

The original documents are located in Box 35, “7/1/76 - Remarks at the Opening of the Historic Centennial Safe in Statuary Hall” of the President’s Speeches and Statements: Reading Copies at the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.

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REMARKS AT OPENING OF CENTENNIAL SAFE

THURSDAY, JULY 1, 1976

CENTENNIAL SAFE OPENING

THANK YOU, SENATOR MANSFIELD

MR. SPEAKER

Lenato Scott
SENATOR PERCY

SENATOR BROOKE

CONGRESSWOMAN BOGGS

DISTINGUISHED MEMBERS OF CONGRESS

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN

deeply
A

I AM HONORED TO OPEN THIS HISTORIC CENTENNIAL SAFE.

IT CONTAINS MANY ITEMS OF INTEREST TO US TODAY AS WE

CELEBRATE THE COMPLETION OF OUR SECOND CENTURY. BUT IT

SYMBOLIZES MUCH MORE THAN A VALUABLE COLLECTION OF MEMENTOS.

IT SYMBOLIZES SOMETHING ABOUT THE UNITED STATES
OF AMERICA THAT IS SO MIGHTY AND SO INSPIRING / THAT IT CANNOT BE
LOCKED UP IN A SAFE. I MEAN THE AMERICAN SPIRIT.

WHEN THIS SAFE WAS SEALED, AMERICANS LOOKED FORWARD
TO THE FUTURE / TO THIS YEAR OF 1976.

THERE WAS NO DOUBT IN THEIR MINDS THAT A PRESIDENT OF A FREE
GOVERNMENT WOULD PARTICIPATE IN A CEREMONY ~~HERE~~, IN THE
UNITED STATES CAPITOL BUILDING. JUST AS AMERICAN MEN AND
WOMEN 200 YEARS AGO LOOKED TO THE FUTURE, THOSE WHO SEALED
THIS SAFE 100 YEARS AGO LOOKED TO THE FUTURE. SO IT IS
WITH TODAY'S AMERICANS. BUT THERE IS NO SAFE BIG ENOUGH TO
CONTAIN THE HOPES, ENERGIES AND ABILITIES OF OUR PEOPLE.

OUR REAL NATIONAL TREASURE DOES NOT HAVE TO BE KEPT

UNDER LOCK AND KEY IN A SAFE OR A VAULT. AMERICA'S WEALTH

IS NOT IN MATERIAL OBJECTS BUT IN OUR GREAT HERITAGE,

OUR FREEDOM, AND IN OUR BELIEF IN OURSELVES.

A CENTURY AGO, THE POPULATION OF THE UNITED STATES

NUMBERED OVER 40 MILLION. TODAY, WE HAVE ABOUT FIVE TIMES

AS MANY. BUT THE GROWTH OF OUR POPULATION HAS NOT LESSENE

OUR DEVOTION TO THE PRINCIPLES THAT INSPIRED AMERICANS IN

1776 AND 1876.

IN 1876 OUR IMMENSE WEALTH, BOTH NATURAL AND
INVENTIVE, COMMANDED WORLDWIDE ATTENTION. WE GREW
FROM COAST TO COAST, IN GREATER INDUSTRIAL AND AGRICULTURAL
DEVELOPMENT THAN HUMANITY HAD EVER KNOWN.

IN 1876 AMERICA WAS STILL EMERGING FROM A TERRIBLE

FRATERNAL WAR. A LESSER PEOPLE MIGHT HAVE BEEN UNEQUAL TO THE

CHALLENGE. BUT 1976 FINDS THE CONFIDENCE OF 1876 CONFIRMED.

TODAY, THERE IS FAR GREATER EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY, LIBERTY

AND JUSTICE FOR ALL OF OUR CITIZENS IN EVERY CORNER OF AMERICA.

THERE IS RISING PROSPERITY FOR OUR NATION AND PEACE AND PROGRESS

FOR OUR PEOPLE.

WE LOOK BACK TO THE EVENING OF JULY 4, 1776•

IT WAS THEN, AFTER THE ADOPTION OF THE DECLARATION OF

INDEPENDENCE, THAT THE CONTINENTAL CONGRESS RESOLVED THAT

FRANKLIN, ADAMS, AND JEFFERSON BEGIN WORK ON A SEAL

AS A NATIONAL SYMBOL•

WE ARE ALL FAMILIAR WITH THE

FRONT OF THE GREAT SEAL•

BUT THE REVERSE SIDE, WHICH ALSO APPEARS ON EVERY DOLLAR

BILL, IS TODAY ESPECIALLY INSTRUCTIVE. IT DEPICTS A

PYRAMID WHICH IS NOT COMPLETED AND A SINGLE EYE GAZING

OUT RADIANTLY. THE UNFINISHED PYRAMID REPRESENTS THE

WORK THAT REMAINS FOR AMERICANS TO DO.

THE LATIN MOTTO BELOW IS FREELY TRANSLATED / "GOD HAS

FAVORED OUR UNDERTAKING."

TWO HUNDRED YEARS LATER,

God
WE KNOW ~~HE~~ HAS.

THOUGH WE MAY DIFFER, AS AMERICANS HAVE
THROUGHOUT THE PAST, WE SHARE A COMMON PURPOSE.
IT IS THE ACHIEVEMENT OF A FUTURE IN KEEPING WITH OUR
GLORIOUS PAST. THE AMERICAN REPUBLIC PROVIDES FOR
CONTINUED GROWTH THROUGH A CONVERGENCE OF VIEWS AND
INTERESTS. BUT THAT GROWTH MUST BE SPIRITUAL AS WELL
AS MATERIAL.

AS WE LOOK INSIDE THIS SAFE, LET US LOOK INSIDE

OURSELVES•

LET US LOOK INTO OUR HEARTS AND HOPES•

ON SUNDAY WE START A NEW CENTURY, A CENTURY OF
THE INDIVIDUAL• WE HAVE GIVEN MEANING TO OUR LIFE AS
A NATION• LET US NOW WELCOME A CENTURY IN WHICH WE
GIVE NEW MEANING TO OUR LIVES AS INDIVIDUALS• LET US
LOOK INSIDE OURSELVES TO UNLEASH THE GOD-GIVEN TREASURES
STORED WITHIN•

AND LET US LOOK OUTSIDE OURSELVES TO THE NEEDS OF
OUR FAMILIES, OUR FRIENDS, OUR COMMUNITIES, OUR
NATION, AND OUR MORAL AND SPIRITUAL CONSCIOUSNESS.

I WILL NOW OPEN THE SAFE.

END OF TEXT