Guide to the Commission on the Bicentennial of the Constitution records

Finding aid prepared by Ashley Toutain
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Overview of the Collection
Title: Commission on the Bicentennial of the Constitution records
Date (inclusive): 1984-1988
Collection number: USDSC_2008_001
Creator: Commission on the Bicentennial of the Constitution
Extent: 3 boxes (3 linear feet)
Repository: University of San Diego, Archives and Special Collections
Copley Library
5998 Alcalá Park
San Diego, CA 92110
spcoll@sandiego.edu
Abstract: The Commission on the Bicentennial of the Constitution (the Commission), consisting of 23 members appointed by President Ronald Reagan, was charged with promoting and coordinating activities to commemorate the 200 year anniversary of the Constitution. This collection documents the work of the Commission, as well as activities planned by state and local organizations for the Bicentennial. These records consist of the meeting materials, planning documents, and publications generated by the Commission, as well as materials highlighting events that took place throughout the United States.
Languages: English
Historical Note
The Commission on the Bicentennial of the Constitution was created by an Act of Congress (Public Law 98-101) in September 1983 in order to promote and coordinate the commemoration of the 200 year anniversary of the Constitution. In 1985, President Ronald Reagan appointed the Commission’s 23 members. Chief Justice Warren E. Burger, who resigned from the Supreme Court in 1986 to focus his attention on the Commission, served as the Chairman. Commission members included historians, professors, judges, and businesspeople. Among the appointed members was Bernard H. Siegan, Professor of Law and Director of Law and Economics Studies at the University of San Diego School of Law. At the time, Siegan was the author of seven books including Economic Liberties and the Constitution. Prior to his appointment, he served on President Ronald Reagan’s Task Force on Housing (1980-1981) and Commission on Housing (1981-1982), and served as a consultant to the Federal Trade Commission.
The first meeting of the Commission took place in Washington D.C. on July 29th and 30th, 1985. In this meeting, the Commission began to set plans for coordinating the Bicentennial. Given the delay between the 1983 Act and the first meeting in 1985, the Commission relied heavily on encouraging state and local organizations to plan events. One of the Commission’s tasks, therefore, was to coordinate promotion of these state and local events in order to bring them all under an umbrella of national celebration. To do this, they vetted the state and local proposals for those they wished to promote. The Commission also coordinated a number of national activities including essay contests, funded grants for an array of educational projects, and supported a number of television series featuring historic events. Additionally, the Commission coordinated the creation of a Bicentennial logo, commemorative postage stamps and commemorative medals.
The Bicentennial was initially slated to be a three year commemoration, with each year representing a theme: 1987 “Framing the Constitution”; 1988 “Ratifying the Constitution: The People Consent”; and 1989 “Establishing a Government under the Constitution.” The Bicentennial expanded to encompass more than a three year celebration with commemorative publications coming out in 1985. Disney World collaborated with the Commission on a joint celebration in October 1986 to celebrate Disney World’s 15th anniversary and to generate interest in the Bicentennial. The Commission appointment was later extended by Congress to December 31, 1991 in order to include the addition of the Bill of Rights to the Constitution in the celebrations. Nationwide, more than 1,000 Bicentennial programs occurred through the six year period.
Scope and Content Note
This collection documents the work done by the Commission on the Bicentennial of the Constitution, as well as local and state agencies to commemorate the 200 year anniversary of the Constitution. The bulk of this collection consists of the meeting materials and planning documents generated by the Commission. Meeting materials include the agendas and minutes of meetings as well as documentation of administrative matters such as budget materials. Meeting materials document discussions about which activities and events would best commemorate the Bicentennial as well as information about the American Revolution Bicentennial which took place in 1976. The Commission used the 1976 celebration as an initial guide in their planning. These records also include memos and reports from local and state organizations sharing how they planned to celebrate the Bicentennial and hoping to receive promotional support from the Commission. Reports and newsletters distributed by the Commission, calendars of local events, and newspaper articles referencing community
reaction to the commission's work are also included. Among the local projects highlighted in this collection are the "We the People 200" celebration in Philadelphia, exhibits and events held at the Library of Congress, publications by Project '87, and The Mini Page publication which featured a series of Constitution themed newsletters for children.

This collection also includes records specific to Commission member and University of San Diego professor Bernard Siegan. These records include planning materials for the fourth Commission meeting held at the University of San Diego, which Siegan coordinated, and biographical information about Siegan.

Arrangement
This collection is arranged into three series:
Series I. Meeting Materials
Series II. Informational Records
Series III. Publications

Access Information
This collection is open for research.

Preferred citation
[Folder Title], Box # Folder #, Commission on the Bicentennial of the Constitution, Copley Library, University of San Diego, Archives and Special Collections.

Processing Information
This collection was processed by Tessie Camina in 2008.

Removed or Separated Material
Copies of photographs were taken and original photographs have been moved to: Events – Meeting – Commission on the Bicentennial of the Constitution – 2/3/1986.

Subjects and Indexing Terms
Siegan, Bernard H.
Hughes, Author E.
Debnam, Betty
Burger, Warren E., 1907-1995
Schlafly, Phyllis
Kennedy, Edward M. (Edward Moore), 1932-2009

Subjects and Indexing Terms
University of San Diego
American Historical Association
American Political Science Association
Project '87
Commission on the Bicentennial of the United States Constitution
We the People 200, Inc.

Subjects and Indexing Terms
San Diego (Calif.)
Annapolis (Md.)
Philadelphia (Pa.)

Subjects and Indexing Terms
United States. Constitution
Series I: Meeting Materials, 1985-1988

Scope and Content Note

Records in this series consist of materials gathered for each of the Commission meetings. The majority of the files include agendas, meeting minutes, memoranda, correspondence, and budget information. Minutes for each meeting provide documentation of discussions, resolutions, and further actions to be taken. Memoranda and correspondence relate to pre- and post-meeting planning as well as general planning around the Bicentennial. As planning for the Bicentennial progressed, later meeting materials include state and local planning documents as well as proposed projects and applications from states and localities to be recognized as part of the Bicentennial. Also included are memos and information gathered by advisory committees such as the Advisory Committee on Educational Projects and the Advisory Committee on Media. Among these materials are biographies of appointed members and planning documents for the fourth Commission meeting which was held at the University of San Diego campus.

While the majority of commission meetings are included, there is a gap in records between the meeting in July 1987 and September 1988. It is not clear how many meetings were held within this time.

Arrangement

Materials in this series are arranged in chronological order.

Box/Folder: 1 / 1-2
Meeting, 1985 July 29
Scope and Content Note
[Materials for the first commission meeting. Includes list of appointed members and biographies of each member.]

Box/Folder: 1 / 3
Meeting, 1985 August 22
Scope and Content Note
[Includes a draft of the First Report of the Commission.]

Box/Folder: 1 / 4
Meeting, 1985 November 24
Box/Folder: 1 / 5-7
Meeting, 1986 February 3
Scope and Content Note
[Includes planning materials for the fourth meeting of the commission which was held at the University of San Diego as well as press releases, newspaper clippings, correspondence, photographs, and a transcript of USD President Author E. Hughes' testimony given to commission members. Also includes the Spring 1985 edition of this Constitution published by Project '87, an organization funded by the American Historical Association and the American Political Science Association to help commemorate the Bicentennial.]

Removed or Separated Material
Copies of photographs located in folder 6. Originals of photographs have been moved to Events - Meeting - Commission on the Bicentennial of the Constitution - 2/3/1986.

Box/Folder: 1 / 8-10
Meeting, 1986 April 13
Scope and Content Note

Box/Folder: 1 / 11-13
Meeting, 1986 June 20
Scope and Content Note
[Includes a list of individual state plans and events as well as correspondence regarding a joint celebration for the Disney World 15th anniversary and the Bicentennial.]
### Series I: Meeting Materials, 1985-1988

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<td>Scope and Content Note</td>
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<tr>
<td>[Materials for the Commission meeting in Annapolis, Maryland. Includes applications for project recognition and memos about proposed projects.]</td>
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<tr>
<th>Box/Folder: 1 / 19</th>
<th>Meeting, 1986 September 12</th>
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<td>Scope and Content Note</td>
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<tr>
<td>[Materials for the Advisory Committee on State and Local Liaison. Includes a report from the Staff Director on the current status of the work done by the Commission.]</td>
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<th>Advertising Campaign, 1987</th>
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<td>Advisory Committee for Private Associations - Project Recognition Application - “Close Up Foundation”, 1987</td>
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<tr>
<td>Box/Folder: 2 / 3</td>
<td>Advisory Committee on Educational Projects, 1986-1987</td>
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<td>Box/Folder: 2 / 4</td>
<td>Correspondence, 1986 December</td>
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<tr>
<td>Scope and Content Note</td>
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<tr>
<td>[Regarding the International Conference on Criminal Justice and Human Rights.]</td>
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<td>Scope and Content Note</td>
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<td>Meeting Book, 1987 May 15</td>
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<td>Box/Folder: 2 / 19</td>
<td>Meeting Book, 1987 July 31</td>
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<td>Box/Folder: 2 / 20</td>
<td>Meeting Book, 1988 September 17</td>
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<td>Box/Folder: 2 / 21</td>
<td>Meeting Dates Proposal, 1986 August 28</td>
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<td>Box/Folder: 2 / 22-23</td>
<td>Memoranda, 1986</td>
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<td>Box/Folder: 2 / 24</td>
<td>Memoranda, 1987 February 25</td>
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<td>Box/Folder: 2 / 25</td>
<td>Memoranda, 1987 May</td>
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<td>Box/Folder: 2 / 26</td>
<td>Search Committee Meetings, 1985 July</td>
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<th>Calendar of Events, 1986</th>
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<td>Scope and Content Note</td>
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<tr>
<td>[We the People 200 Celebration material.]</td>
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<th>Constitutional Exhibit Task Force, 1987</th>
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<tr>
<td>Scope and Content Note</td>
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<tr>
<td>[Project ’87]</td>
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</table>
Box/Folder: 3 / 3  
Event - "We the People" - Concert - Budget, 1987 January

Box/Folder: 3 / 4  
Indian Rights Association - Correspondence, 1986 October

Box/Folder: 3 / 5  
Fact Sheet, circa 1985-1987

  Scope and Content Note
  [News articles and informational materials about the Commission.]

Box/Folder: 3 / 6  
List - Commissioners' Addresses, 1985

Box/Folder: 3 / 7  
Member - USD Law Faculty - Bernard Siegan, 1985-1987

  Scope and Content Note
  [Includes correspondence regarding the Commission meeting at the University of San Diego.]

Box/Folder: 3 / 8  
National Conference of States, 1986 October 1

Box/Folder: 3 / 9  
News Clippings, 1986-1987

Box/Folder: 3 / 10  
Patriotic Educational Incorporated, 1985 September 17

  Scope and Content Note
  [Memo regarding request for hearing with Commission members.]

Box/Folder: 3 / 11  
Proposal for a National Day Banner Project, 1986 December 8

Box/Folder: 3 / 12  
Publicity, 1986

Box/Folder: 3 / 13  

Box/Folder: 3 / 14-15  
Resource Book, 1986

  Scope and Content Note
  [Include biographies, fact sheets, news articles, historical material, and speeches to assist Commission members.]

Box/Folder: 3 / 16  
Resource Book, 1984-1986

  Scope and Content Note
  [Includes constitutional celebration publications such as the Fall 1984, National Forum , the journal of the National Archives' Fall 1985, Prologue , and the Winter 1985, This Constitution .]

Box/Folder: 3 / 17  
Resource Materials, circa 1987

Box/Folder: 3 / 18  
Statement - Staff Director, Mark Cannon, 1987 February 25


  Scope and Content Note
  This series consists of materials printed and distributed by the Commission to notify interested individuals about significant events in history, upcoming Bicentennial events, and progress made by the Commission. A few publications not published by the Commission are also included.

  Arrangement
  Records in this series are arranged in alphabetical order.

Box/Folder: 3 / 19  
Bicentennial Alert, 1987 February

  Scope and Content Note
  [Listing of historic events that took place in the month of February.]

Box/Folder: 3 / 20  
Second Circuit Bicentennial Bulletin, 1986 December

Box/Folder: 3 / 21  
"We, the People", 1985-1987

Box/Folder: 3 / 22  
Publications used by the Communications Division, 1986

Box/Folder: 3 / 23  
Printed Matter, 1986

  Scope and Content Note
  [Brochures and booklets printed by the Commission.]
Box/Folder: 3 / 24  Reports, 1985 September 17, 1986 September
Box/Folder: 3 / 25  Miscellaneous Publications, 1986

Scope and Content Note
[Includes a Report by Action for Children's Television, and a bibliography of works about the Constitution, and the Fall 1984 National Forum.]