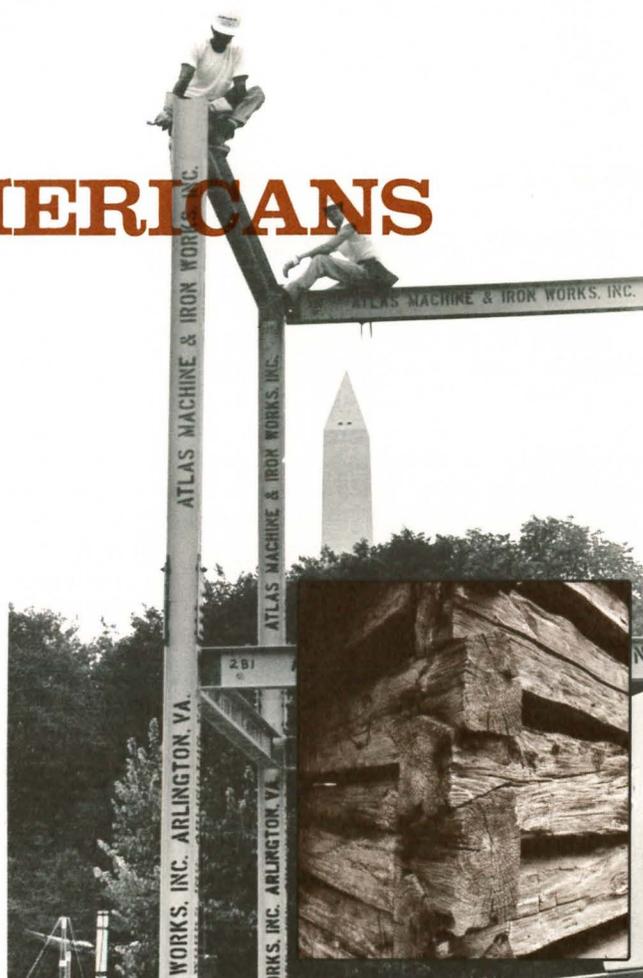


# WORKING AMERICANS



This year the Festival of American Folklife will begin a new theme presentation entitled Working Americans. The presentation of working peoples' skills, crafts, and lore began in 1971 and continued in 1972 when the presentation was known as the Union Workers Exhibit, featuring ten member unions of the AFL-CIO.

*Working Americans* differs from these earlier efforts in numerous ways, most substantially in the consideration of how working people serve human needs and how their skills and expressions have shaped a major national festival to celebrate the nation's 200th birthday.

Looking back to 1876, when America celebrated her 100th birthday with a huge international fair in the city of Philadelphia, we can gain a perspective of the Smithsonian Institution's involvement. Two great exhibit halls—the Industrial Hall and the Machine Hall—were a major attraction in Philadelphia. These halls presented exciting exhibits which were intended to represent “the flower and first fruition of the seed planted by patriotism.” As visitors were given to understand in 1876, the flower was made of iron and the first fruit was the machine. The two halls announced a new branch of human achievement known as Industrial Art.

Following the Philadelphia exhibition the Smithsonian acquired 21 freight car loads of exhibition material from 30 countries, which led to the establishment in 1879 of the National Museum and its Arts and Industries Building.

The establishment of the National Museum also led to a penetrating study of museums by Smithsonian Assistant Secretary George Brown Goode, who suggested that man himself should be the grand

theme to bind together the objects in the museum; the collections would “impart a consistent and systematic idea of the resources of the world and of human achievement.” As we consider the themes and activities for a Bicentennial program, we recognize that a presentation of man and the record of his accomplishments over the past 200 years in America is not possible without the inclusion of the American worker—seen together with the national collections of his machines and artifacts.

*Working Americans* in 1973 will feature “Workers Who Build Our Shelter,” to be followed in future years by exploration of those workers who provide our food and other needs. Shelter is a significant subject with which to begin recognizing that “House” is one of the most frequently used words in many languages. From the pages of American life and the accumulation of our traditions, working people will construct house-types and shelters as developed by Northern Plains Indians, Arkansas settlers, urban planners and suburban architects. We are grateful to the sponsors and to the people themselves who can teach us much about their craft, their history and traditions.

James R. Morris  
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