

From Liberty to Prosperity

Reflections upon the Role of Revolutionary Iconography in National Tradition

MICHAEL KAMMEN

PERHAPS IT IS inevitable that certain well-worn works of art would have suffered from overexposure during the bicentennial year. It is unfortunate, nevertheless, because *The Declaration of Independence*, by Trumbull, and *The Congress Voting Independence*, by Pine and Savage, are really not so trite that they deserve to become clichés. Neither are they so outstanding, however, that we should constantly exhibit or reproduce them, and in the process neglect a fair number of equally interesting pieces of historical art which also take some facet of the American Revolution as their theme.

We are quite familiar, for example, with John Trumbull's four huge historical canvases in the Rotunda of the United States Capitol: *The Declaration of Independence* (1818), *The Surrender of Lord Cornwallis at Yorktown* (1820), *The Surrender of General Burgoyne at Saratoga* (1821), and *The Resignation of General Washington* (1824). But how many of us can visualize the five frescoes completed in the Capitol between 1858 and 1871 by Constantino Brumidi? These lunettes, as they were called, depict the Boston Massacre, Battle of Lexington, Death of General Wooster, Washington at Valley Forge, and the Storming of Stony Point. Or, who can bring to mind the bronze doors of the House and Senate Wings, designed by the excellent sculptor Thomas Crawford during the later 1850s and executed between 1863 and 1867

by William H. Rinehart? Each door is divided into ten panels. The top two are decorative; but the eight principal panels depict scenes and events from the Revolutionary Era, 1775-93. They are, as it happens, very elegantly done.¹

The problem of appreciating and interpreting our historical art is an important one for several reasons. First, because there is much validity in a striking observation by the late Dutch historian J. H. Huizinga that 'historical understanding is like a vision, or rather like an evocation of images.'² Second, because we need to recognize the impact these iconographic materials have had upon our cultural life. In 1823, for example, James Fenimore Cooper visited the Military Academy at West Point, where he happened to see the stunning portrait of Jefferson done a year before by Thomas Sully (fig. 1). Cooper was not himself of the Jeffersonian persuasion. As he wrote to a friend, 'I was brought up in that school where his image seldom appeared, unless it was clad in red breeches, and where it was always associated with the idea of infidelity and political heresy. Consequently I would have gone twice as far to see the picture of almost any other man.' Nevertheless, as Cooper gazed upon Sully's canvas his admiration for both the painter and his subject were significantly altered. 'You will smile,' Cooper remarked, 'when I tell you its effects on myself.'

There was a dignity, a repose, I will go further, and say a loveliness, about this painting, that I never have seen in any other portrait. . . . In short I saw nothing but Jefferson, standing before me, not in red breeches and slovenly attire, but a gentleman, appearing in all republican simplicity, with a grace and ease on the canvas, that to me seemed unrivalled. It has really shaken my opinion of Jefferson as a man, if not as a politician; and when

¹ See Irma B. Jaffe, *John Trumbull: Patriot-Artist of the American Revolution* (Boston, 1975), pp. 243-53; *Compilation of Works of Art and Other Objects in the United States Capitol* (Washington, 1965), pp. 302-4, 373-75.

² Huizinga, 'My Path to History,' in *Dutch Civilisation in the Seventeenth Century and Other Essays* (New York, 1968), p. 269. This essay was completed in 1943, near the end of Huizinga's life, and first published in 1947.

his image occurs to me now, it is in the simple robes of Sully, sans red breeches, or even without any of the repulsive accompaniments of a political "sans culotte."³

I could quote numerous other examples of writers, politicians, or the populace-at-large being powerfully affected by some pictorial rendition of our Revolutionary times; but, at this point, permit me to add my third reason for believing that these works of art deserve our scrutiny, namely, because the artists themselves had an emotional or psychic investment in them—an investment which provides us with important clues to the Revolution's role in our national tradition. In 1831, for instance, Horatio Greenough wrote to Fenimore Cooper from Florence, Italy, explaining his design of a national monument for Washington, D.C. On each of the sides, he envisioned 'four points of the history of the Rev—oppression—Remonstrance—Resistance—Independence. These I should represent in the form of historic bas reliefs—The whole I would surmount with a statue of Washington in the act of resigning his authority as General in chief.'⁴

For all of the reasons which I have cited, therefore, the role of Revolutionary iconography in national tradition requires our most serious attention. Yet, to my amazement, I discover that despite the richness of our primary materials, almost nothing has been written on this subject by cultural historians. There are a few good biographies of artists, some excellent catalogues from exhibitions, and several iconographic

³ Cooper to Charles Kitchel Gardner? [Spring 1823], in James Franklin Beard, ed., *The Letters and Journals of James Fenimore Cooper* (Cambridge, Mass., 1960), 1:95-96, and plate ix following p. 368.

⁴ Greenough to Cooper, March 7, 1831, in Nathalia Wright, ed., *Letters of Horatio Greenough, American Sculptor* (Madison, 1972), pp. 73-74. See also Greenough to Cooper, December 20, 1830, *ibid.*, pp. 66-67; and Cooper to Greenough, September 15, 1829, in Beard, *Letters and Journals of Cooper*, 1:390. 'I am glad you have undertaken a Washington. Go on boldly with the work. Make the figures as severe and simple as possible, for these two qualities contain the essence of the imaginative with such a man. It will also suit our ideas of his character, and of our own character. Aim rather at the natural than the classical, taking care always to preserve the dignity of the man and his station.'

studies of individuals, such as Washington, Adams, and Franklin. But that is about it. My mission here, then, is two-fold. First, simply to sketch out the broad chronological pattern: who painted what, when, and why? And second, to offer a thesis, mainly based upon the current proliferation of bicentennial exhibitions, about the changing symbolism of the Revolutionary Era and the young republic. Inherent in that changing symbolism, I believe, are some fundamental clues to the American mind as it developed between the Age of Washington and the Age of Jackson.

I

During the two centuries which have elapsed since 1776, we have passed through at least half a dozen overlapping phases in which the American Revolution has been illustrated, immortalized, 'romance-itized,' allegorized, sentimentalized, and mythologized. Allow me a few moments to indicate more concretely what I mean.

Just as soon as the first shots were fired, Yankee tin-smiths and silversmiths got busy and engraved their rather primitive renditions of what had happened at Lexington, Concord, and the Battle of Bunker's Hill. Some years ago Clarence Brigham put together a very handsome book of *Paul Revere's Engravings*; but we now need a companion volume on Revere's contemporaries, such as Amos Doolittle, Bernard Romans, and Cornelius Tiebout. Between 1775 and about 1800 they offered pictorial accounts—sometimes factually representational and sometimes allegorically melodramatic—of military encounters and other events, such as Washington's triumphant reception at Trenton in 1789, or his first inauguration at Federal Hall. Often they worked from a painting, by Ralph Earl perhaps, or from a drawing by Peter Lacour. Their work tended to be crude and, in the most basic sense, illustrative.⁵

⁵ See Brigham, *Paul Revere's Engravings* (Worcester, 1954); *An Album of American Battle Art, 1755-1918* (Washington, D.C., 1947), pp., 51-55; Lynn Glaser,

Overlapping them in time, but vastly surpassing them in quality, came a cluster of better-known artists who were more formally trained and who took much greater pains to insure that their Revolutionary illustrations would be historically accurate while still fulfilling the imperatives of aesthetic and patriotic appeal. Working during the half century from about 1790 to 1840, they sought to be *documentary* in their exposition in order to record notable and dramatic events of the Revolution (fig. 2). John Trumbull of Connecticut is the best known of this group, and justifiably so. Between 1786 and 1789, 1817 and 1826, and once again briefly in the 1830s, he recorded illustrious scenes, some of which he had witnessed personally during his active service as an aide to Generals Gates and Washington during the war. I am prepared to argue that Trumbull's efforts were documentary in a way quite analogous to those of Jared Sparks and Peter Force. It is ironic that his paintings now seem to us so stylized in search of inspirational patriotism; for Trumbull felt that he was sacrificing grandeur for historical factuality. And by the artistic canons of his day, he was.

His contemporaries, of course, most especially prominent participants, were eager to know which events he planned to record, and in what manner. Thus Lafayette wrote to Trumbull in 1799:

The pictures I have seen are *Yorktown* and *Gibraltar*. I knew you had *The Declaration of Independence*, *Saratoga*, and *Princeton*; *Bunker's Hill* also. Did you not intend to make *Monmouth*? I much wish it, because in that battle, where Gen. Greene commanded the right wing, Lord Stirling the left, while I had the second line, and where Gen. Washington was surrounded by his family,

Engraved America: Iconography of America through 1800 (Philadelphia, 1970), plate 184; *A Bicentennial Treasury: American Masterpieces from the Metropolitan* ([New York, 1976]), plate 30. Portraits done by folk artists during the 1780s sometimes contained, as part of the background, a Revolutionary battle scene. See, for example, 'Captain and Mrs. Samuel Chandler,' by Winthrop Chandler of Woodstock, Connecticut (ca. 1780), National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. (reproduced in Jean Lipman and Alice Winchester, *The Flowering of American Folk Art* [New York, 1974], p. 16).

I could see several portraits very precious to me; there I would also hope to find Gen. Knox, who commanded the artillery. Have you chosen the ground where Gen. Washington came up to the retreating vanguard, and while Gen. Lee was sent off, honored me with the care to support the attack, until the army was formed? or the rising ground where the cannonade between the two armies took place, and when the general officers and aides-de-camp were about the commander-in-chief? or what other time and place of that action have you preferred? What are the other performances which complete the collection? Wherever my definitive home is fixed, your works shall be the first, or according to circumstances, the only ornament of my dwelling.⁶

And for the most part, Trumbull managed to please his contemporaries. Thomas Jefferson and Abigail Adams were lavish in their praise for his work. When those huge scenes were installed at the Capitol Rotunda in 1826–27, however, some shrill voices rose in criticism. John Randolph of Roanoke, for example, picked a nickname for Trumbull's *Declaration of Independence*. He called it 'the Shin-piece' because he said that he had never before seen so many legs displayed in one picture.⁷ Such critical dissonance may partially be attributed to the overemphasis upon commemorative art and oratory which accumulated during the second half of John Quincy Adams's presidency and Jackson's first administration. In 1830, for example, Washington Allston refused a congressional commission to paint Revolutionary scenes for the Rotunda. As a partisan of Andrew Jackson, Allston did not want to get involved in the fracas over whether or not the Battle of New Orleans should be depicted. The anti-Jackson

⁶ September 3, 1799, quoted in Jaffe, *Trumbull*, p. 188. In addition to Trumbull's half-dozen famous historical scenes, it is interesting to note others which he proposed to do or sketched, but never completed: the evacuation of New York, September 1776; the murder of Jane McCrea, Fort Edward, N.Y., July 26, 1777; the death of General Fraser at Bemis's Heights, near Saratoga, October 7, 1777; the siege of Savannah, September–October 1779; the attack on Charleston, S.C., May 9–10, 1780; the battle of Eutaw Springs, S.C., September 8, 1781; the preliminary treaty, Paris, November 30, 1782; the arch at Trenton, N.J., April 21, 1789; and Washington's inauguration, New York, April 30, 1789.

⁷ Quoted in Jaffe, *Trumbull*, p. 260.

forces opposed it; and they got very noisy, indeed, about the issue.⁸

For about two decades after 1826, artistic interest began to shift away from the Revolution somewhat. It is significant, I think, that after Trumbull's four canvases were installed at the Capitol, the remaining niches remained unadorned; and Trumbull hoped in vain for a congressional commission to complete his so-called Hall of the Revolution in a unified way. Not until the 1840s were the four remaining spaces filled in the Rotunda, and then by historical scenes not from the Revolution, but rather from the careers of Columbus, De Soto, Pocahontas, and the Pilgrims.⁹

Yet the 1830s were by no means barren of Revolutionary art. Jacob Eichholtz did his charming composition called *An Incident of the Revolution* in 1831; Asher B. Durand painted *The Capture of Major André* (fig. 3) in 1833 and *The Murder of Jane McCrea* in 1839.¹⁰ It is noteworthy, however, that most of these artists (and presumably their patrons) were far more interested in romantic landscapes than they were in historical pictures. For every one of the latter that they did, they turned out dozens (indeed, hundreds) of the former. After 1828, even Trumbull occupied himself mainly with Biblical topics.

The theme of Congress voting Independence reached a kind of peak in popularity during the early 1820s. Edward Savage had completed Robert Pine's rendering of that subject by 1817; and Trumbull finished his for the Rotunda by 1818. Two years later Trumbull entrusted the difficult job of en-

⁸ Edgar P. Richardson, *Washington Allston: A Study of the Romantic Artist in America* (Chicago, 1948), p. 134; George R. Nielsen, 'Paintings and Politics in Jacksonian America,' *Capitol Studies* 1 (Spring 1972):87-91.

⁹ See *Works of Art in the United States Capitol*, pp. 116-23; and Jaffe, *Trumbull*, pp. 257, 259-60, 285.

¹⁰ See Rebecca J. Beal, *Jacob Eichholtz, 1776-1842: Portrait Painter of Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia, 1969), pp. 263-64; D. Denise Minault, 'Recent Findings Concerning "The Capture of Major André",' *Worcester Art Museum Bulletin* 1 (November 1971):2-7.

graving this picture to young Asher B. Durand, then only twenty-four years old. By 1823 copies were selling swiftly to an eager public.¹¹

During the 1830s, '40s, and '50s, however, when artists chose the Revolution as a subject for their work, the Declaration of Independence ceased to interest them. They turned instead to comparatively obscure events and themes, such as Gen. Charles Lee pumping water for a kitchen maid; or McCulloch's leap into Wheeling Creek, Virginia, in 1777; or Gen. Francis Marion in his swamp encampment inviting a British officer to share his meal—the latter known to South Carolinians as the 'sweet potato picture' because that is apparently what Marion offered the famished redcoat.¹² John Blake White, who lived most of his life in Charleston, had quite a penchant for such pictures; and in the Capitol building, if you look hard enough near the Senate Gallery, you will find not only the *Battle of Fort Moultrie*, but also *Sergeants Jasper and Newton Rescuing American Prisoners from the British*, and *Mrs. Motte Directing Generals Marion and Lee to Burn Her Mansion to Dislodge the British*.¹³

Others found themes a bit more general and less obscure, such as *The Battle of Cowpens* by William T. Ranney, or James Hamilton's *Capture of the Serapis* by John Paul Jones (fig. 4), or *Pulling Down the Statue of King George III*,

¹¹ See Wayne Craven, 'Asher B. Durand's Career as an Engraver,' *American Art Journal* 3(Spring 1971):39-57; Gordon Hendricks, 'Durand, Maverick and the Declaration,' *ibid.*, pp. 58-71; John Maass, 'The Declarations of Independence,' *The Magazine Antiques* 110(July 1976):106-10; John C. Fitzpatrick, *The Spirit of the Revolution* (Boston, 1924), ch. 2, 'Discovery of the Declaration of Independence by the People of the United States,' esp. pp. 16-18, 20, 22.

¹² John Blake White (1781 - ca. 1859) painted the best-known version of the 'sweet potato picture' late in the 1830s, and John Sartain engraved it in 1840. White's canvas hangs in the Senate Wing of the Capitol (third floor). George Washington Mark (d. 1879) did a charming primitive of the same subject, which is owned by the New-York Historical Society. For negative responses to the Declaration of Independence, see Merrill D. Peterson, *The Jefferson Image in the American Mind* (New York, 1960), pp. 168-69, 201-2.

¹³ See *Works of Art in the United States Capitol*, pp. 128, 134-37; *An Album of American Battle Art*, pp. 60, 61.

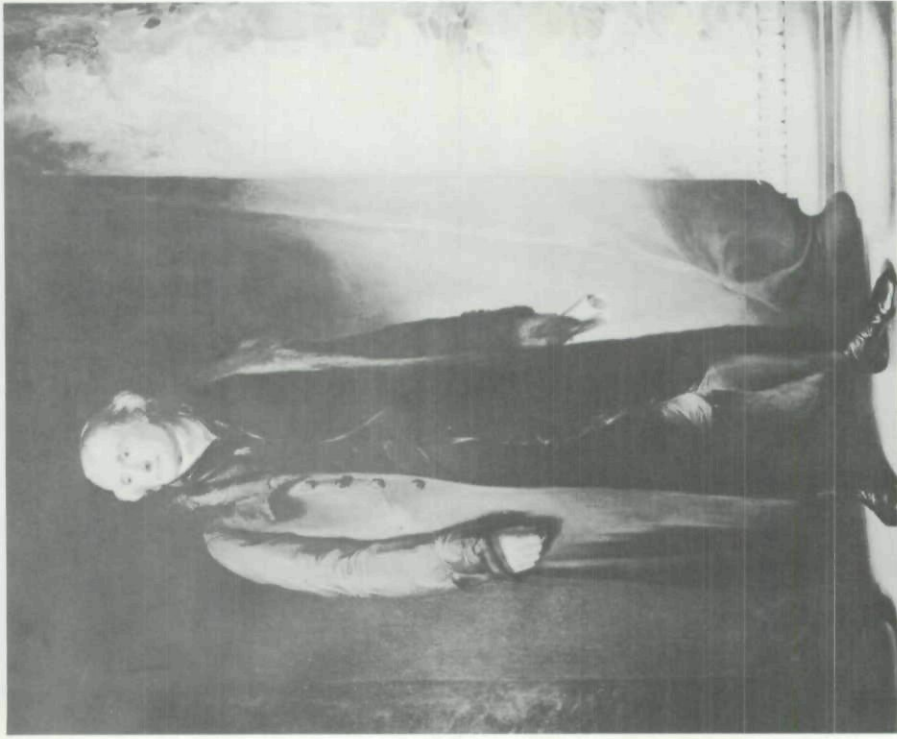


Fig. 1. Thomas Sully, *Thomas Jefferson*, United States Military Academy, West Point, New York.



Fig. 2. John Vanderlyn, *Death of Jane McCrea* (1803-05). Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford; purchase by subscription.

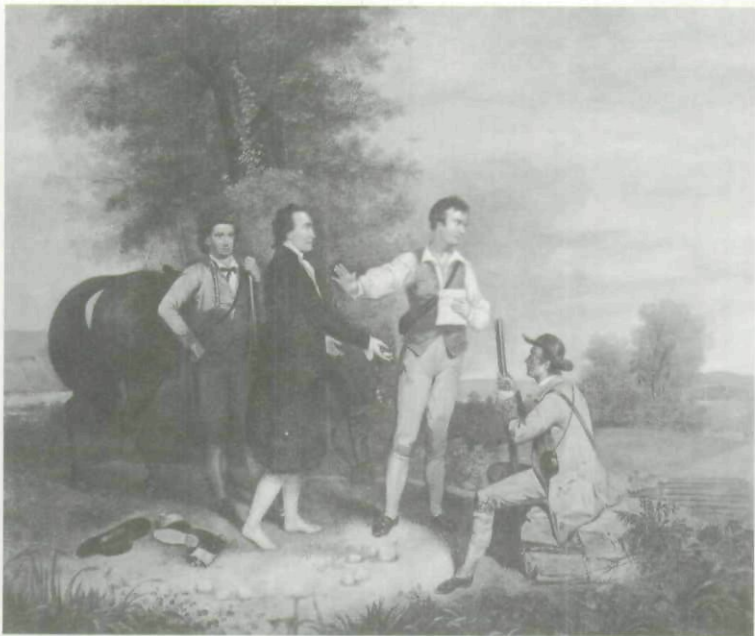


Fig. 3. Asher B. Durand, *The Capture of Major André* (1833). Worcester Art Museum, Worcester, Massachusetts.

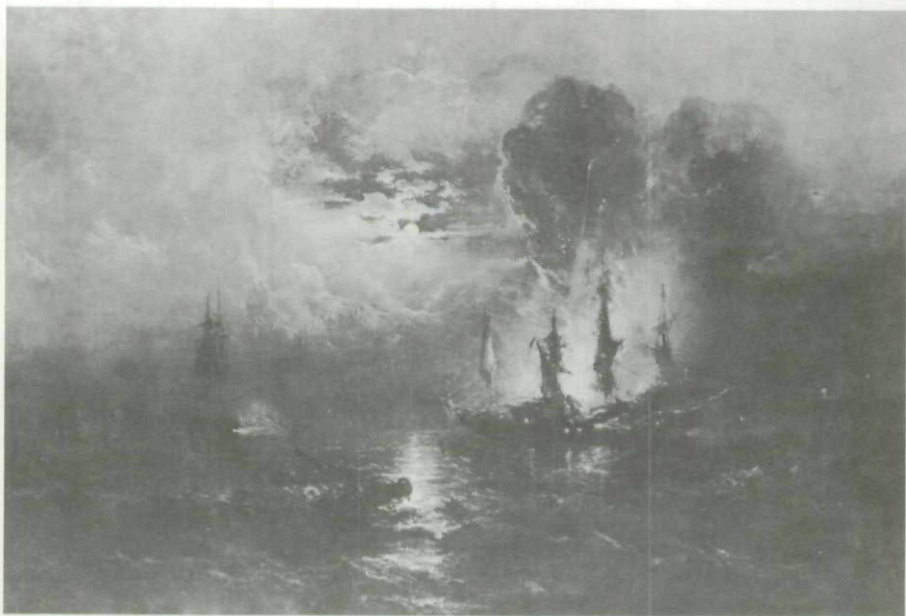


Fig. 4. James Hamilton, *Capture of the Serapis by John Paul Jones* (1854). Yale University Art Gallery; gift of Mrs. Francis P. Garvan for the Mabel Brady Garvan Collection.



Fig. 5. Edward Hicks, *Washington Crossed Here* (1830s?). Mercer Museum of the Bucks County Historical Society, Doylestown, Pennsylvania.



Fig. 6. Emanuel Leutze, *Washington Crossing the Delaware* (1851). Fine Arts Commission; the National Archives.



Fig. 7. William T. Ranney, *Marion Crossing the Pedee* (1851).

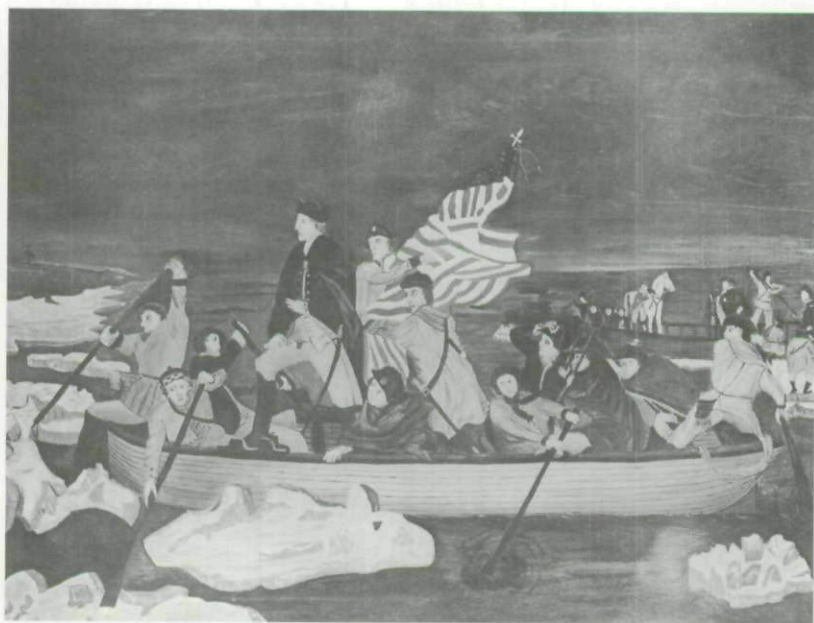


Fig. 8. *Washington Crossing the Delaware* (late nineteenth century), artist unknown. Philadelphia Museum of Art; the Edgar William and Bernice Garbisch Collection.



Fig. 9. Peter Saul, *George Washington Crossing the Delaware* (1975). Allan Frumkin Gallery, New York and Chicago.



Fig. 10. M. M. Sanford, *Washington at Princeton* (1850). New York State Historical Association, Cooperstown.



Fig. 11. Archibald M. Willard, *Spirit of '76* (1876). Minor Congressional Committee; the National Archives.



Fig. 12. William Mercer, *Battle of Princeton* (c. 1786-90). The Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

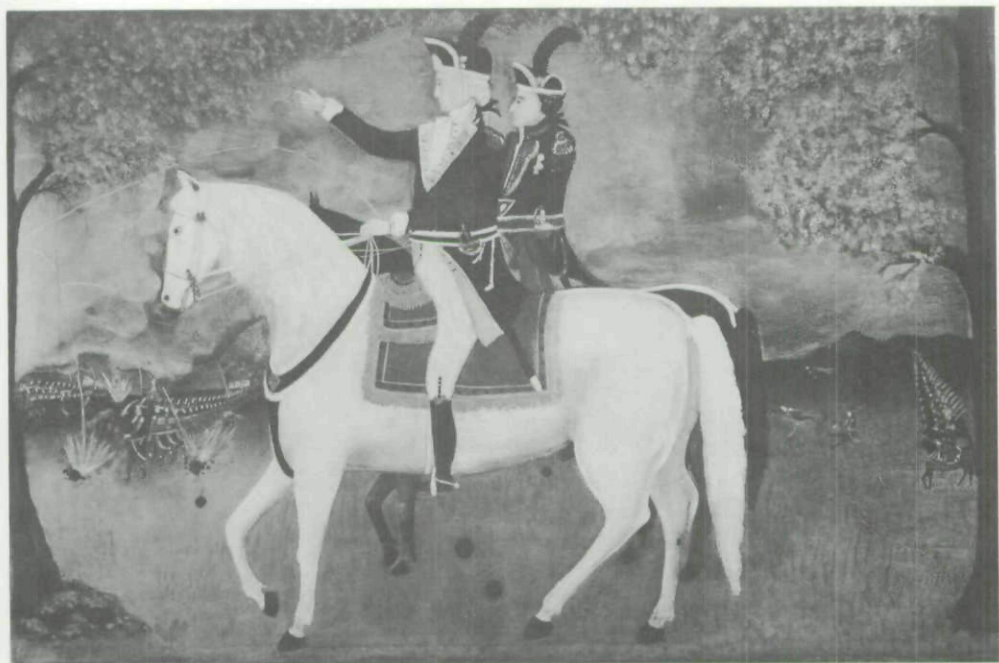


Fig. 13. Reuben Law Reed, *Washington and Lafayette at the Battle of Yorktown* (c. 1860). Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Folk Art Collection, Williamsburg, Virginia.



Fig. 14. Gilbert Gaul, *Molly Pitcher at the Battle of Monmouth* (c. 1892). The Coe Kerr Gallery, New York City.



Fig. 15. Thomas Cole, *Last of the Mobicans* (1827). Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford; bequest of Alfred Smith.

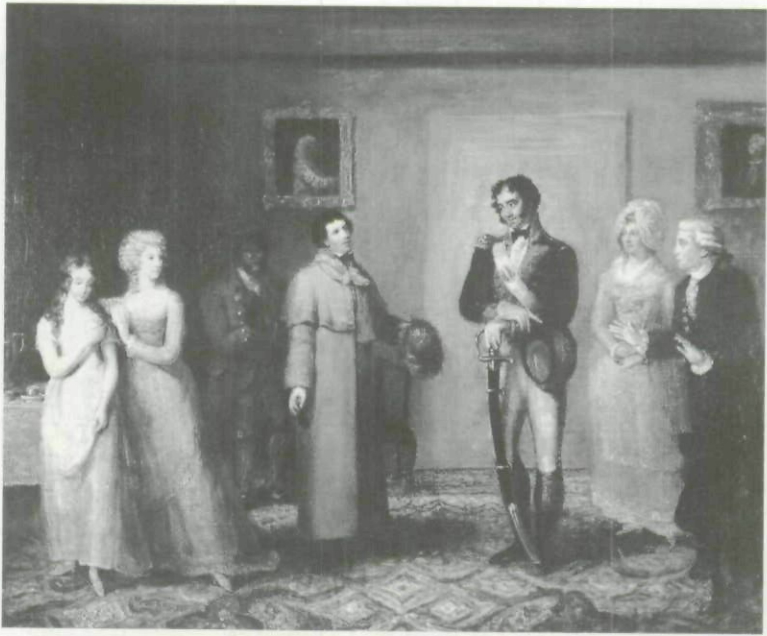


Fig. 16. William Dunlap, *Scene from "The Spy"* (1823). New York State Historical Association, Cooperstown.

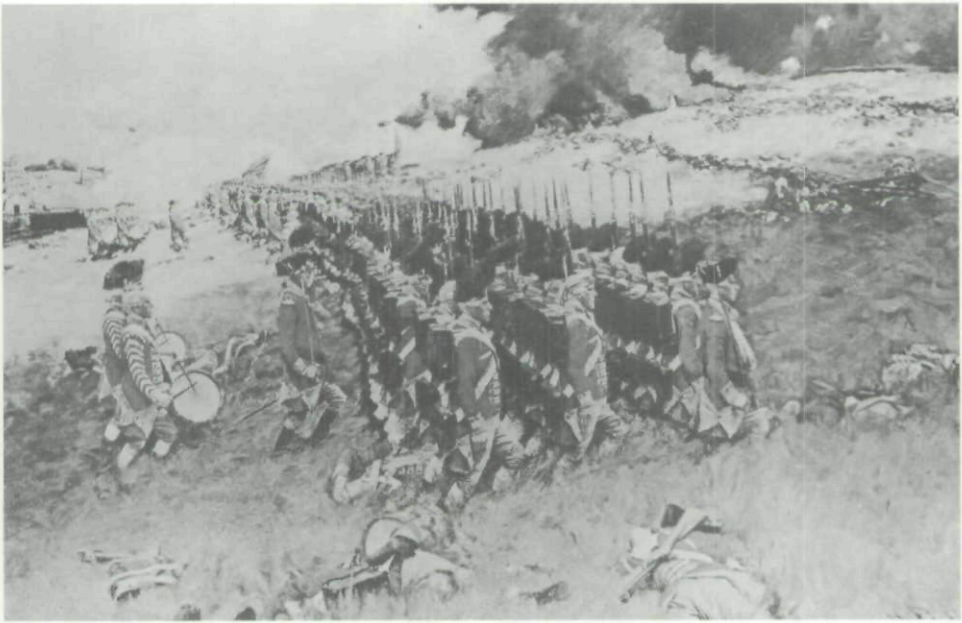


Fig. 17. Howard Pyle, *The Battle of Bunker Hill* (1898). Delaware Art Museum, Wilmington.

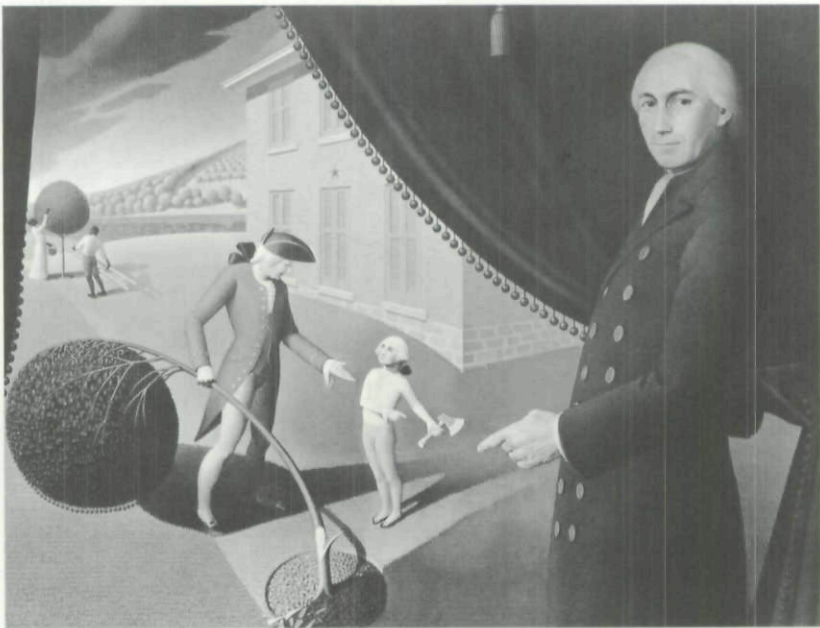


Fig. 18. Grant Wood, *Parson Weems' Fable* (1939). Courtesy Amon Carter Museum, Fort Worth, Texas.

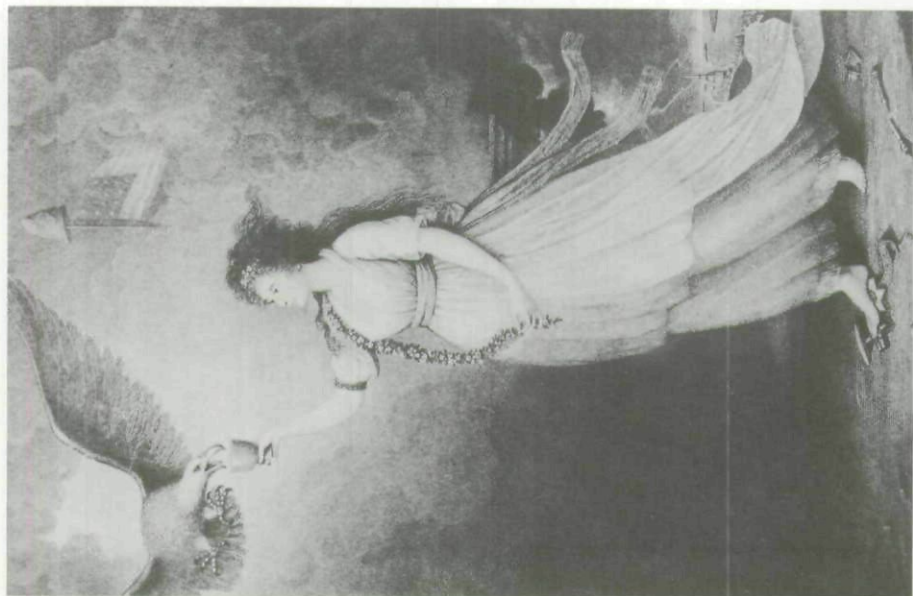


Fig. 20. Edward Savage, *Liberty as Goddess of Youth* (1796). Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

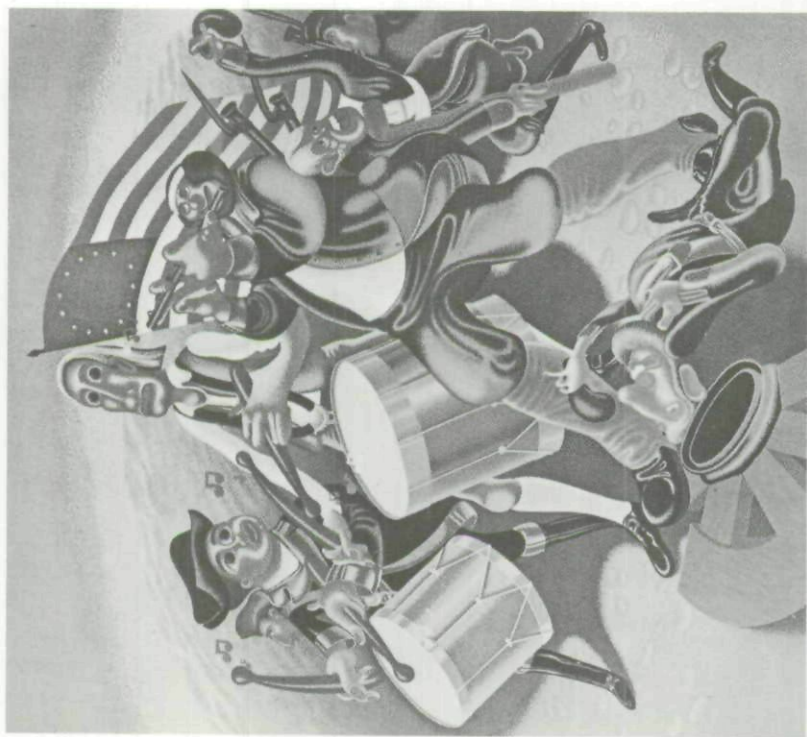


Fig. 19. Peter Saul, *The Spirit of '76* (1976). Allan Frumkin Gallery, New York and Chicago.

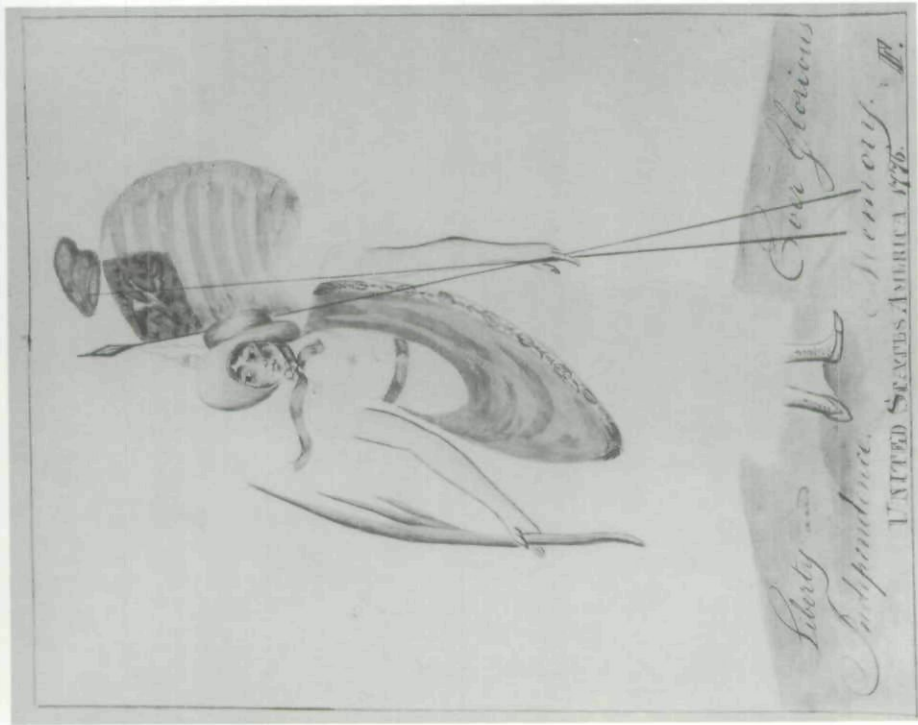


Fig. 21. *Miss Liberty* (c. 1815), artist unknown. Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Folk Art Collection, Williamsburg, Virginia.

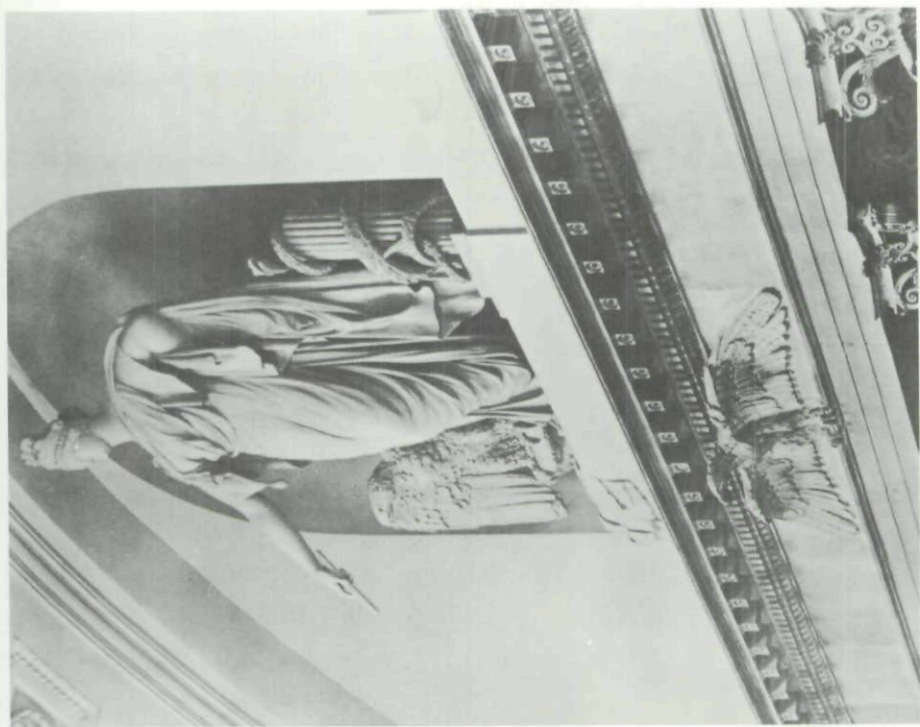


Fig. 22. Enrico Causici, *Liberty and the Eagle* (1817-19). United States Capitol, Washington, D.C.



Fig. 23. Christian Remick, *Perspective View of the Blockade of Boston Harbour* (c. 1768). Courtesy of Massachusetts Historical Society.



Fig. 24. John L. Boqueto de Woiserie, *View of New Orleans in 1803* (1803). Chicago Historical Society.

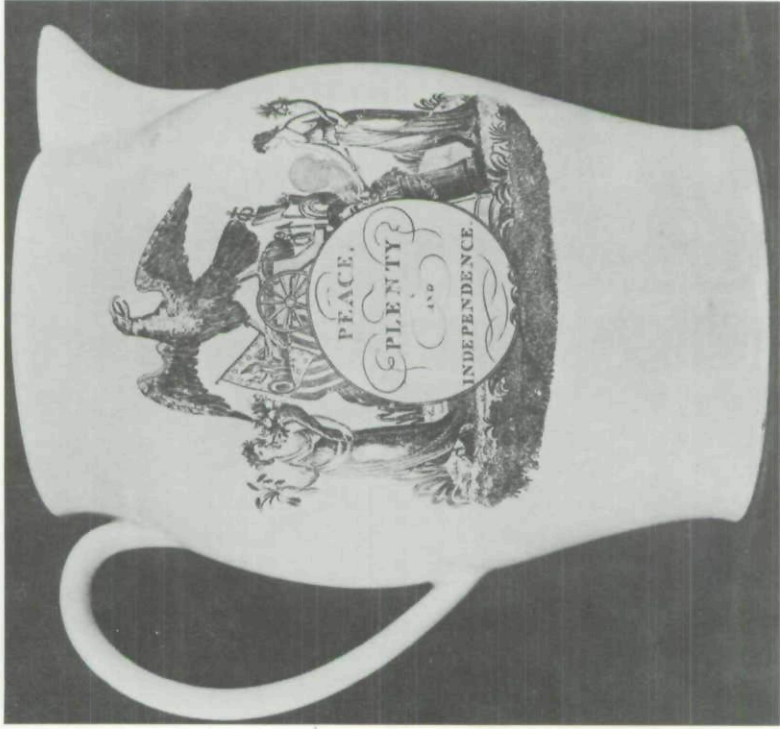


Fig. 25. Creamware pitcher (c. 1798). The Mattatuck Museum, Waterbury, Connecticut.

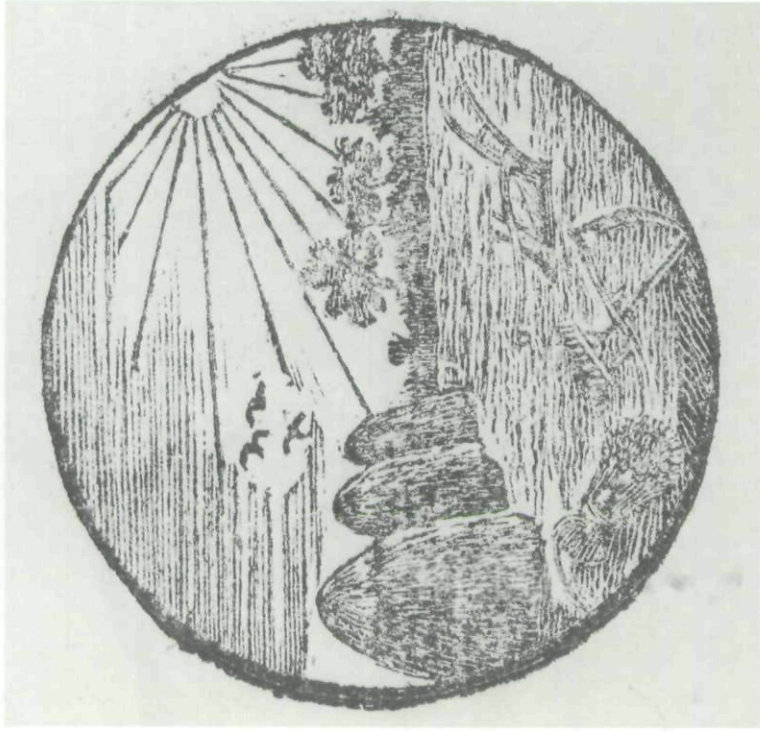


Fig. 26. Logo from the title page of *An Address from the Philadelphia Society for Promoting Agriculture* (Philadelphia, 1785).



Fig. 27. From the
Columbian Magazine, 1 (1786).



Fig. 28. Joseph Richardson, Jr.,
Indian Peace Medal (1799).
Chicago Historical Society;
Gunther Collection.

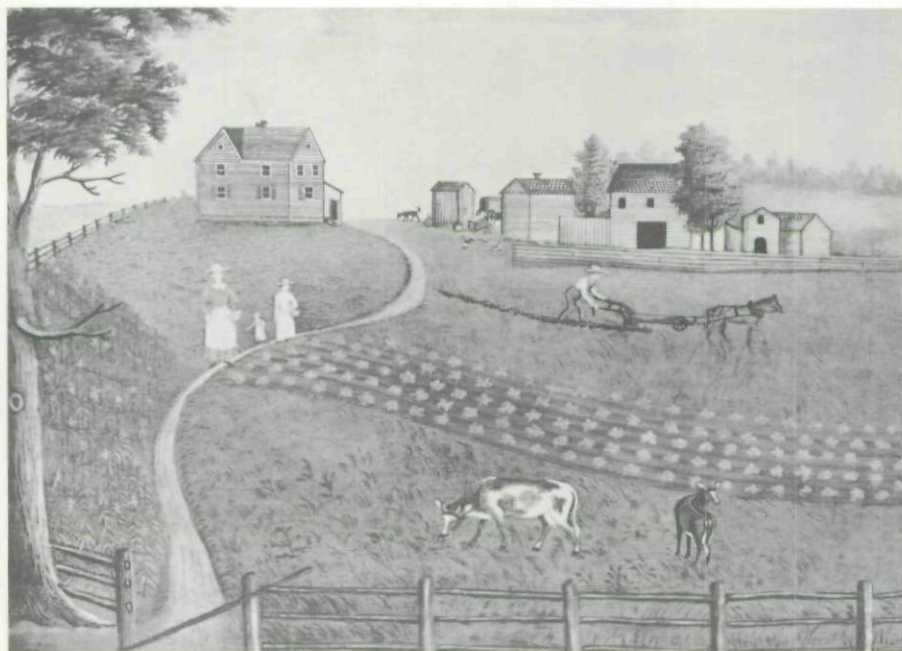


Fig. 29. *He That Tilleth His Land Shall Be Satisfied* (c. 1850), artist unknown.



Fig. 30. *General Putnam Leaving His Plow for the Defense of His Country*, artist unknown. Minor Congressional Committee; the National Archives.



Fig. 31. Constantino Brumidi, *Calling of Cincinnatus from the Plow* (1855). United States Capitol, Washington, D.C.

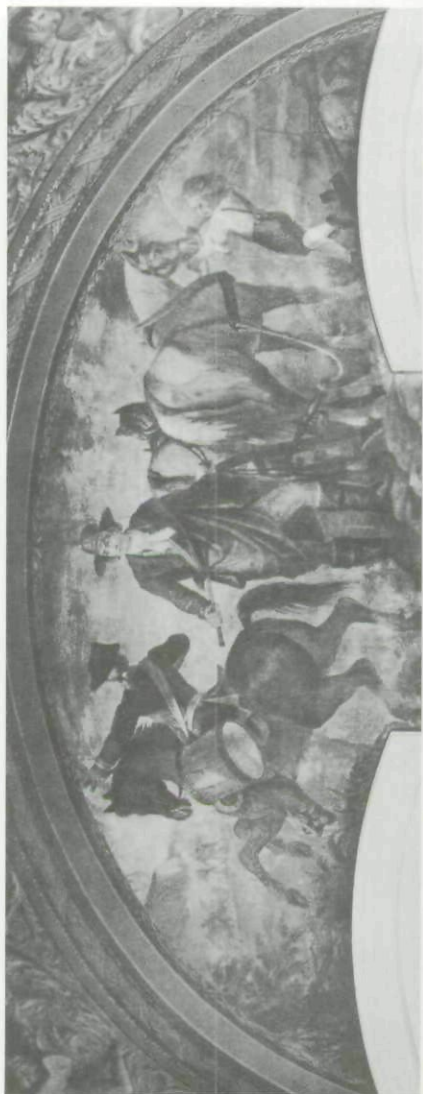


Fig. 32. Constantino Brumidi, *Calling of Putnam from the Plow to the Revolution* (1855). United States Capitol, Washington, D.C.

Bowling Green, New York City, July 9, 1776, by Johannes Adam Simon Oertel.¹⁴ The grand theme, however—and the most persistent theme once the Declaration of Independence waned in popularity after 1826—was George Washington crossing the Delaware River on Christmas night in 1776. Some of you may be surprised, however, to learn that the appeal of this event did not suddenly begin in 1851 when Emanuel Leutze first displayed his extravaganza at the Capitol (thereby fulfilling a boyhood dream). That event only accentuated the attractiveness of this motif, and eventually made it a cliché—albeit sometimes a controversial one—in American iconography.¹⁵

Back in 1819, Thomas Sully had painted *Washington's Passage of the Delaware* for the state of South Carolina; and then made a copy of it in the mid-1820s. Inspired by an engraving of Sully's canvas, Edward Hicks (of *Peaceable Kingdom* notoriety) painted at least six versions which he usually called *Washington Crossed Here* (fig. 5). Two of them are supposed to have hung during the 1830s at either end of a covered bridge which spanned the Delaware River at Washington's Crossing.¹⁶ (A perfectly charming sampler, by the way, made in 1842 by Julia Imhoff, is entitled 'George Washington Crossing the Delaware,' even though it shows the talented general astride his trusty horse. If the Son of God could walk on water, then I suppose there's no reason why the Father of his Country couldn't *ride* on water!¹⁷)

¹⁴ Ranney's painting (1845) is owned by Mr. Frederick Donhauser, Stony Point, Alaska. Hamilton's (1854) is in the Yale University Art Gallery. And Oertel's (ca. 1859) is at the New-York Historical Society.

¹⁵ See Ann Hawkes Hutton, *Portrait of Patriotism: "Washington Crossing the Delaware"* (Philadelphia, 1959), ch. 11.

¹⁶ Sully's picture is in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. One version of Hicks's is located in the Mercer Museum of the Bucks County Historical Society, Doylestown, Pa. Another, done about 1834, belongs to Nina Fletcher Little and is reproduced in Mary Black and Jean Lipman, *American Folk Painting* (New York, 1966), fig. 146. A third, done in 1849 near the end of Hicks's life, is on indefinite loan at the Chrysler Museum in Norfolk, Va. (reproduced in *The Magazine Antiques* 109[May 1976]:866).

¹⁷ The sampler is reported by Langdon G. Wright in *New York History* 57(April 1976):240. Public references to 'Mary the Mother of Washington' began to be com-

Emanuel Leutze, meanwhile, was preparing himself for a successful career as an historical painter. Born in Germany in 1816, his family came to Philadelphia in 1825, where he lived for sixteen years. In 1841 he returned to Düsseldorf to complete his training as an artist. At first he experimented with the life of Columbus as a subject for patriotic pictures. But by the later 1840s Leutze was earnestly planning his great work and making preliminary sketches. He actually completed one version in Düsseldorf during 1850; and when it was damaged by fire, he prepared a second and sold it to a firm prior to its premier exhibition at Washington, D.C., in July 1851. Twenty-one feet wide and twelve feet high, it received an extraordinarily enthusiastic response. John William De Forest, the novelist, insisted in 1851 that Leutze's *Washington Crossing the Delaware* (fig. 6) was 'the grandest & noblest modern picture that I have ever seen.' Subsequently it became the great attraction at New York's Metropolitan Fair of 1864.¹⁸

Its influence upon other historical artists was both immense and immediate. William T. Ranney, for example, a genre and portrait painter from Connecticut, did an unabashedly derivative scene entitled *Marion Crossing the Pedee* (1851) (fig. 7), with a ludicrous number of men, horses, and dogs jammed upon two rather small barges. It was promptly engraved by Charles Kennedy Burt, and then enjoyed wide circulation.¹⁹ Between 1856 and 1871 George Caleb Bingham worked intermittently upon his own version of *Washington Crossing the Delaware*, a rather handsome though equally crowded compo-

monplace during the later 1840s and 1850s. See William A. Bryan, *George Washington in American Literature, 1775-1865* (New York, 1952), pp. 73, 118.

¹⁸ Hutton, *Portrait of Patriotism*, pp. 33, 39-40, 113-17, 122, 128; De Forest to Andrew De Forest, August 29, 1851, John William De Forest Collection, folder no. 20, Beinecke Library, Yale University. I am indebted to James A. Hijiya for this reference.

¹⁹ See E. Maurice Bloch, *George Caleb Bingham: The Evolution of an Artist* (Berkeley, 1967), plate 182. The original painting belongs to a private collector in Seattle.

sition which is arranged quite differently than Leutze's.²⁰ Variations upon this theme continued to be done all through the later nineteenth century by anonymous vernacular painters (fig. 8);²¹ and, in 1975, the irreverent Peter Saul produced his own caricature in acrylic on canvas (fig. 9). Washington's boat is sinking amidst the ice blocks, the flushed general rides a startled pink steed into the Delaware River, and a frenzied cast of characters is being tipped overboard. All in all, it is meant to be a rowdy parody of mock heroism.²²

George Washington had always, of course, been the most popular subject for portraits, busts, and commemorative designs.²³ But directly following Leutze's phenomenal success in 1851, historical painters began to envision Washington in every imaginable moment of Revolutionary endeavor: *Washington at Princeton* (fig. 10); or *George Washington in Prayer at Valley Forge*; or *Valley Forge in the Autumn*; *Valley Forge in the Winter*; *Washington's Residence in Germantown*; and so on.²⁴ Leutze himself then pursued *Washington at Dorchester Heights* (1853), *Washington Rallying the Troops at Monmouth* (1854), *Washington at the Battle of Monongabela* (1858), and *Washington at Princeton* (1859). Between 1853 and 1912 most of the major equestrian statues of Washington were executed: by Henry Kirke Brown at Union Square in

²⁰ *Ibid.*, plate 181; Albert Christ-Janer, *George Caleb Bingham, Frontier Painter of Missouri* (New York, 1975), plate 160.

²¹ A rather ghostly and gaunt one may be found at the Philadelphia Museum of Art in the Edgar William and Bernice Chrysler Garbisch Collection. Cincinnatus Heine (Joaquin) Miller composed a popular poem entitled 'Washington on the Delaware.' See Nellie U. Wallington, ed., *American History by American Poets* (1911; repr. Freeport, N.Y., 1972), pp. 187-88.

²² It was exhibited at the Allan Frumkin Gallery (New York City) in 1975, and at the Chicago Art Institute in 1976. On Christmas night 1972, fifty-eight men wearing uniforms of the Continental Army reenacted the event right at Washington Crossing, Pa., in front of 14,000 spectators. (*The New York Times*, December 26, 1972.)

²³ See Gustavus A. Eisen, *Portraits of Washington*, 3 vols. (New York, 1932); Frances D. Whittemore, *George Washington in Sculpture* (Boston, 1933).

²⁴ See Black and Lipman, *American Folk Painting*, pp. 159-60 and fig. 147; Sotheby Parke Bernet *Newsletter* (January - February 1976), p. 1; Nicholas B. Wainwright, ed., *Paintings and Miniatures at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia, 1974), p. 255.

Manhattan, for example; by Thomas Ball for the Boston Public Garden; and by Henry Marvin Shrady for the Williamsburg Bridge Plaza in Brooklyn, New York. As Wendell Garrett has shown, the centennial of Washington's inauguration in 1889 elicited even more patriotism and filial piety than occurred in 1876, 'and expressed themselves in a growing interest in the iconography, and in some cases the relics, of the first president and the other founding fathers.'²⁵

As public sculpture came into its own, especially during the final quarter of the nineteenth century, that documentary emphasis of Trumbull's generation faded entirely from view. Particular individuals participating in historical situations were replaced by non-specific people as archetypes of courage, valor, and quiet determination.²⁶ What, we might ask, were the two most influential (and most familiar) icons of 1875 and 1876? One was *The Minute Man of Concord* by Daniel Chester French, unveiled and dedicated at the North Bridge by President Grant and his chilled entourage on April 19, 1875. The other is simply entitled *Spirit of '76* by Archibald M. Willard (fig. 11): the grizzled veteran drummer, the bandaged fifer, and the inspired drummer boy—three abreast with that very same 'air of sturdy defiance' as Dan French's elevated Minute Man.²⁷ By 1876 the American Revolution

²⁵ Garrett, 'The First Score for American Paintings and Sculpture, 1870-1890,' *Metropolitan Museum Journal* 3(1970):326; Clarence W. Bowen, ed., *The History of the Centennial Celebration of the Inauguration of George Washington . . .* (New York, 1892).

²⁶ See Frank B. Mayer's oil on canvas called *The Continentals* (1875), National Collection of Fine Arts, Washington, D.C., in which a drummer and fifer plod valiantly uphill through the snow, while continental soldiers with fixed bayonets proceed in the background; and Edwin Howland Blashfield's oil on canvas, *Suspense, the Boston People Watch from the Housetops the Firing at Bunker Hill* (ca. 1879-80), owned by the Home Insurance Company in New York and reproduced in Donelson F. Hoopes, *American Narrative Painting* (Los Angeles, 1974), pp. 168-69. See also the engraving of a stouthearted continental soldier, simply entitled '76,' published in *Harper's Weekly* on July 15, 1876, and reproduced as fig. 318 in John Grafton, *The American Revolution: A Picture Sourcebook* (New York, 1975), p. 133. Also fig. 319, 'Dangerous Ground,' *Harper's Weekly*, May 13, 1876.

²⁷ See Margaret French Cresson, *Journey into Fame: The Life of Daniel Chester French* (Cambridge, Mass., 1947), pp. 71-84, 184-87, 196-97; David B. Little, *America's First Centennial Celebration*, 2nd ed. (Boston, 1974).

had entirely lost its palpable reality. It had been allegorized on banners, cast in bronze, and baked upon the bulging sides of massive ceremonial urns.

Meanwhile, yet another shift occurred. From Trumbull's time until Leutze's, from the mid-1780s until the 1850s, the American Revolution in historical art had included much more than just the War for Independence. Battles had been painted, to be sure; but when they were, they usually depicted the death of a noble leader, such as Joseph Warren at Bunker's Hill or General Montgomery at Quebec. The artist's purpose was not to glorify militarism, but rather to display and explicate the American character (fig. 12). As Abigail Adams put it when she first saw *The Death of General Warren at the Battle of Bunker's Hill*, by Trumbull, 'Looking at it my whole frame contracted, my blood shivered, and I felt a faintness at my heart. [Trumbull] is the first painter who has undertaken to immortalize by his pencil those great actions, that gave birth to our nation. . . . At the same time, he teaches mankind that it is not rank, nor titles, but character alone, which interests posterity.'²⁸

When Trumbull received his congressional commission in 1817, he selected two military events and two civil events. Significantly, the military events actually represented the *conclusion* of hostilities at Saratoga and at Yorktown. In Trumbull's mind these were primarily political and moral occasions rather than military ones. Trumbull considered the Declaration of Independence to be his most important subject, whereas battles, as such seem to have been distinctly secondary.²⁹

²⁸ Quoted in Jaffe, *Trumbull*, p. 90. See also *The Death of Colonel Owen Roberts*, fig. 158 in Robert G. Stewart, *Henry Benbridge (1743-1812): American Portrait Painter* (Washington, D.C., 1971), p. 86; Lewis Leary, *Soundings: Some Early American Writers* (Athens, Ga., 1975), p. 221, for an account of William Dunlap in 1784 experimenting with an oil painting of Washington at the Battle of Princeton beside the fallen body of General Mercer.

²⁹ See Jaffe, *Trumbull*, pp. 93, 151, 236-38, 246. Quite commonly there is an anti-militaristic quality to the works of art produced before about 1855. In addition to

By the later nineteenth century, however, we no longer hear very much about the Revolution and national character; and we see precious little of the sorts of scenes drawn earlier by Sully, Savage, Eichholtz, and Hicks. The American Revolution viewed as a moral and political event gives way to a bloody war, plain and simple. There is a very real sense in which the Revolution came to be reduced to battles, regiments, and colorful uniforms—and thereby got trivialized. Early in the 1860s, for instance, Reuben Law Reed, a granite worker and house painter, rendered a colorful canvas called *Washington and Lafayette at the Battle of Yorktown* (fig. 13). Aerial bombs burst as men march into battle.³⁰ Perhaps it is essentially the Civil War dressed up in eighteenth-century costume. We cannot be sure; but this naive folk painting serves as a harbinger and sets the tone for Revolutionary iconography during the next half century.

The typical paintings now would be *Molly Pitcher at the Battle of Monmouth* by Gilbert Gaul (ca. 1892) (fig. 14); or Charles M. Lefferts's battle scenes, mostly done between 1900 and 1920; or John Ward Dunsmore's *Washington Examining the Plans of the Battle of Long Island*.³¹ Also, a whole series of military heroes would be immortalized in bronze statuary

Trumbull's depiction of Washington in the act of resigning his command, there is Horatio Greenough's famous sculpture of Washington 'renouncing the sword.' Or compare *Washington the Lawgiver* by Antonio Canova (completed in 1821) with *Washington as General* by Hermon A. MacNeil (completed in 1916). During the first half of the nineteenth century, Washington was depicted in his role as president more frequently than in his role as Revolutionary general, and more frequently in civilian clothes than in uniform. After 1855, both of these tendencies would be reversed. See Barbara S. Groseclose, *Emanuel Leutze, 1816-1868: Freedom is the Only King* (Washington, D.C., 1975), p. 44, which discusses paintings of battle sites by Peale, Stuart, Trumbull, and Leutze (executed 1781-1853) 'in which no battle is seen, only the calm, fixed figure of Washington, whose horse, at times, is more active than he.' See also Charles Warren, 'Why the Battle of New Orleans Was Not Painted,' in *Odd Byways in American History* (Cambridge, Mass., 1942), p. 185; and Bryan, *George Washington in American Literature*, p. 33.

³⁰ See Nina Fletcher Little, *The Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Folk Art Collection: A Descriptive Catalog* (Boston, 1957), p. 86 and plate 45.

³¹ Gaul's painting was offered for sale in June 1976, by the Coe Kerr Gallery, New York City, for \$15,000. Various paintings by Lefferts and Dunsmore were displayed in 1976 at the New-York Historical Society.

during the final quarter of the nineteenth century: Ethan Allen, the conqueror of Fort Ticonderoga (at Washington, D.C.); Gen. Nathanael Greene (also at Washington); Nathan Hale (at City Hall Park in New York); and Lafayette, by Paul Wayland Bartlett (at the Louvre in Paris). Even commemorative dishes depicting Revolutionary battles became very vogueish at the turn of the century.³²

Quite a different sort of art underwent a parallel transformation during the late nineteenth century: the art of illustrating books, which in our context means historical fiction about the American Revolution. Just as soon as James Fenimore Cooper established his reputation as an exciting author of romances, artists of both considerable and mediocre quality enlisted their talents in rendering the most vivid narrative passages as palpable scenes (fig. 15). Asher B. Durand, for instance, did a canvas called *Last Interview between Washington and Harvey Birch*, and William Dunlap painted incidents of family crisis from *The Spy* (fig. 16).³³ Thomas Sully and Jacob Eichholtz both depicted episodes from *The Pilot*, such as the wreck of the *Ariel*, the dungeon scene, and the desperate plight of Long Tom Coffin. Felix Darley, James Hamilton, and Robert W. Weir illustrated various novels by Cooper as well as by James Kirke Paulding. And in 1861 Susan Fenimore Cooper compiled a popular anthology of her father's historical fiction with profuse illustrations made on steel and wood from original drawings.³⁴

The point I wish to stress once again, however, is that

³² See Marian Klamkin, *American Patriotic and Political China* (New York, 1973), pp. 37-40.

³³ Durand's picture was exhibited in 1843 and promptly engraved. It appears in John Durand, *The Life and Times of Asher B. Durand* (New York, 1894), opposite p. 132; but its location is no longer known. Dunlap's may be found at Fenimore House, the New York State Historical Association, Cooperstown, N.Y.

³⁴ See Arlene Jacobowitz, *James Hamilton, 1819-1878: American Marine Painter* (Brooklyn, 1966), nos. 11, 25, and 29; Beal, *Eichholtz*, p. 267; Susan Fenimore Cooper, comp., *Pages and Pictures from the Writings of James Fenimore Cooper* (New York, 1861); Sinclair Hamilton, *Early American Book Illustrators and Wood Engravers, 1670-1870* (Princeton, 1958), 1, no. 96.

these illustrations made in the four decades after 1821 commonly took non-military events as their subjects: man against nature, moments of surprise and personal confrontation, family tensions and strong human emotions. Insofar as they helped to popularize that peculiarly American genre, the romance, one might say that they served to 'romance-itize' the Revolution. They were not documentary pictures in search of semi-photographic accuracy, but rather renditions of what *might* have happened. For that reason they served to add distance and haze between the American public and Revolutionary realities. They prepared the way, not only for the allegorization of the Revolution between 1875 and 1900, but also for its sentimentalization by a special breed of book illustrators who came of age vocationally between about 1880 and 1905.

What Harry A. Ogden and Frederick Coffay Yohn and Howard Pyle and Stanley M. Arthurs and N. C. Wyeth all shared in common was a fascination with legends and adventure rather than with revolution as such, with battles rather than politics, with attacks and retreats rather than moral development (fig. 17). They rendered the Revolution as a simplification of its complex essence. Soldiers and weapons were their specialization; or, as a recent exhibition of N. C. Wyeth works at the Brandywine River Museum was entitled, 'Romance and Adventure.' Keep in mind that when Pyle and Wyeth weren't illustrating Cooper, or James Boyd's *Drums*, or *Poems of American Patriotism*, they were illustrating *Robin Hood*, and *Treasure Island*, and *The Boy's King Arthur*. Unfortunately they had but one basic style and one approach to their work, with the result that those who gaze upon their art just might get a sinking sensation that the American Revolution was performed according to a scenario written by Robert Louis Stevenson! When Wyeth wasn't illustrating the Revolution as a saga of piracy, poesy, and mystery, he was executing stirring posters for *The Delineator*, posters en-

titled 'Fourth of July' and 'The Minute Men' which at once allegorized and sentimentalized the American Revolution into a rather maudlin mess.³⁵

The Brandywine school has not ceased to be active or influential since the 1920s; but the interest of its members in the American Revolution has dwindled almost entirely. Andrew Wyeth's 1962 painting, called *British at Brandywine*, stands almost alone as a latter-day exemplar, and it is enigmatic—some sort of optical illusion with toy soldiers.³⁶ What developed instead, especially during the 1930s, was that Revolutionary folklore came to be mythologized as well as gently satirized—simultaneously by Grant Wood and some of the artists on W.P.A. relief rolls. When Wood returned to Iowa in 1929 he embarked upon a quest for redefinition of the American tradition in art, a quest which managed to combine regional chauvinism with personal iconoclasm. His *Midnight Ride of Paul Revere* (1931) and *Parson Weems' Fable* (1939) (fig. 18) are whimsical, charming, and difficult to interpret precisely because Wood was so ambivalent about our historical heritage. He loved America and wanted to proclaim her cultural independence from Europe; yet he despised the tub-thumping, blind patriotism of the D.A.R.—for which he made himself altogether despicable in the eyes of the Daughters and Daughter-lovers.³⁷

³⁵ Works by Ogden (1856–1936) and Yohn (1875–1933) were displayed at the New-York Historical Society in 1976. *The Battle of Bunker Hill*, by Howard Pyle, was prepared to accompany *The Story of The Revolution*, by Henry Cabot Lodge, which was serialized in *Scribner's Magazine* during 1898. In that same year Pyle also did *Washington's Retreat from Great Meadows* for Harper & Brothers. For Wyeth, see Douglas Allen, *N. C. Wyeth: The Collected Paintings, Illustrations and Murals* (New York, 1972), pp. 30, 142. See also Howard Pyle, et al., *The Brandywine Heritage* (Chadds Ford, Pa., 1971), pp. 40–41, plates 42 and 45; Henry C. Pitz, *Howard Pyle: Writer, Illustrator, Founder of the Brandywine School* (New York, 1975), pp. 38, 41, 57, 59, 94–95, 102, 176; and *The American Historical Scene as Depicted by Stanley Arthurs and Interpreted by Fifty Authors* (New York, 1936).

³⁶ It is reproduced in Pyle, et al., *The Brandywine Heritage*.

³⁷ See Park Rinard and Arnold Pyle, *Catalogue of a Loan Exhibition of Drawings and Paintings by Grant Wood with an Evaluation of the Artist and His Work* (Chicago, 1935); James M. Dennis, *Grant Wood: A Study in American Art and Culture*

Meanwhile, the Treasury Department came to the relief of impoverished painters by paying them to do mural designs for federal buildings. And during the mid-1930s a remarkable number of these artists selected Revolutionary scenes, such as *Shays' Rebellion* by Umberto Romano, in the post office lobby at Springfield, Massachusetts; or *The First Provincial Convention in North Carolina* in the courthouse at New Bern; or *Benedict Arnold Commanding the First Naval Battle on Lake Champlain* by Stephen Belaski, at the post office in Rutland, Vermont; or *Molly Pitcher* in the post office at Freehold, New Jersey; or five *Scenes from the Continental War*, eleven by fifty-three feet in size, for the post office lobby at Cranford, New Jersey. These are not, needless to say, great art; and they owe certain stylistic debts to the Brandywine brushes of Pyle and Wyeth. Nonetheless they transcend the naive, undiluted patriotism of 1900, and combine national mythology with personal sympathy for political rebellion and social protest.³⁸

There hasn't been much Revolutionary iconography since World War II. After being documented, illustrated, 'romance-itized,' allegorized, sentimentalized, and mythologized, what was left to be done? Basically, American art went off in other directions—*very* other. What did remain to be done, of course, was criticize: criticize national sham and shame, or parody the discrepancy between national rhetoric and sordid realities. Therefore, in the Age of Watergate, our bicentennial art became *George and Mona in the Baths of Coloma*, a glazed ceramic by Robert Arneson; or *Young General George*, using polymer on canvas by Roy DeForest; or *The Spirit of '76*, acrylic on canvas by Peter Saul (fig. 19).

(New York, 1975), pp. 105, 109, 112-13, 132, 177. In 1940 Wood painted a serious portrait of the fictional *Oliver Wiswell* for Kenneth Roberts's massive novel of the Revolution. It was used on the dust jacket and elegantly reproduced as the frontispiece to the deluxe edition of that book.

³⁸ See Edward Bruce and Forbes Watson, *Art in Federal Buildings* (Washington, D.C., 1936), 1, *Mural Designs, 1934-1936*.

In 1975 the Allan Frumkin Gallery planned a bicentennial exhibition for the big year and invited various artists to create works especially for it. As their efforts arrived and were unpacked, it became manifestly clear that all of them took a humorous (if not jaundiced) view of Revolutionary iconography. What the artists apparently *do* take seriously, however, is their own talent. *A Bicentennial Bedroom*, by Shari Urquhart, sells for \$1,800. *Celebrating the Bicentennial: Big Tits and Money*, by Richard Notkin, cost \$1,500 (and was snapped up quickly by an eager collector). Peter Saul's update of A. M. Willard's classic costs a cool \$12,000. (When last I checked, it had not yet been bought.)³⁹

Even so, the most significant aspect of American Revolution iconography during the past two years is not to be found in the Frumkin Gallery at all, even though the show really was good fun. It is to be found in the bicentennial exhibitions—about a dozen major ones across the country—mounted by museums, university galleries, and historical societies. What now seems to be filling the place of artistic statements about the Revolution is the creative display of aesthetic objects from the Revolutionary Era itself. In going to see these shows, and in studying their catalogues closely, I think that I have been able to put together some clues to the role of Revolutionary iconography in our embryonic national tradition—clues which could only have emerged from the special sort of juxtaposition characteristic of the exhibitions. Consequently I want to devote the second section of this essay to some reflections upon these bicentennial shows.

³⁹ See Allan Frumkin Gallery *Newsletter*, no. 1 (Spring 1976); and Frumkin Gallery, *A Bicentennial Exhibition: Summer 1976*. Cf. the charming and very thoughtful *Fresh Views of the American Revolution* by Paul Foley and Oscar de Mejo (New York, 1976), which begins by declaring that 'the American Revolution was not a war,' but rather 'a revolutionary idea of what a free nation is and how a free people should govern themselves.'

II

There are, as I have indicated, about a dozen of these major exhibitions; and they seem to group themselves into four natural categories. First, there are those which are most political in orientation and concentrate upon the liberation of a colonial society quite ready to undertake the process of becoming a nation. Here I include 'In the Minds and Hearts of the People' at the National Portrait Gallery in 1974; '“The Dye Is Now Cast”: The Road to American Independence, 1774–1776,' at the same gallery a year later; 'To Set a Country Free' at the Library of Congress in 1975; and 'A Rising People: The Founding of the United States, 1765 to 1789,' jointly sponsored by the American Philosophical Society, The Historical Society of Pennsylvania, and the Library Company of Philadelphia in 1976.

The second category I might describe as being rather more personal in that it focuses upon particular participants in the Revolutionary society. I have in mind 'Paul Revere's Boston: 1735–1818' at the Museum of Fine Arts in 1975; 'The World of Franklin and Jefferson, 1706–1826,' which toured Paris, Warsaw, and London in 1975, then came to this country in 1976; and 'The Black Presence in the Era of the American Revolution, 1770–1800' at the National Portrait Gallery in 1973.

My third category stresses the struggle for *cultural* independence during the Revolutionary Era. These shows concentrate upon aesthetic and cultural values, especially in the decorative arts; and here one thinks of 'American Art: 1750–1800, Towards Independence' at the Yale University Art Gallery; 'The Eye of Thomas Jefferson' at the National Gallery in Washington; and a wonderful but neglected show, 'The Pennsylvania German Influence' at the Historical Society of York County in York, Pennsylvania—all three put on in 1976.

A fourth category consists of displays which look at what the Revolution wrought: the art, taste, and cultural aspirations of a new republic. I am thinking of 'William Bingham: America—A Good Investment,' at the Roberson Center in Binghamton, New York, during 1975; or 'The Early Republic: Consolidation of Revolutionary Goals,' at the Worcester Art Museum in 1976; or 'Remember the Ladies: Women in America, 1750–1815,' which opened at Plymouth, Massachusetts, in 1976, and subsequently moved on to several other museums and galleries; or 'Lewis and Clark's America: A Voyage of Discovery' at the Seattle Art Museum in 1976.

Finally, one might add a fifth (and rather marginal) category of shows inspired by the bicentennial but not directly concerned with the Revolution and its iconography. I have in mind 'A Bicentennial Treasury: American Masterpieces from the Metropolitan,' at New York City in the summer of 1976; or '200 Years of American Sculpture,' at the Whitney Museum in New York; or 'America 1976,' a large exhibition of landscape paintings which started at the Corcoran Gallery of Art in Washington as the first stop of a national tour which will continue until 1978; or "The Handwrought Object, 1776–1976' at the Johnson Museum of Cornell University in Ithaca, New York.

Now then, could there possibly be any persistent themes or characteristic qualities in these remarkable performances of curatorial creativity? One hesitates to boil them down to some artificial common denominator because, despite a certain (unavoidable) degree of repetition and overlap, they are very diverse. Indeed, there are even a few contradictions to be noticed: (1) the Yale show emphasizes our continuing artistic dependence upon Europe, while the Worcester exhibit stresses the emergence of an indigenous decorative style; (2) so many of the shows rely heavily upon portraits, which in the nature of things highlight individuals and their personal achievements, whereas the texts of the catalogues tend

to glorify The People as some sort of collective entity ('the minds and hearts of the people,' 'a rising people,' and 'We, the People');⁴⁰ (3) there is a contrast between the professed egalitarianism of various prefaces and visual designs, on the one hand, and the inevitable elitism of many of the artifacts on the other. Much of what we gaze upon unavoidably reflects the high culture of Anglo-colonial and early republican society. Yet Merrill Rueppel's preface asserts that 'Paul Revere was a common man, a working craftsman,' while Charles and Ray Eames, designers of 'The World of Franklin and Jefferson,' set aside an entire wall for portraits of anonymous people by anonymous painters of the Revolutionary period. The point is supposed to be that these are Mr. and Mrs. Sam Citizen, neither urban aristocrats nor rough frontiersmen—just folks, like you and me.

Even so, despite these provocative dualisms, there is a certain coherence to the exhibitions; and that cohesion cuts through the encrusted layers of sentimentalization, allegorization, 'romance-ization,' immortalization, and documentation, thereby returning us to confront directly the trial-and-error reality of Revolutionary America. One of the most fascinating aspects of these materials, for example, is that so many of them are preliminary sketches for paintings, or preparatory architectural plans, or drafts of letters and public documents. We get a sense of imperfection, of accommodation, and compromise. Alongside the gorgeous glaze of polished mahogany and restored canvas, we also see manuscript revisions on printed documents, and the watering down of Jeffersonian idealism in the draft Declaration of 1776, and Franklin's marginalia on the Federal Constitution of 1787.⁴¹

⁴⁰ See, especially, *A Rising People: The Founding of the United States, 1765 to 1789: A Celebration from the Collections of the American Philosophical Society, The Historical Society of Pennsylvania, The Library Company of Philadelphia* (Philadelphia, 1976), pp. 262-77.

⁴¹ See Sidney Kaplan, *The Black Presence in the Era of the American Revolution, 1770-1800* (Washington, 1973), pp. 22-27, for the draft with Jefferson's passage on

Their quest for clarity of meaning, their adaptations as well as their inflexibilities, and their desire for felicitous expression all come sharply into view.

Most of the exhibitions are *developmental* in their orientation. Revere's Boston, 1735 to 1818; American Art . . . *Towards Independence*; a *Rising People*; the *Consolidation of Revolutionary Goals*; and, as William Howard Adams puts it in his Introduction to *The Eye of Thomas Jefferson*: 'the *development* of that eye and the mind and imagination behind it is the subject of this exhibition.'⁴² Nevertheless, despite the stress upon development, discontinuities and stubborn patterns of persistence are not ignored out of deference to national chauvinism and platitudes of progress. Walter Muir Whitehill reminds us that the neoclassical style continued to dominate in the decorative arts, that John and Thomas Seymour settled in Boston from Britain as late as 1794. Several of the catalogues reveal the intellectual importance to Americans of making the Grand Tour—both before as well as *after* the American Revolution. When Thomas Jefferson, that dedicated republican, returned from France in 1789, he brought back no less than eighty crates of Louis XVI furniture. Monarchical furniture, indeed, for Monticello, New York, and Philadelphia!⁴³

Both the practicality *and* the idealism of these revolutionaries come through loud and clear. As Charles Eames remarked, with reference to Franklin and Jefferson, they were 'two practical men, deeply involved in the eighteenth cen-

the slave trade, subsequently deleted; *To Set a Country Free: An Account Derived from the Exhibition in the Library of Congress Commemorating the 200th Anniversary of American Independence* (Washington, 1975), p. 46; and *A Rising People*, pp. 228-29, 261-62.

⁴² W. Howard Adams, ed., *The Eye of Thomas Jefferson* (Washington, 1976), p. xxxiii. (Italics mine.)

⁴³ See *Paul Revere's Boston: 1735-1818* (Boston, 1975), p. 15; *Eye of Thomas Jefferson*, pp. xxxiv, xxxvii; *William Bingham: America—A Good Investment* (Binghamton, 1975), pp. iii, 5. Bingham furnished his Philadelphia home with treasures from Europe.

ture's utopian thought, trying to make it work on the edge of the wilderness.⁴⁴ And if one listens carefully to the language patterns of the catalogues (and their documents), the impression of cooperation, even in a society of proud individuals, emerges powerfully: 'consent,' 'congress,' 'conscience,' 'constituency,' 'confederation,' and 'constitution.' I do not mean to suggest that the Founding Fathers have deliberately done a 'con' job on us; only that their resonant word patterns provide us with clues to their fundamental outlook and expectations.

It was inevitable, I suppose, that we would encounter a certain number of familiar objects and quotations—some of them almost clichés by now; but what is so delightful is that we encounter unfamiliar artifacts and phrases as well—some of them simply lapidary, viz.:

- The four courageous slaves who signed a petition to the Massachusetts General Court in April 1773, and asserted that 'We expect great things from men who have made such a noble stand against the designs of their *fellow-men* to enslave them.'⁴⁵

- Or, the interpolation by Julian P. Boyd of John Jay's observation that it would take 'Time to make Sovereigns of Subjects.'⁴⁶

- And W. Howard Adams's use of an exquisite quotation from Jefferson about 'the important truths that knowledge is power, that knowledge is safety, and that knowledge is happiness.'⁴⁷

Several of the authors and editors of these catalogues, however, assert that pictures and artifacts are 'historic documents in themselves,' which is true enough; nevertheless, their texts do not consistently analyze the objects as cultural symbols

⁴⁴ *The New York Times*, January 10, 1975.

⁴⁵ Kaplan, *Black Presence*, p. vii.

⁴⁶ *A Rising People*, p. ix.

⁴⁷ *The Eye of Thomas Jefferson*, p. xl.

which really have a story to tell us. Merrill Rueppel makes the perfectly valid point that 'only rarely have many of the objects been seen in public together. They are now assembled to recapture old relationships'; and yet some of the most critical relationships remain inert because our attention is not called to them, and so their interconnectedness remains unexplored. In the time which remains, therefore, I want to try to remedy that; or at least make a start in the right direction.

It would not be particularly profound of me to point out that eagles fly all through the halls of these exhibitions, and perch on every other page of their catalogues. There are eagles engraved on shields, inlaid on game tables and candlestands, clamped on top of banjo clocks, stamped on spoons, and punched on porringers. They fly out of the *Columbian Magazine*, alight on ceremonial Indian arm bands and peace medals, get embroidered on coverlets (looking like plucked chickens in the process), eventually land on top of books, branches, mirrors, a magnificent bombé desk and bookcase, and even, in about 1800, on the trade card of Paul Revere and Son, promoting their bell and cannon foundry in North Boston.⁴⁸ Congress adopted the eagle design for our national seal on June 20, 1782, and it began to appear instantaneously on objects as elaborate as John Cogswell's spectacular chest-on-chest, which is documented as having been made in Boston that very same year.⁴⁹

Well, all right, so there are a lot of eagles swooping around in republican America—Benjamin Franklin's strictures to the contrary notwithstanding. So what? The eagle symbolizes our freedom, ebullience, capacity to soar ever higher, and so forth. It's an aggressive and very masculine

⁴⁸ See *American Art: 1750-1800, Towards Independence* (Boston, 1976), pp. 37, 47, 48, 51, 153, 176, 181, 207, 215, 216; Lipman and Black, *Flowering of American Folk Art*, pp. 182-83, 269; *Paul Revere's Boston*, pp. 176, 198; Stephen B. Jareckie, *The Early Republic: Consolidation of Revolutionary Goals* (Worcester, Mass., 1976), pp. 73, 94; *A Rising People*, p. 278.

⁴⁹ See *To Set a Country Free*, p. 73; *Paul Revere's Boston*, p. 176. It is altogether possible, of course, that the eagle was added some time after 1782.

emblem, except, as I said, when it's rendered poorly on a coverlet and then looks like a starkly naked and very vulnerable capon.⁵⁰

The whole business gets a bit more complicated, however, when you leaf through these exhibition catalogues a second and third time, and begin to notice that the eagles are often not alone, not perched upon some isolated, god-forsaken aerie, but usually are hovering around a chick—and in this instance I don't mean a fresh-hatched hen or eaglet, I mean a demure young woman named Liberty. You might even say that Liberty and that ubiquitous eagle sort of hang around together. No one takes much note of it in these catalogues, perhaps because you wouldn't want your Lady Liberty flitting around with a fish-eating bird; or, maybe you don't object to their amity, but you wouldn't want your Liberty to be too intimate with one. Whatever the reason, there they are.

Yale's spectacular catalogue shows eagles inlaid in wood on the front and back covers; but on the spacious, double title page, Liberty strides rather confidently between the divided cornice of a chest-on-chest. Ladies and eagles get a lot more frisky than that, however. In the Worcester Art Museum's catalogue, for example, there is a stipple engraving by Edward Savage, dated 1796 (fig. 20), in which the eagle is about to swill some beverage from a goblet delicately upheld in Liberty's right hand. Later on we find that in 1804 one Mary Green executed the very same picture prettily at home in needlework.⁵¹ It was quite a popular theme. Between 1799 and 1807 various gold pieces were minted with Liberty's lovely head on one side and a rampant eagle on the other. In

⁵⁰ See also Howard H. Martin, 'Orations on the Anniversary of American Independence, 1777-1876,' Ph.D. dissertation (Northwestern University, 1955), pp. 312-13, 321-22.

⁵¹ Jareckie, *Consolidation of Revolutionary Goals*, nos. 47, 74; see also *A Rising People*, p. 215; Joshua C. Taylor, *America as Art* (Washington, D.C., 1976), pp. 11-13, 25, 30, 35; and Boleslaw and Marie-Louise D'Otrange Mastai, *The Stars and the Stripes: The American Flag as Art and as History from the Birth of the Republic to the Present* (New York, 1973), pp. 83-96.

about 1815 an anonymous artist drew a piquant design (in watercolor on paper) called 'Liberty and Independence. Ever Glorious Memory. United States America 1776' (fig. 21). There's the blushing Miss Liberty, of course, supporting a liberty pole topped by the characteristic cap, plus a flag with you-know-what kind of a bird dominating the field of blue right above her head.⁵²

Similarly, the Mattatuck Museum in Waterbury, Connecticut, has a dandy creamware pitcher made in about 1815, also, with a side panel showing Liberty upholding her pole and cap while the spread eagle dominates an American flag in the sky. Finally, in Statuary Hall at the Capitol, a large plaster figure of Liberty made by Enrico Causici (1817-19) (fig. 22) has a vigorous eagle perched by her right hand, and yet another with wings outstretched not far beneath her niche.⁵³

These delineations of Liberty with her eagle friend are interesting for various reasons. They suggest that the ideological relationship between Power and Liberty, which Bernard Bailyn has discussed for the period prior to 1776, does not lapse from the American mind after 1783—only that the relationship perceived between Power and Liberty shifts from one of antipathy to one of mutual support.⁵⁴ My essential concern here, however, is not with Liberty and Power, but with Liberty and Prosperity. My basic contention, moreover,

⁵² Jareckie, *Consolidation of Revolutionary Goals*, no. 101; Little, *Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Folk Art Collection*, p. 196. See also Philip M. Isaacson, *The American Eagle* (Boston, 1975), fig. 164; E. McClung Fleming, 'From Indian Princess to Greek Goddess: The American Image, 1783-1815,' *Wintertbur Portfolio*, 3 (1967), esp. pp. 56-66; and Louise Conway Belden, 'Liberty and the American Eagle on Spoons by Jacob Kucher,' *ibid.*, pp. 102-11. Appropriately, and predictably, this year's U.S. Bicentennial Medal has Liberty on one side and an eagle on the other.

⁵³ See Klamkin, *Patriotic and Political China*, p. 13; *Works of Art in the United States Capitol*, p. 276. See also *Important Frakturs, Embroidered Pictures, Theorem Paintings . . . and Other American Folk Art*, Sotheby Parke Bernet catalogue no. 3692 (November 12, 1974), p. 59.

⁵⁴ Bernard Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution* (Cambridge, Mass., 1967), pp. 55-62.

is that the idea of Liberty obsessed the American mind from the opening of the Revolutionary crisis until about the close of James Madison's presidency. Insofar as any society can keep an abstraction clearly in view for very long, Liberty was the one for Mr. Jefferson's generation—perhaps because it seemed to some of them a good deal more palpable than merely an abstraction.

By the 1820s, however, a new one had already begun to supplant it; not all at once, but gradually. And the new notion, which they later came to call 'Peace and Plenty,' also had its iconographic symbols. We can see them budding in the later pages of some of these catalogues; and if we watch closely enough, we can even pinpoint the transition—the pivotal period when different cultural symbols come briefly into balance, and after which the older ones begin to fade while the newer ones become dominant. The pivotal moment for this shift from Liberty to Prosperity occurs in the last few years of the eighteenth century and the first decade of the nineteenth.

Look in *Paul Revere's Boston*, for example, at the *Perspective View of the Blockade of Boston Harbour* (fig. 23), a water-color done by Christian Remick in about 1768 (p. 110). Above the premier port of the English colonies a banner flutters, and it reads 'Magna Charta.' Now look in *The World of Franklin and Jefferson* (p. 27) at the view of New Orleans harbor in 1803 by John L. Boqueto de Woiserie (fig. 24). Over the budding Gulf port, full of hope for its commercial prospects, our rampant eagle holds a banner which reads, 'Under My Wings, Every Thing Prospers.'⁵⁵

Well, from 'Magna Charta' to 'Every Thing Prospers' in thirty-five years; can we achieve any greater chronological

⁵⁵ Remick's original will be found in the Massachusetts Historical Society. De Woiserie's original is in the Chicago Historical Society; and an aquatint belonging to Mr. and Mrs. J. William Middendorf II is reproduced in *American Art: 1760-1800, Towards Independence*, pp. 22-23. De Woiserie's view of Boston, done ca. 1810, appears in *Paul Revere's Boston*, p. 149.

precision than that? Yes, I think we can.⁵⁶ Let's look next at two creamware pitchers (or 'jugs' as the authorities like to call them) which can be dated with some specificity. The first one (fig. 25) was made during John Adams's presidency. We know that because he is honored as such in the print on one side of the jug. But the obverse is more interesting for our purposes. There we find a design with Liberty and the eagle, both of them quite familiar by now, and scarcely a surprise in the late 1790s. Liberty, however, happens to be clutching a cornucopia full of fruits and flowers; and the motto below the bird reads, 'Peace, Plenty and Independence.' So here are the two sets of symbols in approximate equilibrium. The date must be about 1797 or 1798.⁵⁷

Now let's look at a second pitcher, this one from Jefferson's presidency; we know that because it says so on the side with his visage. But, once again, it is the other side which intrigues me and supplies us with the link we seek. The fifteen states are represented by as many stars, braided together to form an elliptical panel, within which there is a poem.⁵⁸

O Liberty thou Goddess!
heav'nly bright,
Profuse of bliss,
and pregnant with delight,
Eternal pleasures
in thy presence reign
and smiling plenty leads
thy wanton train.

I am prepared to argue that the decade after 1796 comprises the watershed between a revolutionary culture whose attitudinal axis was the concept of Liberty and a republican culture

⁵⁶ See also Brigham, *Paul Revere's Engravings*, pp. 82-83 and plates 75-76. When Revere engraved shilling notes for the continental cause in 1775 and early 1776, he included 'Magna Charta' in the legend. By November 1776, he had altered the plate so that 'Independence' replaced 'Magna Charta.'

⁵⁷ Klamkin, *Patriotic and Political China*, pp. 71-72 and fig. 91.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, plate 5 (top) and p. 73, fig. 94.

whose aspirational axis was the expectation of Prosperity—eventually expanded, after about 1825, to ‘Peace & Plenty.’⁵⁹ And just as Liberty had its cluster of iconographic symbols—Miss Liberty, the pole and cap, the eagle, and the printing press—so, too, did Prosperity have its cluster of images. They include the cornucopia, bowls of luscious fruit (especially bulging bunches of grapes), ripe grain being harvested, and, most of all, the plough.⁶⁰

The plough as an iconographic symbol starts to show up in about 1785. It’s the focal point of an attractive logo on the title page of *An Address, From the Philadelphia Society for Promoting Agriculture* (fig. 26). The next year a plough ap-

⁵⁹ In 1794, for example, the Fourth of July was celebrated in Cincinnati to resounding cheers for the ‘cause of Liberty, triumphant.’ One year later, however, emphasis was placed upon the soil’s fertility and the nation’s commerce. Compare the *Centinel of the North-Western Territory* (Cincinnati) for July 12, 1794, and July 18, 1795, both quoted in Robert P. Hay, ‘Freedom’s Jubilee: One Hundred Years of the Fourth of July, 1776–1876,’ Ph.D. dissertation (University of Kentucky, 1967), pp. 50–51. From 1793 until 1796 the United States government minted a cent which displayed a liberty pole surmounted by a liberty cap. In 1800 Hugh Henry Brackenridge helped to establish in Pittsburgh a newspaper called *The Tree of Liberty*, which lasted until 1810. See Arthur M. Schlesinger, ‘Liberty Tree: A Genealogy,’ *The New England Quarterly* 25 (December 1952):454 and n. 17.

⁶⁰ See the state seals of New Jersey (three ploughs against a shield supported by the figure of Liberty, with ‘Liberty & Prosperity’ on a banner below); Pennsylvania (a plough in the center of a shield surmounted by an eagle); and Maryland (the legend reads, ‘Industry the Means. Plenty the Result’), reproduced in Grafton, *The American Revolution: A Picture Sourcebook*, p. 148. New Jersey commissioned Pierre Eugene Du Simitiere in 1776 to design a state seal. The motto ‘Liberty & Prosperity’ was not included in his original instructions, however. It later became a part of the seal through common usage, after many printers had begun to incorporate the phrase. Along with Liberty, the other figure supporting the shield is Ceres, the goddess of growing vegetation who symbolizes abundance and prosperity. (Communication to the author from the Department of Education, New Jersey State Library, Trenton.) See also Sotheby Parke Bernet catalogue no. 3692, p. 6, item 14; James Peale, *Grapes and Apples*, ca. 1810, in Amy LaFollette Jensen, *Paintings in the White House: A Close-up* (n.p., 1965), p. 30; James Peale, *Still Life*, 1825, in Jareckie, *Consolidation of Revolutionary Goals*, p. 37; George Inness, *Peace and Plenty*, 1865 and 1868, in LeRoy Ireland, comp., *The Works of George Inness: An Illustrated Catalogue Raisonné* (Austin, Texas, 1965), pp. 78 (plate 311) and 108 (plate 437); Elihu Vedder, *Peace and Prosperity*, mural in the Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.; coverlet woven in the ‘Peace & Plenty’ pattern, dated 1841, exhibited during the spring season 1976 at the Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, Williamstown, Mass. The coverlet is owned by John Gerhort. All of the gas lamps on the Victorian chandeliers in the old San Francisco Mint are banded by an ancient Greek design which was selected to symbolize the ‘Peace and Prosperity’ motif.

peared in a handsome little engraving made for volume 1 of the *Columbian Magazine* (fig. 27), with this legend underneath: 'Venerate the Plough.'⁶¹ In 1793 Joseph Richardson, a Philadelphia silversmith, engraved an Indian peace medal (fig. 28). Behind George Washington and a chieftain smoking the peace pipe, there is a farmer with two oxen pulling the venerated plough. In 1813 Asher B. Durand etched an 'Engraved plate of farm implements.' There is a plough displayed in the upper picture, and a man using it in the lower one.⁶²

In 1819 Jethro Wood patented the cast-iron plough; and that same year agricultural journalism really began in New York when Solomon Southwick launched *The Plough Boy* in Albany.⁶³ By 1830 most farmers had learned that iron ploughs turn deeper furrows. A decade later Ezra Cornell was selling them in Maine and in Georgia. Can there be any doubt, then, that this primitive painting (fig. 29) accurately catches one important facet of the American mind at mid-century? The artist is unknown, but the inscription speaks volumes: 'He That Tilleth His Land Shall Be Satisfied.'⁶⁴

Although the iconographic transition from Liberty to Pros-

⁶¹ Both of these are reproduced in *A Rising People*, p. 208. For other examples, see Donald H. Cresswell, comp., *The American Revolution in Drawings and Prints: A Checklist of 1765-1790 Graphics in the Library of Congress* (Washington, 1975), figs. 882, 885; Hay, 'One Hundred Years of the Fourth of July,' p. 108. Hay quotes the toast offered in Savannah, Ga., on July 4, 1807, where patriots drank to the 'agriculture and commerce of Georgia—whilst our ships waft the products of the farmers' labor to every quarter of the globe, may *God speed the plough.*' Italics in the original, *Republican and Savannah Evening Leader*, July 8, 1807.

⁶² The peace medal is reproduced in *American Art: 1750-1800, Towards Independence*, p. 206 (plate 164a). Durand's engraving is in the New-York Historical Society.

⁶³ See Ulysses P. Hedrick, *A History of Agriculture in the State of New York* (Albany, 1933), pp. 287-88, 290-92, 318; Isaac Phillips Roberts, *The Autobiography of a Farm Boy* (Albany, 1916).

⁶⁴ See *American Naïve Painting of the 18th and 19th Centuries: 111 Masterpieces from the Collection of Edgar William and Bernice Chrysler Garbisch* (New York, 1969), plate 77. The New York State Historical Association held an especially pertinent exhibition at Cooperstown (in the spring and summer 1972) entitled 'Rural Life: Real and Ideal, 1790-1890.' For the introduction of the gangplow during the later nineteenth century, see David Lavender, *California: A Bicentennial History* (New York, 1976), p. 116.

perity was fully realized by the 1840s, Americans had not entirely forgotten the meaning of their Revolution.⁶⁵ Indeed, they fixed upon a fairly clever, satisfying way to link the plough (and thereby republican Virtue) with the birth of freedom in 1775. Henry David Thoreau recalled, in *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers* (1849), that many of the patriotic heroes 'were ploughing when the news of the massacre at Lexington arrived, and straightaway left their ploughs in the furrow, and repaired to the scene of action.'⁶⁶ In 1850 an essayist pointed out that after fighting in the French and Indian War, Israel Putnam 'returned to the plough, and was in the act of guiding it, when he heard the news of the battle of Lexington. Like Cincinnatus of old, he left it in the furrow, and repaired at once to Cambridge' (fig. 30). Not surprisingly, then, Congress commissioned Constantino Brumidi in 1855 to prepare two frescoes for the Capitol. (You can see them in the House Appropriations Committee Room.) One is named, *Calling of Cincinnatus from the Plow* (fig. 31); and the other, *Calling of Putnam from the Plow to the Revolution* (fig. 32).⁶⁷

During the next two decades, this symbolic link between patriotism and the plough became an established bond in American iconography. Henry Wise, for instance, explained the true meaning of Houdon's statue of Washington to a

⁶⁵ Between 1849 and the early 1860s, Hiram Powers worked intermittently on a sculpture called 'Liberty' which he intended for a prominent place in the Capitol. In 1859 Congress balked at the price of 'Liberty,' however, and voted an appropriation for statues of Franklin and Jefferson instead. Powers completed his figure anyway, and renamed it 'America.' Today it belongs to the National Collection of Fine Arts in Washington, D.C.

⁶⁶ Thoreau, *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers* (Boston, 1883), p. 271. For ideological context, see Harry V. Jaffa, 'Agrarian Virtue and Republican Freedom: An Historical Perspective,' in *Equality and Liberty: Theory and Practice in American Politics* (New York, 1965), pp. 42-66. In the DeWitt Historical Society, Ithaca, N. Y., there is a beautiful coverlet with this legend woven in: 'Agriculture and Manufactures are the Foundation of our Independence. July 4, 1829.'

⁶⁷ Thomas Wyatt, 'Life of General Joseph Warren,' *Graham's Magazine* 36 (February 1850):159; *Works of Art in the United States Capitol*, p. 325. See also Felix O. C. Darley's scenes of minutemen behind the plough, ready to take the field with their rifles at a moment's notice, in Grafton, *The American Revolution: A Picture Sourcebook*, figs. 46 and 52 on pp. 16, 18.

Fourth of July audience in 1856. The figure, he pointed out, 'stands on the mother earth, the plough share placed on the left by his foot. These signify the idea of "Country".' The Minute Man which Daniel Chester French would sculpt in 1874 for Concord's great centennial celebration brings the whole motif to explicit perfection. The Minute Man is shown at that precise moment when he is leaving his plough and taking up a gun in order to defend the country. French knew that the yeoman farmer's arms must look as though they could handle that old, rugged plough with ease.⁶⁸

III

Considering the points I have been trying to emphasize, it is altogether appropriate that Jefferson and Franklin are the two dominant figures in these dozen bicentennial exhibitions: Franklin, whose artifact was the printing press;⁶⁹ and Jefferson, whose achievement it was during the early 1790s to improve the moldboard plough, which he regarded as 'the most useful of the instruments known to man.'⁷⁰ As he wrote to Charles Willson Peale in 1813: 'The plough is to the farmer what the wand is to the sorcerer. Its effect is really like sorcery.'⁷¹ Jefferson and Franklin are coupled, so to speak, in the big Eames exhibit sponsored by the American Revolution Bicentennial Administration, the Metropolitan Museum of

⁶⁸ Wise, 'Oration at Lexington, Virginia, 4th July 1856,' *Southern Literary Messenger* 23(1856):4; Cresson, *Journey into Fame*, pp. 78-79, 84. The great seal of the State of Montana features a plough in the foreground, as does Grant Wood's wonderful rendition of American fertility, *Fall Plowing* (1931), owned by John Deere & Company, East Moline, Ill.

⁶⁹ The most delightful and popular object in 'The World of Franklin and Jefferson,' by the way, is a small flatbed printing press which had been made for Franklin in Paris. Its hardwood and brass gleaming, it is in good working order and was used at this exhibition to print a most elegant souvenir sheet: the title page of the Treaty of Amity and Commerce made between France and the United States on February 6, 1778.

⁷⁰ See Dumas Malone, *Jefferson and His Time* (Boston, 1948-74), 3:214-17; 5:18-19. Jefferson wrote in 1787 that 'agriculture . . . is our wisest pursuit,' a theme he would reiterate on many other occasions. See Merrill Peterson, *Thomas Jefferson and the New Nation* (New York, 1970), pp. 357, 365-66.

⁷¹ Quoted in Edwin M. Betts, ed., *Thomas Jefferson's Farm Book* (Princeton, 1953), p. 47. See also Jefferson's 'description of a Mould-board of the least resistance,' March 23, 1798, in *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society*, 4, no. 38(1799):313-22.

Art, and the IBM Corporation. Jefferson celebrates visibly in his own vast one-man show at the National Gallery; and, in a more restrained way, at 'The Early Republic' exhibition of the Worcester Art Museum. Sophisticates at home in the unpolished New World, they assumed the guise of simplicity when in Europe, and adapted from its culture whatever seemed attractive and appropriate for a self-consciously republican culture.⁷²

More to the point, however: although each one played a major role in the achievement of our Liberty, they both anticipated that shift in psychic orientation from Liberty to Prosperity which is my central theme here. As early as March 1780, Franklin informed George Washington from Passy that 'I must soon quit the Scene, but you may live to see our Country flourish, as it will amazingly and rapidly after the War is over.' Writing just a year or two later, in his *Notes on the State of Virginia*, Jefferson anticipated that, in America, 'utopia' would be defined in terms of prosperity.⁷³ He developed this theme more fully in his first inaugural address, on March 4, 1801. There he spoke about 'a rising nation, spread over a wise and fruitful land, traversing all the seas with the rich productions of their industry,' and then went on to ask: 'With all these blessings, what more is necessary to make us a happy and prosperous people?' Just one other thing, he answered, 'a wise and frugal government.' Mr. Jefferson concluded his inaugural by beseeching 'that Infinite Power which rules the destinies of the universe' to give the American people 'peace and prosperity.'⁷⁴ Nothing could shake his faith that Prosperity was our national destiny—for better and for

⁷² The Fogg Art Museum at Harvard University devoted the first of its three Bicentennial exhibitions to Franklin. See Louise Todd Ambler, *Benjamin Franklin: A Perspective* (Boston, 1975). The second concerned Lafayette, and the third is called 'Harvard Divided.'

⁷³ Franklin to Washington, March 5, 1780, in Adrienne Koch, ed., *The American Enlightenment* (New York, 1965), p. 92; Charles S. Sydnor, *American Revolutionaries in the Making: Political Practices in Washington's Virginia*, 2nd ed. (New York, 1965), p. 19.

⁷⁴ Koch, ed., *American Enlightenment*, pp. 404, 406-7.

worse—not even the European depredations which precipitated the War of 1812. ‘When these shall be over,’ he wrote to John Adams, ‘it will be the impressment of our seamen or something else; and so we have gone on, and so we shall go on, puzzled and prospering beyond example in the history of man. And I believe we shall continue to grow, to multiply and prosper until we exhibit an association, powerful, wise and happy, beyond what has yet been seen by men.’⁷⁵

There is a poignant problem, of course, because Jefferson’s vision of the well-rewarded yeoman farmer, walking behind his plough and oxen, was being undermined even before the image had achieved its full iconographic impact. Land may well have been our greatest resource during the first half of the nineteenth century, but the yeoman farmer, his wife, and their hired hand did not prosper nearly so much as the land speculator and his agents. Nor was the virtuous farmer so influential or important as the big speculator in real estate. (In this regard, the most representative object in all of these exhibitions may very well be the surveyor’s chain, ca. 1790–1845, displayed at the William Bingham show last year in Binghamton.)⁷⁶

Nevertheless, while Jefferson foresaw American abundance and regarded its profound impact as being inevitable, *he* never lost sight of Liberty, rather than Prosperity, as our most precious blessing; and he did much to insure that iconographic symbols would endure to remind Americans that Liberty must be cherished. John Trumbull visited with Jefferson at Paris in 1785, and together they discussed the artist’s projected series of history paintings. Trumbull recalls in his autobiography that he began his major canvas, *The Declaration*

⁷⁵ Jefferson to Adams, January 21, 1812, *ibid.*, p. 353. On March 27, 1804, Jefferson’s postmaster general, Gideon Granger, wrote to DeWitt Clinton that before the Louisiana Purchase Americans in the West most wanted security, but ‘now it is prosperity.’ Quoted in Richard E. Ellis, *The Jeffersonian Crisis: Courts and Politics in the Young Republic* (New York, 1971), p. 90. See also the statements by Nicholas Collins (in 1789) and by Jefferson (in 1816) quoted by Daniel J. Boorstin, *The Lost World of Thomas Jefferson* (Boston, 1948), pp. 227, 234.

⁷⁶ See *America—A Good Investment*, p. 6.

of *Independence*, after getting information and advice from Jefferson.⁷⁷ When Charles Bulfinch made the Grand Tour in 1785, he too came under Jefferson's influence; and Bulfinch brought back the principles of neo-classicism in architecture, suitably modified for Boston and later for designing the Capitol in Washington, D.C.⁷⁸

In purchasing the vast Louisiana Territory, Mr. Jefferson knew that he could increase our security as well as our prosperity. But when obliged to defend his decision, he spoke less of security and prosperity than of achieving 'an Empire for Liberty.' That incredible Purchase would add yet another dimension—a western one—to American iconography: because of the Lewis and Clark expedition, which is superbly recalled in the current Seattle show;⁷⁹ by means of the wonderful Indian portraits made by Charles-Balthazar-Julien F  vret de Saint-M  min;⁸⁰ and, eventually, in the art of George Catlin, Seth Eastman, and George Caleb Bingham.

By their day—by the 1840s—'Peace & Plenty' had supplanted Liberty as the dominant watchword of our national culture. Our iconography had altered accordingly, and the subtle nuances of that important transformation are, to me, the most fascinating aspect of these truly splendid bicentennial exhibitions.⁸¹

⁷⁷ Theodore Sizer, ed., *The Autobiography of Colonel John Trumbull, Patriot-Artist, 1756-1843* (1941; repr. New Haven, 1953), pp. 92-93; Jaffe, *John Trumbull*, p. 104.

⁷⁸ See Walter Muir Whitehill's introduction to *Paul Revere's Boston*, p. 15.

⁷⁹ See Willis F. Woods, et al., *Lewis and Clark's America: A Voyage of Discovery* (Seattle, 1976).

⁸⁰ Saint-M  min's marvelous profiles pervade several of these shows. See *The Eye of Thomas Jefferson*, pp. xxv, 74-77, 268; Jareckie, *Consolidation of Revolutionary Goals*, pp. 29, 30; and Hugh Honour, *The European Vision of America* (Cleveland, 1975), no. 289.

⁸¹ I should add two final points about the logistical and mechanical aspects of these shows. First, they required an incredible amount of cooperation, national and international, between public and private institutions, and between both sorts of institutions and private individuals. (The French government, the National Endowments for the Arts and the Humanities, Exxon, and IBM seem to have been especially generous.) Second, at least three of the major catalogues were printed by the Meriden Gravure Company, which deserves a standing ovation for the quality of its work. Mr. Isaiah Thomas would be very proud and impressed!

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