

2017

# Guide to the Commission on the Bicentennial of the Constitution records

Commission on the Bicentennial of the Constitution

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## Guide to the Commission on the Bicentennial of the Constitution records

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### Overview of the Collection

**Creator:** Commission on the Bicentennial of the Constitution

**Creator:** Siegan, Bernard H.

**Title:** Commission on the Bicentennial of the Constitution records

**Dates:** 1984-1988

**Quantity:** 3 boxes (3 linear feet)

**Summary:** The Commission on the Bicentennial of the Constitution (the Commission), consisting of 23 members appointed by President Ronald Reagan, was charged with promoting and coordinating activities to commemorate the 200 year anniversary of the Constitution. This collection documents the work of the Commission, as well as activities planned by state and local organizations for the Bicentennial. These records consist of the meeting materials, planning documents, and publications generated by the Commission, as well as materials highlighting events that took place throughout the United States.

**Identification:** USDSC\_2008\_001

**Language:** English

**Repository:** [University of San Diego, Archives and Special Collections](#)

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### Historical Note

The Commission on the Bicentennial of the Constitution was created by an Act of Congress (Public Law 98-101) in September 1983 in order to promote and

coordinate the commemoration of the 200 year anniversary of the Constitution. In 1985, President Ronald Reagan appointed the Commission's 23 members. Chief Justice Warren E. Burger, who resigned from the Supreme Court in 1986 to focus his attention on the Commission, served as the Chairman. Commission members included historians, professors, judges, and businesspeople. Among the appointed members was Bernard H. Siegan, Professor of Law and Director of Law and Economics Studies at the University of San Diego School of Law. At the time, Siegan was the author of seven books including *Economic Liberties and the Constitution*. Prior to his appointment, he served on President Ronald Reagan's Task Force on Housing (1980-1981) and Commission on Housing (1981-1982), and served as a consultant to the Federal Trade Commission.

The first meeting of the Commission took place in Washington D.C. on July 29th and 30th, 1985. In this meeting, the Commission began to set plans for coordinating the Bicentennial. Given the delay between the 1983 Act and the first meeting in 1985, the Commission relied heavily on encouraging state and local organizations to plan events. One of the Commission's tasks, therefore, was to coordinate promotion of these state and local events in order to bring them all under an umbrella of national celebration. To do this, they vetted the state and local proposals for those they wished to promote. The Commission also coordinated a number of national activities including essay contests, funded grants for an array of educational projects, and supported a number of television series featuring historic events. Additionally, the Commission coordinated the creation of a Bicentennial logo, commemorative postage stamps and commemorative medals.

The Bicentennial was initially slated to be a three year commemoration, with each year representing a theme: 1987 "Framing the Constitution"; 1988 "Ratifying the Constitution: The People Consent"; and 1989 "Establishing a Government under the Constitution." The Bicentennial expanded to encompass more than a three year celebration with commemorative publications coming out in 1985. Disney World collaborated with the Commission on a joint celebration in October 1986 to celebrate Disney World's 15th anniversary and to generate interest in the Bicentennial. The Commission appointment was later extended by Congress to December 31, 1991 in order to include the addition of the Bill of Rights to the Constitution in the celebrations. Nationwide, more than 1,000 Bicentennial programs occurred through the six year period.

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## Scope and Content Note

This collection documents the work done by the Commission on the Bicentennial of the Constitution, as well as local and state agencies to commemorate the 200 year anniversary of the Constitution. The bulk of this collection consists of the meeting materials and planning documents generated by the Commission. Meeting materials include the agendas and minutes of meetings as well as documentation of administrative matters such as budget materials. Meeting materials document discussions about which activities and events would best commemorate the Bicentennial as well as information about the American Revolution Bicentennial

which took place in 1976. The Commission used the 1976 celebration as an initial guide in their planning. These records also include memos and reports from local and state organizations sharing how they planned to celebrate the Bicentennial and hoping to receive promotional support from the Commission. Reports and newsletters distributed by the Commission, calendars of local events, and newspaper articles referencing community reaction to the commission's work are also included.

Among the local projects highlighted in this collection are the "We the People 200" celebration in Philadelphia, exhibits and events held at the Library of Congress, publications by Project '87, and *The Mini Page* publication which featured a series of Constitution themed newsletters for children.

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

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## **Arrangement**

This collection is arranged into three series:

[Series I. Meeting Materials](#)

[Series II. Informational Records](#)

[Series III. Publications](#)

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## **Restrictions**

This collection is open for research.

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## **Related Material**

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

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## **Index Terms**

This collection is indexed under the following headings in the online catalog. Researchers desiring materials about related topics, persons, or places should search the catalog using these headings.

Burger, Warren E., 1907-1995  
Debnam, Betty  
Hughes, Author E.  
Kennedy, Edward M. (Edward Moore), 1932-2009  
Schlafly, Phyllis  
Siegman, Bernard H.  
American Historical Association  
American Political Science Association  
Commission on the Bicentennial of the United States Constitution  
Project '87  
University of San Diego  
We the People 200, Inc.  
Annapolis (Md.)  
Philadelphia (Pa.)  
San Diego (Calif.)  
United States Constitution Bicentennial, 1987-1991.  
United States. Constitution

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## **Administrative Information**

### **Preferred citation**

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

### **Processing Information**

This collection was processed by Tessie Camina in 2008.

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## **Detailed Description of the Collection**

## Series I: Meeting Materials, 1985-1988

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

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

Materials in this series are arranged in chronological order.

### Box Folder

- 1 1-2 Meeting, 1985 July 29  
[Materials for the first commission meeting. Includes list of appointed members and biographies of each member.]
- 3 Meeting, 1985 August 22  
[Includes a draft of the First Report of the Commission.]
- 4 Meeting, 1985 November 24
- 5-7 Meeting, 1986 February 3  
[Includes planning materials for the fourth meeting of the commission which was held at the University of San Diego as well as press releases, newspaper clippings, correspondence, photographs, and a transcript of USD President Author E. Hughes' testimony given to commission members. Also includes the Spring 1985 edition of *this Constitution* published by Project '87, an organization funded by the American Historical Association and the American Political Science Association to help commemorate the Bicentennial.]
- 8-10 Meeting, 1986 April 13  
[Includes press releases and copies of *The Mini Page* tabloid newspaper insert geared toward children. *The Mini Page* published a series of 20 issues between March 1986 and September 1987 highlighting Constitutional history.]
- 11-13 Meeting, 1986 June 20  
[Includes a list of individual state plans and events as well as correspondence regarding a joint celebration for the Disney World 15th anniversary and the Bicentennial.]
- 14-18 Meeting, 1986 September 12

[Materials for the Commission meeting in Annapolis, Maryland. Includes applications for project recognition and memos about proposed projects.]

19 Meeting, 1986 September 12

[Materials for the Advisory Committee on State and Local Liaison. Includes a report from the Staff Director on the current status of the work done by the Commission.]

**Box Folder**

2 1 Advertising Campaign, 1987

2 Advisory Committee for Private Associations - Project Recognition Application - "Close Up Foundation", 1987

3 Advisory Committee on Educational Projects, 1986-1987

4 Correspondence, 1986 December

[Regarding the International Conference on Criminal Justice and Human Rights.]

5 European Planning Committee Meeting, 1987 January 13

6-9 Meeting Book, 1986 November 20

10 Meeting, 1986 November 20

[Media Advisory Committee.]

11-12 Meeting, 1987 January 23

13-16 Meeting, 1987 April

17-18 Meeting Book, 1987 May 15

19 Meeting Book, 1987 July 31

20 Meeting Book, 1988 September 17

21 Meeting Dates Proposal, 1986 August 28

22-23 Memoranda, 1986

24 Memoranda, 1987 February 25

25 Memoranda, 1987 May

26 Search Committee Meetings, 1985 July

**Series II: Informational Records, 1984-1987**

This series consists of informational records that pertained to the Bicentennial of the Constitution. These include printed material from various planning committees, correspondence from local planning committees, and informational documents about the Commission. The Commission documents largely include copies of newspaper articles about the Commission, their progress, and critiques of their work.

Records in this series are arranged in alphabetical order.

**Box Folder**

3 1 Calendar of Events, 1986

[We the People 200 Celebration material.]

2 Constitutional Exhibit Task Force, 1987

[Project '87]

3 Event - "We the People" - Concert - Budget, 1987 January

4 Indian Rights Association - Correspondence, 1986 October

- 5 Fact Sheet, circa 1985-1987  
[News articles and informational materials about the Commission.]
- 6 List - Commissioners' Addresses, 1985
- 7 Member - USD Law Faculty - Bernard Siegan, 1985-1987  
[Includes correspondence regarding the Commission meeting at the University of San Diego.]
- 8 National Conference of States, 1986 October 1
- 9 News Clippings, 1986-1987
- 10 Patriotic Educational Incorporated, 1985 September 17  
[Memo regarding request for hearing with Commission members.]
- 11 Proposal for a National Day Banner Project, 1986 December 8
- 12 Publicity, 1986
- 13 Remarks - Warren E. Burger, 1985 September 30, 1986 December
- 14-15 Resource Book, 1986  
[Include biographies, fact sheets, news articles, historical material, and speeches to assist Commission members.]
- 16 Resource Book, 1984-1986  
[Includes constitutional celebration publications such as the Fall 1984, *National Forum*, the Journal of the National Archives' Fall 1985, *Prologue*, and the Winter 1985, *This Constitution*.]
- 17 Resource Materials, circa 1987
- 18 Statement - Staff Director, Mark Cannon, 1987 February 25

**Series III: Publications, 1985-1987**

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

**Box Folder**

- 3 19 Bicentennial Alert, 1987 February  
[Listing of historic events that took place in the month of February.]
- 20 Second Circuit Bicentennial Bulletin, 1986 December
- 21 "We, the People", 1985-1987
- 22 Publications used by the Communications Division, 1986
- 23 Printed Matter, 1986  
[Brochures and booklets printed by the Commission.]
- 24 Reports, 1985 September 17, 1986 September
- 25 Miscellaneous Publications, 1986  
[Includes a Report by Action for Children's Television, and a bibliography of works about the Constitution, and the Fall 1984 *National Forum*.]