Barry Schwartz

Collective Memory and Abortive Commemoration: Presidents' Day and the American Holiday Calendar

> Tradition is the living faith of the dead,
> traditionalism is the dead faith of the living.
>
> Jaroslav Pelikan,
> *The Vindication of Tradition*

"NATURE," AS ERNST CASSIRER CONCEIVED IT, "YIELDS NOTHING without ceremony" (1955: 38-9). The national holiday is one of ceremony's vessels. Holidays are times set aside by custom or law to commemorate great events and their men—or gods. They recur weekly, as in Sabbath observance, or, in the case of national life, annually, as in the celebration of the Fourth of July. In either case, holidays are "seedbeds of virtue" (Etzioni, 2001) that oppose the natural tendency to forget the past. The opening chapters of Deuteronomy provide the best examples. Moses has led his people to the Promised Land, but before they go to possess it he gives them a series of warnings. He knows that his people will soon live in a new world: cities, houses, vineyards, and olive groves in whose making they had no part. These are an inheritance, not an

acquisition: "When you eat your fill there, be careful not to forget the Lord" who gave these to you. And when you have plenty to eat and live in fine houses of your own building "do not become proud and forget the Lord your God who brought you out of Egypt." To this end, three holidays must be observed: first, the Passover, then the Feast of Weeks, then the Feast of Tabernacles (Deuteronomy 5-9, 16). When the conditions of life change drastically, the most decisive historical events will seem irrelevant, but holidays, Moses declares, will make the people remember and keep them together.

Collective memory, whose content holidays sustain, refers to the social distribution of beliefs, feelings, and moral judgments about the past. The primary vehicles of collective memory are *history*—the establishing and propagating of facts about the past through research monographs, textbooks, museums, and mass media—and *commemoration*: the process of selecting from the historical record those facts most relevant to society's ideals and symbolizing them by iconography, monuments, shrines, place-names, and ritual observance. Mediating the relation between history and individual belief, holidays are major parts of all commemorative repertoires.

Two analytic models orient the analysis of holiday rituals and their link to collective memory. The "conflict model" conceives ritual observances in terms of elites' quest to maintain power and construes holidays as control devices inducing individuals to transfer commitment from local communities to the state. From the 1870s onward, Eric Hobsbawm (1983) observes, the rise of electoral democracy in Europe and America meant the masses could no longer be relied upon to follow their masters; therefore "rulers and middle-class observers rediscovered the importance of 'irrational' [ritualistic] elements in the maintenance of the social fabric and the social order" (268). Mabel Berezin (1997) describes Italian leaders' efforts to condition citizens against democracy by melding the public and privates spheres of their lives. Fascist programmers worked largely through holidays built upon a traditional infrastructure, the cult of the family, and church (see also Falaca-Zamponi, 1997.) Even "by the latter part of the twentieth-century," John Bodnar (1992) declares, America's "public memory

[embodied in national holidays] remains a product of elite manipulation, symbolic interaction, and contested discourse" (20; see also Litwicki, 2000).

The "commitment model," in contrast, presumes that elites and masses reaffirm their moral values together. Commitment holidays are subsumed under Robert Bellah's definition of "practices of commitment," namely, "shared activities that are not undertaken as means to an end but are ethically good in themselves. . . . A genuine community—whether a marriage, a university, a whole society—is constituted by such practices" (1985: 335). Whatever the political context—authoritarian or democratic—practices of commitment include ritual co-presence, and ritual co-presence, not historiography, prefigures all shared memory. In ancient Judaism, "memory flowed . . . through two channels: ritual and recital" (Yerushalmi, 1982:11). Early Christian memories, Halbwachs observed, "were closely tied to rites of commemoration and adoration, to ceremonies, feasts, and processions" (Coser, 1992: 222). If, in some cases, these holy days expressed elite domination of the people (Bultmann, 1962 [1934]), in most cases they presupposed leaders' unity with the people (Kirk, 2005). Christian churchmen served the faithful in many ways, including the segregation of Easter and Passover holidays, a tactic ensuring the integrity of Christian communities (Zerubavel, 1984). More recently, Yankee City rediscovered itself through grand tricentennial ceremonies that deliberately included every religious and ethnic group.

Emile Durkheim's statement, however, is the classic:

> There can be no society which does not feel the need of upholding and reaffirming at regular intervals the collective sentiments and the collective ideas which make its unity and personality. Now this moral remaking cannot be achieved except by the means of reunions, assemblies and meetings, where the individuals, being closely united to one another, reaffirm in common their common sentiments. . . (1965 [1915]: 475. See also Etzioni, 2000; Shils and Young, 1975).

When we think of holidays in the Durkheimian sense, we think of them as devices enabling the individual to become part of a sacred past. Indeed, in many religious communities, death rates dip as a crucial holiday approaches, then rise, a way of culture compensating nature, so to speak, after the holiday ends (Idler and Kasl, 1992). This socio-somatic effect, or whatever accounts for the death dip, affirms simultaneously the individual's commitment to his community and its tradition.

At question is whether the concepts comprising the conflict and commitment models are sufficient to capture the meaning and function of most holidays. Whether Presidents' Day, America's most peculiar holiday, upholds collective sentiment, or upholds anything, is questionable. Whether its function is to sustain the hegemony of a dominant class is even more problematic. The case of Presidents' Day suggests the need for a more concrete model, an "abortive holiday" model whose essence the conflict and consensus models fail to capture. Abortive holidays are those that refer to the past without instructing or inspiring, and, at least in the case of Presidents' Day, indicating what precisely they refer to. To abort is to interfere with some process, to prevent a course of development from completing itself. The adjective "abortive" is synonymous with "fruitless," "unsuccessful," "imperfectly formed or developed," "failure to achieve an intended result." This incomplete character gives to Presidents' Day a sense of what postmodern observers call "hyperreality" (Baudrillard, 1983:146)—a connotation prompted by the alternating images of Washington and Lincoln, on the one hand, and, on the other, all the men who have filled the presidential office from George Washington to George W. Bush. No one can identify which of these two sets of presidents the holiday celebrates. Few are bothered by this ambiguity—perhaps because Presidents' Day points to so little beyond itself.

Presidents' Day manifests other postmodern properties, including historicism—the random cannibalizing of all objects, events, styles, and actors of the past. History's replacement by historicism, according to Frederic Jameson, weakens the relation between what we learn in history books and lived experience "of the current multinational, high-rise, stagflated city of newspapers and of our daily life." Accordingly, the same "waning of affect" and "depthlessness" that sedate the

postmodern mind show up in postmodern holidays. The old feelings are still there but are now free-floating, disorganized, not focused on any person or event, not creative of any commitment. We move, in this connection, from the awesomeness of the "sublime" to the confusion of the "hysterical sublime" (Jameson, 1984: 61-2; 65-6; 69; 76-7l; 89), from objects that are representable, inspiring, and embraceable to objects that are unrepresentable and inaccessable; from traditional holidays that define virtue and human greatness, to Presidents' Day, whose multiple forms confound and disorient.

In contrast to holidays ignored or overlooked (for example, Armed Forces Day, Flag Day), abortive holidays are well publicized, involve at least partial interruption of normal affairs, and possess all the characteristics of solemn holidays—except that very few people understand their meaning or are engaged by them. The broader question, then, is whether Presidents' Day, epitome of the abortive holiday, constitutes a readjustment to or an erosion of the tradition of which its original object, George Washington, is part.

WASHINGTON IN THE AMERICAN MIND: BEFORE PRESIDENTS' DAY

Holidays remain vital as long as the objects they celebrate are taken seriously. The Great Depression and World War II were the last eras in which George Washington's legacy was recognized, and they constitute a benchmark for gauging the meaning of Presidents' Day. During the Depression years, newspaper editors marked Washington's Birthday by placing his image on their front pages, above the fold, and printing articles indicating where business, professional, trade, civic, and religious organizations would meet to celebrate. In many communities, "Washington Day" was an occasion for basketball games, movie features, and special community and family events, including the photographing of children. In 1938, 50 patriotic organizations gathered in Carnegie Hall to celebrate the day. Five thousand people attended the annual memorial mass at Saint Patrick's Cathedral (*New York Times,* February 22, 1938: 23). Newspapers throughout the country published cartoons keying the time's economic despair to Washington's military

Figure 1. "Inspiration." Used with permission of *Chicago Tribune,* February 12, 1932.

tragedies. The *Chicago Daily Tribune* (1932) captured the day's relevance by its cartoon, "Inspiration" (figure 1), which represents Uncle Sam with his left arm upon the shoulder of a young man (both with their hats respectfully removed) looking upon a painting of George Washington

Figure 2. *A Scout is Loyal.* Norman Rockwell. 1932. Used with permission of Boy Scouts of America.

beside his suffering men at Valley Forge. Pictures of people looking up to Washington or being guided by Washington suggest that the great man's life was more than just a story to recall; it was a way of experiencing the trials of the present in terms of the greater trials of the past.

In public schools, Washington held preeminent place. Clarice Whittenburg's (1934) analysis of school curricula among the 48 states, grades 1 to 3, shows Washington's Birthday ranking first and Lincoln's ninth, by state laws. In curriculum materials, Washington's Birthday ranked third (Lincoln's Birthday, fourth) behind Thanksgiving Day and Christmas.[1] Artists, in this connection, affirmed Washington's renown. Norman Rockwell's *The Guiding Influence* depicts an earnest youngster working at his desk on a composition. Above him is an ethereal image of Washington; beside him, a bust of Washington, signifying the legacy

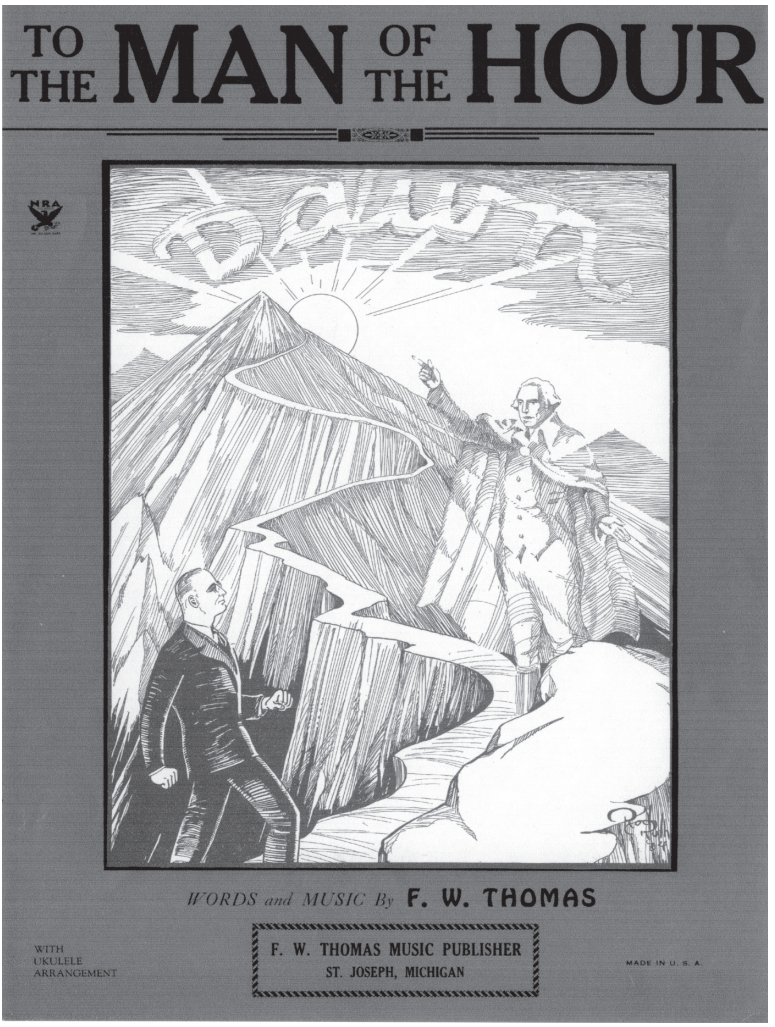

Figure 3. *To the Man of the Hour.* 1934. Sam DeVincent Collection of Illustrated American Sheet Music, Archives Center, National Museum of American History, Behring Center, Smithsonian Institution.

he is contemplating so seriously. In this same year, Rockwell's *A Scout Is Loyal* portrays General Washington standing behind his beneficiary, a solemn Boy Scout, contemplating the future over which his country's father bids him take dominion. (figure 2) Such images found a place in scrapbooks and family Bibles as well as in parlors, kitchens, and bedrooms of American homes. The study of these pictures is the study

Figure 4. "Chips off the Old Block." *Evening Capitol* (Annapolis, Maryland), February 22, 1943: 4.

of people drawing upon the vital symbols of their nation's traditions, locating themselves in time, identifying themselves with something capable of giving meaning to their lives.

Not only ordinary men and women but also members of the nation's elite are shown to be dependent on Washington for definitions of rectitude and courage. Sheet music for Man of the Hour portrays President Franklin Roosevelt ascending a difficult mountain path toward "Dawn"—the end of economic depression. With his left hand,

the Father of His Country welcomes his successor; with his right, he points Roosevelt in the direction of the rising sun and the new day (figure 3).

Throughout World War II, George Washington remained a medium for articulating patriotism. On the first Washington Day after Pearl Harbor, 1,000 Boy Scouts gathered at the New York Sub-Treasury Building to place a wreath at Washington's statue. Of the hundreds of New York speakers praising Washington on that day, few failed to mention Valley Forge, the low point of the revolution. The continuity of present and past is also expressed in a widely printed cartoon, "Chips Off the Old Block" (figure 4), linking the resolute George Washington to an infantry squad fighting the new enemy. World War II battles become momentary episode in a longer, transcendent narrative.

"It was a good thing for America that it had the wit to designate Washington's Birthday anniversary as a holiday," declared the *Bismarck Tribune* editor, "for it serves to remind us of his virtues, all of which might well be copied by the citizens of this and succeeding generations." In Bismarck as in New York City, the virtue invoked most often during the first half of the war, even more than during the Depression, was Washington's fortitude, for which Valley Forge was a metaphor:

> The picture most Americans carry in their hearts of this great man is that of a leader all but defeated by bitter circumstance. It is the picture of George Washington kneeling in the snow at Valley Forge, in that terrible second winter of the Revolution. . . . That was the darkest hour in American history, from the beginning until now. It was a time which required more than the virtues man finds within himself. And had George Washington not found that higher source of power and inspiration, the nation would not be alive today. . . . Valley Forge—and what happened after it—is all the proof one needs to understand that George Washington was truly a man of destiny (*Bismarck Tribune,* February 22, 1943: 4).

A man of destiny: one does not take such a man lightly. "In Solemn Awe Pronounce the Name" (*Modesto* [California] *Bee and News Herald*, February 22, 1943: 13). Such were the editorial declarations of the day.

In the Depression and war years, there was also a Valentine's Day, but it was mainly an amusing day when children exchanged cards with classmates, candy makers put their products in special wrappers, and some adults went to a movie or dinner. There was no consumer frenzy, no fleets of flower trucks making their rounds throughout the city. The pattern has been reversed: *New Yorker*'s February 1988 cover shows Washington and Lincoln exchanging Valentine cards, conceding that the commemoration of their births is no longer as important as Valentine's Day. In schools and media, too, Washington and Lincoln occupy a diminished place. Black History Month, successor to Negro History Week, receives as much or more media attention as the nation's founder and savior. Indeed, in today's major newspapers, Washington and Lincoln are often unmentioned on either their traditional birthdays or on Presidents' Day.

ORIGINS OF PRESIDENTS' DAY

The Uniform Holiday Bill

America's greatest presidents are still remembered, but the tone and texture of their remembrance have changed. The 1968 Uniform Holiday Act reveals the muting of that tone, the vagueness of that texture. The Uniform Holiday Act is the package in which Presidents' Day is wrapped.

Representative Samuel Stratton of New York had tried throughout the early 1960s to create long weekends by designating national holidays, including July 4th and Thanksgiving, as Monday holidays. Not until 1967 did his general idea catch on. In that year, Congress enacted the Monday holiday bill because of its capacity to provide new jobs in the U.S. travel industry; generate local tax revenues through increased tourism; slash absenteeism by preventing workers from adding a day or two to midweek holidays; eliminate the problem of schools and businesses making costly midweek shutdowns and startups, and expand

the do-it-yourself home repair industry.[2] The scores of organizations supporting the bill included the Air Transport Association, American Hotel and Motel Association, American Petroleum Institute, Chamber of Commerce of the United States, National Association of Manufacturers, and the National Retail Federation. These and scores of other organizations supported the new holiday schedule because they wanted to see more people on the move and spending money. No hegemonic force drove this bill; labor organizations, including the AFL-CIO, the International Amalgamated Transit Union, and the National Association of Letter Carriers favored it. Government bureaucracies supported the bill. The United States Civil Service Commission, American Federation of Government Employees, Department of Commerce, and the Department of Labor believed Monday holidays would benefit their employees.[3]

The underlying feature of all Monday holidays is their combining two events once kept separate, namely, vacations and holidays. Vacations are distinguished by their familial and individualistic features: everyone plans his own vacation, goes where he wishes, for as long as he wishes. The vacation epitomizes individual freedom, provides an escape, vacant days, free time. Commitment holidays, in contrast, are meant to be observed collectively at certain times and places, in certain ways, and to evoke a shared and solemn sense of what is being celebrated (Bellah et al., 1985: 328-9).

Because the Presidents' Day bill expressly encouraged independent rather than shared activity, conservative organizations opposed it. Patriotic organizations opposed the bill because they felt that disengagement from traditional holiday dates would diminish their significance; churches, because long weekends would cut down Sunday attendance. The bill's strongest opponents were concerned more with safety than with individual pleasure or historical significance. To conciliate those who believed long weekends would increase the number of automobile accidents, Representative Robert McClory asked the Library of Congress's Legislative Reference Service to assemble statistics on holiday automobile accidents. The resulting study of five holidays between 1947 and 1966 showed lower accident rates on long weekends than on weekdays (*Congressional Record* [*CR*], H, 5-6-1968: 1827-30).

By the middle of 1967, 12 holiday bills had been proposed in the Senate and House, but these languished because congressmen could not agree which holidays to assign new dates and which to keep on their old ones. The tie-up had to do with Thanksgiving, July 4th, and the transforming of Washington's Birthday into Presidents' Day. Once these troublesome issues were resolved and a new federal holiday, Columbus Day (which 34 states already celebrated), was added, the bill gained support and moved quickly, clearing the House Judiciary Committee by a 15-2 vote in April, 1968 (*CR*, H, 4-9-68:9371). The Stratton-McClary Uniform Holiday Bill passed 350 to 27 (56 not voting) in the House and by a voice vote in the Senate (*CR*, S6-25-68:18510).

The original draft of the Holiday Bill provided that the Memorial Day, July 4th, Columbus Day, Veterans Day, and Thanksgiving dates be changed to the nearest Monday and that Washington's Birthday be abolished and replaced by Presidents' Day. The House Committee rejected the proposed changes for July 4 and Presidents' Day. This committee also rejected the Thanksgiving proposal partly because it would interrupt the pre-Christmas retail cycle, beginning on the day after Thanksgiving and running through the weekend. The committee did change the observance of Washington's Birthday from February 22 to the third Monday of the month and also made Memorial Day, Veterans Day, and Columbus Day Monday holidays.

The *Christian Science Monitor*'s editor spoke for the majority of Americans when he said that date-switching weakens the holidays' intrinsic meaning. Louis Harris's 1968 survey showed almost 70 percent of adult Americans opposed to changing the holiday dates (*CR*, S, 4-3-68:8923). The bill's supporters, however, prevailed and the Uniform Holiday Bill, so named in wishful thinking that the states would follow the federal example (*CR*, S, 1-17-69:1269), was signed into law by President Lyndon Johnson on June 28, 1968 and went into effect three years later (*CR*, S, 7-1-68:19438).

From the Uniform Holiday Bill to Presidents' Day

President Richard Nixon's Executive Order 11582 enacted the 1968 Uniform Holiday Bill, shifting the appropriate holidays to Monday. The

executive order plainly recognizes George Washington's Birthday; it never mentions Presidents' Day. Presidents' Day emerged spontaneously and gradually during the late 1970s.

Opponents of the new holiday schedule were no happier after enactment than before. In 1976, America's bicentennial year, journalist Sean O'Gara wrote about George Washington's diminished place in the holiday calendar: "This subtle disparaging of Washington as the father figure supreme of our country . . . is a blatant indication that the actions of our forefathers and the lessons of the past are insignificant in today's America." O'Gara recalled bitterly:

> In 1942, when our nation was endangered, we reached down into our well of national heroes and resurrected them selfishly and possessively, because we needed them, and we used them shamelessly to buoy our hopes in that time of travail; now, with danger apparently passed, we are discarding them by relegating them to secondary memory (reprinted in *CR*, H, 3-30-76:8715).

The Uniform Holiday Bill negated the February 22nd anniversary of George Washington's birth, but the bill's supporters denied it denigrated Washington or encouraged ingratitude. After all, the old holiday dates were arbitrary. Washington's Birthday was February 11 on the Julian calendar in use when he was born in 1732. Furthermore, Memorial Day had no historical affinity with the day on which it was celebrated; Veterans Day, covering all wars, bore no necessary relation to the November 11 World War I armistice. Because several days passed before all delegates signed the Declaration of Independence there was no reason to be sentimental about July 4th. The historical basis for a Thursday Thanksgiving was even shakier.[4] Supporters of the bill argued very much like postmodern theorists seeking to demonstrate the essential arbitrariness of social institutions and conventions.[5]

Yet, supporters insisted their motives were positive: what is important "is not the precise calendar date, but rather that we should have adequate time and opportunity to pause and recall the life and

works of our first president" (*CR*, H, 2-10-71:2338). But if the Monday holiday were so advantageous, then why should not Christmas be made a Monday holiday in order to give more time for people to pause and recall the life of Jesus? That such a rearrangement occurred to no one is an admission that some holidays are too solemn to be changed, despite their arbitrariness. And why was the benefit of Monday holidays not recognized until the late 1960s? This last question stems from the deepest suspicions of the reformers' motives. Convenience always has a price, and if one rejects the inconvenience of midweek holidays, it is because conditions have arisen in which their moral benefit no longer exceeds their cost. Dead *traditionalism* thus replaces living *tradition.*

By the late 1980s, Presidents' Day had become a convention. But what does Presidents' Day mean? National holidays are meant to be more than days for individual pleasure; they are meant to affirm something vital to national existence, something located in the past to which everyone in society is connected and in terms of which all can define themselves. Replacing Washington's Birthday with Presidents' Day reduces the weightiness of the founding events that made Washington worth remembering in the first place. If the holiday schedule no longer distinguishes Washington from Abraham Lincoln, or from Woodrow Wilson, Benjamin Harrison, or James Polk, there is no way for his commemoration to represent anything or for one to know where other presidents stand in relation to him. Precisely this confusion makes Presidents' Day so symptomatic. Ours is an age, according to postmodernist Frederic Jameson (1984), where fragmentation, confusion, a sense of being lost and at a loss are the distinctive pathologies. The characteristic illness of modernity is anxiety; of postmodernity, confusion. Modern man needs the psychological security that comes from being attached to something transcending himself; postmodern man needs cognitive maps and compasses to tell him who and where he is in relation to contemporaries and predecessors (89-92). Confusion is the ruling mood of Presidents' Day.[6]

Presidents' Day refers to different things in different regions and states and to different organizations and people within each state. By 2004, almost half the states (23 of the 50) incorporated it into their

holiday schedule, but the variation is considerable. Presidents' Day is recognized by 11 of 13 Mountain and Pacific states (84.6 percent) where George Washington's commemorative presence and revolution-memories are weakest, but by only 3 of the 17 East Coast states (17.6 percent), all but one of which were part of the original 13 colonies. Of the South-Central states (former Confederate and border states), only 3 (33.3 percent) recognize Presidents' Day.[7]

Observance of Presidents' Day within states is equally variable. In Michigan, Presidents' Day alone is a legal holiday, but were it not for the official website, which contains a picture of Washington and Lincoln, one would never know what that holiday is about. Illinois separately observes Lincoln's and Washington's Birthday in addition to Presidents' Day. Arizona names the third Monday of February Washington/Lincoln/Presidents' Day. Texas formally observes Presidents' Day but does so "in honor of George Washington." California observes Presidents' Day and, in alternate years, Abraham Lincoln's Birthday. But the calendars of the remaining states, most in the West, give no hint as to what Presidents' Day means.

Some ambiguities are more consequential than others. For the United States Postal Service, Washington's Birthday is the official holiday but many of its local announcements refer to Presidents' Day. In many states, including those that officially recognize Washington's Birthday, banks close on what they call Presidents' Day. National and local television follow suit by conveying information about Presidents' Day alone. Thus, even in states where no Presidents' Day exists, most people believe they are observing it.

Washington's Birthday, the official federal holiday, is no less ambiguous on many of the 20 state calendars where it appears. The original holiday was February 22, but Georgia observes it on December 27 in order to give its employees a series of days off at Christmas. In New York, some government units get the day off; others do not. In New Jersey, Washington is honored every other year. In Alabama, his birthday is shared with Thomas Jefferson; in Arkansas, with civil rights activist Daisy Bates. Utah observes Washington/Lincoln Day.

George Washington's Birthday was the first to be observed on America's "Great Calendar." However, this calendar, as historian William Johnston (1991) conceives it, has become a metaphor expressing postmodern infatuation with pastiche:

> It can be likened to a synthesizer, which out of the repertoire of the past throws up the most unlikely combinations. The Great Calendar is a cultural synthesizer, which invites its devotees to combine cultural figures and themes with unheard of ease. The notion of co-commemorations can do for cultural programming what an electronic synthesizer does for music: it shatters fixations by facilitating new combinations (164).[8]

Presidents' Day is certainly a system of "new combinations," but the meaning of any single combination generates no agreement.

Might Presidents' Day have a core, some adamantine foundation that such combinations cannot affect? The meaning of Presidents' Day must be properly understood. There remains an American community of memory, but this community shares only a vague body of belief. It celebrates itself by a listing of dates to be observed but not embraced—abortive holidays standing for little, inspiring little. Such is Presidents' Day's significance. "When you unwrap Presidents' Day," Paul Greenberg discovers, "there's nothing inside. It's how the product is packaged. Each generation makes its own accounting with the past; ours just tends to be blank at the moment" (*Arkansas Democrat-Gazette*, February 12, 2001: 6B).

Mnemonic blankness is constituted collectively, even though it articulates nothing in particular. Congress can shatter traditional practices and reshuffle the national patrimony, the *New York Times* editor wrote in October 1971, but only the people can create holidays, and the people will soon take back their Washington's Birthday.[9] The editor was wrong: the people approved the long weekend. In fits and starts opponents tried to untangle the new holiday knot. In 1975 Representative

William Ketchum unsuccessfully proposed a restoration of all holiday dates; in 1980, Senator Jennings Randolph tried to restore Washington's Birthday to February 22; in 1973 and 1999 Representative Edward Derwinski and Senator Daniel Inouye respectively introduced bills to restore Memorial Day to May 30. All these efforts failed. Richard Durbin of Illinois, with 8 co-signers, a total of 7 Democrats and 2 Republicans (1998), introduced a new and very strange proposal: to rename the official holiday, Washington's Birthday, as "Presidents' Day in honor of George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, and Franklin Roosevelt." But their proposal does not stop there: it would also "mark the institution of the Presidency and the contributions that Presidents have made to the development of our Nation and the principles of freedom and democracy." The bill conceives a holiday at once exclusive and inclusive, one that not only singles out three presidents for special recognition but also honors all presidents. In the most recent series of actions, Representatives Roscoe Bartlett, Tom Tancredo, and their cosponsors tried to pass their House Bill 420, which proposes that all entities, publications, and officials of the United States Government refer to Washington's Birthday by its own name.[10] This effort fails every year to clear the subcommittee.

Why is the resistance of Washington admirers too weak to prevent the effective abolition of Washington's Birthday as a public holiday? The context in which Washington's Birthday originally appeared on the holiday calendar provides a hint. In 1879, after the nation's centennial anniversary and the end of Reconstruction, Rutherford Hayes signed the Washington's Birthday bill. Significantly, this official act merely formalized existing commemorative practices: churches, professional societies, trade organizations, and other associations throughout the country had for almost a century already met to mark the anniversary of the Founder's birth.[11] By the end of the twentieth century, however, that anniversary had lost its relevance. Because today's congressmen, on the whole, are impressed more by other presidents than by Washington, resistance to Presidents' Day is nowhere strong enough to overcome the impulse to observe it. Thus, to blame the Uniform Holiday Act, even indirectly, for Presidents' Day would be a mistake. The act itself did not confound the national legacy; it was a symptom of a presidency and a legacy whose

clarity had already diminished. The holidays shifted to Monday observance in 1968 were for the most part moribund to begin with.

GEORGE WASHINGTON'S FADING IN THE AMERICAN MIND

Counting Down

Because Americans' admiration of their traditional heroes has declined, we need to ask whether George Washington's renown, in particular, has lessened, whether this change is characteristic of all popular presidents, and whether the timing of the change corresponds to Presidents' Day's emergence. No set of questions could have a more direct answer: Washington's fall is accompanied by the diminishing prestige of the five most popular presidents. While the percentage naming Washington as one of the three greatest presidents fell from 47 percent in 1956 to 28 percent in 2001, Abraham Lincoln's fell from 62 to 43 percent during this same period. Roosevelt's rating fell from 64 to 25 percent, and Eisenhower's from 34 to 7 percent. Truman alone became more popular after 1956, but the percentage naming him beginning 1975 fell from 37 to 8. During the same period (1975-2001), Kennedy's rating fell from 52 to 36.

Most of the erosion of Washington's, Lincoln's, and Roosevelt's prestige occurred between 1956 and 1975, the same period in which the Uniform Holiday Bill's conception, discussion, and enactment occurred. The year the bill was signed into law, 1968, was the very peak of the decade's civil disorders and criticism of American institutions and history.[12]

Annual citation counts do not measure Washington's prestige as directly as do national surveys, but they help locate the context of its decline more precisely. Entries from the *New York Times Index*, *Readers Guide to Periodical Literature*, and *Congressional Record* are relevant to Washington's changing stature because they reflect the demands of a general reading audience and the commemorative activities of the U.S. Congress. The *Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature* goes back to 1890 and shows the peak of Washington articles appearing in the 1930s, the decade containing the Bicentennial of George Washington's Birth (1932), the Sesquicentennial of the Constitution's ratification (1937), the Sesquicentennial of Washington's inauguration (1939), and

the Sesquicentennial of Washington's death (1939). Following World War II, a parallel series of bicentennials occurred: the nation's (1976), the Constitution's (1987), Washington's inauguration (1989), and Washington's death (1999), but the post-World War II citation trends are low and flat. The decade during which different versions of the Uniform Holiday Bill were being formulated, the 1960s, corresponds to the lowering and flattening of the *Reader's Guide* citations trend. The same picture emerges from *New York Times* citations, which go back to 1866. Washington citation volume peaks twice, in 1876, the national bicentennial, then in 1932, the Washington Bicentennial. From 1950 forward, the trend is steadily downward. For the *Congressional Record*, too, the trend of entries rises through the late 1930s and early 1940s, then gradually slopes downward during and after the debate over the Uniform Holiday Bill (see appendix A online at www.socres.org/volume75/SchwartzAppendixAB.pdf).

Visits to Washington shrines show similar declines. The peak in visitation to Washington's Wakefield birthplace occurred during the 1976 bicentennial, then dropped off in fits and starts. Washington's Morristown, New Jersey, winter headquarters visitation also peaked during the 1970s and fell off sharply afterward. Mount Vernon visits peaked in the 1960s, then followed a downward trend.[13] Thus, Wakefield, Morristown, and Mount Vernon visitation, like Washington citation counts, decreased or leveled during and after the time of the Uniform Holiday Bill's formulation and enactment.[14] These downward trends characterize visitation to all national historical sites (Zelinsky, 1988:102-103), including Abraham Lincoln's (Schwartz, 2008). That the nation's population has doubled since 1950 (U.S. Census, 2003: 17) means that the visitation rate at the typical site has dropped more than 50 percent (see appendix B online at www.socres.org/volume75/SchwartzAppendixAB.pdf).

Textbook representations of the presidents parallel the new holiday legislation. When Robert Lerner, Althea Nagai, and Stanley Rothman (1995) coded textbook writers' appraisal of American presidents, they found 61 percent of the presidents receiving an unambiguously positive rating during the 1940s and 1950s; in the 1960s—again,

the decade of Monday holiday debate—this rating fell to 39 percent, then to 29 percent by the 1980s. George Washington's rating fell the farthest (146).

Among the more convincing documents of Washington's fading appeal is the failure of efforts to upgrade his image during the 1999 bicentennial of his death. One of Washington's promoters explained, "We were looking for something with a lot of sizzle. . . . He had great name recognition, but not a real high quotient of excitement. Dull, boring. He was the first president. Of course. So what?" (*New York Times,* February 8, 1999: A1). Neither the reenactment of his funeral nor the traveling exhibition of "Treasures from Mount Vernon" (the most popular item being Washington's false teeth) answer this question: So what? The question itself would have occurred to few people during World War II, the Great Depression, or any previous era. The great promotion of 1999 was more a symptom of than solution to George Washington's fallen renown.

Looking Down

Quantitative indicators of presidential renown—surveys, citation counts, visitation statistics—are important because each indicator shows the stature of all presidents diminishing, and these reductions correspond to the activities leading up to Presidents' Day. However, the feelings a people have for their great men also appear vividly in art.[15] Tom Wesselmann's *Great American Nude #4* shows a wantonly voluptuous woman, reclining next to a pineapple, traditional symbol of American hospitality. On the back wall hangs Gilbert Stuart's portrait of George Washington. By foregrounding the nude and backgrounding Washington—by pairing Washington with the nude in the first place—Wesselmann affirms the founder's incongruity with postmodern mores. That Wesselmann is commenting on the national culture as well as George Washington is evident in the stripes representing the American flag (figure 5). Wesselmann's observations are apparent in his other paintings of sexually provocative women, beer cans, and television sets placed beside images of the Stars and Stripes and American historical figures. In a post-puritanical world still swayed by residual asceticism

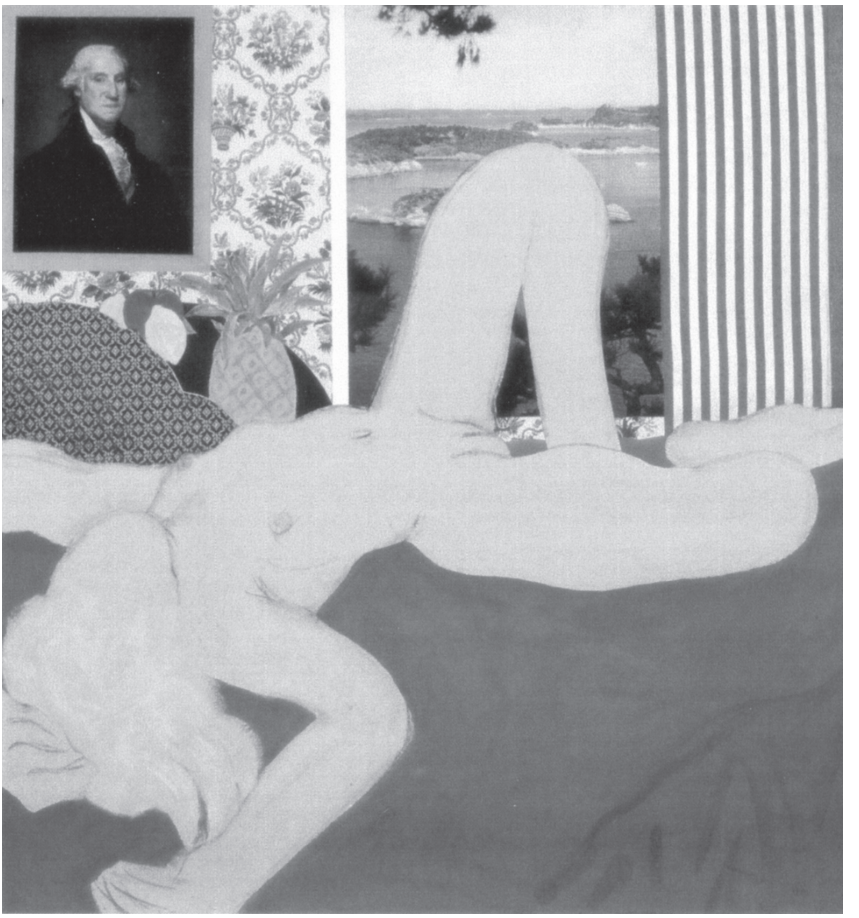

Figure 5. *Great American Nude # 4.* Tom Wesselman. 1966. Smithsonian Hirschhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden. Gift of Joseph H. Hirschhorn.

and self-denial, the exulting of nudity, materialism, and sensuality expresses the artist's scorn for tradition and its symbols. Contrasted to the explosive sensuousness of our era, the irrelevance of Washington's ascetic self-restraint becomes more evident.[16]

This tension between classical constraint and contemporary excess is elaborated in Vitaly Komar and Alexander Melamid's revision of A. Stirling Calder's Washington Arch statue. Again, sexuality is the new and strange marker of historical significance. The Father of His Country appears with his breeches ripped away to reveal female

genitalia. (figure 6) (For detail, see Thistlethwaite, Rector, and Schlegel, 2001: 23.) A Founding Father with no male organ makes for good pastiche. The anomaly is magnified by the "discovery" of Washington's exposed male genitals in another painting: Emanual Leutze's *Washington Crossing the Delaware*. The object appearing on the father's groin is his watch fob, but the present generation sees in it what is on its own mind.

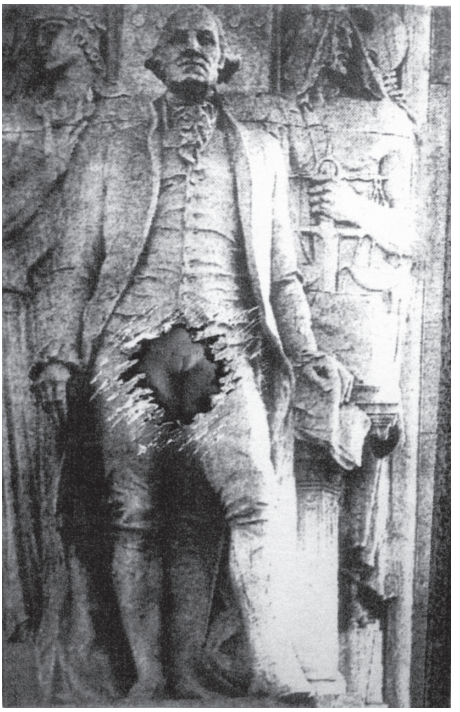

Figure 6. *George Washington Arch.* Vasily Komar and Alexander Melamid. Used with permission of artists.

Pornography websites also make for fun. One site suggests a new interpretation of the cherry tree story. "I cannot tell a lie," confesses young George to his father. "It was I who downloaded those pictures from cherrytreat.com." Elsewhere, the mature Washington, animated by Brad Neely, is highly interested in women (he has two sets of testicles and penises grow from all parts of his body). He is also a macho man: he kills British soldiers for fun, then eats them. The benign father of his country is a brutal sadist to be feared, not loved.

Brutality and sexual power go together with altered states of consciousness. Burlesquing images of the serious-minded George Washington on his farm, Alfred Quiroz's *George Washington Inspects the Hemp Crop* (1994), portrays the Father of His Country with a wide, ridiculous smile, standing beside a howling gentleman holding a clay pipe, the source of his good feeling. On the other side stands a widely grinning slave puffing an equally exhilarating corncob pipe (figure 7). Washington sold hemp for the manufacture of cordage and fabric,

Figure 7. *George Washington Inspects the Hemp Crop.* Alfred J. Quiroz. Used with permission of artist.

but everyone in the group is high on its marijuana by-product. Elation replaces asceticism. In the foreground is a plastic plant and Astroturf, asserting the artificiality of the man and his reputation.

Washington, as shown, is pulled in opposite directions by restraint and release, traditional inhibition and modern permissiveness, convention and perversity. Because artists wish to display rather than reconcile these tensions, he appears ridiculous. Placing today's images of George Washington beside those of the 1930s and early 1940s reveals a profound transformation of American historical consciousness, but the change is not limited to Washington. From every statistical table, from every old cartoon, print, painting, magazine, and calendar illustration one can drop a plumb line deep into the mentality of the generation from which it arose, gauging that generation's fears and aspirations, assessing its styles of thinking and judging. Washington's images, thus, are valuable cultural indices: all sacred pictures of yesterday, like that of the nation's founder, are today pressed to the service of mocking tradition. Leonardo's Virgin is now represented with cow dung; Jesus now appears with an erection or as a naked black woman; the Cross of Calvary now attains fuller meaning when set in a jar of urine. The moral tone of the time is summarized in its art no less than in its abortive holidays.

"THE GREAT THINGS OF THE PAST WHICH FILLED OUR FATHERS WITH ENTHUSIASM DO NOT EXCITE THE SAME ARDOR IN US"

The understated cynicism of the *New Yorker* outdoes itself in James Stevenson's March 6, 1965 cartoon of Ronnie and his mom and dad—an almost perfect introduction to what was soon to happen to Washington's Birthday. The youngster has just built a snowman with an amazingly lifelike Washington's head, to which father reacts: "By golly, Ronnie, I don't know what to say. I feel sort of all choked up." Many Americans felt "sort of all choked up."

In the opening pages of this essay, the conflict and commitment models of holiday observance were distinguished. Both models take holidays as serious objects of commitment; they differ mainly in whether they conceive holiday organizers as manipulators or peers of holiday participants. Neither model, however, explains why some

holidays, including the anniversary of George Washington's birth, are no longer resonant objects of commemoration. The death dip occurring before solemn holidays expresses the faith of the committed, but to find a death dip prior to Presidents' Day would be a great surprise, for on that day commitment discourse is barely audible. But why? Is Presidents' Day a reaction against the state's alleged effort to foster obedience and loyalty (Bodner, 1992)? Probably not, for Presidents' Day is a bottom-up, not a top-down, phenomenon. Congressional representatives flatly rejected Presidents' Day; it arose spontaneously because it somehow met some needs of the people at large.

As commitment holidays have declined in relevance, "tension management" holidays, including New Years Day, Halloween, Valentine's Day, have become more widely and intensely celebrated. Such holidays perform a "safety valve" function by reducing strains accumulated through the normal difficulties of life;[17] however, certain commitment holidays have been transmuted into holidays of remission and rest. Memorial Day, July 4th, and Columbus Day, once the objects of an almost religious seriousness, are now rest and recreation days observed with little ritual and even less fervor.

An account of abortive holidays, however, must address other reactions to holiday reform. The French Revolution failed in its effort to reform the calendar and substitute a religion of reason for Christianity, and the Bolshevik government tried but failed to replace Christian holidays and symbols with political ones. In both cases, popular resistance maintained traditional practices. In the present case, however, no widespread effort to go back to the original holiday calendar exists.

In the introduction, abortive holidays were defined as "those which preserve but fail to instruct and inspire. To abort is to interfere with some process, to prevent a course of development from completing itself. . . ." Holidays are abortive when people recognize forebears as benefactors but no longer feel *themselves* to be beneficiaries. Holidays are abortive when earlier sacrifices, even those made explicitly for the benefit of posterity, fail to evoke gratitude. However, one must not assume that all commitment holidays are fertile "seedbeds of virtue" (Etzioni, 2001). The historical referents of Memorial Day and July 4th

celebration, for example, may be certain, but those days promote more consumption and hedonistic partying than recommitment to the nation. The annual cycle of national holidays, Eviatar Zerubavel (2003) explains, reproduces symbolically the national past, and by blurring the boundary between present and past, the past stays alive in the present. Such has been the case traditionally, but one must ask whether, under certain conditions, the entire cycle of holidays can decay and become abortive, and what this change would mean for the self-consciousness of the nation.

The death of living faith, in this connection, is not to be confused with the disappearance of nationalism. Ritual displays accompanying the 1991 Gulf War, 9/11, and the beginning of the Iraq War show nationalist sentiment has hardly vanished. Yet, nationalism's recent rituals no longer possess a historical frame. Nationalist displays are present-oriented; they draw little inspiration from national history.[18] This is why George Washington's legacy is more often dissected than embraced, more analyzed than emulated, and why the modal attitude toward him and men like him is detached appreciation, not reverence. His commemoration frames few if any current projects; if it does anything, it prompts the search for tell-tale flaws that render admiration naïve. Washington is not even afforded the status of tragic hero, for his greatest flaw, slaveholding, becomes less forgivable as race relations issues assume priority. The yearning for perfection in history thus drives out goodness in history. Such is the case of many traditional heroes in a postheroic age. Here, precisely, resides the point: as Americans cease to believe in the moral fullness of the past, they lose sight of the existential link between their present life and the transformations wrought by their forebears; they lose sight of themselves as historical beings and forget that from these imperfect ancestors they have inherited, not created, the most valuable of their possessions. Loss of historical continuity is evident in the triviality, pointlessness, and moral confusion of Presidents' Day. The men whom earlier generations of Americans looked up to and after whom they tried to pattern their lives are now smaller men, better known but less revered. The situation is paradoxical. On personal computers our students can now log into thousands

of historical websites, visit historical societies, libraries, museums, and archives. No previous generation has enjoyed such effortless access to so much information. No generation, however, has identified with the past less closely.

The holiday's traditional function, moral preservation, cannot be accomplished, as we remember from Durkheim, "except by the means of reunions, assemblies, and meetings" that reaffirm what participants have in common. Presidents' Day inspires few such reunions, assemblies, and meetings. Indeed, many Americans are unaware of the day's arrival until they find their bank closed or mail undelivered. Holidays do not work, do not become "cultural performances" or "public events" (MacAloon, 1984:1-15; Handelman 1990) unless people somehow participate in them, for it is the living of the holiday, the practicing of its rites and sharing of its moral sentiments, the joining with others in affirming the ideal it seeks to sustain, that gives it life. Commitment holidays elevate their participants above themselves and strengthen them morally. If the development of such holidays is for any reason arrested, it is not only because men and women take no part in them but because they see no reason to do so.

Many men and women see good reason to take part in the Martin Luther King Jr. holiday, but King resides in America's living memory. His birthday comemorates events in the immediate, not the remote past, and the poltical issues defing these events are still vital. General observance of King's holiday, however, is very recent. The holiday was signed into law in 1983, took effect in 1986, but for more than 10 years hostile states circumvented the law by ignoring it or combining King's commemoration with that of other men. These tactics failed: by 2000, King's January 15 birthday was officially observed in all states on the third Monday in January.

Martin Luther King's Birthday differs from earlier commemorations, like George Washington's, which, from 1800 through the first half of the twentieth century, was celebrated everywhere and by every ethnic, religious, and racial group. King's birthday evokes no such consensus. In areas of the country where substantial African-American populations live, parades, chruch services, banqueets, elementary

school projects, and a wide range of other public activities are common. Where African-American populations are smaller, the day is recognized but public activities are fewer. Media coverage, on the other hand, embodies a lower limit below which awareness of the holiday cannot fall. To characterize King's birthday as a "black holiday" would be imprecise. Rather, the varialbe intensity of the celebration is affected by the recency of King's life, the relevance of his life to current racial issues, and the demographic makeup of the community.

Because Presidents' Day articulates the key features of postmodernity—weakening connection between present and past, the combining of individual pleasure with national commitment, confusion replacing anxiety as the pathology of the age—Martin Luther King's Birthday must be set in broad proper perspective. King's birthday is a Monday holiday; as such, it is a pastiche of solemn feelings, moral ideals, personal fun, and recreation—as intended by the founders of the Monday holiday system. That King's memory is disproportionately relevant for a minority of the population but recognized by federal and state governments (including schools) and national communications media suggests that key elements of postermodern culture, namely multiculturalism and the politics of recognition (both acknowledgements of minory rights and dignity [Taylor, 1994]) are part of the day's ideological basis. Evoking memories of recent history, the anniversary of Martin Luther King's birth evokes more passion than any other holiday, but it is no exception to Americans diminishing reverence for the great men of their distant past.

Peter H. Gibbons believes that America's vision of greatness can be restored by teaching about heroes more effectively. "Our society is uneasy with greatness," he says, yet greatness is indispensable to maintaining society's morality. "With heroes, we experience the extraordinary and expand our notion of what it means to be human." To this end, a "moderate triumphalism" recognizing both great achievement and moral failure must replace the dogmatic cynicism of the day (Gibbon 2002: 167, 178). Gibbon believes that America's indifference to its great moments and men results from admirers' inflated claims—as if more moderate claims would be more inspiring. The new history (Lerner,

Nagai, and Rothman, 1995) has more than realized such moderation but without the result Gibbon expects.

The prospects for "Renewing America's Vision of Greatness," the subtitle of Gibbons' thoughtful and important book, are weak. Almost one hundred years ago, Durkheim (1965 [1915]) observed his own society going through a transitory phase: "The great things of the past which filled our fathers with enthusiasm," he said, "do not excite the same ardor in us, either because they have come into common usage to such an extent that we are unconscious of them, or else because they no longer answer to our actual aspirations; but as yet there is nothing to replace them." In that last phrase, "as yet there is nothing to replace them," Durkheim implies what he soon states expressly: that society's "incertitude and confused agitation cannot last forever," that a day will arrive "when our societies will know again those hours of creative effervescence, in the course of which new ideas arise and new formulae are found which serve for a while as a guide to humanity" (475). Much time has passed, but such a day has yet to appear on the horizon. Presidents' Day, in particular, is the exemplification of postmodern indifference to anything associated with new formulae, guides to humanity, and grand narratives, or with any commitment to anything beyond the personal and local. Whether we can expect, as Durkheim did, that effervescent holidays of commitment will return in the future or whether our postmodern winter and abortive holidays will be eternal is a question to be posed and answered in future days.

NOTES

1. Asked to name the person they most admire, a majority of 1929 high school seniors in Montgomery, Birmingham, and Mobile, Alabama named family members. Of those naming historical figures, the most frequently mentioned person was George Washington (Hill, 1930).
2. In 1967, the United States Chamber of Commerce found 85 percent of its members preferring Monday holidays over traditional dates. In this same year, Monday holidays were being contemplated and created in

eight different states. Massachusetts, for example, had already made George Washington's Birthday, Patriot's Day, and Memorial Day into Monday holidays. New York was discussing Monday holiday bills for George Washington's Birthday, Memorial Day, July 4th, and Veterans Day. Some companies conceded that they had already used "swinging" or "floating" holidays for the mutual benefit of employers and employees. Travelers Insurance Company, for example, gave up Veterans Day in favor of the day after Thanksgiving.

3. Discussion of the Uniform Holiday Bill is reported in the *Congressional Record* from January 1967 through June 1968. Considerable discussion followed the bill's signing, especially after it went into effect in January 1971. The present essay is informed by documents from all periods.
4. This theme, the arbitrariness of dates, appears repeatedly. For one of the earlier discussions, see *Congressional Record* [*CR*], Appendix, 2-20-67: A739.
5. The point admits of a certain disingenuousness. Abraham Lincoln, for example, was born on February 12 under the Gregorian calendar, but under the Julian calendar it would be Feb 1—and under the Hebrew calendar it would be 3 Adar I. Any dates, including those of the Pearl Harbor, Hiroshima, the World Trade Center, and tsunami calamities are relative to a specific calendar.
6. *Chase's Calendar of Events*, the most authoritative source on American holidays, defines Presidents' Day in the following terms:

> Presidents' Day observes the birthdays of George Washington (February 22) and Abraham Lincoln (February 12). With the adoption of the Monday Holiday Law . . . some of the specific significance of the event was lost and added impetus was given to the popular description of that holiday as Presidents' Day. Present usage often regards Presidents' Day as a day to honor all former presidents of the United States, although the federal holiday is still Washington's Birthday.

This confusing entry assigns two meanings to the day. Washington's Birthday is observed as Presidents Day, which honors all presidents. On the other hand, Presidents' Day honors Washington and Lincoln alone (*Chase's Calendar of Events, 2003* [Chicago, 2003]: 138). See also Arbelbide (2004).

7. No less than 23 of the 27 votes opposing a new holiday calendar were cast by conservative representatives from the southeastern United States. The other four opponents were midwestern Republicans (*CR*, H, 5-7-68:12079-80).
8. These new combinations are also apparent in the ease with which historical images are removed and replaced. The 1864 creation of the National Statuary Hall, for example, symbolically affirmed the Union by inviting every state (despite the ongoing war) to submit two statues of its own choosing to be erected in the United States Capitol. After the war, the hall became a symbol of reconciliation. Recently, however, states have begun to think about representing themselves differently. California's statue of Thomas Starr King, a Civil War ally of Abraham Lincoln, will be removed to Sacramento and replaced with a statue of Ronald Reagan (*New York Times*, September 5, 2006). The committee that convinced Congress to place a statue of Rosa Parks in the Capitol made known its preference for placement in the National Statuary Hall, presumably leaving the Alabama congressional delegation to decide which of the existing two statues to remove.
9. *New York Times*, October 26, 1971. The *Times* endorsed the bill in 1968, but announced in 1971 that the price of new holiday benefits "is one more sacrifice of tradition at a time when that commodity is in seriously short supply." Cited in *CR*, H, 11-18-71: 42150.
10. Edward Derwinski, *CR*, H, October 23, 1973, 34899; William Ketchum, H, February 24, 1976, 4244; Daniel Inouye, S, January 19, 1999. The Durbin bill's roster of signers include Edward Kennedy, Massachusetts; A. Frank Lautenberg, New Jersey; Patrick Moynihan, New York; Max Cleland, Georgia; Rod Grams, Minnesota; Michael Dewine, Ohio; Paul Sarbanes, Maryland; Carl Levin, Michigan (*CR*, S,

7-24-98:8996). Representative Roscoe Bartlett's and Tom Tancredo's bill is discussed by Matthew Spalding (2004).

11. Washington's prestige was at its peak while his birthday was unofficially celebrated before and during the Civil War. By 1879, however, Abraham Lincoln showed signs of catching up to him. At the end of the Progressive Era, Lincoln's popularity permanently surpassed Washington's (Schwartz, 1998: 69-73).
12. One further point bears mention: in 1956, Lincoln was named 32 percent more often than Washington (62 percent vs. 47 percent); in 1975, he was named 96 percent more often—twice as high (49 percent vs. 25 percent). This is because Washington's prestige fell more steeply than Lincoln's (47 percent vs. 24 percent) during these years.
13. Renovations on the Washington Monument during the late 1990s closed the site to visitors, but these do not explain visitation decline during the 1970s and 1980s.
14. Visitation to all major Lincoln and Washington sites can be found on the National Park Service (Department of the Interior) website.
15. "What do we think of," asked Charles Horton Cooley, "when we think of a person?" "Probably, if we could get to the bottom of the matter, it would be found that our impression of a [person] is always accompanied by some ideas of his sensible appearance. . . ." Sensible appearances are good not only for thinking about people but also for thinking about what people represent (Cooley, 1964 [1902]: 112).
16. See also *Still Life #28* (Lincoln); *Still Life #31* (Washington); *Still Life# 10* (Kennedy); *Great American Nude #3; Great American Nude #34*. In *Great American Nude #27,* the framed picture of the president is replaced by a television screen showing a musical performance.
17. For critical discussion, see Etzioni (2001: 118-22). The German language provides two names that resonate, albeit weakly, with these two types of holidays: *Gedenktag*, on which a solemn event, like May 8 or June 17 (end of fighting and official peace between Germany and the former Allies) differs from *Freiertag*, which refers to tension

management holidays, such as Christmas and the commemoration of German unification, work-free days of festival and joy.

18. In contrast, the *Chicago Tribune*'s 1932 frontpage cartoon displays a pantheon of heroes, including George Washington, standing on pedestals atop a platform engraved "Everlasting Fame." A crowd of admirers, mainly men, approach the statues and look up to them. The context is the Great Depression. Each of the heroes, the artist explains in captions, had grasped an opportunity to become great. That the "Present Opportunity" pedestal is empty means that artist and viewer continue to believe in greatness, continue to hope that someone among themselves might have the capacity to step forward and save them from disaster, just as had been the case in the past. The cartoon's title, "Awaiting the Man," suggests as much. To conceive of "Awaiting the Man" appearing in a twenty-first century newspapers, let alone on its frontpage, is difficult to imagine, for it reflects a mentality that has become foreign, corny, naive.

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