Yes, for many readers, popular histories such as *The Floppy Show* will evoke a great deal of nostalgia; but serious historians should not confuse nostalgia with frivolity. As American Studies scholar George Lipsitz observes, "The messages of popular culture circulate in a network of production and reception that is quite serious. . . . A sideshow sometimes can be the main event." Accordingly, Stein effectively illustrates why a long-running children's cartoon show that featured a dog puppet should be considered a main event in Iowa history.

History Comes Alive: Public History and Popular Culture in the 1970s, by M. J. Rymsza-Pawlowska. Studies in United States Culture. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017. xiii, 241 pp. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. $29.95 paperback.

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Iowa Living History Farms, which opened in 1970, and the World Food Conference of 1976, held at Iowa State University, were Iowa's two nationally recognized U.S. Bicentennial projects, but Iowans marked the nation's 200th anniversary with hundreds of undertakings—from the restoration of Old Capitol in Iowa City and Terrace Hill in Des Moines to the 811 towns and cities recognized as Bicentennial Communities, the 1,500 "Iowa Heritage in the American Revolution" study kits distributed to fifth-grade teachers, and the 5,000 farms that qualified for Century Farm designation. Iowa led the nation with 2,800 recorded projects and events, 50 percent more than any other state. (See *Iowa and the U.S. Bicentennial, 1776–1976: The Final Report* [1976].) Iowa isn't mentioned once in *History Comes Alive: Public History and Popular Culture in the 1970s*, but if you are curious about the larger context in which bicentennial celebrations—and protests—occurred, read this book.

The author, M. J. Rymsza-Pawlowska, sees the bicentennial as a pivotal event in American cultural history. As she reads the 1970s, the bicentennial, as well as the decade itself, marked a transformation of historical consciousness among Americans. She argues that in the 1970s a "logic of preservation" gave way to a "logic of reenactment" as a way of making sense of the past (6–7). By this she means that history-based performative activities, such as living history, reenactment, and immersive or interactive experiences at museums and historic sites, began to challenge the traditional mode of understanding the past through documents and other material evidence. The author's premise concerning

the "logic of preservation"—that it "relies on stable and uncontested material evidence" (6)—might be questionable, but she nonetheless weaves a convincing argument that "reenactive engagement with history emerged in the 1970s as a primary mode of historymaking" (167).

Rymsza-Pawlowska unpacks the complicated politics of the American Revolution Bicentennial Commission (ARBC), the initial federal planning body, and the American Revolution Bicentennial Administration (ARBA), which replaced it. She traces the shift from centralized planning wedded to the traditional metanarrative of Anglo-American history under the ARBC to a decentralized approach under the ARBA, which encouraged much greater citizen participation, with all the creativity and unpredictability that came with it. Not surprisingly, the author focuses more on the latter. For instance, she makes only passing reference in a lengthy list of patriotic projects promoted by the ARBC to the American Freedom Train, a traveling exhibition of Americana that included George Washington's copy of the Constitution (59), but she devotes a whole chapter to a host of reenactment projects that sprang from state and local sources, such as reenactments of the LaSalle Expedition of 1681 from Montreal to New Orleans and the 1776 Juan Bautista de Anza Expedition from Mexico City to San Francisco, and the Bicentennial Wagon Train, a year-long, multistate effort to retrace westward expansion in reverse from various points in the West to Valley Forge. She does not assert that reenactment events were new in the 1970s but, rather, that the "forms and purposes of reenactment [changed] considerably" (119).

The author's examination extends to related shifts taking place in American culture. She notes the rise of history-themed prime-time television shows such as *The Waltons* and *Little House on the Prairie* and the new miniseries genre popularized by *Roots*. She also points to the democratizing trend in historic preservation from upper-class groups focused on preserving revered architectural gems to community-based organizations increasingly interested in preserving buildings associated with ordinary people and historic districts that still held a certain feel of the past.

Much of Rymsza-Pawlowska's attention, however, is trained on cultural politics. The People's Bicentennial Commission (PBC), a private organization that challenged the partisanship of the ARBC under the Nixon Administration and helped bring about its demise, also helped to put a finer point on social activism. In Boston, for example, the PBC as well as disabled veterans, Native Americans, and feminists repurposed the official commemoration of the 1773 Boston Tea Party by calling attention to the long history of inequality in American society. In a different vein, the Afro-American Bicentennial Corporation, another private organization, and many black activists, including the

Black Panther Party, sought to build on the earlier Black Arts movement by adding African American histories to the American narrative. The combined strength of bicentennial counterpoint movements led to the transformation of what the author calls "the American archive" of stories, events, and personalities associated with American identity (139ff). The full scope of inquiry in this book is difficult to capture in a brief review; suffice to say that Rymsza-Pawlowska's analysis of American popular culture in the 1970s in relation to the U.S. Bicentennial helps explain why the culture wars, which began in the 1970s, have gradually become the new normal.