

REMARKS OF SPEAKER CARL ALBERT  
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
OPENING OF THE CENTENNIAL SAFE  
STATUARY HALL, U.S. CAPITOL  
JULY 1, 1976

CONGRESSWOMAN BOGGS, PRESIDENT FORD, MAJORITY  
LEADER MANSFIELD, SENATOR BROOKE, MEMBERS OF THE JOINT  
BICENTENNIAL COMMITTEE, AND FRIENDS:

THE IDEA FOR THIS CENTENNIAL SAFE CAME INTO BEING  
THROUGH THE VISION, CREATIVITY AND HARD WORK OF A REMARKABLE  
WOMAN -- ANNA DEIHM. INDUSTRIOUS, PATRIOTIC, THE WIDOW  
OF A CIVIL WAR VETERAN, MRS. DEIHM SOUGHT TO LINK THE  
ANNIVERSARY OF THE FIRST HUNDRED YEARS OF OUR COUNTRY'S  
HISTORY WITH ITS EXPECTED BICENTENNIAL CELEBRATION IN 1976.

TODAY, HER DREAMS BECOME A REALITY.

THE CENTENNIAL SAFE WAS FIRST ON DISPLAY IN  
PHILADELPHIA IN 1876. AFTER THE EXPOSITION WAS OVER, THE  
SAFE WAS MOVED TO THE UNITED STATES CAPITOL. FOR A TIME,  
IT WAS ON DISPLAY HERE IN STATUARY HALL.



THIS, OF COURSE, WAS THE LOCATION OF THE OLD HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CHAMBERS FROM 1807 TO 1857. HERE, HENRY CLAY AND JAMES K. POLK, PRESIDED AS SPEAKERS. HERE, DANIEL WEBSTER, AND LATER, ABRAHAM LINCOLN, SERVED AS OBSCURE REPRESENTATIVES, EACH DESTINED TO ACHIEVE A MUCH GREATER FAME. IT WAS IN THIS CHAMBER THAT JOHN QUINCY ADAMS WAS CHOSEN AS PRESIDENT OVER ANDREW JACKSON IN 1825 WHEN THE ELECTION WAS THROWN INTO THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES. HERE, THE AGING ADAMS, ENDING HIS BRILLIANT PUBLIC CAREER IN THE HOUSE, SUFFERED HIS FATAL STROKE.

PERHAPS A FEW OF ADAMS' COLLEAGUES SURVIVED TO BE INCLUDED AMONG THE 500 LEADING MEN OF THE NATION WHOSE PHOTOGRAPHS AND SIGNATURES WERE PRESERVED IN THIS SAFE'S ALBUMS.

CLEARLY, MOST OF THE MEMBERS OF THE 44TH CONGRESS, WHO SERVED FROM 1875 TO 1877, WERE INCLUDED IN THESE ALBUMS, ABOUT TO BE OPENED FOR THE FIRST TIME IN 100 YEARS. SAMUEL J. RANDALL OF PENNSYLVANIA HAD JUST BEGUN THE FIRST OF THREE TERMS AS SPEAKER OF A 293-MEMBER HOUSE; THOMAS W. FERRY OF MICHIGAN SERVED AS PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE OF A 76-MEMBER SENATE.



ASIDE FROM THE SMALLER SIZE AND MORE LIMITED SESSIONS, HOUSE AND SENATE DEBATE A CENTURY AGO WAS NOT THAT MUCH DIFFERENT FROM CONTEMPORARY CONGRESSES. TURNING BACK THE CLOCK, 100 YEARS AGO, ONE WOULD FIND THE HOUSE CONSIDERING A LEGISLATIVE, EXECUTIVE AND JUDICIAL APPROPRIATIONS BILL; THE SENATE TAKING UP SUNDRY PRINTING COSTS OF VARIOUS DEPARTMENTS OF THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT.

OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES ONCE REMARKED: "HISTORIC CONTINUITY WITH THE PAST IS NOT A DUTY, IT IS ONLY A NECESSITY." MRS. DEIHM WOULD HAVE ECHOED THAT SENTIMENT. THANKS TO HER SPLENDID EFFORTS, WE ARE ONCE AGAIN REMINDED OF OUR PRECIOUS HERITAGE AND OF THE DEDICATION OF SO MANY PEOPLE WHO HAVE CONTRIBUTED TO OUR COUNTRY'S FREEDOM, STRENGTH AND PROSPERITY -- 200 YEARS AGO, 100 YEARS AGO, AND NOW.



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Congresswoman Boggs, President Ford, Majority Leader  
Mansfield, Senator Brooke, Members of the Joint Bicentennial  
Committee, and friends:

The idea for this Centennial Safe came into being  
through the vision, creativity and hard work of a remarkable  
woman -- Anna Deihm. Industrious, patriotic, the widow of a  
Civil War veteran, Mrs. Deihm sought to link the anniversary of  
the first hundred years of our country's history with its  
expected Bicentennial Celebration in 1976.

Today, her dreams become a reality.

The Centennial Safe was first on display in Philadelphia  
in 1876. After the Exposition was over, the safe was moved to  
the United States Capitol. For a time, it was on display, here,  
in Statuary Hall.



Opening of  
Centennial Safe

This, of course, was the location of the old House of Representatives Chambers from 1807 to 1857. Here, Henry Clay presided as Speaker. Here, Daniel Webster, and later, Abraham Lincoln, served as obscure Representatives, each destined to achieve a much greater fame. It was in this chamber that John Quincy Adams was chosen as President over Andrew Jackson in 1825 when the election was thrown into the House of Representatives. Here, the aging Adams, ending his brilliant public career in the House, suffered his fatal stroke.

Perhaps a few of Adams' colleagues survived to be included among the 500 leading men of the Nation whose photographs and signatures were preserved in this safe's albums.

Clearly, most of the Members of the 44th Congress, who served from 1875 to 1877, were included in these albums, about to be opened for the first time in 100 years. Samuel J. Randall of Pennsylvania had just begun the first of three terms as Speaker of a 293-Member House; Thomas W. Ferry of Michigan served as President Pro Tempore of a 76-Member Senate.



Opening of  
the Centennial Safe

Aside from the smaller size and more limited sessions, House and Senate debate a century ago was not that much different from contemporary Congresses. Turing back the clock, 100 years ago, one would find the House considering a Legislative, Executive and Judicial Appropriations bill; the Senate taking up sundry printing costs of various departments of the Federal Government.

Oliver Wendell Holmes once remarked: "Historic continuity with the past is not a duty, it is only a necessity." Mrs. Deihm would have echoed that sentiment. Thanks to her splendid efforts, we are once again reminded of our precious heritage and of the dedication of so many people who have contributed to our country's freedom, strength and prosperity --200 years ago, 100 years ago, and now.