

Living in the Past: Community and Change in Historical Commemorations at
Plymouth, Williamsburg, and Salem

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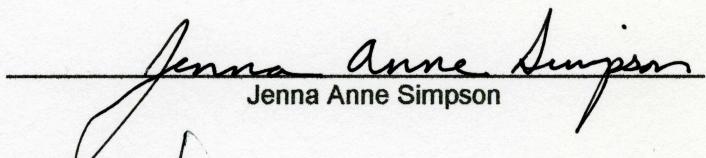
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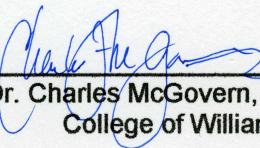


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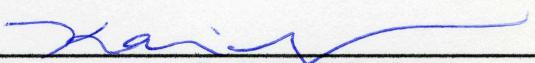
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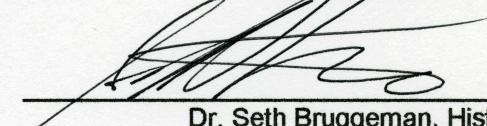
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ABSTRACT

Where we live, how long we've lived there, and what events we associate with that location all help us define ourselves. Having a hometown celebrated for a particular historical narrative can bring a lot of benefits – an economic boost, national attention, fame, and even fortune. But it also poses problems when national attention and local interests come in conflict. In this dissertation, I explore the ways in which local historical commemorations were shaped by – and came to shape – the towns in which they developed. This has much to tell us about how the historical tourism industry can affect a local community, and also how our understanding of the past is shaped by who gets to tell the stories.

In the quest to understand the interaction between communities and commemorations, I look at a series of case studies: Plymouth, MA; Williamsburg, VA; and Salem, MA. I chose these locations because of an important factor they share: all are towns in which a local story (dating broadly to the colonial era) has long held a place in the American imagination. Plymouth is famous for the landing of the Pilgrims in 1620. Williamsburg is noted as one of the birthplaces of the American Revolution. Salem is notorious for the witch trials that rocked the community in 1692-1693. All three sites also share a long history of historical commemoration, and their historical tourism has come to define them.

In Chapter 1, Plymouth exemplifies a place with a long tradition of locally-led historical commemoration. This provided a framework for the tercentennial celebrations held there in the 1920s and for the institution of Plimoth Plantation after World War II. The strong local hold on their own story helped townspeople dictate the terms in which Pilgrim history was told. In Chapter 2, I examine a city with a less organized tradition of local commemoration: Williamsburg. While local history was treasured and celebrated, there was not an established framework of commemoration. This made it easier for “outsiders” and professional historians to take control of the narrative. In Chapter 3, Salem serves as a counter-narrative: a place with a notorious and widely-known history, but one which locals generally preferred not to celebrate or commemorate. I show how the community's treatment of witch trial history affected the development of institutions commemorating the town's past. My study is further complicated by Chapter 4, in which I consider the treatment of Native American history at these sites. After considering the negotiation between local voices and professional historians at Plymouth, Williamsburg, and Salem, I explore how this minority has struggled to have their own story told.

Together, my case studies reveal that the development of living history was not inevitable. Many factors, including local attitudes and traditions, economics and demographics, trends in the historical profession, and even social movements, all played a part. As these commemorations evolve and institutionalize, they have consequences for the communities in which they exist and for the stories we tell ourselves about the past.

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This dissertation is dedicated to my parents, without whose unfailing love and support it would never have been completed, and to my dear friends, who have kept me sane and always reminded me of the richness of life.

I am, now and always, at your disposal.

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“You’re living in the past.” That phrase is usually spoken in derision or dismay – but for people living in areas which have come to be defined by their local history and a tourism industry based on historical commemorations, it takes on a whole new meaning. Where we live, how long we have lived there, and what events we associate with that location all help us define ourselves and our neighbors. When your home town is celebrated for a particular historical narrative, that becomes a part of your own lifestyle and identity. This can bring a lot of benefits, including an economic boost, national attention, and opportunities for both physical and psychological community-building. But it also poses problems when national attention and local interests come in conflict. In this work, I will be exploring the ways in which local historical commemorations were shaped by – and came to shape – their towns. This has much to tell us about how a historical tourism industry can affect a local community, and also how our understanding of the past is shaped by who gets to tell the stories.

In my quest to understand the interaction between communities and commemorations, I will be looking at a series of case studies: Plymouth, Massachusetts; Williamsburg, Virginia; and Salem, Massachusetts. I chose these locations because of an important factor they share: all are locations in which a particular local story, dating broadly to the colonial era of American history, has long held national prominence and a place in the American imagination. Plymouth, of course, is famous for the landing of the Pilgrims at Plymouth Rock in 1620, and for subsequent interactions with local Native Americans and the traditional “first Thanksgiving.” Williamsburg is noted as one

of the birthplaces of the American Revolution, sometime home to such greats as George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, and Patrick Henry, and as a political and economic powerhouse of colonial America. Salem is notorious for the witch trials that rocked the community in 1692-1693. All three sites also share a long history of historical commemoration (especially reenactments), and their historical tourism has come to define them. There are certainly other locations I could have chosen for their historical links to particular early-American stories (Philadelphia, for instance). Similarly, there are a number of very well-known and well-regarded living history institutions telling a colonial-era story (such as Old Sturbridge Village in Massachusetts or Old Salem in North Carolina). However, Plymouth, Williamsburg, and Salem (MA) are in the relatively unique situation of being *both* connected to a particular story (for which they are known more than anything else) *and* having a strong and long tradition of historical reenactment and commemoration.

By looking at how these communities and the historical commemorations held therein have developed over time, we can begin to understand both how community members shape the stories they tell and also how a community can be changed when others are allowed to tell those stories for them. We can also examine how historical tourism develops differently under different circumstances. It is true that the location of all three of the sites under consideration on the East Coast of the United States is a limitation. However, given my self-imposed constraint (for the purpose of comparability and

practicability) of nationally-recognized sites related to the history of (British) colonial America, it is also reasonable.

Another limitation in looking at Williamsburg, Plymouth, and Salem, is that in studying historical commemorations at these sites (particularly in the early 20th century) it is easy to see only the history of the white community. For that reason I have introduced an additional case study, looking at the interpretation of Native American life at all three locations. Another possibility worth comparison would be to look at African-American interpretation. However, that really only comes strongly into play at Williamsburg, where it has been the focus or a major factor in a number of studies already.¹ Native American histories, however, have been important in the interpretation of all three locations, and therefore can provide a sizeable pool of information for me to examine.

Much work has been done on the status of Native Americans and the ways in which their voices and cultures have been appropriated (or silenced) in American history. While interactions with Native cultures have long been a part of many of America's founding myths, from Pocahontas and Squanto to the

¹ See, for example, arguments in Richard Handler & Eric Gable's *New History in an Old Museum* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997) and Anders Greenspan's *Creating Colonial Williamsburg* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2002); as well as a number of theses and dissertations including Erin Krutko Devlin's "Colonial Williamsburg's Slave Auction Re-enactment: Controversy, African American History and Public Memory" (M.A. thesis, College of William and Mary, 2003); Rex Ellis's "Presenting the Past: Education, Interpretation and the Teaching of Black History at Colonial Williamsburg" (Ed.D. thesis, College of William & Mary, 1989); Anna Logan Lawson's "The Other Half": Making African-American History at Colonial Williamsburg" (Ph.D. diss., University of Virginia, 1995); Jessica S. Carter's "A People With No Past Have No Future": The Interpretation of Slavery at Colonial Williamsburg" (M.A. thesis, East Carolina University, 2004); Nicole Carroll's "African American History at Colonial Williamsburg" (M.A. thesis, College of William & Mary, 1999), and Martha Katz-Hyman's 1993 research report for Colonial Williamsburg entitled "In the Middle of Poverty Some Cups and a Teapot": The Material Culture of Slavery in Eighteenth-Century Virginia and the Furnishing of Slave Quarters at Colonial Williamsburg."

supposed influence of the Iroquois League on the US Constitution, these myths have all worked in ways to legitimize the status quo.² As Philip Deloria explains, although “performances have changed over time, the practice of playing Indian has clustered around two paradigmatic moments—the Revolution, which rested on the creation of a national identity, and modernity, which has used Indian play to encounter the authentic amidst the anxiety of urban industrial and postindustrial life.”³ My study brings together both of these periods in one phenomenon – Americans expressing or reshaping their identities in the twentieth century through reenactments of the colonial and Revolutionary period. Particularly around the time my study begins, at the turn of the twentieth century, the image of the Native American in popular culture became an important tool in defining an “American” identity and helping to Americanize immigrants, as Alan Trachtenberg argues in *Shades of Hiawatha*. Indeed, Trachtenberg refers to this as the “age of Hiawatha,” a time when “vast audiences rushed to Indian performances – Wild West shows, dances in the southwest, and, in the east and Midwest, popular performances by Indians themselves of staged versions” of the *Song of Hiawatha*.⁴

² Christian F. Feest, “Pride and Prejudice: The Pocahontas Myth and the Pamunkey” in James A. Clifton, ed., *The Invented Indian: Cultural Fictions and Government Policies* (New Brunswick: Transaction, 1990), 49-70; Lynn Ceci, “Squanto and the Pilgrims: On Planting Corn ‘in the manner of the Indians’” in James A. Clifton, ed., *The Invented Indian: Cultural Fictions and Government Policies* (New Brunswick: Transaction, 1990), 71-90; Elisabeth Tooker, “The United States Constitution and the Iroquois League” in James Clifton, ed., *The Invented Indian: Cultural Fictions and Government Policies* (New Brunswick: Transaction, 1990), 109-128.

³ Philip J. Deloria, *Playing Indian* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 7.

⁴ Alan Trachtenberg, *Shades of Hiawatha: Staging Indians, Making Americans, 1880-1930* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2004), xiii.

While Native Americans themselves did at times participate in such events, they had a complex maze to navigate if they wished to use such experiences to express any truths about their own identity, rather than simply being used as tourist attractions or as props. Nancy Parezo and John Troutman warn us against assuming that Native peoples were “merely exploited. . . . They were neither unwittingly fooled by anthropologists or fair agents nor completely trusting of them.” There were, certainly, circumstances in which they “negotiated the conditions of their participation.”⁵ However, as another author notes, it “is not only that – in terms of the vulgar truth – history is written by the victors; it is also much more insidiously and invidiously written . . . in such a way that the motivations and purpose of the victors, and the results that obviously favored them, will provide the dominant terms in which the line of the narrative is constructed.”⁶ While Native Americans might have had some control over the terms of their participation in such celebrations, on an individual or group level, the mere participation of “real Indians” doesn’t necessarily connote “authenticity” or “agency.” For instance, as Parezo and Troutman note, while there were Native groups represented at the 1904 Louisiana Purchase Exposition in St. Louis, “visitors watched San Juan and San Ildefonso men in Plains and Pueblo attire impersonate Hopi dancers in pseudo-Snake, Kachina, and Flute Dances or

⁵ Nancy J Parezo and John W. Troutman, “The ‘Shy’ Cocopa Go to the Fair,” in Carter Jones Meyer and Diana Royer, ed., *Selling the Indian: Commercializing & Appropriating American Indian Cultures* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2001), 31. Christian F. Feest, for example, discusses the ways in which the Pamunkey used Pocahontas pageants to try to reinsert their presence and agency into the narrative.

⁶ Hartwig Isernhagen, “Identity and Exchange: The Representation of ‘The Indian’ in the Federal Writers Project and in Contemporary Native American Literature,” in Gretchen M. Bataille, ed., *Native American Representations: First Encounters, Distorted Images, and Literary Appropriations* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2001), p. 168-197, quote from p. 169.

perform their own Eagle Dance; San Juan women produced and sold pottery in the plaza modeled on Zuni Pueblo.”⁷ Thus, as Deloria concludes, “Even as Indian play has been an invasion of the realities of native people, it has been an intercultural meeting ground upon which Indians and non-Indians have created new identities, not only for white Americans, but for Indians themselves.”⁸ By attending to representations of Native American voices in the historical commemorations at Plymouth, Williamsburg, and Salem, I will both consider the ways in which Native American stories were used and how Native people themselves have slowly won a voice in today’s interpretative programming. This consideration in turn complicates and nuances all three of my preceding case studies.

The inclusion of Native American history also highlights the place of this dissertation within the genre of American Studies. Current trends in American Studies seek to challenge the myth of an “exceptional” nation, urging us to remember that we are a country built upon many different traditions and that we are inextricably linked with the rest of the world – in our influence on others and in others’ influence on us – even as we study the development of culture, history, and identity within this country. Including Native history and perspectives in this dissertation forces me to push back against any traditional narrative of Anglo-centric “progress” and to take this more inclusive approach. At the same time, as I examine the interplay between local historic sites and national tourist audiences in all of my case studies, I will engage with these themes of diversity,

⁷ Parezo and Troutman, 5.

⁸ Deloria, 187.

nationalism, and interconnectedness. This project is also firmly in the field of American Studies as it looks for “fresh syntheses and connections” through a wide range of disciplines and materials, including not only archival and traditional historical primary sources but novels, plays, poetry, oral histories, and personal interviews.⁹

This study as a whole builds upon the work of many earlier scholars, who have looked at both the concepts of heritage tourism and at the individual sites under consideration. In *The Tourist-Historic City*, G. J. Ashworth and J.E. Tunbridge have looked at modern urban areas as sites in which tourism has shaped the ways in which historical resources are managed, with a particular focus on urban conservation and urban planning in a global context.¹⁰ Similarly, Priscilla Boniface and Peter Fowler take a broad, global perspective in their examination of heritage tourism; they write with a concern for how the tourist industry can affect the identities of both visitor and host.¹¹ On a much more local level, detailed studies have been done on the development of all three of the sites I’m examining. Historical commemorations in Plymouth, Massachusetts, have been discussed in works including John Seelye’s *Memory’s Nation* (looking broadly at Plymouth’s place in America’s national mythology), Stephen Eddy Snow’s *Performing the Pilgrims* (focusing specifically on the development of programming at Plimoth Plantation), and institutional histories such as James

⁹ Shelly Fisher Fishkin, “Crossroads of Cultures: The Transnational Turn in American Studies,” *American Quarterly* 57 (March 2005): 19.

¹⁰ G. J. Ashworth and J.E. Tunbridge, *The Tourist-Historic City* (New York: Belhaven, 1990).

¹¹ Priscilla Boniface and Peter J. Fowler, *Heritage and Tourism in ‘the global village’* (New York: Routledge, 1993).

Baker's *Plimoth Plantation*.¹² Similarly, historical commemoration in Salem has been covered in individual studies, particularly in the series of essays collected by Morrison and Schultz's *Salem: Place, Myth and Memory*.¹³ Given its size and importance as a leading living history museum, it is unsurprising that Williamsburg's history has been particularly well studied, in books such as Anders Greenspan's *Creating Colonial Williamsburg*, Richard Handler and Eric Gable's *The New History in an Old Museum*, George Yetter's *Williamsburg Before and After*, Philip Kopper's *Colonial Williamsburg*, and a variety of other articles and theses.¹⁴

What makes this study unique is its focus on three comparable sites: all are small-town, east coast cities tied to nationally-noted historical events, and in all three, a successful tourist industry based upon historical commemoration has evolved. By looking at the evolution of the sites over the course of the twentieth century, we can see not only how each site changed, but how the preexisting circumstances in each town – in terms of local support for historical

¹² John Seelye, *Memory's Nation: The Place of Plymouth Rock* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998); Stephen Eddy Snow, *Performing the Pilgrims: A Study of Ethnohistorical Role-Playing at Plimoth Plantation* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1993); James W. Baker, *Plimoth Plantation: Fifty Years of Living History* (Plymouth: Plimoth Plantation, 1997)

¹³ Dane Anthony Morrison and Nancy Lusignan Schultz, *Salem: Place, Myth and Memory* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 2004).

¹⁴ Anders Greenspan, *Creating Colonial Williamsburg* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2002); Richard Handler and Eric Gable, *The New History in an Old Museum* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997); George Humphrey Yetter, *Williamsburg Before and After: The Rebirth of Virginia's Colonial Capital* (Williamsburg: Colonial Williamsburg, 1988); Philip Kopper, *Colonial Williamsburg* (New York: Stewart, Tabori & Chang, 2001); Robert P. Maccubbin, ed., *Williamsburg, Virginia: A City Before the State, 1699-1999* (Williamsburg: University Press of Virginia, 2000); Andrea Kim Foster, "They're Turning the Town All Upside Down": the Community Identity of Williamsburg, Virginia Before and After the Reconstruction" (Ph.D. Thesis, George Washington University, 1993); Kristen Vera Koch, "Colonial Williamsburg, 1926-1940: The Ambiguity of an American Heritage Site" (M.A. Thesis, University of California, Davis, 2011).

commemoration and local economics – influenced the ways in which living history institutions were able to develop. In turn, we can see how the development of institutionalized living history – when it occurred – affected a local community and the stories told about it.

The timeline I have chosen starts in the period when I first see a large number of recorded “living history” commemorations in the communities under study – the turn of the twentieth century – and continues through the present. This starting point coincides with the period in which the nation (and western world as a whole) was indulging in a golden age of expositions, World’s Fairs, and Wild West shows, while on a local level tableaux vivant and community pageants became an increasingly popular way of commemorating past events and reliving them for contemporary purposes. As David Glassberg shows in his *American Historical Pageantry*, such performances in the first half of the twentieth century can be seen as a response to the modernization of America and its consequent political upheavals, as well as a tool of progressivism. Naima Prevots even more explicitly focuses on the progressive and reformist uses of historical pageants in *American Pageantry*, while also considering pageants as an expressive form of art.¹⁵ I will show how these pageants provided a framework and precedent for the institutionalized forms of living history that followed them, as well as noting how the stories changed as professional historians took charge and grassroots celebrations faded in prominence.

¹⁵ David Glassberg, *American Historical Pageantry: The Uses of Tradition in the Early Twentieth Century* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990); Naima Prevots, *American Pageantry: A Movement for Art & Democracy* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1990).

This is all worth considering because of the importance of our understanding of history in shaping our identity, as individuals and as a community. In choosing to commemorate particular events through pageantry or living history museums – and through the considerable investment of time and money in these commemorations – we make a statement about the relevance of those events to our lives and to the American story. In celebrating, for instance, the Fourth of July with a “colonial pageant,” as the city of Williamsburg regularly did in the 1920s, the community not only connected its current residents with their illustrious forbearers but reminded themselves, through physical reenactment, of the values perpetuated by the founding fathers at the time of the American Revolution. In those celebrations, Williamsburg’s residents actively reflected the principles they attributed to the founding of the United States and thereby made a statement about what principles they felt were foundational to America and American identity.

We can extend this argument to other examples of enacted history throughout the twentieth century, and then can see that enacted history has not simply reflected our sense of the past but has been an important factor in shaping our sense of national identity. It is not coincidental that in the 1920s, when immigration, modernization, and urbanization were serious issues of social debate, Colonial Williamsburg – representing not only the status and power the town experienced as a colonial capitol but also, importantly, a relatively rural, comparatively small-town, pre-industrial lifestyle – came into being to celebrate the heart and history of America. When America faced a fight for international

political supremacy and an ideological war over socio-economic systems during the Cold War, there was a surge in history tourism, Plimoth Plantation was established, and the US military actively encouraged its members to visit sites including Williamsburg to learn about American history and ideals. In the last quarter of the twentieth century, as Americans dealt with the social change made possible by the civil rights and feminist movements, forms of living history and historical commemoration – particularly films, television shows, and museums – found ways to work the “forgotten” stories of minorities and women into their narratives of the past, creating yet another interpretation of what it is and was to be American.

The sorts of historical commemorations and institutions that we see developing at Plymouth, Williamsburg, and Salem, are particularly powerful in this regard because of their performative, immersive nature. While American children receive some basic aspects of our national history at school, it is through these forms of “living history” that many Americans have received their most lasting and most visceral lessons about the past. As Roy Rosenzweig and David Thelen show in *The Presence of the Past*, the sense of having lived through an event – or having the word of someone else who did so – provides a greater authority about historic narratives than simply being lectured to by schoolteachers. Such a personal investment in the past can come through an oral tradition, visiting museums, relating family stories, and exposure to the work of professional historians.¹⁶ However, the more sensory, immersive, and

¹⁶ Roy Rosenzweig and David Thelen, *The Presence of the Past: Popular Uses of History in American Life* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998).

participatory the experience, the more powerful it can be, particularly in imparting not merely factual knowledge about the past but a personal, emotional connection with times gone by. Paul Connerton presents one aspect of this power in *How Societies Remember*, discussing the concept of “social memory.” Social memory, for Connerton, is the communal image and understanding of the past which is not personally lived but which becomes ingrained in personal identities through the enactment of rituals and ceremonies. “If there is such a thing as social memory,” he writes, “we are likely to find it in commemorative ceremonies; but commemorative ceremonies prove to be commemorative only in so far as they are performative.” Performativity, he goes on to argue, “cannot be thought of without a concept of habit; and habit cannot be thought of without a notion of bodily automatisms.”¹⁷ He further explains this concept of bodily automatisms through example: “To kneel in subordination is not to state subordination, nor is it just to communicate a message of submission. To kneel in subordination,” he writes, “is to display it through the visible, present substance of one’s body. Kneelers identify the disposition of their body with their disposition of subordination. Such performative doings are particularly effective, because unequivocal and materially substantial, ways of ‘saying.’”¹⁸ That is to say, physical immersion in a performed commemorative ceremony (such as, for instance, planting corn in a traditional ceremony at Plymouth or casting one’s

¹⁷ Paul Connerton, *How Societies Remember* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 4-5.

¹⁸ Ibid., 59. He goes on to argue that the very “elementariness of the repertoire from which such ‘sayings’” as the simple physical act of kneeling “are drawn makes possible at once their performative power and their effectiveness as mnemonic systems” (59).

vote as a juror at a witch trial in Salem) is a vital part of creating a personal connection with – and in a sense, personal *memories* of – the past. The particular power of this “social memory,” as Connerton describes it, is its ability to make the particular interpretation of the past which we have imbibed almost instinctive; the physicality of the performative acts helps make memories that are “passed on in non-textual and non-cognitive ways.”¹⁹ Participating in immersive or performative forms of historical commemoration, then, can create an understanding of the past which is not necessarily analyzed as carefully as we would analyze historical information acquired through a college course or a scholarly text.

Alison Landsberg sets forth a similar concept in *Prosthetic Memory*. Landsberg describes “prosthetic memory” as “privately felt public memories.”²⁰ She writes that such memories are created “at the interface between a person and a historical narrative about the past, at an experiential site such as a movie theater or museum. In this moment of contact, an experience occurs through which the person sutures himself or herself into a larger history.” A participant in this experience “does not simply apprehend a historical narrative but takes on a more personal, deeply felt memory of a past event through which he or she did not live. The resulting prosthetic memory has the ability to shape that person’s subjectivity and politics.”²¹ She points out that prosthetic memories become extremely personal, as they are linked not simply to an experience with a

¹⁹ Ibid., 102-3.

²⁰ Alison Landsberg, *Prosthetic Memory: The Transformation of American Remembrance in the Age of Mass Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 19.

²¹ Ibid., 2.

historical narrative but to “our other experiences and place in the world.”²²

Landsberg sees prosthetic memory as a uniquely modern phenomenon, and cites media and mass culture in general as playing an important part in creating prosthetic memories, as they make “group-specific cultural memories available to a diverse and varied populace” through the use of “transferrential spaces,” venues such as museums and theaters “in which people are invited to enter into experiential relationships to events through which they themselves did not live. Through such spaces people may gain access to a range of processual, sensually immersed knowledge that would be difficult to acquire by purely cognitive means.”²³ Like Connerton, she asserts here that the knowledge and context gained through the acquisition of prosthetic memory are not necessarily analyzed critically, but instead becomes a part of our very identity.

This is particularly worth considering as we take into account Connerton’s assertion that “images of the past commonly legitimate a present social order.”²⁴ If we accept the Gramscian theory that a hegemonic bloc dominates the cultural and political dialogue of an era, then the influence of that hegemonic group upon the interpretation of the past presented through enacted history is particularly vital. This is why it is so important to look closely at the factors affecting the development of living history and the particular stories told by the institutions which become the primary tellers of those tales, legitimized either by professional historians on staff or by grassroots support of the community. History is more

²² Ibid., 137.

²³ Ibid., 11, 113.

²⁴ Connerton, 3.

than “just the facts”; conscious or not, there is always a perspective or agenda, and understanding that helps us look more critically at the stories heard and also helps us understand why communities have reacted to developments in their local historical commemorations in different ways.

Concepts of “legitimation” are particularly important here. As historical commemorations developed over time, different historical sources became valued and different “truths” were expressed as the ways in which the histories were “authenticated” was redefined. In the late nineteenth century – the same period in which we see a major flourishing of amateur historical pageantry in Plymouth, Williamsburg, and Salem – academic history itself was becoming professionalized. A “rising class of professional historians,” as Ellen Fitzpatrick describes them, was earning doctorate degrees and establishing professional organizations, including the American Historical Association.²⁵ Denise Meringolo further explains that the “first professors of history had joined the faculties of American colleges and universities in the 1870s,” though most academic historians at that time were obtaining their qualifications overseas. As American universities built up their history programs and graduate training in the following decades, that would change; by 1929 there were thirty-nine programs in the United States offering doctorates in history.²⁶ However, as Meringolo notes, “At the same time, by the late 1920s most professionally trained historians had begun to distance themselves from historical commemorations and from historic

²⁵ Ellen Fitzpatrick, *History's Memory: Writing America's Past, 1880-1980* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002), 16.

²⁶ Denise Meringolo, *Museums, Monuments, and National Parks: Toward a New Genealogy of Public History* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2012), 94.

preservation.”²⁷ This was a part of the growing separation between what was seen as “legitimate” history and the work of the “amateur” or public historian. And indeed, there were real differences in the methods and sources valued by the professional historian working in a university or a well-regarded museum such as the Smithsonian and the sources valued by the more local or amateur historians working in emerging public history sites and house museums.

Meringolo offers the example of the early preservation of Jamestown Island. As we will see in Chapter 2, some of Virginia’s earliest preservation efforts, including those at Jamestown, were carried out by the (white, elite) women of the Association for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities. They “had relied on written and oral sources, including property records and family narratives,” in interpreting the site and postulating the original position of the settlement. “Seeking a stronger platform for asserting its authority” in managing the site when the government sought to control the island under the auspices of the Park Service, “the Park Service turned to the Smithsonian Institution for support.” The curator of archaeology at the Smithsonian in turn “recommended a scientist – J.C. Harrington – to direct site research. Harrington implemented a systematic program of archaeological research” which “refuted long-held beliefs about the location of the original settlement.”²⁸ There was, then, a conflict in methodology and means of intellectual support between those who saw themselves as academics and professionals using archival sources and scientific methods and

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid., 105.

the amateur historians and preservationists working in local communities and relying in part upon regional traditions and oral histories.

The rise of the professional historian, with academic credentials and scientific and supposedly verifiable sources, helped contribute to a lack of respect for local and amateur historians in the early 20th century. For instance, while “museum directors and curators might be eligible for membership in the AHA, their visibility and influence was limited,” as Meringolo explains. “They were relegated to the least prestigious committee assignments and [largely] kept out of leadership positions.”²⁹ The legitimacy of the work produced by historians on the local level and at sites such as Williamsburg, Plymouth, and Salem was also called into doubt by “university-focused colleagues” and the public as questions were raised “about the ‘objectivity’ of any historian who produced scholarship on behalf of a paying client.”³⁰ If a historian was working to create narratives to educate and entertain a tourist, he or she was ultimately serving market forces rather than embarking on a pure quest for knowledge.

Thus, throughout the twentieth century historical sites have struggled with the issues of legitimacy and authenticity, particularly as audiences at these sites have changed. Oral histories and family traditions can have great value for a local audience. Indeed, as Roy Rosenzweig and David Thelen have shown, personal accounts from relatives and stories from witnesses “who were there” are among the most trusted sources of historical information for members of the

²⁹ Ibid., 100.

³⁰ Ibid., xx.

general public.³¹ In a survey conducted in the 1990s, such sources were actually rated as much more trustworthy than information garnered from college professors and books. However, the historical profession values the presumed objectivity of primary sources, historical records, and hard data. Living history museums such as Colonial Williamsburg and Plimoth Plantation evolved out of organizations and traditions built upon local, amateur historical commemorations. These early commemorations were aimed primarily at regional audiences, and in those cases, the local stories and traditions were often closely linked to the people visiting the commemorations. However, as the celebrations were institutionalized and increasingly marketed to a national audience, new forms of legitimization were necessary. Thus Colonial Williamsburg and Plimoth Plantation sought connections with professional academics and historians – at the College of William and Mary, Harvard University, the Omohundro Institute for Early American History and Culture, and elsewhere – in making their claims of historical authenticity. This authenticity – based upon the objectivity associated with professional historians supposedly working outside the marketplace – became itself a marketable commodity as living history museums evolved into economic powerhouses driving the flow of tourists into their communities.

Through my site-specific case studies, I will demonstrate the different ways in which these questions of authenticity, economics, and identity evolve depending on the needs and circumstances of a local community. In my first chapter, Plymouth exemplifies a town with an enduring tradition of local pride in

³¹ Rosenzweig and Thelen, 91.

the area's past, with a long-held glorification of the Pilgrim Fathers and a history of pageantry and other physical commemorations stretching back at least as far as the nineteenth century. These traditions were only bolstered by Plymouth's tercentennial celebrations in 1920. The institutionalized living history programming at Plimoth Plantation grew out of this already established grassroots structure, with considerable local involvement in programming and planning. The situation changed in the 1960s and 1970s, as academic historians increasingly pursued "social history" and as outside forces – most notably the American Indian protest movement – demanded a rethinking of the Pilgrim story. Together, these forces shaped an environment in Plymouth that is supportive of historical commemoration and reenactment, and which encourages professionalized living history and amateur historical celebrations to continue to exist side-by-side.

In my second chapter I turn to Williamsburg, Virginia. Like Plymouth, it is a town in which locals took obvious pride in their city's past. In contrast to Plymouth, however, it is a place in which a strong tradition of grassroots commemoration focused on the colonial period had never fully developed. Thus, when parish rector W.A.R. Goodwin had the inspiration to "restore" the town, the project became the work of an organization largely funded, run, and planned by "outsiders." (In particular, funding came from the Rockefellers of New York and architectural planning was done by a Boston firm.) This means that from the very beginning the endeavors at Williamsburg have largely been "professionalized" and reliant upon the whatever the latest trends in research and scholarship have

been. It also means that, since the late 1920s, members of the local community have not had a strong voice in the stories being told about their town. Intended from its inception as a destination for outside tourists, Williamsburg's institutionalized history has always been strongly focused for a national rather than local audience. And in creating the physical framework for this institution, the very geography and demographics of the city have been reshaped. This results in a city which makes strong claims to "academic legitimacy" and national "relevance," but which has become, to a degree, disengaged from its local community.

Providing a contrast to my other studies, in chapter three I examine the evolution of historical commemoration in Salem, Massachusetts. While the witch trials that occurred in and around the area have long held the nation's imagination, they provide a history which the town has never been eager to celebrate. In looking at the ways in which Salem addressed the trials in the pageants of the early 20th century, we see the various ways in which the story was downplayed or "spun" to allow a more positive local identity to be expressed. However, one consequence of the region's discomfort with the witch story was a lack of any firm foundation on which a professionalized living history program might be built. It was not until the economics of tourism in the mid-twentieth century offered significant financial incentives (bolstered by national attention drawn by such popular cultural phenomena as *The Crucible* and *Bewitched*) that a strong witch-tourism industry sprung up. As a relatively late arrival on the scene, however, this has almost always been sensationalized and commercial, in

contrast to the more putatively professional and “legitimate” historical endeavors at Plymouth and Williamsburg.

My fourth and final chapter adds a complicating dimension to this study as I examine the development of Native American interpretation in Plymouth, Williamsburg, and Salem over the course of the 20th century. As many scholars have noted, Native American voices and culture have long been appropriated or silenced in the telling of the American story. While Native Americans were pivotal figures in the American colonial period, they have rarely been depicted as the protagonists in the narrative. In this chapter, I explore the ways in which Native Americans were used and portrayed in early 20th century commemorations. Working from personal interviews with contemporary Native American historical interpreters, I also consider the ways in which – and reasons why – Native voices have increasingly found outlets. This reveals a trend towards greater acceptance and promotion of these “minority” histories in the professionalized living-history museum setting and offers insight into the ways in which this new interpretation has been received by both Native and non-Native audiences.

Together, these case studies demonstrate that the evolution of living history in these towns was not inevitable. Many factors, including local attitudes and traditions, economics and demographics, trends in the historical profession, and even social movements have all played in part. This is important to understand because as these commemorations develop – be they professionalized, amateur, or strictly commercial endeavors – they all have

consequences for the communities in which they exist and for the identities expressed by the residents in these communities. In turn, as national icons, they tell us about the values and narratives that we struggle over as Americans.

A House Built on a Rock: Plymouth, Massachusetts

In 1620, a small band of English settlers decided to make their home in the wilderness of Massachusetts. Calling their new town “Plimoth Plantation,” they survived incredible hardships and successfully established a permanent settlement in America. They were hardly the first English colonists to achieve such a feat – that honor is claimed by the settlers in Jamestown, Virginia, who arrived in 1607 – but for later generations, those early New Englanders somehow acquired all the glory of early arrival. Even before the thirteen colonies broke away from England in the American Revolution, the founding fathers and mothers of Plymouth were memorialized and revered as symbols of patriotism and the true “American” spirit. With a strong tradition of memory and celebration – both locally and nationally – by the turn of the twentieth century Plymouth had built a firm foundation of commemoration upon which a living history and tourism industry could be established. In this chapter I will explore just how historical institutions such as the living history museum Plimoth Plantation developed out of local celebrations and how local memory and institutionalized history have been balanced in this small New England town with such a big reputation.

Plymouth began building a national reputation for historical significance very early. In his book *Memory’s Nation: The Place of Plymouth Rock*, John Seelye shows that the story of the founding of Plymouth played an important role early on not only in New England but in the whole cause of American independence. As Seelye explains, for American colonists (particularly those with regional claims of Pilgrim descent) the “sufferings of the Fathers . . .

validated the claims of the Sons to their inheritance of the New World republic, on the one hand, and on the other provided a high mark for emulation.”¹ As popular images of the Pilgrim Fathers depicted them as hardy, independent souls of “pure, selfless integrity” (maintained to this day in the widely-accepted – though not entirely accurate – popular perception that the Massachusetts Pilgrims came to America in a spirit of religious tolerance and open-mindedness), they provided a useful image of the spirit of America in opposition to a decadent and tyrannical England. Though this imagery and rhetoric was particularly powerful in New England, it did gain national attention in the early years of the Republic.² Nationally-known speakers came to commemorative celebrations at Plymouth Rock. For example, Daniel Webster spoke there in 1820, the year that marked the bicentennial of the Pilgrims’ arrival. The landing at Plymouth Rock became a popular subject in art and rhetoric throughout the nineteenth century, as Seelye shows, gradually becoming “an icon underwriting an exclusionist doctrine” in response to immigration, shifts in political power, and other anxieties brought on in a changing, industrializing, and modernizing nation.³

Plymouth’s national relevance was also bolstered in the nineteenth century by the rise of popular celebrations of the Thanksgiving holiday. As Elizabeth Pleck notes, this built upon the mid-nineteenth-century middle-class focus on family and the “domestic occasion” with particular reverence for the nuclear (and extended) family. Thanksgiving, as a day of celebration with

¹ John Seelye, *Memory's Nation: The Place of Plymouth Rock* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 16.

² Ibid., 10, 1.

³ Ibid., xv.

features celebrating the early settlers, began as a day primarily celebrated in New England. Its national spread was a very deliberate shift, as Sarah Josepha Hale pushed for a national Thanksgiving holiday to unite the states before the Civil War; it was eventually also promoted by Abraham Lincoln both as a celebration of the victory at Gettysburg and to enforce the same sense of unity Hale sought.⁴ Thanksgiving gained popularity in the late nineteenth century, Pleck argues, because through its emphasis on family reunion and the celebration of historic events and “old fashioned” values it appealed to a sense of nostalgia in a time of conflict and social change. The holiday continued to rise in popularity into the twentieth century; by the 1920s, “Thanksgiving was the most frequently celebrated holiday in the schools, even slightly edging out Christmas.”⁵ However, as Thanksgiving became an ever more popular holiday, it also gained, in some ways, a less regional and more nationalizing aspect. As Pleck asserts, “Hale helped to invent a domestic occasion, which emphasized family homecoming; Lincoln saw in the holiday an opportunity for a nation to give thanks for its blessings.”⁶ However, the public of Hale’s and Lincoln’s time “still understood the holiday as a Protestant one.”⁷ By the early 20th century, however, Thanksgiving was increasingly being used as a tool for the nationalization and integration of immigrants; in “the Progressive era teachers did not emphasize the Protestant origins or meaning of thanksgiving, and instead

⁴ Elizabeth Pleck, “The Making of the Domestic Occasion: The History of Thanksgiving in the United States.” *Journal of Social History* 32:4 (Summer 1999), 775.

⁵ Ibid., 778.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

portrayed the holiday in secular, nationalist terms, as a day when all Americans could feel they belonged to the nation.”⁸ The early settlers of Plymouth were set up as a model of good “American” life, as they supposedly represented faith, family values, and a love for democracy, as manifest in their Mayflower Compact, the “first democratic constitution in the New World.”⁹ Of course, not every family celebrated Thanksgiving. However, by the early twentieth century it was sufficiently popular that even non-celebrating families would likely have heard of it, and the story was taught throughout the country as part of American history. Thus the stage was further set for a national interest (and participation) in pageants and presentations celebrating Plymouth’s earliest settlers.

In addition to the development of informal Thanksgiving traditions celebrated in American homes and schools, John Seelye shows that the expressions of pride in a pilgrim past that had been flowering in art and political rhetoric throughout the nineteenth century began to shift into new forms of organized expression at the turn of the twentieth century. In a society gripped by enthusiasm for “exhibition” culture, marked by the considerable success of world’s fairs and Wild West shows, it is perhaps only natural that local pageantry would gain a new importance in the commemoration of historical events. As Robert Rydell and Rob Kroes have demonstrated, Wild West shows themselves were essentially sensational history pageants (albeit very recent and not necessarily accurate history). These shows, while on a (usually) grander scale and running for much longer periods than the temporary pageantry celebrating

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid., 779.

local history, developed a similar structure to the historical pageants which would soon follow in local commemorations. As Rydell and Kroes write, the “basic structure” of these spectacles “was set as early as 1886, when Buffalo Bill opened a show in Madison Square Garden that ran for several months.” This show, *The Drama of Civilization*, featured “five acts—called ‘epochs.’ The first epoch, ‘The Primeval Forest, featured Indians and animals . . . before the arrival of whites.” The ensuing epochs followed a basically chronological track with the journey of an emigrant train, Buffalo Bill rescuing a “beleaguered pioneer family,” and finally “the arrival of ‘civilization’ with the Pony Express.”¹⁰ As we will see in this and following chapters, early 20th century pageantry celebrating local history similarly tended to follow an “epochal” scheme, starting with scenes of Indian life and progressing forward through the colonial period, with a narrative pointing to increasing civilization, accomplishment, and virtue. The connection – at least in a structural sense - between these Wild West shows and the celebrations of local history, was obvious even at the time. For instance, in 1920, when Plymouth was planning a major celebration of the town’s tercentennial, Mr. Lillie of “Pawnee Bill’s Buffalo Ranch” wrote to the organizers offering his help in acquiring and managing Native American participants, writing that “I have had lots of experience in putting on big pageants, spectacles and in handling Indians.”¹¹ Lillie saw that the Wild West show could serve as a parent to the

¹⁰ Robert W. Rydell and Rob Kroes, *Buffalo Bill in Bologna: The Americanization of the World, 1869-1922* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 31.

¹¹ G. W. Lillie to J. F. McGrath, 4 August 1920, p. 1, Pilgrim Hall Archive, Plymouth.

local historical pageant, offering both a successful model and, in his case, a set of skills for local performers.

The World's Fairs and expositions of the nineteenth century also helped set the stage for 20th century celebrations of Plymouth, though through exhibits rather than dramatizations. As early as the Centennial Exhibition of 1875 (held in Philadelphia) we see displays related to Plymouth. According to period guidebook writer James McCabe, the "New England Farmer's Home and Modern Kitchen" constituted "one of the most interesting features of the Exhibition." The Farmer's Home, built "in the style of the New England farm-houses of a century ago," was furnished with antiques including a number of pieces specifically tied to Plymouth. For instance, in one room was "the Fuller cradle in which rocked little Peregrine White, the child who was born on board the 'Mayflower' on the voyage of the Pilgrims to Plymouth." Writing of that piece, McCabe notes that the "rockers have been worn away in the long years that have elapsed since then, but the cradle still remains a mute witness to the wonderful story of American progress with which all tongues are busy now. What a contrast," he continues, "between the scene when it held its little charge in the hamlet of Plymouth, amid the fierce storms that howled along the bleak and barren coast of New England, and the grand assemblage of nations and wealth of the world in which it now takes part!"¹² In his comment, McCabe illustrates Seelye's point that the Pilgrim Forefathers continued to be used not simply as a local point of pride but as a national touchstone in narratives of national pride and progress. Other Plymouth

¹² James D. McCabe, *The Illustrated History of the Centennial Exhibition*. (Philadelphia: The National Publishing Company, 1876), 645.

memorabilia featured in the 1876 exhibition included John Alden's writing desk and Priscilla's spinning wheel.¹³

As with celebrations of Thanksgiving, *performed* commemorations of the settlement of Plymouth began locally. Stephen Eddy Snow notes that the “first actual performative representation of Pilgrim history” on record appears to be a performance on December 22, 1801, as a part of a Forefathers’ Day celebration. Quoting Robert Withington’s 1920 work on pageantry, Snow notes that at this event “an Indian, dressed in the habiliments of a Sachen [sic], met Capt. Turner in the place where Massasoit was first discovered, and the emblems of peace and friendship, which were interchanged, brought into view, an interesting scene that existed soon after the arrival of our ancestors.”¹⁴ However, the next event for which I have considerable evidence of a performance representing the Pilgrims’ landing did not occur until 1896, with a “Historic Festival” called “Old Plymouth Days and Ways.” The souvenir program from the festival’s second

¹³ Ibid. I do not see as clear a link to Plymouth history in later 19th century exhibitions. For example, according to a guidebook for the 1893 World’s Columbian Exposition in Chicago, the Massachusetts building was modeled on Boston’s John Hancock House; if any Pilgrim artifacts were included, they were not sufficiently notable to the guidebook’s author to merit mention. (John J. Flinn, *Official Guide to the World’s Columbian Exposition*. Chicago: Columbian Guide Company, 1893, p. 156-157.) At the 1904 St. Louis World’s Fair, the Massachusetts building was “a composition of old colonial mansion styles . . . including in its façade a partial reproduction of the State Capitol.” It was furnished with “old heirloom furniture,” and “cherished relics and mementos of Massachusetts history,” some of which may have been related to Plymouth, but the exact identity of these relics is unclear. (*World’s Fair Authentic Guide*. St. Louis: Official Guide Company, 1904. p. 127-128.) In the Jamestown Tercentennial Exposition of 1907, the Massachusetts display was based on the old State House in Boston; a guide to the exhibit mentions that colonial antiques were included but does not draw a specific connection to Plymouth. (*Laird and Lee’s Guide to Historic Virginia and the Jamestown Centennial*. Chicago: Laird & Lee, 1907. p. 124.) We see in all of these examples that while Massachusetts’ history is emphasized, a broader view – often focusing more on the Revolutionary period and the importance of Massachusetts to the development of government – is emphasized. The Pilgrim story may have been featured, but it was not seen as sufficiently important to guidebook writers to include in their works for a general audience.

¹⁴ Stephen Eddy Snow, *Performing the Pilgrims: A Study of Ethnohistorical Role-Playing at Plimoth Plantation* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1993), 13.

year (1897) reveals that two historic houses, the Winslow House and the Crowe House, were opened to the public, and the Winslow House was furnished with antiques on loan specifically for the event. Another highlight was a series of tableaux vivant tracing the story of the Pilgrims beginning with their captivity in England, going through their various journeys to Holland and America, displaying notable scenes of the early years of the colony (including, of course, the “Courtship of Myles Standish”), and continuing through the American Revolution.¹⁵

The 1897 event had a strongly patriotic theme, tying in local events with an American identity. The souvenir program from the festival explains that the event had the same financial goal as the previous year’s festival: attempting to raise money for the building of a church bell tower “in memory of the Pilgrims.”¹⁶ The church, the program asserted, “connected with the churchyard as it will be by the new gateway and approach to Burial Hill [the site where a number of the earliest colonists are buried], the spot, hallowed by more than two hundred years of continuous worship, will contain an enduring and fitting memorial of the virtues, heroism and noble lives of the Pilgrim Fathers.”¹⁷ Such language is typical of the publication, which idolizes the early settlers. In glorifying the Pilgrim Fathers, Plymouth’s residents were not only able to express pride in their ancestors’ accomplishments but to take pride in their own identity as descendants of these early Americans. The importance of family connections is brought out as the

¹⁵ Burbank, A.S. *Old Plymouth Days and Ways Souvenir Program* (Plymouth, Massachusetts: 1897), 52-64.

¹⁶ Ibid., 7.

¹⁷ Ibid.

book notes, for instance, that “Gen. Warren’s waistcoat and shoe-buckles are worn in this scene by his great-great-grandson.”¹⁸ Reaffirming their attachment to the land, it asserts that while the Native Americans who previously controlled the area had been successful in living off the land, “were it not for their lazy and improvident habits, they might have lived without the suffering which they doubtless endured for want of food during the winter months.”¹⁹ The localism of the event was also evident (and important to) its participants. A flier advertising the event proclaimed of the tableaux: “A great many of the characters will be taken by the descendants of the people who came in the Mayflower, which will add doubly to the interest Not only the town of Plymouth, but the neighboring towns of Duxbury and Kingston, where several of the prominent Pilgrim families afterward settled, are actively interested in this festival.”²⁰ Throughout the pageant’s proceedings, scenes depicted the history of locals’ Pilgrim ancestors; it wrapped up with a “Flag Dance” and the singing of “My Country Tis of Thee,” making the connection between the Pilgrim Fathers’ deeds and the American nation they helped to found and shape. This was, then, a local event drawing on local pride and expressing pride of ownership in the area and its past through celebration and performance, while at the same time highlighting the national significance of these events.

The next celebration for which I have found archival evidence was held in 1920 with the tercentenary of the Pilgrims’ arrival. In many ways, it was much

¹⁸ Ibid., 60.

¹⁹ Ibid., 20.

²⁰ Flier, “Ye Old Plymouth “Days and Ways. July 29, 30, 31, Aug. 1, 3” p. 2, Pilgrim Hall Archive, Plymouth.

more than a local event. And, indeed, by this time Plymouth had taken on an increasingly national significance, as the rising popularity and political uses of Thanksgiving were making Plymouth's founding a cornerstone of "American" history – despite the earlier claims of St. Augustine, Jamestown, and any number of other sites. Even the federal government became involved in Plymouth's celebrations, as Congress established a "United States Pilgrim Tercentenary Commission" and appropriated \$400,000 to be used towards commemorative events.²¹ There was also planning at the state level, as the Massachusetts Legislature set up a commission which reported in 1916, proposing "the improvement and preservation of those localities within the town of Plymouth which were specially connected with the Pilgrim Story" and also suggesting a "pageant of such a nature and magnitude as will not only preserve the story of the Landing of the Pilgrims and the historic settlement at Plymouth, but will also typify and illustrate the steps, not merely of New England's advancement from the small beginnings at Plymouth, but also the progress of the nation as well."²² In the spirit of the times, an international exposition was proposed. Governor Samuel McCall was particularly enthusiastic about the idea, which proposed that "a kind of Bostonian Ile de la Cite [be] built on piles in the middle of the Charles River" which would contain

churches, opera houses, theatres, lecture and concert halls, museums, restaurants and cafes, individual shops, together with great State buildings for the Nations of Europe in which would be exhibited works of historical art and also modern artistic productions of

²¹ L.J.T. Biese, *The Pilgrim Tercentenary* (1920). Typed manuscript, corrected version, p. 1, Pilgrim Hall Archive, Plymouth.

²² Ibid., 2.

all kinds. All the operatic musical and theatrical associations of Europe would be represented all the learned societies of the world would be expected to hold conventions during the exposition; while the Olympic games would be provided for at Soldiers Field.²³

Reality imposed, however – not least because of the expenses of the First World War – and it was finally agreed that the State of Massachusetts and the U.S. government would together contribute \$1 million for “local improvements of historical sites in Plymouth and Provincetown and for tablets and markers of important sites throughout the state.”²⁴

Other groups also began planning early, as the “Pilgrim Tercentennial League,” headed up by editors at the *Boston Herald*, began urging a celebration as early as 1909. This group, which made its voice heard through “The Pilgrim Magazine,” was a strong proponent of the idea of a major exposition in celebration of the tercentennial, publishing articles on other such events (such as the Panama-Pacific Exposition) and discussing Massachusetts’ participation in expositions. “The Pilgrim Magazine” stated its purpose clearly:

to awaken sentiment, and to arouse enthusiasm throughout New England in favor of such a commemoration of the Pilgrim Tercentenary as will be worthy the greatness of the New England States, and that shall redound to their prestige, their patriotism and their enduring and increasing prosperity. And from the beginning we have advocated a World’s Exposition in 1920 as the only appropriate means of a Celebration – of the Celebration of the Founding of the American Nation – that would be commensurate with the epochal importance of the event. Now that the Governor of Massachusetts has taken the official initiative in advocating the recognition by the

²³ Ibid., 5.

²⁴ Ibid., 5, 8.

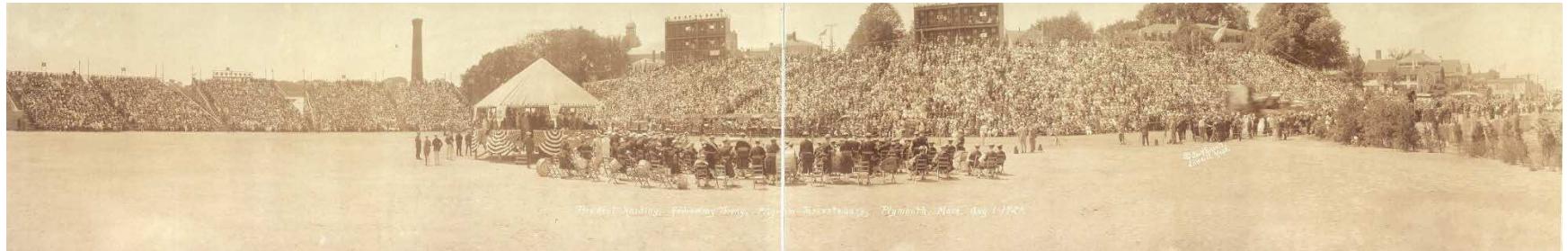
Commonwealth of a fitting and adequate observance of the Founding of this State and that, in accordance with his views a bill has been introduced to provide for a Tercentenary Commission, THE PILGRIM MAGAZINE has reason to regard its mission so far crowned with success.²⁵

Despite the ultimate failure of such grand plans for an international exhibition, Plymouth was still host to an impressive array of celebrations in 1921. Since the actual anniversary of the landing of the Pilgrims fell in December of 1920; it was decided that the spring and summer of 1921 would be the most appropriate – and tourist-friendly – time to celebrate, though many local commemorative events were in fact held in December. (I will detail these events later in this chapter.) The year was filled with a series of parades, pageants, and tableaux vivant. April saw one of the year's earliest events, as Governor Channing Cox gave an address at the Old Colony Theater, followed by a series of “Pilgrim Tableaux.” Keeping with traditional themes, the final scene was “The Pilgrim Heritage: Civil and Religious Liberty.”²⁶ The highlight of the summer fell on August 1, 1921, when President Harding visited for “Plymouth Day.” [Figure 1]

²⁵ “The Pilgrim Magazine” Vol. 1 No. 1 (Jan. 1913); “The Pilgrim Magazine” Vol. 3 no. 1 (Jan 1914): 1.

²⁶ “300th Anniversary of the Return of the Mayflower, Old Colony Theatre, Friday, April 15, 1921,” Pilgrim Hall Archive, Plymouth.

Figure 1



The scale of Plymouth's tercentennial events can partially be grasped in examining the size of the crowd gathered for President Harding's speech on August 1, 1921. Courtesy of the Library of Congress

Figure 2



A Panoramic Shot of the “Personnel of The Tercentenary Pageant, ‘The Pilgrim Spirit,’ Plymouth, Massachusetts, 1921.” Accounts suggest that the majority of the people in this photo came from Plymouth and surrounding communities. Courtesy of the Library of Congress

President and Mrs. Harding, accompanied by Vice President and Mrs. Coolidge, arrived in the Presidential yacht "Mayflower," accompanied by six destroyers.²⁷ A parade was given, luncheons were held for visiting dignitaries, and the day ended with speeches by Harding and other invited guests and a performance of the pageant "The Pilgrim Spirit."²⁸ Harding's speech emphasized the importance of Plymouth in creating a united nation under a representative government; referencing the conflict in Europe he argued that the story of Plymouth teaches us that sometimes schism may lead to true solidarity; that division may mean multiplication. . . . what would have been [Cromwell's] amazement if he could have foreseen the destiny that awaited this feeble colonial enterprise, if he could have known that here was being founded the community that would at last inspire the forces of Old-World liberalism if he could have looked down the vista of three centuries and seen political division followed by spiritual reunion in the greater cause of liberty for all mankind?²⁹

This connection of the lessons of the Pilgrims to the problems of the day was also made in an official souvenir book authorized by the town's Tercentenary Committee, asserting that "The basic problems of the world today were the problems of Plymouth 300 years ago. The Common House and the Common Plot showed them the fallacy of communal living while they proved the principle

²⁷ While the name seems suggestive, the vessel was not christened in honor of the event. The yacht hosting Harding at the Plymouth celebrations had been purchased by the Navy around 1898, served as a US Naval ship in the Spanish-American War, and was commissioned as the Presidential yacht in 1902. In 1929, the vessel was returned to the Navy as a service vessel, and it was used as a submarine chaser in both the First and Second World Wars before eventually being sold off. "Mayflower Sold for Tramp Work," *New York Times*, April 14, 1948, p. 55.

²⁸ "Plymouth Day, August 1, 1921. Program of Exercises," Pilgrim Hall Archive, Plymouth.

²⁹ Warren Harding, "The Achievement of the Centuries: Address of the President, Delivered August 1, 1921 at The Tercentenary Celebration of the Landing of the Pilgrims at Plymouth" (Washington, Government Printing Office, 1921. Senate Document No. 60; 67th Congress, 1st Session), 6-7.

of individual enterprise to be correct. Social problems among which were laziness and poverty were theirs to solve.”³⁰ The story of Plymouth, then, in the views of many the celebration’s organizers and speakers, was one of local, individual achievements with national results and implications.

This appeal to the importance of Plymouth on the national and international stage is particularly relevant because the tercentennial celebrations were indeed aimed at more than just a local audience. Plymouth and its surrounding communities hoped to reap substantial profits from an influx of tourism. Indeed, they had some concerns that they might even draw more people than they were prepared to handle, as a letter from an unidentified correspondent to Denny B. Good of the Boston Chamber of Commerce reveals. He writes that “after a hard struggle, I have succeeded in working out a solution to our eating problem in Plymouth. The Plymouth Tercentenary Committee has secured the use of a fine two story factory building that is splendidly located, and has windows on three sides so it will be light and cheerful.” The location “will seat between 5-600 people on each floor. The lower floor will be given over to a self service restaurant and to an A la carte restaurant where service will be rendered. The upper floor will be reserved for special events when we have to entertain larger crowds.” Keeping with the theme of the celebration, “The restaurant will be known and advertised as ‘Ye Plymouth Tavern.’”³¹ Local booksellers and shop owners produced and stocked publications and trinkets to

³⁰ A.S. Burbank, “Pilgrim Plymouth: The Official Souvenir Book Authorized by the Plymouth Tercentenary Committee” (NP: 1921), 1.

³¹ [Unidentified], to Mr. Denny B Good of the Convention and Tourist Bureau, Boston Chamber of Commerce, 18 May 1921, p. 1, Pilgrim Hall Archive, Plymouth.

sell to visitors as souvenirs of the event, and many did indeed come to celebrate the event. To deal with the expected influx, on June 10, 1920, the town's Tercentenary Committee formed sub-committees to handle transportation, housing and feeding, reception and entertainment, traffic and highways, law and order, publicity, tablets and markers, parades and celebrations, pageantry and public features, sports, concessions, speakers, finance, information & guidance, religious exercises, outside town cooperation, emergency & first aid, fire prevention, civic pride, business relocation, decoration, and music.³²

One account of the celebrations survives in a letter written by "W.W." to Margaret Warren on August 2, 1921. In it, the author describes the events of "Plymouth Day," which was a "clear bright day & very cool." The "crowds up town were immense," W.W. states; "in the morning Pelham and I went up on the burying hill to see the war ships & the Mayflower come in & to hear the chimes rung for the first time & then came back through the crowds to see the house." While the author "did not go to hear Harding," "Pelham did & said the sight of the 10,000 or 20,000 people around the grand stand was impressive. . . . There was of course a crowd at the Pageant – but not larger than Saturday." Further describing the crowds, W.W. writes "Think of 3,000 people in Pilgrim Hall Saturday & Monday."³³ While this does not give us exact numbers on the people who came out for the tercentennial celebrations, it does show that the events attracted significant attention and brought tourists to the area.

³² "Minutes of the June 10, 1920 Town Tercentenary Committee meeting." Typescript. Pilgrim Hall Archive, Plymouth.

³³ W.W. to Margaret Warren, 2 August 1921, p. 1-3, Pilgrim Hall Archive, Plymouth.

There is other evidence of the interest of outside parties in the commemoration of the tercentenary, as well. Examples of celebrations are rife. The Speech Readers Guild of Boston gave a series of Tableaux vivant representing the Pilgrim story in December of 1920. In November of 1921, the Colonial Dames of America held a service at the National Monument to the Forefathers in Plymouth. Provincetown, Massachusetts had its own celebrations on August 29, 1920.³⁴ Interestingly, the Provincetown event was held “in cooperation with the Sulgrave Institution,” an independent organization which seemed to be causing considerable frustration for the official Plymouth Tercentennial Committee, as on more than one occasion Plymouth organizers were concerned that the public was confusing Sulgrave-sponsored events with official celebrations. (The Sulgrave Institution, a private endeavor, was dedicated to promoting good relations between the British and Americans and to preserving Sulgrave Manor, ancestral home of George Washington’s family.) A letter from Mr. MacGrath of the Plymouth committee expresses some of this frustration, stating that “our people do not seem to be very much inclined toward that body owing to the fact that it is a self constituted movement not having official connection with either the Government, the Pilgrim Society, The National Society of Mayflower Descendants, nor is it connected in any way with the several official commissions to represent this great event in American history.” He goes on to

³⁴ Flyers and Programs: “Pilgrim Episodes told with Living Pictures and with Screen. Huntington Chambers Hall, Friday, December 17, 1920. Speech Readers Guild of Boston.”; “Massachusetts Federation of Women’s Clubs at Plymouth, Mass. Song Service at the National Monument to the Forefathers”; “Official Programme of the Celebration at Provincetown commemorating the Landing of the Pilgrims.” Pilgrim Hall Archive, Plymouth.

write that “We look upon it very much as a ‘hands across the sea’ proposition, which, you may know and realize from Mr. Lodge’s speeches in the Senate against the Peace Treaty, does not much appeal to New Englanders – particularly hereabouts. Why this great event should be ‘celebrated’ by an English organization is beyond me because the Pilgrims left England, not because of their love for it, but rather because their lives were made unbearable by the British Government.”³⁵ Thus in the tensions over Sulgrave involvement in Plymouth celebrations we can see just how integral a role Pilgrim history played in shaping local identities as Plymouth citizens, Massachusetts citizens, and New Englanders – and how threatening it could feel if that history seemed to be co-opted by a group of which they didn’t approve. Locals wanted their history celebrated far and wide, but without giving up local “ownership” of the story.

Working to spread the story of the Pilgrims and encourage participation in the tercentennial celebration (under local leadership), schools throughout Massachusetts were encouraged by the state’s Department of Education to commemorate the anniversary with pageants, “field day activities,” “English country dances,” “Indian dances,” “movie pictures,” and pageants. A sample pageant, written by Lotta A. Clark, was provided in a publication by the state, with the promotional note that it “has been given in two communities with success and satisfaction.” The pageant included music, instructions on how to make costumes, and illustrative pictures.³⁶

³⁵ MacGrath to Bronson Batchelor, 25 May 1920, p. 1, Pilgrim Hall Archive, Plymouth.

³⁶ “Commonwealth of Mass. Bulletin of the Dept. of Education 1920, No. 10 #119. The Pilgrim Tercentenary 1620-1920. Suggestions for observance in the schools, giving specimen programs, pilgrim stories, a pageant and a bibliography. Prepared by the Special Committee on

Schools outside of Massachusetts also proved eager to mark the anniversary, as the Plymouth Tercentenary Committee received letters from around the country asking for help and suggestions for activities schoolchildren could participate in. The superintendent of schools in Brookings, South Dakota asked for “a pageant or bibliography of suitable material,” while a request came in from Moline, Illinois for a “play, pageant or illustrated material . . . for presentation by high school students.” The dramatic director of the Young Men’s Hebrew Association in New York also expressed interest, writing that “We intend to celebrate with you and will probably produce a Pageant on Thanksgiving. Can you suggest any Masque or pageant that we can use?” Miss R. M. Hatchett of Lanier High School in Montgomery, Alabama, summed up the general tenor of these letters, writing: “I am anxious to celebrate the Plymouth Tercentenary and write to ask your assistance in getting material. The plays I have do not exactly suit me. I would like to give a pageant-masque. . . . I think we in Dixie ought to celebrate too. Don’t you?”³⁷ By performing these sorts of plays and pageants, Americans far outside of New England could not only celebrate Plymouth’s history, they could make their own claim to a share in the American heritage

the School Observance of the Pilgrim Tercentenary,” Boston: Wright & Potter, 1920, pp. 11, 18, 76. Pilgrim Hall Archive, Plymouth. Interestingly, this publication does recommend tying in local history when producing field trips or pageants: “A special feature . . . should be the use of local history in one of the episodes, tying up incidents of local history with the Pilgrim story in such a way as to give the pageant real meaning to the persons who participate in it, and to the spectators who witness its presentation” (11).

³⁷ S. W. Johnson, superintendent of Brookings, S.D. City Schools, to Plymouth Pilgrim Tercentenary Commission, 29 Sept 1920; Helen J. Bardues [?] of Moline, IL to the Tercentenary Commission, 27 September 1920; Dramatic Director [?? Hack?] of the Young Men’s Hebrew Association in New York City to Pilgrim Tercentenary Celebration Committee, 29 September 1920; Miss R.M. Hatchett of Lanier High School in Montgomery Alabama (a public school) to Mayor of Plymouth, 4 October 1920. All in Pilgrim Hall Archive, Plymouth.

represented by the Pilgrim Fathers. As Paul Connerton argues, participating in rituals and ceremonies (such as, in this case, historical pageantry) helps to create “social memory,” a communal way of understanding the past and integrating that past into one’s own identity. Thus, by taking part in the school plays celebrating the Plymouth Tercentennial, a child – be it a young Jewish immigrant boy in New York or the daughter of sharecroppers in Alabama – could make a new claim on a broader American identity by playing the part of and taking on the social memory of an early New England settler.

Even further afield, the tercentenary was marked internationally. Two brass cannons from around the period of the Pilgrims’ landing were donated from the British National Artillery Museum and installed on Burial Hill during a ceremony in October of 1921. Next to the cannons a plaque was placed to let the public know that “In consideration of the Greatness of the Occasion, the Tercentenary Celebration of the Landing of the Pilgrims, and the Good Will of the English Nation, the Government, on behalf of the British people, have made this gift to the Town of Plymouth, Massachusetts.”³⁸ Further, a souvenir booklet published in Plymouth recorded that commemorative events were held in Holland (in August of 1920) and England (in September of 1920).³⁹ Here we catch glimpses of other nations and communities using the celebration to mark important parts of their own history, and perhaps making a statement on the

³⁸ Program, “Ancient and Honorable Artillery Company of Massachusetts. Exercises. Burial Hill, October 4, 1921.” Pilgrim Hall Archive, Plymouth.

³⁹ Booklet “Pilgrim Tercentenary. Observances at Plymouth December 21, 1920 and the Summer of 1921. Issued by Alfred S. Burbank Plymouth, Mass. Pilgrim Book and Art Shop by authority of the Tercentenary Town Committee,” p. 2, Pilgrim Hall Archive, Plymouth.

global stage about their relationship with the United States, as the Sulgrave Institution did in its own support of commemorations.

Various publications were printed and distributed to ensure that any group across the nation wishing to share in the celebration could take part. Myrtle Strode-Jackson published “Mayflower Morning,” which would have been available in stores outside of Plymouth.⁴⁰ This was “A stirring Patriotic Song in the form of an **Ode to the Pilgrim Fathers and Mothers** on the tercentenary of their voyage from Holland and England to America. . . . The Ode is five verses long with chorus, and is most suitable to open a Pageant or Play or to wind up an entertainment. It has been specially written for the Tercentenary Celebrations.”⁴¹ Numerous souvenir booklets were produced and sold, explaining the history and importance of the event. Another notable publication that would have helped in creating celebrations at other sites was the printing of the script of “The Pilgrim Spirit,” the pageant that stood at the center of celebrations in Plymouth. One could also celebrate the anniversary from afar by “playing pilgrim” with toys and souvenirs. The Gnirol Game company advertised a “Pilgrim’s Party” game in which “the principle actors are the Pilgrims themselves. Historical—Instructive—Fascinating.” The less frivolous consumer might choose instead to purchase a “Polly Prim Apron,” which provided “both an attractive and useful souvenir of your

⁴⁰ I have been able to find frustratingly little about Ms. Strode-Jackson, aside from advertisements for a few of her publications (mostly dramatic works and tracts on religious topics). However, one intriguing passenger list from the ship *Adriatic*, arriving in New York on April 16, 1920, lists a writer by that name among the passengers; the woman on the list is noted as a British subject whose permanent residence was in London, England. If Ms. Strode-Jackson was an Englishwoman, that raises even more questions about why she was writing an Ode to the Plymouth Fathers, but the elusive details of her life provide no answers.

⁴¹ Myrtle Strode-Jackson, Advertisement for “Mayflower Morning.” Pilgrim Hall Archive, Plymouth.

visit to historic Plymouth" and was even (supposedly) "designed and made by a Pilgrim descendant."⁴²

We can see, then, that the Plymouth tercentenary celebration was an event with national and international connections. At the same time, however, the commemoration was an intensely local event with strong ties to the community that produced it. These local connections can be seen in part in the celebrations that took place in December of 1920, when few tourists were expected to travel to the area. The local celebrations that December included: a musical performance on December 19 that was sponsored by the Masons and held in the Old Colony Theater, a series of tableaux vivant featuring 12 scenes of the Pilgrims' progress from Holland to America (sponsored by the Plymouth Antiquarian Society on December 20), a program of music and speeches at the Old Colony Theater (including addresses by then-governor Calvin Coolidge and Henry Cabot Lodge) on December 21, and a musical program and dance given by the Plymouth Girls' Club and 10th Co. 1st Coast Defense Command (also on December 21).⁴³ L.J.T. Biese writes that the program on the 21st in the Old Colony Theater was so popular that not everyone who wanted to attend could fit

⁴² William Franklin Atwood, "Pilgrim Plymouth Guide and Historical Digest. Illustrated. With an Outline of the Tercentenary Observances" Second Edition. Np: nd, p. 76, back cover, Pilgrim Hall Archive, Plymouth.

⁴³ "Commemoration of the Landing of the Pilgrims. Public Observance, Sunday, December Nineteenth by Plymouth Lodge, A.F. & A.M. Old Colony Theatre, at three o'clock in the afternoon. Plymouth, Massachusetts" Pilgrim Hall Archive, Plymouth; "Plymouth Antiquarian Society Pilgrim Tableaux December twenty, nineteen hundred twenty" Pilgrim Hall Archive, Plymouth; "Order of Exercises at the 300th Anniversary of the Landing of the Pilgrims. Tuesday, December 21, 1920 at the Old Colony Theatre, Plymouth, Mass." Pilgrim Hall Archive, Plymouth; "First Pilgrim Festival. In Commemoration of the 300th Anniversary of the Landing of the Pilgrims. State Armory, Plymouth, Mass. December 21st, 1920. By Plymouth Girls' Club and 10th Co. 1st. Coast Defense Command" Pilgrim Hall Archive, Plymouth.

in the theater; the Antiquarian Society's tableaux was meant to "appease the would-be celebrants" who were unable to attend the more official function.⁴⁴

It was also an event of direct local importance in that the tercentenary celebrations physically affected the geography and landscape of the town. As Biese explains, when the Pilgrim Tercentenary Commission published its report in January of 1917, it called for a number of changes to the area including "permanent alteration and improvement of the water front on both sides of [Plymouth] Rock by the removal of unsightly wharves, coal shed and other buildings." Display of the Rock itself was to change, as "the present canopy of the Rock should be removed, the Rock lowered to its original bed, and a more permanent inclosure [sic] erected." There was to be "the taking of sufficient land on the hill rising above the Rock, known as Cole's Hill, where were buried the Pilgrims who died the first winter, to permit the discontinuance of the present highway and the location of a new highway westerly of the present line," and on Cole's Hill itself they called for "a permanent memorial hall, which shall not only perpetuate the memory of the Pilgrims, but shall also recognize the fact that here was established the first town government and was laid the foundation of free democratic institutions in America." Further, and perhaps of greatest impact to the daily lives of residents of Plymouth, the commission called for the "restoration of the slope" of Burial Hill "by the removal of houses along School and South

⁴⁴ Biese, 8.

Russell Streets" as well as building of "a low retaining wall, and the grading of the slopes of the hill.⁴⁵

Once the stage was physically "set" and the grand celebrations of the summer of 1921 began, locals continued to be major players in and consumers of the celebrations. In the parade held on Plymouth Day (August 1), they participated not only by joining the throngs to watch the parade and listen to the President's speech (as did "W.W." of the letter referenced earlier), they provided floats and marched in the morning's "Grand Parade." The day's "Program of Exercises" explains that there were five "divisions" of the procession: military, veterans, civic, town floats, and industrial.⁴⁶ "W.W." gives us a firsthand account of this parade in a letter written to a friend:

Promptly at 11.30 the procession started & it was certainly the most interesting one I have seen. The President came first with cavalry and then long lines of soldiers & jockies [sic] – the Legion – Grand Army & various quaint bodies of Indians antiques &c including the old Marshfield Coach – Daniel Webster's carriage - & sulkies drawn by people in old costumes – then the long line of floats illustrating Pilgrim & Colonial scenes Many of these were [illegible] pretty & trimmed in good taste. We thought the best were Miss Howland in white [illegible] for the Red Cross [. . .] The effect was very good. The Barnstable float was also pretty & the Marshfield one which took the prize. Then there was one from Middleboro full of young women singing old fashioned tunes – Coronation, Majesty &c accompanied by an old harmonica & violin. This excited much applause. It took an hour & a half for the procession to pass.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Ibid., 4. Scholars of Jamestown, Virginia, would certainly challenge some of the claims to primacy that were made in this report.

⁴⁶ "Plymouth Day, August 1, 1921. Program of Exercises" Pilgrim Hall Archive, Plymouth.

⁴⁷ W.W. to Margaret Warren, 1-2.

This account makes it clear that the “town floats” included representatives of local communities, and that people in the float were known by name to at least some of its viewers.

The local community was also intimately involved in the summer’s pageant, “The Pilgrim Spirit.” As the published book of the pageant explains, it was “acted and sung by the people of Plymouth, Kingston, Duxbury, and Marshfield” on “July 13, 14, 15, 16, 30, [and] August 1, 2, 3, 10, 11, 12, 13, 1921 in the State Reservation by Plymouth Rock.”⁴⁸ While the costume mistress was brought in from New York, the costumes themselves were sewn by local volunteers. Mrs. Ralph W. Hall, who prepared a lecture on the subject of the pageant for those who were unable to attend it, asserts that “there were between one thousand and eleven hundred actors in the cast,” and a “chorus of three hundred.”⁴⁹ [Figure 2] These numbers are corroborated in the advertisement for a commemorative book published by A.S. Burbank, which states that the pageant was “enacted by over 1200 people of Plymouth, Kingston, Duxbury and Marshfield,” and by a flier for the pageant itself, which asserts that the “cast contains more than 1,000 persons” and the “chorus, especially trained, 300” (as

⁴⁸ George P. Baker, *The Pilgrim Spirit: The Tercentenary Pageant*, Pilgrim Hall Archive, Plymouth. As the pageant was outside and on the waterfront, dates were chosen to “take advantage of favorable tides and the phases and positions of the moon,” and performances were to last around two hours and ten minutes. (Biese, 10; “Tercentenary Pageant ‘The Pilgrim Spirit’ Rehearsals for the week of July 25th” Pilgrim Hall Archive, Plymouth. Pilgrim Hall Archive, Plymouth.)

⁴⁹ Mrs. Ralph W. Hall, lecture on “The Pilgrim Spirit,” Typescript Draft with handwritten notes. No date, p. 3, Pilgrim Hall Archive, Plymouth. (There is no date on this document, but I have found a ticket in the Pilgrim Hall archives for an “Illustrated Lecture on the Plymouth Tercentenary [sic] Pageant by Mrs. Ralph W. Hall for the Radcliffe College Endowment Fund and the Young Peoples’ Christian Union” which was held at the Universalist Church of the Messiah (Broad St. and Montgomery Ave.) on Thursday, March 15, 1923.)

well as having a 70-piece band).⁵⁰ Biese writes that “since the crowds were big and the tickets expensive (\$2.50), for many of the kids in the area the only way to see the spectacle was to be in it,” so many local children signed on, and because of the play’s needs, anyone “who had access to a horse was immediately drafted.” Returning WWI vets were also eager to sign on in a continuing fervor of patriotism, and Biese suggest that the local Plymouth Cordage Company may have put some pressure on its employees to participate as well.⁵¹ Mrs. Hall argues that “Never was community spirit better exemplified” than in the production of “The Pilgrim Spirit,” with “the first families and the last contributing their full share to the glory of Plymouth and to the success of the Pageant. There were many native Plymoutheans [sic] who trace their ancestry back to the Pilgrims fathers whose names they still keep alive – and there were foreign born in the larger groups, some American citizens, and some whose arrival here was so recent that they had to have their directions interpreted to them.” Painting the pageant as an event that brought the community together and was even an active force for Americanization, she goes on to argue that “the last group [immigrants] was fully as enthusiastic as any other, and their inherent dramatic instincts responded readily to the appeal of their parts. Although their feelings could not perhaps be the same as those of the Pilgrim descendants concerning this occasion, nevertheless it was felt that valuable Americanization work was accomplished as a by-product of their participation. One interesting fact is that

⁵⁰ Advertising material for “The Pilgrim Tercentenary Pageant.” Sold by A.S. Burbank, Pilgrim Book and Art Shop, Plymouth Mass, Pilgrim Hall Archive, Plymouth; Flyer for The Pilgrim Spirit, p. 1, Pilgrim Hall Archive, Plymouth.

⁵¹ Biese, 10, 11.

the splendid Norseman, of whom there is an individual picture, is a Russian born and was the first man to become a naturalized citizen in Plymouth.”⁵²

While “The Pilgrim Spirit” was the most visible and highly-attended performative attraction in the tercentennial celebrations (one estimate put the total audience at 100,000), it was hardly the only costumed performance to take place.⁵³ In addition to the various one-time tableaux vivant, the tercentenary saw the beginning of what would become a revered tradition in Plymouth: the Pilgrim Progress. William Atwood described the event in its earliest incarnation and explained how to participate, writing in his guide to Plymouth that an

unusual and at the same time impressive service has been inaugurated in connection with the tercentenary observances. This is called the ‘Pilgrim Progress.’ Those interested in paying homage to the Pilgrims, especially those of Pilgrim descent, are requested to meet at the foot of Leyden Street near the Rock. Here at 5 p.m. daily (Sundays excepted) the gathering will form and in the costumes of the early period march through Leyden Street and Town Square to Burial Hill, where, at the site of the old Fort, hymns will be sung and appropriate services observed. It is a service of reverence and will be simple and appropriate in every way to the character and times of our Pilgrim forbears. These services have been arranged in such a way as not to conflict with the Pageant programme, but on the contrary, will be a fitting feature of the major whole. Costumes will be provided for those desiring them and those interested are requested to send their names to Miss Helen E. Millar, Russell Street, Plymouth, Massachusetts.⁵⁴

⁵² Hall, p. 5. How I wish I had the images that accompanied this lecture.

⁵³ “Town Tercentenary Committee Minutes, 1917-1921,” Typescript, Pilgrim Hall Archive, Plymouth.

⁵⁴ Atwood, 86.

As Stephen Eddy Snow explains, this combination of parade and pageant is the only relic of the tercentenary to survive the years, and is to this day still regularly performed (though considerably less frequently than it was when it debuted). Over time, he writes, “the Progress began to involve a kind of role-playing. . . . local people started to become identified with their roles in the Progress. . . . This probably came about because these individuals played the same part year after year.” Thus, competition for certain parts could become fierce and contested.⁵⁵ Pilgrim Progress, then, became another strong tradition in which locals could commemorate their history and forge personal links with their community’s past.

At the turn of the twenty-first century, the Progress no longer holds the prominence it once did. However, its survival as a relic of the tercentennial points to the strength of local performative practices of commemoration in Plymouth. There were, certainly, local organizations dedicated to the Pilgrims’ memory that are as old, or older, than the Progress, including the Plymouth Antiquarian Society, the Old Colony Club, the Mayflower Society, and Pilgrim Hall. However, the tercentennial was the first event to bring all of these groups together for performance and celebration, and with its pageant and Pilgrim Progress it provided the beginnings of a model for more permanent forms of living history in Plymouth. In the wake of the anniversary celebrations, living history events began to be practiced at the Antiquarian Society’s “Harlow Old Fort House” (so named for the tradition that the building was constructed from timbers taken from the original fort on Burial Hill). Jim Baker, a native and

⁵⁵ Snow, 23.

dedicated historian of Plymouth, explains that women in costume demonstrated colonial crafts such as spinning at the house.⁵⁶ The Old Fort House also became the site of a tradition in which local schoolchildren reenacted the planting of crops as the Pilgrims were taught by the Natives.⁵⁷ These efforts are overshadowed, though, by the creation of Plimoth Plantation.

Plimoth Plantation, incorporated in 1947, was the first major undertaking in Plymouth to give a permanent institutional structure to the recreation of scenes from the past. Certainly, it was not the first to preserve a building in Plymouth, a job undertaken by the Antiquarian Society beginning in 1919, nor was it the first to recreate a building from the past. The Massachusetts Society of the Sons of the American Revolution had, for instance, reconstructed a powder house on Burial Hill in 1920, “with as great fidelity to the original design as was consistent with making a permanent memorial structure.”⁵⁸ Very little had been done since the tercentennial, however, in an effort to create or perpetuate dramatized retellings of the Pilgrims’ story. Snow quotes former Plimoth Plantation president George C.P. Olsson as asserting that after the 300th anniversary “I don’t think any real effort had been made For more than 25 years there was only the Pilgrims’ Progress tableau which took place every Friday in August.”⁵⁹ Plimoth Plantation was, then, the first to take on a large-scale, long-term project combining reconstruction and costumed interpretation in the town. As such, it

⁵⁶ James W. Baker, interview by author, 28 July 2010, digital recording, Plymouth.

⁵⁷ Donna D. Curtin, interview by author, 29 July 2010, digital recording, Plymouth.

⁵⁸ Program, “Massachusetts Society of the Sons of the American Revolution Annual Field Day and Dedication of Powder House. Plymouth, Massachusetts. Tuesday, October 12, 1920” Pilgrim Hall Archive, Plymouth.

⁵⁹ Snow 21.

created an institutional structure that would significantly shift the balance between local and national interpretations of Plymouth's history.

When the first structures of Plimoth Plantation (a reconstructed fort and meetinghouse, built on the waterfront) were dedicated and opened on June 27, 1953, their connection with earlier living history celebrations in town was clear.

[Figure 3] The ceremony for the event began with a performance of Pilgrim Progress, and the program of events strongly echoed earlier commemorations as it included songs, invocations, and speeches. At the same time, the speeches given reflected the contemporary historical situation, as in reference to the Cold War conflict with Communism Harold Stassen stated: "This fort and meeting house are symbolic of our time. We need both. We need strong protection against those who would attack us. We also need the meeting house – a place where men can freely come together to share their thoughts, and, having spoken, arrive without coercion at a course of action which seems best to most of those concerned."⁶⁰

Plimoth Plantation began as a (relatively) local inspiration, as it was largely the brainchild of Henry Hornblower II, scion of a wealthy Boston family who had spent many childhood summers in the Plymouth area (where his family kept a summer house) and had a strong interest in its history. Hornblower family money provided the first financing for the project; the earliest buildings were constructed on ground that had first been cleared for the Tercentenary pageant.

⁶⁰ "Dedication Addresses by His Excellency Christian A. Herter and The Honorable Harold E. Stassen at Plimoth Plantation's First Fort and Meeting House. Plymouth, Massachusetts, 27 June 1953" p. 2, 14-15, Pilgrim Hall Archive, Plymouth.

Figure 3



On the waterfront in Plymouth stand two of Plimoth Plantation's original exhibition buildings. Author's photograph

Figure 4



A view of the English village at Plimoth Plantation, seen from its meetinghouse.
Author's Photograph

However, the design itself was not local, as Charles T. Strickland of Boston was brought in as architect. Further, much of the inspiration came from other living history sites of the time. For instance, in 1947 the architects suggested an archaeological workshop and “small museum building” with the argument that “A building of this nature is maintained at Jamestown, Virginia, by the National Park Service and has proved to be of tremendous interest to the student and layman alike.”⁶¹ However, the story being told at Plimoth Plantation was still, in those early years, largely under local control. As the project proved to be a tourist draw and financial success, the Fort-Meeting House was physically transferred to a site on land donated by the Hornblowers and new buildings were constructed to recreate the town of Plymouth to look as it would have to the original settlers (albeit not on the original site, which was covered with modern structures). Early interpretation of these buildings did not involve first-person interpretation, but “guides” and “hostesses” drawn from the local population were present in costume (not particularly historically accurate costumes by today’s scholarly standards, but evocative of the era and meeting the stereotypical image of the “pilgrim”) to explain the significance of the buildings and the antiques with which they were furnished to visitors. Eventually, wax mannequins were set up in tableaux of notable historic scenes, but there were still costumed interpreters to explain their importance to guests. The idea was to “keep it a live thing” by showing how the settlers would have lived.⁶² The story they told was created by

⁶¹ Charles R. Strickland, of Strickland and Strickland (Architects) to Henry Hornblower II, 6 June 6 1947, p. 2. Plimoth Plantation Archive, Plymouth

⁶² Snow, 30; Strickland, 1.

Plymouth High School history teacher Arthur Pyle, who instructed the guides and went on to become the first official director of education for Plimoth Plantation.⁶³ In its early years, then, Plymouth Plantation maintained a local character and a local interpretation of the area's history.

A major and drastic shift in the interpretation of history at Plimoth Plantation occurred in the late 1960s. Aware of new developments in the fields of archaeology, anthropology, and academic history, including the rise of the new "social history," the administration of Plimoth Plantation decided to hire Harvard scholar James Deetz, who put the institution on the path towards the model of first-person interpretation which it follows to this day. Under Pyle's program of museum education, interpreters talked freely with the public in a "conversational approach" rather than lecturing. However, the interpreters, though in costume, were not in character. Deetz, as a professional anthropologist, was interested in incorporating more thorough research and an emphasis on historical accuracy into the story told at Plimoth Plantation, bringing in student archaeologists and taking out the mannequins. In 1969 the reconstructed homes were stripped of their antique furniture (to a horrified outcry from some Pilgrim descendants and others who cherished this previous interpretation - especially when the items were auctioned off in 1972) as the regime under Deetz moved the story told at the Plantation away from "ancestor worship" and towards a "debunking" of "American myths" and worked to redesign the physical buildings and layout of the

⁶³ Snow, 26, 29-30.

museum itself.⁶⁴ [Figure 4] Deetz helped establish a first-person living history program at Plimoth Plantation in which interpreters interacted with visitors as though the interpreters were actual colonists going about their day-to-day business, practicing crafts and farming. As James Baker explains,

it shocked and dismayed many. Labels, antiques, displays and mannequins . . . had vanished. The houses appeared bare and Spartan. Kitchen gardens full of vegetables replaced the herb gardens, the split-rail fences which were proving ineffectual in preventing newly-acquired sheep and chickens from pillaging household plots were replaced by animal-proof board fences. The familiar presentation of the Pilgrim Story had been superseded by something called 'living history. . . . The museum's course had abruptly turned from the veneration of early Pilgrim ancestors to an unadorned, unromanticized representation of the social history of the infant colony and its struggling, stalwart inhabitants.⁶⁵

As Snow explains, "many older visitors and townsfolk [and, as Baker asserts, employees!] complained that the Pilgrim Village now looked like a hippie commune."⁶⁶ However much it disgusted the locals, the changes did not turn away the tourists – indeed, attendance continued to increase during this period – so the new system was judged a success.

While it may be amusing to think of "hippie pilgrims" and colonial street theater, it's worth noting the effects of these changes on the local communities. Certainly, one can argue that the increased focus on authenticity is laudable, and (as we have seen in the arguments of Landsberg and others) the interest in

⁶⁴ Snow, 30-36; James W. Baker, *Plimoth Plantation: Fifty Years of Living History* (Plymouth: Plimoth Plantation, 1997), 19-20.

⁶⁵ Baker, 22-23.

⁶⁶ Snow, 37.

performance makes the story of the Pilgrims' lives and struggles more relatable and relevant to visitors. However, the change came about without the consent – or even the choice – of local stakeholders in the story (that is to say, people who actually lived in the area and constructed their personal identities as residents of a town associated with the Plymouth Pilgrims, as well as people who considered their descent from the Plymouth Pilgrims an integral part of their personal identity). Many Plymouth residents were proud of their descent from the town's founders, and in a way, they found themselves "colonized" by academics from outside the community intent on changing the focus of the story, taking it out of their control. While this may have made for better and more accurate history, it represented a significant shift in the dynamics of historical storytelling in Plymouth. Previously, despite outside financial interests, the story told through living history at Plymouth was, generally speaking, the story endorsed by local citizens. After 1970, the hegemonic narrative was told by professional academics from outside the community.

It is in this context that we must consider the next major commemoration of the founding of Plymouth: the 350th anniversary celebrations in 1970-1971. In many ways the planning and pageantry would have been quite familiar to those who participated in the tercentennial fifty years earlier. Just as before, the tone was patriotic and nationalistic, painting the Plymouth story as the story of American values. When Senator Edward M. Kennedy introduced a bill to create a Plymouth-Provincetown Celebration Commission on September 13, 1969, he asserted that "Three-hundred and fifty years have passed since the landing of

the Pilgrims. And, in that time, the nation they helped to found has become the leader of the free world. Much of its success as a nation can be traced directly to an adherence to the principle of freedom – the principle which brought the Pilgrims to America in search of a new world.”⁶⁷ The celebrations in Plymouth began on September 12, 1970 with “the best, longest, and most memorable parade in Plymouth’s history,” accompanied by a ball and fireworks.⁶⁸ A pageant, “America 350,” written by Charles Hull Wolfe, was performed twice over the course of the year.⁶⁹ “America 350” was a piece of theatre drawing “on a wide variety of talent to depict in music the story of America, from pre-Pilgrim times to the present,” with performers including “the Brockton Harmoneers, the Plymouth Sweet Adelines,” a “Plymouth area youth chorus, and a bevy of vocal soloists and dancers.”⁷⁰ (In its focus on local talent, chronological narrative, and reliance on musical numbers, this harkened back to earlier pageantry. However, it was not nearly as central a feature in the celebrations as the tercentennial pageant had been 50 years earlier.) There was a lecture series, and also a “series of reenactments during the several anniversary months for the purpose of introducing the Pilgrim experience to adults and children through their participation and to remind the public, in a colorful way, about this unique experience.”⁷¹ The Plymouth Antiquarian Society marked the 50th anniversary of

⁶⁷ *350th Pilgrim Anniversary: Final Report of the Plymouth-Provincetown Celebration Commission*. Plymouth, Massachusetts. Nd: np, iii.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 114, 3.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 7.

⁷⁰ *Pilgrim 350th Anniversary Celebration: Official Program and Guide* (Wakefield, MA: Pride Publications, 1970), 28.

⁷¹ *350th Pilgrim Anniversary*, 23.

their “corn planting ceremony,” which had been inaugurated as a part of the tercentennial celebrations and presented annually at the Old Fort House. An event for children, the “the ceremony represents the first sowing of corn with herring in 1621, as the Pilgrims were shown by Squanto, and has been acted out by Plymouth school children during these many years.” (This proved so popular with guests in 1971 that the ceremony was brought to other celebrations that year; for instance, at Boston’s Harvest Festival, “one for the cutworm, one for the crow, one for the blackbird, and two to grow’, a verse from the corn-planting ceremony, was used in publicity, along with reference to the Plymouth tradition.”⁷²) Many other smaller celebrations were also recorded, including a day in August 1971 when “about 60 costumed dancers and musicians came in to perform along the waterfront to the Mayflower II pier to the delight of several hundred tourists and Plymouth residents. . . . The music, played on fiddles and accordions, was Elizabethan and summery. At the Mayflower pier, the public was invited to join in country dancing and learned a circle dance.”⁷³ Very similar to festivities at the tercentennial, activities in the 1970-71 celebration included “open houses at the historic houses, Pilgrims’ Progress . . . a public buffet dinner, a square dance, and . . . religious service[s]. The Plymouth-Carver High School football game and a special Thanksgiving concert by the Plymouth Philharmonic were also part of the program.”⁷⁴

⁷² Ibid., 24.

⁷³ Ibid., 83.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 94.

However, coming as it did in a different social, political, and economic climate, the 350th anniversary did have many differences from the tercentennial. For one thing, the event apparently did not garner as much local enthusiasm and wrought fewer physical changes on the town. Original plans for the celebration included the building of a “Pilgrim fountain” by the Plymouth waterfront, the purchase of land from the Pen-Central Railroad “for future park or parking purposes,” and the re-enactment of the popular “Pilgrim Spirit” pageant from 1920. All of these ideas were shelved or voted down through referenda.⁷⁵ Furthermore, the story told at this later celebration was influenced by the new developments in social history and the rise of American Indian activism. Seeking to be inclusive and respectful (in ways vastly different from the representation of Native Americans at the tercentennial, which I will explore in chapter 4), planners sought to answer “the criticisms posed at the Thanksgiving Indian protests in 1969 and 1970, when it was said that the Indian role in Thanksgiving and in the Pilgrim adventure has never been given the recognition it deserved.” Soliciting suggestions from “Helen Attaquin [president of the Descendants of the Wampanoags] and various members of the Indian Program at the Harvard University School of Education and others, the Commission planned an Indian speaking forum, an Indian music and folklore afternoon, a number of Sabbath services, the Peace Treaty reenactment, and other projects.”⁷⁶

Another notable difference between the tercentennial and the 350th celebration was the way in which new media and technologies made the local

⁷⁵ Ibid., 7.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 67.

celebrations immediately accessible to a regional and national audience. Time after time, descriptions of the events note the presence of the press or television crews. For instance, the “spring corn-planting ceremonies and other Pilgrim scenes were given a Thanksgiving television showing on the Major Mudd Show,” a children’s program shown throughout New England, during the 350th celebrations. Similarly, images from celebrations at Plymouth and Boston celebrations were featured in magazines and news articles at Thanksgiving and in an exhibition by the Smithsonian.⁷⁷ When a “shallop” recreating the explorations of the early settlers plied Massachusetts waters on September 11-12 of 1971, there “was excellent press and television coverage at the point of departure.”⁷⁸

Meanwhile – perhaps reflecting America’s greater role in world affairs in the mid-twentieth century – Plymouth’s anniversary was also celebrated in a number of cities abroad. These international celebrations sought both to reinforce friendly ties in a world under the shadow of the Cold War and also to draw in tourist income. Thus, from May through October of 1970, the city of Plymouth, England, hosted a program called “Mayflower ‘70” in which representatives from the US and Holland “participated in a full program of receptions, festivities, and reenactments sponsored by Plymouth, England, and the British Travel Authority.”⁷⁹ Early 1970 also saw “a number of events, including a reenactment of the departure of the Pilgrims” in Leiden, Holland.⁸⁰

⁷⁷ Ibid., 24-25.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 37.

⁷⁹ Ibid., np.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 3.

Meanwhile, foreign dignitaries came to the US to celebrate, as the Lord Mayor of Plymouth, England (Dorothy F.W. Innes) visited Plymouth, Massachusetts to “stress the ties between the two Plymouths.”⁸¹

The 350th anniversary was, then, a significant moment in celebrating the area’s history, and it drew both national and international attention. It represents in some ways a fulcrum: the celebrations fell back upon many traditional methods of celebrating a major historical anniversary, but also incorporated new historical ideas and technologies. The last decades of the twentieth century saw Plymouth increasingly tipping towards a modern style of interpretation, as Plimoth Plantation fully committed itself to first-person interpretation showing the “nitty gritty” side of pilgrim life and as Native American history – as told by the local Native community – became increasingly important (as we will see in chapter four).

The 1980s and 1990s saw the incorporation of new interpretative sites at Plimoth Plantation, and the push towards a “new social history” interpretation of the site continued. More children were incorporated into interpretation, and the institution sought funding for new areas in its craft shop including a possible bake shop, glass furnace, shoemaker, and pottery kiln.⁸² Beginning in the 1980s, Plimoth Plantation also increasingly sought interpreters with acting or performance experience, to aid in its mission of an immersive, first-person experience for guests.⁸³ This has resulted in a program which today, in the early

⁸¹ Ibid., 90.

⁸² Programming Committee folder, Plimoth Plantation Archive, Plymouth.

⁸³ Snow 45.

21st century, does still tell the story of the “big name” Pilgrim Fathers, but also presents an in-depth view of the everyday way of life for the common settler in early Plymouth.

These changes all worked to help keep Plymouth’s story relevant to a national audience as the narrative performed there tells a relatable story with meaning and lessons for modern visitors. While the fabled landing at Plymouth Rock has, as we have seen, been a part of our national mythology since before the American Revolution, the 20th century saw portrayals of the story and the early settlers expand into new forms of mass media, helping to keep Plymouth in the public eye. The massive pageant held for the tercentennial was, according to reports, filmed (though, unfortunately, I have not been able to find any records or evidence of the film in question).⁸⁴ In the meantime, the Associated Cinema Industries of Massachusetts were working on a movie based on the “Courtship of Miles Standish.”⁸⁵ Released in 1923, after the excitement of the tercentennial celebrations had died down, it was a flop; as Snow notes, the “American public’s fascination with the Pilgrims was by now beginning to dwindle, and the film simply faded out of existence.”⁸⁶ Plymouth continued to appear sporadically in

⁸⁴ A sheet for pageant performers with rehearsal information noted that on “Sunday, July 31, at 3 p.m., THE WHOLE PAGEANT will be filmed in order, with costumes and properties for purposes of historical record.” (Rehearsal information flyer “Tercentenary Pageant “The Pilgrim Spirit” Rehearsals for the week of July 25th” Pilgrim Hall Archive, Plymouth.) This may have been done at the urging of the play’s author (and Harvard professor) George P. Baker, who “suggested that the spectacle be recorded on movie film for the future edification of the Nation’s school children” (Biese, 5). Charles Howard Mills of the Pathe Exchange corresponded with the tercentenary committee about filming the pageant for a Pathe release in August (*after* the rehearsal notes of July mentioned filming to occur); it is unclear whether a filming arrangement with Pathe was ever settled. (Charles Howard Mills to the National Tercentenary Committee, 11 August 1920, Pilgrim Hall Archive, Plymouth.)

⁸⁵ J.F. MacGrath of the Tercentenary Committee to Charles H. Mills, 10 September 1920, Pilgrim Hall Archive, Plymouth.

⁸⁶ Snow 20.

media representations throughout the 20th century, including the 1952 film *Plymouth Adventure* (starring Spencer Tracy and Gene Tierney and featuring the voyage of the Mayflower), a 1942 “Traveltalk” short on “Picturesque Massachusetts,” the 1979 film *Mayflower: The Pilgrims’ Adventure* (starring Anthony Hopkins), 1994’s *Squanto: A Warrior’s Tale*, and even cartoons including Popeye (“Wigwam Whoopee” [1948]) and Mighty Mouse (“Prehistoric Perils [1951]). Most recently, the PBS series “American Experience” debuted their episode on *The Pilgrims* in 2015.

While these representations (as well as the continuing legacy of Plymouth kept alive through America’s annual Thanksgiving celebrations) has kept Plymouth’s history in the national consciousness, Plimoth Plantation has worked to keep their own scholarship and interpretation interesting and relevant to constantly changing audiences. Not only are the representations there generally in line with current academic understandings of the past (seeing not only the Pilgrims but the Wampanoag as protagonists in the story, and not shying away from uncomfortable truths about the Pilgrim Fathers), but they reach out to broader audiences not simply through traditional publicity but through media appearances (for instance, appearing in television segments about historic foodways during the Thanksgiving season) and in their educational outreach efforts to Massachusetts schoolchildren. In addition, keeping up with the times, Plimoth Plantation reaches out to national audiences through not only a website and Facebook pages but through several blogs.

As we will see in future chapters, however, one thing that makes this narrative of interpretative progress in Plymouth unique in this study is that while the institution of Plimoth Plantation *has* come to dominate the interpretation of Plymouth history, and while the need to appeal to a national audience and keep up with changing historical standards *has* meant that the focus of history there has changed from a reverence for the “Big Names” to the history of the everyman, and while the leadership and stakeholders *have* changed from a primarily local (and somewhat non-professional) base to a class of educators and professionals drawn from across the country, the strength and enthusiasm of the local commemorations has meant that not only was there a firm base upon which Plimoth Plantation could be built, but grassroots organizations celebrating local history have survived and continue to practice a more “old school” style of historical commemoration (in the shadow of Plimoth Plantation) to this day.

Pilgrim Hall, which bills itself as the “oldest continuously operating public museum in the country,” was built in 1824 and is home to a collection of artifacts treasured for their relationships and (supposed) provenance to specific founding fathers (harkening back to the early-20th-century glorification of individual Pilgrim settlers.)⁸⁷ The Mayflower Society (for descendants of the first setters) maintains a large house and archive right downtown. Among other early residences, the Harlow Old Fort House (initiator and still host of the “Corn Planting” tradition) continues its interpretation of local history and offers a venue for uniquely local historical commemorations such as an annual “Pilgrim breakfast” and an annual

⁸⁷ Pilgrim Hall Museum. “About Us.” Accessed January 2, 2016. <http://www.pilgrimhallmuseum.org/about.htm>

gathering for descendants of settler William Harlow.⁸⁸ The Pilgrim Progress procession is still held each August, led by locals in costume (though visitors are invited to join in).⁸⁹

In Plymouth, then, we see a town with a centuries-long tradition of historical commemoration on both a local and national level finding a balance between the needs of local interests and national tourism. Local pride in the town's history promoted the creation and maintenance of a number of organizations and events celebrating local heroes. Because of this, major historical anniversaries (such as the tercentennial) were celebrated in grand style through pageants attended by many outsiders but largely supported and staffed by area citizens. Thus, when Henry Hornblower had the inspiration to create Plimoth Plantation, there was already a strong precedent for similar reenactments in town, and there were local people ready to step forward in helping to create that institution in its early years. However, the fact that the local history was of national significance helped draw in a national audience to many of the town's commemorations. As these tourists became an important part of the local economy, and as Plimoth Plantation grew in size and prominence, stories that appealed to these visitors – and that met with the approval of outside, “professionally accredited” historians – became more important. As Plimoth Plantation’s leadership fell more closely into line with scholarly trends, the stories told at Plimoth Plantation gradually moved away from the previous traditions

⁸⁸ Destination Plymouth. “1677 Harlow Old Fort House.” Accessed January 2, 2016. <http://www.seeplymouth.com/things-to-do/1677-harlow-old-fort-house>

⁸⁹ Destination Plymouth. “Pilgrim Progress.” Accessed January 2, 2016. <http://www.seeplymouth.com/events/pilgrim-progress-0>

glorifying the Pilgrim Fathers and fine antiques, looking instead at the grit, dirt, and prejudices of everyday Puritan life. However, the deep roots of local historical commemorations (and the fact that the town still has a mixed economy relying on healthcare and industry rather than on tourism alone) have allowed a number of more parochial, grassroots organizations and events celebrating Plymouth's past to survive. Plymouth's history of local historical reenactment has influenced the way the town and its historical institutions developed, and thus what stories it tells and what stories others tell about it. As we will see, this is in considerable contrast to the development of historical institutions in Williamsburg and in Salem.

The House that Jack (Rockefeller) Built: Williamsburg, Virginia

Williamsburg, Virginia, was once a bustling colonial capital and proving ground for many of America's founding fathers. It was here that Virginia became the first British colony to declare its independence, sending a resolution to the Continental Congress proposing a formal separation from the mother country. However, this hotbed of American patriotism saw its own political actions lead to its decline; as Williamsburg was in a strategically vulnerable position during the Revolution, the capital of Virginia was moved to Richmond during the War, and Williamsburg slowly faded from prominence. Many businesses moved away with the politicians, and by the turn of the 20th century it could be said that that the town was a place of the "lazies and the crazies," as the College of William and Mary and the Eastern State Hospital, a mental institution with its roots in colonial days, were two of the most prominent businesses. Cows famously wandered the dirt streets, and one story says that the city was so sleepy it even forgot to hold an election. Yet this became the site of what would become the nation's largest living history museum, one of the most prominent examples of its kind in the world. How did this happen, and how did Williamsburg's circumstances shape the development of its institutions?

Unlike Plymouth, at the beginning of the 20th century Williamsburg did not have a strong and established grassroots tradition of local historical commemoration. Certainly, there were institutions in Virginia dedicated to preserving local history, most notably the Association for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities (today known as Preservation Virginia.) The Association for

the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities (APVA) was founded in 1889 in order to “restore ‘buildings in which stirring deeds have been enacted, and where they have been destroyed to mark the spot on which they stood.’”¹ By the early 20th century, the APVA had gained control over both the foundations of the (destroyed) capitol building in town as well as the powder magazine.

Anders Greenspan characterizes the early APVA as a locally-based but aristocratic organization, serving “primarily as a means to preserve genteel culture against a variety of changes in the post-Civil War era.”² He argues that while the APVA worked well with – and smoothed the way for – the Goodwin/Rockefeller Restoration of Williamsburg in its early years, they “tended to resent the power and influence” that these “Northerners” came to possess.

Even earlier than the founding of the APVA, a group of Williamsburg children were organized in 1884 by local woman Cynthia Beverley Tucker Coleman into the Catherine Memorial Society, a group that worked on repairs in the graveyard of Williamsburg’s Bruton Parish Church.³ As Denise Meringolo notes, the women behind this and other similar early 20th century local preservation groups were motivated to “protect and elevate to national significance the icons of a predominantly white, Anglo-Saxon American past. . . . They protected landscapes and artifacts made meaningful by blood, sentiment, and pedigree.”⁴ And indeed, the women of Williamsburg involved in the APVA were white women

¹ George Humphrey Yetter, *Williamsburg Before and After: The Rebirth of Virginia’s Colonial Capital* (Williamsburg: Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, 1988), 44.

² Anders Greenspan, *Creating Colonial Williamsburg* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2002), 17.

³ Yetter, 43.

⁴ Denise Meringolo, *Museums, Monuments, and National Parks: Toward a Genealogy of Public History* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2012), 160.

from long-established or politically important families. Cynthia Beverley Tucker Coleman, for instance, was – as her name suggests – the descendant of three of colonial Virginia’s leading families, all with ties to Williamsburg’s history, and she married into a fourth. Her co-founder at the APVA was Mary Jeffrey Galt (the Galts were also an old Williamsburg family), and the wife of Virginia’s Governor, Mrs. Fitzhugh Lee, supported them in the endeavor.⁵ In preserving the Magazine and other sites of colonial importance, they were preserving their own heritage and in so doing implicitly making claims about the importance of the traditional culture and values represented by those sites, especially in the face of an ever-modernizing world.

The encroachments of modernity upon Williamsburg are evident, ironically, in a description of the area from 1907, just as another aspect of Virginia’s colonial past was being celebrated. That year, a Jamestown Ter-Centennial Exposition was held to celebrate the 300th anniversary of the establishment of the first permanent English settlement in what would become the United States. While the celebrations and pageantry were mainly held in Norfolk, the event did draw attention and visitors to Williamsburg. This was not Williamsburg’s first introduction to the tourist trade; indeed, the town’s importance in the Revolutionary era ensured that it was mentioned in a number of early twentieth century historical travel guides, such as Sarah Comstock’s *Roads to Revolution: With Here and There a Byway to Colonial Days*. However, the Jamestown Exposition of 1907 was the first major national event to bring in

⁵ Yetter, 44.

tourists, and Williamsburg locals prepared to greet their new visitors. A “group of local ladies” founded a Williamsburg Civic League in 1907 “for the ‘improvement of civic conditions primarily with the view of making the place more attractive to the many visitors expected during the coming summer,’” and a paved road was built from Williamsburg’s train station to Jamestown.⁶ Ultimately the success of the Jamestown exposition was questionable at best, with delays in building, major financial losses, and less than half the anticipated audience attending, but it did draw national attention to the historic sites of southeastern Virginia.⁷ Just as importantly, the modernizations it brought only emphasized the changing times and made the importance of historical preservation even more important for traditional community leaders such as Mrs. Coleman and, as we shall see, Rev. Goodwin, pastor of the local Episcopal church.

While the Jamestown tercentennial celebrations were a nationally-important and nationally-advertised event, there were also local historical commemorations being held in and around Williamsburg in the early 20th century, particularly on patriotic holidays like the Fourth of July. For instance, on July 4, 1922, a “Community Celebration and John Marshall Pageant” was held on campus at the College of William & Mary, under the “Joint Auspices” of the College and the “Churches and Civic Organizations of Williamsburg.” This event consisted of athletic events, a band concert, speeches by guest speakers from Portsmouth and Richmond, and a “John Marshall Pageant.” The pageant

⁶ Yetter, 44-45.

⁷ Brian de Ruiter, “Jamestown Ter-Centennial Exposition of 1907.” In Encyclopedia Virginia, accessed January 10, 2016. http://www.encyclopediavirginia.org/Jamestown_Ter-Centennial_Exposition_of_1907

focused on local hero John Marshall's service in Virginia during the Revolution, from his becoming a lieutenant of the Culpeper Minute Men in 1775 to his service in war and meeting of his wife Mary Amber at Yorktown, and ended with his role in the Virginia Constitutional Convention.⁸ The Independence Day pageant held a year earlier, in 1921, focused on the work of the House of Burgesses in Williamsburg in 1764 and 1765 against the Stamp Act.⁹ These celebrations were clearly focused on local glories and local heroes, like George Wythe, who were important to Williamsburg's story but did not hold as much fame on a national level.

Unlike the pageantry held at almost the same time in Plymouth, these events appealed primarily to locals, and do not appear to have reached out to any broad national audience. In the commemorative program from the 1922 pageant the vast majority of the advertisers were local Williamsburg businesses, with a few additions from Newport News and only two from farther abroad (a steam laundry in Hampton and a large department store in Norfolk). This suggests that the organizers and advertisers were expecting a mainly local crowd. In addition, the historical pageantry taking place in Williamsburg was clearly an annual event (at least for the Fourth of July), but does not seem to have been strongly supported by a particular community organization or historical society interested in creating and maintaining a particular tradition and narrative – unlike the Pilgrim descendant groups which kept Pilgrim Hall running and

⁸ *Souvenir Program, Community Celebration and John Marshall Pageant*. NP: NP, 1922.

⁹ *Programme of the Colonial Pageant* (NP: NP, 1921).

established and carried on such annual traditions as the Pilgrim Progress in Plymouth.

Early 20th-century Williamsburg was a place where local history was acknowledged as important, but where a regular structure of commemoration had not been established as strongly as was found in Plymouth. Neither did the particular details of local historical events hold great significance for a broad national audience in the way that Plymouth attracted the attention of Pilgrims' descendants. While the figures who passed through the town and made history there – George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Patrick Henry, and the like – were nationally-known and revered figures, they were not identified solely (or even primarily) with Williamsburg. The town was known to be important in the American Revolution, but it was hard to associate the town with a specific defining figure or event.

Into this situation stepped W.A.R. Goodwin, rector of Williamsburg's Bruton Parish Church. Goodwin was a native Virginian, but not from Williamsburg. He had a lifelong interest in history and historic preservation, and during his first period working at Bruton Parish he supervised the renovation of the church, a project begun in 1905. After serving in another parish in New York, in 1923 Goodwin returned Williamsburg, where he held positions working for both Bruton Parish and the College of William and Mary (as head of the Department of Biblical Literature and Religious Education and in a fundraising position for an endowment campaign). It was upon this return that Goodwin decided to pursue his dream of preserving and renovating not only his church but the entire town.

Searching for wealthy investors, he was able to interest philanthropist John D. Rockefeller, Jr. in the project. Together they began secretly buying up property in town, and Colonial Williamsburg was born.

It's worth noting that, like Plymouth, this development in Williamsburg was spurred and funded not by a homegrown institution but by outsiders who saw something they valued in the community's history and chose to support and promote it. In so doing, they (rather than the locals) would play an important part in shaping what stories would be told there. They were also influenced by broader trends in American life at the time, such as the popularity of Colonial Revival architecture in the early 20th century. This, for instance, led to the reconstruction of the "wrong" capitol building on the site, and the inclusion or changing of architectural details in complete conflict with archaeological evidence. (Colonial Williamsburg's own present-day architectural historian Carl Lounsbury notes that the "Beaux Arts principles" of the Boston architects working on the project "were often at odds with historical evidence of 18th century American architecture."¹⁰)

For the most part, Williamsburg locals welcomed the reconstruction of Williamsburg, as it offered economic development and the prospect of jobs as America was plunged into an economic depression. Indeed, in the first two decades of the project, more than 48 million dollars were invested, and the local economy was given a new foundation "based more and more on upon the

¹⁰ Carl Lounsbury, "Beaux-Arts Ideals and Colonial Reality: The Reconstruction of Williamsburg's Capitol, 1928-1934," (Williamsburg: Colonial Williamsburg, 1990), 1.

accommodation of visitors.”¹¹ The Restoration got underway just as the Great Depression began, but steady Rockefeller funding meant that construction (and deconstruction) continued unabated. [Figures 5 and 6] The institution that sprung up from this construction quickly became a major economic powerhouse in the region. According to the City Planning Commission, by 1950 Colonial Williamsburg employed more than twice as many people as any other business in town: Colonial Williamsburg employed approximately 1200 workers over the course of the year; the next highest enterprise on the list was the College of William and Mary, with only 520 on staff, including student help.¹²

However, not everyone was certain that the Restoration would move the town in a positive direction. The project was begun in secret, as Rockefeller supplied Goodwin with funds as an anonymous backer. In a practical sense, this was intended to prevent land speculation, as no one would know that such a wealthy man was interested in buying the property. Richard Handler and Eric Gabler suggest it was also an issue of public image, with a concern that Rockefeller might be seen as “swindling” the town “for private gain.”¹³ When Rockefeller’s involvement – and the extent of the plan for the Restoration – was revealed at a town meeting on June 12, 1928, Goodwin was able to “sell” most of the townsfolk on the transition from living town to living history. A vote needed to be held to approve the transfer of public property (including the Palace Green,

¹¹ Kenneth Chorley, *Colonial Williamsburg: The First Twenty-Five Years* (Williamsburg: Colonial Williamsburg, 1951), 24, 27.

¹² Harland Bartholomew and Associates, *Comprehensive Plan, Williamsburg, Virginia*. (Np: Np, 1953), 11.

¹³ Richard Handler and Eric Gable, *The New History in an Old Museum* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997), 32.

Figure 5



Reconstruction also meant deconstruction: here the modern “Palace” movie theater is torn down, c. 1927. Image courtesy of The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation

Figure 6



During Williamsburg’s Reconstruction, the town’s businesses were consolidated into the block closest to the College of William and Mary. The stores here were rebuilt in a “colonial” architectural style and given the name “Merchants Square.” In its early years, this was an important resource for the community, with practical shopping opportunities such as the Williamsburg Drug Company and several grocery stores (including both Pender’s Food Market and an A&P). Today, the shops there are aimed almost entirely at the tourist market, largely offering high-end and luxury goods; to a lesser extent they cater to the College trade. The trend over time has been towards increasingly upscale goods. Image courtesy of The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation

Market Square, Courthouse, and Matthew Whaley School) to the private ownership of the Restoration. Of the approximately 200 citizens – all white – in attendance, there were 150 votes in favor and only 4 who voted against the move.¹⁴ However, the opposition could be quite vocal. One citizen, Sam Freeman, spoke eloquently in the town meeting:

It is my unpleasant duty to voice the minority side. There should be something said for both sides. No consideration has been given to the broader aspects of this transfer. If you give up your land, it will no longer be your city. Will you feel the same pride in it that you now feel as you walk across the Greens, or down the broad streets? Have you all been hypnotized by five million dollars dangled before your eyes? Can any of you talk back to five million dollars?

If we close the contract, what will happen when the matter passes out of the hands of Dr. Goodwin and Mr. Rockefeller, in both of whom we have perfect confidence? Who will be the head? Who will control? I beg you to consider some things which have been overlooked. Dr. Goodwin has spoken very beautifully and very poetically. But is this a philanthropic enterprise? Is it altruistic? There is no doubt but that the contract will go through, but I want you to know that there is one man who has had something to say on the other side. We will reap dollars, but will we own our town? Will you not be in the position of a butterfly pinned to a card in a glass cabinet, or like a mummy unearthed in the tomb of Tutankhamen?¹⁵

A similar sentiment was posed in a poem published in the wake of the transfer:
“My gawd they’ve sold the town.”¹⁶

¹⁴ Yetter 55; Rosanne Thaiss Butler, “The Man Who Said No,” *Colonial Williamsburg Journal* Autumn 2011, accessed online on January 10, 2016. <http://www.history.org/Foundation/journal/autumn11/man.cfm>

¹⁵ Quoted in Butler

¹⁶ Quoted in Yetter, 55.

In addition to this loss of physical control of parts of the city, the shift to an institutionalized Reconstruction and retelling of the area's history would come to affect Williamsburg's very identity as a Southern town. As Handler and Gable write, the "identity of Williamsburg's white citizens had to be remade with the American Revolution rather than the Confederacy as is focal point," and this was not an easy change.¹⁷ A good example of the tensions surrounding the changes brought to Williamsburg by the early years of the Restoration (and the ways in which the town, and its reactions, changed over time), can be seen in the history of Williamsburg's Confederate monument. The monument, and a wrought iron fence to surround it, were ordered from the Couper Marble Works of Norfolk in 1906 at the request of the United Daughters of the Confederacy, with some financial assistance from the City of Williamsburg.¹⁸ It was officially unveiled in its home on Palace Green, a block-long grassy area just off the town's main street, Duke of Gloucester Street, on May 9, 1908. [Figure 7] The *Virginia Gazette* reported that there were "at least a thousand people arrayed around the shaft when the veil was drawn" despite "threatening weather [that] kept many at home who would otherwise have come from a distance." The paper went on to note that "Practically every business place in town was closed during the exercises proper and as the procession of ladies, school children and veterans [attending from as far away as Richmond, Charles City, York, Warwick, Hampton, and Newport News] marched upon the scene."¹⁹ Sitting at the heart of

¹⁷ Handler and Gable, 33.

¹⁸ Order, United Daughters of the Confederacy Records (Mss 92 U2), Swem Library Special Collections, College of William and Mary.

¹⁹ *Virginia Gazette*, 9 May 1908, 1.

this old Virginia town, the monument reflected locals' pride in their forbearers and their identity as Southerners. However, when the Restoration of Colonial Williamsburg got underway in the late 1920s, the positioning of the monument in a highly visible spot – indeed, blocking the vista towards one of the architectural highlights of the new construction, the Governor's Palace – posed a bit of a conundrum.

Figure 7



The Confederate monument on Palace Green. The building in the background at the center was a (at that time still new) school building, which would be torn down to make way for Williamsburg's Governor's Palace. Image courtesy of the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation

There is no evidence that the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation ever requested, or even suggested, that the monument be removed from Palace Green. Indeed, the Restoration had no right or expectation of having the monument moved; the official deed conveying Palace Green from the city to the Restoration specified that the conveyance was subject to "Rights granted to the United Daughters of the Confederacy by the Common Council of the City of Williamsburg, in and to the plot of ground fenced in on said Green, containing the Confederate Monument erected to the Confederate Soldiers and Sailors of Williamsburg and James City County, and to said monument, together with a right of access thereto; and an unmolested view thereof over said green."²⁰ However, the initiative was taken by the United Daughters of the Confederacy (UDC) themselves to move the monument and make way for the reconstruction of the town. In a letter of January 1932, Restoration officials wrote that the "Williamsburg Holding Corporation is appreciative of this action of the Daughters of the Confederacy, especially as it was taken without the suggestion coming from the Restoration."²¹ That said, there were likely behind-the-scenes discussions and negotiations, given that Mrs. Goodwin – wife of W.A.R. Goodwin, founder and original planner of the Restoration – was the president of the local chapter of the UDC in the early 30s.

²⁰ Item 4 (subset 3) Copy of December 21 1931 deed between City of Williamsburg and Colonial Williamsburg (photocopy), United Daughters of the Confederacy Records (2000.51), Swem Library Special Collections, College of William and Mary, p. 2.

²¹ Colonial Williamsburg to United Daughters of the Confederacy, 15 January 1932, Colonial Williamsburg Archives.

In any case, as early as April 2, 1931, the UDC had decided to remove the fence from around the monument, with Colonial Williamsburg's assistance.²² In December of that year, according to the UDC Minute Book, a "resolution was offered that a Com[mittee] be appointed to confer with the officials of the Restoration & City council as to the advisability of moving the Monument on Palace Green to the Cemetery [Cedar Grove]" where many local Confederate veterans had been buried, and to "wait on the officials of the Restoration to see if we decided to move it to the Cemetery if they would undertake it for us."²³ As of January 7, 1932, the UDC was still committed to the idea of moving the monument, and accepted a resolution that the committee "appointed to see the Restoration in regard to moving the Monument be given the power to continue the work."²⁴ The city council gave their permission for the move, officials in the Restoration agreed to lend their aid, and it seemed to be a done deal. A work order was issued on January 2, 1932, for the monument to be moved from the Green to the cemetery; the pillar was disassembled and transported.²⁵

While the pieces of the monument were delivered to the cemetery, it was never assembled there. Some members of the local community strongly opposed the change – and perhaps, on a larger scale, the broader changes the Restoration was bringing to the town – and as soon as the move became evident, quickly made their voices heard. According to one newspaper, a "cross

²² Minute book 1927-1936 (UDC), page 31, United Daughters of the Confederacy Records (2000.51), Swem Library Special Collections, College of William and Mary.

²³ Ibid., 41, 43.

²⁴ Ibid., 45

²⁵ Work order of 22 January 1932, Colonial Williamsburg Archives.

draped with crape [sic] was erected on the last site of the monument by individuals whose identity was not learned.”²⁶ Records from the UDC elaborate further, noting that “the very next day following its removal, there appeared on the Palace Green at the very same spot where the old memorial had stood, a large black cross draped with a Confederate flag and labeled ‘crucification [sic] of the Confederacy by wealth.’”²⁷ Cara Armistead was a particularly vocal opponent. Elaborating on this accusation of greed and a loss of the community’s soul in welcoming the Restoration’s changes, she published the following poem in the Virginia Gazette in April of 1930 (a date indicating that the notion had been raised in the past, before the UDC made their decision in 1931 to move ahead with the transfer).

Sleeping buried ranks of Gray
Doomed to oblivion, your sons now saw
Your marker stands in progress’ way

You risked your all, courageous band,
Fought weary years to save our land
From warring brothers’ ruthless hand.

Why did you dare to suffer long?
To hope that right would conquer wrong?
Had life not taught you Mammon’s strong?

For men who dream and lust for power
With threat and falsehood seek to cower
Those who delay their triumph’s hour.

And with the strength of beggar gold
Dazzled and awed those few who sold
Our birthright from brave sires of old.

²⁶ “Petition of Daughters is Granted by Judge Halsey” [unattributed clipping], United Daughters of the Confederacy Records (Mss 92 U2), Swem Library Special Collections, College of William and Mary.

²⁷ Item 1 [photocopy], United Daughters of the Confederacy Records (2000.51), Swem Library Special Collections, College of William and Mary.

Your blood still courses in our veins.
 What is it weakens modern strains
 Who value naught save golden gains?

What profiteth a man whose soul
 Dies as he strives to reach a goal
 That saves a part to curse the whole?

Life, liberty and . . . happiness
 Have reached a stage of sad duress
 Who dares the sordid truth confess.²⁸

Armistead also opposed the move on legal grounds. In a letter to the *Daily Press*, she wrote: “In view of the following language quoted from a Virginia statute, it is inconceivable that the local chapter [of the UDC], or any citizen or citizens, should assume the authority to remove to any new site the Confederate monument erected on Palace Green.” Quoting the statute as “it shall not be lawful thereafter for the authorities of said county or any other person or persons whatever to disturb or interfere [sic] with any monument so erected,” Armistead went on to write that “In addition to the law quoted, the local council re-enforced the state law by an expressed reservation of the spot covered by this monument in the terms made with Mr. Goodwin and the Williamsburg Holding Corporation. Is that part of the contract less binding than the clauses turning over the city properties to the Corporation?”²⁹

In the wake of the heated controversy prompted by the monument’s disappearance from Palace Green, the UDC consulted with the city council, and

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ “Writer Cites VA. Statute in Regard to Moving Statue.” *Daily Press*, 6 February 1932, Colonial Williamsburg Archives.

together they agreed that the land in front of the new courthouse being built a block south of the newly restored historic area would be a better place to put the monument, rather than tucking it away in a cemetery.³⁰ However, even this compromise was not enough. Like Cara Armistead, some other locals decided to turn to the law in an attempt to turn back the changes coming to their town. In March of 1932, a petition was filed with the local circuit court opposing the monument's move. And so the monument sat in pieces while a judge determined its fate. The court invited citizens of the "City and County of the filing of the petition" to weigh in on the issue by signing petitions either in favor of the move to the courthouse or in opposition. While these signatures ultimately proved the move's opponents were a vocal minority – "some 580 odd citizens" signed their names in support of the new location at the courthouse, while only "250 odd citizens filed their answers objecting to the proposed location, and suggesting some four or five locations" – the case moved forward.³¹ Opponents of the move argued that because the city council had helped pay for the original monument, it was against the law for it to be moved; they wanted it returned to the Green, or, failing that, to be placed in a prominent location on Duke of Gloucester Street, such as in front of the historic courthouse, on Market Square, in the grass plot across from the courthouse, or on a walkway to the new

³⁰ Having agreed to move the monument to the new courthouse, in May of 1932 the UDC began raising funds to erect a new monument in Cedar Grove Cemetery, where they had wanted the 1906 monument to rest. This new monument was completed in 1935, and today is one of three official Confederate monuments in Williamsburg, the others being the 1906 monument and a monument in the cemetery at Bruton Parish Church.

³¹ "Virginia in the Circuit Court of the City of Williamsburg and County of James City. In the matter of the Petition of the Williamsburg Chapter of the United Daughters of the Confederacy. Brief of Petitioner. [March 18, 1932], p. 4. Colonial Williamsburg Archives.

courthouse.³² The UDC's legal response was that having removed the monument from Palace Green they had waived their rights to that spot, and it might not even be legal to return it. They expressed their indignation at having their "intelligence and integrity" questioned, firmly asserting that as the monument was not erected by authority of the city legal provisions about city monuments would not apply; the monument was the property of the UDC, not the City of Williamsburg, and the UDC could do what they liked with it. In any case, they concluded, they had received permission from the city council to move it, and as signed petitions had shown, the majority of interested citizens wanted the monument relocated to the new courthouse property, not back to the Palace Green. ³³

While these legal arguments were, on the surface, about cherishing the memory of local Confederate veterans, city politics, and the legal rights of the UDC, resentment and controversy regarding the changes which the restoration of Williamsburg were bringing to town – changes wrought largely by Northern finances and Boston architects – clearly underlay the showdown. This even comes out in some of the language used in legal petitions surrounding the case. In one petition, for instance, citizens advocating against the move clearly referenced changes in attitude brought about by the Restoration as they wrote "Did [the erectors of the monument] ever dream that their City would progress to such an extend [sic] in less than a quarter of a century that a Confederate

³² Chancery Records, "Petition of Williamsburg Chapter of the United Daughters of the Confederacy", page 33, Chancery Records Index 1932-017, Library of Virginia.
http://www.lva.virginia.gov/chancery/case_detail.asp?CFN=095-1932-017

³³ "Virginia in the Circuit Court . . .", 17.

Memorial would be called and deemed an anachronism and should be removed from view?"³⁴ And again, writing hotly, they asserted "they say that it will impede the work of the restoration, and that it would be a glaring anachronism [to return the monument to Palace Green]. A reproduction of Williamsburg to its appearance in the seventeenth century would be an anachronism. . . . We have no desire to impede the work of the restoration, but our Southern Heroes and the Cause and Ideals for which they fought are just as close, and more so in point of time, just as dear, and more so because our fathers, mothers and grandfathers underwent the hardships of those trying times, as the restoration is to the philanthropist and dreamer."³⁵ While one might be moved by the florid appeal to familial piety, in those words are clear jabs at John D. Rockefeller and W.A.R. Goodwin.

The UDC responded to these complaints in similar language. Yes, they did argue in one petition, the "re-location of the monument on Palace Green would interfere with the efforts of the Restoration, in restoring the Green, and that vicinity to its authentic Colonial appearance, and would be a glaring anachronism, certainly to the students of Colonial history."³⁶ However, they also astutely noted that "We still wonder whether some of the Respondents would have objected to the removal of the monument, had they not suspected that it

³⁴ Chancery Records, 167.

³⁵ Chancery Records, 174.

³⁶ However, they added nuance in a further petition, clarifying their position that "Progress never makes anachronisms, but if we reverse the process of progress by restoring an area to its appearance as of a time prior to the creation or existence of any object, then to be perfectly accurate that object would be an anachronism. Counsel for Respondents seems to take particular offense to the term, anachronism, which, we submit, has nothing vicious or degrading in its nature or meaning." Chancery Records, 131.

was moved at the request of someone connected with the work of restoring Williamsburg.”³⁷

In the end, the court determined that since all possible owners of the monument, both the UDC and the City of Williamsburg, had agreed on both the removal of the monument from Palace Green and its re-erection at the entrance to the new courthouse, there was no legal grounds for an objection.³⁸ [Figure 8] However, the controversy engendered by the move offers an unusually clear illustration of the “growing pains” Williamsburg experienced in its transition from a small town with generally local and infrequent celebrations of its colonial past to a tourist town of national interest. Because its formal structure of historical commemoration came quickly to be dominated by what were seen as “moneyed” and “outside” forces, a development made both possible and necessary by the fact that local traditions of commemoration were not already well-developed by the 1920s, there were hard feelings and a sense of loss of voice and loss of identity as changes were made.

And, indeed, time has confirmed the fears of some of those 1930s protestors, for the Confederate monument would not be left in peace even in its new home at the courthouse. In the mid-1960s, the land that the “new” 1930s courthouse had been built upon was sold to Colonial Williamsburg, and another courthouse was built a few blocks further south. Planning documents from that

³⁷ Chancery Records, 131.

³⁸ John J. Tuozzolo, “Memo,” 3 March 1972, Colonial Williamsburg Archives.

Figure 8



The Confederate monument reconstructed at the courthouse after its move from Palace Green.
Image courtesy of The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation

Figure 9



The Confederate monument in its third home. Image courtesy of the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation

time reveal little concern that moving the monument farther from public view would be controversial.³⁹ The UDC was consulted, and passed a resolution on January 13, 1966 assenting to the move; a rededication ceremony was held on May 10, 1969 at this new location. [Figure 9] The changes in the city, its population, its identity, and its culture can be deduced from the estimate of one local paper that only “approximately 50 persons attended the outdoor service.”⁴⁰ Compare this to the (supposed) thousand guests at the original unveiling – how outraged and disappointed would Cara Armistead and her supporters be! In fact, not even this was the final resting place of the monument. The local courthouse was moved yet again in 2000; there was some debate as to whether the monument should again move with the courthouse (this time to a location far removed from Duke of Gloucester Street), whether it should go to Cedar Grove cemetery (as the UDC originally intended in the 1930s), or whether it should end elsewhere. The only thing certain was the city’s determination that it could not remain where it stood.⁴¹ It was finally determined that the monument should be moved to Bicentennial Park, an open area about two blocks south of Duke of Gloucester street. There it rests – for now.⁴² [Figure 10]

³⁹ “Block 44, #4 Courthouse for James City County and City of Williamsburg – Landscaping 1969-1972,” Colonial Williamsburg Archives.

⁴⁰ Unattributed article clipping, 10 May 1969, United Daughters of the Confederacy Records (Mss 92 U2), Swem Library Special Collections, College of William and Mary.

⁴¹ John Heverly, “Put Monument to Rest in Cemetery,” *Virginia Gazette*, 22 March 2000, 4A.

⁴² Minutes of May 11, 2000 City Council Meeting, United Daughters of the Confederacy Records (2000.51), Swem Library Special Collections, College of William and Mary.

Figure 10



The Confederate monument in its current home. Author's photograph.

The changes that the Restoration brought to the town's very identity can also be glimpsed by looking at a mid-twentieth-century novel set in Williamsburg, *The Diary of a Williamsburg Hostess* (1946). A fictionalized account, though written by a woman who actually did work as one of the costumed "hostesses" in the historic area, it includes the very Southern Uncle Dab. Uncle Dab is the voice of the ornery local opposed to change and all the upset that the Restoration has brought to town. Lumping the town's visitors with "other present and impending disasters," he regards the tourists brought to Williamsburg as a

second Yankee invasion.⁴³ Dab constantly brings the Civil War and Virginia's Confederate past into the conversation, clinging to the identity which, as Greenspan asserts, Williamsburg's Reconstruction sought to change. "It's mighty sad, mighty sad," he says, "th' way things have gone t' pot around here. Town probably looks all right to folks that don't know any better," but there "never was a time when everybody in town had their outhouses standing up nice and neat, all painted up bright and shiny all at the same time." They're "Tryin' to make it look like a Yankee town! —Never did that so't of thing around here. . . . No one else pays any attention to what really was here, or to The War, or what went on when the Pennsylvanians tried to burn up the College." Indeed, "the only thing about the Restoration that Uncle really approves of is making them Pennsylvania Soldiers and Sailors pay now to see a copy of what their daddies and gran'daddies tore down."⁴⁴ It is his voice that ends the novel, as he asserts that he is thankful "that I c'n still hold out a little longer, unreconstructed an' un-restored."⁴⁵ But even as the novel was written, Uncle Dab's generation was dying out – as is evidenced by the small turnout just twenty years later for the rededication of Williamsburg's Confederate monument.

Another "Southern" element to the town worth considering is the fact that for much of the 20th century, Williamsburg was a segregated city with a significant African-American community. African-American Williamsburgers are glimpsed in *Diary of Williamsburg Hostess* in the character of Florrie, the

⁴³ Helen Jones Campbell, *Diary of a Williamsburg Hostess* (New York: Putnam, 1946), 41.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 98-99.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 178.

narrator's in-home maid, but it is (unsurprisingly, given the white narrator and the era in which it was written), a stereotyped view. As Linda Rowe explains, African Americans were a vital part of the Williamsburg community at the turn of the 20th century. While segregated, there was public schooling for black students, supported privately by the black community through the Williamsburg School Improvement League.⁴⁶ There were active black churches in the community, and black professionals and business owners gained ground in the community, most notably Samuel Harris, whose "Cheap Store" on Duke of Gloucester Street catered to both black and white customers and was arguably the most successful business in town at the turn of the century.⁴⁷ The community was also supported by civic and social groups such as the Odd Fellows and various church organizations.⁴⁸

When the Restoration came to town, it disrupted and displaced some of these networks. They were not among the voters who agreed to the project in the town meeting of 1928, but they would be seriously impacted by its consequences. As Rowe writes, as late as the 1920s black and white citizens lived in "close proximity along Duke of Gloucester, York, and Nassau streets, and in an area known as Buttermilk Hill near the old palace grounds." While white families outnumbered their black counterparts in these areas, black families and businesses were disproportionately affected by their removal from the area to be "restored" because as they moved out, the relocation "Established racially

⁴⁶ Linda Rowe, "African-Americans in Williamsburg, 1865-1945," in *Williamsburg, Virginia: A City Before the State, 1699-1999* (Williamsburg: University Press of Virginia, 2000), 123.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 124-5.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 126.

segregated residential areas along lines unknown in pre-restoration days. . . .

Blacks were funneled into specific areas northeast of town on Scotland Street and south of Francis Street on Henry Street," as well as specific areas on Nicholson and Botetourt Streets.⁴⁹ Churches were also pressured to move. The last black-owned business was off of Duke of Gloucester Street by 1930, the black public school was rebuilt several blocks away by 1941 (albeit in a much-needed new facility), and the last black church congregation had been moved by 1955.⁵⁰ While the Restoration did provide many jobs for the black community, it was a major factor in segregating the town along even more stereotypically "Southern" lines than had existed at the turn of the century.

Williamsburg continued to maintain this strong "Southern" identity well into the mid-twentieth century. Such regionalism was not destined to last, however, in large part due to rapid changes brought about by the increasing importance of the tourist industry. From the beginning, Colonial Williamsburg's reconstruction was a notable commercial success, attracting national attention for the novel and ambitious project. As early as 1934, the very year that the reconstructed Governor's Palace and Capitol Building were opened, a Williamsburg "Governor's Palace" was featured in the Colonial Village in the Chicago World's Fair. Tourists began to visit, and travel companies offered new transportation options to these potential visitors, an option made easier by the improvements in transportation developed for the commemoration of the Jamestown tercentennial in 1907 and the 150th anniversary of the battle of Yorktown in 1931.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 127.

⁵⁰ Ibid, 127, 128, 131.

The power and authority of Colonial Williamsburg in reshaping the town, and Colonial Williamsburg's ability to reshape the stories being told, was also bolstered by fact that Williamsburg is a college town. By working with the College of William and Mary (the second oldest university in the United States, founded in 1693), Colonial Williamsburg's historians and architects had over 200 years of academic credibility to put behind their efforts. Early on, they partnered with the College, publisher of the respected academic journal the *William and Mary Quarterly* since 1892. Together, Colonial Williamsburg and the College co-founded the Institute of Early American History and Culture (now the Omohundro Institute) in 1943. This institution is now the official publisher of the *Quarterly*, and from its inception it was recognized as a valuable authority on matters of colonial history. For example, when a Kansas man named William Franklin Horn came forward in 1932 with papers supposedly documenting colonial life in western Maryland and Virginia, the new sources he presented seemed to be groundbreaking. However, they did not attract great national attention until they were published by the Greene County [Pennsylvania] Historical Society in 1945. Under the glare of broad historical attention, a hoax was suspected, and it was Williamsburg's own newly-formed Institute of Early American History and Culture that took the lead in setting up a committee of prominent historians to investigate. The committee examined the evidence and, speaking to and for the broader American historical community, were able to report to the American Historical Association that the Horn papers did indeed seem to be a forgery.⁵¹

⁵¹ Omohundro Institution of Early American History, "History," accessed January 10, 2016, <http://ieahc.wm.edu/about/history.html>; Voices from the Past, "The Mysterious Horn

Williamsburg continued to be a model of historic preservation and a popular tourist draw through the 1940s, and was used to particular purpose during the Second World War. Located near the important Hampton Roads point of embarkation and numerous military bases, Williamsburg and the stories it told were further shaped by national needs. A country mobilizing for war against totalitarianism and fascism needed a model of American liberty and good government, and Williamsburg volunteered to fill the roll. Hundreds of local soldiers and sailors were brought in to visit Williamsburg while stationed in the area (a fact that is humorously obvious when viewing the crowds touring the historic area's gardens in the film "Flower Arrangements of Williamsburg," released in 1953). [Figure 11] During the war, the leading hotel in town, the Williamsburg Inn, was set aside for visiting Officers and their families, and Williamsburg's ability to portray the importance of American values and its central role in the founding of the nation were particularly emphasized. This comes in contrast to the early local celebrations, focusing as they did on the needs of the local (rather than national) community and local, lesser-known heroes. While in the 1920s pageantry had centered on figures such as George Wythe and pageant programs advertised local businesses, by the 1940s Williamsburg was, with the help of the US military, reaching a national audience and linking its local story to the broader narrative of the American Revolution and the American values it represented. "The voice of Colonial Williamsburg carries far,"

Figure 11



Servicemen tour the Governor's Palace, c. 1951. Image courtesy of the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation.

Foundation President Kenneth Chorley asserted in a 1951 report. Indirectly referring to the political and social situation as the US emerged from the Second World War and found itself in a newly developing Cold War, Chorley continued his argument that Colonial Williamsburg's message was vital, "perhaps especially today—because at an historic time of trial, questioning, and danger it speaks of a

deep faith in the rights of man, in liberty of the human spirit, in responsibility, in courage and devotion to duty.”⁵²

Chorley’s statements about Williamsburg’s national importance were more than mere puffery, as the economic boom the Restoration and the town experienced by the middle of the 20th century attests. Williamsburg was very successful in its self-promotion and the attraction of tourists in this mid-century period, and it helped inspire the institutionalization of historical commemoration in other communities, most notably in Plymouth. By the early 1950s, Colonial Williamsburg officials noted that “more than a quarter of a million people a year” were visiting the exhibition buildings, with more than six million total visitors since the official founding of Colonial Williamsburg. The community “could provide accommodations for the night for more than 2,000 people – and it was not enough.”⁵³ Colonial Williamsburg even coordinated with local homeowners to rent rooms to out-of-town visitors in need of a place to stay.

Further expanding its reach, Colonial Williamsburg developed its audio-visual resources in the 1940s and began releasing educational films, used both locally and across the nation (and the world). National audiences had seen depictions of Williamsburg before Colonial Williamsburg began shooting its own productions. Various news film crews had come through to produce travelogues, and a major Hollywood production came to town in the late 1930s to shoot the Cary Grant vehicle *The Howards of Virginia* (1940). As early as 1944, Colonial Williamsburg partnered with Eastman to produce the short “Eighteenth Century

⁵² Chorley, 10.

⁵³ Ibid., 11, 18.

Life in Williamsburg, Virginia," a production which, by 1948, had supposedly reached audiences of "more than 5,000,000" through its nationwide release as well as its screening in the Colonial Williamsburg Reception Center, where it was shown twice weekly. This movie was also used by the State Department in "numerous foreign-language prints" to expose other countries to the wonders of Williamsburg and the supposed American values espoused at this important historical site.⁵⁴ It was in 1951 that Colonial Williamsburg officially founded its own in-house Audio-Visual Department, intended to supervise "such activities as the audio-visual library, the photographic section, slide programs, and motion pictures on Williamsburg, its history and significance."⁵⁵

Perhaps the most notable Colonial Williamsburg production to spread the city's fame and "values" abroad was *Williamsburg: The Story of a Patriot*, a film released in 1957. This film in particular is a good example of how the institutionalization of historical commemoration in Williamsburg reshaped the stories being told in the town and bowed to the needs of the nation and the time. Knowing that this would be a flagship film for the Foundation, intended as an introduction to both the town and the story it had to tell, Colonial Williamsburg began work on the movie in 1954, sending a delegation to California to consult with production supervisors and story editors at a variety of studios, including MGM, Warner Brothers, 20th Century-Fox, Columbia, Universal-International,

⁵⁴ "The Camera Eye," *News From Colonial Williamsburg* 1.3 (August 1948): 8.

⁵⁵ "Arthur Smith Is Appointed New Department Head," *Colonial Williamsburg News* 4.2 (June 1951): 1.

Disney, Republic, and Paramount.⁵⁶ They were eventually able to gain special permission from Darryl Zanuck to hire Frank McCarthy of 20th Century-Fox as a consultant, and partnered with Paramount Studios to produce the film.⁵⁷ The end product was a true collaboration between the foundation and the Hollywood studios: while a scriptwriter was hired and Hollywood crews were used, Colonial Williamsburg retained overall control and employed historians to ensure historical accuracy, noting the “complete history of mediocrity” in the historical movies made by Hollywood alone.⁵⁸

The end product also clearly reflects the needs that Colonial Williamsburg then served: promoting American nationalism and spreading American values in a divided, Cold War environment. Anticommunism was an especially important concern in creating the film; the “Red Scare” and industry blacklisting of the period played an undeniable role in the film’s production. In 1947, the major Hollywood studios had released their “Waldorf Statement” in which they vowed not to “knowingly employ a Communist or a member of any party or group which advocates the overthrow of the government of the United States by force or illegal constitutional methods.”⁵⁹ Colonial Williamsburg’s representatives to Hollywood, John Goodbody, M.A. Wilder, and Arthur Smith, took note of this and

⁵⁶ John Goodbody to Mr. Wilder, 8 November 1954, *Williamsburg: The Story of a Patriot* Production Books 1.3, Media Production Archives, Colonial Williamsburg, 2.

⁵⁷ Darryl Zanuck to Winthrop Rockefeller, 30 April 1955, *Williamsburg: The Story of a Patriot* Production Books 1.3, Media Production Archives, Colonial Williamsburg, 1.

⁵⁸ Arthur Smith to Carlisle Humelsine and John Goodbody, 11 October 1955, *Williamsburg: The Story of a Patriot* Production Books 1.3, Media Production Archives, Colonial Williamsburg, 2.

⁵⁹ Lary May, *The Big Tomorrow: Hollywood and the Politics of the American Way*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 197.

it clearly factored into the hiring of a screenwriter for the new film. In creating their shortlist of possible writers, they commented that:

On the Hollywood bugaboo of political reliability, we were generally advised that we are safe if we employ someone who has had continuing recent employment with major studios. On the other hand, if we select someone who has been barred from work since the trial of "the Hollywood ten," we might be asking for trouble or embarrassment for this or other Rockefeller interests. Before drawing up any contract with a writer – once the project is itself approved – I would favor a further check in Hollywood via Murphy and Life-Time and possibly one or more studios. This can be handled on a confidential basis.⁶⁰

These delegates were also careful to note potential problems in screenwriters' politics. The memo they drew up carefully documented the fact that their second-choice for a screenwriter, Ben Maddow, was, for instance, one of the "petitioners for the Hollywood ten, but [he] has worked with major studios and is on no official blacklist."⁶¹ Similar notes were taken on Emmet Lavery, who eventually went on to pen the final screenplay after the death of first-choice writer James Agee. Writing of Lavery, Williamsburg representative John Goodbody noted: "his studio is considered extremely conservative and that there is no uneasy feeling whatever about Lavery's politics; he has continued to have MGM assignments. I mention this only as part of the record."⁶² Colonial Williamsburg itself may not have had an explicitly anticommunist agenda and did not overtly

⁶⁰ Goodbody to Wilder, 8 November 1954, *Williamsburg: The Story of a Patriot* Production Books 1.3, Media Production Archives, Colonial Williamsburg, 6.

⁶¹ Ibid., 6. In a later memo it was documented that "Ben Maddow, once highly recommended, was dropped after further checking into background." "Meeting of Program and Production Committee", 14 March 1955, *Williamsburg: The Story of a Patriot* Production Books 1.3, Media Production Archives, Colonial Williamsburg, 1.

⁶² Goodbody to Kenneth Chorley, 22 August 1955, *Williamsburg: The Story of a Patriot* Production Books 1.6, Media Production Archives, Colonial Williamsburg, 3.

engage in blacklisting, but McCarthyism was in the air, and was to be ignored at one's peril. It would, then, necessarily influence decisions made in this important Colonial Williamsburg production.⁶³

The final production also reflected strong Cold War themes, as it focused on an independent capitalist (fictional plantation owner John Fry) who thinks for himself rather than conforming to the ideas of those around him. While an "everyman" in the sense that he was written as a character with whom the audience was meant to identify, Fry eventually chooses an identity as an American patriot, championing the values of freedom, independence, and personal choice. If these themes were not explicit enough from the plot, the opening titles made the context and ideological goals of the film clear: "This film, [is] dedicated to the principles of liberty wherever and whenever they may be under challenge."⁶⁴ Audiences at the time were quick to make the connection; at the film's premier, Virginia Governor Thomas Stanley echoed it as he "described Williamsburg as 'a symbol of the desire of mankind in its endless quest for the

⁶³ Colonial Williamsburg's choices were not entirely conservative in creating this film. The first screenwriter hired was James Agee, a "celebrated left-wing writer" and social critic "who gained fame describing the dignity of the folk in the Depression." Agee died shortly after beginning on his work for Colonial Williamsburg, but the brief treatment he wrote, which survives in Colonial Williamsburg's archives, points to a remarkably progressive story for the period, making a point of emphasizing black history, showing balanced arguments for and against the Revolution, and taking an interest in the life of the common man. James Curtis argues that "even had he lived he would not have been able to sell these ideas to Hollywood or to Colonial Williamsburg. His views were far too radical for either." However, evidence from Colonial Williamsburg production archives shows that the Agee treatment was indeed circulated among Colonial Williamsburg production staff and was viewed with interest and enough approval and admiration that it was passed on to Emmet Lavery, Agee's replacement. May, 243-4, 115, 117-118; James C. Curtis, "Clio's Dilemma: To Be a Muse or to Be Amusing," in Ian M. G. Quimby, ed. *Material Culture and the Study of American Life* (New York: Norton, 1978), 213; John C. Goodbody, "Treatment for New Information Center Film," Internal memo, 13 June 1955, *The Story of a Patriot* Production Books 2.7, Media Productions Archives, Colonial Williamsburg, 1.

⁶⁴ *Williamsburg: The Story of a Patriot*, dir. George Seaton, Colonial Williamsburg Foundation and Paramount Pictures, 1957, DVD.

guarantees of freedom and justice so essential to individual happiness and peace.”⁶⁵ Personal independence and the winning of freedom was an important theme in midcentury Williamsburg not only in this new film but in the museum’s interpretation as a whole, according to Thad Tate, who worked as a historian for the Foundation at that time.⁶⁶ (Tate, who was also a history professor at the College of William and Mary, provided yet another source of legitimization for Colonial Williamsburg’s claims of historical authenticity.)

Story of a Patriot also offers a good model for how Colonial Williamsburg expanded its reach and influence throughout the mid-twentieth century. Having shown its potential for promoting American values during the Second World War, the Defense Department and United States Information Agency – a governmental agency that was essentially a public relations department for the United States, promoting America and its ideology to other countries – made good use of Williamsburg and its films. As soon as Colonial Williamsburg made *Story of a Patriot* available to outside distributors, it was snatched up by schools, museums, libraries, and other educational institutions. While these groups made an important, and logical, audience for the film outside of Williamsburg, the US government was also a major consumer of the film. In 1959 alone, the Defense Department ordered 597 prints of the movie, and by 1967 it was announced that “a conservative estimate indicates that over two million members of the Armed

⁶⁵ “Stanley Hails Colonial Williamsburg At Dedication Of Information Center” *The Virginia Gazette* 5 April 1957, 17.

⁶⁶ Thad Tate, interview with Richard McCluney for *Story of a Patriot Retold*. Dub of camera original tapes. Media Production Archives, Colonial Williamsburg.

Forces have seen the film through the Troop Information Program.”⁶⁷ Shown to troops to motive and educate, shown to foreigners as an example of American history and values, and used by educators across America, *Story of a Patriot* – along with other Colonial Williamsburg films, books, slide shows, and other toys and products – helped spread the story and the influence of Williamsburg and the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation.

By the late 1950s, Colonial Williamsburg had firmly established itself as an institution of national importance and national influence. The historians and administrators working for the organization had firm control of the story told there. Thus, when the winds of change swept through mainstream academia in the 1960s and 1970s, with the coming of the “new social history,” the stories told at Williamsburg would change as well. Focus shifted away from the fine architecture and the Revolutionary leaders to look more at the common man, and African-American history and women’s history eventually took greater prominence. While this helped lead to a more balanced and historically accurate view of the past, it marks an even further departure from the locally-led community celebrations of the early twentieth century, with their celebrations of George Wythe and George Washington and their fancy-dress minuets. On the other hand, it finally tells the stories of the forefathers of the African Americans whose businesses were displaced by the Restoration project on Duke of Gloucester Street, whose communities were broken up by the restructuring of the

⁶⁷ Strom to Alexander, 23 September 1960, 1; “‘Patriot’ Celebrates Tenth Anniversary More Than 85,000 Showings Since 1957” *Colonial Williamsburg News* 4 April 1967, 3.

town, and whose presence was segregated in the public spaces of this Southern city.

Colonial Williamsburg quickly became and remained a national icon, moving further and further away from its local base. Early on, the Foundation was careful to maintain connections with the community. When local businesses and schools were displaced by the Reconstruction, the Rockefellers helped pay for new schools. The Rockefeller-funded Bruton Heights School, for African-American students, even became something of a community center. Colonial Williamsburg also sponsored “community nights” in its first few decades, inviting in locals to inform them about what Colonial Williamsburg was doing and what it had to offer. [Figures 12 and 13] These community nights also invited discussion of Williamsburg’s local history and how things were changing.

However, as the Foundation’s focus shifted and audience expanded, the community itself was changing. The new economic success of the area brought new businesses and new immigrants, and home-building, particularly beginning in the 1970s, brought many “transplants” to the area. A major turning point in the residential growth of the city came in 1969, when Colonial Williamsburg sold 3,900 acres on the James River to Anheuser-Busch, which used the property for a theme park (Busch Gardens), brewery, and a residential community called “Kingsmill.” Building on Kingsmill’s success, other “large planned upmarket residential communities followed, including Croftton (later named Powhatan), Middle Plantation (reborn as Ford’s Colony), Governor’s Land, Greensprings,

Figure 12



Mingling at Community Night, 1950. Courtesy of the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation

Figure 13



Community Night informational panels, 1948. Courtesy of the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation

and Stonehouse," as Jack Edwards explains.⁶⁸ As a result, the population of the City of Williamsburg, James City County, and York County jumped from 29,992 residents in 1970 to approximately 59,115 in 1998, an increase of 97.1 percent.⁶⁹ By 2014, according to estimates from the US Census Bureau, that number had boomed to 153,616.⁷⁰ As Edwards argues, the "characteristics of the population have changed substantially" along with its numbers; while in the city of Williamsburg itself "the black and white populations have both grown slowly" and so "the percentage constituted by each has not changed much," within James City County the black population has (as of the turn of the 21st century) "remained fairly stable, while the white population has increased sharply," changing the local racial ratios. In addition, much of the new housing has been expensive, pointing to a more affluent population – though, as Edwards notes, "growing affluence has obscured poverty, not eliminated it."⁷¹ Thus the "local base" itself changed significantly, in part as a result of Colonial Williamsburg's growth and success.

In this period of increasing demographic change and national prominence, the city continued to be a tool for the American government and its diplomatic efforts, as world leaders were brought to Williamsburg during their trips to the United States. This arrangement was aided by Williamsburg's relative proximity to Washington DC and the political connections between Colonial Williamsburg

⁶⁸ Jack Edwards, "Change and Growth: Williamsburg Begins a Fourth Century," in *Williamsburg, Virginia: A City Before the State* (Williamsburg: University of Virginia Press, 2000), 273.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 277.

⁷⁰ US Census Bureau, "Quick Facts Table," <http://www.census.gov/quickfacts/table/PST045215/51830>. Accessed May 8, 2016.

⁷¹ Edwards, 277.

president Carlisle Humelsine and his former employers in the US State Department. Kings, queens, politicians, and diplomats from around the globe visited the museum-city, and the eyes of the world rested upon Williamsburg in 1983, when it hosted a G8 Economic Summit. In 1957, Queen Elizabeth II of England visited, as Jamestown celebrated its 350th anniversary. Unlike the exhibition of 1907, these celebrations were geographically focused on Jamestown itself, with the eight-month long series of programming at the Jamestown Festival Grounds (now run by the state of Virginia as Jamestown Settlement) and on Jamestown Island drawing “visitors by carload, planeload, and busload.”⁷² Like the earlier celebrations, however, this anniversary prompted investment in local infrastructure, including the completion of the Colonial National Historical Parkway, a limited-access road connecting Jamestown, Williamsburg, and Yorktown. According to the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, the celebrations brought 1,700,000 people to the area that year and caused a “nearly fifty percent” increase in attendance at Williamsburg’s exhibition buildings.⁷³ Tourism also got a boost in the 1970s as America celebrated its bicentennial; while attendance did not reach the levels that Colonial Williamsburg’s administrators had hoped for, the area’s strong connection with the nation’s founding helped bring a record number of tourists in 1976, with 1,250,623 visitors to Colonial Williamsburg alone.⁷⁴

⁷² Peter A. G. Brown and Hugh DeSamper, “A Household Name: Colonial Williamsburg in the Second Half of the Twentieth Century,” in *Williamsburg, Virginia: A City Before the State* (Williamsburg: University of Virginia Press, 2000), 224.

⁷³ Ibid., 225.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

This boost helped to make the period between 1975 and 1985 the most successful time in Colonial Williamsburg's history, in terms of paid visitors.⁷⁵ As attendance began to drop off – and as interpretive and scholarly priorities changed – Colonial Williamsburg has turned to new forms of programming. The turn of the 21st century saw a particularly dramatic shift in Williamsburg's focus and methods, as a new program of immersive street theater, "Revolutionary City," was developed. Premiering in 2005, this brought the focus of Colonial Williamsburg's programs out of the colonial period and firmly into the American Revolution. It also sought to immerse visitors in new ways and make the history presented more immediate and relevant. Rex Ellis, at that time Vice President of the Historic Area, explained that "We don't want the guests to just watch what's going on. We want them to be immersed. We want activity to be happening around them, conversations taking place with them, asking them 'What do you think about this?' in some way trying to involve them in the experience."⁷⁶ This shift is interesting in the development of Colonial Williamsburg's programming not only in the historical story it is choosing to present, but in the fact that it is reaching out to its audience and asking them to make decisions for themselves. On the one hand, this helps Colonial Williamsburg to continue broadening its audience far beyond the local community. On the other hand, for the first time in several decades it starts to put historical storytelling back into the hands of non-professionals, as visitors are invited to actively participate in the programming.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Bill Tolbert, "Partial closure eyed for Historic Area" *Virginia Gazette* 2 Nov. 2005, online edition 18 Nov. 2005 <www.vagazette.com/news/va-news2_110202nov02,1,5547520.print.story>.

Surveys conducted by Roy Rosenzweig and David Thelen in the 1990s suggest that this may in fact be a very effective way of teaching history. After all, as they concluded, members of the general public want “to approach the broader past on their own terms. Only by getting close to experience could they see the ambiguities, multiple perspectives, and transformative potential” of a historical narrative.⁷⁷ At the same time, however, such a personal experience with history sidesteps the very “objectivity” valued by the historical profession, as Meringolo has shown, and may privilege emotion and over fact. It also encourages broad narratives which appeal to a general audience, further distancing Williamsburg from the local roots of its history.

Revolutionary City is not the only Colonial Williamsburg program to reach out in this way as the 21st century begins. The Audio-Visual Department (later reorganized as Productions, Publications, and Learning Ventures) has been producing “Electronic Field Trips” since the 1990s. The original goal of these televised and videotaped shorts was to provide educational materials to schoolteachers and schoolchildren who could not come visit Colonial Williamsburg in person. Early “EFTs” focused on topics particularly relevant to Williamsburg’s history in particular and the Colonial period in general. However, in recent years that focus has expanded, as Colonial Williamsburg has begun to cover historical topics stretching from the earliest settlement of America all the way through the Civil Rights struggles of the mid-20th century. More recently,

⁷⁷ Roy Rosenzweig and David Thelen, *The Presence of the Past: Popular Uses of History in American Life* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 90.

seeking to make itself relevant and marketable in the modern educational system, Colonial Williamsburg Electronic Field Trips have even ventured into a focus on teaching math and science, with “The Amazing Trade Shop Math Race” (2014) and “The Amazing Trade Shop Science Race” (2010).

Similarly, Colonial Williamsburg has been spreading its name as a force in history education well beyond Williamsburg through a new interactive textbook it has developed, “The Idea of America.” While created by Colonial Williamsburg and featuring many Colonial Williamsburg interpreters, this “digital American history program” is intended to teach “our nation’s rich history, from its early beginnings to the 21st century.”⁷⁸ The Idea of America is designed as a supplemental learning aid to be used in classrooms. It provides “chapters” on a variety of historical topics, and it also actively engages in debates about ethics and good citizenship. In this endeavor (currently distributed through Pearson, but soon to be released independently by Colonial Williamsburg), Williamsburg is extending its reach and influence even further. While it gained its authority by telling the story of a very particular space, geographically and temporally, it is now using that influence to become something much broader and wide-reaching. While still best-known as a living history museum, Colonial Williamsburg’s history professionals, supported by a massive internal structure of productions, research, and interpretative departments, has become a much broader entity than W.A.R. Goodwin could ever have imagined. Colonial Williamsburg is no

⁷⁸ Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, “The Idea of America,” accessed January 10, 2016, <http://www.history.org/history/teaching/ideaofamerica/index.cfm>

longer just about Williamsburg, and no longer interested only (or even primarily) in the local stories which first inspired the Restoration.

Today, then, Colonial Williamsburg is as much an idea and a producer of materials for history educators as it is a historic site grounded in a specific place and time. This city, once a sleepy backwater known to the general public only as a vague entity, and celebrated by its locals in loosely-organized community celebrations, has undergone a seismic shift in its identity because of the influence of historical commemoration. As an important historical site, Williamsburg always had some degree of fame, and locals did value its colonial roots – but they also valued their Southern identity. They commemorated and valued their history, but their efforts to appeal to a broader, national audience were limited. However, this limited framework of grassroots commemoration meant that when an individual with a particular vision for the town obtained the funding and opportunity to build a comprehensive Restoration and interpretation program, he (W.A.R. Goodwin) was able to do so from the ground-up. This meant that the living history museum at Williamsburg was largely imposed from the outside rather than developed by locals, and as it became more and more institutionalized, it moved more and more out of local control. (Of course, as we have seen in the debate over Williamsburg's Confederate monument, local opinion itself was not unified on the subject of the city's future.) Because of its geographical location, the stories it was able to tell, and the fortuitous timing of its opening (just before the Second World War), Colonial Williamsburg quickly gained national prominence and became the tool not only of professional

historians but of the US Government and military. It finds itself at the beginning of the 21st century with a highly professionalized, hierarchical organization with an established record of original historical research and innovation in new methods of teaching history, and is well-equipped to reach out to the public and to create a narrative about our national identity as Americans. At the same time, it has become, in many ways, detached from its local community.⁷⁹ Yes, George Washington walked here – but “here” could be just about anywhere. The “Historic Area” has been preserved, but much of the community that grew up in the aftermath of the Revolution has been lost or scattered. For all its historic importance, Williamsburg has no active local historical society to record and preserve the entirety of the town’s past. Further, in the second decade of the 21st century, the organization itself is facing major changes as new leadership seeks to increase profits and reverse the long-term decline in visitation, bringing about reorganization of departments, a pause (perhaps permanent) in electronic field trip production, the loss of senior staff, and the implementation of controversial new features such as modern lighting of historic buildings at night and non-historical programming in the historic area.

⁷⁹ As of late 2015, this situation seems to be shifting under the new administration led by Mitchell Reiss, who was appointed president and CEO of the organization effective October 6, 2014. Recent events aimed directly at the local community (while also clearly being tourist attractions for a broad general audience) include a Halloween trick-or-treating event, a small ice skating rink between the modern commercial “Merchants Square” and the historic area, and the restoration of the bell at the local (historically African-American) First Baptist Church. However, these are all programs initiated and led by the administration at Colonial Williamsburg, not initiatives coming from the community. It will be interesting to see how this develops, though it is too early to draw any broad conclusions.

Haunted House: Salem, Massachusetts

Salem, Massachusetts: the very name is synonymous with superstition, persecution, intolerance, and downright creepiness. For over 300 years the infamous Salem witch trials of 1692 have overshadowed that town, affecting the stories its residents and visitors told – and suppressed – through historical commemorations. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, just as Plymouth and Williamsburg were beginning to proudly display their colonial heritage through pageantry and plays, Salem's residents were busy trying to downplay their city's troubled history. Certainly, they participated in the growing fad for living history performances, but in the process they sought to remake their reputation and emphasize their region's importance as a global shipping and whaling hub, thriving industrial town, and cultural center. In so doing, Salem's residents may have been able to maintain control of their story as it is told locally, and bolster their civic pride. However, in ignoring the story which has long proven most fascinating and emotionally compelling to the outside world – that of the witch hysteria – they passed up the opportunity to build a network of support for the sorts of living history institutions which create “prosthetic memory.” Without an established framework for social memory-making, Salem had a limited ability to shape the way in which it became a part of a national rather than local story. As a result, Salem's witch history – and the enacted commemorations surrounding it – has been more often appropriated by outside groups and commercial endeavors. “Professionalized” historical efforts have had little opportunity to create successful living history programs in Salem, with

neither a local base of support nor a particular visionary or investor to help things along.

Salem has a rather different relationship to institutionalized history than Plymouth and Williamsburg do. Pioneer Village, a small living history museum which still operates today, was developed in the wake of the city's tercentennial celebrations (making it one of the earliest such sites in the United States). However, in the long term it has never been as successful or as well-known as Plimoth Plantation or Colonial Williamsburg, and it suffered from neglect and poor management through the course of the twentieth century. It never had the national reach – or the national leadership – that those other museums acquired, and the story it tells of Salem's settlement remains intensely local. However, as Pioneer Village steadily declined after its founding, Salem's industrial economy also suffered. In searching for new sources of jobs and revenue, Salem's residents began to consider their city's supernatural notoriety as a potential asset. By a coincidence which would prove economically fortunate for some Salem residents, in mid-twentieth century America events on the national stage were also bringing the Salem witch hunt into the national consciousness. With McCarthyism and the anti-Communist fervor of the early Cold War bringing comparisons to Salem's tortured past into the political and cultural dialogue, Salem found itself poised to capitalize on the economic potential of this notoriety. As a "new" economic asset, witch tourism flourished in the mid-to-late twentieth century in Salem.

The psychics, historic houses, reenactments, and museums that now thrive in Salem are of a fundamentally different nature from that of institutionalized living history museums such as Plimoth Plantation and Colonial Williamsburg. While some do seek to educate, in many cases they also seek to titillate, and the latest in historical research does not always play an important part. Theoretically, one can argue that visiting a psychic or walking through a “witch museum” does help put a person, psychologically, in the shoes of the superstitious Salem residents of the 1690s, but it is difficult to compare the aspirations, and thus the “successes,” of these attractions with those of more traditional living history museums. While the stories of real local historical figures are drawn upon, lending authenticity to the tales told, the narratives are often accompanied by sensational images or details. Few sites even attempt to draw upon professional academics to bolster their claims to historical legitimacy (as we see in Plymouth and Williamsburg).

However, one living history activity in Salem does buck the trend: “Cry Innocent,” an interactive theatrical program run by Gordon College, an institution which has also been involved in the running of Pioneer Village in recent years – and which, as a college, lends legitimacy to its historical endeavors. As an attraction which is both a formal living history event and a tourist activity playing on the popular fascination with the witch trials, “Cry Innocent” offers a rare model of the successful integration of academic history and living history in Salem. However, unlike the established living history museums in Williamsburg and Plymouth, it is almost entirely disconnected from earlier local traditions of

pageantry and drama. It is very much a local event, but created by a national rather than a grassroots interest in the past.

To understand these developments, we must look back at the historical events which have shaped Salem's character and identity since the colonial era. The Salem witch trials occurred in 1692 and 1693, when Massachusetts was still a relatively young colony; Salem itself had only been established forty-six years earlier. The trials were quick and violent. By the time the hysteria was over twenty-four people had died. As the furor abated, the area's residents had to cope with the emotional and psychological aftershocks of the events, and to grapple with the notoriety that their actions brought upon their town. To their dismay, it was a fame that was to echo down through the centuries. Salem residents who were ashamed of the trials and hysteria used two main methods of coping with this unwanted notoriety – denial, and “spinning” the story to show their society in a positive light.

One of the earliest major historical commemorations in Salem for which we have detailed records is the bicentennial of Salem's settlement, held on September 18, 1828. Printers with the *Salem Gazette* published an “Account of the Celebration” in that year, laying out the events and themes of the day. The author tells us that the celebration was a “novelty . . . unprecedented in the ‘Bay State’” and that it “was a day of happiness and festivity.” The events included a speech by the Honorable Judge Joseph Story that went for “more than two hours,” a procession through town, military exercises, religious services at the North Church, and a formal dinner at Hamilton Hall. Then-president John Quincy

Adams had even been expected to attend, though family illness kept him from coming. The publication gives no hint as to the content of Judge Story's long speech, but a much shorter talk by Edward Everett of Charlestown is included, and Everett's, at least, gives no hint of Salem's sordid past. Rather, it ties Salem in to the rise of the new United States, as Everett states that it "is a peculiar feature of our history" that "our national existence is of a date so recent, that the memory of man seems to cover its whole extent. . . . It is an interesting consequence of this interesting fact, that we trace our origin to a civilized period and to civilized nations; and are not obliged to hunt for the exploits of our ancestors, in the doubtful and disgusting fictions of barbarous ages and tribes." Such talk of a "civilized" colonial past neatly ignores the events of the witch hysteria. Indeed, the only mention of the witch trials in relation to the whole event comes buried in a few verses of a song that was sung to the tune of "Auld Lang Syne" at that formal dinner:

The captain next and minster
Would have the women vail
Lest satan by a pretty face
Weak hearts at church assail

A fair defeat the worthies met,--
The women had their will;
And all that own a pretty face
Are free to show it still

In turn this insult to revenge
They sore bewitch'd the men,
Tho' some were hung, their witching arts
Continue much, as then

This joking reference to witchcraft makes light of the violence and terror that occurred in Salem just over a century earlier, though it does nothing in an

attempt to redeem the reputation of the colony. In the grand scheme of the celebrations, however, it would seem that the city's haunted history was passed over as lightly as possible.¹

Evidence exists for a handful of other historical commemorations in the nineteenth century, none of which focused on the witch trials. Salem did celebrate the national centennial in 1876 with local festivities. A program from that celebration reveals that there was a parade held which included a wide variety of floats. Not all of them had local historical relevance (they even included a float of a "Dixie Scene"), but two floats did acknowledge the past. The First Universalist Society had a float described as "Salem Witchcraft. Young Men and women representing an event in local history." Another float is described as "The Witch Circle. In the centre is a little witch flying off on her broom-stick, surrounded by little girls roped in with flowers, and bearing baskets of flowers. Motto: Our Witches are no longer old/And wrinkles beldames Satan-sold,/But young and gay and laughing creatures,/With their hearts sunshine on their

¹ "Account of the Celebration of the 200th Anniversary of the Settlement of the Town of Salem, Sept. 18, 1828" (Salem: Salem Courier, 1828), 1, 5. The religious services held at the North Church are described in Two-Hundredth Anniversary of the First Settlement of Salem. Order of Exercises at the North Church (Salem: Foote & Brown, 1828). In her manuscript notes for a history of centennial celebrations in Salem, Lucy Saltonstall Rantoul makes the argument that the 1828 commemoration was the first such event in Salem. (Lucy Saltonstall Rantoul, "The Centennial Celebrations of Salem – 1828-1930. Notes – with references to the book, author and page," TMs, Phillips Essex Library, Salem.)

This early suppression of the city's history is echoed in the renaming of Danvers, Massachusetts. At the time of the witch trials, Danvers was known as Salem Village (as opposed to Salem City, today known simply as Salem). Danvers separated from Salem in the mid-eighteenth century, promptly changing its name. Despite the fact that many of the important events in the witch trials actually took place in Danvers rather than in Salem, even today the witch sites in Danvers are nowhere near as well-publicized as those in their better-known neighbor.

features.—Whittier. One horse vehicle.” This second float is particularly interesting in the way it echoes the song lyrics from the 1828 dinner.²

The poetry quoted is from John Greenleaf Whittier’s “Moll Pitcher,” which by its creation and popularity demonstrates that a fascination with the witch trials had already spread outside of Salem. (Whittier was a Massachusetts native, but not from Salem.) In this instance, both an interest in Salem witchcraft and an attempt to soften it for contemporary audiences is revealed. Of course, the religious intolerance of colonial Massachusetts would also provide fodder for one of the most enduring classics of nineteenth-century American literature, Salem native Nathaniel Hawthorne’s *Scarlet Letter*. However, it is not the wildly popular *Scarlet Letter* but the less well known *House of Seven Gables* (set in the nineteenth rather than the seventeenth century) that Salem chooses to celebrate. The “House” that inspired the novel itself was purchased to be used as a tourist attraction in 1908, and has become an important marker of Hawthorne’s legacy in Salem.³

The nineteenth-century celebrations set the stage for later events in acknowledging the witch trials only in the larger context of Salem (and, indeed, American) history, and treating them lightly whenever possible. This precedent would be important around the turn of the twentieth century, as the fad for pageantry and a new interest in historical preservation swept the nation. Certainly, Salem and its surrounding communities saw their fair share of

² “1776-1876 Centennial Celebration of American Independence. July 4.” (np:nd), 1, 5, 6.

³ “History of the Property.” House of Seven Gables.
http://www.7gables.org/history_property.shtml

pageants in the early twentieth century. Perhaps the most prominent of these was a “Pageant of Salem” which was held June 13-17, 1913, in association with the (abovementioned) House of Seven Gables. The event was held not held in downtown Salem, but rather on an estate outside of town called Kernwood – surely a necessity, as a program for the event advertises a cast of 1,200.⁴ (The advertisement assured potential attendees that “Arrangements will be made for transportation” to the site.) As was the case with contemporary celebrations in Williamsburg and Plymouth, a major impetus for the pageant was the desire to bolster civic pride. As the promotional materials boasted, besides “its educational value and the stimulating of local pride in past achievement it is believed by those who have the Pageant in charge that it will strengthen community spirit, reveal artistic resources and turn thought naturally from the past to the future and encourage the development of higher, better ideals.”⁵

This idea that the historical pageantry was important not only to the past but to the future points to the importance of these commemorations in shaping the very identity of local citizens and their understanding of their place in the American story. As Victor Turner explains in his engagement with the work of Wilhelm Dilthey, “Through the performance process itself, what is normally sealed up, inaccessible to everyday observation and reasoning, in the depth of sociocultural life, is drawn forth. . . . ‘Meaning’ is squeezed out of an event which has either been directly experienced by the dramatist or poet, or cries out for

⁴ “Pageant of Salem June 13-14—16-17 1913. Kernwood, Salem, Massachusetts,” 1.

⁵ Ibid.

penetrative, imaginative understanding.”⁶ Following this, by performing in this pageant of Salem’s history or engaging with it as an audience member, residents gained new perspectives on the significance of their ancestors’ experiences. This created a space for them to incorporate this history into their own self-understanding and use it as a tool in shaping their futures as individuals and as a community.

The understanding of Salem history and identity encouraged by the pageant of 1913 did include the witch trials. However, both the dramatic context of the pageant’s witchcraft episode and the rhetoric surrounding it sought to downplay the events and “spin” the episode in a way that suggests its outcome was positive. A program for the pageant defends this glossing over of the trials, explaining that “In the brief space allotted to this Episode, the general subject of Witchcraft can be treated only in the most superficial way.” Furthermore, the author takes the offensive in dealing with the negative reputation of the Salem witch trials: “Two common errors of opinion, to-day, should be corrected here,” the program says. Firstly, “No witch was ever burned in Salem,” and secondly, “Salem is not peculiarly responsible for trials or executions for Witchcraft. These were in strict accordance with the laws of England, which extended at that time to Massachusetts as a dependent province.” Going on to give the hysteria an astoundingly positive interpretation, the program asserts that “Salem Village was the scene of a great moral conflict between the powers of Darkness and Light, in

⁶ Victor Turner, *From Ritual to Theatre: The Human Seriousness of Play* (New York: PAJ Publications, 1982), 13.

which the latter won a glorious triumph.”⁷ Through such rhetorical ploys, the program-writer clearly sought to minimize the damage the witch trials caused to the reputation of the area.

Further, the 1913 pageant strongly downplayed the witch trials by burying them in a much larger narrative of Salem’s progress. The pageant began with a scene of the Naumkeag people observing the landing of Roger Conant and his followers in 1626, and the first part of the pageant, “Colonial Days,” included five episodes, only the final one of which dealt with “Salem deluded by Witchcraft” (a scene whose very title attempts to shift moral responsibility for the witch trials from the consciences of colonial Salem citizens to some evil force which “deluded” them). This was followed by Part II, “Revolutionary Days, with four episodes and an interlude”; Part III, “Commercial Days,” with two episodes detailing the rise of Salem as a port city; Part IV, “19th Century Days,” with two episodes celebrating Nathaniel Hawthorne and the Northern victory in the Civil War; and a grand “Finale” depicting “Salem of Today” and looking forward to the “Ideal Salem.” By creating such a grand scope in their historical narrative, pageant planners effectively buried the tale of the witch trials in this all-encompassing history of Salem. In so doing, they were indeed able to “strengthen community spirit” rather than dwelling on shameful episodes, and thereby helped “turn thought . . . from the past to the future.”

⁷ “Pageant of Salem. Kernwood, Salem, Massachusetts. June 13, 14, 16 and 17, 1913. Pageant on Friday evening at 8 o’clock. Saturday afternoon at 3 o’clock. Monday evening at 8 o’clock. Tuesday afternoon at 3 o’clock.” (np:nd), 24.

Contemporary pageants from communities surrounding Salem follow a similar pattern. On April 11, 1912, the Peabody Historical Society presented a pageant of that town's history. Peabody was a part of Salem until the early eighteenth century, and as such the witch trials were a part of their town's history. (As a later pageant program shows, the community was known as "Salem" from 1708-1752, "Danvers" from 1752-1855, "South Danvers" from 1855-1868, and finally "Peabody" from 1868 on.⁸) The Peabody pageant of 1912 included the Salem of Nathaniel Hawthorne, a scene with the Naumkeag, the settlement of Peabody and the arrival of Endicot, the arrival of the Quakers, a play by Mary E. Wilkins Freeman about the witch trials entitled "Giles Corey, Yeoman," and a scene in Katharin Daland's Dame School. The importance of Freeman's play indicates that the people of Peabody were evidently more willing than those of Salem to deal directly with the witch trials – perhaps their physical distance and the fact that their town no longer bore that notorious name helped – but even here, it's included in a broader story of local history. And even here, citizens were able to find a way to find a positive angle on the story: accused witch Sarah Pease's home, as they emphasize in the pageant program, would later be "fitted up" for Katharin Daland as the town's first "Public School House."⁹

The Peabody pageant was repeated at least once more (and it is certainly possible that the 1912 event was not the first of its kind). A program from 1913

⁸ "Pageant. Twenty-second September 1913. Peabody Historical Society will give Scenes from our Town's History. Salem 1708-1752 Danvers 1752-1855, So. Danvers 1855-1868, Peabody 1868. In Commemoration of The Ordination of the First Minister of the South Church 23 September 1713" (np:nd).

⁹ "Peabody Institute Free Lecture Course. Town Hall, Peabody Mass. 11 April 1912. Peabody Historical Society presents Scenes from our Town's History Brookesby, (now Peabody), a Part of Old Salem 1626-1708" (np:nd), 1-8.

reveals that there was also a pageant in September of that year. This one had a rather different focus; the story does not even begin until after the witch trials and it continues through the town's renaming as "Peabody" in the mid-nineteenth century. The first episode begins with the area's "First Meeting House" of 1711, continues through tales of the French and Indian War and the American Revolution, depicts weddings and the founding of local charitable organizations, continues with local involvement in the Civil War, and ends with the naming of the town after George Peabody, a local boy who "made good" as a merchant and banker, helping to found institutions including what is now known as Morgan Stanley, and becoming a prominent philanthropist.¹⁰ Perhaps the content of this pageant was affected by the pageant held in Salem earlier that year, which also, as we have seen, neatly elided the importance of the witch trials in the area, though I have uncovered no direct evidence to support this hypothesis.

The location and sponsorship of another historical pageant, held in nearby Danvers on June 29, 1912, offers a particularly glaring example of this local ambivalence about Salem's physical connection with the witch trials, as it was held "under the auspices of the Rebecca Nurse Memorial Association." Rebecca Nurse was an elderly woman who became a victim of the witch trials when she was hanged in 1692, at a time when Danvers was known as Salem Village. In 1907, the Nurse Homestead was purchased and given over to the Rebecca Nurse Memorial Association, which restored it and opened it as a museum in 1909. The Rebecca Nurse Memorial Association, according to the pageant

¹⁰ "Pageant. Twenty-second September 1913."

program, was incorporated for the preservation of the house and estate and for “the collection and preservation of the literature relating to the history of demonology and witchcraft and the early history of New England, particularly of ‘Salem Village’; the promotion and study of the psychological phenomena of witchcraft; and for other literary and scientific objects.”¹¹ It is quite interesting, then, that in a pageant from 1912 which purports to set forth “Scenes (in part) from the history of the house or neighborhood 1633-1708,” the story of the witch trials does not appear to feature at all.¹² The seven scenes listed in the program are: “The Planting of a Pear Tree on the Orchard Farm – 1633,” the “Paying of the Bounty for the Killing of Wolves – 1636,” the “Home-Coming of the Bride – 1653,” a “Merry-Making – 1663,” the “Conveyance of the Estate by ‘Twig and Turf’ – 1678” (explained in the program as “an old custom of conveyance from feudal times”), the “Quilting Bee – Summer 1678,” and “Katharin Daland’s School – 1708.” While Rebecca Nurse is listed as a character in the Conveyance and Quilting Bee scenes, it would appear that the story skips right over the hysteria of the 1690s. This seems particularly curious given the location and sponsorship of the pageant. However, it fits right in with the themes of contemporary pageants in Salem and Peabody.

This ambivalence about portraying the witch trials in local pageantry continued on well past the first decades of the twentieth century. June 11, 1921

¹¹ “Historical Pageant Under the Auspices of the Rebecca Nurse Memorial Association On the Grounds of the Homestead. 149 Pine street, Danvers, Mass. (Formerly Salem Village) June 29, 1912 3.15 O’Clock P.M.” (np: 1912), 1, 2.

¹² Ibid.

saw a pageant in Beverly, Massachusetts, a town just north of Salem.¹³ Like its predecessors, this pageant covered a broad span of local history, from the earliest days of the colony to the present. It did explicitly address the story of the witches. In “Episode Three,” audiences watched as “Witchcraft Tempts Beverly and is Overcome,” followed by a symbolic interlude in which “the Spirit of Enlightenment appears” and “lifts up the prostrate Spirit of Beverly.”¹⁴ However, this scene is only one of many covering the broad span of local history. The pageant ended with an extended dance sequence showing the importance of then-recent immigrants to the area, with the “Coming of the Nations” shown through an Italian Tarantella, Highland Fling, French Peasant Dance, Swedish Oxdansen, Irish Lilt, English Sellerger’s Round, and Norwegian Mountain March.

The ending to the Beverly pageant is particularly relevant in light of the economic circumstances of the Salem area in the early 20th century. The eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries had seen Salem’s glory days as a shipping port. These years of international prominence were celebrated by allegorical figures in pageants of the early twentieth century, as can be seen in Figure 14. By the turn of the twentieth century, Salem’s economy had shifted, as industry had become increasingly prominent; the leather and textile industries

¹³ Four residents of Beverly were condemned during the witch trials of 1692. Reverend John Hale of Beverly was involved in investigating the claims, and later wrote a book, *A Modest Inquiry Into the Nature of Witchcraft*, about the proceedings. His home in Beverly is now owned and operated as a tourist site by the Beverly Historical Society. Local folklore also refers to a wooded area near the town as “Witches’ Woods.” Beverly Historical Society, “Beverly History,” <http://www.beverlyhistory.org/education/bevhistory.html>. “Witches Woods in Beverly,” New England Folklore, <http://newenglandfolklore.blogspot.com/2013/12/witches-woods-in-beverly-headless-ghost.html>.

¹⁴ “Historical Pageant of Beverly, Massachusetts. Under the Auspices of the Beverly Teachers’ Association. June the Eleventh Nineteen Twenty-One,” (np: 1921), 11.

Figure 14



Above: A woman allegorically represents Salem's nautical glory in the pageant of 1913. "Salem Pageant – Commerce," used with permission of the Peabody Institute Library, Peabody, MA.

Figure 15



A pageant participant as a knight of "Industrial Progress" in the Salem pageant of 1913. "Knight of Industrial Progress from scene of 'Salem of the Future,'" used with permission of the Peabody Institute Library, Peabody, MA.

were particularly important. This, too, was celebrated in pageants; the 1913 Salem pageant even featured an allegorical knight bearing a shield emblazoned “Industrial Progress.” [Figure 15] With the influx of immigrants and thriving factories, there was no financial incentive to capitalize on any public fascination with the witch trials. (Indeed, Salem’s industrial might in the nineteenth and early twentieth century played a part in reshaping local demographics. Particularly driven by the Naumkeag Steam Cotton Company, better known as the Naumkeag Mills or Pequot Mills, a surge of new migrants came to the area. As Aviva Chomsky notes, the majority of these workers were French Canadian, followed in smaller numbers by Polish and Irish immigrants. Mill employment helped drive the population of Salem to “almost 26,000 by 1875 and to over 36,000 in 1915.”¹⁵)

As these early pageants were primarily created by and for the local community, it was unsurprising that they would cater to a desire to build civic pride and downplay those elements which might cause residents to be ashamed of their past. However, it would be misleading to suggest that Salem residents in this period *never* mentioned or traded on their witch history. As previous examples have shown, episodes depicting the witch hunts were indeed included in many pageants, downplayed though they often were. These pageants, however, were produced locally and aimed primarily at a local audience. When

¹⁵ Aviva Chomsky, “Salem as a Global City, 1850-2004,” in Dane Anthony Morrison and Nancy Lusignan Schultz, ed. *Salem: Place, Myth, and Memory* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 2004), 221.

Salem wanted to reach out to a broader audience, the interpretation of the past was sometimes a bit different. While tourist guidebooks of the period emphasized the same themes seen in pageantry – the importance of the shipping industry, fine architecture, Hawthorne and local literary sites of note – the witch trials were not ignored, and in some cases took on a commercial function. For instance, a guidebook from 1897 noted witch-themed items for sale in a chapter on “souvenir shopping.” In photographer Frank Cousins’ shop “those specially interested in Hawthorne, or in the witchcraft tragedies” could “find in Mr. Cousins’ list every view capable of being reproduced by photography,” while in the shop of silversmith and jeweler Daniel Low one could purchase souvenir spoons featuring a “Salem Witch.”¹⁶ Such examples of witch history promotion were an attempt to trade on outsiders’ interest in that titillating past and point to a complex negotiation between wishing to “paint things in a good light” and wanting the economic benefits that outside interest in the witch story might bring. This negotiation became increasingly noticeable and important as the twentieth century wore on.

While outsiders had long been interested in the story of the witch hysteria - an interest evidenced by the apparent market for witch souvenirs as early as the nineteenth century and a few local goods marketed under a “Witch City” brand name as early as 1900 – civic celebrations of local Salem history were focused largely on the needs of the community.¹⁷ The first major event to

¹⁶ *Visitor’s Guide to Salem* (Salem, MA: Essex Institute, 1897), 177, 178.

¹⁷ Francis Hill notes that by “1900, a popcorn factory, bicycle manufacturer, boat yard, and oil firm were” all local businesses “using the *Witch City* name.” Francis Hill, “Salem as Witch

challenge this pattern was the tercentennial of Salem's settlement, in 1926. In many ways, the Salem tercentennial was a continuation of earlier trends, as the story of the witch trials was buried or reinterpreted in Salem's favor. However, the tercentennial celebrations were on an unprecedented scale, and they explicitly aimed to draw a non-local audience. As such, they mark the beginning of a more outward-looking interpretation of Salem history by the Salem community.

The events celebrating the tercentennial of Salem's founding took place over several months in the summer of 1926 and included special events on July 4-10 and a pageant performed September 8-11. The July program included church services, band and choral concerts, bonfires, military exercises, street fairs, balls, spectacles (including "woman balloonist" Louise Gardner who "will make a balloon ascension and triple parachute jump") and parades.¹⁸ Participants included the Governor of Massachusetts and US senators, but in many ways the themes of the events remained local, and echoed the community-building ethos of earlier commemorations. The "Floral and Historical Parade" was described as the "crowning feature of the week," and like the pageants that preceded it, the scenes in the parade covered a broad span of Salem history, from "Nanepashemet The Indian Chief" to a float from the United Shoe Machinery Company.¹⁹ Also echoing earlier celebrations, the parade floats

City," in Dane Anthony Morrison and Nancy Lusignan Schultz, ed. *Salem: Place, Myth, and Memory* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 2004), 284.

¹⁸ Gauss, John D. H., ed. "Salem Tercentenary. July 4th to 10th. Official Program of the Celebration and Episodes in History. Salem, Massachusetts, 1926," (Salem: Newcomb & Gauss, 1926), 23-25; 27-29.

¹⁹ Ibid., 36-46.

celebrated local maritime success, industry, and progress, with entries depicting “Derby Wharf, With Imports,” the “Founding of the Naumkeag Mills,” and “Yesterday and Today.” Among the more than sixty floats listed, only one directly dealt with the witch trials – the “Trial of George Jacobs” – and even in this case, a positive light was shed upon the event as the program explained that “In 1693, Salem people were the *first* to realize that witchcraft was only a delusion, and the prisoners accused of witchcraft were released by order of Governor Phipps.”²⁰ In this celebratory event, the witch trials would not be allowed to dominate the triumphal narrative of Salem’s progress, or to suggest that the townsfolk were or ever had been unenlightened.

The September pageant was also very traditional in its themes and narrative. The pageant was scripted by local historian Nellie Stearns Messer, and it was proudly advertised as a local production, with all “parts, including Speaking, Dancing and Orchestral Parts taken by Citizens of Greater Salem.”²¹ Like earlier pageants, it played down the negative aspects of the witch trials. Messer explained that “Salem has such a rich and varied past that any attempt to set forth all the important events in her history is perforce impossible.” Since Salem’s “early history has already been beautifully represented in pageant form” she “used a rather different treatment than is customary in historical pageants. I have chosen to present the city’s history in outline only,” Messer wrote, to show

²⁰ Ibid., 37.

²¹ I have been able to find very little about Nellie Stearns Messer. However, census data shows that she was born in Massachusetts and lived the majority of her life with her mother and siblings in Salem. In the 1920 census she is listed as a “curator” in a “memorial home.”

"the contribution Salem has made" to "the nation's growth and ideals."²²

Acknowledging that this meant giving little attention to important events and figures ("We shall regret many glaring omissions. Where are Endicott, Roger Williams, Simon Bradstreet? Where is the martyrdom of Giles Corey"), she sought to show the progressivism and economic success in Salem's history, with "the bursting of fantastic religious bonds, the development of national spirit. . . the furtherance of art and letters" and "the adjustment to new industrial conditions."²³ Also echoing this early-twentieth-century interest in promoting Salem as a bastion of immigration and industrialism, the final scene of the pageant was focused on "Modern Industry" and called upon the representatives of various immigrant groups (particularly the Irish, French, Italians, and Polish) to help with the work.²⁴ The pageant did include a scene of accused witch Bridget Bishop on her way to trial, but the description of that scene was accompanied in the program with the apologia that colonial Salem was "unfortunate in being the home of a group of neurotic children and the focus of religious zealots" who "must appear bigoted to us in this year of 1926." But "Two hundred years hence, what will our successors write of us?" Further spinning the story in Salem's favor, Messer goes on to write "Salem produced twenty martyrs to truth. They would not confess to a crime of which they were not guilty, when a simple word of retraction would have saved them. Salem has the distinction of being the spot

²² Messer, Nellie Stearns. *A Pageant-Drama of Salem*. Written at the request of Post 23, American Legion for production before the STATE CONVENTION. September 8, 9, 11 at 8.30 o'clock 1926. *Salem Common*. Written by Nellie Stearns Messer. All parts, including Speaking, Dancing and Orchestral Parts taken by Citizens of Greater Salem. (Salem: Newcomb & Gauss, 1926), 4.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid., 43-44.

where the ghost of religious persecution was finally laid.”²⁵ Surely the audience member reading that could hardly be blamed for almost seeing the witch hysteria as a *good* thing, an ultimate – if sadly belated – triumph of reason over ignorance and intolerance!

But for all this apparent “traditionalism” in the celebration’s portrayal (or non-portrayal) of the witch trials, we do begin to see definite traces of outside influence, as the pageant – rather than relying strictly on local expertise – hired an outside director, M. Dorabelle Strong of the John B. Rogers Producing Company in Fostoria, Ohio. Similarly, the pageant aimed at an audience encompassing far more than Salem locals, as it was explicitly written not just out of civic pride but “for production [on Salem Common] before the State Convention” of the American Legion. Furthermore, the pageant explicitly sought to tie Salem’s history to that of the nation, as Messer wrote: “We find in Salem’s story a digest of our national history, --the story of the consecrated pioneer, the thrifty founder, the religious liberator, the far-sighted patriot, the financial promoter, the artist, the loyal defender of ‘one nation indivisible,’ the mechanician [sic] the world citizen. These progressive elements have proved essential to that great enterprise we term the United States of America.”²⁶ The committee charged with planning the Tercentenary clearly intended that many outsiders would be visiting their town for the festivities, as they produced a flier informing visitors of the various “interesting places” in the town that they could visit. Many of these were historic houses related to the work and writings of Nathaniel

²⁵ Ibid., 14.

²⁶ Ibid., 4.

Hawthorne, but they also began to capitalize on outsiders' interest in the witch story by advertising the "Witch House and Ropes Memorial on Essex Street," the courthouse (which housed "witch records"), and Gallows Hill, site of the hanging of condemned witches.²⁷

Interestingly, the tercentennial of 1926 also provides evidence of some more immersive forms of "living history" for visitors to the city. For instance, visitors to "Early Days on Chestnut Street," held on July 8, could see "Everyone in old-fashioned costumes" and participate in "Old-fashioned Dances."²⁸ That the public was encouraged not simply to take part in the tercentenary as guests but perhaps to dress up and imagine themselves as participants in the past is suggested by an advertisement that was produced by the Hooker-Howe Costume Company offering "Costumes for Tercentenary Celebration."²⁹ In so doing, as Alison Landsberg's work suggests, the audiences would have been creating not simply cognitive but emotional bonds with the past, and outsiders may have gained a personal connection with Salem's history which could not otherwise have been formed.

Another tercentenary just a few years later would continue this trend of involving outsiders in Salem's history and connecting Salem's past with a broader story. The year 1930 saw celebrations throughout Massachusetts of the state's tercentennial. As the Board of Directors of the Tercentenary Conference of City & Town Committees reported, there were 103 local pageants in

²⁷ Untitled Flier, Phillips Essex Library, Salem.

²⁸ "Early Days on Chestnut Street," Ms., Phillips Essex Library, Salem.

²⁹ Advertisement, Phillips Essex Library, Salem.

Massachusetts that year; just like earlier pageants, “nearly all were home made, locally conceived, directed and produced for local audiences.”³⁰ The Board estimated that the pageants had a total attendance of 580,000 people throughout the state, which, in a self-congratulatory mood, they boasted made it “a greater use of pageantry as a form of community expression than was ever known in any state of America or in connection with any celebration in this country.”³¹ (Evidently, the pageants successfully served their morale and community-building purposes for the board members, whether or not they were so successful for others!)

However, seeing these celebrations merely as the local events the Board describes ignores the important role they could also serve in building connections between communities. For instance, Lucy Saltonstall Rantoul reports on a piece from the *Salem Evening News* describing a “Tercentenary Charter Cavalcade” which started in Salem but continued on to Boston.³² Similarly, a reproduction of the ship *Arbella* was used in celebrations in Salem on June 12; later, the vessel “was on display in Charles River Basin, Boston, open to the public throughout the summer. Religious services were held on board several Sundays by clergymen and persons in Puritan garb.”³³ In such examples, we can see that while tercentennial events might be planned locally, they could also have strong ties to the broader community.

³⁰ Beale, Joseph H. *Celebrating an Anniversary: A Report of the Massachusetts Bay Tercentenary of 1930*. (NP: Board of Directors of Tercentenary Conference of City & Town Committees, Inc., 1931), 54.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Rantoul, “The Centennial Celebrations of Salem – 1828-1930. Notes – with references to the book, author and page,” TMs, Phillips Essex Library, Salem, np.

³³ Beale, 54.

In the case of Salem, this is especially clear through the pageant held there in the summer of 1930 depicting “The Arrival of Governor Winthrop in the Ship *Arbella*.” A major production that ran from June 12 through September 1, the spectacle clearly expected to draw more than a local crowd. The “stage” for the pageant was an entire reproduction village. The “manual for participants and spectators” at the pageant seems to reveal a show that looks to the modern eye almost like a cross between a play and a modern living history museum: rather than simply providing a series of dramatic scenes, the pageant was going to offer women chatting out of their windows, men at work thatching roofs, salt-making, curing fish, cleaning boats, and making shoes, and children going off to school.³⁴ Indeed, so much effort was put into making this recreated historical environment, and it was so popular, that the decision was made to preserve the “set” after the pageant ended in September and to open it as a museum known as “Pioneer Village.”

The Massachusetts tercentennial and its attendant pageantry came towards the end of the heyday of traditional pageantry, which first became so popular in the late 19th century. However, it came at the beginning of a new era in historical commemoration, as the idea of the “living history museum” was just coming into its own. Indeed, Colonial Williamsburg was in the middle of its Rockefeller-funded reconstruction in 1930, and was already gaining a national reputation. In Plymouth, the Harlow Old Fort House was open as a house

³⁴ Board of Park Commissioners, City of Salem, *Massachusetts Bay Tercentenary Guide to Salem, 1630. Forest River Park, Salem, Massachusetts. June 12 to September 1, 1930. Manual for Participants and Spectators at The Pageant of The Arrival of Governor Winthrop in the Ship Arbella* (Salem: Berkeley Press, 1930), 23-32.

museum, offering demonstrations of colonial crafts (though Plimoth Plantation would not be reconstructed for some time). Like these early American living history museums, Pioneer Village allowed both local and national visitors to step into the past, immersing themselves in a historical environment.

In many ways, Salem's Pioneer Village was very traditional – it maintained the old narrative of Salem history so long utilized by local residents, completely ignoring the witch hysteria in its focus on the early settlement of Salem. The contrast between outside expectations and local self-presentation is beautifully illustrated in an article from a Boston paper from the 1930 celebrations, describing the events on the pageant grounds (Pioneer Village): "As Salem is to take a large part in the celebration of the Massachusetts Tercentenary, 'The Witchcraft City' will choose as its feature reception the sailing into the local harbor next June of a craft . . . which will be the second replica of the *Arbella*, which sailed into Salem Harbor June 12, 1630, with settlers from England."³⁵ As we see here, while Bostonians saw Salem as the "witch city," Salem was throwing itself into the effort of presenting its earlier colonial heritage. Granted, this was dictated in part by the very reason for the site's creation: the tercentennial of 1630. However, we can clearly see that it reflected the priorities of earlier historical commemorations in Salem.

³⁵ Author Unknown, "The Boston Sunday, May 1930, "Again Will *Arbella* Sail Into Salem Harbor, As In June, 1630", *The Boston Sunday* [?], May 1930, p. 18, Clipping File, Salem Public Library, Salem. Interestingly, this article notes that the first reconstructed *Arbella* was "constructed by the late Ex-Mayor David M. Little, a noted marine architect of his day, from an old schooner hull which he used successfully in sailing from Salem Harbor to Manchester-by-the-Sea on August 1, 1895, when the latter town observed its 250th anniversary. Little was aided in his idea of the design from a drawing made by the late Ross Turner of Salem."

In its early years, Pioneer Village was able to overcome this potential obstacle by touting itself as a place where one could immerse oneself in an authentic experience of the past. At that time, it had few serious competitors in the realm of large-scale living history museums. Active antiquarians and preservationists including George Francis Dow, Norman Isham, and Joseph Chandler (all associated with the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities) were brought in to help with the design.³⁶ As an early guidebook noted, Pioneer Village was located in a city park and its purpose was “to show the types of shelter built by the first settlers and in use at the time of the coming of Winthrop.”³⁷ An article on the Village in the 1931 Bulletin of the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities gives us a further picture of the museum in its early days, explaining that the layout of the site (which, we must remember, was originally intended as a pageant set) was based on historical evidence of the earliest buildings of the settlement; the Bulletin concluded that “Seldom has reproduction of the past been carried out with such fidelity and with such success.”³⁸ In support of this claim of historical authenticity, the site began to collect historic artifacts, moving, for instance, the John Ruck House from Margin Street to the Village when it was threatened with destruction to make way for a post office.³⁹ Visitors to the Village could witness “Early American Industries”

³⁶ Goff, John. “The next frontier.” *PortFolio*, Spring 2004, Vol. 1 issue 5, p. 12.

³⁷ “A Reference Guide to Salem, 1630. Forest River Park, Salem, Massachusetts. Revised Edition, Enlarged 1935. Board of Park Commissioners. City of Salem, Massachusetts.” (Salem: NP, 1935), 5.

³⁸ Dow, George Francis. “The Colonial Village Built at Salem, Massachusetts, in the Spring of 1930.” *Old-Time New England: The Bulletin of The Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities*, Vol. XXII No 1 (July 1931): 14

³⁹ Unknown, “Wood of John Ruck House, Once on Margin Street, in Pioneers’ Village” *Salem Evening News*, July 9, 1946: 6.

being practiced, including: salt making, fish curing, soap making, laundering, tobacco growing and curing, weaving, shoemaking, silver working, printing, woodworking, medicine, furniture making, masonry, ironworking, thatching, tool making, food preparation, and more. Ephemeral programs survive proving that these demonstrations were regularly presented at least until the early 1940s.

There was even a special “Thanksgiving” feast held on October 12, 1932.⁴⁰

At the time of the 1930 tercentennial and in the years immediately following, the site was apparently very successful in attracting visitors. The *Salem Evening News* reported that the June 12, 1930 arrival of the *Arbella* was witnessed by “over 20,000.”⁴¹ Their success came at least in part by helping outsiders identify with the story of Salem’s founding by connecting it to a broader narrative of American progress. Part of the purpose of showing the colonial “American Industries,” one guide explained, was “to give a practical demonstration of the march of progress” and “to remind those of us who are engrossed in the machine-driven mechanisms of the present, of the methods used by those who laid the foundation of our nation and culture.”⁴² Building a link to American patriotism and the rise of the US as a world power in the Second World War, a printed program for the Village (apparently from 1940) asserted that “here [at Salem] were commenced the industries which have raised America

⁴⁰ Ticket: “At Ye Pioneers’ Village ____ will share ye bounty of ye land by Feasting and Thanksgiving – October 12, 1932 – With ____ At ____,” Ephemera folder, Salem Public Library, Salem.

⁴¹ “Over 20,000 Saw the Village Episodes and Arrival of Winthrop” *Salem Evening News* 13 June 1930: 1, 14.

⁴² “Early American Industries Portrayed at The Pioneers’ Village. . Salem, Mass. Ye Programme Twelfth and Thirteenth of September Nineteen hundred and Thirty Six. Auspices of Salem Chamber of Commerce,” 1.

from the status of being a precarious colonial experiment to that of being a world power, second to none, with the highest technological and cultural standards found anywhere on the globe." Referencing the Great Depression, it went on to assert that "Throughout the recent prolonged interval of catastrophic economic upheaval [sic], the courageous spirit of the pioneer and the builder, which has always permeated every walk of American life, has suffered a marked dissipation." But visiting Pioneer Village and experiencing the life of the colonial settlers can change that: "It was that courage [of the pioneers] which turned this land of wilderness into a great nation and it is only through a revival of that courage to meet and conquer all obstacles that a renewal of prosperous, happy and normal American Life may be achieved. It is to demonstrate the courageous spirit which is the American tradition that this exhibition was conceived and executed."⁴³

As America entered the postwar era, national events gave Salem an unexpected boost in prominence. With the dawning of the Cold War and McCarthyism, parallels with the Salem witch trials became a cultural trope. Perhaps best-known today is the debut of Arthur Miller's *The Crucible*, which premiered on Broadway on January 22, 1953. While initially panned by critics as a propaganda piece with underdeveloped characters, over the course of the second half of the twentieth century it became a classic, "one of the most frequently read and most often produced plays of the modern theatre," with numerous professional and amateur restagings both in the United States and

⁴³ Ibid., 3.

internationally.⁴⁴ In order to shine light on the injustices of the McCarthyism and anticommunist “witch hunts” of the era, Miller uses the story and voices of both accusers and victims of Salem’s historic witch trials, exposing the attitudes and atmosphere that lead to persecution and injustice. Salem was also kept before the public eye in the 60s and 70s by the popular television series “Bewitched,” which aired from 1964 to 1972 and even included a story arc filmed in Salem.

This revival of national interest in the witch hunts gave an economic incentive to Salem residents to offer more opportunities for tourists to explore the story of the witch hysteria. At the same time, Salem’s own economy was beginning to shift. As local citizen (and landscape architect) Harlan P. Kelsey noted as early as 1935, “Our manufacturing prospects are not bright and our population is not materially increasing, so why is it so difficult to see that Salem’s prosperity and its citizens [sic] future welfare and happiness are clearly bound up in the conservation and proper exploitation of our abundant historic things, which cannot by any stretch of the imagination be duplicated elsewhere and so are forever unique.”⁴⁵ Salem’s glory days as a shipping port in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries had faded away. In the early years of the twentieth century there was still a reasonably strong industrial base. (Indeed, these local businesses helped support the traditional narrative of Salem’s colonial [non-witch] history through support of Pioneer Village. For example, a program from 1936 reveals that the Village featured a shoe exhibit sponsored by a local shoe

⁴⁴ Claudia Durst Johnson and Vernon E. Johnson, *Understanding the Crucible* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1998), xii.

⁴⁵ Harlan P. Kelsey, “Can Salem Live on its Past?” (1935) Ms, p. 15, Phillips Essex Library, Salem.

company and a laundry exhibit sponsored by the Salem Laundry Company.⁴⁶⁾ However, as Kelsey recognized, these businesses were decreasingly able to provide a sole economic foundation for the town, and as the twentieth century drew on, Salem's economy came to depend less on the big industries which had previously supported it. (Indeed, according to the city government today [2015] none of Salem's top ten employers are manufacturers.⁴⁷⁾ Thus, when Kelsey suggested that "I think Salem has been largely living, or I might more truthfully say sleeping in its past and has not yet awakened to the amazing potentialities in value of that past," he quite accurately predicted the future economic path of his community.⁴⁸ However, while Kelsey wanted to preserve more "traditional" historic sites in town such as the old town hall and Darby Wharf, it was witch-related sites that a broader public expressed a particular interest in seeing. And so, by the mid-to-late twentieth century, the economic lure of witch tourism was more powerful than any local shame about the events of the past. And, indeed, the local government began to make it a priority. By 1967 the Salem Chamber of Commerce had even commissioned a tourist survey of visitors to the town in order to determine how to better marshal their resources and bring more outsiders in to enjoy (and spend money on) local history. The questionnaire concluded that visitors to the town in 1967 came from 41 states plus the District of Columbia, and a full 84% of them came specifically because of Salem's

⁴⁶ "Early American Industries Portrayed at The Pioneers' Village," 3.

⁴⁷ City of Salem, "Salem's Top Employers," Accessed December 28, 2015. <http://www.salem.com/business-and-economic-development/pages/salems-top-employers>

⁴⁸ Kelsey, 6.

history, bringing nearly \$1.35 million into the local economy.⁴⁹ Granted, the survey did not specify just *which* period of history the visitors came for – they could have been maritime buffs or Hawthorne fans – but the (financially successful) local response over the next several decades in building up a witch tourist industry suggests otherwise.

As “witch tourism” became more popular and acceptable in town, a wide variety of tourist attractions sprang up, including the Salem Witch Museum and the Witch House (home of witch trial judge Jonathan Corwin). Today these attractions are joined by such offerings as the “Chambers of Terror,” “Count Orlock’s Nightmare Gallery,” “Frankenstein’s Castle,” “Gallows Hill Museum and Theater,” “Haunted Witch Village,” “Salem Wax Museum of Witches and Seafarers,” “Salem Witch Hunt: Examine the Evidence,” “Witch Dungeon Museum,” “Witch History Museum,” “Within the Witching Hour” (featuring a “live spell casting”), and a plethora of psychic readers.⁵⁰ While some of these do attempt to tell the historical story of Salem’s witch trials, they are primarily private, for-profit ventures cashing in on the sensationalization of the tragic events of 1692. They are certainly, in a sense, “local voices” telling the story, rather than professionalized endeavors, but they are entirely pitched at the tourist and thrill-seeker. Indeed, as one frustrated history-seeker wrote in a visitor survey in 2013, it is sometimes difficult to find the “real, serious historic sites. Salem was the low point of our vacation. . . . Please get a good town map without

⁴⁹ Salem Chamber of Commerce, “1967 Tourist Survey,” Phillips Essex Library, Salem.

⁵⁰ City of Salem, “Attractions,” Accessed 27 December 2015.
<http://www.salem.org/advertisers/find/museums-attractions>

all the silly, take advantage of the tourist spots. Was exhausted by the time I realized what was a legit historic site.”⁵¹ This weary wanderer must be in the minority, however, as the witch tourism industry continues to thrive, and many other comments in the survey wanted even more information about witch attractions. For instance, one visitor noted: “We were disappointed in there being basically no information on Salem Witch Trials [at the National Park Service visitor center],” while another criticized the visitor center for “The over-avoidance of anything witch-related; would have been great to have one stop for comprehensive town history.”⁵²

This is not to say that there are no serious attempts being made in Salem to present the town’s colonial history today, or that the professionalization and institutionalization seen in Williamsburg and Plymouth have not touched the town. As early as 1938, the Salem Maritime National Historic Site became the first National Historic Site (under the Historic Sites Act of 1935).⁵³ To this day the visitor center there serves as the official visitor center for Salem; the site hosts exhibits and films about the town’s entire history with a particular focus on the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Thus it is giving a similar span to what we see in the pageants of the early 20th century – and with just as little emphasis on the witch hunts, which are not even mentioned among the interpretive themes in planning documents.⁵⁴ This is despite the fact that a survey of visitors in 2013

⁵¹ Marc F. Manni and Yen Le, “Salem Maritime National Historic Site Visitor Study, Summer 2013,” (US Department of the Interior: Ft. Collins, CO, 2014), 87.

⁵² Ibid., 75, 85

⁵³ National Park Service, “Salem Maritime: History and Culture,” Accessed 27 December 2015. <http://www.nps.gov/sama/learn/historyculture/index.htm>

⁵⁴ “Long Range Interpretative Plan, Salem Maritime National Historic Site,” (US Department of the Interior: Harpers Ferry, 2001), 5.

shows that 49% of visitors went there hoping to learn about the witches, while only 33% expressed an interest in maritime history. The vast majority – 68% – just wanted to know what there was to do in Salem.⁵⁵

The site also preserves several historic buildings, including wharves, a Custom House, Public Stores, Scale House, and West India Goods Store, as well as the tall ship *Friendship*. However, this site has long struggled to capture tourist attention in the way that other local attractions have done.⁵⁶ As park superintendent Edwin W. Small noted in 1947, "the problem of severe competition offered by earlier historic houses in the vicinity touched by the magic of witchcraft remains unsolved and is likely to do so as long as the witchcraft tradition retains its place with the visiting public as the popular symbol for Salem."⁵⁷

The other longstanding bastion of non-witch-trial history in Salem, Pioneer Village, should have been well positioned to take advantage of a rising tourist economy. Unfortunately, it suffered in both its location a mile and a half from downtown Salem, tucked back in a public park well away from the city's other (pedestrian-friendly) tourist attractions, and in its focus on the initial colonization of the area. [Figures 16 and 17] While an estimated 50,000 people visited Pioneer Village in 1930, the rise of witch tourism in town, as well as shifting municipal priorities, meant that fewer and fewer visitors would seek out this

⁵⁵ Manni and Le, v.

⁵⁶ Pauline Chase-Harrell, Carol Ely, and Stanley Moss, "Administrative History of the Salem Maritime National Historic Site" (Boston: Boston Affiliates, Inc, 1993), 69, 78.

⁵⁷ "Superintendent's Monthly Report for July 1947", quoted in Chase-Harrell et al., 79.

Figure 16



The entrance to Pioneer Village, tucked back in Forest River Park. Author's photograph

Figure 17



A costumed interpreter speaks with a family at Pioneer Village. These were the only other visitors on site during the author's visit in 2010. Author's photograph

attraction, and it gradually fell into disrepair.⁵⁸ The replica of the ship *Arbella*, which was at the Village from 1936 to 1954, had to be retired due to “minimal maintenance over many years, [damage from] Hurricane Carol [in 1954], safety hazards associated with a rotting hull, vandals setting fires and a critical article written about her design and upkeep in the American Neptune authored by the great maritime historian Ernest Dodge.”⁵⁹ (When planners wished to have a ship represent the *Arbella* at Salem in 2005, for the 375th anniversary of its arrival there, they had to bring down the “stylistically similar *Kalmar Nyckel*” from Delaware to play the part.)⁶⁰ The site fell victim to poor maintenance and vandalism; by the early 1980s “some residents were referring to the place as ‘Rambo Village’” due to its condition.⁶¹ Most notably, vandals torched two buildings in 1976, the Ruck and Arbella houses; by the next day, all that was left of the buildings was “a steaming pile of beams and coals.”⁶² Not only were those structures destroyed, but so were all the furnishings being stored there for the winter, including an antique blanket chest and table.⁶³ It was closed to the public in 1978, by which time two of the three “English wigwams” had been destroyed, in addition to the two houses. The future of the site looked grim; “[o]ver the next seven years, the buildings fell victim to vandals and decay. City officials

⁵⁸ John Goff, “The next frontier.” *PortFolio*, Vol 1. issue 5 (Spring 2004), 13.

⁵⁹ John Goff, “Remembering this astounding *Arbella*” *Salem Gazette*, 17 November 2006, 5.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Richard P. Carpenter, “Early days re-created again in Salem’s Pioneer Village” 20 September 1987, C17.

⁶² Carl Johnson, “Blaze blamed on vandals” *Salem Evening News*, 4 April 1976, 1.

⁶³ David Langworthy, “Mayor calls loss ‘dastardly,’” *Salem Evening News*, 1 April 1976, 1.

considered having the village bulldozed for a condominium development.”⁶⁴ However, the nonprofit Pioneer Village Management Association was formed and worked to get it back into shape (beginning around 1986), and a lease was given to the House of Seven Gables to run it.

It seemed that new management (and a grand re-opening in 1990) under the auspices of the House of Seven Gables might open a new chapter for Pioneer Village. The long-successful House of Seven Gables (a rare Salem institution thriving on a history beyond the witch story, with its connection to native son Nathaniel Hawthorne) opened the Village with a special weekend event (“Salem Towne Faire”) and reenactors. A Boston newspaper optimistically proclaimed that “Days of hardship seem to be over for Salem’s Pioneer Village.”⁶⁵ Under this new management, a number of new programs were tried to bring in visitors and raise interest, including a “residency program” on Friday nights in which visitor groups could stay overnight “as though they were living in the 1600s. That means no heat, no running water, no electricity, no phones – no modern conveniences.”⁶⁶ Additional support came in 1997 when 20th Century Fox donated \$30,000 worth of household artifacts which had been used as props in their recent movie of *The Crucible* (1996).⁶⁷ However, even this was not enough to make Pioneer Village a viable attraction. There was simply not

⁶⁴ Unknown, “Pioneer Village to reopen” *Salem Evening News*, 6 June 1989, 9.

⁶⁵ Anne Driscoll, “Days of hardship seem to be over for Salem’s Pioneer Village,” *Boston Sunday Globe*, 26 August 1990, B7.

⁶⁶ Nancy Wentworth, “Pioneer Village gives its visitors an overnight sample of 17th-century,” *Boston Sunday Globe*, 11 October 1992.

⁶⁷ Tom Dalton, “Pioneer Village to host ‘Salem Day’ Saturday,” *Salem Evening News*, 9 May 1997, C1, C11.

enough demand (and not enough resources) to go around; the House of Seven Gables couldn't "make a success of it," and gave up their lease in 2003.⁶⁸ It was closed for most of the span between 2003 through 2008. At that time the lease was held by Salem Preservation, Inc., and while they put money into restoring it, they were unable to keep it open on a regular basis. As James Shea said, speaking for the city as they sought out a new leaseholder, "They've done some work, and it's fine. It's just that they can't get it open. . . . We're looking for someone to invest money and open it immediately."⁶⁹

In 2009 Gordon College's Institute for Public History made an offer and was given a lease to run the village.⁷⁰ Using revenue from the witch-trial themed "Cry Innocent" living history show in downtown Salem (also run by Gordon College students), Pioneer Village was refurbished and staffed with public history students in costume as interpreters under the auspices of "History Alive." "Cry Innocent" debuted in 1992 for the Salem Witch Trials' tercentenary. It is one of the few (perhaps the only) living-history production in Salem focused on the witch trials which is created and supported by a professional academic institution (the college). In this sense, it is the only institution in town actively making the type of claim to legitimacy and authenticity made by institutions at Plymouth and Williamsburg. When "Cry Innocent" opened, it "played to sell-out audiences and

⁶⁸ Amanda McGregor, "A historic comeback," *The Salem News*, 1 July 2009, 10.

⁶⁹ Chris Cassidy, "City seeks anyone to get Pioneer Village running," *Salem News*, 28 February 2008, 2.

⁷⁰ Through the terms of the agreement, the College agreed to "pay the city \$515 a month from May through December to lease it, and also committed \$12,500 to restoration there." Amanda McGregor, "Good first year for group running historic attractions," *Salem News*, 9 December 2009, 14.

strong reviews, and garnered national attention from such high-profile media outlets as CNN, National Public Radio and Nickelodeon.”⁷¹ The production is a recreation of the indictment of Bridget Bishop, an accused witch. It begins with costumed actors talking and playing a game in the public pedestrian area of Salem’s tourist center; when the witch accusation begins, the cast moves the show into the city’s Old Town Hall; only visitors who purchase tickets can then come in for the rest of the show. The interior scene features witness testimony and Bridget’s rebuttals; the visitors in the audience are then asked to render a verdict. (As an interesting aside: in the second year of the production, the cast of the show estimated that audiences “rendered a guilty verdict about 33 percent of the time. The play makes for an interesting sociological study. That 33 per cent figure is the combined track record of the handful of actresses – including Dawn Jenks and Leigh Deacon – who have portrayed Bishop since the show’s inception.” However, at the time of these observations, “the title role [had] just been taken over by Carol Smith Austin. In her first 12 performances, she was set free every time.” As reporter Alexander Stevens notes, “This change in the fortunes of Bridget Bishop raises interesting questions of how audiences are making their decisions. After all, the testimony remains the same, with the exception of questions asked by the audience and answered in character, by the actors. So if the testimony is essentially unaltered, what is influencing audience voting? Is it something as frivolous as the jury’s mood that day? Is the jury swayed by something as irrelevant as Bishop’s demeanor? The color of her

⁷¹ Alexander Stevens, “‘History Alive’ and well, and living in Salem,” *North Shore*, 1 August 1993, 19. See also the official “Cry Innocent” website: <http://cryinnocentsalem.com/>

hair? The same questions could be asked of our contemporary judicial system, which is why ‘Cry Innocent’ provided a fascinating focal point for discussion when it was performed at Swampscott High School on Legal Awareness Day.”⁷²

Gordon College’s reopening of Pioneer Village also offers an instance in which we can see contemporary local community involvement in reviving non-witch history: Boy Scouts, particularly those working towards becoming Eagle Scouts, helped out in reconstructing certain areas, and students from the Salem Academy Charter School also got involved. Goods to furnish the dugout house were donated from local businesses.⁷³ This points to an enduring local interest and involvement in the story of early colonization being preserved at Pioneer Village. While Salem residents have embraced the witch story as a tourist boon and an important part of their own economy and regional identity, continued support for Pioneer Village on a personal rather than simply a municipal or administrative level offers evidence for a lingering pride in this early-twentieth-century narrative. At the same time, it’s hardly evidence of an outpouring of popular enthusiasm, as visitation by both outsiders and locals remains small.

While visitors returned to the site, it was at much lower levels than in the museum’s early years; the *Salem News* reported in 2009 an estimated 3,000 visitors in the first season for the new enterprise, down from the 35,000 visitors reportedly attending as late as 1976.⁷⁴ The College ran Pioneer Village as both

⁷² Stevens, 21.

⁷³ John Goff, “New allies for historic preservation,” *Salem Gazette*, 30 May 2008, 4; John Goff, “Preservation vision: Pioneer Village as an educational site” *Salem Gazette*, 10 August 2007, 4-5.

⁷⁴ Amanda McGregor, “Good first year for group running historic attractions,” *Salem News*, 9 December 2009, 1; Langworthy, 2.

a minor tourist attraction and as a training ground for students in their public history and theater programs; special events such as their Halloween-themed “Spiritways” production and Pirate Days helped bring in a bit of extra revenue, but Cry Innocent primarily subsidized the programming there.⁷⁵ The Village has also served as the background for a few PBS series on the colonial era, including Native-American themed “We Shall Remain” and a series about “God in America.”⁷⁶ Pioneer Village remains the last bastion of the sort of historical commemoration Salem promoted in the early twentieth century, eschewing the witch story to focus on the early settlers and their noble attempts to found a new and just society. As former manager of Pioneer Village Dick Walker argued in 2001, “Yes, this is the town that had the witch trials. But this is also the town that started the notion of American liberty.”⁷⁷ Gordon College gave up its lease in 2008, choosing to focus its energies on Cry Innocent. Management passed back to the city of Salem, and it is now being run by the same people who run the Witch House in Salem, a historic home that was lived in by one of the witch trial judges.

Unfortunately for Walker, and for Pioneer Village, the story of Salem as a cradle of American liberty is simply not the narrative that draws in a national tourist audience. However, the longstanding lack of public support for the witch trial narrative means that, unlike in Plymouth and Williamsburg, there was never

⁷⁵ McGregor, “Good first year,” 1, 14.

⁷⁶ Kristin D’Agostino, “It Takes a Village (and a beach),” *Salem Gazette*, 6 March 2009, 1, 9.

⁷⁷ Alan Burke, “Rescuing the Puritans at Pioneer Village,” *Salem Evening News*, 20 April 2001, A3.

a framework upon which an institutionalized, professionalized commemoration could be built.⁷⁸ Thus, when Salem turned to a greater reliance on a tourist economy around the middle of the twentieth century – taking advantage of the town’s prominence in popular culture around this same time, in theater and on television – the narrative was largely in the hands of individual entrepreneurs. Many may have been locals, but these new “museums” and commemorations were not designed for local consumption but for outsiders with an interest in the more lurid side of the town’s history. In 1935, Harlan Kelsey asked: “Can Salem Live on its Past?” The last several decades have shown that in large part it can. However, it is not the past Kelsey was hoping for, and because there were no institutions or structures in place (or a grassroots tradition of supporting this particular history) when historical tourism in Salem took off, witch tourism in Salem became something of a free for all. Unlike Williamsburg, where tourist demand was largely created by an institution, institutions (often less than professional, in a historical sense) were formed by tourist demand once Salem decided that its history was something to be capitalized on. Pioneer Village, the one site where locals had been telling their own story, with some attempts at historical authenticity (in the sense that it touts connections to the academic historical profession), has been economically unsuccessful and become increasingly unpopular. Thus Salem finds itself a place defined by one particular part of its history, and living off a past it long preferred to sweep under the rug; while it is telling its own stories, they are being told primarily for outsiders rather

⁷⁸ The city’s own official memorial to the victims of the witch hunt was not built until 1992, and is tucked back off a main street.

than as a celebration of local pride and identity. It is also a place where we can see just how divided the “local” can be, as entrepreneurial spirit and economic necessity shift attitudes about the past and its “value,” and as industrial shifts and immigration alter local needs and demographics.

Meet the Neighbors:**Native American Voices in Plymouth, Salem, and Williamsburg**

In looking at living and material historical representations of the colonization and founding of America, I have to this point been considering shifts in the narrative primarily relating to how the white settler population is portrayed – whether we are talking about the Pilgrim Fathers and “great white men” or whether we are discussing women’s history and the everyday life of the common man. However, even the most inclusive view of the life of the settler is incomplete if seen in isolation from the Native American history being shaped at that same time – and the picture is very different from a Native perspective. Throughout the period under discussion the Native American side of history has often been overlooked, under-represented, or, worse, caricatured. As we will see, in the early years of the 20th century the voices of self-identified Native Americans and members of Native American descendant groups were rarely heard. While the existence of early Native Americans was not denied, they were represented as stock characters by white Americans in “red face.” However, by the mid-twentieth century, just as local white communities were seeing their story taken out of their hands and put in the control of professionalized history, historical institutions were gradually beginning to put Native stories and Native historical interpretation back into the hands of Native American groups.

Interestingly, in the founding myths of both Massachusetts and Virginia the help and generosity of Native Americans is emphasized in traditional Anglo-centric narratives. With stories of Squanto in the north and Pocahontas in the

south, commemorations of early-American history could hardly ignore these figures. However, by the early 20th century, Native American tribes in the east had largely been subdued or relocated, and groups in the west had firmly captured the imagination and attention of American popular culture. Thus when local communities in Plymouth, Salem, and Williamsburg included American Indians in their pageantry and commemorations, it was generally in the form of white citizens costumed as members of western tribes – with apparently no consultation with or inclusion of Native Americans still living in the area.

Turning our attention first to Plymouth, we see Native American characters (though rarely Native American participants) in commemorations performed by the white community since at least the 1890s. The souvenir program for a “Historic Festival” held in Plymouth in the summer of 1897 notes that when the settlers first arrived the land was occupied by Natives, who lived well there despite their “lazy and improvident habits,” without which “they might have lived without the suffering which they doubtless endured for want of food during the winter months.”¹ Whether the pageant planners shared the prejudices of the souvenir program author is unclear, but they did include Indians in the tableau scenes presented upon the occasion, including “The Landing on Plymouth Rock,” “Indian Home Life” (which included a “war dance”), “The Treaty with Massasoit,” and an “Indian Scene” towards the end which featured the “Moon Dance of Indian Maidens” and a “War Dance of the Braves.” There is no language

¹ “Old Plymouth Days and Ways. Souvenir Program. Historic Festival July August MDCCCXCVII. Handbook of the Historic Festival in Plymouth Massachusetts July 28, 29, 30, 31 and August 2 and 3 MDCCCXCVII. Margaret MacLaren Eager, Director. Plymouth, Massachusetts.” (Boston: Thos. P. Smith Printing Co, 1897), 20.

indicating that these characters or dances were performed by anyone other than the presumably white participants in the rest of the show.

Similarly, during the pageantry surrounding the Plymouth tercentennial in 1920/1921, commemorations did include depictions of Native Americans, but these were done from a non-Native perspective and performed by non-Native participants. For instance, one contemporary account of the casting of the tercentennial notes the following about the inclusion of troops just back from participating in the First World War: “Patriotism was running high, and the boys were feeling full of beans and ready and willing to paint themselves up as red Indians and raise the devil.”² The same account indicates that these enacted Indians may (perhaps inadvertently) have provided more comic relief in the program than kindhearted assistance; an audience member reports that the “first ‘Indian’ who stood up in his canoe to shoot an arrow, lost his balance and fell overboard. . . . The ‘Indians’ and ‘Norsemen’ had a tendency to show more enthusiasm and less caution than was called for.”³ Another description of Indian characters in the tercentenary pageantry gives a different account of their origins. Mrs. Ralph Hall wrote that “All of the Indians in the Pageant were members of the local tribe of the order of Redmen,” a patriotic and fraternal society which “traces its origins back to 1765 and is descended from the Sons of Liberty” and “patterned themselves after the great Iroquois Confederacy and its democratic governing body,” but which has no connection with any actual Native American

² L.J.T. Biese, “The Pilgrim Tercentenary (1920)” Tms, p. 11, Pilgrim Hall Archives, Plymouth.

³ Ibid., 12

group.⁴ The tercentenary celebrations also saw the first performance of a “corn-planting ceremony” for local children, a “ceremony represent[ing] the first sowing of corn with herring in 1621, as the Pilgrims were shown by Squanto.”⁵ This ceremony became an annual event for the town and in the 1970s, at the time of the 350th anniversary, was expanded into the Harvest Festival at City Hall in Boston, where, according to a report on the celebrations, “one for the cutworm, one for the crow, one for the blackbird, and two to grow’, a verse from the corn-planting ceremony, was used in publicity, along with reference to the Plymouth tradition.”⁶ Relations with the Indians were also a part of plays and pageants produced by the (white) Plymouth community as a part of other celebrations commemorating the area’s colonial past (including, for instance, the “historical sketch” on “Peace with the Indians,” included as a part of the Minot School graduation exercises in 1920). However, these were more instances of Natives being portrayed by non-Native actors.⁷

Performance scholar Joseph Roach argues that such forms of “redface” are more about white identity than about acknowledging Natives’ place in history. Roach writes of two forms of “surrogation” in white performance of nonwhite characters. The first is when white performers speak as if they are actually nonwhite people, acting as direct stand-ins. Alternately, they may perform a sort

⁴ Lecture by Mrs. Ralph W. Hall on “The Pilgrim Spirit”. Typescript Draft, no date, p. 5, Pilgrim Hall Archives, Plymouth; The Improved Order of Red Men, “Information,” accessed 22 December 2015, <http://www.redmen.org/redmen/info/>

⁵ “350th Pilgrim Anniversary: Final Report of the Plymouth-Provincetown Celebration Commission. Plymouth, Massachusetts,” p. 24-25, Pilgrim Hall Archives, Plymouth

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ “Graduating Exercises of the Minot School. Friday, June 25, 1920 at 10 o’clock A.M.” Pilgrim Hall Archives, Plymouth. Minot is a community about 20 miles north of Plymouth; it is currently considered part of Scituate, MA.

of “minstrelsy [wherein] one actor wears two distinct masks – the mask of blackness [or in this case, redness] on the surface and the mask of whiteness underneath.”⁸ When the first of these alternatives is used, white actors take on the actual persona of indigenous people, and in so doing can claim a special “American” identity. In the other alternative, words and actions can be ascribed to the “ventriloquized” nonwhite character which affirm white views of the Native, either as an ignorant and uncivilized person or as a “noble savage” giving benediction to the white civilization which now stands in his place. As Roach argues, in both cases “Anglo-American self-definition occurs in performances that feature the obligatory disappearance or captive presence of circum-Atlantic cohabitants.”⁹

In addition to such instances of “redface” performance, white citizens organizing historical commemorations in Plymouth were interested in having “real” Native Americans (as defined by white standards) on display. They actively pursued such involvement as they planned Plymouth’s tercentenary commemorations, though they saw Natives more as an attraction or exhibit than as full participants with a say in the narrative and features of the celebrations. Indeed, as Squanto and his people were so clearly a part of the legends surrounding Plymouth, they were deemed an obviously desirable attraction. In August of 1920, Mr. Lillie of Pawnee Bill’s Buffalo Ranch wrote to J.F. McGrath, one of the celebration planners, offering his assistance in putting together an

⁸ Joseph Roach, “Culture and Performance in the Circum-Atlantic World,” in Erin Striff, ed. *Performance Studies* (New York: Palgrave, 2003), 130.

⁹ Ibid.

Indian attraction, writing that “I have had lots of experience in putting on big pageants, spectacles and in handling Indians.”¹⁰ McGrath was apparently interested in the prospect, writing in his reply of “a desire to have a number of real Indians as part of [the] program. I think some local Indians can be had, but, as I understand it, they might need two hundred or more to give to the pageantry that touch of realism essential to an exercise of such international importance.” The Indians “would really be the only spectacular feature of the celebration to be located at Plymouth during the whole period of the celebration, as there will be no midway or other hippodroming features. I figured that the Indians separated into villages would be quite appealing as a feature and might be productive of much money for them through sales and their [illegible] activities.”¹¹ This massive Indian feature discussed by McGrath and Lillie apparently never proceeded beyond this exchange of letters, but their remarks highlight the ways in which Indian participation was viewed in these proceedings: they were an asset to be managed, an exhibit to draw in crowds, and it would be nice to have actual local ones – but ultimately, an Indian was an Indian, and the experts and organizers would determine how they were displayed.

This fits neatly into the contemporary treatment of such ethnological exhibits at World’s Fairs and similar expositions in the early 20th century. As Nancy Parezo and John Troutman argue, these events “presented viewers with paradigms and canons through which a broad audience of the ‘civilized’ world

¹⁰ G[?].W. Lillie of Pawnee Bill’s Buffalo Ranch to J.F. MacGrath, 4 August 1920, Pilgrim Hall Archives, Plymouth.

¹¹ MacGrath[?] to Lillie, 9 August 1920, Pilgrim Hall Archives, Plymouth.

could meet, interpret, and ultimately commodify the ‘noncivilized’ world.”¹² Of greatest importance was the entertainment and putative education provided to the predominantly white audiences; Native opinions, perspectives, and even physical needs were secondary, as Parezo and Troutman show in their examination of Native participation in the World’s Fair of 1904. Even the educational aspects of such displays were not of primary importance, they suggest, as the display of Native crafts and traditions demonstrated to audiences the Natives’ lack of “civilization” and thereby “served as tools for the imperialist countries who staged them to justify and essentially celebrate the subjugation and dispossession of indigenous peoples worldwide.”¹³ It is this spectacle of progress and civilization, and the lessons and legitimization that the dominant white culture could draw from it, that drove these displays.

In the end, there was some Native participation in Plymouth’s tercentennial commemorations, though on a much smaller scale than McGrath had proposed. One souvenir book alerted potential visitors that “The friendly relations of the Pilgrims with the Indians will be commemorated in the Indian Village, located by the side of one of Plymouth’s beautiful ponds. Here the pure blooded Indian members of one of New England’s remaining tribes will entertain the visitors by the portrayal of ancient Indian customs, dances, etc., etc., in costume.”¹⁴ William Franklin Atwood offers a few more details on this attraction

¹² Nancy J. Parezo and John W. Troutman, “The ‘Shy’ Cocopa Go to the Fair,” in Carter Jones Meyer and Diana Royer, ed. *Selling the Indian: Commercializing & Appropriating American Indian Cultures* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2001), 3.

¹³ Ibid., 4.

¹⁴ *Pilgrim Tercentenary Souvenir Book. Guide to Plymouth, The Cape, Nantucket and Martha’s Vineyard* (New Bedford, Mass: Curtis S. Bates, Nd), 5.

in his own guidebook to the events, noting that “Visitors to Plymouth will find much to interest them in the real native Indian camp which the Passamaquoddy tribe have established here for the summer. They come from their tribal reservation in Maine and for the occasion of the Tercentenary have adopted the original costume of their ancestors. There are about forty of this early New England stock and they bring with them canoes, camp equipage and everything that goes to make up the complete presentation of real Indian life under real native conditions. It will be an interesting feature of the celebration.”¹⁵ Thus we see a limited, non-local (though, at least, northeastern) Native presence, though there is no indication that Native people were given much say in any other aspect of the tercentennial celebrations, or even had any agency in determining the conditions of their presence in this display. With their presentation of what boosters advertised as “real Indian life under real native conditions,” they offered the same sort of ethnographic exhibit that Parezo and Troutman describe at World’s Fairs of the same period. Their presence ultimately served the ends of the non-Native event planners as they displayed a more “primitive” lifestyle to tourists visiting their encampment.

The story is much the same when we look to early 20th century historical commemorations in Salem, Massachusetts. The very logo on a postcard from a 1913 historical pageant in Salem was an image of Indians seen from the back, gazing out on the bay towards a ship. Scenes in that pageant, performed by white actors, included “Naumkeag – Haunt of the Indians” and “The Indians

¹⁵ William Franklin Atwood, “Pilgrim Plymouth Guide and Historical Digest. Illustrated. With an Outline of the Tercentenary Observances” Second Edition. (Np, nd), 94.

welcome the advent of the English, Roger Conant and followers.”¹⁶ A year earlier, in 1912, the Peabody Historical Society presented “Scenes from our Town’s History, Brookesby, (now Peabody), a Part of Old Salem.” The scenes depicting the early history of the town clearly emphasized Native characters, if we are to believe the program produced for the event. Painting a vivid but highly romanticized view of the past, the opening scene is described in colorful language: “You perceive at a glance that this is the ancient and primitive wood. The white man’s ax has never smitten a single tree. Yet see! Along through the vista of impending boughs, there is already a faintly traced path, as if a prophecy or foreboding of the future street had stolen into the heart of the solemn old wood. What footsteps can have worn this half-seen path? Hark! Do we not hear them now rustling softly over the leaves? We discern an Indian woman – a majestic and queenly woman – there amid the murmur of boughs go the Indian Queen and the Indian Priest.”¹⁷ We are further informed that the main characters in this scene are Squaw Sachem (widow of Nanepashemet), Wappacowett (medicine man and guardian of Winnepauweekin), Winnepauweekin (youngest son of Nanepashemet, Sagamore of Salem), Ahawayet (daughter of Pequanum of Nahant), Yawata (sister of Winnepauweekin), and Manatahqua (son of Winnepauweekin). The Native people, the “Naumkeags are described as a tall strong-limbed people . . . They were kind and docil [sic] in disposition, generous

¹⁶ Postcard, 1913 pageant ephemera collection, Phillips Essex Library, Salem.

¹⁷ “Peabody Institute Free Lecture Course. Town Hall, Peabody Mass. 11 April 1912. Peabody Historical Society presents Scenes from our Town’s History Brookesby, (now Peabody), a Part of Old Salem 1626-1708,” p. 2, Phillips Essex Library, Salem.

in their treatment of the whites.”¹⁸ The creators of this particular event did acknowledge the tragedy of European settlement for the Native communities, noting in one scene that “The forest-track, trodden more and more by the hobnailed shoes of these sturdy Englishmen, has now a distinctness which it never could have acquired from the light tread of a hundred times as many Indian moccasins. The Indians marvel at the deep track and are saddened by the presentiment that this heavy tread will find its way over all the land; that the wild woods the wild wolf and the wild Indian will alike be trampled beneath it.”¹⁹ On the whole, however, even this set of scenes is primarily focused on the triumphs and travails of the European settlers and their history. It is also notable in the way it draws upon the image of the “noble savage” popularized in the nineteenth century. As Lynn Ceci notes, this romantic view of the Native American as a “friendly, benign, almost childlike figure” who “unhesitatingly shares native food, technology, and land with the Europeans” and “even welcomes their coming” became both possible and popular just as Natives themselves began to be seen as a vanishing – and therefore no longer threatening – people.²⁰ The image of these “uncorrupted natural beings” was especially appealing in an increasingly modernized, mechanized culture, as America saw increasing immigration and “rising industrial and urban mobs.”²¹ The nostalgia for a simpler time and

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid., 3.

²⁰ Lynn Ceci, “Squanto and the Pilgrims: On Planting Corn ‘in the manner of the Indians,’” in James A. Clifton, ed. *The Invented Indian: Cultural Fictions & Government Policies* (New Brunswick: Transaction, 1994), 83.

²¹ Ibid.

romanticizing of the “noble savage” is reflected in the language of this pageantry, with its imagery of “trampling” and a loss of natural wildness.

An examination of Salem’s tercentennial celebrations reveals no changes in these trends. In a big parade for Salem’s tercentennial in 1926, many floats in the “historical parade program” featured scenes depicting Natives, including “Nanepashemet The Indian Chief,” “An Indian Village (by Order of Red Men),” “Roger Williams Welcomed by Indians,” and “Indian Deed.”²² The pageant held in Salem for the tercentennial of the Massachusetts Bay Colony in 1930 included many scenes with Native characters: the first act featured peaceful Indians coming to the village with gifts of fowl and conducting trade; in the second half of the program an Indian runner announces the arrival of the ship “Arbella” and then a group of Indians help celebrate the arrival.²³ Again, these are all examples of commemorations apparently planned and executed by local citizens without any notable input (or participation by) members of the local Native communities.

Looking to the south, one finds the same basic pattern in early 20th century historical commemorations in Williamsburg, Virginia. The Fourth of July pageants held in Williamsburg in the 1920s, discussed in chapter 2, are entirely focused on politics and the Founding Fathers, with no American Indian characters or scenes at all. To find any representation of the area’s first

²² “Salem Tercentenary. July 4th to 10th. Official Program of the Celebration and Episodes in History. Salem, Massachusetts, 1926. Published by the City Government. Compiled by John D. H. Gauss.” (Salem: Newcomb & Gauss, 1926).

²³ “Massachusetts Bay Tercentenary Guide to Salem, 1630. Forest River Park, Salem, Massachusetts. June 12 to September 1, 1930. Manual for Participants and Spectators at The Pageant of The Arrival of Governor Winthrop in the Ship Arbella. June 12, 1630. Copyright 1930, by Board of Park Commissioners, City of Salem, Mass.” (NP: Berkeley Press, 1930), 23-32.

residents, we must look a bit further abroad, to pageantry taking place at Jamestown and at Yorktown. Jamestown's tercentennial exposition did feature Native Americans, but not in a way that gave them much opportunity to voice their own story. As a guidebook for the exposition noted, planners initially intended to construct both a recreation of the English settlement and an Indian village with an eye to historical accuracy, "as nearly like the old place as possible."²⁴ Brian de Ruiter explains that the Indian village was to be "a historical exhibition by the Powhatan Indians, who hoped that by participating in the Ter-Centennial they would remind fellow Americans of their existence and raise awareness of their low standard of living in the state."²⁵ However, any such expectation was quickly dashed, as they were "relegated to the 'amusement' area" where "they were compelled to stage Pocahontas's rescue of Captain John Smith, thus giving visitors the impression not of the forefathers of a modern or civilized people, but of savages in feathers. In addition," de Ruiter explains, "the Powhatans were further overshadowed by a program by the Plains Indians of the 101 Ranch Wild West Show, whose whooping, showy presence was more recognizable and attractive to paying customers."²⁶ The US Department of the Interior also featured a display by the Indian Office featuring models and artifacts of Native life, and sponsored a course of lectures at the exhibition, "with biography and stereopticon," showing Reservation life. However, if the subject matter

²⁴ *Illustrated Standard Guide to Norfolk and Portsmouth and Historical Events of Virginia 1607 to 1907* (Norfolk: Standard Lithographing and Publishing Co., 1907), 88.

²⁵ Brian de Ruiter, "Jamestown Ter-Centennial Exposition of 1907." (2015, October 27). In *Encyclopedia Virginia*. Retrieved from http://www.EncyclopediaVirginia.org/Jamestown_Ter-Centennial_Exposition_of_1907.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

covered in the lectures is representative of the exhibit as a whole, it focused almost exclusively on Native life in the American West. The lectures discussed the Navajo, Crow, and Moki people in Arizona and New Mexico.²⁷

Virginia Native Americans seized another opportunity to take part in (non-Native led) historical commemorations during a large pageant held at Yorktown for the Yorktown sesquicentennial celebration in October of 1931. A “Colonial Fair and Harvest Festival” was a part of the entertainment, and included an “Indian Village” featuring “Descendants of the Pamunkey and Mattaponi Tribes of Indians which inhabited the Colonial Tidewater section of Virginia in the earliest days,” presenting “War Dances and Ceremonial Dances” and “Exhibitions of Indian Work” for the entertainment of visitors. If they hoped to emphasize the difficulties of their circumstances, that was not recognized by the planners, who proudly emphasized that “These descendants of the aborigines now occupy reservations allotted by the State of Virginia for their exclusive use.”²⁸ Interestingly, the opening pageant of the commemoration, “The Pageant of the Colonies,” depicted important scenes in the colonial histories of each of the original thirteen colonies. Virginia’s scene was “The Landing at Jamestown – 1607.” None of the characters or action listed for this scene gives any indication that Native Americans were even mentioned. However, Native characters (portrayed by non-Natives) do appear in other colonies’ scenes, including “The Defiance of the Narragansetts” in Massachusetts, “Roger Williams Makes friends

²⁷ See! See! See! Guide to Jamestown Exposition, Historic Virginia, and Washington (Washington DC: Byron S. Adams, 1907), 25-26.

²⁸ Official Program of the Yorktown Sesquicentennial Celebration (Richmond: Lewis Printing Co, 1931), 37.

with the Narragansetts” in Rhode Island, and “They deal with Governor Carteret and the Lenni Lenape Indians” in New Jersey. These scenes were portrayed by “citizens of Portsmouth [Virginia],” faculty and students of Gloucester High School, and representatives from Langley Field, respectively.²⁹ Here again (as discussed above in the context of Plymouth’s pageantry), non-Natives performed as “surrogate” Indians. As these local citizens took on the “redface” roles, they reenacted a narrative depicting the progress of America towards increased civilization and also primarily featuring Native characters as helpful “noble savages.” The context of this pageantry - a celebration of the United States’ triumph over the British at Yorktown in an event that ensured the creation of a new American nation – makes this use of Native characters by non-Native actors was especially powerful. By incorporating this narrative about the relationship between Natives and settlers, but enacting it through non-Native bodies, local residents could claim and reshape their own identities as “native” Americans and citizens of the nation.

We see, then, that in all three of the sites we have been examining, historical commemorations and reenactments up through the mid-20th century were almost universally told from the dominant (non-Native) perspective. While the presence and (to some degree) the importance of Native Americans in the early years of European settlement was not ignored, Natives were portrayed in a generally stereotyped fashion (either as lazy and useless, as noble savages, or as helpful benefactors). More often than not they were portrayed by non-Natives

²⁹ Ibid., 38-40.

in “red face.” When people of Native descent were in fact invited to participate, they were not necessarily members of the local Native community and were regarded and spoken of by planners and event promoters as midway attractions and not as equal partners in the commemoration of an event as important in their own history as it is in the history of the European settlers’ descendants. It was, however, important to the local communities to include these Native characters in their commemorations. When depicting Native characters as uncivilized and unworthy of the lands they held, non-Natives justified and legitimized their own possession of the land and glorified their own ancestors. In portrayals of early Native Americans as “noble savages” befriending the colonists and welcoming them to their shores – be it Squanto teaching agricultural skills to the Pilgrims or Pocahontas saving the life of John Smith – locals asserted their own rights and connections to the land.

What did Natives draw from these commemorations when they themselves participated? I have not discovered evidence from the pageants discussed above to shed light on the motivations and reactions of Native Americans involved in those specific events. However, a number of scholars have studied similar situations which can shed light on the hopes and reactions of Native participants. Christian F. Feest notes that in the case of Virginia’s Pamunkey tribe, the Pocahontas story was used by Natives to “establish a base for common ground” with their non-Native neighbors and became “a profound

emotional plea for a redefinition of their status in Virginia's race-class hierarchy.³⁰ Feest notes that between 1881 and 1915, the Pamunkey occasionally performed their own Pocahontas pageant for mixed Native and non-Native audiences, an event that was incorporated into a "Forefathers' Festival" on the Pamunkey Reservation.³¹ This was an opportunity to lay claim to the importance of their own heritage and ancestry in the land, as well as to appeal to the sympathies of white audiences in a racially-segregated society. The Pocahontas-Smith story was used by the Pamunkey, Feest argues, "to fix their identity" in a society often hostile to non-Whites and "to win the hearts and minds of Captain John Smith's children."³²

While the Pamunkey participated in these performances in their own region, why would other Native groups be willing to travel to perform, as did the Passamaquoddy who came to Plymouth in 1920 and the members of various other tribes who travelled with Wild West shows and joined World's Fair exhibits? Parezo and Troutman offer insight into some possible motivations in their study of the members of the Cocopa tribe of the American southwest who took part in the St. Louis Louisiana Purchase Exposition of 1904. As these scholars argue, the Cocopa "were neither unwittingly fooled by anthropologists or fair agents nor completely trusting of them." They "thought long and hard about attending the fair, negotiated the conditions of their participation, controlled how their members

³⁰ Christian F. Feest, "Pride and Prejudice: The Pocahontas Myth and the Pamunkey," in James A. Clifton, ed. *The Invented Indian: Cultural Fictions & Government Policies* (New Brunswick: Transaction, 1994), 55.

³¹ Ibid., 58.

³² Ibid., 60.

acted. . . and left when they thought the situation was becoming exploitative.”³³

In the case of the Cocopa, agricultural conditions were making life on the land increasingly difficult, and their people were being forced to turn to unskilled and temporary wage labor. The fair offered a chance to make money by selling their wares, and they were further induced to participate through gifts from the fair agents of “money, tobacco, and food.”³⁴ They engaged in several months of negotiations regarding which tribe members would attend and for how long, taking into account family dynamics and the agricultural season. In these ways, participating in an ethnological exhibit had a very different meaning for Native actors than it did for East Coast Anglo-Americans celebrating their towns’ colonial histories. While white audiences and pageant performers were using history as a tool for self-expression and nationalism, a greater proportion of Native participants may have viewed the commemorations from a strictly commercial perspective. Further, while Natives were expected to perform certain stereotypical crafts and activities at these events, they could choose just how much of their culture – the aspects of their traditions and history which shaped their own identities – that they wished to share. The Cocopa, for instance, refused to perform some of the traditional ceremonies that World’s Fair organizers wished them to present.

As political and scholarly priorities changed in the 1960s and 1970s, it became increasingly socially and academically unacceptable to portray Native history from an Anglo-centric perspective. By the time of the 350th anniversary of

³³ Parezo and Troutman, 31.

³⁴ Ibid., 31, 20.

the founding of Plymouth (celebrated in 1970/1971), it was no longer possible to celebrate in the way that the tercentennial had been celebrated. The professional historical atmosphere had certainly changed, as the history of the common man and of minorities was beginning to come to the forefront. However, politics also played an important role, particularly as the American Indian Movement began its activism in the late 60s. The first “National Day of Mourning” – a Native American protest at Plymouth on Thanksgiving Day – was held in 1970. This activism on both the national and local levels was a force that the planners of historical commemorations at Plymouth could not ignore – especially with the 350th anniversary of the founding of Plymouth, an event seeking national publicity and attendance, right around the corner. The first National Day of Mourning (an annual protest that continues to this day) came at the same time that American Indian protestors were occupying Alcatraz Island, the American Indian Movement (AIM) had recently been founded (in 1968), and advocacy for Native rights was increasingly being brought to national attention. The protests at Plymouth in 1970 made it in the *New York Times*, which reported on the gathering of “about 200” participants – both Native and non-Native – who made speeches, threw sand at Plymouth Rock to symbolically cover it, and boarded the recreation of the ship *Mayflower* docked nearby.³⁵ Tellingly, the report quoted Frank James, the Wampanoag man who was a leading figure in planning the protest, as saying that “There is a difference of opinion here between the national Indians and we locals about how we should mark this day,

³⁵ “Mourning Indians Dump Sand on Plymouth Rock,” *New York Times*, 27 November 1970, 26.

but we are all agreed that we need to call the white man's attention to our problems and that we need to do it nonviolently.”³⁶ James' comment references the fact that the original plan was for a smaller protest, with “a traditional ceremony of mourning to precede the annual Pilgrim festival staged by local non-Indian residents.” However, members of the American Indian Movement, a national organization, began to make speeches and initiated the other protests that day.³⁷ Ironically, Plymouth’s residents had succeeded so well in promoting the larger significance of their local history that they became not merely a local but a national touchpoint in protests against the Anglo-centric narrative they had long promoted.

Thus, in commemorating the 350th anniversary of the founding of Plymouth, the Plymouth-Provincetown Celebration Commission had as one of its stated goals an intention to answer “the criticisms posed at the Thanksgiving Indian protests in 1969 and 1970, when it was said that the Indian role in Thanksgiving and in the Pilgrim adventure has never been given the recognition it deserved.”³⁸ To do this, the Commission turned to Helen Attaquin (president of the Descendants of the Wampanoags) as well as to “various members of the Indian Program at the Harvard University School of Education and others.” Programs planned for the commemoration, in addition to the reenactments

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ “350th Pilgrim Anniversary: Final Report of the Plymouth-Provincetown Celebration Commission. Plymouth, Massachusetts,” p. 67, Pilgrim Hall Archives, Plymouth.

discussed above, were to include “an Indian speaking forum,” an afternoon of “Indian music and folklore,” and “other projects.”³⁹

Together, the Commission, Plimoth Plantation, and the local Native communities created much more inclusive commemorations than Plymouth had previously seen, and thereby presented a vastly different view of the founding than was seen in the tercentennial. In an effort to spread information about Native American history and culture, a number of performances, lectures, and shows were scheduled to take place in 1971. As a part of the annual art show hosted by the Plymouth Area Chamber of Commerce, performers recommended by Attaquin presented songs and stories, including presentations by “Leonda, a Cherokee folk singer, and Princess Redwing of the Seven Crescents, a story teller. . . . [Redwing] told of the four Thanksgiving legends of the Indian, among others, and led the public in a circle Indian dance to the beat of her small drum.” In her storytelling, Redwing also explained that the Pilgrims’ “First Thanksgiving” was “just another harvest festival for the Indians. (The other Indian harvest festivals are the strawberry festival, the tomato festival, and the bean festival.)”⁴⁰ At a forum held in collaboration with the Museum of Science in Boston, demonstrations highlighting “Northwest and Northeast [Native American] artifacts, Indian crafts, and children’s Indian games” were presented, two movies (“Loon’s Necklace” and “Treaties Made, Treaties Broken”) were shown, the planetarium “showed skies the ‘Mayflower’ sailed by,” and “Indian-type food was

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 73-74.

served in the restaurant.”⁴¹ The Commission also contributed funds towards a powwow and Thanksgiving supper “for a gathering of about 50 Indian students connected with a Dartmouth College Student program, who planned to visit Plymouth on Thanksgiving Day.”⁴²

In addition, there were a number of historical reenactments and recreations involving – in many cases for the first time – Native Americans representing their ancestors alongside people of European descent representing the Pilgrims. Thus, as part of the celebrations at Plimoth Plantation on August 29, 1971, for example, there was a reenactment of the signing of a treaty between the settlers and the local Native Americans. At that event, the Native community was represented by such dignitaries as Earl Mills (Chief Flying Eagle of the Mashpee tribe) and Chief Great Moose Russell Gardner; during the commemoration a “joint religious service [was held,] concluding with the Lord’s Prayer recited in the Wampanoag tongue.”⁴³ According to a report on the event, the “reenactment, a simple ceremony, brought representatives of the Wampanoag community to the Pilgrim village for the first time. Remarks focused on the bond of trust forged by this action 350 years ago, which lasted 55 years and has been called the first American mutual security pact.”⁴⁴ In September of that same year, a reconstruction of the shallop “Discovery” travelled along the coast with costumed sailors (actually a crew from the Naval Academy at Annapolis) which also made a point of integrating the local Native community.

⁴¹ Ibid., 75.

⁴² Ibid., 80

⁴³ Ibid., 33.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

When the ship stopped at Barnstable, the “ceremonial heads of the Wampanoag Indians of Cape Cod, Chief Mittark Lorenzo Jeffers, Mr. Frank Hicks, Chairman of the Board of Selectmen of Mashpee, and Mr. John Peters of Mashpee,” were invited to “greet the shallop as it arrived and accept, from the crew, a quantity of corn representing reparations for the corn taken from mounds on the Cape during the first voyage of exploration of the shallop.”⁴⁵ Also in September 1971, there was a “photographic reenactment” of the “First Thanksgiving” in which the people representing the Pilgrims “were actually Pilgrim descendants; and, for the first time in history, those representing the Wampanoags were descendants of the Wampanoag Indians.”⁴⁶ Such recreations were also sponsored by members of the Native community, as occurred on “Richard Bourne Day” on August 15, 1971. Bourne had been a preacher to the Native community who had learned to speak Algonquin; at the 1971 commemoration “a delegation of costumed ‘Pilgrims’ were guests at Mashpee’s Indian Meeting House on Richard Bourne Sunday. Dr. Robert Bartlett, a scholar and published author on the Plymouth Pilgrims and an ordained minister who helped found the United Church of Christ, spoke of the friendships and the difficulties of the early Pilgrims and Indians” and “extended an invitation to members of the Meeting House to participate in the Peace Treaty reenactment” at Plimoth Plantation.⁴⁷

This is certainly not to suggest that more “traditional” perspectives and commemorations were not a part of the 350th anniversary celebrations. The

⁴⁵ Ibid., 38

⁴⁶ Ibid., 40

⁴⁷ Ibid., 69. “Robert Merrill Bartlett Papers,” Oberlin College Archives, http://www.oberlin.edu/archive/WWW_files/bartlett_b.html

bravery and religious leanings of the Plymouth Pilgrims were still emphasized, as was the importance of ties between Massachusetts, England, and Holland. Indeed, the Lord Mayor of Plymouth, England, visited during Thanksgiving week (and was interviewed by Barbara Walters on the Today Show), the “Pilgrim Progress” was again highlighted, and there were public dinners, parades (including “the best, longest, and most memorable parade in Plymouth’s history,” according to one report), dances, concerts, and religious services.⁴⁸ There was even another pageant written: “America 350,” by Charles Hull Wolfe, a musical extravaganza which purportedly was meant to rededicate the country to the ideals of the Pilgrims, including the search for truth, tolerance, respect for authority, patience, and love of God.⁴⁹ A guidebook even indicated that the tercentenary pageant, “The Pilgrim Sprit,” would be presented in a “simplified re-staging.”⁵⁰ However, these events no longer represented the only voices being heard during the commemoration of the Pilgrims’ landing.

These collaborative celebrations in 1971 are important not only because they were among the first instances of the inclusion of local Native American leaders and representatives in the commemoration of Plymouth’s history, but because they marked a turning point in the intentions of Plymouth’s official historical community (particularly Plimoth Plantation). As a report on the events indicated, the peace treaty reenactment and the Thanksgiving photo tableaux were meant not simply as a publicity stunt but as a place in which “members of

⁴⁸ 350th Pilgrim Anniversary, 94, 114.

⁴⁹ “Pilgrim 350th Anniversary Celebration: Official Program and Guide.” (Wakefield, MA: Pride Publications, 1970), 21-24.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 28

the Plantation staff and the Indian community have come together to exchange ideas for future cooperative projects that will more accurately portray the lives and relationships of the Pilgrim and Indian community.”⁵¹ And in the wake of these projects, Plimoth Plantation did indeed integrate Native voices and perspectives more firmly into its programming.

While all of these were signs of movement towards a more inclusive narrative of Plymouth’s history, they did not necessarily satisfy Native communities. The best descriptions of the events come from state commissions and non-Native organizers themselves; I have to date found no evidence revealing the perspectives of the Natives involved in these commemorations. However, the fact that the National Day of Mourning continues to this day as a protest is telling: the changes made in non-Native commemorations are far from sufficient in redressing the imbalance of perspectives in the story told. For instance, in 1973 Frank James, the Native man and Plymouth local whose activism helped spark the National Day of Mourning, made a speech at a “unity meeting” in the local Unitarian Church denouncing the “dirty racist stuff that goes on in Plymouth,” citing, for instance, a “waxed figure of Miles Standish knocking off the head of an Indian.”⁵² James later also spoke with offense and anger at the display of Indian bones which had been exhibited at the local Pilgrim Hall museum for over fifty years.⁵³ Even Helen Attaquin, who was a Native consultant in the planning of the 350th anniversary commemorations and who

⁵¹ “350th Pilgrim Anniversary” 41

⁵² Paul Deveney, “Let’s Throw Out that Pumpkin Pie, Say Indians,” *Boston Globe* 13 May 1973: 33.

⁵³ Paul Deveney, “Plymouth Museum Votes in Indian,” *Boston Globe* 29 May 1973: 7.

worked with Plimoth Plantation, “admitted that the efforts in this direction have ‘largely been unsatisfactory.’”⁵⁴

As an employee of Plimoth Planation, however, Attaquin was able to help raise the influence of its Native interpretation, especially as the organization made increasing representation of Native voices an institutional priority. Since its founding, Plimoth Plantation had a desire to tell both the Pilgrim and the Native sides of the Plymouth story. The initial thought was to “include not only replicas of Pilgrim houses and of Indian tepees [sic], but also a museum where Indian relics might be displayed.”⁵⁵ The early Indian village there was just a few “huts,” later supplemented by a “single Native ‘wigwam.’” The interaction between setters and Natives was displayed in a scene of “arranged mannequins in the Bradford house to depict the 1621 treaty between the Pilgrims and the Wampanoag Indians.”⁵⁶ However, in the light of both evolving scholarly trends towards social and minority histories and the social unrest of American Indian activism in the 1960s and 1970s, Plimoth Plantation began to shift both its leadership and its interpretive strategies. In 1973, Plimoth Plantation’s Board of Governors voted to seek out Native representation for its Board of Trustees – a move unprecedented in the organization’s history.⁵⁷ The Board also called for more local Native involvement in the museum’s Native American program. Museum Director James Deetz argued that “many of the injustices” in the

⁵⁴ Deveney, “Let’s Throw Out,” 33.

⁵⁵ Ellis Brewster to the Pilgrim Society, 3 December 1945, quoted in Jim Baker *Plimoth Plantation: Fifty Years of Living History* (Plymouth: Plimoth Plantation, 1997), 7.

⁵⁶ Baker 18-19.

⁵⁷ Deveney, “Plymouth Museum Votes,” 7.

portrayal and treatment of Native Americans “are subtle and the only way to get them out is to involve Native Americans in the program.”⁵⁸ In that same year, Plimoth Plantation opened a new “Algonquian Summer Camp” site near the English village, taking the place of the earlier “wigwam” and mannequins. In 1990 that was replaced by “Hobbamock’s Homesite,” representing a Native American farm of the period (based on the home of a particular historical figure) and staffed by Native Americans. Today’s interpretation there is of a more generic Wampanoag home site.⁵⁹ [Figure 18]

According to Darius Coombs, Associate Director of the Wampanoag Indigenous Program at Plimoth Plantation, the early years of the American Indian programming in the 1970s were conducted under the leadership of a Narragansett woman (the Narragansett are located in Rhode Island, so this was not a member of the local Native community).⁶⁰ For a number of years, this programming included a mix of Native and non-Native interpreters, though the interpretation was primarily (and still is) in the third-person (as opposed to the strictly first-person interpretation practiced in the English Village). Since 2000 the program has been completely Native-run, and features Native interpreters (in costume, but not in character) teaching not only the history of colonization but its effects on Native communities today. As Tim Turner, manager of the Wampanoag Home Site at Plimoth Plantation explains, “we actually seek

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Snow, 38; Baker np.

⁶⁰ Darius Coombs, interview by author, 22 July 2010, digital recording, Plimoth Plantation, Plymouth.

Figure 18



Native American interpreters with visitors at Plimoth Plantation's Wampanoag Home Site.
Author's photograph

[employees] from the Native communities because they can talk about Native people much more than somebody who studies a training manual. . . . We're a pretty unique program where everyone who works for our program is Native. And that's only changed in the past 10 years. It was pretty controversial beforehand because we had [something similar to] park rangers [earlier]. They were down there in their little brown khaki suits and their nametags and they were talking about Native people, and I think that's what was controversial. If you want to hear from Native people you should have obviously talked with Native

people, and changing that was a huge thing for the museum because they had to take a serious role and . . . because you can't just hire Native people; not all Native people are cut out for working in a museum and generally when you work in a museum, it's a lower paying job, it's not a high-paying job. You do it because you love it and not because you want to make a ton of money out of it. So it's actually kind of hard to find qualified people to work for a program like this but that's what makes us unique.”⁶¹ In addition, Turner reports that there are Native people working throughout the institution, from the marketing department to the craft center. Leaders in the Wampanoag program are also consulted about the appropriateness of items to be sold in the gift shop, and are even brought into the discussion on environmental changes to the site, in deference to their cultural beliefs. Turner cited an example in which a new pathway needed to be built. Museum leadership was sensitive to Native beliefs and concerns regarding the land. “For Native people,” Turner explains, “our trees, trees are like our brothers and sisters and so, one of our directors came to me today and said, listen, they’re starting to mark what trees that are going. Please tell us which ones are terribly important and we’ll also go out there and we’ll do a ceremony before they take down all those trees.”⁶²

By putting the Wampanoag programming into the hands of employees drawn from the local Wampanoag communities, Plimoth Plantation has allowed them to shape the way their own story is told. For example, Turner reports that

⁶¹ Tim Turner, interview by author, 28 July 2010, digital recording, Plimoth Plantation, Plymouth.

⁶² Ibid.

at the Wampanoag Home Site, Native religious ceremonies are not recreated or discussed, as that is considered a private, personal matter for the tribe, not something broadly discussed with outsiders.⁶³ Similarly, the Wampanoag community has been given a say in the use of their language on site. According to Turner, before they used the language in their orientation film they “had to get approval from the language committee . . . and anyone who is associated with the language or studying the language is a part of the committee, and they all collectively, not like 90 percent of them, not 99 percent, all of them had to vote to allow it to happen, to have it in our orientation film. And if one person said no, we wouldn’t have had it in our orientation film.”⁶⁴ Plimoth Plantation also invites its Native program to offer their unique perspectives and insights on historical sources. Coombs gives the example of English colonists seeing many women living in a house with Massasoit and assuming, by their cultural living standards, that they must all be his wives. Coombs explains that in the traditional Native housing, many generations of a family would have lived together; what the setters saw were more likely a wife, aunts, and sisters.⁶⁵

These changes in interpretation have, in turn, had an effect on the way that Plimoth Plantation is perceived by visitors. As Turner commented in 2010, “if we polled visitors say, 10 or 15 years ago and we asked them why they came to Plimoth Plantation, I’d say a good 75, 80 percent of them would have said: ‘we’ve come to see the Pilgrims.’ I think that number has changed drastically

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Coombs

from that 80 percent to maybe 55 percent. And the other 45 would be to learn about Native people, which is a huge change in that amount of time and that has a lot due to our dedicated staff and the museum who has become very dedicated to our program.”⁶⁶ The Native interpreters on site help visitors to realign their perceptions of Native history – and help the program to address preconceptions about who the local Native tribes were and how they were affected by colonization. As Coombs remarks, many people “believe what they see on TV, and what they put on TV is buffalo, horseback, plains . . . a lot of people don’t believe any of the people east of the Mississippi are still living. But we’re still here – it’s not a large number of us still here – for us as Wampanoag population, there is probably about 5,000 [based in Mashpee on Cape Cod and in Plymouth] compared to what was before . . . which is looking at over 100,000.”⁶⁷

Having interpreters of Native descent on site also offers a personal perspective to visitors dealing with difficult historical issues, such as the treatment of Native Americans in the colonial era. As Turner explains, “that can be sometimes hard to hear for our visitors, because they very much romanticize the Pilgrims, and [to] hear that there were Pilgrims who killed Natives and there were Pilgrims that took land, mistreated Native people, trying to convert Native people, took Native people as slaves. That slavery thing doesn't always go . . . over well with people because they're like, ‘our ancestors never took slaves.’ And we're like, ‘no, no, they've been taking slaves since the early 1600s.’”⁶⁸

⁶⁶ Turner

⁶⁷ Coombs

⁶⁸ Turner

In addition, the program engages in outreach activities, such as a public canoeing event in which community members were invited to bring their boats and row down the Eel River alongside Natives in a historic canoe. As Turner explains, what this initiative “really did for the people who were involved in that event was to get to know Native people on a different level. So they weren’t asking questions the whole time about how you make those canoes or, how long did it take. The questions were much different and . . . people really today, want to know more about Native people.”⁶⁹ In this way the Native American programming at Plimoth seeks to educate the public not only in historical relations between the Wampanoag and non-Natives, it seeks to break down the divide on a personal level and help visitors to see Native Americans as contemporary human beings rather than exhibits in a museum.

The Plimoth Plantation site also has the unique advantage among the historical sites discussed in this study of being on land with a strong geographical connection to the Wampanoag community. As Turner notes, the site “is registered with the State of Massachusetts as an . . . active archaeological site. We found in the spring after we waited till the frost comes up from the ground after a good rain, you could easily be walking out in our garden and find several arrow points at any time. I found a stone whole blade, hammer stones, hundreds of arrow heads.”⁷⁰ While perhaps not obvious to visitors, it does give the site a grounding for both interpreters and the public, as Natives are discussing their

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

history on the very land on which their ancestors once hunted and worked, activities manifest by ongoing archaeological finds.

That is not to say that the program at Plimoth is uncontroversial. As Turner notes, some members of the Native community welcome the collaboration, while others feel that there should be no connection between the two. However, Turner anecdotally notes that between 300-400 members of the Native community generally attend when an annual community social event is held in February.⁷¹ In addition, because Native interpretation at Plimoth Plantation is ultimately presented in the context of the Pilgrim story, it is problematic in its presentation of a Native-centric historical narrative. As Coombs explains, Plimoth Plantation is centered on 1620 and the early years of the Pilgrims' settlement. However, this focus neglects a vital turning point in the history of the local Native community: an epidemic that passed through the community in 1618, before the arrival of the settlers, wiping out "over 70 percent of the Wampanoag leaders, of the Wampanoag people period . . . you're looking at leaders gone, you're looking at medicine people gone, councilmen" – important and drastic changes in the community which are passed over because of the focus on a Eurocentric timeline.⁷²

It is more difficult to discuss changes in Native interpretation at Salem. As tourist attractions have turned firmly away from the early years of settlement towards the sensational witch trials, less and less is said of the local Native communities. However, Pioneer Village does now actively include Native

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Coombs

Americans in their (albeit limited) programming, including periodic “Native American Days.” One such day in 2008 featured members of the Massachusetts Ponkapoag Tribal Council “discussing [the] history, lifestyle, tools and trades of Native Naumkeag” and a lecture by “Feather on the Moon, Sachem of the Massachusetts Ponkapoag Tribal Council . . . on Massachuseuk or Massachusett life here when it was Naumkeag.”⁷³ The site does also contain a small example of Native housing. Beyond these limited events welcoming visiting Native interpreters onsite, not much can be said for the progress of Native voices in Salem.

However, in recent years Salem *has* been used in limited ways by outsiders to legitimate a more Native-centric narrative of colonial history. Scenes representing the “First Thanksgiving” in the PBS television series “We Shall Remain” (described as “an ambitious attempt to see American history through the eyes of Native Americans”) were filmed at Pioneer Village in Salem, returning this living history museum to its original purpose as a stage set.⁷⁴ Other scenes for the series filmed locally included hunting on Plum Island and a scene in which “Massasoit’s son, known to the English settlers as King Phillip, is called to defend himself against reports he is amassing arms,” filmed at the Rebecca Nurse Homestead in nearby Danvers.⁷⁵ Salem is not important here because it is Salem, home to a significant history of its own. It is important because early 20th

⁷³ John Goff, “Saturday is Native American Day at Pioneer Village,” *Salem Gazette*, 26 September 2008, 4.

⁷⁴ Tom Dalton, “Locally filmed PBS-TV series debuts tonight,” *Salem News*, 13 April 2009, 1.

⁷⁵ Ibid, 8.

century commemorations built a landscape portraying early settlement, and a shortage of modern tourist interest in these sites has left them relatively undeveloped since then. They therefore form ideal film sets to stand in for Plymouth in particular and “colonial New England” in general. Because Salem had limited success in promoting its non-witch heritage, the “believable” but relatively unpopulated historical environment there can lend “authenticity” to filmmakers’ narratives about Native history.

In contrast to Salem, interpretation at Williamsburg has followed in the path blazed by Plimoth Plantation’s Wampanoag program. As scholarly trends turned in the direction of the “new social history,” and as women’s and minority histories came more to the forefront, Williamsburg’s interpretation initially focused more on the integration of African-American stories – an obvious choice, given the demographics of eighteenth-century Williamsburg. (This programming and its development has been discussed at length by other authors, including Rex Ellis, Richard Handler and Eric Gable, Anders Greenspan, and Erin Krutko Devlin.)⁷⁶ However, there would most certainly have been Native Americans in Williamsburg at the time of the Revolution, and their voices are increasingly being heard in Williamsburg’s programming. Williamsburg’s location (as a city and colonial capitol) and the time period represented there (generally the 1770s,

⁷⁶ See Richard Handler & Eric Gable, *The New History in an Old Museum* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997); Anders Greenspan, *Creating Colonial Williamsburg* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2002); Erin Devlin Krutko, “Colonial Williamsburg’s slave auction re-enactment: controversy, African American history and public memory” (Ph.D. diss., College of William and Mary, 2003); Anna Logan Lawson, “The other half”: making African-American history at Colonial Williamsburg” (Ph.D. diss., University of Virginia, 1995); Rex Ellis, “Presenting the past: education, interpretation and the teaching of Black history at Colonial Williamsburg” (Ed.D. thesis, College of William and Mary, 1989).

long after the days of Pocahontas, and a time when the most famous encounters with Natives in Virginia were occurring far to the west) provide a number of challenges to the development of Native interpretation in Williamsburg. For one thing, as Buck Woodard, manager of Colonial Williamsburg's American Indian Initiative (AI) has explained, many of the Natives walking around Williamsburg in 1775 would have been dressed much like any other colonist, so it is difficult to develop a way to put Native interpreters on the street that marks them as what they are meant to be without being historically inaccurate. Williamsburg of the 1770s also poses a challenge for the development of Native interpretation because there is no particular place or building in the city with a strong historical link to Native history. (The closest example might be the Brafferton building; once an Indian school, it is now the offices of the Provost and President of the College of William and Mary.) Despite these challenges, however, Colonial Williamsburg has been gradually building up its Native programming and its corps of Native costumed interpreters, working in collaboration with Native groups both locally and regionally to develop its programming.

When the Foundation decided to wholeheartedly pursue a Native program, they sought advice from a number of sources, consulting with the Council on Indians, various tribal leaders from local and regional groups (particularly the Eastern Cherokee), the American Indian Resource Center at the College of William and Mary, Native programming professionals at the Park Service, and also speaking with leaders of the Wampanoag program at Plimoth Plantation. Building upon this, they enhanced their programming by sponsoring

lectures, involving Native actors in educational “electronic field trips,” and welcoming representatives of the Cherokee for special weekends of demonstrations and dancing, ensuring that visitors to the city (at the right time of year: programming emphasizing Native American interpretation is particularly heavy in June and October/November) could gain the occasional glimpse into Native life in Virginia at the time of the Revolution. At the same time, the All continued working to build connections with Native groups and historical bodies, especially the Museum of the Cherokee Indian in North Carolina and the performing group “The Warriors of Ani Kituhwa.” Interpreters occasionally presented programming dealing with Cherokee political hostages in Williamsburg, and a dramatic piece, “Beloved Women,” was developed to feature visiting “guest artists” including nationally-renowned Native American actors including Wes Studi and Irene Bedard.

While a dramatic expansion of Williamsburg’s portrayal of Native history, these temporary and periodic programs would be little more than Salem’s programming done on a larger scale had Williamsburg not found a way to bring Native interpretation onto its streets on a daily basis – an initiative just coming to life in the last few years. While they still have no particular place to call “home” in the historic area, there are now several actor-interpreters on staff representing Native historical figures on a daily basis, meeting visitors in the coffeehouse, on the street, and in special programs, and leading themed tours in the historic area.⁷⁷

⁷⁷ From around 2010-2015, Colonial Williamsburg had a contract to provide public history programming at Preservation Virginia’s Historic Jamestowne, which included some similar

Unlike Native interpreters at Plimoth Plantation, Colonial Williamsburg's interpreters perform in first-person (though they are occasionally able to break character). Their training is based on information from both the mainstream academic community and on collaboration with representatives from Native communities. The first two full-time Native actor-interpreters on staff are Kody Grant, whose primary character is Charles Murphy, a half-Irish, half-Cherokee man who worked as a translator for the governor of the colony, and Warren Taylor, who primarily portrays Robert Marsh, a Pamunkey man who had attended the Brufferton School and who regularly visited town for trade. While these men generally portray (real historical) characters from the same group that they are descended from, they also occasionally interpret as members of other groups, such as the Shawnee. However, as Grant pointed out, they are "working closely with the Absentee Shawnee to make sure that they feel comfortable with the way that we're portraying them."⁷⁸

The programming in general is developed by Colonial Williamsburg's historical staff, but in collaboration with Native communities and museums, which All program director Woodard actively seeks out and visits. Grant describes these visits as diplomatic missions "because you're going into a Native community saying 'this is the type of work that we're doing. What do you think

programming on a much smaller scale (Buck Woodard, interview by author, 31 January 2013, digital recording, Colonial Williamsburg, Williamsburg). The life of the Powhatan Indians of Virginia is also represented at the state-run "Jamestown Settlement," which has been open since 1957. Interpreters there are in costume, but there is no emphasis on hiring interpreters of Native descent and interpretation is done in the third person. However, all interpretation at Historic Jamestowne and Jamestown Settlement is focused on life around 1607, as opposed to the Revolutionary Era portrayed in Williamsburg, which is the focus of my work.

⁷⁸ Kody Grant and Warren Taylor, interview by author, 29 May 2015, digital recording, Colonial Williamsburg, Williamsburg.

about this type of work? Is this the type of thing that you'd like to do? Is this the type of avenue you'd like to go to tell your story?' And then . . . there's always that apprehension of 'well, I don't know what you're trying to get out of me. I don't know how this is entirely working.' So, and then it's . . . trying to play diplomat or ambassador to these various different communities to get them to come tell their stories."⁷⁹ The interpreters' training is firmly founded in the historical and cultural information gathered in primary sources and on community visits, but is supplemented with their own cultural knowledge and the oral traditions passed down through their communities. In this way, as Taylor comments, the information is not just "stuff that's coming out of a book that some . . . white guy wrote about an Indian tribe," but is informed by Native perspectives, historians, and traditions. Colonial Williamsburg's approach is, as Woodard describes it, a "happy medium of people who are experienced in the material as well as from the communities that we're trying to coordinate and represent and collaborate with."⁸⁰

As at Plimoth Plantation, the interpreters at Williamsburg are able to put a personal face on Native history. Both Taylor and Grant have described the surprise of many visitors on encountering Native interpretation in Williamsburg. As Grant explains, "it's always an astonishment when they get here and they first start talking with us because they didn't know. . . . they come expecting to talk to Patrick Henry or Thomas Jefferson, the 'enslaved' interpreters and things like that. . . . just the same as telling the story of the enslaved people can be a very

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Woodard

soft spot for a lot of people, telling the indigenous story can be a very soft spot because you're not talking about a lot of nice things at times."⁸¹ They relate many instances of visitor interactions resulting in long conversations about Native American history that would not have happened without an understanding, face-to-face encounter.

We see, then, that at the sites where reenactment has thrived, political pressure and trends in professional academic history have slowly brought Native American history into greater prominence and, importantly, have given Natives themselves more opportunities to shape the narratives that represent their ancestors. However, these changes have not been without their challenges for the Native interpreters bringing their history to light. As Darius Coombs of Plimoth Plantation explains, "people know about Native people through the TV, you know, horseback, plains, and the old movies and the cartoons and making war whooping and slapping your mouth and going around saying 'how.' At one time back—well it was going on for a long time until I think 2002-2003 – that we had visitors coming into the site and doing this on a daily, daily, every day, 'wa-wa-wa-wa' all the time. . . . I believe the museum stated to us, 'well you guys are educators, you guys are down there so you guys gotta educate them, correct them.' And that's fine and dandy, you can do that – but when you've got this going on every single day that's a mental beating, you know. And we stood up and said 'this is the museum's responsibility to protect us,' which it is, and so they asked 'well, how could we do that?' So we developed . . . a lot of signs

⁸¹ Grant and Taylor

around the museum, a lot of literature. We developed one sign for both our side entrances into [the] Home Site about stereotypes . . . [reading] please don't war whoop, this is why; please don't say 'how,' this is why; you know. Do not go by the stereotype; please don't ask . . . what's the percentage of blood in you, 'cause that's insulting. Since we put those signs up in 2003, those war whooping, slapping their mouths has gone down 90 percent. But [it was] not just kids but also adults were doing this.⁸² [Figure 19] Grant and Taylor report similar incidents happening in recent years at Williamsburg, with visitors chanting a singsong "hi, how are ya; hi, how are ya" and questioning them for not looking "Indian" enough.⁸³ Woodard explains that these incidents don't necessarily happen all the time, but "they're cumulative. You can only hear about certain stereotypes every day for so often before it becomes a personal sort of weight one carries around."⁸⁴

There are also, of course, challenges in coming to some sort of agreement between professionalized history and Native views of their past, often inflected by oral history (distrusted in some quarters) and tradition.⁸⁵ As Woodard has remarked, at times when Native communities meet with scholarly institutions,

⁸² Coombs

⁸³ Grant and Taylor

⁸⁴ Woodard

⁸⁵ Oral histories have been particularly problematic in both Native histories and Anglo-centric celebrations of the past. As Denise Meringolo explains in her study of the professionalization of public history, academic historians have long been wary of oral and family histories, preferring "scientific" methods and archival research to the biases of family affection and memory (85). However, while both whites and non-whites continue to use – and value, as Rosenzweig and Thelen have shown – these more personal histories in understanding the past, the archival sources given precedence by academic historians privilege a Euro-centric view of the colonial period, if only because of the greater abundance of material available.

Figure 19



A sign posted at each entrance to Plimoth Plantation's Wampanoag Home Site. Author's photograph

they “brought what they considered to be traditional, but that wasn’t necessarily historical. Traditions change over time.”⁸⁶ This creates the challenge of presenting a history that is as accurate as possible, balancing the perspectives of both white and non-white participants, while understanding that the past is always seen through a distorting glass of biases and misperceptions from both the European *and* Native viewpoints.

The path that Native interpretation has taken in Plymouth, Salem, and Williamsburg, has been long and winding. While the presence of Natives in the early years of colonization has never been wholly ignored, early portrayals were almost universally dictated by non-Natives, with generally romanticized or caricatured Indians. It has only been in the later part of the twentieth century, prompted not only by shifts in professional historical trends but by actual political activism on the part of Native Americans, that Native history – from a Native perspective and presented by Native interpreters – has gained a real foothold. Even in the situations where it has thrived, it has been most successful in well-established institutions (such as Plimoth Plantation and Colonial Williamsburg) with the scholarly credentials to produce Native-centric historical narratives that meet the standards of authenticity valued by professional historians and with the financial ability to hire new workers, build new facilities, and send employees out on community-building and information-gathering missions. However, the future looks promising for the growth, longevity, popularity, and influence of these

⁸⁶ Ibid.

endeavors, as Plimoth maintains a good reputation for its Wampanoag program and Williamsburg is actively building and expanding its American Indian Initiative.

Past and Present, Living Together

Walking down the main street running through Colonial Williamsburg, as I did on my first visit in 2005, it seems impossible to believe that at the turn of the 20th century this thoroughfare was rutted and muddy, lined with a motley assortment of increasingly-dilapidated 18th century structures, 19th century homes and businesses, and various then-modern services, stores, and homes. But the striking contrast between the town of Williamsburg before its Restoration and the bustling tourist attraction that exists in the early 21st century is a useful reminder that today's living history institutions were not an inevitable outgrowth of any town with historical importance. It took, as we have seen, a specific set of social, economic, historical, and demographic forces to shape and build up these structures. Further, the differing circumstances and attitudes held by a town's citizens would determine just how accepting they would be of historical commemorations, and how involved they would be in shaping such institutions in their communities.

It's also important to remember that the "local" was never monolithic. Williamsburg again offers a good example, as we recall the sometimes-angry divisions in the town during the removal of the Confederate monument from Palace Green. In addition – because they were more often in charge of planning and their voices survive in guidebooks, reports, and other such documentation – the "local" voice we often hear in early historical commemorations is the voice of a white upper and middle class, often with longstanding ties to the region and a vested stake in celebrating the "Great White Men" who played a role as

“Founding Fathers” of the nation and of particular towns. But as early as the turn of the 20th century, demographics were changing in these communities as an industrial economy (particularly in Plymouth and Salem) demanded workers and immigrants filled the need for inexpensive labor. We know that these immigrants were involved as participants in some of the early pageants, as we saw, for instance, in Mrs. Hall’s lecture on the Plimoth “Pilgrim Spirit” program in the 1920s. But did the pageantry really do “valuable Americanization work,” as Hall argued, or did it serve as a reminder of their differences?¹ Similarly, as I discussed in chapter four, the voices and perspectives of Native Americans living in and around a community were seldom incorporated in early pageantry, though, since the 1970s, they have increasingly been included in the planning and programming of historical observances in Plymouth and Williamsburg.

As we move into the 21st century, Plymouth and Salem are now approaching their 400th anniversaries. How will their quadricentennial celebrations differ from their tercentennials, and what is the future of living history commemorations in the 21st century? Without knowing the myriad factors that will influence these towns and their development in the upcoming decades, it’s hard to answer the second part of that question, but current trends in historical commemoration offer possible clues. More concretely, Plymouth is already planning for its anniversary celebrations in 2020, and details are already being publicized for eager tourists and locals alike.

¹ Hall, p. 5

In many ways, Plymouth's upcoming celebrations echo the 1970-71 festivities, with museum exhibits ("Our Story: A Wampanoag History Exhibit" opened in 2014 and "will travel regionally and expand each year leading up to 2020," while a "nationwide travelling exhibit" entitled "Plymouth 1620-2020" is set to open in 2016), international publicity, and on-site celebrations to be held in the summer of 2020.² It is, as yet, unclear to what degree the sort of pageantry and theater featured in earlier events will play a role, though organizers promise music, "choreographed movement, original productions, and visual narratives."³ It appears that the local indigenous community will be given more of an outlet to share their own culture and history through Wampanoag Days, in which the "people, culture, food, and traditions of the Wampanoag and other indigenous Nations from across the country will come to life in a variety of stage performances, special recognitions and festive presentations of traditional music, regalia, dance, visual art, craftsmanship, and spoken word." While on first reading this sounds little different from the often-exploitative exhibitions of Native culture a hundred years past, organizers promise more local involvement in 2020, as "over the course of two days this cultural event will feature the historical and contemporary contributions of the Wampanoag and other Native Nations,

² "Our Story: A Wampanoag History Exhibit," Plymouth 400, <http://www.plymouth400inc.org/events/our-story-wampanoag-history-exhibit>; "Plymouth 1620-2020," Plymouth 400, <http://www.plymouth400inc.org/events/plymouth-1620-%E2%80%93-2020>

³ "Plymouth 400 Opening Ceremony," Plymouth 400, <http://www.plymouth400inc.org/events/plymouth-400-opening-ceremony>

who not only have survived through many years of disruption but also have sustained their ancient customs and connections to traditional homelands.”⁴

New media and an increasingly diverse audience have paved the way for new forms of commemoration as well. “Plymouth Rocks 400,” an “International Educational Web-Cast for Elementary Age Students” is planned for October 2020. This is billed as an “interactive multi-media webcast featuring the legacies of exploration, innovation, self-governance, religious freedom, and thanksgiving, and the events that significantly shaped the building of America,” which will be “pre-taped live for TV and available for immediate web distribution to millions of students and be available on going as a resource for educators. Location segments may include Plimoth Plantation, Pilgrim Hall, Mayflower II, Plymouth England, The Netherlands, and significant Wampanoag locations.” In addition, organizers promise that in “the year leading up to the event on-line tools, creative student engagement, and educational resources will be available to support the Standards of Learning (SOLs) for grades 3-5.”⁵

This “webcast” points toward some new directions in historical memory and commemoration which the internet age has made possible. As we have seen, major historical institutions today actively engage with the public through websites, blogs, social media, webcasts, and interactive television broadcasts (such as Colonial Williamsburg’s “electronic field trip” program, which combines taped pieces with live segments in which students from around the country can

⁴ “Wampanoag Days,” Plymouth 400, <http://www.plymouth400inc.org/events/wampanoag-days>

⁵ “Plymouth Rocks 400,” Plymouth 400, <http://www.plymouth400inc.org/events/plymouth-rocks-400>

call in with questions to be answered on air by interpreters and historians). In these ways, living history museums are seeking to bring a broad range of visitors more deeply into the historical narrative. Alison Landsberg describes the phenomenon they're building upon as the creation of "transferential spaces" through mass media. Landsberg argues that "technologies of mass culture" such as film, television, and the internet "have been called on to play a new and important role in circulating images and narratives about the past."⁶ Various forms of mass media have significantly changed the way in which historical memory is transmitted, she continues, because they make "group-specific cultural memories available to a diverse and varied populace."⁷ Today's living history institutions take advantage of this very power as they use interactive computer games, immersive movies, and other forms of digital outreach not only in the spread of knowledge but "the production of 'feeling'" about the past.⁸ Seeing colonial life through the eyes of a slave, reading blogs about modern Native American struggles and successes, and helping visitors connect with the emotional meaning of historical triumphs and injustices through dramatic performances all connect diverse audiences with the past, creating personal and powerful memories.

Innovations in the digital age are also important as our newly connected culture allows non-professionals to share information, celebrate and commemorate historical events, and offer their own interpretations of history.

⁶ Landsberg, 11.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid., 113.

Anyone with initiative, basic technical skills, and a few dollars for a domain name and web hosting can set up a website on any historical subject imaginable. The web authors might not have the authority and legitimization that comes with professional historical accreditation, but depending on their design savvy and writing style, that may or may not be obvious. Further, museums today are reaching out to amateur historical fans through blogs, soliciting comments and conversations. For example, Colonial Williamsburg's *Making History* blog features daily posts (almost all of which generate user comments), and their Facebook page has more than 146,000 followers. The growth of the internet, email listservs, and online "groups" also facilitates the sharing of research and planning of events for hobbyist reenactors.⁹ Through these means, there has been a resurgence of "nonprofessional" voices and alternate, community-driven stories in historical remembrance and commemoration.

While these technologies are exciting new avenues for sharing and commemorating history on their own merit, they're also important to institutions like Colonial Williamsburg and Plimoth Plantation, who hope that their novelty and sophistication will appeal to modern audiences. Historical tourism has been on the decline at these sites for some time. Williamsburg's highest visitation

⁹ There is an extensive literature on the subject of (amateur) historical reenactment. Jay Anderson's *Time Machines* is foundational in providing a history of both professional and hobbyist reenacting. Jenny Thompson's *War Games* provides another model for the study of reenacting, as she gives a participant-observer's perspective and offers her analysis of the place of reenacting in late twentieth-century American life. While Thompson shows the human side of reenactment and the identity-forming role it plays, Tony Horowitz emphasizes the outlandish side of reenacting and historic memorialization in his *Confederates in the Attic*; both authors discuss the role of authenticity in the hobby. Less well documented is the civilian side of reenacting, though Katherine Jackson addresses this division within the hobby itself in her dissertation on Civil War reenacting.

rates came in the 1970s and 1980s; by the mid-1990s tourism onsite was in decline.¹⁰ Numbers have continued to drop into the early years of the 21st century; by 2012 attendance hit a “40-year low.”¹¹ Similarly, Plimoth Plantation has seen a decline in visitation in recent decades. Between 2001 and 2003, a “large drop in visitors” forced the layoff of around 24 employees at that site.¹² No one seems clear on the reasons for the downward trend. As the *Boston Globe* reports, “The familiar litany of mushrooming interests that are transforming 21st-century society is invoked by museum directors as a prime culprit in waning popularity. Widespread computer literacy among adolescents and young adults, less family time, the spreading popularity of youth sports, and an attraction to glitzier recreational alternatives are cited as reasons why potential customers choose something other than taking a leisurely stroll through history.”¹³ Others blame “decreased emphasis on history in schools and shorter attention spans in an electronic-media age.”¹⁴ Whatever the cause, living history museums and the local economies that depend upon the tourists they bring to town are eager to reverse the trend and find new ways to attract visitors.

One controversial method being employed at Colonial Williamsburg in the quest for increased visitation is the implementation of programming which is only

¹⁰ Brown and DeSamper, 225; “Visits to Colonial Williamsburg Decline,” *Greensboro News and Record* 17 September 2003, http://www.greensboro.com/visits-to-colonial-williamsburg-decline/article_a5ed6c01-5a32-5fd5-b019-65a2f7ef011c.html.

¹¹ “Paid Attendance Dips 3% at Colonial Williamsburg,” *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 7 February 2013, http://www.newsadvance.com/work_it_lynchburg/news/paid-attendance-dips-at-colonial-williamsburg/article_3975778c-7120-11e2-914e-001a4bcf6878.html

¹² Brian MacQuarrie, “‘Living History’ Falls on Hard Times,” *Boston Globe* 2 November 2003, B1.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Michael Z. Wise, “Colonial Williamsburg’s New Reenactments,” *Travel & Leisure*, <http://www.travelandleisure.com/articles/colonial-williamsburgs-new-reenactments>.

tangentially historical. Recent examples include a Halloween event called “Haunting on DoG Street: Blackbeard’s Revenge” and a wintertime skating rink called “Liberty’s Ice Pavilion.” While the Halloween event did include some historical information about Blackbeard’s crew – some of whom were imprisoned and tried in Williamsburg – main features of the weekend were trick-or-treating, games and contests, and scary thrills led by interpreters costumed as “zombies,” all to a decidedly modern amplified soundtrack. The opening of the ice skating rink was accompanied by a blog post about skating in the colonial era, but there was no interpretive or educational material surrounding the rink itself.¹⁵ In a similar vein, Plimoth Plantation offers movie screenings and dramatic productions at its visitor center to entice tourists who might not otherwise be interested in visiting.

These developments have angered some patrons who argue that activities such as trick or treating and ice skating move historical sites away from their primary mission and “devalue” or delegitimize the historical story being told (bringing us back to Meringolo’s argument about the lack of respect for historians working for commercial endeavors). The sensitivity around such ahistorical ventures is highlighted by the public response to an April Fool’s Day blog post created by Colonial Williamsburg in 2016. As a prank, Colonial Williamsburg posted that they would soon be introducing a new interpreter portraying a “Young Abe Lincoln.” More than two hundred Facebook users commented, alongside more than thirty responses on the blog post itself. Many were appreciative of the

¹⁵ Bill Sullivan, “Ice Skating Comes to DOG Street,” *Making History* 13 November 2015, <http://makinghistorynow.com/2015/11/ice-skating-comes-to-dog-street/>

April Fool's humor, but other angry readers directly related it to recent "misguided" moves on Colonial Williamsburg's part. "I agree with the posters who have commented on recent and unwelcome changes," reader Dorothy Bell commented. "Chief among them for me was 'trick or treating' in the Historic Area – how is that supported by 18c documentation?" Similarly, disgruntled poster Pam Rapp wrote "WHY?!?!?! You are diluting the experience and your message to the point where it will be a mixed up, unfocused mess. . . . This decision is back in line with the ice skating rink on DoG St. If people want to visit a theme park, they would be much happier going on a few miles to Busch Gardens Old Country. You are diluting your niche, your brand."¹⁶

Ice skating and trick or treating are indeed more entertainment than education, but an important aspect is being missed by the critics of these programs. These are activities which appeal to a general public and which are particularly accessible to members of the local community. Certainly, tourist children were welcome to register for the Halloween programs, and out-of-town families could rent skates and enjoy the rink. But these opportunities were also significant events in inviting people living in and around Williamsburg back into the historic area for fun and socialization. The town's main street, which has been increasingly privatized since the beginning of the Restoration in the 1920s, once more welcomed Williamsburg's residents and became a venue for community togetherness.

¹⁶ J. A. Lyon, "April Fool's! Young Abraham Lincoln Joins Colonial Williamsburg," *Making History* 1 April 2016, <http://makinghistorynow.com/2016/04/young-abraham-lincoln-joins-colonial-williamsburg/>

While these activities obviously do not appeal to all audiences, they do bring this study full circle. As I have shown, historical commemorations at the turn of the twentieth century in the towns of Plymouth, Williamsburg, and Salem were primarily community-based affairs, responding to local needs, reflecting local history, and shaping local identities. Driven by social and demographic change, shifting economies, and changes in local needs and priorities, over the course of the 20th century these community-led commemorations were largely overshadowed by institutions (or by entrepreneurial “tourist traps,” in the case of Salem). In many cases this development has changed the stories told at these historic locations, and in significant ways, these institutions have shifted the economies and dynamics of the towns themselves. This is particularly important when we consider the role of our communities and the stories we tell about them in defining our own identities. As we look to the future, more change is on the horizon, especially as museums and tourist attractions fight to draw in new tourist dollars. However, with new technologies and new innovations in historic area programming, the 21st century may well begin to see a shift back to some of the grassroots and non-professional commemoration that marked the turn of the 20th century.

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