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# The First Hundred Years of the Dante Society\*

ANTHONY J. DE VITO

What is now known as the Longfellow House on Brattle Street in Cambridge, Massachusetts, was originally the property of a loyal British subject, John Vassal, for whom the house had been built about 1759. Colonel Vassal abandoned the property at the outbreak of the American Revolution and returned to England. Vassal House, as it was called then, served as headquarters for General George Washington who, in July, 1775, came to Cambridge and took command of the revolutionary forces. Washington remained in the area until the following spring, after the British had permanently sailed away from Boston on the 17th March 1776. Toward the end of the 18th century the Vassal property was purchased by Andrew Craigie. From that time—even well into the 20th century—the house was known as the Craigie House.

To this house came Henry Wadsworth Longfellow in 1838 as he was about to begin his teaching at Harvard. The widowed Mrs. Craigie, by this time in not very comfortable financial condition, had become compelled to rent rooms, and Longfellow became one of her tenants. Eventually the house was purchased by Nathan Appleton, a Boston merchant, who in 1843 presented it as a wedding gift to Longfellow and his bride, Frances Appleton, adding later “the land across the street, reaching to the river; securing thus the open space, with the pleasant view of the winding Charles, the salt meadows, and the Brighton hills against the south-western sky.”<sup>1</sup> In this house lived Longfellow and his

family and descendants, some of the latter well into the 20th century. In 1973 the Longfellow House, now declared a historic site, was assumed by the Department of the Interior of the United States.

Longfellow's interest in Dante and in the *Divine Comedy* in particular dates back at least to 1828 when he was in Europe preparing himself for courses which he was to teach at Bowdoin College. A close friend, George Washington Greene, gave Longfellow an edition of the *Commedia* in three small volumes. Shortly after beginning his work at Harvard ten years later, Longfellow began to translate into English isolated verses of the *Commedia* and eventually various passages. In 1839 he published five passages, 117 verses in all, from the *Purgatorio*. In 1843 he translated the first sixteen cantos of the *Purgatorio* and finished the remaining cantos of that *cantica* ten years later. Early in 1862 he translated the last twelve cantos of the *Paradiso*, which were followed, in 1863, by the first twenty-one cantos of the *Paradiso*. Then he began to translate the *Inferno*, finishing this part of the Poem at the end of that year. Thereupon he returned to his version of the *Purgatorio*, composed twenty years earlier, correcting and polishing his work so that by the end of March, 1864, he felt that he had finished his translation.<sup>2</sup>

With the 600th anniversary of Dante's birth approaching, Longfellow was very anxious to publish at least a part of his translation. On the 10th February 1865 he received the first copies of the *Inferno* from the bindery and through Charles Sumner in Washington had the first copy delivered to the Minister from Italy for presentation to the Italian government, with this inscription: *In Commemorazione del Secentesimo Anniversario della Nascita di Dante Alighieri*.

In the meantime, Longfellow had two colleagues with whom he was on most cordial relations, James Russell Lowell and Charles Eliot Norton, both of whom were enthusiastic admirers of Dante and had already published essays on the Poet. In 1862 Longfellow began to meet with his two friends regularly and depended upon them for criticism and suggestions on his translated work. Eventually much of this labor of criticism was done on the very proofs received from the printer. From time to time other individuals, whose names have a well-known ring, participated in these gatherings: Oliver Wendell Holmes, George Ticknor, William Dean Howells. By the fall of 1865 this group became known as Mr. Longfellow's Dante Club.

The chief concern of the group was to assist Longfellow in the translation before the manuscript would reach the printer. These meetings were held between October, 1865, and May, 1867. In February, 1865, only the *Inferno* had been published: in May, 1867, all three *cantiche*, revised and polished in the interim, appeared in their entirety and with that publication Mr. Longfellow's Dante Club for practical purposes ceased to exist.

However, Charles Eliot Norton, despite his preoccupations with organizing the department of Fine Arts at Harvard and its curriculum, continued his interest in Dante, reading his works and interesting his students in the Poet. As time went on and as Norton offered suggestions concerning the advisability of an organization devoted expressly to the promotion of studies on Dante, his hinting and prodding finally bore fruit when, late in 1880, a delegation of his students expressed to him their desire to see such a group organized and their good will in supporting such a project. Norton was of course happy to receive this reaction, but he felt that such an organization could be successful only if Longfellow would accept the presidency of it. Consequently, he visited Longfellow and presented the proposal directly to him along with an invitation to the presidency. Longfellow approved of the project and agreed to serve as president.

Accordingly, in the words of Longfellow's grandson, "a printed prospectus was sent out, dated December 6, 1880, and signed by John Woodbury, one of Norton's students who acted as secretary. This announced: 'It is proposed to form a society for the encouragement and promotion of the study of Dante's life and works.' It went on to state: 'Mr. Henry W. Longfellow has consented to accept the Presidency of the Society.'"<sup>3</sup>

On the 11th February 1881 various individuals gathered in Longfellow's study.

... The meeting was called to order by the President, Mr. Longfellow, seated in his chair at the round table in the middle of the room. Behind him was the bust of George Washington Greene, who some fifty-three years earlier had given him in Italy those three little volumes of the *Divina Commedia*. High above, on a bracket over the mirror, was the statuette of Dante, presiding over the meeting. As Longfellow had written to Greene on January 13, 1864, when he first put the statue there: "Dante has ascended to his station over your head."<sup>4</sup>

Twelve persons were present at this meeting; eleven others had already expressed their desire to be members of this group. A committee was named to draw up a constitution. On the 17th March a meeting was held at Norton's home, at which the By-Laws of the Dante Society were presented and approved and Longfellow was officially elected President, while James Russell Lowell was elected Vice-President. Several days later the members met in the room of John Woodbury, the first secretary of the Society, agreed to have the By-Laws printed, and voted funds for the acquisition of books necessary for Dante studies, said books to be placed in the library of Harvard College.<sup>5</sup>

The next meeting took place on the third Tuesday of May, 1881, thereby establishing the Society's annual meeting day until 1969, when it was transferred to the third Friday of May as a possible convenience to members who lived at some distance from Cambridge.

On the 24th March 1882 Longfellow died. Shortly thereafter, James Russell Lowell was elected President with Charles Eliot Norton as Vice-President. However, by this time Lowell was occupied with his diplomatic duties as ambassador to the Court of Saint James, so that much of the responsibility for the guidance of the Society fell upon the shoulders of Norton.

From the beginning, the purpose of the Dante Society was to promote Dante studies and from the beginning there was a strong link between the Society and Harvard, since almost all the members of the Society had some connection with the college, as members of the faculty, as alumni, or as local admirers of Dante. Consequently, the primary effort of this group of scholars and enthusiasts was to organize a collection of Dante literature, works of Dante and critical works on Dante. With this relationship between members of the Society and Harvard there was also the consideration that Norton, who possessed an enviable collection of Dante literature, was to bequeath it to the Harvard Library. It seemed natural, then, that Harvard's library should benefit from the generosity of the Dante Society, and even now there are still found in Widener Library books bearing the inscription "Gift of the Dante Society."

As Gifford also states, a second aim of the Society was the publication of studies on Dante. Longfellow had already suggested as desirable the publication of the *Commento* of Benvenuto da Imola, then still in manu-

script. It was known that Lord Vernon had intended to publish such an edition, but the project seemed suspended after his death.

So arrangements were made for publication in this country, and through the instrumentality of Pasquale Villari, for copying the Laurentian manuscript of the *Comment*. This copy was paid for by Longfellow and eventually deposited in the Harvard Library. On learning however that Lord Vernon's sons were taking steps to carry out their father's design, the Society's proposal was withdrawn.<sup>6</sup>

When the commentary of Benvenuto did appear, the comment in the report of the Society was that "though not sharing in the honor of this valuable service to students of Dante, the Society may feel its proposal was an encouragement to those who regarded this publication as a reverent and honorable duty."<sup>7</sup>

According to the By-Laws of the Society, the Council was to present a report to the membership at the annual meeting and this report was to be published and distributed to the membership. Thus originated the *Annual Report of the Dante Society*, the first, in 1882, containing Norton's eulogistic paper on Longfellow. In the reports which followed, the paper read at the annual meeting was usually published together with other papers and bibliographical material.

Another means of promoting interest in Dante was the Dante Prize. In 1885 the Society established an essay contest open to students in Harvard College and to graduates of no more than three years' standing. The Society was to propose five subjects relating to Dante and the best essay was to receive the prize of \$100.00. If two essays should be of equal merit, the prize was to be divided equally between the two authors. Naturally, if no essay were deemed worthy of the prize, no award would be made. The first essay judged worthy of the prize, in 1887, was "Dante's Obligation to the Schoolmen, especially St. Thomas Aquinas" by Heinrich Conrad Bierwirth, a recent graduate who was to have a lengthy career in the department of German at Harvard. Other winners who were to have successful teaching careers were Jeremiah D. M. Ford, George H. Gifford, Ralph Hayward Keniston, and J. Chesley Mathews. In 1890 the contest was extended to students of any college and graduates of no more than three years' standing from any college in the country, although for many years there were few contestants outside of Harvard. In 1965 the competition was extended still further to include

undergraduates attending colleges in Canada. The Council also established the Charles Hall Grandgent Prize of \$200.00 available exclusively to graduate students in universities in Canada and in the United States. Moreover, greater latitude was granted to all contestants in the choice of subjects, to include any matter "relating to the life or works of Dante."

Not long after the founding of the Society, a work of major importance was announced as being in preparation: the Concordance to the *Divine Comedy*, prepared by Edward A. Fay, published in 1888. Members were urged to subscribe to this work in advance of publication in order to insure its publication, although one member had volunteered to make up any deficit in the expenses of publication. (It was later learned that this anonymous volunteer was the generous patroness of the arts, Isabella Stewart Gardner.) This Concordance to the *Divine Comedy*, the first in a series of concordances published by the Society, was praised by two distinguished European scholars, Edward Moore and J.A. Scartazzini.

It was in 1889 that the Society began to honor eminent scholars from abroad by electing them honorary members. The first were Italy's dominant poet of the second half of the century, Giosuè Carducci, and Adolfo Bartoli, "a leading spirit in the new Italian Dante Society; the Swiss, Johann Andreas Scartazzini, well known for his Dante *Handbuch* and his editions of the *Commedia*; Theodor Paur, to represent German scholarship; and two Englishmen, Edward Moore and the Hon. W.W. Vernon."<sup>8</sup> A complete list of honorary members of the Society will be found in Appendix A.

A marked increase in the membership was noted during the first two decades of the existence of the Society. At the beginning, there were 23 members among those present at the organizational meeting in Longfellow's study as well as others who had signified their intention to be members. The number of members recorded in the first Annual Report of the Society in 1882 is 49. By the end of the century the membership had reached 100, with an average of 110 during the years prior to World War I and slightly less than 100 in the years immediately following that conflict. It must be kept in mind that as time went on a number of members had moved to locations distant from Cambridge, but had retained both their membership and their interest in the Society, in some cases participating in its activities as well as paying dues. According to Gifford,<sup>9</sup> this loyalty was due in large part to Norton, President of the Society from 1892 until 1908, whose enthusiasm and zeal had been

communicated to his students and to members of the Society. Indeed it can be said that Norton exerted the greatest influence upon the development of the Society during most of the first three decades of its existence. He it was who first approached Longfellow with the idea of a society with Longfellow as President; and it was Norton who guided the Society after the death of Longfellow in 1882, since the new president, Lowell, was, until 1885, usually out of the country as ambassador to Great Britain.

The Society's interest in concordances continued during Norton's presidency and later during the presidency of both Sheldon and Grandgent. In 1905, the concordance to the minor works in Italian and the *Canzoniere*, prepared by E.S. Sheldon and A.C. White, was published by the Society. Then in 1912 E.K. Rand and Ernest H. Wilkins edited the concordance to the works in Latin. Rand and Wilkins later edited the brief concordance to the Batifolle Letters, in 1925; and in 1936 the Society published a supplement to the concordance to the minor works in Italian, edited by Lewis H. Gordon.

In the present context of the "feminist movement," it may be of some interest to refer to Gifford's history of the Society where he writes that in 1902 "the Society adopted the policy of rotating its membership" [i.e., membership on the Council] "by the election of a new member each year . . . It had been tacitly understood that one of the three Council members should be a woman."<sup>10</sup> As a matter of record, in 1903, years before the adoption of the 19th amendment to the Constitution of the United States, Mary Augusta Scott took her seat on the Council of the Dante Society. She was followed by Margaret Jackson (1907), Mrs. John C. Gray (1913), Katherine V. Spencer (1915). Eventually, other women succeeded these on the Council: Mrs. Daniel M. Bates, Angeline Lograsso, Matilde Pfeiffer, Angelina La Piana, Gina R. Merola, Grazia Avitabile, Irma Brandeis, Maria Simonelli, Beatrice Corrigan, Anne Paolucci, and Joan M. Ferrante. The latter two have served also as Vice-President.

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The period between the two world wars saw a lessening of activity by the Dante Society. As another centenary was approaching, the 600th anniversary of the death of the Poet, the Society began to discuss plans for observing this anniversary. However, no conspicuous event marked this date. President Grandgent read his sestina, "On Dante's Death," at



the annual meeting of 1921, and a contribution was sent to the Ravenna committee, which had organized a programme for the occasion. No other activity of note took place in the Cambridge area. It is also during this period that annual reports were not published singly but in clusters of two or three successive years in one volume. With the depression years and a consequent decline in both membership and funds, publication of the report ceased completely until 1951. However, during those years of diminished resources and diminished activity the Society did manage to bring out several "special" publications, viz.:

- J.E. Shaw, "The Lady Philosophy in the *Convivio*" (1939);  
Joseph G. Fucilla, "Forgotten Danteiana" (1939);  
Vincenzo Cioffari, "The Conception of Fortune and Fate  
in the Works of Dante" (1940);  
——— "Fortune in Dante's Fourteenth Century  
Commentators" (1944);  
Charles S. Singleton, "An Essay on the *Vita Nuova*" (1949).

It can be said that the Dante Society became revitalized with the return to the Cambridge area, in the late 1940's, of Ernest H. Wilkins at his retirement from the presidency of Oberlin College. With his admirable septuagenarian energy and wisdom he rallied the diminished membership and interested many outside the fold to join the Society. Before he became president in 1954, Wilkins was instrumental in the compiling and publishing of the Annual Reports that had remained suspended since the appearance of the *54th Report* in 1936. In 1951 was published a group of reports, 55th to 68th (1937-1949), and in 1954 another group, containing reports 68th to 72nd (1950-1954). In 1955, the *73d Annual Report* appeared, bearing that date, and all subsequent reports have been published on an annual basis.

During the period 1948-1954, the membership of the Council was increased to seven, including the three officers. A concerted effort was made to enroll new members, especially those individuals who became known to the Council through their publication of material relating to Dante, whether studies, articles, or reviews, or through their teaching of courses on Dante, or simply through their express interest in and admiration of the Poet. An enormous stock of back-numbers of the annual reports was offered for sale to the membership at modest cost.

Above all, libraries, both university and public, were singled out for special canvassing, and by the middle of the 1950's some 100 libraries in the United States and Canada were subscribing to the reports. Annual meetings continued to be held in the home of the President or in the home of some hospitable member in Cambridge or even in the very birthplace of the Society, Longfellow House. Publication of annual reports was resumed with papers selected by the President and with this extremely important and valuable addition, the "American Dante Bibliography," compiled by Anthony L. Pellegrini. This bibliography initially appeared, for the year 1953, in the *72d Annual Report*, published in 1954, and has continued to provide useful and invaluable bibliographical information to Dante scholars everywhere.

During this activity, in order for the Society to assume a stronger national position and to reach and enroll a larger number of potential members, it was decided to rename it The Dante Society of America and to reorganize it as a corporation. The corporate form—and the subsequent letter of exemption from the Internal Revenue Service—would make it less difficult to attract donations which could be classed as deductible for income tax purposes. George Gifford's account, included in his report of the Secretary in the *73d Annual Report* (1955), best records the various steps leading to incorporation:

During the summer and autumn of 1954 the officers of the Society carefully explored the possibility and advisability of incorporation. A meeting of the Council on October 21 approved the project, and a special meeting of the Society, held in the Harvard Faculty Club on Nov. 9, 1954, voted unanimously that the Council should take the necessary steps to incorporate the Society under the laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. After the meeting the officers and members of the Council present, together with Messrs. Charles R.D. Miller and Anthony Pellegrini, signed an agreement of incorporation.

The signers of the agreement met again on Nov. 16, 1954, in the rooms of the Harvard Trust Company; and in the presence of Mr. Sayward, vice-president of the Trust Company, went through the ritual prescribed by the Commonwealth, elected G.H. Gifford first temporary and then permanent clerk, signed articles of incorporation, and elected as members of the Council of the incorporated Society the seven existing council members. A meeting of the Council immediately following elected Dr. Wilkins as President, and Professor Singleton as Vice-President.

A period of waiting ensued, and it was finally learned that the application had been granted, and the Society incorporated by charter of Dec. 28, 1954.

Mr. Guido Perera, the son of Mr. Gino Perera, our fellow member, most generously gave us, without compensation, the legal advice and assistance without which the task of incorporation could not have been carried through.<sup>11</sup>

Under this form of organization the membership elected a Treasurer and Clerk (Secretary-Treasurer) and six members of the Council. These seven then elected from among their number a President and Vice-President. Originally, the President was elected annually, but with modifications made in 1966 the President serves a term of three years with possible re-election to a second term. The term of the Vice-President is for one year. With the amendments of 1966 the Council was further expanded from seven to nine members.

During the presidency of Ernest H. Wilkins, 1954-1959, the office of Council Associate was created. The Associates, five in number elected for five years, attend meetings of the Council and may participate in the deliberations of the Council, but they have no vote. Theirs is largely a consultative responsibility, the President calling upon them from time to time for counsel.

Toward the end of the 1950's the Society began to think ahead to 1965, the 700th anniversary of Dante's birth. If the Society's activity had been negligible during the centenary of 1921, its contribution toward the observance of the anniversary of 1965 was considerable. One of the earliest decisions of the Council was that the anniversary should be commemorated by a worthy publication of the Society. It was then decided that the work most necessary and desirable for the Society to publish was a new concordance to the *Divine Comedy*. The Fay Concordance of 1888, although very useful at the time, contained much extraneous material and above all was based on a text that in 1958 was no longer acceptable. The new concordance was based on the text of the *Commedia* prepared by Giuseppe Vandelli and reprinted by the Società Dantesca Italiana in its slightly revised edition of 1960.

Mr. Wilkins assumed the editorship of the project and was aided by 120 collaborators, most of whom were members of the Society but some of whom were non-member enthusiasts of Dante. These compilers were each assigned one canto or a half-canto and listed each verse of their assignment, marking each word of each verse except for articles, prepositions, certain adjectives and adverbs, and forms of very common verbs such as *avere*, *essere*, *andare*. This material was then reviewed by ten

assistants who checked the work of the compilers for accuracy. After these preparations, the entire list was placed in alphabetical order and prepared for publication. The Society was greatly encouraged and aided in this preparation by a generous grant of \$1500.00 from the American Council of Learned Societies for the preparation of the typescript of the concordance.

During this period Wilkins resigned as President, in 1959. George H. Gifford, Vice-President, succeeded to the presidency and subsequently was elected President. Wilkins, however, remained as editor of the concordance, but in 1963 declining health forced him to relinquish even that responsibility and the editing of the work was entrusted to Thomas G. Bergin and Anthony J. De Vito, who saw the work through to its publication by the Harvard University Press shortly after the annual meeting of the Society, viz., in July, 1965.

In the meantime, during the period 1963-1965, the Society was very active in publicizing the imminent Dante anniversary. Vincent Cioffari was named chairman of the Dante Celebration Committee and under his direction members throughout the country and Canada were urged to plan local and regional meetings celebrating the anniversary. Members were also urged to send to the Society information concerning their plans, their meetings held or to be held. Periodic newsletters were drafted and sent to the membership, containing such news both as a matter of news and as a possible inspiration to others who were hesitant or slow in making their plans. A speakers' bureau was organized: members informed the Society of their availability and their topic, which information appeared in the newsletter.

An appeal for funds was directed to the membership in order to meet the expenses of the Society's activities in this celebration, and the members responded generously with a contribution of almost \$3000.00.

It is also to be noted that, through the efforts of the Istituto Italiano di Cultura in New York or through personal and institutional efforts, distinguished European *Dantisti* visited the United States and Canada, presenting their papers far and wide. In this way university communities in the two countries were able to hear at first hand the interpretations and findings of such eminent scholars as Umberto Bosco, Gianfranco Contini, Kenelm Foster, Raffaello Morghen, Giorgio Petrocchi, and Natalino Sapegno.

In 1964 the officers of the Society, like the man whose name the Society bears, also descended into the political arena, although at less hazard and with results more felicitous than those which rewarded Dante's efforts. They succeeded in persuading various members of the Congress of the United States of the desirability to take formal recognition of this Dante anniversary with the issuance of a commemorative postage stamp. In due course, the Hon. Robert N. Giaimo of Connecticut offered a resolution in the House of Representatives to ask the Postmaster General to issue such a stamp.<sup>12</sup> At the same time, Sen. Paul H. Douglas of Illinois presented a similar resolution to the Senate, saying, among other things, that the Poet, through his *De Monarchia*, "was the first powerful voice to advocate a federation of nations as the only means of bringing about an enduring peace on this earth, thus anticipating what has become a reality in our United Nations."<sup>13</sup>

Subsequently, in view of the slowness of bureaucratic procedure, the decision to issue the commemorative stamp, a decision resting solely with the Postmaster General, was made in December of 1964, and the stamp was issued in San Francisco on the 17th July 1965. Members of the Society each received a first-day issue sent from the office of the Society. On the 27th August, Postmaster General John S. Gronouski held a ceremony in Washington, D.C., during which he made presentations of Dante albums to members of the Dante commemorative stamp committee. On that occasion the Postmaster General and President Lyndon Johnson paid tribute to the genius of Dante and to the contribution of Italians to America.<sup>14</sup>

In addition, seeking official recognition for the Dante celebration, the officers requested the Governor of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts to take appropriate action toward that end. Accordingly, His Excellency John A. Volpe, Governor of Massachusetts, graciously issued a proclamation declaring the week of the 8th to the 15th May 1965 as Dante Alighieri Week. This came appropriately enough, just at the time of the 83d annual meeting of the Society.

Prior to the celebration of the Dante centenary, President Gifford nominated Vincent Cioffari as the official delegate of the Dante Society to the Dante celebration in Italy. The various events of that observance took place in Florence on 20-24 April 1965, in Verona on 25-26 April, and in Ravenna on the 27th. On the 20th April in the Palazzo Vecchio

of Florence Mr. Cioffari presented the history of the Dante Society at a meeting in which reports were offered by representatives of the various national Dante Societies, namely, from Germany, England, Argentina, The Netherlands, and the United States. Mr. Cioffari also presided at a discussion of “Studi filosofici e teologici dell’Alighieri e della sua età,” in which Étienne Gilson, Gilles G. Mcersena, O.P., Bruno Nardi, and Charles S. Singleton were participants.

Because of the importance of the year 1965 the programme for the annual meeting of that year was expanded. First of all, rather than for the third Tuesday of May, in order to accommodate more members, especially those at some distance from Cambridge, it was decided to schedule the meeting for Saturday, 15 May, and the following day, Sunday, the 16th. The Saturday meeting was held in Boylston Hall, Harvard University, and was divided into three sessions as follows:

I. Morning Session:

J. Chesley Mathews: “The Interest in Dante Shown by Nineteenth-Century American Men of Letters.”

Angeline H. Lograsso: “From the *Ballata* of the *Vita Nuova* to the Carols of the *Paradiso*: A Study in Hidden Harmonies and Balance.”

II. Afternoon Session:

Nino Pirrotta: “Gothicism, Scholasticism and Music.”

Vincent Cioffari: Report on the *Congresso Dantesco* in Italy.

Umberto Bosco: “*Paradiso* XXIII (‘Trionfo di Cristo’).”

III. Evening Session:

Charles S. Singleton: “The Vistas in Retrospect.”

President George H. Gifford presided at all sessions.

On Sunday, 16 May, for the second part of the celebration the Society returned to its birthplace, Longfellow House. There a group from the Collegium Musicum of Boston University presented a programme of

music of the time of Dante, after which the following cantos were read in the original:

*Inferno* xxvi . . . . . Anthony J. De Vito  
*Purgatorio* v . . . . . Dante Della Terza  
*Paradiso* xxxi . . . . . Grazia Avitabile.

The concluding portion of the celebration took place on the 15th October 1965 at the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum in Boston, courteously made available to the Society by the trustees of the museum, with the following programme:

Welcome and Remarks from the President of the Society . . George H. Gifford.  
Remarks from the Delegate to the *Congresso Dantesco* . . . . . Vincent Cioffari.

Music of Dante's time performed by a group directed by the composer-musician of Boston, Daniel Pinkham.

"Dante's *Divine Comedy*: The View from God's Eye" . . . . Aldo S. Bernardo.<sup>15</sup>

At the 81st Annual Meeting of the Society, in 1963, the noted sculptor, Joseph Coletti, a member of the Society for many years, offered the Society a Dante Medal in bronze, the photograph of which appears on the covers of *Dante Studies*. The medal itself, with dies and copies, was presented to the Society by Mr. Coletti during the summer of 1965. Upon receipt of the medal, the Council voted that it "be awarded for outstanding, unselfish devotion to the promotion of Italian culture in the United States, and personal achievement in the field of culture." A special committee, consisting of the three officers of the Society, the President of the American Association of Teachers of Italian, and the Director of the Istituto Italiano di Cultura, was to deliberate upon and make a selection, which was then to be approved by the Council. The medal was bestowed for the first time upon Ernest H. Wilkins late in 1965, shortly before his death. In the following year the medal was awarded to Joseph G. Fucilla, editor of *Italica* for many years. Thomas G. Bergin received the medal in 1973 and Charles S. Singleton in 1975.

Already in 1964 the Society had tried to interest members beyond the immediate vicinity of Cambridge in the governance of the Society, when Thomas G. Bergin was elected to the Council. In 1965 the Council

decided to hold a second meeting of the Society each year, immediately after Christmas in conjunction with the annual meeting of the Modern Language Association. This alternate meeting would obviously be of great convenience to members all over the continent who might be unable to attend the annual meeting in May. Members could also maintain better contact with the officers and other members of the Society. These meetings have been held in New York, Chicago, New Orleans, Denver, San Francisco, and Houston. Papers read at the winter meetings have been of a quality equal to that of those presented at the annual meeting. Moreover, attendance of the winter meetings has exceeded that of the May meeting by a ratio of at least two to one.

Between the annual meetings of 1965 and 1966 the Council devoted considerable time to a revision of the By-Laws, and these revisions were approved at the 84th Annual Meeting in May, 1966. As a consequence, the Council was increased to nine members on a rotating basis, elected by a mail ballot distributed to the entire membership with the call to the annual meeting. The President and Vice-President continue to be elected by the Council from this membership of nine. The term of the President is three years, with the possibility of re-election to a second term of three years. The term of the Vice-President remains one year.

A matter of great importance arose in 1966, due in large part to the interest of Professors Aldo S. Bernardo and Anthony L. Pellegrini of the State University of New York at Binghamton. After some preliminary negotiations, the State University of New York Press had expressed an interest in publishing the Annual Reports of the Society. Subsequent discussions between the Council and representatives of the State University of New York led to an agreement according to which the Annual Report would become *Dante Studies*, published for the Society by the State University of New York Press, which would also distribute the journal to the membership and to subscribing libraries. Expenses of publication were to be met by a contribution from the Society based on a portion of membership dues, a contribution from State University of New York at Binghamton, and monies from subscriptions to libraries, which would be processed by the Press. The Society was to retain full editorial responsibility for the journal. Anthony L. Pellegrini was appointed editor of *Dante Studies*, a position which he has splendidly filled while continuing to compile his annual "American Dante Bibliography."



The editor is assisted by various Associate Editors, among whom, past and/or present, are Thomas G. Bergin, Phillip W. Damon, Dante Della Terza, John Freccero, Louis M. La Favia, Maria Picchio Simonelli, Charles S. Singleton and, since the incumbent President becomes automatically, *ex officio*, an Associate Editor, the following presidents: George H. Gifford, Vincent Cioffari, Nicolae Iliescu, and Robert Hollander.

The Editorial Board of *Dante Studies* is complemented by a number of Consulting Editors, chosen from among eminent Dante scholars abroad. This roster has included Umberto Bosco, Kenelm Foster, O.P., Cecil Grayson, Giorgio Padoan, Jean Pépin, André Pézard, Giorgio Petrocchi, and Paul Renucci. All editorial appointments are made officially by the Council in consultation with the Editor.

After the flood in Florence in November, 1966, President Gifford appealed to the membership to contribute funds for the restoration of Danteiana damaged in the flood. The members responded with a contribution of \$1350.00, a sum which was sent to the Società Dantesca Italiana for the specific purpose mentioned. Francesco Mazzoni, at that time Secretary of the Società Dantesca Italiana, acknowledged the gift with an expression of gratitude from the Società, stating that one-half of the contribution would be used to replace books of the Società Dantesca that had been on loan to scholars and lost in the flood and that the other half would be used to fill the "gravi lacune del Seminario di Filologia Dantesca della Facoltà di Lettere dell'Università di Firenze," lacunae which resulted from the destruction of the university's library. Each volume replaced was to bear the inscription: *Dono della Dante Society alla Società Dantesca*.

In 1967, Vincent Cioffari was elected President of the Dante Society and served until 1973. During these years *Dante Studies* became firmly established. Since the journal was now larger in size, it could—and did—attract studies from Dante scholars, established and beginning, who were not all necessarily connected with the Society. The financial base of the Society was now stronger. Also, the winter meetings at the Modern Language Association became a regular activity of the Society with attendance of 100 and more persons, the meeting being open to all, non-members and the simply curious, as well as members. In addition, President Cioffari succeeded in interesting groups in the general Cambridge area to sponsor special local meetings of the Society primarily in

order to reach a broader audience drawn from that particular local community, persons who would not normally attend the regular meetings of the Society. In this way the Society enjoyed the hospitality of Boston University and Brown University. It was during the middle and late 1960's that the membership finally reached 400, and it has remained over that number ever since.

Nicolae Iliescu became President in 1973. In 1974, the State University of New York Press published for the Dante Society the long awaited *Expositiones et Glose super Comedia Dantis* of Guido da Pisa, edited by Vincent Cioffari.

With the 200th anniversary of American independence approaching, the Society decided to participate in the observance of that anniversary. President Iliescu proposed, and the Council approved, the preparation of a volume of studies which would exemplify the course of American Dante studies during the first 200 years of our national independence. Professor A. Bartlett Giamatti, then Vice-President of the Society and since then President of Yale University, was invited to edit such a volume. After accepting the invitation and receiving suggestions from the Council, Professor Giamatti put together a volume of studies in which are found, among others, essays of Lorenzo da Ponte, Longfellow, Lowell, Rand, Wilkins, Bergin, and Singleton. However, it became extremely difficult to find a benevolent press disposed to assume the financial responsibility for this volume, since most publishing houses, including university presses, increasingly insist upon a secure expectation of financial gain from any publication they undertake.

The Society in effect observed the American Bicentennial at its winter meeting in New York on 28 December 1976. Professor Anne Paolucci, taking as a theme "Dante's Influence on American Writers," organized the following panel:

J. Chesley Mathews: "A Historical Overview of Early American Writers' Interest in Dante (to about 1900)."

James Wilhelm: "Two Visions of the Journey of Life: Dante as Guide for Eliot and Pound."

Glauco Cambon: "Dante on Galway Kinnell's 'Lost River.'"

These papers, edited by Professor Paolucci, were published by the Society in 1977 to mark its participation in the anniversary of American independence.

As the 100th anniversary of the founding of the Society was approaching, a campaign for funds was announced to the membership in order to observe this anniversary in an appropriate fashion, and specifically to ensure continued publication of *Dante Studies* and to publish further works in keeping with the high standards of the Society's publications in the past. This appeal for funds was not restricted to the membership. Indeed, members were urged to seek donations from friends, from corporations, and from institutions. It is perhaps too early to assess the ultimate result of this continuing appeal.

Robert Hollander was elected President in 1979. In this capacity, his first responsibility was to undertake the many preparations for the 100th anniversary of the Society in 1981. The observance of the centenary of the Society was much simpler than the Dante celebration of 1965. On the afternoon of the 15th May 1981, ceremonies were initiated at the very location of the Society's birth, Longfellow House. However, whereas a century earlier the meeting had been held in the host's study with Dante memorabilia much in evidence, the meeting of 1981 took place in the open air on the porch of the house. Since Longfellow House is now under the administration of the Department of the Interior of the United States, meetings may no longer be held inside the house. In any case, the staff of Longfellow House graciously permitted the Society to hold its commemorative meeting on the porch, at an hour in which the house was officially closed, and courteously invited those present to a tour of the interior with its exhibit of Dante memorabilia.

After words of greeting to those assembled and a brief talk commemorating the anniversary, President Hollander read messages of congratulation from The American Academy of Arts and Sciences, The American Council of Learned Societies, The American Philosophical Association, The Folger Shakespeare Library, The Modern Language Association, The National Endowment for the Humanities, from Derek C. Bok, President of Harvard University, and A. Bartlett Giamatti, President of Yale University. After these messages, Mr. Hollander read the following telegram from the President of the United States, dated 15 May 1981:

I am delighted to send warm greetings and best wishes to the Dante Society of America as you celebrate the one hundredth anniversary of your founding.

Men and women refine their vision in many ways, but arts and scholarship are hallmarks of any civilization. The vision of the Society's founder, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, is well served by the distinguished writers and teachers who today uphold the high standards of the Dante Society.

At this milestone in your history, you have my congratulations and my best wishes for every success in the future.

Sincerely,

Ronald Reagan

The meeting on the porch concluded with a reading of the final canto of the Poem, read in the Longfellow translation by Professor Allen Mandelbaum, and in the original by Professor Anthony J. De Vito.

An informal dinner followed at the Harvard Faculty Club. At this occasion, President Hollander called upon Professors Vincent Cioffari and Nicolae Iliescu, former presidents, for toasts, to which they responded with reminiscences and with expressions of good fortune for the Society as it began its second century.

On the following morning, the 16th May 1981, the Annual Meeting of the Society, the 99th, was held in Boylston Hall of Harvard University, at which Professor Dante Della Terza read a paper, "*Inferno* v: Tradition and Exegesis."

The final event in observance of the centenary of the Dante Society took place at the Istituto Italiano di Cultura in New York City on the 24th June 1981. Under the joint auspices of the Istituto and the Dante Society Professor Francesco Mazzoni, President of the Società Dantesca Italiana, was invited to participate in the anniversary observances. His gracious acceptance and subsequent greeting to the Society culminated with his reading of a paper, "I battezzatori di Dante (*Inferno* xix, 16-21)."

Through a felicitous coincidence even the City of Cambridge seems to have participated in the centenary of the Dante Society by naming the intersection of Broadway and Quincy Street Dante Alighieri Square.

From the twelve persons who were in attendance a century earlier at

the organizational meeting in Longfellow House, in the presence of the American poet, together with the eleven who had signified their intention of participating with the other twelve, all persons with roots and bonds strongly linked to Cambridge and Harvard, the Dante Society of America has now grown to some 450 members representing many other regions of the world, Australia, England, France, Italy, Japan, The Netherlands, as well as Canada and the United States.

## NOTES

\* For very useful and more detailed information concerning the "Dante Club" and the first 75 years of the Dante Society the following studies, to which I am indebted, are important: J. Chesley Mathews, "Mr. Longfellow's Dante Club," in the *76th Annual Report of the Dante Society*, Boston, 1958 (Mathews), and George H. Gifford, "A History of the Dante Society," in the *74th Annual Report of the Dante Society*, Cambridge, 1956 (Gifford). Also important for the early history of the Dante Society is the ms., "Longfellow and Dante," of Henry W.L. Dana, quotations from which are taken through the courtesy of the National Park Service, Longfellow National Historic Site.

1. Samuel Longfellow, *Life of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow*, 2 v. (Boston: Ticknor and Company, 1886), Vol. II, p. 3.
2. Mathews, p. 23.
3. H.W.L. Dana, ms., "Longfellow and Dante," p. 63.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 64.
5. Gifford, p. 8.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 13
7. *Ibid.*
8. *Ibid.*, p. 20
9. *Ibid.*, p. 21.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 23.
11. *73d Annual Report of the Dante Society*, p. xviii.
12. Congressional Record-House, 23 July 1964, pp. 16882-16883. See Appendix B below.
13. Congressional Record-Senate, 27 July 1964, p. 16996. See Appendix C for full text.
14. Congressional Record-House, 22 July 1965, pp. 17998-17999. See Appendix D for full text.
15. Mathews' essay was published in *Dante Alighieri: Three Lectures* (Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress, 1965), pp. 1-22; Miss Lograsso's paper was published in the *83d Annual Report of the Dante Society* (1965), pp. 23-48, together with Bosco's, translated into English by Anthony J. De Vito, p. 1-22; Singleton's essay appeared in *Atti del Congresso Internazionale di Studi Danteschi*, Vol. I (Firenze: Sansoni, 1965), pp. 279-304. Bernardo's paper was published in *A Dante Symposium*, edited by William De Sua and Gino Rizzo (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1965), pp. 45-53.

## APPENDIX A

### *Honorary Members of the Dante Society*

Adolfo Bartoli	Francesco Mazzoni
Bernhard Berenson	Edward Moore
Laurence Binyon	Bruno Nardi
Umberto Bosco	V.E. Orlando
Giosuè Carducci	Theodor Paur
Mario Casella	Giorgio Petrocchi
Gianfranco Contini	André Pézard
Alessandro D'Ancona	Pio Rajna
Isidoro Del Lungo	Gaetano Salvemini
A.P. D'Entrèves	Johann Andreas Scartazzini
Francesco D'Ovidio	Paget Toynbee
T.S. Eliot	William Warren Vernon
Rev. Kenelm Foster, O.P.	Karl Vossler
Etienne Gilson	Berthold Wiese
Henri Hauvette	Nicola Zingarelli

### *Presidents of the Dante Society*

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (1881-1882)  
James Russell Lowell (1882-1892)  
Charles Eliot Norton (1892-1908)  
Edward Stevens Sheldon (1909-1915)  
Charles H. Grandgent (1915-1932)  
Jeremiah D. M. Ford (1932-1940)  
Fred Norris Robinson (1940-1954)  
Ernest Hatch Wilkins (1954-1959)  
George Hussey Gifford (1959-1967)  
Vincent Cioffari (1967-1973)  
Nicolae Iliescu (1973-1979)  
Robert B. Hollander, Jr. (1979- )

### *Vice-Presidents of the Dante Society*

Thomas G. Bergin	James Russell Lowell
Aldo S. Bernardo	Charles R.D. Miller
George R. Carpenter	Charles Eliot Norton
Vincent Cioffari	Anne Paolucci
Joan M. Ferrante	Fred N. Robinson
A. Bartlett Giamatti	Edward S. Sheldon
George H. Gifford	Charles S. Singleton
Charles H. Grandgent	William R. Thayer
Ernest F. Langley	Ernest H. Wilkins

Justin Winsor

## *Members of the Council of the Dante Society*

Stuart P. Atkins	George H. Gifford*
Grazia Avitabile	Carlo L. Golino
Mrs. Daniel M. Bates	Lewis H. Gordon
Mrs. William C. Bates	Mrs. John C. Gray
Thomas G. Bergin	Robert B. Hollander, Jr.
Aldo S. Bernardo	Nicolae Iliescu
Morton Bloomfield	Margaret H. Jackson
Irma Brandeis	Philip C. Knapp, Jr.
Glauco Cambon	Ernest F. Langley
George R. Carpenter*	Angelina La Piana
Anthony K. Cassell	Angeline H. Lograsso
Giovanni Cecchetti	Arthur R. Marsh*
Fredi Chiappelli	Jerome Mazzaro
S.B. Chandler	Gina R. Merola
Vincent Cioffari	Charles R.D. Miller
Beatrice Corrigan	Julius A. Molinaro
Henry W.L. Dana	Rocco Montano
Mrs. Richard H. Dana	Mark Musa
Charles T. Davis	John C. Nelson
Dante Della Terza	Charles Eliot Norton
Anthony J. De Vito*	Anne Paolucci
Charles A. Dinsmore	Anthony L. Pellegrini**
Louis Dyer	Matilde Pfeiffer
Edward A. Fay	Robert H. Pfeiffer
Francis Fergusson	Renato Poggioli
Joan M. Ferrante	Chandler R. Post
Franco Fido	Edward K. Rand
Joseph Figurito	Fred N. Robinson*
Jeremiah D.M. Ford	Aldo Scaglione
John Freccero	Mary A. Scott
Joseph G. Fucilla	Edward S. Sheldon
James Geddes, Jr.	Maria Picchio Simonelli
A. Bartlett Giamatti	Charles S. Singleton



*Members of the Council of the Dante Society (Cont'd.)*

Katherine V. Spencer  
William R. Thayer  
George B. Weston\*  
Alain C. White

Ernest H. Wilkins  
Justin Winsor  
John Woodbury\*

\* Secretary.

\*\* Served as Assistant Secretary, 1955-1957.

*Council Associates of the Dante Society*

Thomas G. Bergin  
Giovanni Cecchetti  
Marguerite M. Chiarenza  
Phillip Damon  
Charles T. Davis  
Henry G. Doyle  
John Freccero  
Joseph G. Fucilla  
Allan H. Gilbert  
Emilio Goggio  
Carlo L. Golino  
Urban T. Holmes  
Christopher Kleinhenz  
Hamilton A. Mathes  
J. Chesley Mathews

Joseph A. Mazzeo  
Giuseppe Mazzotta  
Robert C. Melzi  
Julius A. Molinaro  
Mark Musa  
Hannibal S. Noce  
Anthony L. Pellegrini  
Olga Ragusa  
Michele Ricciardelli  
J.E. Shaw  
Maria Picchio Simonelli  
Charles S. Singleton  
Charles Speroni  
Albert E. Trombly

Librarian of the Dante Society, 1888-1931: William Coolidge Lane

## APPENDIX B

### SPECIAL STAMP FOR DANTE ALIGHIERI

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under previous order of the House, the gentleman from Connecticut [Mr. Giaimo] recognized for 15 minutes.

Mr. GIAIMO. Mr. Speaker, "that singular splendor of the Italian race" was the noble phrase applied to Dante Alighieri by his first biographer, Giovanni Boccaccio. After seven centuries that "singular splendor" still shines forth in undiminished glory. Later biographers have discussed the aptness both of his original given name, "Durante," "the much enduring," or "the long lasting," and of the contraction that became his name in actual use, "Dante," "the giver." In his earliest work, "La Vita Nuova," Dante celebrated his spiritual love for Beatrice in prose interspersed with lyric poems and sonnets. This work, together with Dante's later lyrics, powerfully influenced, not only Italian poetry, but the whole field of lyric poetry in Europe and England, contributing, in a marked degree, to the lyric achievements of Elizabethan England.

Dante's greatest work, the "Divine Comedy," depicts hell, purgatory, and heaven, and, in so doing, surveys the culture and knowledge of the age. Philosophy, history, classical literature, physical science, morals, theology—each is amply represented in this encyclopedic work—and yet all this learning is subordinated to the masterly dramatic movement and lyric eloquence of the poem. The Italian language, which hitherto had been hardly more than a Latin dialect used chiefly in conversation, was by this literary masterpiece established as a vehicle worthy to convey the most sublime thoughts and feelings. The "Divine Comedy" stands as one of the noblest achievements of the mind and heart of man, a literary work second only to the Bible in its influence upon writers, and

one of the most quoted and most translated works in all literature. Dante's prose commentary, "Il Convito," has been pronounced worthy to stand by the side of the best works of antiquity. In his "De Monarchia," in Latin, he set forth a well thought out description of his ideal of government—incidentally casting great light upon the political and social theories back of the Guelf and Ghibelline struggles of the time; and in "De Vulgari Eloquentia," also in Latin, he discussed language in general, its developments, and particularly the dialects of Italian.

Dante was a man of his age—a man of action, involved in the affairs of Florence and the papacy; a man of intellect, deeply learned in the philosophy and religion of his time; and a man of eminence, acquainted with the great men in politics and literature, both of Italy and of the rest of Europe. He is truly representative of his time and place, yet his stature far transcends that time and place—his eloquent vitality exerts its powerful influence on contemporary thought as well. It is therefore most fitting that the United States of America, in the 20th century, separated from Dante by 4,000 miles and seven centuries, should, by the official act of issuing a postage stamp to celebrate his birthday, recognize that his poetic magnificence, his mastery of language, his human tenderness and moral grandeur, make him a man worthy of the praise and emulation of all men.

For these reasons, I am introducing today a bill to provide that the U.S. Post Office shall issue a stamp celebrating, in May 1965, the 700th birthday of Dante Alighieri. I am also writing to the Postmaster General, requesting appropriate action on this proposal. I urge my colleagues to join in the sponsoring of this legislation.

I am happy to cooperate with the Dante Centenary Committee on this bill. I especially wish to thank Dr. Vincenzo Cioffari, national chairman of the committee, and Dr. Thomas G. Bergin, Sterling professor of romance languages at Yale University. Their assistance in the preparation of this bill was invaluable.

## APPENDIX C

### SPECIAL SERIES OF POSTAGE STAMPS IN COMMEMORATION OF 700TH ANNIVERSARY OF BIRTH OF DANTE ALIGHIERI

Mr. DOUGLAS. Mr. President, although the United States has a relatively short history and we are often proud of our youthful eminence, our culture has acquired some of the essential qualities of European civilization. Ever since the exploration and settlement of the Americas, we have been enriched by a multiplicity of European influences from such sources as Athens of the fifth century B.C., Renaissance Italy, Elizabethan England, and the France of the Enlightenment, to name just a few.

Occasionally we have an opportunity to pause for a gracious acknowledgement of great men or events of the past which have given something unique and immortal to our civilization. During this year, we have been celebrating the 400th anniversary of William Shakespeare's birth, and we have seen a salutary broadening of knowledge and appreciation for his writing.

Next year, 1965, will bring the 700th anniversary of the birth of Dante Alighieri, surely one of the finest poets the world has ever produced. Dante, writing at the dawn of what was to become the Italian Renaissance, gave to his world and to ours his "Divine Comedy." This is poetry at its most expressive, it is social comment at its most acerbic and it is a timeless and universal depiction of humanity.

During 1965 I hope a great deal of interest in Dante's writing will be generated. As a humanist he was fascinated by society and government

as the framework in which man confronts his destiny. Because of his genius many of his ideas and observations are as meaningful to us as they were to his contemporaries.

In anticipation of the coming year, and as a token of the attention which I trust will be aroused by this anniversary, I am introducing today a Senate joint resolution authorizing the Postmaster General to issue a stamp commemorating the birth of Dante Alighieri in the year A.D. 1265. I ask unanimous consent that the text of the resolution be included at this point in the RECORD.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The joint resolution will be received and appropriately referred; and, without objection, the joint resolution will be printed in the RECORD.

The joint resolution (S.J. Res. 186) to provide for the issuance of a special series of postage stamps in commemoration of the 700th anniversary of the birth of Dante Alighieri, introduced by Mr. Douglas, was received, read twice by its title, referred to the Committee on Post Office and Civil Service, and ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

Whereas Americans gratefully honor the memory of persons whose lives and accomplishments have enriched our own; and

Whereas the year 1965 will mark the 700th anniversary of the birth of the great Italian man of letters, Dante Alighieri; and

Whereas Dante Alighieri, through his treatise entitled *De Monarchia* was the first powerful voice to advocate a federation of nations as the only sure means of bringing about an enduring peace on this earth, thus anticipating what has become a reality in our United Nations; and

Whereas Dante's *Divine Comedy*, acknowledged as one of the greatest literary works of all time, has, through numerous translations into English, become a genuine part of our American cultural tradition; and

Whereas Dante Alighieri, by virtue of his supreme genius as a poet and thinker, has enriched not only Italy but all of western civilization: Now, therefore, be it

*Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled*, That the Postmaster General is authorized and directed to issue, during the calendar year 1965, a special series of postage stamps, of such appropriate design and denomination as he shall prescribe, in commemoration of the 700th anniversary of the birth of Dante Alighieri.

## APPENDIX D

### ISSUANCE OF DANTE COMMEMORATIVE STAMP

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New York [Mr. ROONEY] is recognized for 20 minutes.

Mr. ROONEY of New York. Mr. Speaker, on March 26 last, I commented on the fact that significant anniversary ceremonies would be held throughout the Nation this year honoring Dante Alighieri, one of the world's greatest poets. On that occasion, I advised this House that we honored this past year another great Italian, Giovanni da Verrazano, with a U.S. commemorative stamp, and urged that Dante be similarly honored as a gesture of our admiration and respect.

I was particularly pleased that, as recommended, this renowned and most distinguished Italian literary figure of all time was, in fact, memorialized by the issuance of a stamp commemorating the 700th anniversary of his birth. This commemoration was observed at a dedication ceremony held in San Francisco last week on the first day the stamp was offered for sale.

Sponsored by the Dante Alighieri Commemorative Stamp National Committee, it was a moving and deserving tribute attended by many notable persons from all walks of life. Several of our distinguished colleagues served on the honorary committee, of which the senior Senator from Rhode Island, [JOHN O. PASTORE], was chairman, Dr. Edward D. Re, Chairman of the Foreign Claims Settlement Commission, who served at the request of Postmaster General Gronouski as national chairman of the committee, read the message of President Johnson in honor of the occasion.

Presiding at the ceremonies which took place at the Fairmont Hotel in San Francisco, was the Honorable John A. Ertola, supervisor of the city and county of San Francisco. The invocation was delivered by the Most Reverend Joseph T. McGucken, archbishop of San Francisco, and the pledge of allegiance led by the Honorable George Cerasi, member of the Advisory Committee of the Department of Veterans' Affairs for the State of California.

Greetings were extended on behalf of Mayor Jack Shelley by Hon. Peter Tamaras, supervisor of the city and county of San Francisco. In addition to the remarks by Dr. Re, as national chairman of the committee, speakers on the program included Postmaster John F. Fixa and Judge Lawrence S. Mana, chairman of the Dante Centenary Committee of the San Francisco Bay Area.

The significance of the stamp was explained in an address by Assistant Postmaster General Ralph Nicholson representing the Postmaster General. Mr. Nicholson also made several presentations of Dante commemorative stamp albums. Incidentally, Mr. Speaker, the stamp was designed by Mr. Douglas Gorsline, of New York City, the artist who designed Shakespeare's commemorative stamp issued last year by the Post Office Department. It is an attractive representation of Dante wearing the usual laurel wreath which is symbolic of poetry, the language in which Dante was at his best. In fact, his best known poem, the "Divine Comedy," is incorporated in the stamp by an allegorical reference to the flames of Hell about which he wrote so vividly in that work.

Among those serving on the national committee were Judge Ruggero Aldisert, national president, Italian Sons and Daughters of America; Mario J. Cariello, president, Borough of Queens, New York, N.Y.; Mayor Ralph G. Conte, of Bloomfield, N.J.; Dr. James DiRenna, president, UNICO National; Paul D'Ortona, president, City Council of Philadelphia; John N. LaCorte, president, Italian Historical Society of America; Edward T. Lagonegro, mayor of Elmira, N.Y.; James J. LaPenta, Jr., Deputy Assistant Postmaster General; Albert V. Manicalco, president, Borough of Richmond, New York, N.Y.; Judge Juvenal Marchisio, national president, American Committee on Italian Migration; Dr. Edward J. Martola, president of Pace College, New York; Charles G. Notari, national president, Federazione Figli di Colombo; John Ottaviani, supreme venerable Order Sons of Italy; Fortune R. Pope, president,

Columbus Citizens' Committee; Dr. Peter Sammartino, president of Fairleigh Dickinson University, New Jersey; Paul R. Screvane, president, City Council of New York; Frank J. Lucia, commissioner of sanitation, city of New York; Salvatore A. Locurto, deputy commissioner of sanitation, city of New York; Joseph J. Perrini, deputy controller, city of New York; and Paul P. Ree, Jr., tax commissioner, New York City.

Under permission to extend my remarks, I should like to include the texts of Dr. Re's statement and the message of President Johnson and Postmaster General Gronouski:

### Remarks of Dr. Edward D. Re

Mr. Mayor, Assistant Postmaster General, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen we have gathered at these impressive ceremonies to pay tribute to the memory of one of the great literary figures of all time.

The entire world commemorates this year the 700th anniversary of the birth of Dante Alighieri, one of the world's greatest poets. Though a Florentine by birth, Dante Alighieri belongs to all peoples and to all nations a genius whose vision and wisdom have now been recognized everywhere, Dante's works have neither been forgotten nor their influence diminished by the passage of time. Rather, they have assured his standing as a universal poet, as Shakespeare—a writer for men and for all times. As one of the giants of the Renaissance, Dante has left an indelible mark upon the world.

On this centenary celebration, therefore, we pay tribute to a man who also belongs to all ages. That he still lives in the hearts and minds of men everywhere is eloquently expressed by your presence at these ceremonies.

It is particularly appropriate that all Americans, and not merely Americans of Italian heritage, should honor Dante by this commemoration. For the genius of Dante honors not only the land that gave him birth but honors all humanity as well.

It is also fitting that this tribute should be in the form of a commemorative stamp which knows neither boundaries nor time—a commemoration which may be shared by all peoples and all nations everywhere. What better memorial, therefore, could serve to remind all humanity of the contributions of this great poet to the world's literary masterpieces?



But in commemorating the birth of Dante, the stamp issued today recognizes more than the outstanding contributions of one man in one country. Rather, it serves to emphasize the contributions made by all peoples and by all nations in the forward march of mankind everywhere.

Those of us privileged to be Americans are particularly aware of this truth, for no other nation can compare with the American landscape as a vast mosaic, composed of varied heritages and cultures. Only by the combined efforts, talents, and labors of all Americans regardless of their race or national origin, has this Nation grown and prospered.

But the contributions of all Americans to the growth and development of our Nation were only made possible by the equality of opportunity that America guarantees to all citizens. America today strives to attain that goal for all Americans, realizing that without equality and justice under the law, no nation can be truly great, and no society can be truly free. These principles, inspired by his love of justice, can be found in Dante's works. To Dante, the concept of a free world was God's greatest gift to mankind. The torment of a man, dismayed and outraged by the violence and disorder of his day and by moral injustices often ending in bloodshed, was, in part, the "leitmotiv" of the "Divine Comedy." Throughout the Comedy we see the supreme artist ceaselessly striving for the triumph of his ideals of peace and justice—a peace through justice. The first artistic giant of the modern age, marking in literature the boundary between medievalism and modern times, it has been said that with Dante "the human spirit had taken a mighty step toward the consciousness of its own secret life."

Although renowned primarily for his literary works, Dante was an active man who was forced by events to become a prominent figure in Florentine politics. Dante held important public offices and carried out diplomatic missions on behalf of his government. Although it may be said to be unfortunate that he ended his life in exile from the Florence he loved, it was during this period that he wrote one of his most inspirational works, the "De Monarchia," his blueprint for attaining universal peace through justice. It was through his writings that Dante was able to express effectively his hopes for a spiritual and civic revival of all humanity. From that revival may we draw inspiration for our continuing efforts to achieve a better community at home and a just peace in the world.

As national chairman of the Dante Alighieri Commemorative Stamp Committee, I would like to express my appreciation to Postmaster General Gronouski for the privilege of participating in these impressive ceremonies. The Postmaster General who was unable to attend these ceremonies has asked me to read the following letter:

Washington, D.C., July 14, 1965.

Dr. Edward D. Re,  
Chairman, Dante Alighieri Commemorative Stamp National Committee,  
Washington, D.C.

Dear Dr. Re: I am most grateful for your invitation to attend the Dante Alighieri commemorative stamp first-day-issue ceremonies in San Francisco, but a prior commitment, unfortunately, prevents me from accepting. Therefore, I have asked Mr. Ralph Nicholson, my able Assistant Postmaster General in charge of Finance and Administration, to represent me and the Department.

The issuance of the Dante Alighieri stamp is a fitting tribute to the immortal Italian-born poet, who, by virtue of his genius, belongs to the whole civilized world. But as we observe the Dante Alighieri anniversary we do more than honor one man, however great he was. We honor a rich Italian heritage, which is also our heritage, thanks to millions of Americans of Italian descent. They added to our culture, our traditions, and our greatness, and we would be a lesser nation without them. They instilled in us love for music, arts and sciences, and the immortal value of humanity.

This is one of the many reasons why our country should keep its door open to those sons of Italy who can contribute further to our cultural and economic growth. Our present discriminatory immigration laws must be replaced by enlightened legislation proposed by President Johnson which will respect the needs of our country and at the same time welcome to our shores those who continue to bring with them the heritage of mankind's greatest intellectual, moral, and political creativeness.

Only by the fusion and combined strength of all heritages have we been able to make of this blessed land "one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all."

Please convey my best wishes to all members of the Dante Alighieri Commemorative Stamp National and San Francisco Committee as well as to the entire Italo-American community on this memorable occasion.

With best personal regards, I remain,

Sincerely yours,

John A. Gronouski,  
Postmaster General.

I should like to acknowledge the contribution of all those whose combined efforts culminated in the issuance of the Dante commemorative stamp. A word of appreciation is also due the Dante Centenary Committee of the San Francisco Bay area and its president, Judge Lawrence Mana, and also to Mr. John A. Ertola and his committee, who arranged so expertly the many details of this program.

It is now my happy privilege to read on this historic occasion the message of the President of the United States:

The White House  
Washington, July 15, 1965.

Hon. Edward D. Re,  
Chairman, Foreign Claims Settlement Commission of the United States

Dear Chairman Re: It gives me pleasure to join the millions of our citizens paying tribute to the immortal memory of Dante Alighieri on the 700th anniversary of his birth. A commemorative stamp in honor of this great son of Italy is a fitting tribute to the universal contributions of an illustrious man who belongs to every age and to people of all ages.

Through his genius and creative achievement, Dante became forever a citizen of the world. Poet, philosopher, musician, political scientist, and psychologist, Dante's renowned accomplishments are a lasting testament to his fully and richly rewarding life.

Dante's immortal "Divine Comedy," with its sublime message of faith and hope, is his best known and most widely respected work. But for those who are charged with administering their nation's affairs, his provocative political ideas, expressed in his other literary masterpieces, have enduring meaning and significance.

I am both proud and happy to express at this time my congratulations to our entire Italian-American community for sustaining in their new home the revered ideals and traditions of the old. You have my personal good wishes on this memorable occasion.

Sincerely,  
Lyndon B. Johnson