

AMERICA’S REPUBLICAN VALHALLA VANISHED:

THE RISE AND FALL OF THE HALL OF FAME FOR GREAT AMERICANS

By

Daniel Saperstein, Esq.
Columbia University

On 30 May 1901, America’s Decoration Day, about five thousand people gathered at University Heights, the unfinished Bronx campus of New York University (NYU), to dedicate the nation’s first hall of fame. For the twenty-nine inductees enshrined, Tiffany Studios designed bronze tablets attached to the limestone and granite surface of architect Stanford White’s five hundred foot long and ten-foot-three-inch wide semicircular colonnade. As select guests snaked across the sinuous redbrick walkway for the unveiling, the pink Rafael-Guastavino-tiled roof brightened the open-air corridor. The Hall of Fame for Great Americans, made possible by the then-anonymous \$100,000 donation of philanthropist Ms. Helen Gould, awaited the arrival of bronze busts to rest above the nameplates and between the square piers formed by a double row of classic columns.¹

NYU Chancellor Henry Mitchell MacCracken’s creation once captured the imagination of the country: now it is a footnote, the gated likenesses of 98 Americans rusting on the grounds of the Bronx Community College (BCC).² This paper will analyze why the Hall of Fame for Great Americans has lapsed into irrelevance. Part I chronicles its origins in the historical backdrop of hero-craving late-nineteenth-century America. Part II details its election results, searching for themes and aberrations in the selections. Part III proposes the reasons for its downfall: a flawed constitution, the contextual nature of heroism, the

¹ For the Hall of Fame’s debut, see “Hall of Fame is Dedicated,” *Chicago Daily*, 31 May 1901. For its architectural makeup, see Robert Johnson, *Your Hall of Fame: Being An Account Of The Origin, Establishment, And History Of This Division of New York University From 1900 to 1935 Inclusive* (Washington Square, NY: NYU, 1935), 3. For Miss Gould’s generosity, see “Miss Gould’s Gift to Hall of Fame,” *New York Times*, 8 March 1900. For the first busts, see “More Names in Hall of Fame,” *Los Angeles Times*, 31 May 1907.

² For an explanation of why four of the 102 total inductees do not have busts, see *infra* Part III (H).

emergence of celebrity, the undue influence of interest groups, resistance to fame, the success of the “specialized” hall of fame, the federal desertion of Bronx County, the government scandals from the 1950s through the 1970s, charges of racism, a remote location, the near-bankruptcy of NYU, lack of funding, and waning tourism. The conclusion explores whether the Hall of Fame or another such shrine is relevant today.

I. THE GENESIS OF THE HALL OF FAME: HERO HUNGER AND LATE NINETEENTH CENTURY AMERICA

A. MacCracken, White, and University Heights

On 1 March 1910, the front page of *The New York Times* read in capital letters: “MACCRACKEN QUILTS THE UNIVERSITY.” The grizzled chancellor of “NYU WOULDN’T COPY ROOSEVELT,” the recently retired president who went hunting for lions in Africa, preferring instead “to Hunt Lions of Education in Japan.”³ MacCracken, an educator for nearly 50 years, had served at NYU as chair of the philosophy department, vice-chancellor (1885-1891), and chancellor (1891-1910). In 1894, more than fifteen years before his departure, MacCracken cemented his legacy by relocating the “sorely tried institution” of Greenwich Village to the uptown greenery of University Heights, where “more patrons arose, a splendid dormitory was built, [and] a library of monumental beauty was reared.”⁴

Modeling the new campus after the Greco-Roman edifices of Thomas Jefferson’s University of Virginia, chief-architect White visualized as early as 1894 a colonnade resting upon a massive granite substructure to enhance the view of the new campus from the Harlem River. Initially, NYU’s executive committee rejected the proposed colonnade as the architectural foreground to the Hall of Languages, the nearly finished Pantheon-like Gould Memorial Library, and the soon-to-be-erected Hall of Philosophy—all made (or to be made)

³ “MacCracken Quits The University,” *New York Times*, 1 March 1910.

⁴ For MacCracken’s impact on NYU, see E.G. Sihler, “The Place of Chancellor MacCracken in the History of New York University,” in *Henry Mitchell MacCracken. In Memoriam* (New York: NYU Press, 1928), 62, 78.

of yellow Roman brick with limestone and terra-cotta trim. Despite this, White had reintroduced the idea into his drawings by 1896.⁵ By 1900, MacCracken had secured approval for the costly project by consecrating this onetime battleground of the Revolution with a tribute to America's heroes.⁶

B. Shrine Upon a Hill

Robert Underwood Johnson, a later NYU chancellor, expressed surprise that the Hall of Fame "should have waited until the year 1900 for its conception." But the idea of an American hero shrine was not without precedent. In 1790, future Supreme Court Justice James Wilson prophetically predicted the structure and contents of the Hall of Fame: "The glorious dome already arises. Its architecture is of the neatest and chastest order: its dimensions are spacious: its proportions are elegant and correct. In its front a number of niches are formed. In some of them statues are placed."⁷ The architect Robert Mills later foresaw an obelisk to Washington towering above a colonnade enshrining other notables of the Revolution. Begun in 1848 on America's future Mall, the Washington Monument's accompanying pantheon never materialized, as the nation's sectarian strife limited the project to the obelisk.⁸

With 'A House Divided,' in April of 1864, United States Representative Justin Morill conceived of Statuary Hall, proposing that the vacant former House chamber "be set apart for the reception of such statuary as each State shall elect to be deserving of" national recognition. Each state could nominate two individuals "for their historic renown or for

⁵ Leland Roth, *McKim, Mead & White Architects* (New York: Harper & Row, 1983), 190.

⁶ Henry Mitchell MacCracken, *The Hall of Fame: Being the Official Book Authorized by the NYU Senate as a Statement of the Origin And Constitution of the Hall of Fame, And of its History up to the Close of the Year 1900* (New York: The Knickerbocker Press, 1901), 2-3.

⁷ James Wilson, "On the Study of Law in the United States," in *The Works of James Wilson*, ed. Robert Green McCloskey (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1967), 1: 71-72.

⁸ "Virtual American Biographies," s.v. "Mills, Robert," <http://www.famousamericans.net/robertmills> (accessed December 30, 2009).

distinguished civic or military services.” MacCracken regularly criticized Statuary Hall’s inattention to “science and scholarship,” for “every man thus far honored, with a single eccentric exception, has been a holder of public office either military or civil.” Chancellor Johnson emphasized that “the lesson of that calamity has not been lost upon those in charge of the Colonnade at University Heights.”⁹

MacCracken also condemned the halls of fame in Great Britain, France, and Germany, basing his censure on their air of royalty, nobility, and sainthood. He argued that both German Halls of Fame were “too monarchical and too militaristic.” Of non-king and non-soldier Germans, he noted, “not even their names are known but they are designated ‘The author of the oldest Germanic poem’; ‘The architect of the most famous cathedral of Cologne’; and finally ‘The three heroes of liberty who made their plans together at Ruetli in German Switzerland.’ Westminster Abbey, he complained, prominently displayed British aristocracy while “it is only the outer region of the so-called ‘Poets Corner’ in one transept and the ‘Statesmen’s Corner’ in another transept that really makes . . . a Hall of Fame for Great British Citizens.” He deemed the French Hall of Fame a “pagan shrine” without much recognition of the Enlightenment *philosophes*. In the spirit of democratic standards, the Chancellor recognized American fame as “the opinion of the wise in regard to great men accepted and held by a multitude of people.” He boasted of his own creation, “The Hall for Great Americans is in its constitution like America.”¹⁰

MacCracken admired the public contributions of America’s past leaders from a young age, recalling, “I had a Hall of Fame for Great Americans when I was not ten years old, only I did not call it by that name.” Reverend Henry Coffin noted, “The youthful Henry used to

⁹ Johnson, *Your Hall of Fame*, 12-13. For Statuary Hall’s provenance, see “The Origin of the National Statuary Hall Collection,” *The Architect of the Capitol*, http://www.aoc.gov/cc/art/nsh/nsh_coll_origin.cfm (accessed December 30, 2009). For MacCracken’s disapproval of Statuary Hall, see MacCracken, *The Hall of Fame*, 22-23; Theodore Morello, ed., *Official Handbook: The Hall of Fame for Great Americans at New York University* (Washington Square: NYU Press, 1962), 11.

¹⁰ For MacCracken’s views on Europe’s halls of fame, see Johnson, *Your Hall of Fame*, 2-3; Guide to the Personal Papers of Henry Mitchell MacCracken 1852-1910, New York University. For MacCracken’s definition of American fame, see Philip Katz, “Valhalla in the Bronx,” *Culture Front* (1998): 13.

stand eagerly drinking in the reading, and its effect was shown in his choice of an original plaything. He formed a collection of empty spoons which he arranged into armies or into a congress of the United States making a constitution, naming the big spoons Washington, Franklin, Adams, and other prominent heroes of the national history.” MacCracken’s passion for American biographical history, the symbolism of University Heights, the writings of Wilson, Mills’ design for an accompanying pantheon to the Washington Monument, and the lessons of Statuary Hall and Europe’s halls of fame molded his vision. But his devotion to public service—an extension of his religious conviction as an ordained Presbyterian minister—stands out. The devout MacCracken yearned to fulfill the prophecies of the early Puritans, who likened America to a New Israel shining “light to lighten the world.” Set atop a hilltop, his creation concretized the Puritan John Winthrop’s vision of America as the ‘City Upon a Hill.’¹¹

C. Democracy Has No Monuments?

The conventional view of America’s founders is that hero worship and its product, fame, contradicted democracy. Author Richard Rubin wrote, “So wary were they of the trappings of monarchy—especially an official aristocracy—that they declined to establish any kind of mechanism to recognize greatness. There would be no knighthoods in America.” John Adams established, “It will never be pretended that any persons [of the Revolution]...had interviews with the gods, or were in any degree under the inspiration of Heaven.” For Thomas Jefferson, it was “ridiculous to suppose that a man had less rights in himself than one of his neighbors.” With the humility of the Revolutionary heroes as

¹¹ For MacCracken’s Puritan roots, see Henry Coffin, “Chancellor MacCracken as Citizen,” in *Henry Mitchell MacCracken. In Memoriam*, 42. For background on the Puritans, see Walter McDougall, *Promised Land, Crusader State: The American Encounter With The World Since 1776* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1997), 20. For Winthrop’s prophecy, see John Winthrop, “Sermon: A Model of Christian Charity” (1630).

precedent, the faceless consistency of war memorials of the nineteenth century affirmed this egalitarianism.¹²

There were signs, however, of early American idolization. Historian Douglas Adair contended that “the lust for the psychic reward of fame, honor, glory, after 1776” fixated Washington and his foremost contemporaries. According to Adair, prior to the Revolution mere land, standing, and reputation motivated the likes of Washington, Adams, Jefferson, and Madison. But, he argued, the magnitude of a war for independence against the world’s most powerful empire transformed their earthly ambitions into “an almost obsessive desire for fame.”¹³ Historian L.H. Butterfield identified the nation’s fiftieth birthday in 1826 as a watershed in American hero worship. That fateful July 4th, when former-presidents John Adams and Thomas Jefferson passed, “awakened in every thoughtful citizen a consciousness of the republican ideals the two patriots exemplified.” From this stirring, the nation lavishly lauded George Washington, the touchstone of an increasingly divided union. Mill’s Washington Monument in Baltimore (1829)—a statue of the President atop a Doric column—was the country’s first grand monument to an individual.¹⁴

In 1829, when the hero of the Battle of New Orleans, Andrew Jackson, trekked from Tennessee to Washington D.C., he carried a brand of democracy antithetical to individual veneration. When asked if he would prefer a sarcophagus for his eternal rest, Jackson replied, “I cannot consent that my mortal body shall be laid in a repository prepared for an

¹² Michael Kammen, *Mystic Chords of Memory: The Transformation of Tradition in American Culture* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1991), 19. Richard Rubin, “The Mall of Fame: Even in Neglect, a Shrine to Our Society’s Values Embodies Them Still,” *Atlantic Monthly* 280, no. 1 (1997): 14 (hereafter cited as “Mall of Fame”). For John Adams’ quote, see Wesley Craven, *The Legend of the Founding Fathers* (New York: NYU Press, 1956), 74. Thomas Jefferson, “Natural Rights of Man,” in *Democracy by Thomas Jefferson*, selected and arranged with an introduction by Saul K. Padover (New York: D. Appleton Century Company, 1939), 23.

¹³ Douglas Adair, “Fame and the Founding Fathers,” in *Fame and the Founding Fathers*, ed. Trevor Colburn (New York: W.W. Norton & Company Inc., 1974), 7-8.

¹⁴ L.H. Butterfield, “The Jubilee of Independence, July 4, 1826,” *The Virginia Magazine of History And Biography* 61, no. 2 (1953): 119, 139. For appreciation of the Adams-Jefferson dynamic, see John Ferling, *Adams v. Jefferson: The Tumultuous Election of 1800* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004). For the adulation of Washington, see Jefferson J. Miller, “The Designs for the Washington Monument in Baltimore,” *The Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* (1964): 19-28. Archie McDonald, “More than Man,” in *George Washington In And As Culture*, ed. Kevin Cope (New York: AMS. Press, Inc., 2001), 5.

emperor or king. My republican feelings and principles forbid it.”¹⁵ As the Age of Jackson witnessed the elevation of the common man, Jacksonian disciples muted the call for hero worship. With remembrance now limited to toasts of past heroes, Philadelphians allowed the razing of George Washington’s presidential mansion in 1832, the Philadelphia *Public Ledger* opposed a proposed monument to Washington in 1837, and even a ceremony to honor Jackson’s victory in New Orleans was deemed undemocratic.¹⁶

As Jackson’s presidency faded and the Civil War loomed, the persona of Washington resurfaced, with North and South each claiming his legacy. In the wake of the nation’s fratricide, both sides lionized their heroes in a Civil War-Revolution continuum. In the North, with the martyred Abraham Lincoln deified, General and later President Ulysses Grant assumed the mantle. His death spurred a strident shift in American monument building from the unadorned obelisks of the past to the grandeur of Grant’s Tomb. In the South, Monument Avenue became a shrine to the officers of the Confederacy. Although the splintered nation worshiped two sets of heroes, the country had become more fame-conscious since its founding. America had proved critic Thomas Carlyle wrong, when he stated of democracies, “Hero-worship professes to have gone out, and finally ceased.”¹⁷

D. The Historic Divide

For the *post-bellum* nation, the notion of Reconstruction swept both the North and the South. The City Beautiful movement of the late nineteenth century “crystallized a new sense

¹⁵ Andrew Burnstein, *The Passions of Andrew Jackson* (New York: Vintage Books, 2003), 217.

¹⁶ Democratic Review, “The Democratic Principle,” in *The Meaning of Jacksonian Democracy, Problems in American Civilization*, ed. Edwin Charles Rozwenc (Boston: D.C. Heath and Company, 1963), 19. Arthur Schlesinger Jr., *The Age of Jackson* (Old Saybrook: Konecky & Konecky, 1971), 159-176. Kammen, *Mystic Chords of Memory*, 53, 55, 68.

¹⁷ Historian Thomas Carlyle, preeminent scholar on hero worship, held that the “History of the world is but the Biography of Great Men.” Thomas Carlyle, *On Heroes, Hero-Worship, & the Heroic in History* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1993), 11; Katz, “Valhalla in the Bronx,” 13. For the North’s perspective, see Kammen, *Mystic Chords of Memory*, 129. For the South’s perspective, see John Coski, “The War Between the Names: What Should the American War of 1861 to 1865 Be Called?,” *North and South* (2006): 62-71. For the history of Grant’s Tomb, see Eric Reinert, *Grant’s Tomb* (Eastern National, 1997), 6. For the history of Monument Avenue, see Sarah Driggs, et al, *Richmond’s Monument Avenue* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001).

of civic grandeur.” In a show of unity, America held the City Beautiful-inspired Centennial Exposition (1876) in Philadelphia to commemorate America’s unifying manifesto, the Declaration of Independence. Outdone seventeen years later on the first morning of May 1893, a procession of carriages paraded past a crowd of thousands awaiting the opening of Chicago’s World’s Columbian Exposition. Upon its dedication, giant American flags unfurled over the neoclassical White City: a powerful moment in the nation’s regeneration.¹⁸

Historian Henry Commager described the 1890s as the “historic divide between the past and the present,” with the Exposition marking the therapeutic transition from *post-bellum* animus. Author Donald Miller writes of “a surge of ‘Americanism’ . . . gazing upon the architectural symbols of the country’s greatness.” Americans revealingly “saw the architecture as a return not to the Rome of the Caesars [or present day Europe] but to the chaste classicism of Thomas Jefferson, ‘a return to our better selves.’” Like the curative role of Washington before the Civil War, the Revolutionary period was common ground for the *post-bellum* North and South.¹⁹

Introducing his “Frontier Thesis” at the Exposition, historian Frederick Jackson Turner argued that the western frontier had disappeared, prompting Social Darwinian preachers to fret for a global Manifest Destiny. Reverend Josiah Strong insisted “that the rigors of the frontier had been God’s way of training the race for global leadership and, with the frontier now closed, ‘the final competition of the races.’” Missionary zeal and envy of Europe’s empire building impelled America to wage the Spanish-American War. Defending

¹⁸ For the City Beautiful movement, see The Brooklyn Museum, *The American Renaissance* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1979), 21. For the Centennial Exposition, see Leland Roth, *American Architecture: A History* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2001), 236-37. Norman Bolotin and Christine Lang, *The Chicago World’s Fair of 1893-The World’s Columbian Expo* (Chicago: The Preservation Press, 1992), 1. For the success of the World’s Columbian Exposition, see Claudia Bushman, *America Discovers Columbus: How An Italian Explorer Became An American Hero* (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1992), 159. Donald Miller, *City of the Century* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996), 491.

¹⁹ David Burg, *Chicago’s White City of 1893* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1976), xii. Alfred Kazin, *An American Procession: Major American Writers, 1830-1930* (Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1984), 249. Miller, *City of the Century*, 491. Europe’s *Ecole des Beaux Arts* trained many of the Exposition’s leading architects in the classical style of Greco-Roman architecture. See Chaim Rosenberg, *America at the Fair: Chicago’s 1893 World’s Columbian Exposition* (Chicago: Arcadia Publishing, 2008), 244.

the mission, U.S. Senator Albert Beveridge defined America as the “land that can feed and clothe the world.”²⁰

The post-bellum healing process had reached remarkable heights: America was not only a united country again, but a “benevolent” empire. As the nation approached the 20th century, the Civil War ignited an appetite for history and a hunger for hero worship. The City Beautiful movement, Philadelphia Centennial, and the World’s Columbian Exposition brought order out of chaos. Completing the objective of Manifest Destiny divined a special providence. The Social Darwinist-inspired Spanish-American War fueled patriotism. The post-war occupations kindled grand visions of empire. And, lastly, the plight of newly “freed” nations spurred American appreciation for her own independence. The time was ripe for an American hall of fame.

II. ELECTION TRENDS AND ABERRATIONS

A. The Inaugural Class

In March 1900, following approval by the Council of NYU, MacCracken drafted a constitution for the Hall of Fame, immediately generating interest and competition.²¹ The

²⁰ McDougall, *Promised Land, Crusader State*, 101, 105. Frederick Jackson Turner. “The Significance of the Frontier in American History.” Josiah Strong, *Our Country* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1965), 13.

²¹ MacCracken, *The Hall of Fame*, 7-8. The original rules, which were regularly amended, included:

- (1) The University will invite nominations until May 1st, from the public in general, of names to be inscribed, to be addressed by mail to the Chancellor of the University, New York City.
- (2) Every name that is seconded by any member of the University Senate will be submitted to one hundred or more persons throughout the country who may be approved by the Senate, as professors or writers of American history, or especially interested in the same.
- (3) No name will be inscribed unless approved by a majority of the answers received from this body of judges before October 1st of the year of election.
- (4) Each name thus approved will be inscribed unless disapproved before November 1st by a majority of the nineteen members of the New York University Senate, who are the Chancellor with the Dean and Senior Professor of each of the six schools, and the president or representative of each of the six theological faculties in or near New York City.
- (5) No name may be inscribed except of a person born in what is now the territory of the United States, and of a person who has been deceased at least ten years.
- (6) In the first fifty names must be included one or more representatives of a majority of the following fifteen classes of citizens :
 - (a) Authors and editors, (b) Business men, (c) Educators, (d) Inventors, (e) Missionaries and explorers, (f) Philanthropists and reformers, (g) Preachers and theologians, (h) Scientists, (i) Engineers and architects, (j) Lawyers and

Brooklyn Daily Eagle, like many newspapers and magazines, offered \$100 for the list, of which there were 776 candidates, which best predicted the outcome of the election.²² The *Omaha World Herald* advertised that the competitions “will impel Americans to more carefully study the lives of great Americans.” In October, the University Senate sent 100 of nearly 1,000 nominations by the public to the 100 member Board of Electors, 97 of whom responded. The electors were an impressive assembly of Americans, among them former President Grover Cleveland and future Presidents Theodore Roosevelt (one of three who did not vote due to his nomination for the vice-presidency) and Woodrow Wilson; former President Benjamin Harrison declined the offer.²³

The Board’s members fell into four groups, comprising of university or college presidents; professors of science and history, publicists, editors, authors, and judges of the Supreme Court, both state and national. They came from forty-one of the forty-five states (twenty-two from New England, twenty-five from the Middle States, sixteen from the South, and thirty from the West). With a balanced geographical distribution, MacCracken warded off worries of a New York or Northern bias. The electors were required to vote for fifty of the total 234 nominations, but only twenty-nine nominees attained a simple majority.²⁴

judges, (k) Musicians, painters, and sculptors, (l) Physicians and surgeons, (m) Rulers and statesmen, (n) Soldiers and sailors, (o) Distinguished men and women outside the above classes.

(7) Should these restrictions leave vacant panels in any year, the Senate may fill the same the ensuing year, following the same rules.

The goal was that “[o]ne hundred and fifty panels, each about two by eight feet, will be provided for inscriptions. Fifty of these will be inscribed in 1900, provided fifty names shall be approved by the two bodies of judges named below. At the close of every five years thereafter, five additional panels will be inscribed, so that the entire number shall be completed by A.D. 2000” (ibid.).

²² MacCracken, *The Hall of Fame*, 31-38, 48.

²³ Louis Banks, *The Story of the Hall of Fame: Including The Lives and Portraits Of The Elected And Of Those Who Barely Missed Election. Also A List of America’s Most Eligible Women* (New York: The Christian Herald, 1902), 352-54. Johnson, *Your Hall of Fame*, 26.

²⁴ MacCracken, *The Hall of Fame*, 24-25, 29-31. The first class of the Hall of Fame was (A) Authors and Editors: Ralph Waldo Emerson (87 Votes), Nathaniel Hawthorne (73), Washington Irving (83), and Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (85); (B) Business Men: none (C) Educators: Horace Mann (67); (D) Inventors: Robert Fulton (86) and Samuel F.B. Morse (82); (E) Missionaries and Explorers: none (F) Philanthropists: Peter Cooper (69) and George Peabody (74); (G) Preachers and Theologians: Henry Ward Beecher (64), William Ellery Channing (58), and Jonathan Edwards (82); (H) Scientists: John James Audubon (67) and Asa Gray (51); (I) Engineers and Architects: none; (J) Judges and Lawyers: James Kent (65), John Marshall (91), and Joseph Story (64); (K) Musicians, Painters, and Sculptors: Gilbert Charles Stuart (52); (L) Physicians and Surgeons: none; (M) Rulers and Statesmen: John Adams (62), Henry Clay (72), Benjamin Franklin (94), Thomas Jefferson (92), Abraham Lincoln (96), George Washington (97), Daniel Webster (96);

MacCracken praised the electors for capturing the zeitgeist of early twentieth century America. He touted, “When the 29 names which stand foremost in the popular vote are placed side by side with the 29 which received a majority of the votes of the one-hundred electors, it appears that there are 22 names that are common to the two lists.” As Rubin noted, “America’s halls of fame do not themselves bestow fame; they merely acknowledge it. Only society can bestow fame.” The selections of the twenty-nine-member inaugural class indeed revealed the national sentiment. First, contrary to his protestations, MacCracken’s desire to reduce the ubiquity of the statesman and soldier met measured success, for no musician, sculptor, architect, or engineer earned admittance. Reflective of the historical trend, turn-of-the-twentieth-century American culture unabashedly emulated its European counterpart. American art went unrecognized, and American architects went unacknowledged, with the fascination of Europe’s *Ecole des Beaux Arts* and the Colonnade.²⁵

Secondly, sectional allegiance generally did not shape the election results. There were a few instances of residual bitterness: John Quincy Adams (three votes shy), whose neo-Federalist presidency chastened Southerners, only received a quarter of the Southern vote. Vice-President John Calhoun (two votes shy), whose defense of nullification inflamed North-South tensions, received less than a third of the Middle States’ vote. Editor-in-chief of the *Evening Post* William Cullen Bryant (two votes shy), a strong opponent of slavery, only received a third of the Southern vote. But there were striking examples of unity: Robert E. Lee (sixty-eight votes) needed only one vote from the South to earn election; Ulysses S. Grant (ninety-three) needed only three votes from the New England and Middle States;

(N) Soldiers and Sailors: David Farragut (79), Ulysses S. Grant (93), Robert E. Lee (68); (O) Distinguished Men and Women Outside The Above Classes: none (ibid., 50-51, 63-66.).

²⁵ Ibid., 40, 65-67. Rubin, “Mall of Fame,” 13. For America’s artistic attraction to Europe, see Lloyd Goodrich, “What is American?,” in *The Artist in America*, compiled by the editors of *Art in America* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company Inc., 1967), 7. Lawrence Levine, “Jazz and American Culture,” in *The Jazz Cadence of American Culture*, ed. Robert O’Meally (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 433.

Admiral David Farragut (seventy-nine) did not need a single vote from the New England states; and Abraham Lincoln (ninety-six) received nineteen of twenty votes from the South.²⁶

Thirdly, statesmen from the Revolutionary and Civil War periods dominated the representation of the inaugural class. In 1936, historian Hugh Moran conducted a biographical study of the then-sixty-three members of the Hall of Fame, searching for shared hereditary, religious, social, economic, moral, and educational experiences. He formulated a scale of excellent, moderate, limited, and no information (or some other close variant) to evaluate ancestry, parent-child relationships, educational and religious background, and motivations, ideals, and purposes. From this paper's perspective, Moran failed to evince dispositive patterns, for it was inherently fruitless to quantify immeasurably qualitative evidence. He even acknowledged the difficulty of objectifying the data.²⁷

Moran's analysis assumed that heroes became heroes because of some unique trait or exceptional background. The election results of 1900 (and beyond) highlighted that historical context, more than any other factor, determined the "greatness" of the individual. The Revolutionary and Civil Wars elevated the stature of their giants to mythology, trumping the legacies of leaders in "less" important periods. Surprisingly missing from the first class were two-term presidents James Madison, James Monroe, and Andrew Jackson, all of whom attained the nation's highest office *between* the Revolutionary and Civil War periods. Madison, architect of the U.S. Constitution and coauthor of *The Federalist Papers*, belatedly achieved enshrinement in 1905. The "Era of Good Feelings" President Monroe received only nineteen votes, lingering until 1930 for his election. Jackson, one of early America's most

²⁶ MacCracken, *The Hall of Fame*, 66-67.

²⁷ Hugh Anderson Moran, *Makers of America, Significant factors in the Ancestry and Social Inheritance of Leading Americans; A Study of the Lives of Sixty-Three Persons Elected to the American Hall of Fame, from the Point of View of their Heredity, Social and Economic Status, Education, Religion and Moral Training, in an Attempt to Discover Significant Factors in their Early Years* (Ithaca: N.Y. Cornell United Religious Work, 1936), vii, x. There were other attempts to explain election results. M.D. Liming conducted a study of "four reference titles" tallying their "totals of adjectives of praise" describing an inductee and "counting the lines of space" devoted to an inductee. M.D. Liming, "A Study of the Methods of Determining Fame," *Science* (1910): 157-159. For a postal analysis, see "Postal Guide a Hall of Fame," *Washington Post*, 6 Nov. 1910. For even an astrological perspective, see Evangeline Adams, "Temple of Glory Open to Persons Born in Aquarius," *Washington Post*, 1 Mar. 1931.

prominent presidents, waited until 1910. Daniel Webster and Henry Clay, the only two statesman elected in 1900 not defined by the Revolutionary and Civil War, nevertheless dedicated their lives to preserving the result of the Revolution and delaying the Civil War.²⁸

B. Rumbblings of Discontent

There were other perplexing results in the election of 1900. The Hall of Fame's slight of writer Edgar Allan Poe stirred attention. The debate would rage until 1910 when he finally received entry. The botanist Asa Gray earned election, yet his mentor John Torrey received no consideration. Elias Howe, inventor of the sewing machine, did not obtain a space beside Eli Whitney and his cotton gin. No physicians were chosen - not Benjamin Rush, Valentine Mott, nor Marion Sims.²⁹

With the continued absence of Poe, James Fenimore Cooper, and other American writers in 1907, the poet and literary critic Edmund Stedman called for "an improved working method."³⁰ He rebuffed the practice "that 'once only' shall a ballot be cast at each quinquennial election."³¹ His solution: those who come within ten votes of a majority should

²⁸ For election results, see MacCracken, *The Hall of Fame*, 67. Johnson, *Your Hall of Fame*, 5. The absence of the trio may be more nuanced. Perhaps elucidating Madison's oversight in 1900, the War of 1812's turn-of-the-century redefinition diminished his nearly unmatched record of service. As Gerald Johnson wrote, "In this country the War of 1812 remained for a hundred years a victory over England, then it became a military victory of England over the United States." Gerald Johnson, *American Heroes and Hero-Worship*, (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1941), 4. Perhaps explaining Monroe's later entry, his seminal foreign policy doctrine enjoyed more esteem as American involvement in Latin America grew in the early 20th century. See Albert Hart, *The Monroe Doctrine: An Interpretation* (Boston: Little, Brown & Company, 1917), Preface. Perhaps with the exceptions of Washington, Jefferson, and Lincoln, Jackson's presidential legacy could have competed with any other. The elite electors likely disavowed Jacksonian democracy as ochlocratic—a referendum on the cherished leaders of the Revolution. Many of the Founders such as Jefferson and Madison distrusted Jackson's motives. See Schlesinger Jr., *The Age of Jackson*, 37. For an appreciation of Webster's esteem, see David Cole, "The Men Who Would Be President," *New York Times*, Nov. 8, 1987. "By 1901 Webster's reputation was so secure that in the initial voting for the Hall of Fame of Great Americans, he tied with Abraham Lincoln and was second only to George Washington" (ibid.). For Clay, see Robert Remini, *Henry Clay: Statesman for the Union* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1991).

²⁹ Editorial, *The Dial; a Semi-monthly Journal of Literary Criticism, Discussion, and Inf...*XXX, no. 349A January 1, 1901: 8. George Eggleston, *The American Immortals: The Record who by their achievements in Statecraft, War, Science, Literature, Art, Law, and Commerce have created the American Republic and whose names are inscribe in The Hall of Fame* (New York: The Knickerbocker Press, 1901), xi-xii.

³⁰ Edmund Stedman, "Hall of Fame Methods," *New York Times*, 7 September 1907.

³¹ "New Hall of Fame Rules: Election of Great Americans Will Be Made Easier," *New York Times*, 10 Mar. 1912.

place on a provisional ballot. In these special cases, electors could lobby the Board for the election of “near-misses.” Prior to the election of 1915, constitutional amendments were introduced to address the aforementioned problems. First, the classes of electors were regrouped: university or college presidents, professors of history and science, editors and authors, and persons outside the seven vocations here named; plus, high public officials and chief justices of the highest courts, either national or state. Second, to assure better geographic representation, every state or group of states having one million inhabitants would have one elector. Third, the fifteen classes of famous men and women first would be judged by the electors of their fields to rectify the paltry representation of some occupations.

In 1920 John Jay, the first Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, received only two fewer votes than Grover Cleveland, twenty-two more than William Penn, and twenty-seven more than James Monroe—all of whom, except Jay, earned entry between 1930 and 1935. In 1925 Jay peaked at fifty-nine votes, yet still lacked the necessary majority. Following his strongest showing, Jay only garnered twenty-four votes in 1930 and nine in 1935; amazingly, in 1960, he received zero votes. Statesman Samuel Adams had a near-identical voting history, receiving fifty-eight votes in 1925, only thirty-two in 1930, and but one vote in 1960.³² The precipitous drop of Jay and Samuel Adams in short spans of time is perplexing because, by the twentieth century, their legacies had not changed significantly.

While populated by the occasional legislator (Clay and Webster), self-promoter (Benjamin Franklin and Alexander Hamilton), and freedom fighter (Patrick Henry), the Hall of Fame’s Statesman Corner was a Commander-in-Chief Corner. The Hall of Fame confirmed a trend beginning with Theodore Roosevelt’s transformation of the presidency in 1901 and peaking with the election of John Kennedy in 1960: the elevation of the president above other distinguished politicians and statesmen. As Lewis Gould writes, “Theodore Roosevelt did establish the modern presidency as a powerful concept in the minds of the

³² Theodore Morello, ed., *Official Handbook: The Hall of Fame for Great Americans at New York University* (Washington Square: NYU Press, 1967), 174-175.

American people.” That arguably middle-of-the-road presidents John Adams, Madison, Monroe, and John Quincy Adams were denied admission in 1900 and later received entry likely evidences the influence of the modern presidency on the voting behavior of electors.³³ Revealingly, 1960 was the poorest showing for Jay and Samuel Adams.

The Constitution barred foreign-born Americans from entry, resulting in the glaring disqualification of Alexander Hamilton. In 1904, to counter this failing, MacCracken established The Hall of Fame for Foreign-Born Americans, with plans for an addition at the north end of the Colonnade. The supplemental Hall of Fame inducted Hamilton along with the naturalist Louis Agassiz, the separatist Roger Williams, and Revolutionary War general John Paul Jones. The Hall of Fame for Foreign Born Americans, however, ceased in 1914. In 1915, Hamilton and Agassiz earned admittance to the Hall of Fame for Great Americans, yet colonial figures Roger Williams and William Penn waited until 1920 and 1935, respectively. With the dividing line of 1776 apparent, frequently overlooked colonial leaders belonged to European history in American eyes, not the American narrative.³⁴

The class of 1900 did not include a single woman. Three were elected in 1905: Mary Lyon, founder of Mount Holyoke College; Maria Mitchell, astronomer; and Emma Willard, pioneer in the education of women. Two earned admission in 1910: Harriet Beecher Stowe, author of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, and Frances Willard, a champion for temperance. In 1914, to counter the poor showing, NYU established a separate hall of fame for women. Charlotte Cushman, an opera singer, received entry in 1915, as did the former president of Wellesley College Alice Freeman Palmer in 1920. The Hall of Fame for Women shortly discontinued in 1922. Not until 1950, with the election of suffragette Susan B. Anthony, would another

³³ For a look at Theodore Roosevelt’s impact on the presidency, see Lewis Gould, *The Modern American Presidency* (Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 2003), 28. For Kennedy’s aura, see Theodore Lowi, *The Personal President: Power Invested, Promise Unfulfilled* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985), 9.

³⁴ Johnson, *Your Hall of Fame*, 34. Morton Yarmon, “Changing Fashions in our Heroes,” *New York Times* 15 May 1955. Craven, *The Legend of the Founding Fathers*, 172.

woman grace the Hall of Fame for Great Americans. Today there are just eleven women in the Hall of Fame.³⁵

C. Continuing to Project the National Mood

In 1955, *New York Times* author Morton Yarmon analyzed the trends in the Hall of Fame's membership, marking World War I as transformative. The Hall of Fame's post-war election results recognized American cultural output. As the American art form of jazz flourished in the 1920s, the selections reflected the emergent Amerocentric spirit. The era of *Beaux Arts* architecture had subsided, as American realism supplanted European grandeur. America's shift to realism may explain why authors, theologians and educators—the pondering professionals—received less recognition, while physicians, artists and scientists—the hands-on practitioners—garnered more attention. From 1900-1915 there were only two American artists and no physicians to represent nearly three hundred years of history. By the election of 1920 to Yarmon's authorship, there were four artists and three physicians and surgeons. The Hall of Fame represented the shifting winds of the time, seemingly dismissing celebrated professions as deserving heroes of lesser society.³⁶

III. FLEETING FAME: WHY THE HALL OF FAME BECAME EXTINCT BY THE 1970s

A. A Flawed Constitution: The Contextual Nature of Heroism and the Emergence of Celebrity

In 1922, the Hall of Fame amended the Constitution to increase the eligibility for election from ten to twenty-five years *post-mortem*, seeking to separate fame from fleeting popularity.³⁷ Twenty-five years still proved rather myopic, for one's standing, especially as

³⁵ Topics." *New York Times* 29 Mar. 1960.

³⁶ Yarmon, "Changing Fashions in Our Heroes." Levine, "Jazz and American Culture," 433.

³⁷ Morello, *Official Handbook II*, 159; "Thousands to View Hall of Fame Site," *New York Times*, 29 Apr. 1928.

statesman, evolved long after death due to revelations and relevance. Likewise, the significance of authors, scientists, and physicians, who addressed the problems of their day, diminished as time passed. With the advent of television and the glamour of Hollywood, present celebrity trumped past fame. A *New York Times* editorial captured the redefinition of fame: “Fame is a media event, a national phenomenon of instant replay.”³⁸ For any hall of fame to remain relevant, the vast majority of the selections must resonate timelessly. Some of the Hall of Fame’s members are so obscure today that few would argue for their immortality.

B. Lobbying Efforts

Had the electors been better informed of the candidates’ resumes, they may have been insulated from the politics of campaigning. But unpreparedness, coupled with the exorbitant expense of busts in the 1960s (nearly \$11,000 a head), allowed outside groups to influence elections with donations. Originally, MacCracken’s Constitution called for nameplates, with only the prospect of busts or statues. Without busts, interest groups such as the United Daughters of the Confederacy (UDC) might not have played such a prominent role. The UDC frequently embarked on propaganda campaigns to elect its Southern heroes, most controversially former President of the Confederacy Jefferson Davis. For Davis and others, the UDC disseminated pamphlets to the Board of Electors, listing hundreds of complementary quotes from a host of great Americans, including soldiers, jurists, congressmen, governors, clergymen, educators, authors, and patriotic societies. To appreciate the UDC’s influence, one must track the election history of Davis from 1930-

³⁸ “Fame’s Fleeting Nature Is on Display in This Hall,” *New York Times*, April 3, 1993. Editorial, *New York Times*, October 17, 1977. To appreciate the obscurity of some inductees, view the complete list. See Theodore Morello, ed., *Great Americans: A Guide to the Hall of Fame for Great* (Washington Square: NYU Press, 1977).

1960: three votes in 1930; eight in 1935; zero in 1940 and 1945; one in 1950 and 1955; and the anomaly of forty-four votes in 1960.³⁹

The voting history of Monroe was also irregular: he received nineteen votes in 1900; twenty-four in 1905; twenty-seven in 1910; six in 1915 and 1920; no nomination in 1925; and election with sixty-six votes in 1930. The striking shift from 1925 to 1930 suggests outside influence. For the election of 1960, by a special ruling, the University Senate waived its twenty-five year eligibility rule, nominating Orville Wright only twelve years after death. Elected five years later, the electors overlooked the preferential treatment circumvented the Hall of Fame's Constitution. In 1970, philanthropist Aaron Rabinowitz headed a forty-person committee to elect social worker Lillian Wald. He conducted a seven year campaign of letter writing, leafleting, and lobbying of the Board of Electors. After a failed campaign in 1965, his cause paid off the next election cycle.⁴⁰

C. Resistance to Fame

Henry David Thoreau, the simple-living American author and naturalist, earned admittance to the Hall of Fame in 1960 thanks, in part, to the campaign initiated by investment firm partner Theodore Bailey. Upon talk of a dedication ceremony on the 100th anniversary of Thoreau's death in 1962, controversy came from an unlikely source, The Thoreau Society. Objecting to the exorbitant cost of the ceremony and the bust (estimated at \$10,774), it likened the lavish honorifics bestowed on the simple-living writer to a betrayal of his legacy.⁴¹

³⁹ Clifford Colmer Nelson, *Taking Pains: The Hand of Noah and the Hall of Fame*, 1990 (revised 1993, 1997), Unpublished Manuscript in Archives of the Hall of Fame for Great Americans, New York University. For the Jefferson Davis pamphlet, see UDC "To the Eminent Electors, Hall of Fame, NYU." Archives of the Hall of Fame for Great Americans, New York University. For the election results, see Morello, *Official Handbook II*, 174. For the buzz surrounding Davis in the election of 1960, see Harry Golden, "Jeff Davis Is Up For Election Again!," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, May 22, 1960.

⁴⁰ Morello, *Official Handbook II*, 169. "N.Y.U. Lifts Rule For Air Pioneer," *New York Times*, 15 June 1958. Grace Lichtenstein, "Hall of Fame Lobbying Pays Off," *New York Times*, November 8, 1970.

⁴¹ Brooks Atkinson, "Critic at Large. Spirit of Frugal Thoreau Resists Efforts to Get His Bust Installed in Hall of Fame," *New York Times*, 19 January 1962.

D. The “Specialized” Hall of Fame

When the Hall of Fame’s Bronx neighbor, Yankee Stadium, opened Monument Park, the proliferation of halls of fame and accompanying museums commenced. Cooperstown’s Baseball Hall of Fame debuted in 1939 as the shrine to the nation’s pastime—now America’s most celebrated hall of fame. Then following World War II, the hall of fame movement exploded. While the Hall of Fame for Great Americans tried to compete, more than one hundred hall of fame museums and exhibits arose from the 1970s to the 1990s. Bronx Community College President Roscoe Brown Jr. concluded, “There is a baseball hall of fame and a basketball hall of fame and a hall of fame for country music and another one for stock car racers. With so many people being well known by so many, real fame is devalued.”⁴²

At its inception, the Hall of Fame authorized a museum to house rare memorabilia of its members. Due to a leaky roof and lack of funding, however, the hopes of a vibrant museum quickly dimmed. Although White’s pavilion and connective colonnade remained an impressive assembly of structures, one learned little about American heroes from the Hall of Fame. Had there been more emphasis on the Museum at the inception, history might have proven differently. At Cooperstown, by contrast, one can peruse paragraphs on baseball history and scan treasured items. As the Hall of Fame’s fate reveals, aging busts, rusting tablets, and one-line quotes were not enough to sufficiently entice tourists.⁴³

E. The Federal Desertion of Bronx County

From the 1930s to the 1970s, the federal government incentivized the redlining of urban neighborhoods and the construction of highways across the urban landscape,

⁴² Victor Danilov, *Hall of Fame Museums: A Reference Guide* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1997), 18. Kaufman, “Fame’s Fleeting Nature Is on Display in This Hall.”

⁴³ MacCracken, *The Hall of Fame*, 71-72. Archives of the Hall of Fame for Great Americans, New York University.

For a look at the offerings of Cooperstown, see “Exhibits of the Hall of Fame and Museum,” *National Baseball Hall of Fame*, <http://community.baseballhall.org/Page.aspx?pid=373> (last accessed December 30, 2009).

encouraging the World War II generation's flight from the city to suburbia.⁴⁴ The effect of mortgage divestment in the Bronx was especially stark: accelerated housing abandonment, population shifts, tenant malfeasance, and socio-economic upheaval. With the Bronx now deserted, the neighborhood encircling the Hall of Fame transformed "from a quiet community . . . to an outpost of 'Fort Apache.'⁴⁵ University Heights no longer resembled a "beautiful farm...[where] on University Avenue one could find cows browsing nearby."⁴⁶ As early as 1943, coal produced at a Con-Edison plant blew fumes into the University Heights air, corroding the busts and surrounding Colonnade. Crime even struck the Hall of Fame, with busts of James Kent and Grant stolen—although eventually recovered. The Hall of Fame's panoramic view also faded, as pollution, graffiti, and crime despoiled America's republican Valhalla.

F. Criticism of Past and Present Public Officials

The government's prosecution of the Korean and Vietnam Wars, compounded by the Watergate scandal, heightened disapproval of America's leaders from the 1950s to the 1970s. In addition, the Hall of Fame's inclusion of racist Confederate heroes struck a discordant note as the nation became more diverse and tolerant. Even Dr. Brown stated of the Hall of Fame, "If it's a monument to anything it's a monument to the sexism and racism of the elite white males who dominated in the first half of this century." Of the 102 Americans in the Hall of Fame, only two are African-American (Booker T. Washington and George Washington Carver), one is Jewish (Louis Brandeis), and none are Catholic. Though

⁴⁴ Tom Lewis, *Divided Highways: Building the Interstate Highways. Transforming American Life* (New York: Viking, 1997), 147. Mark Gelfand, *A Nation of Cities* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975), 59.

⁴⁵ Richard Devine, *Institutional mortgage investment in an area of racial transition : a case study of Bronx County, 1960-1970* (Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 1974), Appendix. Kenneth Jackson, "Robert Moses and the Planned Environment: A Planned Evaluation," in *Robert Moses: Singled-Minded Genius*, ed. Joan Krieg (Interlaken, New York: Heart of the Lakes Publishing, 1989), 27-28.

⁴⁶"Valhalla in the Bronx," 48. *The Bronx in the Innocent Years, 1890-1925*, ed. Lloyd Ultan (New York: Harper and Row 1985), 110-11. Lloyd Ultan, *The Beautiful Bronx, 1920-1950*, (New York: Arlington House Publishers, 1979), 29. "Future Shaky at Hall of Fame," *New York Times*, 6 Jan. 1977.

noted for its geographic cross-section, the Hall of Fame's racial, religious, and ethnic composition is starkly uniform.⁴⁷

G. Location

Notwithstanding the changing neighborhood, the Hall of Fame's location was remote. The white-domed Grant's Tomb and the green-domed Gould Memorial Library were two unfrequented structures perched atop the New York City skyline. With the Hall of Fame's oblivion apparent in the 1970s, there were suggestions for a change in scenery, but none were realized. The New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection rejected plans to move the Hall of Fame to Liberty Park in Jersey City, New Jersey. The old U.S. Customs House on Bowling Green in downtown Manhattan was another dismissed site. The Smithsonian and the National Parks Service both refused the offer. Robert Moses believed that D.C.'s General Services Administration should have taken the sculptures. As the epicenter of national hero worship, Washington, D.C. might have best suited the Hall of Fame best.⁴⁸

H. Money Problems: The Near-Bankruptcy of NYU, Lack of Funding, and Loss of Tourism

Compounding the already existent financial woes of the Hall of Fame, the near-bankrupt NYU left University Heights in 1973 to return to its other operating campus in Greenwich Village. NYU sold University Heights for \$164 million to the City University of New York (CUNY). The following fall CUNY moved BCC to the nearly fifty-five-acre site. On 15 October 1973, the president of NYU proposed that an independent non-profit Board

⁴⁷ See David Rees, *Korea: The Limited War* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1964); James Thomson, Jr., "How Could Vietnam Happen? An Autopsy," *Atlantic Monthly* (1968): 47-53. For views on lack of diversity, see Edith Asbury, "Moses Cites Ideal Of Hall Of Fame," *New York Times*, May 31, 1969. Kaufman, "Fame's Fleeting Nature Is on Display in This Hall."

⁴⁸ Reinert, *Grant's Tomb*, 8. "Hall of Fame Plans Dropped," *Associated Press*, Feb. 27, 1978. Dee Wedemeyer, "Article 3," *New York Times*, 15 Sept. 1977.

of Trustees manage the Hall of Fame. In 1974, the president of NYU and the chancellor of CUNY appointed members to the Board. Until 30 June 1977, NYU and CUNY jointly funded the Hall of Fame at an annual sum of \$120,000. In October 1977, NYU officially withdrew from the Hall of Fame as the two institutions ended their partnership. The Dormitory Authority of the State of New York assumed control of the Colonnade, but NYU held onto the busts, plaques, and memorabilia until a later transfer. By 1 January 1979, the members of the Board had resigned.⁴⁹

In 1973 and 1976, the Hall of Fame held their last elections. To offset costs, there were no busts of inductees President Franklin Roosevelt, American Red Cross crusader Clara Barton, Supreme Court Justice Louis Brandeis, botanist Luther Burbank and industrialist Andrew Carnegie. With the Hall of Fame languishing, New York State spent three million dollars restoring the Colonnade's foundation in the late 1980s. In the 1990s, the busts were restored at the price of \$200,000, prompting outraged preservationists to carp for the original green patina. In 1992, Franklin Roosevelt finally received his bust, with 1,000 guests attending the unveiling. Director Rourke campaigned to finance the busts for the four faceless inductees and create interactive exhibits, but to no avail.⁵⁰

During the golden years from 1920-1950, about 50,000 visitors annually came to the Hall of Fame. By the 1970s, however, the number dropped to 10,000. In the late 1980s, not including schoolchildren on field trips, there were just 1,000 sightseers per year. By 2000, the number was 25,000, but most of the tourists were schoolchildren. The Hall of Fame had lost the appeal that it enjoyed a century earlier.⁵¹

⁴⁹ Kaufman, "Fame's Fleeting Nature Is on Display in This Hall." Archives of the Hall of Fame for Great Americans, New York University. Richard Hatch, "Follow-up on the News: Fragile Fame," *New York Times*, 29 Nov. 1981. Wedemeyer, "Article 3." "A Scenic Outlook on Great Americans."

⁵⁰ Katz, "Valhalla in the Bronx," 49. Rubin, "Mall of Fame," 18. Sheraton, "Untitled." Poor fundraising was a persistent problem. For a brief look at the Hall of Fame's "pay-as-you-go operation," see Nelson, *Taking Pains: The Hand of Noah and the Hall of Fame*.

⁵¹ Wedemeyer, "Article 3." Sam Verhovek, "Neglect Dulls the Glory Of a Once Famous Hall," *New York Times*, 21 Mar. 1988. Sheraton, "Untitled."

CONCLUSION

A noble experiment imbued with patriotism, MacCracken's Hall of Fame for Great Americans was built on visions of the past and thrived on the national unity of the late nineteenth century. Its well-intentioned founder, however, deserves some criticism for its failings: the shaky financial footing, flawed constitution, corruptible election process, and unrealized interactive museum of rare personal items. But the Hall of Fame's downfall transcended MacCracken: it was the casualty of a changing society. Fame morphed into celebrity, abuses of power quieted the veneration of the country's leaders, and the specialized hall of fame made fame a commodity. With the fate of the Hall of Fame for Great Americans known, should America resurrect it or create another national pantheon?⁵² Perhaps, if structured to engage the public's interest in America's past leaders the way MacCracken once did. To the credit of the Hall of Fame, it sought to maintain a national shrine.

If either a revived Hall of Fame for Great Americans or a new one should be created, the following strategy should be adopted: an initial vetting by members of the nominee's profession, but a final vote before the entire elective body. Such a process values peer input but helps prevent Balkanizing a hall of fame for great Americans into a specialized hall of fame. The benchmark was and must remain whether the nominee's contribution helped advance America, not only his or her field.

The voting procedure must change, however, in two significant ways. First, enduring enshrinement must require more than a simple majority or even a three-fifths vote. This paper endorses a requirement of at least a fourth-fifths majority of any electing body. Secondly, exaltation begs patience. The Hall of Fame's paltry waiting period for eligibility solidified the evanescent adoration of the time, imposing cloture before debate had the chance to rage for decades or even centuries. A resuscitated or second Hall of Fame for

⁵² For a recent proposal, see William N. Thompson and Ernita Joaquin, "The Hall of Fame for Great Americans: Organizational Comatosis or Hibernation," *History News Network*, 4 Jan. 2010.

Great Americans should require that nominees wait fifty years for eligibility. Hastily granting eternal favor is as undeserved as the European halls of privilege MacCracken so eagerly condemned. Beware of canonization: only the passage of time and thoroughness of scrutiny can weather the criticism of undeserved fame.

One might argue that the example of the still successful Baseball Hall of Fame, which only requires a short five-year waiting period before eligibility, weakens the presented argument. However, sports halls of fame judge careers primarily based on statistical compilation. The professions recognized by a hall of fame for great Americans could not and should not be measured by such quantifiable data. As discussed earlier, there is also the concern of electors projecting the fleeting national mood onto their selections. The zeitgeist will invariably prejudice what professions or individual contributions electors most value. If the nominee has withstood the vicissitudes of history and the electing body has had sufficient time and information to make a studied decision, then the ephemeral winds of the day will only carry so far.

Over a century ago, thousands attended a Memorial Day ceremony on a luscious new campus brimming with majestic architecture and overlooking glistening rivers. Today, as one walks through the Colonnade, gone are the eager lines and white glow. Broken light fixtures, greenish rust, untended patches of grass, unrecognizable busts, and nearby factories plague the forgotten Shrine upon a Hill. Yet, there is George Washington still occupying his special niche, William Penn donning his feathered hat, Daniel Webster catching a glimpse of Henry Clay, Abraham Lincoln's head bowed in prayer, Woodrow Wilson and Theodore Roosevelt exchanging stares, and nemeses Ulysses S. Grant and Robert E. Lee fixed adjacent. For a time, the Hall of Fame proved the compatibility of hero worship and democracy: the narrowness of politics, sectionalism, and personal ambition overshadowed by the words

coating Teddy Roosevelt's tablet: "That man is the best American who has in him the American spirit, the American soul."⁵³

⁵³ Morello, *Official Handbook II*, 128.