

North Carolina Libraries and the American Revolution Bicentennial

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Libraries have a chance, if they will take it, to play an essential role in local community celebration of the American Revolution Bicentennial. This is the conclusion arrived at by the Bicentennial Committee of the Public Libraries section of the North Carolina Library Association. The Committee first met in April, 1974 and has since been conferring periodically in meetings of the Committee as a whole and of sub-committees.

The Committee consists of Chairman, Mrs. Eugenia Babylon, Richard H. Thornton Library, Oxford; Vice Chairman, Mrs. Nellie M. Sanders, Pettigrew Regional Library; Secretary, Arthur Goetz, Public

Library of Johnston County and Smithfield; Mrs. Mary Barnett, Morganton-Burke County; Mrs. Martha Davis, Rockingham County; Jim Baucom, Wake County Public; Mrs. Lou Benke, Salisbury-Rowan County; Ms. Patsy Hensel, Onslow County; Mrs. Jean Llewellyn, Sandhill Regional; Wallace McLendon, Stanly County; Richard Meldrom, Catawba County; Mr. Lloyd Osterman, Hyconeechee Regional; Mrs. Margaret Randall, Harnett County; Ms. Judith Sutton, Division of the State Library; Mrs. Josie Tomlinson, Wilson County; Ms. Jane Wilson, Retired; Mrs. Mary Wilson, SHM Regional; Valerie Knerr, Appalachian Regional; and Dr. Annette Phinozee, Dean, School of Library Science, NCCU. In addition, the

committee invited other sections of the North Carolina Library Association to send representatives to the meetings. The Bicentennial emphases affects school, special, college and university libraries as well as public.

The Committee has explored what was planned on a national scale and members have sat in session with directors and consultants for the North Carolina State Bicentennial. Mrs. Babylon and Mrs. Llewellyn attended a SYMPOSIUM ON THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION IN THE SOUTH at Lexington, Kentucky.

The American Revolution Bicentennial Commission was established when President Lyndon B. Johnson signed Public Law 89-491 on July 4, 1966. Members were "to plan, encourage, develop and coordinate the commemoration of the American Revolution Bicentennial." Since this time there have been many changes in leadership and emphasis. The national effort is now under the direction of the American Revolution Bicentennial Administration. However, it is more in line with President Nixon's admonition to the Commission of 1969 to ensure that the celebration not be confined to the national level but to be something in which all the people could participate. The celebrations have been cut back from the original period (which would have lasted at least until 1983) to the period of March, 1975 through December, 1976 with the focal day July 4, 1976.

North Carolina's Bicentennial is under the Department of Cultural Resources. Mr. Dick Ellis is the present person in over-all charge. Dr. Jeff Crow is director of *Heritage*, the look at the past theme of the three-part program. *Heritage* aims to provide historical perspective in which to appreciate the significance of The American Revolution as a crucial and relevant event in the total heritage of the nation, dealing specifically with the history of the Revolution, but also with the unique history of communities and the State as a

whole. Included under this theme are restorations, local histories, symposia, publications and chronologies. *Festivals* is the now, the theme area celebrating goals achieved, drawing attention to our cultural heritage, and sharing with visitors what is unique about our locality. *Festivals* cover such projects as collecting folklore, promoting the arts, commemorating historic dates, encouraging assemblies and speeches. Ardath Goldstein is the consultant. *Horizons*, Ed Barham, Consultant, involves cooperative effort to undertake projects that will demonstrate concern for human welfare, happiness and freedom. It encompasses day care centers, mini parks, bike trails, junk car removal, beautification and such civic improvements.

The State Bicentennial has planned some publications to be released beginning in the fall of 1975. There will be a series of pamphlets on the early days of North

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Carolina. They will begin with a day-by-day listing of historical happenings in the State during the Revolution written by Dr. Jeffery Crow and entitled *NORTH CAROLINA: A CHRONOLOG*. A minority affairs almanac of the minority contributions to the State is being compiled under the direction of Frank Emory at the Department of Urban Affairs at N. C. State University.

Dr. Larry Wheeler is Director of Community Participation for the State. Each county had two people who were designated as official representatives and charged with setting in motion plans for local bicentennial programs. People on the local committees were to be approved by the elected officials of the county or municipality and were to be as representative as possible of the age groups, socio-economic levels, racial components and civic organizations making up the community. This local committee then explored and decided what was needed or wanted in the community. The most likely plans were then selected to be implemented. They were submitted to local officials, endorsed, then sent on to the state, district and national commissions. If approved, the locality was certified and registered as an official bicentennial unit. The county or municipality then is presented with an official bicentennial flag and certificate of registration. It is then eligible for professional assistance and for funding, if money is available and warranted.

It is at this local level that librarians can most effectively participate. It is not too late for librarians to ask to serve on their local committees. There is still much work to be done, no matter how far the community has progressed with its plans. Librarians will be able to show how their resources and reference facilities can help. The library's meeting rooms could be offered for community meetings or even, if circumstances permit, as headquarters for the program. The North Carolina Committee would be pleased if librarians would

be interested in disseminating bicentennial information to the public. The *NEWSLETTER* may be obtained from Liz Fentress, Editor, 109 E. Jones Street, Raleigh, N. C. 27611, by sending \$1.00 for a subscription. The State Committee announced the upcoming publication by Oxmoor House of a new book about North Carolina history, *Spirit up the People*, written by Joanne Young with full color photographs by Taylor Lewis. It will sell for \$12.95 and be introduced by a national publicity promotion.

A children's curriculum, *Guide on the Bicentennial Theme*, available in September will be distributed to schools and libraries.

If there is no history of the library, this is an appropriate time to compile one for distribution. Committee member, Art Goetz, provides his bookmobile personnel with a tape recorder so they can record stories or reminiscences of the earlier days. Oral history and folklore are an important part of the bicentennial effort locally.

Library staff members might be enabled to better serve the public in the area of the American Revolutionary period by taking refresher courses. Such could be arranged through the nearest community college, technical institute or a high school history teacher. It might be held in the library and be open to the public. The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill offers a correspondence course on the subject. Jim Baucom wrote to colleges and universities around the state to see if librarians close by might audit courses on related subjects. He also wrote to professors who teach courses in Political Science, History and English. He compiled a list of the ones who have agreed to speak at libraries in their county of residence or close by. Lists are available from him or from Mrs. Babylon.

The Library Bicentennial Committee has had special bicentennial bookplates and bookmarks made up. Samples have been sent to all public libraries so that those interested may order these for their li-

baries. More are obtainable through Secretary, Arthur Goetz.

By now all libraries have received a list of materials prepared by the American Library Association, to back up the national American Issues program. These lists could be checked against holdings and used as suggestions for purchase. Since this is a national effort in which the media and many organizations are planning to participate, reading lists should be widely distributed to patrons of the library. Supplies may be replenished by request from the Division of the State Library.

The Library Committee investigated the possibility of special grants for the purchase of books and pamphlets on the American Revolutionary period. This request was rejected as there were no funds available for this purpose. However, libraries will find the state pamphlets relatively inexpensive. As much money as practicable can be allocated for books and A-V. Aspects of the bicentennial will be the subject of many club programs, school assignments and general interest reading.

The Bicentennial Committee of the Public Library Section of NCLA has received from the North Carolina Humanities Committee a grant of \$23,000 to carry out a series of forums in 30 localities across the state devoted to the topic "Reassessment of the American Experiment." Dr. Robert S. Rankin, Professor Emeritus of Duke University, is the project director and humanists from the academic world have expressed a willingness to participate. Twenty-eight public libraries responded to a request for participating agencies and will host the forums in their own communities: providing place, moderators, pan-

elists, promotion, publicity and the necessary staff, time and energy. March of 1976 is the selected period for the forums and there will be three in each locality dealing with "The Idea of America: The American Reality" and "An American Agenda for the Beginning of the Third Century."

Representatives from the Bicentennial and Children's Services Committee of the Public Library Section of NCLA and of the North Carolina Bicentennial Committee are working on a plan to encourage participation of children in the bicentennial through an especially designed reading program. This will be released when completed.

Mrs. Martha Davis heads a subcommittee, the NCLA conference film project. Four subcommittee members are previewing films and from these would be drawn those that would be shown at NCLA. All films will be historically accurate, will be new and current and would include children and adult films. They will prepare an annotated listing of all bicentennial films for distribution at NCLA.

Mrs. Nellie Sanders, Committee vice-chairman, is president of the North Carolina Barge Foundation, a private organization, which has as its goal a barge containing a model library, theatre and exhibit area to bring cultural offerings to accessible places in eastern North Carolina. While the Barge Project bill failed in both houses because of economic unrest, other ways may be found to pursue it.

The committee and the North Carolina State Bicentennial Committee would appreciate knowing what libraries and librarians are doing toward the bicentennial commemoration in their local area.