and Monroe were also invited. None of the men was able to attend but all sent memorable letters which were printed in the Washington papers on July 4. Jefferson’s letter (part of which is reprinted elsewhere in this report), his last testament to the American people, was one of his finest efforts. Printed in newspapers throughout the country, this stirring letter became one of the highlights of the jubilee.

For New York the jubilee marked fifty years of impressive achievement. From 1790 to 1820 the population of the state had more than tripled, to 1,372,812 persons. Governor De Witt Clinton could point to the completion of

the Erie Canal in 1825 as one of the great engineering feats of all time. Western New York had been settled and its agriculture and industries were developing. New York City had become the nation's leading port and an important business and cultural center.

In New York as elsewhere in the nation the "grand jubilee" on July 4 had a serious and a "fun" side. In a typical community, the day started with the raising of the flag and the firing of cannon or guns. Military units in full uniform, fire departments with engines, badges and banners, or civic organizations, accompanied by public officials, paraded to strains of "Hail Columbia" to a church or hall, where a solemn ceremony took place. This included an opening prayer, the reading of the Declaration by an "esquire," an oration of at least an hour's duration, and a benediction. In New York City special odes were sung by choral groups as part of the ceremony.

The oratory over, Americans settled down to enjoy this special day. Picnic lunches eaten in a grove or park were popular. In New York City the city corporation provided free refreshments for the people, erecting temporary barracks on the Washington parade ground which would accommodate seven or eight hundred people. A newspaper described the scene: "On a table arrayed the whole length, were the oxen, roasted whole, with an endless quantity of hams and loaves of bread, interspersed with barrels of beer and cider on tap. The *great dishes*, namely the whole oxen, were decorated with garlands and ribbons." After the governor, the mayor and other officials had sampled the "cheer," the paper reported that the throng "dispatched the same with incredible promptness, gravity, and order." Formal dinners, attended by officials and leading citizens, sparked a round of toasts "to the thirteen states," "to the twenty-four states," "to the Declaration," "to the soldiers of '76," to "our Sister Republics of South America," and to whatever and whomever the participants' imagination could devise before the supply of wine or cider was exhausted.

After dark, fireworks and illuminations climaxed the day. In New York City elaborate fireworks were planned at City Hall and at the Vauxhall Gardens, where an intricate "Temple of Independence," was constructed, 75 feet long and 25 feet high, with figures of the Goddess of Liberty and "heathen deities," "the whole when on fire, forming one of the most agreeable and magnificent objects that can be accomplished with Fireworks." Unfortunately a severe shower dampened the fireworks and illuminations though not the spirit of New Yorkers.

The most significant part of the New York City Corporation's jubilee celebration was the presentation in the Common Council chamber by Mayor Philip Hone of a gold medal, commemorating the Erie Canal celebration, to the only son of Robert Fulton in appreciation for his father's contributions to internal navigation and his interest in canals and railroads. The medal was acknowledged by C. D. Colden, young Fulton's guardian. Four of these medals were struck, the remaining three being sent to the three surviving signers of the Declaration.

Another feature of the New York City celebration much publicized in the newspapers was the display in City Hall Park of a model of a colossal equestrian statue of Washington by the Italian sculptor, Enrico Causici, who hoped to have it cast in bronze. After the jubilee the statue remained in the park for

several years when Causici, failing to persuade the city fathers to pay him for his time and materials, removed it.

Scarcely had the martial music faded, the flags been furled, and the cannon silenced when New Yorkers and the nation were stunned by the news that both Thomas Jefferson and John Adams had died on July 4. "Great God! Thy ways are inscrutable!" a New York editor exclaimed. Learning that Jefferson had died on the fourth, President John Quincy Adams wrote in his diary: "A strange and very exciting coincidence." Several days later, as he hastened to Quincy to the bedside of the dying John Adams, he learned enroute that *he* also had died on the fourth!

The nation greeted the deaths of the two former presidents and framers of the Declaration of Independence as an apocalyptic wonder, a providential sign that one era had ended and another was beginning. Grief and mourning bands replaced flags and bright banners as the nation paid tribute to the two great leaders. In New York City the Common Council held a memorial service at the Middle Dutch Church on July 12. On that day the major-general directed a regiment to report at the Park with thirteen pieces of cannon and to march to the Battery and fire 175 minute guns, corresponding to the combined ages of Adams and Jefferson.

New York City businesses and the post office remained closed on July 12. Flags on vessels and public buildings were ordered to remain at half-mast from sunset to sunrise. Similar gestures of respect were repeated throughout the nation, and during the next several months leading orators delivered eulogies to the two leaders, a notable one being the eulogy delivered at Boston by Daniel Webster. What had begun as an observance of the jubilee of independence ended as a massive panegyric to Adams and Jefferson.

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By 1876, the year of the centennial, John Adams's prediction that Independence Day would be celebrated "from one end of the continent to the other" had come true. The United States extended from sea to sea. There were thirty-eight states to participate in the celebration of the hundredth birthday. Colorado, the thirty-eighth, was the centennial state, entering the Union on August 1, 1876. The population of the country had quadrupled since 1820, with more than thirty-eight and one-half million people living in the United States in 1870. New York state's population had likewise burgeoned to 4,382,759 in 1870. Ulysses S. Grant was in the final year of his presidency, and Samuel J. Tilden was governor of New York and a candidate for the presidency in the most controversial and closely-contested election in the history of the nation, an election he was to lose to Rutherford B. Hayes.

In the fifty years since the jubilee, the nation had fought a bloody Civil War which tested the union forged by the founders of the nation. By 1876 Americans were in a mood to bind up the nation's wounds, to stress the industrial and scientific progress they had achieved. Accordingly on March 3, 1876 Congress passed an act to provide for celebrating the one hundredth anniversary of American independence by holding "an international exhibition of arts, manufactures and products of the soil and mine, in the city of Philadelphia, in the year 1876."

In 1875 the New York State Legislature authorized the creation of a "State Centennial Board," composed of seven members appointed by the governor, to serve without pay, to be associated with the national centennial commission. The act appropriated \$25,000 for the expenses of the board. Later, an additional \$8,000 was provided by the legislature for the exhibition of the state dairymen's association at the Philadelphia exposition.

In announcing the appointment of the State Centennial Board, Governor Tilden commented: "The event not only appeals to the people of the whole United States by the patriotic associations which attend it, but it will be an occasion of unprecedented interest in the opportunity it affords to all our citizens of a personal inspection of the progress and state of the industrial arts in all the countries of the civilized world."

The Centennial of American Independence International Exhibition opened in Fairmount Park, Philadelphia on May 10, 1876. For six months Americans and visitors from abroad could view exhibits on mining and metallurgy, manufactures, education and science, art, machinery, agriculture, and horticulture. These represented the most advanced technical and cultural developments of the thirty-eight states and numerous foreign states. Especially impressive were the exhibits of hydraulic and steam machinery.

*New York's building at the International Exhibition of 1876 in Philadelphia was an 80-foot long villa styled in a manner already familiar along the Hudson and on Long Island. The illustration is from the Centennial Portfolio, an 1876 picture guide to the exhibition by Thompson Westcott. His comment on the ornamentation of the building might have applied to many at the time: "Here are displayed the wonders which result from the modern adaptation of machinery to the production of irregular forms, in the wood mouldings and scroll-work, the decorations and patterns, which have all the beauty of carving without requiring the labor and patience once necessary to obtain them."*



The buildings themselves were true temples to science and industry. Agricultural Hall, built of wood and glass in the form of a Gothic nave crossed by three transepts and complete with Gothic arches, covered seven and one-half acres. Many states, including New York, had buildings, as did numerous private firms and foreign countries. New York featured exhibits of its cheese industry. Women were represented by a Women's Exhibition Building and Women's Schoolhouse.

Governor Samuel Tilden and his political opponent, Rutherford Hayes, both visited the Philadelphia Exposition in that campaign summer of 1876. Many New Yorkers made the trip to Philadelphia also, but for the state as a whole the principal centennial events occurred the following year in commemoration of important Revolutionary events which took place in New York; these included the adoption of the first state constitution at Kingston, the Battle of Oriskany, the Battle of Bemis Heights, Burgoyne's surrender at Schuylerville, and the Cherry Valley massacre. No official state celebration was held, but various local organizations made the arrangements, enlisting the oratorical talents of the state's leading political figures. Chauncey Depew addressed the Kingston celebration, while Horatio Seymour and others did the honors at Oriskany, Schuylerville, and Cherry Valley. In 1878 the state legislature passed a resolution authorizing Allen C. Beach, Secretary of State, to compile a complete record of the centennial celebrations. The resultant 450-page publication, *The Centennial Celebrations of the State of New York* (Albany, 1879), is a documentary history of the 1877 centennial.

A prominent feature of these 1877 centennial celebrations, according to the published record, was the all-pervasive oratory. Long historical speeches, commemorative poems and odes bathed the audience in a flood of words. Detailed and often well-researched, the historical speeches, in published form, with notes and appendices, made a contribution to the historical knowledge of New York's Revolutionary War history. But delivered "live" they must have taxed the endurance of the large audiences who sat or stood on the battlefields in the summer sun.

In addition to the oratory, the 1877 centennial programs included parades headed by a grand marshal, followed by national, state, county and local officials. Military units and visiting fire departments and bands lent color and dash to the processions. Houses and public buildings were festooned with flags, red, white and blue bunting, and evergreen branches. Picnics and dinners, followed by fireworks, ended the celebrations.

The centennial events of 1877 drew large crowds, taxing local transportation facilities. At Oriskany on August 6, 1877 thousands visited the battlefield where speakers' stands were erected in two different locations. The program began with the unfurling of a flag carried by Colonel Peter Gansevoort's regiment during the Revolution. A contemporary account captures the enthusiasm of the crowd: "Hon. John F. Seymour then lifted the flag which floated proudly in the breeze. At the sight of it the vast audience gave three rousing cheers and lifted their hats. All the military presented arms, and the bands played the 'Star Spangled Banner.' The Fultonville battery belched forth a salute which shook the hills, and cheer upon cheer went up. The effect was thrilling."



*The Saratoga Battle Monument at Schuylerville was erected as part of the Centennial observances in 1877. A winding stairway inside the 154-foot granite tower leads the visitor to a view overlooking the site of Burgoyne's surrender of October 17, 1777. Photo Courtesy of New York State Department of Commerce.*



At Bemis Heights on September 19 the chief attraction was a sham battle re-enactment of the Battle of Bemis Heights. On October 17, an estimated twelve thousand persons attended the centennial of Burgoyne's surrender at Schuylerville, where the principal event was the laying of the cornerstone of the Saratoga Monument. A mile-long procession composed of three thousand persons — dignitaries, bands, firemen, policemen, military units, Knights Templar — made its way through the streets of Schuylerville.

Two additional Revolutionary War monuments were erected during the centennial period. On September 23, 1876 at the old fort in Schoharie, the cornerstone of the monument to David Williams, one of the captors of André, was laid with accompanying speeches and ceremonies. And on August 15, 1877 a monument was unveiled at Cherry Valley honoring the victims of the Cherry Valley massacre of 1778.

The erection of monuments, the overlong historical speeches and ambitious programs were perhaps indicative of the fact that New Yorkers had neglected their history and in the centennial year were determined to make amends. Horatio Seymour at the commemoration at Oriskany stressed the importance of restoring New York's role in the history of the Revolution: "We are this day bringing out the events of our country in true light. . . . Events are not seen in their just proportions or in proper perspectives. This is mainly due to the neglect of its history by New York. There is a dimness in the popular vision about this great center, source, and theatre of events which have shaped the civilization, usages, and government of this continent."

\* \* \* \*

The sesquicentennial year, 1926, found the United States a nation of forty-eight states. Immigration had swelled the national population to almost 106 million persons in 1920 and had created a multi-cultured, "melting pot" society, especially in the state of New York, which had a population of over ten million people, many of whom were immigrants or the children of immigrants. Calvin Coolidge was president and Alfred E. Smith was governor of New York.

Nationally, the sesquicentennial of American independence was again centered in Philadelphia. A second international exposition was held there from June 1 to December 1, 1926, with the official endorsement of the federal government. As part of a broad program of Americanization, the national sesquicentennial commission made the placing of a copy of the Declaration of Independence in every home in America one of its major objectives.

In April, 1926 the New York State Legislature passed legislation creating a nine-member commission to represent the state at the sesquicentennial exposition in Philadelphia. The commission was to serve without pay, except that necessary traveling expenses within and without the state were to be paid. It was authorized to erect whatever buildings it might deem necessary and to make all arrangements for the participation of the state in the celebration. An appropriation of \$100,000 for the six-month exhibition in Philadelphia accompanied the bill.

New York's in-state sesquicentennial celebration, unlike previous observances, was planned on a statewide basis and financed by the state. Assigned to the State Education Department, the sesquicentennial program was developed by

a Regents' committee consisting of President Frank P. Graves, Regent Charles B. Alexander, Assistant Commissioner James Sullivan, State Historian Alexander C. Flick, and Supervisor of Public Records Peter Nelson.

This committee worked out the Regents' program for the observance of the sesquicentennial, which was adopted in 1925. It had six principal objectives:

1. A statewide commemoration by localities of all significant events which occurred within the state from 1775 to 1783.
2. A concentration of the state celebrations within a two-year period covering 1926 and 1927, with appropriate observances of the major events in the crucial years 1776 and 1777.
3. The marking of historic sites and buildings.
4. The publication of an account of the part played by New York in the Revolution, directed to the general public and the schools.
5. The preparation by the combined scholarship of the state of a comprehensive, multi-volume history of the state.
6. The acquisition of the battlefields of Saratoga and Oriskany and of lands associated with the defense of Fort Stanwix as public parks.

An initial \$75,000 was appropriated by the state legislature in 1926 for state celebrations, for the erection of markers, and the preparation of publications. To implement this program the Regents appointed a committee known as the New York State Executive Committee of the 150th Anniversary of the American Revolution. The committee was composed of individuals who represented various educational, historical, and patriotic organizations. Dr. Alexander C. Flick, state historian, was made chairman and Peter Nelson executive secretary.

The 1926 sesquicentennial celebration was launched by a message from Governor Smith urging every community in the state to observe the week of July 3 to 9 as Independence Week with special exercises. Many schools, clubs, lodges, villages, and cities followed the governor's suggestion and developed local celebrations, usually with the assistance of a local historian or patriotic society.

In addition, an extensive series of official state programs commemorated the major civic and military events of 1776. Highlights of these programs were: the re-enactment at White Plains of the adoption of the Declaration of Independence by the Provincial Congress; the re-enactment of the proclamation of the Declaration to the troops in New York City by order of General Washington; the unveiling of a bronze tablet in the State Capitol honoring New York's four signers of the Declaration, under the sponsorship of the Daughters of the American Revolution; commemoration of the 150th anniversary of the Battle of Long Island, sponsored by the Kings County Historical Society; and a pageant celebrating the Battle of White Plains.

In 1927 pageants and observances were held at Oriskany, Bennington, and Kingston, but the climax of the Regents' two-year program was the sesquicentennial of the Battle of Saratoga and the surrender of Burgoyne, celebrated in

Saratoga Battlefield Park on October 8, 1927. Invitations were sent to all the states and to foreign countries. Following a reception for distinguished guests in Albany, a motorcade proceeded to Saratoga Battlefield where a monument given by New Hampshire was dedicated. Historical addresses were delivered by the governors of Vermont, New Hampshire, Connecticut, and New York, followed by a presentation of flags from every state in the Union in dedication of Saratoga Battlefield as a public park. A pageant in which 7,000 persons participated followed. An audience of more than 100,000 watched the performance.

Souvenir programs with historical information, historical maps, and 50,000 copies of *The American Revolution in New York* were distributed in the state and throughout the country as educational and promotional features of the 1926-27 commemorations. The United States also issued a commemorative stamp.

In 1928 the legislature made further appropriations to enable the executive committee to direct the sesquicentennial of the Sullivan-Clinton Campaign in 1929. Three major observances were held — at Cuylerville, September 14; Geneva, September 21; and Elmira, September 28. Large audiences attended the pageants where major events of the Sullivan-Clinton Campaign were re-enacted.

As part of the 1929 observances, the Committee printed an edition of the *Sullivan-Clinton Campaign in 1779* as well as souvenir programs and a map of several parts of the campaign. Monuments and markers were erected along the army routes. And again the federal government issued a commemorative stamp.

The state of New York appropriated a total of \$540,000 for the celebration of the sesquicentennial. Of this amount \$100,000 was spent for the state's participation in the Philadelphia Exposition and \$145,000 for the purchase and rehabilitation of Revolutionary battlefields. The Regents' Executive Committee supervised the expenditure of \$295,000. Of this sum \$110,000 was spent for several thousand historic markers and monuments. Approximately \$70,000 was spent for the printing of historical books and maps, and for publicity. The remaining \$115,000 was spent for historical pageants and hundreds of celebrations in all parts of the state.

The state sesquicentennial program was an impressive one, actively involving thousands of people throughout the state in historical observances, either as participants or onlookers. The historical markers continued to be erected in the thirties and still dot the highways of the state, tangible reminders of the sesquicentennial. The ten-volume *History of New York*, edited by Alexander C. Flick, as well as *The American Revolution in New York*, are still valuable references for state history. And for many New Yorkers, who viewed the pageant at Saratoga through children's eyes, there will never be a spectacle to equal it.

\* \* \* \* \*

As New Yorkers look ahead to the celebration of the bicentennial of their state and nation, they can be certain of one thing: their's is a different generation, far removed from even the pageant participants of the sesquicentennial celebrations. Whole roasted oxen, bedecked with ribbons and garlands, and temples of independence with goddesses of liberty would not be for modern

residents of New York City. Nor would two-hour-long historical addresses and wooden temples to industry have meaning for Americans who, from earth, have watched other Americans walk on the moon. This generation will have to find its own meaning in the patriotic ritual, the national renewal of the bicentennial years. Hopefully, it will not miss the fun and enthusiasm of other centennial generations.



*Thomas Jefferson, in 1826 one of the three surviving signers of the Declaration of Independence, was invited to participate in the celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of independence in Washington, D.C. on July 4. Eighty-three years old and in ill health, he wrote the mayor of Washington declining the invitation and sending a message to the American people. On July 4, 1826 as cannon noisily proclaimed the nation's jubilee, Jefferson passed away quietly at Monticello. The following is an excerpt from his last letter, dated June 24, 1826:*

All eyes are opened, or opening, to the rights of man. The general spread of the light of science has already laid open to every view the palpable truth, that the mass of mankind has not been born with saddles on their backs, nor a favored few booted and spurred, ready to ride them legitimately, by the grace of God. These are grounds of hope for others. For ourselves, let the annual return of this day forever refresh our recollections of these rights, and an undiminished devotion to them.



## MEMBERS OF THE COMMISSION

*John H. G. Pell*, chairman, is a Manhattan business executive and historian. Active in a large number of civic and historical organizations, he is probably best known for his association with Fort Ticonderoga, whose grounds and buildings his family has owned for 150 years.

*E. K. Fretwell, Jr.*, vice-chairman, is president of the State University College at Buffalo. He has made education his career, having served as a faculty member at Teachers College, Columbia University, and as assistant commissioner for higher education with the New York State Education Department before assuming his present post.

*Walter Averill II* of Poughkeepsie, a former hotel executive, is engaged in regional promotion as executive vice-president of the Hudson River Valley Association.

*Major General John C. Baker* of Troy is chief of staff to the governor and commanding general of the New York National Guard. Enlisting in the National Guard as a private in 1935, he rose through the ranks to his present position.

*Mrs. Mary Biondi* of Ogdensburg, formerly in publishing and printing, is Saint Lawrence County historian.

*J. Moreau Brown* is associate secretary of the General Electric Foundation in Ossining, and administers that organization's educational support programs. He is past president of the Empire State Society of Sons of the American Revolution.

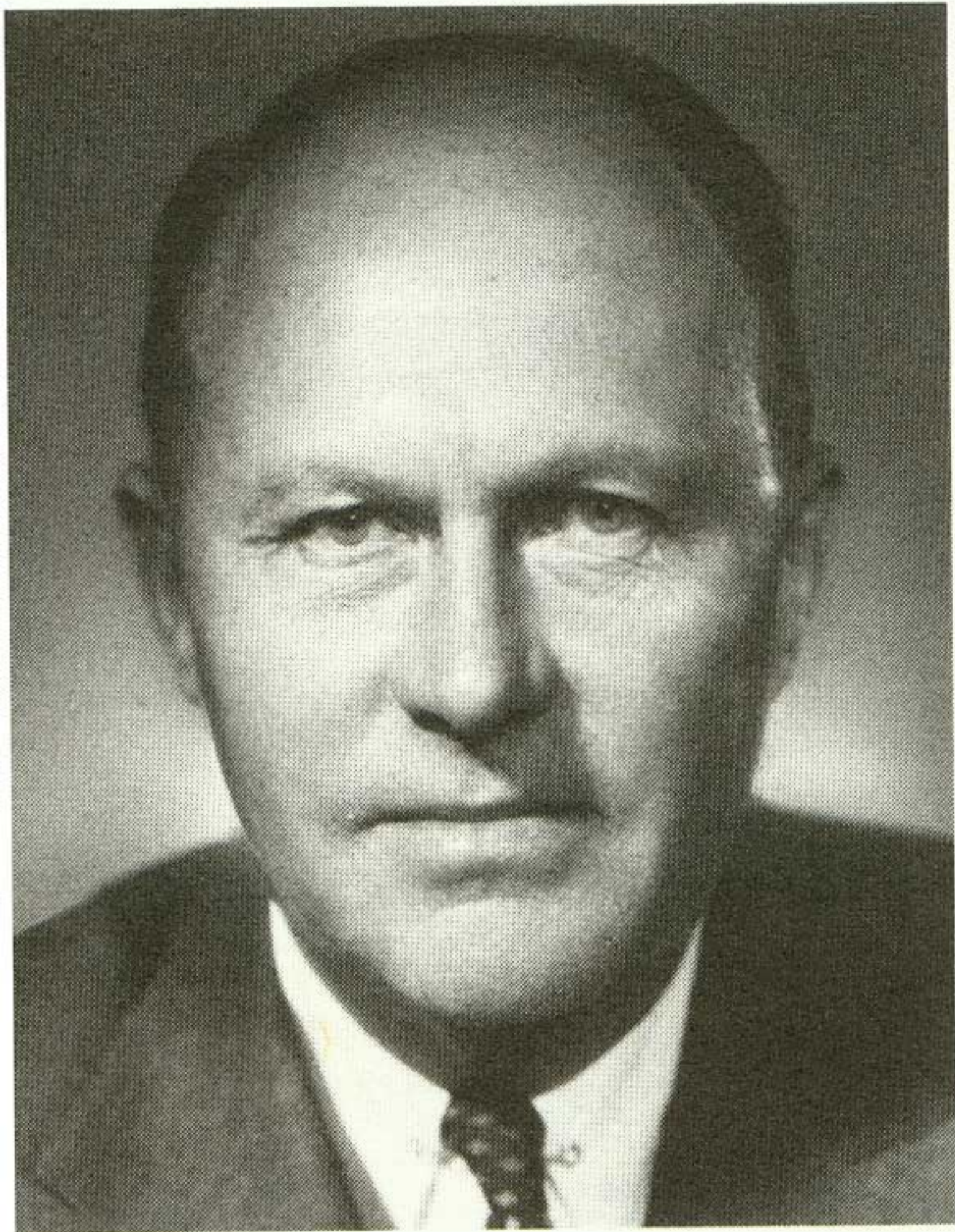
*Rev. Laman H. Bruner*, rector of Albany's St. Peter's Church (Episcopal), also serves as chaplain of the New York State Assembly.

*Mrs. Jane des Grange* is director of the Suffolk Museum and Carriage House at Stony Brook on Long Island.

*Miss Laura G. Ebell* of Patchogue, a retired teacher, is town historian of Brookhaven, one of the state's largest towns.

*Robert A. Fusco* of Waterford is a legislative correspondent and columnist with the Record newspapers in Troy.

*Supreme Court Justice Guy A. Graves* of Schenectady, former assistant to Governor Thomas E. Dewey, has had a long career as a practicing lawyer.



*John H. G. Pell*  
Chairman

(Photo by Bacbrach)

*Otto E. Koegel*, a lawyer of New York and Westchester County, is chairman of the John Jay House Restoration Commission.

*Nathan S. Langdon*, a Greenwich publisher, has long been active as chairman of various celebrations and historic observances.

*H. Bert Mack* of Maspeth is a prominent contractor and industrial developer, who in recent years has headed many Long Island civic and philanthropic endeavors.

*Dr. I. Frank Mogavero* of Grand Island is a professor of history at Niagara University.

*State Senator Dalwin J. Niles* of Johnstown is a former children's court judge and a practicing lawyer.

*Judge Nicholas M. Pette* of Jamaica has had a distinguished career as a jurist. He retired from the state supreme court in 1967.

*Joseph Verner Reed, Jr.*, a Manhattan banker, is active in theatrical and civic organizations. He is a fellow of the Pierpont Morgan Library and a trustee of the Yale University Art Gallery.

*Dr. Seth Spellman* of Albany, a retired lieutenant colonel, was engaged in psychiatric social work in the U.S. Army for twenty-five years. He is currently an associate professor of sociology and assistant to the president at the State University of New York at Albany.

*Mrs. Mildred F. Taylor* of Lyons has long been active on commissions dealing with history, and served as a member of the New York State Assembly from 1947 to 1960.

*Col. Frederick P. Todd*, author and life-long student of military history, lives in Cornwall-on-Hudson since his retirement as director of the West Point Museum.

*Major General Almerin C. O'Hara* contributed significantly to the planning of the bicentennial during his twenty month membership on the commission. Since the chief of staff to the governor is a member of the commission by legislative mandate, when General O'Hara assumed the position of Commissioner of the Office of General Services February 1, 1971, his membership on the commission terminated. He was replaced as of that date by his successor, Major General John C. Baker.



*E. K. Fretwell, Jr.*  
*Vice-Chairman*

## CHAPTER 630—LAWS OF 1968

### AN ACT

Creating a temporary state commission to commemorate the two hundredth anniversary of the American revolution and making an appropriation for the expenses of the commission

*The People of the State of New York, represented in Senate and Assembly, do enact as follows:*

*Section 1.* A temporary state commission to be known as the New York American revolution bicentennial commission is hereby created in order to provide for appropriate observances, ceremonies and other activities to commemorate the two hundredth anniversary of the American revolution.

§ 2. The commission hereby created shall consist of twenty-one citizens of the state, of whom eleven shall be appointed by the governor, one of whom shall be the chief of staff to the governor, five by the temporary president of the senate, and five by the speaker of the assembly. The governor shall appoint from its membership the chairman and vice-chairman of the commission. Vacancies in the membership and in the offices of chairman and vice-chairman of the commission shall be filled in the manner provided for original appointments.

§ 3. For the accomplishment of its purposes, the commission shall be authorized and empowered to prepare an over-all program to include specific plans for commemorating the two hundredth anniversary of the American revolution. In preparing these plans and programs the commissioner shall give due consideration to any similar plans advanced by any federal, state, municipal, civic, patriotic, military, veterans and historical bodies and may designate special committees with representation from the above-mentioned bodies to plan and conduct specific ceremonies. The commission shall cooperate in the program and plans of any American revolution bicentennial commission established under the laws of the United States and may cooperate in the programs and plans of such commission and similar bodies established by other states, including participation in any exhibition commemorating the American revolution. Through its own personnel or in cooperation with any public or private agency, the commission may undertake, prepare and publish any studies, publications or other writings which it may deem relevant to the participation of the state of New York and its citizens in the American revolution.

§ 4. The commission may employ and at pleasure remove such personnel as it may deem necessary for the performance of its functions and fix their compensation within the amounts made available by appropriation therefor.

§ 5. The commission may meet within or without the state. It may participate in bicentennial observances and ceremonies during the years nineteen hundred sixty-eight to nineteen hundred eighty-one, inclusive, on the revolutionary war battlefields and other historic sites, where troops from New York served, or

where other events significant to the state of New York in relation to the American revolution occurred. The commission may hold public or private hearings and shall have all the powers of a legislative committee pursuant to the legislative law.

§ 6. The members of the commission shall receive no compensation for their services but shall be allowed their actual and necessary expenses incurred in the performance of their duties hereunder.

§ 7. The commission may request and shall receive from any department, division, board, bureau, commission or agency of the state or any political subdivision thereof such facilities, assistance and data as it deems necessary or desirable to properly carry out its powers and duties hereunder. The commission, in its discretion, may establish an advisory counsel to assist in its work.

§ 8. The commission is hereby authorized and empowered to make and sign any agreements and to do and perform any acts that may be necessary, desirable or proper to carry out the purposes of this act, not including the erection of monuments and memorials.

§ 9. Notwithstanding any inconsistent provisions of law, general, special or local, no officer or employee of the state or of any civil division thereof shall be deemed to have forfeited or shall forfeit his office or employment by reason of his acceptance of membership on such commission.

§ 10. The commission shall submit an interim report to the governor and the legislature presenting the preliminary plans of the commission not later than March first, nineteen hundred sixty-nine. Thereafter, the commission shall submit an annual report to the governor and the legislature not later than March first of each year. The commission shall submit such other interim report or reports to the governor and the legislature as it may deem advisable. A final report shall be made to the governor and the legislature on or before December thirty-first, nineteen hundred eighty-one, upon which date the commission hereby created shall terminate.

§ 11. The sum of fifteen thousand dollars, (\$15,000), or so much thereof as may be necessary, is hereby appropriated from any funds in the state treasury in the general fund to the credit of the state purposes fund, not otherwise appropriated, and made available to the temporary state commission for its expenses, including personal service, in carrying out the provisions of this act. Such moneys shall be payable out of the state treasury on the audit and warrant of the comptroller on vouchers certified or approved by the chairman of the commission or by an officer or employee of the commission designated by the chairman.

§ 12. This act shall take effect immediately.



*Word of the outbreak of fighting at Lexington and Concord on April 19, 1775 arrived in New York City by horseback messenger four days later. Here an unidentified artist of a later period has shown how the news might have been received among Sunday worshippers along the Bowery. Courtesy of the Prints Division, New York Public Library.*

