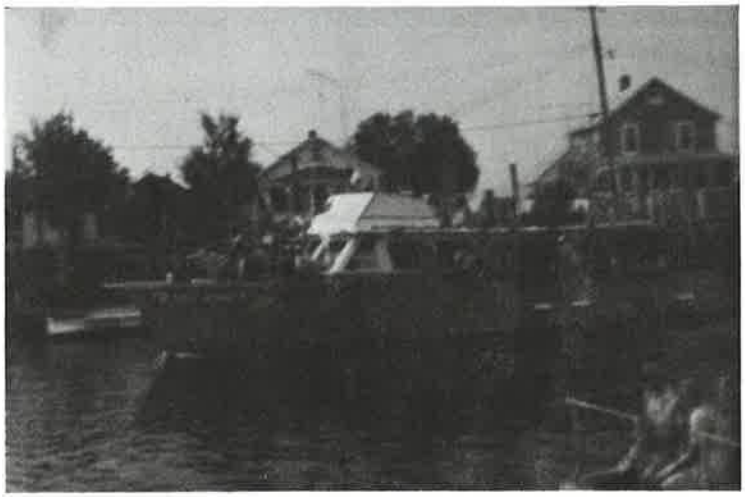
First State BICENTENNIAL NEWSLETTER

DELAWARE AMERICAN REVOLUTION BICENTENNIAL COMMISSION

June, 1975



Bowers Beach's "Big Thursday" parade winds up outside Saxton United Methodist Church.



Fishing boats, decorated in honor of "Big Thursday" leave Bowers Beach heading for the bay.

Museum is goal

Bowers Beach revives 'Big Thursday'

"A Country Day on Delaware Bay" is the theme for the second annual revival of Big Thursday at Bowers Beach July 4.

Big Thursday used to come on the second Thursday in August. For almost 100 years after Delaware first imposed a ban on the taking of oysters during the summer months, it was a day of celebration marking the beginning of the new oystering season.

Even before the enactment of the law, families would frolic in the Bowers Beach area as oysters were gathered for the winter—and people would come from miles around to join them. The original law lifted the ban on oystering in mid-August; hence it became customary to go to Bowers Beach on the second Thursday of August to get oysters and join the festivities.

World War II put an end to Big Thursday celebrations, which had become a principal gathering for politicians during election years.

The idea had its genesis when Mrs. Edna LeMunyon, now chairman of the Bowers Beach Bicentennial Committee, and her husband, Joseph, visited St. Michael's, Md. "Why can't Delaware have something like this?" she wondered—and took her question to a friend in the Governor's office. The friend suggested the Bicentennial as a source of funds for the museum she hoped to see erected in the fishing town.

Reviving Big Thursday was the idea of Mrs. Jane Boone, another member of the Bicentennial Committee. Funds would be needed to build and fill a museum; Big Thursday might be the thing to do it.

Bowers Beach applied for and received Bicentennial Community designation—one of the first in the state to be so designated. And on July 4, 1974, the first revival of Big Thursday was held.

The date was changed to the holiday, Mrs. LeMunyon explained, so that more people could attend.

This year's festivities will be much like last year's. The head and party boats will be gaily decorated—and visitors are welcome to arrive as early as 5 to 7 a.m., when the boats head out on their fishing excursions. They return about 3 p.m. and seeing the catches is a big part of the day for many visitors.

A parade at noon will kick off the day's festivities. Prizes are offered for the best-decorated bicycles; the best dressed walkers

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Governor hosts Separation Day

Separation Day ceremonies were held at the Governor's Mansion on Sunday, June 15.

Dr. John A. Munroe, history professor at the University of Delaware, spoke on the events that led Delaware to declare itself independent of the British Crown on June 15, 1776.

The observance was co-sponsored by the Kent County, Dover, and Delaware Bicentennial organizations. Governor and Mrs. Sherman W. Tribbitt invited the groups to use the Governor's Mansion for the occasion.

Co-chairpersons for the event were Elizabeth Moyne and Marion MacDonald.



Samuel L. Shipley



Harvey B. Rubenstein

Meet the Commission

Samuel L. Shipley, chairman of the DARBC's executive committee, has been a member of the commission since 1972, when he became the first member appointed by Governor Sherman W. Tribbitt.

Mr. Shipley is president of Shipley Associates, Inc., an advertising and public relations agency with offices in Independence Mall north of Wilmington. He lives, with his wife and three children, near Newark.

He is listed in **Who's Who in America** and **Community Leaders of America,** and includes among the honors he has received the George Washington Medal awarded by the Freedoms Foundation at Valley Forge.

Mr. Shipley's interest in Democratic politics began long before he came to Delaware 14 years ago. He has served on the campaign staffs of candidates for office at every level from county executive to president of the United States. Twice, in 1970 and 1974, he unsuccessfully sought the nomination of the Democratic Party for U.S. Representative from Delaware.

When the late Charles L. Terry, Jr., was governor, Mr. Shipley served as director of the State Development Department. He has also served on such diverse things as the Governor's Oceanographic Committee, the Governor's Beautification Committee, the Delaware Economic Development Board, the Cooperative Area Manpower Planning System, and the State Human Relations Commission—and as Atomic Energy Coordinator for Delaware.

He was born in 1929 in Marlboro, Mass., and received his education in New Hampshire public schools, the University of New Hampshire, and the Charles Morris Price School of Advertising and Journalism in Philadelphia. He is a veteran of the European Theater, where he served with U.S. Army Intelligence.

He is a Mason and a Rotarian. His other memberships include the Wilmington Advertising Club; Delaware Travel Council; Delaware Safety Council; Del-Mar-Va Boy Scout Council; the International Platform Association; Delaware State Chamber of Commerce; and the Better Business Bureau of Delaware.

Harvey B. Rubenstein is an attorney with a broad interest in government that led him into co-authorship of **The Delaware Citizen.**

He was admitted to the Pennsylvania bar in 1956 and the Delaware bar in 1957. He has served as attorney for the Delaware House of Representatives in the 123rd General Assembly, 1965-66; as Levy Court attorney for New Castle County, 1966-67; and as assistant county attorney for New Castle County from 1967 to 1973.

He was vice chairman of the Delaware Constitutional Revision Commission from 1968 to 1970.

His expertise in state and local government led James M. Rosbrow and Cy Liberman to add him to their team when the third edition of **The Delaware Citizen** was produced in 1967. The book is recognized as the leading reference book on Delaware governments.

Mr. Rubenstein was appointed to DARBC in 1974. He is a member of the Historical Society of Delaware; a board member of the Jewish Historical Society of Delaware; a past president of the Faulk Elementary PTA and the Alfred I. du Pont PTA Council; and is vice president of the Adas Kodesch Shel Emeth Congregation. During the past year, he has been a member of the executive committee on the Delaware State Bar Association.

Mr. Rubenstein, his wife, Myrna, and their three children, Dana, Kara, and Alison, live in Chatham.

14 more receive project grants

Fourteen more organizations have received grants from the American Revolution Bicentennial Administration for a variety of projects approved by the Delaware American Revolution Bicentennial Commission.

Three of the grants are to colleges—the University of Delaware and Delaware State College have received $10,000 each to fund comprehensive programs, and Goldey Beacom College has received $350 to help publish a book entitled **The Office Worker in Delaware During the Colonial Period.**

The State Department of Public Instruction will receive $2,500 for a series of Bicentennial debates and $400 for updating of a teachers guide. Other school districts and schools receiving grants are:

Alfred I. du Pont School District, $6,375 for an arts festival; Claymont School District, $4,500 for the production of travel books; Caesar Rodney School District, $350 for a music festival; Smyrna School District, $1,000 for a celebration of the Bicentennial through music; Stanton School, $390 for a community project documenting its history; Wilmington Public Schools, $5,800 for a comprehensive program including two film projects, a book, a black history project, a visual arts project, and a music program; Indian River School, $4,000 for an audio-visual program; Old Mill Lane School, $3,149 for a festival and pageant; and Carrcroft Elementary School, $780 for a project by students exploring their family histories, the history of the area, and the history of the school itself.

An $890 grant to the Christiana Bicentennial Committee will help finance the construction and erection of signs marking and describing Christiana's historical district.

The University of Delaware grant will go for concerts by the University Concert Choir; a public lecture-demonstration series entitled "Chemical World of the Founding Fathers"; a symposium, "Design for America's Future"; revision and undating of the reference book, **The Government of Delaware;** and two studies, "Analysis of the Chesapeake and Delaware Canal", and "A Floral Survey of Iron Hill."

Delaware State College's program includes lectures, plays, a festival, publications, and an ethnic exhibit.

Ohio seeks historical articles

The Ohio American Revolution Bicentennial Commission, in cooperation with the Ohio Academy of History and the Ohio Historical Society, is sponsoring an Ohio Bicentennial Article Contest.

Four prizes of $500 each are offered to the authors of the winning articles, which must deal with Ohio or Ohioans during the Revolutionary era, just prior to it, or on the consequences of the Revolution on Ohioans prior to the Civil War.

Articles must conform to the standards of the best scholarly journals. Winning entries will be published in the Summer, 1976, issue of **Ohio History.** All entries become the property of the Ohio Historical Society; non-winning essays may be selected for later publication.

A few copies of the rules are available at the DARBC office. More information can be obtained from David C. Twining, college coordinator of the Ohio ARBC, Ohio Historical Center, Columbus, OH 43211.

Bowers Beach festival set for July 4

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in old-fashioned costumes; the most interesting old-fashioned car; the best animal in the parade; the oldest fire engine in the parade; and the best floats.

The parade will march past the town lot next to Saxton United Methodist Church, where the Delaware flag, the Bicentennial flag, and the U. S. flag will be raised.

Open house will be held at the Saxton Church. Dinner, featuring fresh Delaware sea trout and Delmarva fried chicken, will be served in the firehall from 1 to 4 p.m. From 2 to 6 p.m., there will be carnival booths and children's games in the state-owned park in the center of town.

Captain Earl Booker will explain the construction of a boat currently being built, at the foot of Davidson Avenue. And Ann Sparklin, author of **Big Thursday** and **Lili Jo,** will be in the state park area to tell stories about Kent County folklore and history.

"Big Thursday involves all three of the Bicentennial themes," Mrs. LeMunyon said. "In reviving it, we're remembering our heritage; we're holding a festival to raise money to build a museum to leave for the future."

Last year, Bowers Beach had between 3,000 and 4,000 visitors for "Big Thursday." This year, they're hoping for more.

Maritime museum near reality

The maritime museum that the people of Bowers Beach will build as their principal Bicentennial project is well on the way to becoming a reality.

In addition to the money that the townspeople have raised through the "Big Thursday" revival and other events, Bowers has received a $9,100 grant from the American Revolution Bicentennial Administration, through the Delaware American Revolution Bicentennial Commission.

The museum building has not yet been secured, but Mrs. Edna LeMunyon, Bicentennial Committee chairman, is optimistic. Where the original timetable called for opening the museum in August, 1976, she says, "we're hoping now that we can have it open by July 4, 1976."

Bowers residents have been generous in donating items for the museum. Some of the items pledged are a painting of an oyster boat; two old ship lanterns; an ice cutter and puller; a wooden lavatory from the steamship "Frederica"; a ship's wheel; photographs; a sail from an oyster boat; an anchor; a marine flag; and running lights.



Ready to parade

Frank Lucia (right), his wife, Grace, and James Heal model the colonial costumes Delaware American Legionnaires and auxilians will wear in the Legion's Bicentennial parade in Minneapolis August 17. Mr. Lucia is chairman of the Spirit of '76 Committee (Bicentennial) for the American Legion, Department of Delaware. Mrs. Lucia designed the costumes.

University program set

The University of Delaware, designated in February as a Bicentennial University by the American Revolution Bicentennial Administration, has announced its Bicentennial program for the 1975-76 academic year.

John A. Murray, chairman of the University Bicentennial Committee, said the program will include concerts, lecture series, plays, exhibitions, films, special publications, seminars, tours, conferences and special courses of interest to the general public.

University President E. A. Trabant will open the observance at 8 p.m. September 17, in John M. Clayton Hall on the North Campus. The opening program will include the president's address, and a special program by the university Concert Choir. The choir will present a program tracing American music from the times of the Puritans to the present and including the black origins of American music and the works of traditional American composers like Stephen Foster.

Earlier, on August 13, the College of Agricultural Sciences Field Day at Georgetown will include a special Bicentennial exhibit on the agricultural history of Delaware.

A sampling of other types of programs offered during the academic year include a national conference on the "Design for America's Future," by the art department; the documentation and presentation of "The First State's Folk Tradition," including a film series on "Film: The American Art," by the English department; and a lecture series on "The Development of American Political and Social Institutions, 1776-1860," including an exhibition of "The 1876 Centennial," by the history department.

In all, the complete university Bicentennial observance will comprise nearly 50 events chosen from among some 75 proposals submitted by various departments and divisions of the university community.

Anthem, anyone? State has none

Delaware doesn't have a Bicentennial anthem yet, nor have any definite plans been made for having one written.

However, if Delaware musicians want to try their hands at composing such a song, the Delaware American Revolution Bicentennial Commission would be happy to consider any submitted to it for designation as the official anthem.

But even if no anthem is selected, Delawareans might want to consider increased use of the state song, "Our Delaware" at public affairs—and especially during the Bicentennial period.

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Lewes fete opens Sussex Bicentennial

There will be dancing in the streets of Lewes September 12 as Sussex County begins its Bicentennial celebration.

The street-dancing is only one part of a two-day festival continuing through September 14.

Other features of the festival are a gala parade on Saturday afternoon; opening of all museums for the week-end; a flag-raising ceremony; and stationary and mobile demonstrations and craft exhibitions.

The Sunday program will begin with all churches holding morning services with a 1776 motif. Later, boat rides will be available and a boat parade will be scheduled with a ceremony at sea for a special blessing on those who died in shipwrecks before they could reach these shores.

Other ideas for the festival are being considered by a large committee of Lewes citizens headed by Mrs. Leslie G. Knapp, Bicentennial Committee chairman. Mrs. Thomas Dyer of Milford and Kenneth Douty of Lewes are co-chairmen of the Sussex County Bicentennial Committee. Miles L. Frederick of Millsboro is coordinator of the opening festival.

The First State Bicentennial Newsletter

A publication of the Delaware American Revolution Bicentennial Commission

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Medallion featured

The Delaware Bicentennial Medallion, showing Caesar Rodney riding for independence, is featured in paperweights and pendants produced by Delaware's older citizens. They are on sale at the Golden Eagle Elder Craftsmen Shop, a non-profit outlet sponsored by the Wilmington Senior Center. Items A and C, paperweights, sell for $12.85 and $8.85, respectively. B and D, the pendants, sell for $11 and $11.25. Mail orders are accepted by the shop, 1901 Market Street, Wilmington 19802. Add $1 for mailing costs.

'These States' film available

"These States", the official Bicentennial "grand tour" of the places and events in the 13 original states that set the stage for the building of our nation, is now available at the Delaware American Revolution Bicentennial Commission office.

The film is in three segments—New England, the Mid-Atlantic States, and the South—each 30 minutes long. The commission will loan any or all of the segments to groups wishing to show the film.

"These States" was written and produced by Andre de la Varre and directed and edited by Pablo Zavala. Both professional and amateur actors were used, and most of the filming was done on location.

The Delaware segment includes old New Castle, the bells of Immanuel Church, the execution of a British soldier, the old Court House at New Castle, Cooch's Bridge, Dover, the John Dickinson mansion, modern Wilmington, and Caesar Rodney's ride to Philadelphia.

The film is designed to have educational as well as entertainment value.

For information, call the Bicentennial office at 571-1776 or wrote to P.O. Box 2476, Wilmington, 19899.

A video-tape version of the Mid-Atlantic section of the film will also be available soon at the commission office.

Dover reactivates militia company

Mayor Crawford J. Carroll and members of the City Council recently voted a general order reactivating the Light Infantry Militia Company of Dover.

The order was presented by Daniel Blagg, chairman of the Dover Bicentennial Committee, before the public and members of the Militia. At the presentation ceremony, some of the men were dressed in colonial costume carrying flintlock muskets.

After Mayor Carroll signed the order, he was presented with an honorary captain's commission and a pewter Bicentennial coin with the serial number one. The Mayor told the company that it would have full support of the Mayor and City Council in all of its activities.