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From the President General

In honor of Jamestown's upcoming 400th anniversary, American Spirit sets sail for America's first settlement. Our cover feature examines the colony's historical significance and takes a closer look at the contribution of the area's Native American cultures. Throughout 2007, DAR members will be encouraging the study and appreciation of Jamestown's incredible legacy.

This issue also celebrates another noteworthy anniversary—the 219th birthday of the United States Constitution. It was at the request of the DAR in 1955 that a Joint Resolution of Congress designated September 17–23 as Constitution Week. Last year, Congress passed legislation requiring educators to teach students and employees about the Constitution on September 17. Learn how groups across the country are marking the historic occasion and how you can commemorate America's most enduring document in meaningful ways.

Fascinated by engineering marvels? Our feature on the Erie Canal, the largest public works project of its time in the United States, details the decades of planning and passion required to build the 363-mile wonder in an era before steam power replaced human and animal muscle.

We also celebrate musical passion in our story on the art of violins. The violin was introduced to Colonial America in 1759 and quickly became a household fixture that transcended cultures, regions and economic status. Colonists loved to dance to English and Celtic reels, jigs and minuets, often accompanied by only a single violin. Today, American violin makers, or luthiers, preserve the craft with a dedication to perpetuating the instrument's living history.

Our Spirited Adventures department ventures West to explore the centuries-old traditions of New Mexico, the state known as the Land of Enchantment. Besides its rich Native American history—well preserved in ancient pueblos and other historic landmarks—the state's diverse natural wonders welcome thousands of visitors each year.

Another "spirited" adventure takes readers to Occoquan, a tiny riverfront town in Northern Virginia that remains a charming reminder of the area's pre-Revolutionary importance as an industrial and commercial hub. Not only is Occoquan home to a number of historic homes and several businesses in continuous use for more than 200 years, but the small town of 800 residents also hosts an unusually large number of local ghosts.

Six million American women joined the labor force during World War II to fill the jobs of men off fighting the war. Fondly known by the collective nickname "Rosie the Riveter," they performed all manner of hot, dirty, muscle-straining jobs. Some 60 years later, the Rosies—including several Daughters who proudly wear that name—are getting the tribute they deserve with the establishment of the Rosie the Riveter/World War II Home Front National Historical Park in Richmond, Calif., a wartime boomtown. We are proud to recognize such hard-working, patriotic women.

Presley Merritt Wagoner
Five questions every woman should ask herself.

- Do I have a signed will to protect my assets as well as my family and friends and is it stored in a safe place?

- Do I have any low-yielding stocks that I could reinvest in a charitable gift annuity or living trust for a better stream of income?

- Did I protect my family from the burden of high estate and income taxes due upon my death?

- Did I make arrangements in my estate plans to preserve the futures of the charitable organizations, like NSDAR, that I supported during my life?

- Did I take advantage of the new NSDAR gift planning program that is free with no obligation?

If you answered “no” to any of the questions above, you may benefit from speaking with a member of the Gift Planning staff in the Office of Development at the National Society Daughters of the American Revolution. Simply complete the form and mail it to the address listed, or please call 1-800-449-1776 or e-mail giftplanning@dar.org to speak to someone about bequests, gift annuities, trusts or other estate planning tools.

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A Woman’s Best Friend

When Sandy Sperry first saw Brownie wandering alone on a country road, he was severely malnourished, about 35 pounds underweight, infested with fleas, ticks and worms and in need of a good home. Ms. Sperry had never had a dog and didn’t know what to do with one, but one look at the amber-eyed hound was all it took to change her mind.

“I looked at Brownie’s sweet face, and there was absolutely no choice—I had to bring him home,” she says.

That was almost five years ago. Today, after being nursed back to health, Brownie is now a certified search and recovery dog that specializes in finding human remains. Together he and Ms. Sperry work as volunteers with the Portsmouth, Va., based V K9 Scent Specific Search and Recovery Unit, a job this retired human resources executive from New York City never in a million years thought she’d be doing.

Whenever they’re needed, Ms. Sperry and Brownie are called to a site—sometimes far from home—where they meet up with other team members and their K9s to search for a scent trail. In Brownie’s case, he has been trained to sit when he finds human remains. Once a dog finds something, the team calls in local law enforcement to take over the case.

“It’s certainly been an adventure,” Ms. Sperry says. “Even if the person is not alive, even if the news isn’t good news, at least we’re able to bring the person ‘home’ and close the case.”

Ms. Sperry admits that she’s always a little worried that she’ll run into a snake, but says overall she feels very safe when she’s on the trail with Brownie. “It can be scary,” she says. “But we very rarely go into a situation without armed law enforcement.”

During a case last year, a property owner threatened to shoot team members and their dogs if they were found on his property. Still, Ms. Sperry says she would not trade working with Brownie and helping solve cases for anything. “Watching Brownie and all the other dogs work is always so amazing to me,” Ms. Sperry says. “Most people only consider their dogs as pets or companion animals and don’t give them much credit. But to see a K9 work a case is one of the most wonderful and humbling things I have experienced. And the loyalty and love they give back to their handlers is absolutely amazing.”

When she and Brownie aren’t working search and recovery, Ms. Sperry stays busy as Regent of the Edenton Tea Party Chapter, Edenton, N.C. A DAR member since 1972, Ms. Sperry transferred to the Edenton Tea Party Chapter after moving to nearby Hertford, N.C., when she retired.

The 56-member chapter recently held a fund-raising luncheon for the Crossnore School, a DAR-supported children’s home and school in the western North Carolina mountains that serves children who, due to circumstances beyond their control, can no longer live at home.

“The school is exactly what the DAR is about,” Ms. Sperry says. “Children are our future. We have to raise them properly, prepare them for their future, and we have to show them that they are important and that they are loved and needed.”

To nominate a Daughter for a future issue, e-mail a description to americanspirit@dar.org.
EVERYONE HAS A STORY TO TELL—and those stories are worth saving. That's the premise behind StoryCorps, a national initiative that, in the last three years, has invited thousands of Americans into sound booths and inspired them to interview each other and record their stories in sound.

"The stories of everyday people and our histories are as important as the celebrity gossip we’re fed all the time," says Dave Isay, the project's founder. "Daughters have a unique and powerful connection to history. They personify so much of what we’re trying to do," Isay says. "We want all DAR members to bring their daughters and mothers, so that their stories can be preserved for generations to come."

Modeled after a similar Works Progress Administration project from the 1930s, StoryCorps is the brainchild of Isay, an award-winning radio documentarian and founder of Sound Portraits Production, which specializes in profiling Americans living in communities that are often neglected or misunderstood.

Since 2003, StoryCorps has captured more than 7,000 interviews, and by 2013, Isay hopes that number will be closer to a quarter of a million.

"StoryCorps is a project of authenticity in a society that is increasingly phony," he says. "We hope it becomes part of the fabric of life in this country and is accessible to anyone who wants to participate."

The concept is simple. Pick someone you want to interview and StoryCorps takes care of the rest—from helping you come up with interview questions to handling the technical aspects of the recording. At the end of the 40-minute session, you get a copy of your interview on CD.

Another copy of the interview makes it into the StoryCorps Archives, housed at the American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress, so that your story can live on for generations.

StoryCorps currently has four soundproof recording booths, called StoryBooths, across the country. Two are permanent locations in New York City; the other two are traveling studios, called Mobile Booths, which embarked on cross-country tours last spring.

But there's more to come. StoryCorps plans to launch booths around the country, along with door-to-door service and StoryCorps outposts at local libraries and historical societies.

For more information on tour dates and sample stories, visit www.storycorps.net. On the Web site, you'll also find an online question generator, as well as a do-it-yourself guide.
True or False?

FIND ANSWERS AT DAR

DID THE 13 PANES of early American cupboards really represent the 13 original Colonies? Are 18th-century beds short because people were shorter then? Chances are, if you've visited a museum or historic house, you've heard one of these statements, or something very similar about early Americans. But how reliable are these legends passed from person to person?

The DAR Museum looks at these and other popular stories about the early years of our country and examines the reliability of history by word of mouth in "Myth or Truth? Stories We've Heard About Early America." By using period documents, graphics and antique objects, the museum tries to pin down the origins of some of America's favorite "history lore" in the new exhibit on display from October 6, 2006, to March 31, 2007. For more information, visit www.dar.org/museum.

Learn how to find genealogical truths at the Conference on Early American Genealogical Research, taking place October 27-28, 2006, at DAR Headquarters in Washington, D.C. Hosted by the DAR Library, the two-day program will feature experts from the DAR and the National Archives to discuss genealogical research spanning the Colonial period through the pre-Civil War era.

Early registration ends September 15. For more information, visit www.dar.org/library.

A Presidential Display

A PEACEMAKER, advocate of technology and an aggressive policymaker, Woodrow Wilson (1856-1924) is considered one of the greatest presidents in American history. But his life was one of stark contradictions. Despite not learning to read until the age of 12, he remains the only American president to have earned a Ph.D. Seemingly aloof and undemonstrative in public, Wilson was warm and gentle in his private life. Take a closer look at the complicated, fascinating life of our 28th president at a new exhibition at the Woodrow Wilson House, a National Trust Historic Site and the only presidential museum in Washington, D.C. The exhibition is part of Wilson 150, a series of public programs running through December celebrating the 150th anniversary of Wilson's birth.

"I really believe this exhibition will do a lot to explore the humanity of Woodrow Wilson, who as a leader always ranks as one of our top 10 presidents, but is rarely understood as a person," says Frank Aucella, executive director of the Woodrow Wilson House. "He enjoyed popular culture, sports and most of all loved cars and embraced the emerging technologies of his age. This is what the exhibit explores."

For more information, visit www.woodrowwilsonhouse.org.

GOING ONCE, GOING TWICE

Four rare flags from the American Revolution sold on Flag Day in a Sotheby's auction. The winning bid: $17.4 million. Sold to an anonymous bidder, the flags were regimental standards captured by a British officer in two battles in 1779 and 1780. Of the 30 Revolutionary War flags known to exist today, these four are the only ones not in a museum or other institutional collection.

September 5, 1882: Americans celebrate the first Labor Day.
September 8, 1900: A Category 4 hurricane decimates Galveston, Texas, killing more than 8,000 people in the deadliest recorded natural disaster in the United States.
September 17, 1787: The 39 members of the Constitutional Convention vote to approve and sign the final draft of the new United States Constitution.
September 22, 1784: Russians establish their first settlement in Alaska on Kodiak Island.
September 26, 1777: British forces occupy Philadelphia, forcing Congress to relocate to York, Pa.
October 4, 1636: The General Court of the Plymouth Colony institutes a legal code, the first composed in North America.
October 9, 1776: Spanish missionaries establish San Francisco.
October 16, 1786: Congress establishes the United States Mint.
October 19, 1849: Elizabeth Blackwell graduates from Geneva Medical College, becoming the first woman to receive a medical degree in the United States.

Quick Quiz

**ERIE CANAL**

1. **When was the concept of the canal first proposed in North America?**
2. **How many canals are in the state of New York?**
3. **What popular 1905 song memorialized the Erie Canal's early days when mules pulled the barges?**
4. **The Erie Canal cost a little more than $7 million to construct. How much would it cost today?**
5. **How long would it take to cruise between Albany and Buffalo on the Erie Canal?**

Answers on page 8.
In The Galleries

If you’re in the area, these exhibitions are must-sees this fall

A STONE WITH A SECRET

One of New Hampshire’s most mysterious artifacts—the Mystery Stone—is now on display at the Museum of New Hampshire History in Concord, N.H. After more than a century, the origin of the four-inch-long, two-and-a-half-inch-thick stone is still a mystery. The symbols on the stone—including an inverted arrow, a moon, an ear of corn and a figure that resembles a deer leg—continue to baffle anthropologists and visitors to the museum alike. For more information, visit www.nhhistory.org.

GOING TO GRANDMA’S

Experience the life and work of popular American folk artist Anna Mary Robertson “Grandma” Moses at the Fenimore Art Museum in Cooperstown, N.Y. Running through 2006, “Grandma Moses: Grandmother to the Nation,” includes 38 paintings, including the famous “Battle of Bennington,” which is part of the DAR Museum’s permanent collection.

The painting, completed in 1953, was a gift to the DAR from Grandma Moses, who joined the DAR late in life. Legend has it that Grandma Moses’ mother informed her when she was young that she was eligible to join the DAR, but family responsibilities and other commitments prevented her from joining. After she began her painting career, the local DAR chapters often invited her to speak, which sparked in Grandma Moses a renewed interest in DAR membership. A year before she died, she joined the Hoosac-Wallomsac Chapter, which merged with the Ondawa-Cambridge Chapter, Cambridge, N.Y., in 1992.

For more information on the exhibition, visit www.fenimoreartmuseum.org.

What’s in a Name?

Discover the meanings behind some of the DAR chapters’ interesting names.

The Council Grove Chapter, Oklahoma City, Okla., takes its name from the historical Council Grove where the Native Americans held council meetings on the eastern bank of Lake Overholser.

The name of the Sycamore Chapter, Adams County, Ohio, derives from the giant sycamores found throughout this region when the first settlers arrived. One hollow tree was so large it afforded shelter to a loaded wagon and a team of horses that drove into it during a storm.

The namesake of the Chief Tuscaloosa Chapter, Tuscaloosa, Ala., was a great Native American chief who, in 1540, was taken prisoner by Hernando de Soto in the Spaniard’s quest for gold. When persuaded to mount the tallest horse available, it is said the 7-foot-tall Tuscaloosa’s feet nearly touched the ground. Tuscaloosa was never heard of after the Battle of Maubila, October 18, 1540, a conflict between Native Americans and Spaniards that left many dead and the southwest Alabama city of Maubila in ruins.

Members of the Rhoda Farrand Chapter, Addison, Vt, honor the namesake of their chapter, Rhoda Farrand, just as she honored the Patriots. An energetic and patriotic widow of a Revolutionary War officer, she was famous for knitting socks for soldiers and telling tales of the war.

Answers to the quiz on page 7:

1. In 1699, the French engineer Vauban suggested building a canal between Lake Erie and Lake Ontario.
2. New York has more than 27 canals.
4. As a fraction of gross domestic product, the Erie Canal would cost $110 billion if it were constructed today.
5. Five days, according to speed limits set forth by the New York State Canal System.

Want to learn even more about the Erie Canal? Turn to page 44.
Making Beautiful Music

Though they are only for show, the gilt pipes on the front of this late 18th-century barrel organ suggest its purpose. Like a music box, music is played when a winding key triggers metal fingers that pluck a set of pins attached to a cylinder. Unlike a music box, however, the barrel organ’s sound is made from air passing through pipes at the back of the instrument. When the winding key is turned, bellows supply the air. The DAR Museum’s barrel organ has three interchangeable cylinders that play many popular tunes of its time, including polkas, minuets and waltzes.

Barrel organs were expensive when new and found only in public places like taverns or in wealthy households. This example is attributed to the London firm of Longman & Broderip, which was known for making unusual musical instruments.

Take a step inside the DAR Museum for a closer look at its fascinating collection.
Saint or Sinner?

At a time when most households had only one chair, and that one was reserved for the man of the house, Anne Marbury Hutchinson sat in her husband's chair and rehearsed Sunday sermons. According to the Puritan leadership of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, this choice made her an "instrument of Satan." In *American Jezebel: The Uncommon Life of Anne Hutchinson* (HarperSanFrancisco, 2004), author Eve LaPlante painstakingly recreates the environment Hutchinson lived in as an adult and recounts the complex details of her trial on charges of sedition and heresy.

Hutchinson, whom renowned author Nathaniel Hawthorne used as a model for Hester Prynne in *The Scarlet Letter*, has traditionally been viewed by historians as either a devil or a saint. LaPlante, herself an 11th-generation descendent of Hutchinson, aims for a balanced description of her complex, fascinating ancestor, who was, in her time, a religious radical, a loving mother, a feminist, a dedicated wife and a trusted midwife.

Hutchinson emigrated to America from England, seeking a place where she could worship freely. She believed that people could communicate directly with God without the help of ministers or the Bible—an idea that conflicted with the established religion. She criticized the teachings of the colony's ministers, who believed that people could find God only by adhering to the biblical interpretations that they preached.

At first, only women attended Hutchinson's religious meetings, held at her home. Gradually, men showed up at her door. The meetings that started out as discussions of the weekly sermons morphed into question-and-answer sessions where followers asked for Hutchinson's thoughts on their philosophical questions. It was these "subversive" meetings that caused her neighbor, John Winthrop, first governor of Massachusetts, to arrest the 46-year-old mother of 12 and bring her to trial in the fall of 1637.

With the first American novel yet to be written, the Bible was the only reading material available to most colonists. "Many settlers knew much of it by heart and readily applied it to such events as thunderstorms, sudden inexplicable deaths, or the passing of a comet overhead," LaPlante writes. With the colonists' strict adherence to a literal reading of the Bible, as well as the prevalent view of women as morally feeble creatures, there were consequences when anyone stepped out of line.

Hutchinson's male neighbors were also skeptical of anything that was specifically in a woman's realm. "Men of the period tended to view midwifery, a realm of power from which they were excluded, with suspicion," LaPlante writes. Because Hutchinson covered up the birth of a child born with severe birth defects, she violated the rule that women could not give birth in secret. In truth, she was merely trying to protect the child's mother who would be unfairly blamed for causing the defects.

LaPlante's novel-like writing transports readers to the 17th-century courtroom setting where Hutchinson's fate was decided. She builds anticipation by interspersing trial segments with background about the trial participants. LaPlante weaves the men's unwillingness to hear differing points of view with the oppression of women to reveal an atmosphere in which no woman with a mind like Hutchinson's could possibly survive unscathed.

LaPlante traveled widely to research her ancestor's story. In the appendix "Exploring Anne Hutchinson's England and America," her descriptions of 17th-century settings and customs give readers a clearer picture of what everyday life was like for Hutchinson.

Hutchinson was expelled from the Massachusetts Bay Colony in 1638 by Colonial leaders for her insistence on continuing to preach and practice religion as she chose. She moved with her husband and family to an area of the country that would become Rhode Island and then to Pelham Bay, Long Island. Siwanoy Indians murdered Hutchinson and five of her children in the fall of 1643 near Long Island Sound. She had refused to fear the Indians or to flee, as the rest of the town had done.

After her murder, the Siwanoy chief took Hutchinson's name as "it was customary for a Siwanoy warrior to assume the name of his most illustrious victim." Victim or hero, the name Hutchinson is now widely recognized. The Hutchinson River, the Hutchinson River Parkway and the Anne Hutchinson Chapter, Bronxville, N.Y., are her namesakes. While serving as governor of Massachusetts, Michael Dukakis, also a descendent of Hutchinson, pardoned her in 1987. She was inducted into the National Women's Hall of Fame in 1994. And now, LaPlante's meticulous research and evenhanded writing pays tribute to her ancestor, the "American Jezebel."
Parallel Lives

Their names are both famous in American history but for different reasons. George Washington became an American hero by leading the Patriots to decisive victory over the British and guiding the republic in the tenuous years after the Revolution; Benedict Arnold became an infamous traitor by betraying the troops who revered him and attempting to hand Washington over to the British.

In a dual biography, George Washington and Benedict Arnold: A Tale of Two Patriots (Regnery Publishing, Inc., 2006), Dave R. Palmer explores the parallel lives of the two celebrated generals and the paths that led one to become the father of our country and the other to become a man without a country. Both of the men came from hardscrabble backgrounds and rose to military prestige by similar routes. Both were targeted by petty politicians and jealous comrades who tried to discredit them. But ultimately the way they handled their foes sealed their fate: While Washington rose above his enemies, Arnold grew embittered by his.

Palmer, a retired lieutenant general of the United States Army and a former superintendent of West Point, brings the perspective of an accomplished soldier and a historian to his comprehensive narrative, which offers a revealing glimpse into the character of two legendary Americans.

BY EMILY McMACKIN

Mount Vernon Memoir

Visitors to Mount Vernon have long been entranced by the sense of history there. Through the centuries, the estate where Washington spent his last years has become a national shrine. Readers can get a glimpse into what made Mount Vernon so special to many Americans in Experiencing Mount Vernon: Eyewitness Accounts, 1784–1865 (University of Virginia Press, 2006) edited by Jean B. Lee.

The book offers excerpts of observations penned by Mount Vernon’s early visitors, who recorded their reactions to the site in detail and with intense emotion. Lee selects substantive accounts from letters, journals, public speeches and newspaper and magazine articles and also includes documents from Mount Vernon’s various owners. Though at Mount Vernon Washington claimed to have “retired from public employments,” he used his estate to preserve the memory of events that led to the country’s independence and to express his vision for its future. In the days before public museums or a national library, Americans touring Mount Vernon could view treasures, such as John Trumbell’s image of the signing of the Declaration of Independence and Washington’s wartime correspondence. Some even met Washington and listened to him reminisce about his military and public service and share his ideas on securing freedom.

This informative compilation illustrates not only why Mount Vernon meant so much to Americans, but also how it helped forge a national identity. —E.M.
We the People

Section 1. All legislative Powers here granted shall be vested in a Congress of the United States, which shall consist of a Senate and House of Representatives.

Section 2. The House of Representatives shall be composed of Members chosen every second Year by the People of the several States, and the Electors in each State shall have the Qualifications requisite for Electors of the most numerous Branch of the State Legislature.

Each State shall choose in such Manner as the Legislature thereof may direct, a Number of Electors, equal to the whole Number of Senators and Representatives to which the State may be entitled in Congress; but no Senator or Representative, shall be chosen over the Age of thirty-five Years, and, when chosen, shall serve four Years; and no Person shall be eligible to that Office who shall not have attained to the Age of thirty-five Years.

The Electors shall meet in their respective States, and vote by Ballot for two Persons, one of whom at least shall not be an Inhabitant of that State; and they shall make a List of all the Persons voted for, and of the Number of Votes for each; which List they shall sign and certify, and transmit sealed to the Seat of the Government of the United States, directed to the President of the Senate.

The President of the Senate shall, in the Presence of the Senate and House of Representatives, open all the Certificates, and the Votes shall then be counted; The Person having the highest Number of Votes shall be the President; if there be two or more Persons equally entitled to that Office, the House of Representatives shall choose from among them, the President at Large.

The President shall receive theSum of all the States.
With the fate of an emerging nation in their hands, American leaders met behind closed doors at Philadelphia’s State House for four heated months in the summer of 1787 to create a government that would withstand the test of time. The Constitutional Convention delegates came from different backgrounds and with different agendas, but they all agreed on one thing: America needed a stronger framework to remain a free democracy. Braving sweltering heat outside and scorching temperatures inside, the men hashed out their viewpoints and consulted political tracts of their day, as well as histories of ancient civilizations, to form a central government with three branches—legislative, executive and judicial—elected mostly by the people and restrained by sophisticated checks and balances. The plan, unveiled on September 17, 1787, was considered one of the greatest compromises in political history and has only been amended 27 times since.

"[The Constitution of the United States] was not, like the fabled Goddess of Wisdom, the offspring of a single brain," James Madison said in 1834. "It ought to be regarded as the work of many heads and many hands."

On September 17, communities and schools everywhere will commemorate the 219th anniversary of that historic day with events spanning the week in many places. The Daughters of the American Revolution started this tradition in 1955, petitioning its Continental Congress to set aside September 17–23 for the observance of Constitution Week. The resolution was later adopted by the U.S. Congress and signed into law on August 2, 1956, by President Dwight D. Eisenhower.

Since then, the DAR has worked to encourage Americans to read and study the Constitution and reflect on their heritage of freedom during this week. Constitution Week celebrations in schools have grown more widespread since Congress passed legislation last year requiring educators to teach their students about the Constitution on September 17. Towns like Louisville, Ohio, and Mesa, Ariz., have long held annual celebrations with parades, proclamations, patriotic programs and displays. Whether it’s a town, an organization or a school celebrating the event, all
Americans could benefit from learning more about the Constitution, says Earl Taylor, president of the National Center for Constitutional Studies.

"We have big challenges in America today, and people are looking for answers," Taylor says. "What we often don't realize is that the Founders had an answer to nearly every problem we face."

While the Constitution might not mention specific issues that lawmakers grapple with these days, it addresses human nature and the potential of too much power, if left up to one person or entity, to corrupt.

"The Founders' way of protecting freedom and solving problems is as effective in our day as theirs because human nature never changes," Taylor says.

The National Center for Constitutional Studies (www.nccs.net) partners with towns to help them plan Constitution Week events and holds seminars around the country that focus on teaching not only the basics of the Constitution, but also "where the Founders got their good ideas, and why they made sense to them," Taylor says.

Last year, the group worked with the Department of Education, community businesses and organizations, including the DAR, to send DVDs of the bicentennial movie "A More Perfect Union," which dramatizes the 1787 Constitutional Convention, to all Arizona schools. NCCS also distributes pocket-sized versions of the Constitution, though Taylor discourages handing these out indiscriminately.

"Unless you help the people you give it to understand what is in it, they won't do much with it," Taylor says.

Celebrating a 'Living Document'

To educate Americans about the Constitution, the National Constitution Center in Philadelphia has launched a Web site (www.constitutionday.us) with a national clearinghouse of downloadable resources to help schools, federal agencies and civic groups plan meaningful Constitution Day events. The site offers search tools to locate age-appropriate material and allows anyone to post ideas that they want to share with others.

"When the Founders wrote the Constitution, they expected that it wasn't just going to sit there, and that we weren't just going to sit there—the idea was to form active, involved and engaged citizens," says Jane Eisner, the center's vice president for civic initiatives. "This isn't true of a lot of young people today, and we are trying to provide resources to change that."

For the second year, the center will sponsor "America Reads the Constitution" on September 17, a program in which public figures as well as ordinary citizens take turns reading parts of the Constitution aloud. Eisner hopes that events around the country will spark a continuing conversation about the Constitution.

"The Constitution is a living document meant to be worked on, acted upon and occasionally changed—but more importantly, it is meant to be embraced in new ways," she says.

Eisner encourages groups to promote the spirit of the Constitution by holding voter registration drives, becoming local activists or teaching others about bedrock principles vital to democracy like serving on juries or advocating causes.

Throwing a National Party

On September 17—in addition to a birthday cake and a chance to "meet" James Madison, father of the Constitution—the National Archives in Washington, D.C., will show "Road to Runnymede," a film guiding youngsters through 600 years of political struggle from the Magna Carta to the Constitutional Convention. Visitors will get to sign a copy of the Constitution, while speakers will discuss how it relates to current issues, such as free speech in schools and FBI wiretapping.

Those who can't travel to Philadelphia for Constitution Day can take free, online field trips to dozens of historical landmarks that trace the story of the Constitution and its signers by visiting www.theconstitutional.com/tour. The Annenberg Foundation's Public Policy Center (www.justicelearning.org/constitutionday) will make available DVDs of videotaped discussions between high-school students and Supreme Court justices on the role of the courts and safeguards the Constitution provides to ensure the separation and balance of powers, along with radio show tapes about constitutional issues such as domestic spying and the power shift on the Court with the confirmation of new judges.

"The Constitution depends on all of us; it's up to each person to make it real, alive and the great protector that it is—and the justices bring home that message for students," says Kathryn Kolbert, a senior researcher at the center who encourages groups to use these DVDs to kick off discussions in their hometowns.

Spreading the Enthusiasm

Getting people excited about the Constitution is a mission that has long inspired Bill Norton of Gilbert, Ariz. Five years ago, he started a local Constitution Week celebration to bring churches in his community together. The event has since evolved into a celebration that draws 10,000 people and last year featured Sandra Day O'Connor swearing in 52 Arizona immigrants as Americans. Norton sees the festivities as a chance to educate others about the tenets of freedom and liberty, "so they can be better citizens and understand their rights."

Families can tour replicas of the U.S. Capitol, the White House, the Supreme Court and Independence Hall and peruse information booths on the Constitution and its signers. They can meet lawmakers, attend programs with patriotic music and fireworks and listen to guest speakers discuss the Constitution's relevance to America today. During the week, Colonial "characters" visit schools, students compete in contests to win trips to Washington, D.C., and each household in Gilbert receives a lesson about the Constitution that they can do together as a family.

"No matter what they learn, Norton hopes that attendees take away one enduring concept that will change them forever. "We want them to know that it isn't a document or a leader that makes America great—it is ourselves," he says. "The reason why we are able to excel as a nation better than others because we have a document that clears the path for us to pursue happiness, greatness and achievement."

Emily McMackin is a contributing editor. She wrote about family pilgrimages for the July/August 2006 issue.
THE NSDAR HAS A LONG TRADITION of celebrating Constitution Week, September 17-23—and this year is no different. With “Celebrating Constitution Week Throughout the DAR Year” as their focus, DAR chapters across the country will commemorate the Constitution’s 219th birthday in many meaningful ways.

Constitution Week Committee National Chairman Rosemary Hunter encourages chapters to educate their membership and their communities about the responsibility of protecting and defending the Constitution and preserving it for posterity. Some chapters may want to promote the week through editorials, articles and letters to the editor in newspapers or public service announcements on television or the radio, she suggests.

Many chapters are planning luncheons and teas featuring speeches about the Constitution and awards ceremonies to honor outstanding members of their communities. Ms. Hunter encourages chapters to ask churches, schools, courthouses, city governments and other patriotic organizations to ring bells to celebrate the Constitution’s signing on September 17 at 4 p.m. EST, as many DAR members across the country plan to do.

She also urges members to create Constitution Week displays for schools, libraries, storefronts, churches and town halls.

“We especially love to have displays in schools because it encourages children to observe Constitution Week,” Ms. Hunter says.

The DAR Public Web Site, www.dar.org, offers Constitution Week facts and sample proclamations. The DAR also encourages members and others to consider purchasing copies of the Constitution Week poster available at “The DAR Store” for $2.
New Mexico's Pecos National Historic Park is the site of the Pecos Pueblo, the easternmost pueblo visited by Francisco Vázquez de Coronado in 1541.
Enchantment

AWAITS IN NEW MEXICO

When they think about New Mexico, those who have never been there probably picture a vast rocky terrain peppered with tumbleweed and a lone coyote's eerie howl. After all, it wasn't dubbed the Land of Enchantment for nothing. But New Mexico is also a land of centuries-old traditions, a crossroads of time where your imagination can be delighted by wonders of the past, the present and the eternal.

New Mexico possesses one of the most enduring Native American legacies in the country. The state provided many of the Navajo Code Talkers for the Pacific Theater in World War II, and it has one of the largest Apache communities in the United States, second only to Texas. Most closely associated with New Mexico, though, are the various Pueblo tribes—such as the Acoma, Taos and Zuni—known throughout the world for their ancient adobe buildings, elaborately decorated crafts and beautiful turquoise jewelry.

The Acoma Pueblo, located 60 miles west of Albuquerque, was built hundreds of years ago on a 357-foot sandstone mesa. Considered by Acomans to be the oldest continuously inhabited city in the country, the 70-acre pueblo, known today as Sky City, was built at its high elevation for extra protection against raiders.

A National Historic Landmark, Sky City is also the site of the San Esteban del Rey Mission. Construction started in 1629, under the direction of Friar Juan Ramirez, and wasn't completed until 1640 because all building materials had to be hauled up the steep slopes of the mesa. Sky City holds several annual festivals, but the most popular is the September Feast of San Esteban, the patron saint of the pueblo. Visitors to Acoma Pueblo must receive permission to attend. To schedule your visit, call (800) 747-0181 or visit www.skycitycom.

Also a National Historic Landmark, the Taos Pueblo is the largest surviving multi-storied pueblo structure in the United States. The people of Taos Pueblo continue to live much as they did for the last 1,000 years, and many of them devote their time to crafting tanned buckskin moccasins and drums, as well as clay pottery. Their sculpture, painting and jewelry excel as modern interpretations of their traditional art forms. If you happen to visit on a feast day, you will hear songs and see dances that have been passed down for generations. Taos Pueblo is open daily to visitors most of the year, but it closes periodically for special ceremonies. Before you visit, check the calendar at www.taospueblo.com or call ahead at (505) 758-1028.

Zuni legend tells of a parrot and crow that each presented Zuni women with an egg to see which one would be chosen. The Zuni chose the crow's egg because of its...
turquoise color. At the Zuni Pueblo, near the Arizona border, this love of color comes alive with every generation, as the Zuni love to craft turquoise jewelry fashioned with painstaking mosaic patterns. You can even see how the murals of Alex Seowtewa in the Mission Church of Nuestra Senora de Guadalupe depict the history and culture of the Zuni with vibrant coloring and tradition-inspired skill.

The Zuni people are most striking in their dances. Their costumes are unsurpassed in their detail and colors, and the dances themselves offer a unique window into an ancient past. There are many chances to see Zuni dances throughout the year, but the most popular occur during the Shalako ceremony, held in December, and the McKinley County Fair, held at the pueblo in August. Plan your visit at www.experiencezuni.com.

**EYES FORWARD AND UPWARD**

The many aspects of New Mexico's heritage converge upon Albuquerque, the state's largest city. Named after the Spanish Duke of Albuquerque, the viceroy of New Spain, Albuquerque was founded in 1706 by Spanish colonists. Throughout the 18th and 19th centuries, Albuquerque served as a desolate trading post connecting Mexico to Santa Fe. Most of its residents lived around the central plaza, which is the site of historic Old Town.

Old Town consists of 10 blocks of old-style adobe buildings, many of which have been converted into shops or restaurants, and all of which surround the plaza. The San Felipe de Neri Church, which was founded in 1706 and rebuilt in 1793, looms on the north end of the plaza and is the oldest surviving building in the city.

One of the biggest and most popular attractions in New Mexico is the Albuquerque International Balloon Fiesta, which occurs during the first week in October. The festival brings together the largest gathering of ballooning enthusiasts from around the United States and the world. During the nine-day event, visitors can watch the flights of hundreds of beautifully designed and colored hot-air balloons.

In 1971 aviator Sid Cutter flew a balloon on his mother's birthday and fell in love with the pastime. The following year he
invited other balloonists and founded what would become the Albuquerque International Balloon Fiesta. Although it began as a gathering of 13 balloons, the festival has since expanded to include hundreds of participants who engage in skill competitions, exhibitions and mass ascensions—a picturesque sight where a dizzying array of balloons are piloted into the sky.

Year-round visitors can learn more about the history and craft of ballooning at the recently opened Anderson-Abruzzo Albuquerque International Balloon Museum, located on the same grounds used for the fiesta. The museum is named for two Albuquerque balloonists who completed the first nonstop crossing of the Atlantic Ocean in a gas balloon, among other feats.

For more information on Albuquerque’s attractions, visit the Albuquerque Convention and Visitors Bureau at www.abqcvb.org.

**TIMELESS BEAUTY**

Besides rich cultures, New Mexico has a boundless wealth of natural wonders that visitors can experience, such as the 275-square-mile White Sands National Monument, the largest gypsum sand dune field in the world. Because gypsum is water-soluble, rain would normally dissolve it and carry the crystals out to sea. At White Sands, however, the sand is deposited into the Tularosa Basin, which has no outlet to the ocean, so the dunes are constantly being shifted and reshaped by the wind. A scenic...
eight-mile drive takes you from the visitor’s center into the heart of the dunes. For the more adventurous, ranger-led activities are scheduled daily through Labor Day, including nature walks and evening slide programs. Visitors can access the dunes by Dunes Drive, which is sometimes closed due to missile testing at the adjacent White Sands Missile Range. For more information on park closures and to plan your visit, go to www.nps.gov jwhsa or call (505) 679 - 2599.

Located in the southeast corner of New Mexico in the Guadalupe Mountains, Carlsbad Caverns National Park is home to one of the largest underground caves in the world. It began as a reef in an inland sea 250 million years ago. Rainwater erosion and natural sulfuric acid helped dissolve the limestone to form the gigantic chambers of the caves. Within these caves are countless rock formations, including enormous stalactites and stalagmites. The park hosts hundreds of thousands of visitors annually, and year-round, self-guided tours or a variety of ranger-guided tours are available. For more information, visit www.nps.gov/cave or call (505) 785 - 2232.

LANDSCAPE OF INSPIRATION

Rolling landscapes and luscious flora and fauna have drawn countless artists—innovative and traditional—to New Mexico, many of whom eventually migrated to Santa Fe. Canyon Road, a stretch of old-style adobe architecture teeming with the sounds of flamenco guitar, is known as the center of Santa Fe’s artist community.

Another reason for this thriving art scene is the legacy left by Georgia O’Keeffe, one of the greatest American painters. Most of her famous works were inspired by New Mexican landscapes—like the gorgeous Ghost Ranch—and she even spent the last two years of her life in Santa Fe. In 1997, 11 years after her death, the Georgia O’Keeffe Museum began its mission of preserving O’Keeffe’s artistic legacy and promoting American Modernism. Located two blocks from the historic Santa Fe Plaza, the museum houses the largest collection of O’Keeffe works—more than 139 paintings, drawings and sculpture, at least 50 of which can be seen at any given time. You can begin planning your visual journey at www.okeeffemuseum.org.

Santa Fe is also home to one of the country’s oldest neighborhoods, the Barrio de Analco, or “neighborhood on the other side of the river.” It was first settled in the early 1600s by Tlaxcalan Indians who were not allowed to dwell in the city proper. After the Pueblo Revolt, General Don Diego de Vargas (the namesake of the adjoining De Vargas Street) granted the land to Juan de Leon Brito, a Tlaxcalan leader who helped recapture New Mexico for the Spanish in 1693.

In addition to the oldest continually occupied house in America, Barrio de Analco also contains the oldest church in America: the Chapel of San Miguel por Analco. It was built in 1626, and although tradition holds that the church’s burning sparked the Pueblo Revolt in 1680, almost everything but the wooden parts survived. Renovated in 1710, the chapel currently boasts several historical works of priceless art, including a church bell cast in Spain in 1356 and a statue of San Miguel carved in Mexico in 1709 for the chapel’s renovation.

Matt Kelley is a contributing writer.
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Rediscovering America’s Genesis

Ask Americans where the country got its start, and you will likely hear “Plymouth” or “the Mayflower.” The story of the Pilgrims’ 1620 landing has long been considered the first chapter in United States history, and it hangs onto its aura of American genesis with the help of a little autumn holiday called Thanksgiving. While it does not have its own famous feast day associated with it, America’s real start arguably began at Jamestown 13 years earlier in 1607, a settlement a few hundred miles south of Plymouth. Next year will mark the colony’s 400th anniversary. Though Jamestown was not the first European settlement, nor the first English one, it was the first permanent English settlement in North America.

By Lee Gimpel
Jamestown settlers were the continent's first capitalists, motivated to survive on the land out of a desire to get rich or die trying.

Previous English settlements hadn't survived as well as non-English European settlements, the most notable of which were the Spanish settlements of St. Augustine and Santa Fe, founded in 1565 and 1607, respectively. Although the English made a handful of other attempts to establish settlements, the most famous prior to Jamestown's founding was the Roanoke Colony. Located on an island just off the coast of present-day North Carolina, the 1585 experiment—now commonly known as America's "Lost Colony"—ended a few years later and is now famous not for its beginning but rather for its mysterious demise.

Together, both Plymouth and Jamestown offer a glimpse into the country's essence. If Plymouth stands for independent religious practice, then Jamestown deserves credit for America's other great defining characteristics: capitalism and democracy. Rather than escape their homeland for reasons of prayer and orthodoxy, Jamestown settlers were the continent's first capitalists, motivated to survive on the land out of a desire to get rich or die trying—which many did, as three quarters of the original 450 settlers died in the first three years. All early settlement of the New World had at least some degree of strategic national or military implications, but Jamestown's founders did not see their settlement as a lonely frontier garrison but rather the beginning of a profitable trans-Atlantic enterprise.

A Commercial Venture

The men behind Jamestown were some of England's richest and most powerful merchants. In an age where the successful sailing of a ship laden with exotic spices from the Orient could make a fortune, the New World held the promise of immense wealth. While the Spanish were more entranced by the Native American legends of gold and silver, the get-rich-
quick fantasy of discovering glittering mineral wealth certainly appealed to even the most staid Englishman.

A commercial venture that grew into much more, Jamestown's significance in history has largely gone unnoticed, according to James Horn, Ph.D., author of *A Land As God Made It: Jamestown and the Birth of America* (Basic Books, 2005). It gained a reputation for some time as being less than a success, Horn says. But aside from simply being first, there is more to Jamestown's relevance and historical significance. On perhaps the most basic level, it has been overlooked as the beachhead that made future English settlements, such as Plymouth, possible. If the colonists hadn't hung on—surviving disease and confrontations with the Native Americans—England might never have settled North America's Eastern seaboard. Without Jamestown holding the fort in the mid-Atlantic, the land that became the United States might have been carved up by the Spanish advancing from the south, the French from the northern reaches of present-day Canada or the Dutch, who had established themselves along the Hudson River and New Amsterdam (later New York City) area.

Jamestown's parent company in London had made overtures with the Pilgrims, then living in the Netherlands in 1617, proposing that the religious separatists move to the Virginia colony. The colonists who would later found Plymouth even considered sailing to South America and, without a stronghold on the mainland, might have also turned their sights to the Caribbean islands, as was the case with other similar groups. The *Mayflower* was originally slated to disembark farther south, but went off course.

Jamestown proved to the English that they could indeed make a go of a mainland American settlement. And as England's pied-a-terre, Jamestown planted more than an English flag. By default, the colony laid the groundwork for the country we see today—its culture, laws and institutions. Horn notes that in Jamestown three elements of successful colonization existed: private property in land ownership, a representative assembly for ordering local affairs and civilian control of the military. When it was discovered that Jamestown's tobacco profits were being drained by a monopoly of Virginia Company members, for instance, reforms were instituted in London to give settlers the right to own their own land and to replace the arbitrary rule of the governor with English common law.

Of course, it is hard to ascribe to Jamestown the paternity of what would eventually form the United States because of concurrent developments in other colonies. However, the colony does deserve a special mention for the creation of representative government: While a 1619 church meeting that met upon an order from the Virginia Company to establish an equal, uniform government to make laws for the colony's settlers came years after Jamestown's 1607 founding, it also came more than a century before the "no taxation without representation" rallying cry that ignited the American Revolution. This elected legislative government—the House of Burgesses—consisted of two representatives from each private estate and two from each of the company's four estates and was one of the earliest experiments with democracy in the New World.

**Jamestown's Native Americans**

Until recently, not much was known about the Native Americans who traded and fought with the settlers, nor the Africans who arrived in 1619 as slaves. Only in the past three decades have scholars focused more on the Native Americans' role in the story, vastly expanding one's understanding of the Jamestown settlement.
What is known about the original inhabitants today constitutes "a different world" than what was known just 50 years ago, says ethnohistorian Helen Rountree, the author of *Pocahontas, Powhatan, Opechancanough: Three Indian Lives Changed By Jamestown* (University Press of Virginia, 2005) and one of the foremost experts on Virginia's Indians.

"In 1957 there had not been an anthropological study—a really serious one—of the Powhatan culture. When I started in 1969 and 1970, everybody told me it was impossible ... they figured there weren't any records about it [but] I started delving in, and I found a ton of them," Rountree says.

Before, the only appearances the aboriginal population made were a few cameos in a bigger story: the original contact, the inevitable fighting and the somewhat well-known rudiments of the legend of Powhatan princess Pocahontas, who supposedly saved Captain Smith's life when her father tried to kill him (a story that some historical researchers cast doubt upon, though Pocahontas did exist and married one of Jamestown's settlers).

New scholarship adds more depth to the Native Americans' involvement. On one hand, historians now treat them as more than one group. Common perceptions have tended to paint them with a broad brush rather than the more realistic view that different tribes, each constituting its own political organization, existed.

"You can't simply lump everyone on a continent together," Rountree says.

On the other hand, the story of the Powhatans and the other Native Americans is now viewed within a larger context with more give-and-take with the English, whom they thought of as incompetent in many regards. They may have seen the English as pawns in a game for local power, using them to obtain "prestige goods," such as copper and European weaponry, but they did share food with the Englishmen, showed them how to plant corn and yams and introduced them to the forests. Still, peace was tenuous, and fighting between the groups was frequent and fierce.

Aside from general scholarship across the country, archaeology has played a major part in the rediscovery of this and other parts of the Jamestown story.

In 1994, much of the original Jamestown fort was discovered buried near the bank of the James River. The fort was near the spot where a sign once pointed into the water to indicate the supposed location of the lost structure. The military heart of the colony has yielded new discoveries about the settlers, but recently unearthed Native American settlements, particularly Werowocomoco, have shed new light on the 1607 world that has been buried for so long and still remains undiscovered next to more substantial digs.

A Different World

Overall, the lens through which Jamestown is seen has changed. The colony used to be painted as a mere English hamlet transported piecemeal across the ocean. However, Jamestown is now viewed as a completely new entity. Despite its population of a few hundred and English cultural ties, it was a cosmopolitan place that was part of the burgeoning Atlantic economy, which stretched between Europe and the Americas and encompassed the West Indies.

"The archaeology of Jamestown looks more like the archaeology of a major commercial city than it does an English village," says Thomas Davidson, Ph.D., senior curator of the Jamestown-Yorktown Foundation, who notes the existence of records indicating the presence of Oriental porcelain, imported lemons, Mediterranean delicacies and exotic spices.

For the colonists of 1607, what they found—and what they created—was a different world from the one they knew. With all that is new, rediscovered and better understood today, Jamestown visitors from just 50 years ago might think the same thing if they came today.

Lee Gimpel is a freelance writer based in Richmond, Va.
A Beginning and an End for England

At Jamestown, the English got their start in America in 1607. Yet, 174 years later, their dominance in America ended at the hands of the nascent United States at Yorktown, just a few miles away from the original Jamestown palisades. It's like two American beginnings in one.

Celebrating its 225th anniversary in 2006, the Yorktown Battlefield is an unassuming site, but one that illuminates—with the aid of a park ranger and a brief walking tour—the engagement in a way a history book never could. While the sprawling fields do not look much different from open farmland around Virginia's Tidewater area, the scars of the decisive battle of the Revolution are still visible, including earthworks used by Cornwallis and Washington. And a number of rogue cannonballs are still lodged into the sides of brick buildings in Yorktown proper—the remnants of some of the 15,000 artillery rounds fired upon the British continuously for nine days.

Kid Friendly

A visit to Jamestown likely means a visit to two other historical attractions located nearby as well: Yorktown Victory Center and Colonial Williamsburg.

Drawing families and school groups, the sites offer an experience suitable for children and adults. Costumed interpreters abound, some of whom will fire off period muskets or cannons (all with blanks, of course) during demonstrations. Interactive displays explore the life of the English and the Native Americans—whether through rigging demonstrations on one of the replica sailing ships or lessons in tanning animal hides. Other hands-on activities include playing a Colonial game of ninepins, digging out a log with oyster shells to make a period canoe, competing in the African game "mancala" and trying on the metal armor of the period. In the museums, display panels at a child's eye level are written specifically for young visitors, encouraging kids to compare their modern-day experiences with those of centuries ago.

For more information, visit www.historyisfun.org.

For Extra Credit

To help commemorate America's 400th anniversary, the NSDAR annual American History Essay Contest features a Jamestown-related theme. The 2006-2007 contest, titled "Jamestown Colony Is Settled," invites students in grades 5 through 8 to take on the persona of one of the early settlers and detail the activities and hardships involved in establishing the settlement. All essays must first be submitted to a local DAR chapter. National winners will receive a monetary prize. For more information, contact the Office of the Historian General, NSDAR, phone: (202) 879-3256.
The violin is in every way a living art.

To those who play and enjoy its haunting music, the violin is in every way a living art.

By Laura Flynn Tapia
Antes was known to have crafted the first violin made in Colonial America in 1759. During the Colonial period, the violin became a household fixture that transcended culture, region and economic status. Colonists loved to dance to English and Celtic reels, jigs and minuets, often accompanied by only a single violin.

European-made violins, considered the most perfect in the world in form and function at the time, were designed to be played by classically trained musicians. Their intricate size, proportions and artistry and impeccable acoustics came from centuries of experimentation. Early American violin makers lacked experience in the trade as well as patronage from the church and the royal courts that their European counterparts enjoyed. So they experimented with a great deal of trial and error before the quality of their instruments rivaled those from Europe.

Many American violin makers, also known as luthiers, used church basses (sometimes called Yankee bass viols) as a model for their violins. These instruments had three to five strings, which varied in size and were primarily used to play the low, somber notes that accompanied choir and congregational singing in church. They were never suited for classical music, and this limited American violin makers who used them as a blueprint.

Massachusetts violin makers who lived near Boston, the cultural center of the nation, had an advantage over other luthiers across the country. Bostonian Ira White studied a Stradivarius violin, a master-made Italian instrument, and embarked on a successful career as a violin maker along with his brother, Asa, in the 1830s. Asa taught several apprentices, and they, in turn, passed on the tradition, a ritual that still continues today. Some early American luthiers were cabinetmakers, clock makers and cobbler who transferred their craftsmanship skills into violin making. With the help of New World craftsmen, the violin gained further diversity in how it sounded—a difference often dictated by who was playing its strings.

Early violins were crafted using a soft, close-grain spruce for the front belly of the instrument. Makers favored the way the wood held and enhanced the vibrations of the strings. A harder wood, fashioned from Bosnian maple, was chosen for the back, sides and neck. The strings were made from gut (sheep or lamb intestines), and a length of wood fit with horsehair was used for the bow.

A 'DELIGHTFUL RECREATION'

Thomas Jefferson, a gifted musician, called playing the violin a "delightful recreation." He played one at his own wedding, accompanied by his bride who played the pianoforte. Women were discouraged from playing the violin because it wasn't considered proper for their reputation and were steered toward more "acceptable" instruments like the harpsichord, also known as the English guitar.

Jefferson was required to study the violin as part of his formal education and, as a boy, would practice at least three hours each day. By age 14, he had learned to pen his favorite fiddle tunes. He and Patrick Henry are known to have played Mozart and Corelli in Jefferson's Monticello parlor, and his library was stocked with musical compositions of classical artists, such as Vivaldi and Handel. Jefferson supposedly owned an Amati violin, a 17th-century Italian-made instrument, which was one of several he collected in his lifetime.

Jefferson's brother, Randolph, shared his passion for playing. According to a family slave named Isaac, Randolph "used to come out among the black people, play the fiddle, and dance half the night."

Jefferson, like most slave owners, made certain a few slaves learned to play the violin for entertainment at plantation balls. After these events, the slaves would take the instruments back to their quarters and create their own style of music. Ultimately, these late-night sessions evolved into the early development of jazz and the blues.

Fiddles also infiltrated the Appalachian hills of Kentucky and West Virginia, where bluegrass music surfaced in the early 20th century. The violin is informally referred to as a fiddle when it is used to play certain types of music, specifically bluegrass. When pressed for a distinction between the two, some have said "the violin sings, and the fiddle dances." Ultimately, the difference lies in how the instrument is played.
A craftsman carves violin components. It takes about four months to handcraft a violin.
For Appalachian families who lived miles apart on isolated farmland and struggled to scratch out a living on the soil, fiddling offered a diversion to their hard-scrabble life. At the end of long, backbreaking days in the fields, families would gather with their fiddles and other handcrafted instruments to play music together and forget their troubles. Much of the music they played were tunes that originated from Scottish and Irish melodies of their ancestors, which had changed over time through oral transmission.

**Each Violin Has a Story**

"I can tell the mood of the player by the sound of his fiddle," old-time fiddler Ed McCracken says. "There is an intimacy created between a player and his instrument." Many musicians believe each player leaves a mark on his instrument that carries throughout its life. Bill Lloyd, curator of stringed instruments at the Country Music Hall of Fame in Nashville, Tenn., says some instruments "carry feelings of the artist that are almost palpable when you touch them."

These instruments possess a living history; the soul of makers and players live in each one that survives, which is why the preservation of violins and fiddles is essential. "Fortunately, the instruments must be played to maintain good condition, so the musicians who work for the Country Music Hall of Fame are the ones who get to 'air out' the fiddles," Lloyd says.

**Preserving the Craft**

Today American violin makers follow a more traditional style in crafting their instruments, basing their constructions on early masters from Cremona, Italy, such as Stradivari (see sidebar on page 33). American violin maker Jonathan Cooper studied for three years in Cremona to develop his skill, while others learn from stateside craftsmen, attend schools like the Violin Making School of America in Salt Lake City or even teach themselves. Throughout history, violin making has remained a family business with the secrets of the trade passed down through generations.

American craftsmen use the same materials as their Colonial counterparts—though many substitute synthetic strings for gut. It takes them the same amount of time—about four months—to make a violin as it did in the 18th century, though today's craftsmen don't have to wait as long for the varnish to dry. "Violin making is the perfect blend between art and science," says violin maker Charles McCook. "This balance must be maintained or the resulting instrument will be inadequate in some way."

"With every instrument I make, I feel like I am leaving part of myself to carry on; there is something very fulfilling about that." Over time, many instruments have been created out of necessity, using whatever resources were available. Musician Ed McCracken knew a fiddler who "made his own fiddle in the shape of a triangle and carried it around in a sack."

American luthiers are a close-knit group. Members of the American Federation of Violin and Bow Makers gathered recently at the Library of Congress to celebrate the violin's history in America. Players met luthiers and bonded over their roles in perpetuating a rich musical heritage. "By looking back at who we were, it allows us to see who we are," says Lloyd, explaining why he sees violins and fiddle preservation as part of American musical heritage. The life of the violin continues to provide a glimpse into the past and a link to the future, enabling music-lovers to share a piece of common history. 

Laura Flynn Tapia is a freelance writer in Nashville, Tenn.
The violin emerged in the early 16th century in northern Italy. Andrea Amati was commissioned by the Medici family to build an instrument that would lend itself easily to street musicians. Two hundred years later in Cremona, Italy, Guarneri del Gesu and Antonio Stradivari began producing what are still considered the most perfectly crafted violins ever made. Stradivari (1644–1737) made more than 1,000 instruments in his lifetime. About 600 Stradivari violins are known to have survived and remain the most sought-after instruments in the world. In fact, at Christie’s in May 2006, Stradivari’s violin “The Hammer” sold for $3.5 million, making it the most expensive instrument ever purchased at a public auction.

The violin’s spectacular success hinges on its versatility. Not only did the appeal of the violin cross distinct class lines—from street musicians to aristocratic drawing rooms—but it spanned cultures and continents. As its popularity increased, composers like Mozart and Paganini began writing extensively for the violin, enhancing its appeal. But its obvious place within the classical genres should not overshadow its vital role in other musical genres, such as blues, jazz, folk and bluegrass.

Stradivarius: Five Violins, One Cello and a Genius by Tony Faber (Pan, 2005) traces the life of several instruments made by Antonio Stradivari. Faber’s extensive research follows each instrument from its birthplace in northern Italy, through the concert halls of Europe and into America.

Above: This 19th-century print portrays Antonio Stradivari (c.1644–1737), the great violin maker, in his workshop.
New National Park Honors Home Front Workers Who Helped Win World War II

By Phyllis McIntosh
In 1943, when news of $200-a-week defense jobs reached Kellogg, Idaho, Floradell Frimodig Ogle convinced the high-school principal to give her a diploma five months early. She and her mother packed up and moved to California to work in the shipyards. Ogle started work as a welder and her mother, Margaret, took a job as a “burner,” cutting huge plates of steel into sections for the hulls of Liberty ships. “What I remember most is the camaraderie, all cultures, all people working for a common cause—to win the war,” says Ogle, who now lives near Sacramento, Calif. In that same year, Margaret Arnold Nash, unhappy in a teaching job, jumped at the chance to become a crane operator in a Michigan plant that built B-24 bombers. She spent much of the next two years some 40 feet above the floor suspended in a steel cage that traveled a bridge length of two city blocks. It didn’t bother her a bit that her crane operator’s card read “he.” “They hadn’t bothered, nor cared to change it,” she says. “I just laughed.”

Six million American women joined the labor force during World War II to fill the jobs of men off fighting the war. Some 3 million of them donned bandannas and pants—most for the first time—and went to work in defense plants, building planes, ships, tanks and artillery. Fondly known by the collective nickname, Rosie the Riveter, they wielded riveting guns and welding torches; operated cranes, lathes and drill presses; and performed all manner of hot, dirty, muscle-straining jobs. Met at first with resentment from men still on the job, they soon earned the respect of male colleagues and supervisors. And though many dutifully returned to their roles as homemakers at the war’s end, these brave women paved the way for their daughters and granddaughters to launch a movement that would secure women a permanent place in the American labor force.

Now some 60 years later, the Rosies are getting the tribute they deserve. Congress has authorized establishment of the Rosie the Riveter/World War II Home Front National Historical Park in Richmond, Calif., a wartime boomtown where four shipyards produced a record 747 ships—including one in just four days—more than any other shipyard complex in the country.

‘She’s Making History’
The fictional character of Rosie the Riveter stemmed from the government’s campaign to glamorize defense work and lure middle-class women into factories. The name originated with a 1942 song titled “Rosie the Riveter,” which praised female assembly-line workers with such lyrics as:

She’s making history.  
Working for victory.  
Rosieetti the riveter.

The first image of Rosie appeared in a Norman Rockwell painting for the May 29, 1943, cover of the Saturday Evening Post. It depicted a brawny yet feminine figure with a halo around her head, a riveting gun and lunch bucket on her lap, and a copy of Hitler’s Mein Kampf crushed under her foot. The original painting sold at auction in 2002 for nearly $5 million.

Dozens of real-life Rosies were captured on film by leading photographers of the day such as Dorothea Lange and Margaret Bourke-White. But the most recognizable Rosie of all is another painting of a young woman in a bandanna and blue overalls with her arm bent to show her muscle, pictured above the slogan “We Can Do It!” Drawn in 1943 for a government recruitment poster originally intended to be displayed for just two weeks, this determined Rosie remains the most enduring image of women workers during World War II.

With the Rosies now in their 80s and 90s, the National Park Service is anxious to preserve as many of their stories as possible. The Rosie the Riveter National Historic Park has collected some 20,000 photos, personal memorabilia and “moving stories of sacrifice, loss and patriotism,” says park ranger Elizabeth Tucker. Donated items include employee badges, pay stubs, rivets of all sizes, a welder’s mask, jewelry and doll furniture made of scrap metal and a shirt embroidered with
the names of one woman’s coworkers at a Goodyear Tire plant.
Several California chapters of the Daughters of the American Revolution have rallied to the cause by raising funds for an interpretive display at the park and distributing park service forms to urge members to share their home front stories.

**Tour a Wartime Boomtown**

Though the park itself may not be in full operation for another five to ten years, visitors now can take a driving tour of Richmond’s wartime sites and view exhibits that tell how people from all over the country flocked to jobs at the town’s four shipyards, along with 55 other wartime industries. Housing was so scarce at first that some workers had to share the same bed, sleeping in shifts. But by the end of 1943, Richmond had one of the largest public housing projects in the country. To maintain round-the-clock production and serve the needs of his workers, shipyard owner Henry J. Kaiser opened 24-hour day-care centers and instituted a healthcare system that grew to become Kaiser Permanente, the nation’s pioneer HMO. The original Kaiser Permanente Field Hospital, Atchison Village Housing (which has hardly changed since World War II) and two day-care centers that operated until just a few years ago line the driving tour.

Structures at the heart of the park include the Ford assembly plant, which produced 60,000 tanks and other combat vehicles during the war and is slated as the site of a permanent visitor/education center, and the buildings and dry docks of Shipyard 3, the only Kaiser shipyard designed as a permanent facility. Docked outside Shipyard 3 and open to visitors is the Richmond-built USS Red Oak Victory. Also recently moved to the site is a 10-story whirlie, or rotating crane that lifted massive ship sections and gear into place.

Inspiration for the national park stemmed from Richmond’s Rosie the Riveter Memorial, completed in 2000 on the site of former Shipyard 2. Built as the first national tribute to female home front workers, the memorial features sculptures evoking construction of a ship’s hull, as well as plaques, photos and granite pavers that recount the timeline of the war and individual memories of that era.

“‘If it hadn’t been for women getting into the wartime jobs and being on the home front for the soldiers, I don’t think we would have won the war.’”

_Floradell Frimodig Ogle, member of the General John A. Sutter Chapter, Sacramento, Calif._

“‘If it hadn’t been for women getting into the wartime jobs and being on the home front for the soldiers, I don’t think we would have won the war.’”

A quote on a platform of the Rosie the Riveter Memorial overlooking San Francisco Bay sums it up this way: “You must tell your children, putting modesty aside, that without us, without women, there would have been no spring in 1945.”

Phyllis McIntosh covered the Washington-Rochambeau Revolutionary Route for the July/August 2006 issue.

**Share Your Stories**

If you have stories to share about your or a family member’s experiences on the home front during World War II, call the Rosie the Riveter/World War II Home Front National Historical Park at (800) 497–6743 and leave your name and address. The Park Service will send you instructions. Visit <www.nps.gov/rori> for more information.

Behind-the-scenes tours of the park’s collection of memorabilia are available for former home front workers or their families. Call (510) 232–5050 for an appointment.
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NESTLED NEXT TO THE OCCOQUAN RIVER, ABOUT 20 MILES SOUTH OF WASHINGTON, D.C., the town is small, a mere glimpse for travelers speeding by on Virginia Route 123. New multi-story condominiums, born of Northern Virginia’s urban sprawl, rise from hills overlooking the cluster of vintage houses and shops standing on the riverfront, offering a charming reminder of a simpler era.
Occoquan's peaceful demeanor belies its history of war, fire and flood. After each disaster, the town reinvented itself to survive. Perhaps that's why it's believed to harbor an inordinate number of ghosts, the spirits of those who refuse to move on to the next world.

Annette Riley, head of the Occoquan Merchants Association, said that although a few residents aren’t crazy about the town’s ghostly reputation, most townspeople embrace—and cultivate—their spectral claim to fame. But then, Occoquan folks are not touting ghouls, banshees, poltergeists or other scary spirits. Their ghosts are a tamer, if sometimes playful, lot.

“There’s not a single nasty ghost in Occoquan,” Riley says.

The town capitalizes on its otherworldly residents, of which Riley calculates are at least a dozen.

Fifteen years ago the town launched “ghost tours” on the last two weekends of October. The tours, though, are billed as “Historic Walking Tours With Ghosts.”

Proud as Occoquan may be of its ghosts, it’s even prouder of its history, which often intertwines the supernatural and the historical.

The Ghosts of Occoquan


She’s lived in the same rambling bungalow on Commerce Street in Occoquan since 1930 when she was 9 months old—almost as long, perhaps, as its resident ghost “Old Bill.”

Her front porch overlooks the Occoquan River, which has served as the lifeblood of the town for centuries. It’s where Musselman ice-skated as a child and where soldiers from nearby Fort Belvoir honed their pontoon-bridge building skills during World War II. She remembers prisoners swimming the river to escape from the now-defunct state prison a few miles away, hoping to find refuge in Occoquan. And she remembers Hurricane Agnes’ devastating floodwaters in 1972.

“People are not easily frightened here,” she says.

Perhaps that’s why Musselman and other residents relish retelling the town’s ghost stories. And why she speaks of “Old Bill” and his antics as fondly as if he were a pesky younger brother.

She’s seen him occasionally—a ghost about 5 feet tall and wrapped in a dark cloak. He used to play ball with one of her cats and has often brushed past her in the house. He hid her favorite iron skillet for a year and then nabbed her rolling pin. He empties the ice trays, leaving the tray in a puddle of melted ice on the kitchen counter.

“He must be serving drinks to his ghost friends in the basement,” she jokes.

Perhaps some of his phantom friends are among the spirits rumored to gather at night, playing cards in one of the town’s oldest homes a few blocks away.

Occoquan, Va., offers visitors a taste of riverfront charm, along with otherworldly diversions.
Occoquan’s architecture consists of an engaging mélange of pre-Revolutionary and Victorian with a few examples of English Tudor and Arts and Crafts in the mix. The ghosts seem to favor the oldest, least disturbed structures.

Some of the town’s supernatural residents are transient, spending the night in a building then leaving during the day. Others stay put, like the ghost at the Veterans of Foreign Wars hall that was once a firehouse in the 1930s.

“That ghost doesn’t allow the lights to be turned off at night until the tables are stacked away, and all is in order in the hall,” Riley says.

The spirit of the long-deceased Mrs. Leary lingers at the 1860s-era building that was originally Leary’s Lumber and Hardware on the corner of Union and Mill Streets.

“She used to chase away noisy children in the evenings as she worked behind the counter in the window,” Riley says. “But she hasn’t been seen for a while, probably been scared away by the noise of the motorcycles at the pub across the street.”

The “Down Under” basement pub is part of the historic Occoquan Inn. The central part of the building dates back to 1810, when the inn welcomed travelers arriving by boat or horse and carriage.

Today the inn also houses a casual eatery, the Virginia Grill and the more upscale, Colonial-style Occoquan Inn, home to its own ghost.

“Occoquan” derives its name from a Dogue Indian word meaning “at the end of the water.” Legend has it that after Occoquan’s settlement drove the Dogues west, one lone Native American remained.
He was a tall man with a dignified face and long black hair—and he had a crush on the wife of the inn's owner. One night as the Native American descended the staircase from the inn's second floor, the innkeeper surprised and shot him. The man died before hitting the last step.

Jonathan Carroll has worked at the inn for nine years. He'll talk with curious diners about mirrors cracking, wine glasses crashing and candles being mysteriously snuffed out. He's never seen the ghostly Indian, but he'll point out a framed photo of the inn's wooden staircase—with a vague shadow that some believe is the image of the unfortunate lover.

Riley says that in the early 1990s, a television crew arrived with an array of sound and video equipment and a squad of paranormal experts. Crew members left convinced that they had verified the existence of at least four ghosts at the inn.

Claudia Cruise, Occoquan Town administrator and clerk, has experienced unexplainable happenings in the town hall. The building, formerly a 1925 red brick Methodist church, also houses the Occoquan police station.

“Light bulbs, too high for anyone to reach without a ladder, are unscrewed, and footsteps are heard in the town offices when no one is there,” she says. “I’m not an unbeliever.”

The Other World of Occoquan

Shopping and relaxation, rather than ghosts, are usually on the minds of the tourists strolling Occoquan’s brick sidewalks or relaxing with a cool drink on the riverfront deck of Madigan’s Waterfront restaurant.

Jim Boyt from nearby Lake Ridge, Va., his wife and three young children visit frequently.

“We bring the kids to feed the ducks in the park and to get cookies from the Garden Kitchen café and bakery,” he says.

Audrey Watson traveled with a contingent of senior citizens day-tripping from Washington, D.C.

“I love the shops,” she says. “This is a good place to just go with the flow and enjoy.”

Occoquan has a history of going with the flow. From Virginia's earliest days, the town was a nautical commercial center and, by 1750, an industrial hub of forges, sawmills, warehouses, shops and dwellings. In 1757 John Ballandine, a leading industrialist and considered to be Occoquan’s founder, built an 11-room stone mansion, Rockledge, overlooking the river falls. The house, designed by architect William Buckland who built Gunston Hall, home of patriot George Mason, still stands at the end of Mill Street.

In 1759 Merchant's Mill was the first automated gristmill in the country. A single worker operated the machinery that off-loaded the cargo schooners and barges, processed the grain and returned it to the ships. A stage route, authorized by the federal government in 1805, made the Occoquan post office the main delivery point for mail traveling between the Northern and Southern states.

By 1838 the town had one of Virginia's first cotton mills—a four-story, thousand-spindle wonder—and also supplied cord wood, fish and river ice to the Washington, D.C., area. During the Civil War, Confederate forces wintered in Occoquan, but Union troops still burned the cotton mill and the toll bridge leading into town.

The town regrouped after the war and prospered. In the late 1800s dozens of fishing and ice schooners sailed in and out of Occoquan, an oyster-shucking house and turtle farm flourished and, on summer weekends, excursion steamers...
brought picnickers from Washington, D.C., and Baltimore.

At the turn of the century, Occoquan bustled with shops, the first opera house in the area and the Lyric Theater. Circuses and traveling shows set up along the public wharf during the summer, and everyone ice-skated on the thick river ice in the winter.

That all changed with the 1916 fire that claimed homes, stores, the jail, hotel, stables and the Methodist church. Eight years later, another fire destroyed the Merchant’s Mill.

In 1928 the newly constructed Route 1 bypassed the town, as did a new railroad. The river silted in, industry declined and Occoquan became just another sleepy little town.

Then in June 1972, Hurricane Agnes roared through, destroying homes, businesses and the town’s bridge across the river. Property values declined further when the replacement bridge bypassed the town.

“Until the hurricane, this was a town of mom-and-pop businesses,” Riley says. “But the storm changed life for a lot of people.”

As Occoquan recovered, specialty shops and restaurants replaced the old secondhand and antique stores. Residents restored vintage buildings and capitalized on the town’s charm, a vanishing commodity in Northern Virginia’s burgeoning development. The stone structure that had been the miller’s office, spared in the 1924 fire, was restored as the Mill House Museum, also home to Historic Occoquan, Inc.

“Occoquan didn’t pattern itself on Williamsburg or any other town—we’ve found our own way; we’ve done our own thing,” Claudia Cruise says.

Today Occoquan, a national historic landmark since 1984, covers only one-fifth of a square mile and has fewer than 800 residents. Tourism is essential to the town’s economy, Cruise says.

“That’s our prime industry, what really keeps us going.”

Two huge craft shows each year draw hundreds of craftsmen and thousands of visitors to admire the hilly streets filled with unique shops and boutiques, the flowering plum trees, the waterfall and the fishermen pulling shad from the river. But as darkness falls amid the glow of the gas streetlights, the town takes on a different tenor.

Are there spirits gliding through the streets?

Riley thinks so.

“Several promoters have suggested hyping our ghost stories to make more money on our tours,” she says. “But we want no part of that. We tell only those stories that have been documented from personal experience.”

*Phyllis Speidell and John Sheally II covered the Colonial Polo Cup at Shirley Plantation for the May/June 2006 issue.*
A grain boat passes under a huge railway lift bridge on the Welland Canal, which connects Lake Erie with Lake Ontario.
RUNNING 363 MILES from Buffalo on Lake Erie to Albany on the Hudson River and rising 573 feet, the Erie Canal ranked as a monumental engineering achievement in an era before steam power replaced human and animal muscle. Comprised of 83 locks to raise and lower vessels, the project cost $7,143,789 and was completed in just over eight years—far less than the 12 years projected at the outset. Often referred to during construction as “Clinton’s Ditch”—a derisive reference to its greatest champion and long-suffering protector, De Witt Clinton, a former U.S. senator, New York City mayor and governor of New York—the Erie Canal transformed our notions of transportation, commerce, lifestyle and personal convenience, and it quite likely kept a new nation from splitting along a mountainous fault line.

**Whither West?**

The desire for an east-west water route in New York dated back to Henry Hudson’s exploration of the river that bears his name, according to Peter L. Bernstein, in *Wedding of the Waters: The Erie Canal and the Making of a Great Nation* (Norton, 2005).

Hudson hoped to find a westward water route to the Pacific somewhere along the deep broad river. The one promising course disappointed him—the Mohawk River below present-day Albany was too shallow for ships. Ironically, Bernstein notes, the Mohawk Valley held the key to an artificial river west.

The Appalachian Mountains separated much of the original United States from the West. Settlers pushed through gaps in the mountains, but then found transporting goods too difficult and too expensive. Spain controlled the Mississippi River, blocking that route. Without ready access to markets or easy communication with more settled power centers, the settlers felt increasingly isolated and shunted aside by the East.

In the early 19th century, overland travel was a miserably uncomfortable, unreliable process. Rain could wash out roads or turn them into muddy bogs, while fallen trees could block the path. Stagecoaches ran on uncertain schedules; they shook their passengers like dice as they rumbled over the logs paving the “corduroy” turnpikes. Roadside accommodations were notoriously uncomfortable and unreliable.

As a result, few people traveled far from home by land unless they had to. Far worse from both an economic and political viewpoint, farmers and
Garnering Support

The idea received a considerable boost from a businessman named Jesse Hawley in Geneva, N.Y. He knew the difficulties of economically transporting goods and had seen the difference made by the Western Company's waterway. Bernstein notes that Hawley's original inspiration may have come from a conversation with another canal proponent, James Geddes, a judge and surveyor who would become one of the canal's engineers. Geddes in turn had become inspired by Gouverneur Morris, who dreamed of an artificial river from Lake Erie to the Hudson.

Dreams began to turn into reality after President Thomas Jefferson intimated in his 1805 inaugural address and again in 1807 that the federal government would use surplus revenue to help fund internal improvements such as canals. The states, including New York, responded with enthusiastic plans for divvying up the surplus.

When New York presented its case to Jefferson in January 1809, the president observed that George Washington's small Potomac project had founderd and flatly rejected the Erie idea "as little short of madness." If New York wanted a canal, the state would have to find some other way to pay for it.

In 1810, Thomas Eddy, the treasurer of the tottering Western Company, tried to persuade the board of directors to extend their project westward. Given the company's weak finances, it is not surprising that they refused. Eddy decided on a bold strategy: He would ask the state government to investigate the need for a western canal. Eddy was confident the report would be favorable and could be the leverage he needed to move his stubborn directors.

Eddy enlisted the aid of state Senator Jonas Platt, who represented the western region, to put together a blue-ribbon investigative commission that included Geddes and fellow surveyor Benjamin Wright, who would also serve as a canal engineer. Fatefully, they also persuaded De Witt Clinton, the influential and powerful state senator, to be a commissioner.

The canal became Clinton's passion, the capstone of a long and distinguished career. Elected to 10 one-year terms as New York City mayor and two terms as governor, Clinton ran against James Madison for president in 1812 on a peace platform. He attracted fierce allies and foes. This was in the early days of party politics, when invective slander and abuse were standard weapons. The maneuvering, plotting, sidestepping and frontal assaults that marked the effort to approve building the canal and then completing it make today's rancorous political environment seem polite by contrast.
But that was still in the future. The commission returned from its fact-finding mission, issued a glowing report and began the serious work of designing and financing “the Great Western Canal,” as it was then called.

**An Engineering Marvel**

Forty feet wide and 4 feet deep, the Erie Canal crossed gorges and rushing rivers and wound through forests primeval and marshes miasmal. The builders had to figure out how to dig through the woods, span the soupy marshes and swamps, and cut through stony hills. Not only that, they also had to divert streams to supply water to the canal, span rivers that cut across the route and build bridges to connect properties divided by the artificial river.

The Erie Canal was the largest public works project of its time in the United States, and one of the largest anywhere in the world. Even mature nations would have balked at its stunning scope. The federal government continued to refuse to help, so in the end, New York state financed it through a combination of taxes and bonds.

At the time, America had no professionally trained civil engineers. Geddes and Wright were familiar with surveying and their meticulous measurements enabled them to connect sections of the project with as little as 2 inches of error. They received invaluable assistance from another self-taught engineer, Canvass White, who paid his own expenses to spend a year in England examining 2,000 miles of its canals to ferret out the secrets of successful construction and operation.

As enormous as it was, the Erie Canal was far from the first or even the longest canal ever dug. Bernstein notes that Babylonians in 2200 B.C. connected the Tigris and Euphrates rivers with a canal, while Egypt bypassed the cataract at Aswan with a canal on the Nile. The Chinese spent nearly a millennium starting in 600 B.C. building the 1,000-mile Grand Canal from near Beijing to Hangzhou.

One thing that all these projects had in common was that human and animal muscle supplied most of the power. But the Americans had some advantages over their earlier counterparts—especially their use of blasting powder for cutting through rock and heavy iron-clad plows that broke up the earth.

They also had Yankee ingenuity. As described by Noble E. Whitford in his 1905 *History of the Canal System of the State of New York*: “The gain in power was such that, with one machine, a team of horses and seven laborers, from thirty to forty large stumps were grubbed in a day. A plow with an additional cutting blade was invented for use among small roots.” Also, the development of locally produced waterproof cement strengthened the stone walls lining the canal and helped prevent leaks.

The planners divided their work into three sections. The westernmost stretch ran from Lake Erie to the Seneca River, more or less downhill all the way. The middle section ran from the Seneca River to Rome, N.Y., near the origin of the Mohawk, passing through hillier terrain. The last section again went downhill from Rome to Albany.

The middle section was the easiest to build. It included a 59-mile-long level stretch from Syracuse to Utica that required no locks. The middle section would be built first. The Canal Bill of 1817 funded only the middle section of the project; future legislation would set the route and devise funding for the western and eastern sections.

Work progressed ahead of schedule, and as sections of the canal were opened to traffic, revenues rolled faster than expected. These successes secured the completion of the project, as they overcame skeptics’ fears about financial failure. The
canal became a job-creation machine, running in high gear even in times of general economic woes.

Sheriff notes that the Erie Canal was in some important ways a truly democratic project. In addition to hordes of laborers, the canal employed farmers, townspeople, artisans and others who worked on the sections passing their homes. Families boarded laborers—often with mixed feelings about opening their homes to strangers. Businessmen sold goods to workers and joined speculators in making land available for the route.

The canal's proponents believed the waterway would help fulfill America's promise of land ownership for virtually all who desired it, Sheriff says. Property ownership was the sine qua non for full-fledged citizenship in the early days of the republic. People who worked for wages were presumed to aspire to owning land or a business or other productive property, according to Sheriff.

That didn't happen. Instead, many of the 9,000-plus people who worked on building the canal remained wage earners. With the advent of the Industrial Revolution, the wage-earner class grew swiftly, transforming early American notions of citizenship.

Immigrant labor also caused tensions as growing numbers of Irish fleeing the famines of 1817 and 1822 joined the work force. Polite society viewed them as uncouth, dirty, illiterate and willing to work for virtually nothing, thus driving down wages for all. Ultimately, they assimilated into the society, many of them settling in towns along the route.

By the 1840s, as many as 30,000 men, women and children—mainly boys who led the teams of horses that pulled the boats—had canal-related jobs, Sheriff reports. There were also untold numbers of people providing services, such as food, drink and accommodations, for canal workers, boat crews and passengers.

Opening a Stream of Wealth

After years of battling his political foes, some of whom had the cheek to claim they were the canal's original supporters and its constant adherents, Governor Clinton must have felt a sweet sense of accomplishment in November 1825 as he approached New York Harbor. He had left Buffalo on October 26 in the Seneca Chief with a keg of lake water to pour into the Atlantic Ocean as a symbolic wedding of the waters. After participating in celebrations at towns along the entire length of the trip, Clinton arrived in New York Harbor on November 4 and slowly poured the fresh Western water into the Atlantic brine.

The Erie Canal provided not only a solution to the rapid transport of goods, mail and people, it also became a hugely popular tourist attraction. People flocked to ride the packet (passenger) boats to experience the trip and to marvel, at a safe distance, at the stretches of uninhabited wilderness along the route.

A maximum of 78 feet long and 14.5 feet wide, the packet boats featured onboard meals and sleeping berths. Although cramped, noisy and often airless, these accommodations often surpassed the even more cramped, noisy, smoky and bug-ridden inns onshore.

Pulled along by teams or horses, passenger boats hit speeds of around 5 miles an hour; freight boats averaged about 2 mph. Slow by modern standards, that pace was a godsend in the canal's early years before the faster railroads became widespread. Boats could maintain that speed virtually around the clock, except for the annoying delays at crowded locks and occasional accidents.

There was one drawback to pleasingly floating along—the many low bridges. Passengers had to leap into the cabin or fling themselves onto the deck whenever the lookout cried "Low Bridge!" to avoid bashing one's head.

Even factoring in delays, the canal cut travel time between Albany and Buffalo to between five and seven days, half of what it took overland. People quickly became accustomed to this rapid transit, so much so that when certain locks began experiencing regular tie-ups due to traffic, stagecoach services sprang up to take the impatient travelers around the backup to catch a boat further ahead.

The flow of goods was stupendous. Grain shipments increased 10 times in the 1840s over the previous decade. New York City, which had originally opposed the project, emerged as the nation's preeminent port, and its greatest city. The output of the West impacted both American and European economies and turned once provincial farmers and businessmen into international traders. The stream of wealth led to New York being nicknamed The Empire State.

The End of an Era

By 1882, the Erie Canal was serving more than 20 million people annually and had produced revenues of $121 million since 1825, more than quadruple its operating costs, Bernstein says. The original canal was enlarged in the 1840s and again in the early 1900s when it was expanded to accommodate tugboats and barges. The final expansion took twice as long to complete as the original, despite the use of power equipment, Bernstein adds.

A rush of canal building followed Erie's success. But even as it flourished, the cause of its demise appeared on the horizon in a cloud of smoke and a swirl of steam. Railroads were cheaper to build than canals, were faster and could carry more freight and passengers, and weren't prey to freezing weather. Eventually they would eclipse canals as the primary mode of transport, connecting ports and harbors to all parts of the country, before being eclipsed in turn by the internal combustion engine.

Bill Hudgins is a contributing writer. His last feature was "Rescuing History From Disaster's Wake" in the May/June 2006 issue.
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