

Statement on the Historical and Cultural Significance of the 1969 Woodstock Festival Site

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INTRODUCTION

"The baffling history of mankind is full of obvious turning points and significant events: battles won, treaties signed, rulers elected or disposed, and now seemingly, planets conquered. Equally important are the great groundswells of popular movements that affect the minds and values of a generation or more, not all of which can be neatly tied to a time or place. Looking back upon the America of the '60s, future historians may well search for the meaning of one such movement. It drew the public's notice on the days and nights of Aug. 15 through 17, 1969, on the 600-acre farm of Max Yasgur in Bethel, N.Y." ¹

The Woodstock Music and Art Fair, held in the Catskill Mountains of New York's Sullivan County, showcased a veritable who's who of the top performers of rock, folk, and progressive popular music during the Sixties era. To this remote location was attracted an audience estimated variously at between a quarter- to a half-million mostly young people from all over the country. For the three summer days over which it was held, the Festival site was said to constitute the Empire State's second most populous city.² The site itself had been selected by the Festival's organizers because it comprised a natural amphitheater that afforded decent acoustics and unobstructed sight views, plus plenty of space for camping on the grounds. To gauge the significance of the talent on stage, consider that over a third of the thirty-one groups or solo performers who played Woodstock have subsequently been inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, with several more expected to be so honored in the coming years. Despite problems with the sound system, intermittent downpours, and critical shortages of food, drinking water, and toilet facilities, this self-billed "Aquarian Exposition" was universally regarded as a critical success. Even those who didn't attend reckoned it to be an epoch-making event, a gathering that has come to represent the acme of the era's counterculture. Recognizing its singular place in contemporary history, the U.S. Postal Service recently issued a first-class postage stamp in honor of Woodstock and based it on the distinctive dove-on-guitar neck design of the Festival's poster.³ Another indication of its importance is demonstrated by the inclusion of an entry for Woodstock in *The Dictionary of Cultural Literacy*, thus according it the status of a term that the scholars who compiled this

reference work feel every educated member of our society would be expected to know.⁴

The Woodstock Festival site is significant for a number of reasons. First is its association as the setting for the largest musical event of its kind produced to that date. (And in this role, the land itself figuratively became an important and much remarked upon "player" in the drama that unfolded on its sylvan-fringed sward).⁵ Second, it is of local and regional significance because of the enormous impact, both immediate and lasting, the event had on the local and regional community. Finally, it is significant due to the symbolic weight with which the Festival and the Festival site have been invested by members of the Sixties counterculture, as well as their admirers and detractors over time. Indeed, this amorphous social movement subsequently came to be called "Woodstock Nation," and the Baby Boomers, who comprised most of the audience at the Festival, are frequently referred to as the "Woodstock Generation" as a result.⁶

HISTORIC CONTENT

The year preceding the Festival had been one of the most violent in post-World War II history. The long struggle for African-American civil rights had been forestalled following the assassination of its most articulate leader, the Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr. His murder had provoked rioting and arson in most of the nation's largest cities with the destruction of property worth hundreds of million dollars. Protests against American involvement in Vietnam had drawn thousands of people into the streets, most notably in Chicago the previous summer at the Democratic National Convention. There demonstrators who, in their frustration at being prevented from picketing nearer the convention center, taunted law enforcement authorities and precipitated what the Kerner Commission report later called a "police riot." A growing perception among women of their own lack of social and economic equality prompted the emergence of a new wave of feminism that in its insurgent stage went by the name of Women's Liberation. College campuses were convulsed with sit-ins opposing the Vietnam war and also against *in loco parentis* practices. During the month before the Festival a routine police raid on a gay bar in Greenwich Village touched off the Stonewall riots, which itself marked the birth of the Gay and Lesbian Liberation movement. All of these crises and disruptions to the status quo produced a feeling among many Americans, and particularly the youth, that the country was coming unraveled. Among the more radical segment of political and cultural activists on the left there was an increasing sense that the next American revolution might be at hand.

The Woodstock Festival was the largest and most spectacular gathering of the type known as the be-in. The first such gathering to be called by this term (which itself was derived from the civil rights movement "sit-in" demonstrations held throughout the South beginning in Greenville, N.C., in 1960) was the Human Be-In, a free event held in January 1967 in San Francisco's Golden Gate Park. There a crowd of young people, including those who were associated with the beat movement of the late 1950's and their younger bohemian successors known as hippies, along with a wide assortment of college students and curiosity seekers of all ages, participated in what the organizers had promoted as a "gathering of the tribes." The rationale for this festive occasion was to

bring together Bay Area activists who had been involved in the movements for civil rights and free speech and opposition to the Vietnam War with counterculture activists, distinguishable from their more conventionally political counterparts by their belief in dropping out of society instead of working to reform it. As a focal point of the Be-In, a low stage was erected on the park's polo grounds and there were invited to speak such luminaries as the poets Allen Ginsberg, Gary Snyder, Lawrence Ferlinghetti, Lenore Kandel, the Buddhist spiritual leader Suzuki Roshi, and antiwar activist Jerry Rubin. Also on the dais were showcased several of the bands most representative of the "San Francisco sound," including the Jefferson Airplane, the Grateful Dead, and Big Brother and the Holding Company. Despite these attractions, the Be-In conveyed a palpable feeling for the estimated 20,000 persons in attendance that their community of opposition was larger and more colorful and diverse than any of them had previously imagined. It provided a cultural form for evoking an alternative community in place, and garnered the counterculture's first coverage by the national news media. Dozens of be-ins and love-ins were organized across the country over the course of that year, the most famous of which included the love-in held in Los Angeles and New York's Central Park be-in, both which took place on Easter Sunday 1967.⁷

When musicians performed at be-ins, they were considered an essential part of the gathering, although not quite its *raison d'être*. New "acid rock" groups had found their audience in primarily what has been called the vaudeville hippie ballrooms whose floors permitted free-form dancing abetted by state-of-the-art sound systems and liquid projection "light shows."⁸ With experiences enhanced by the use of psychedelic drugs, there was very little distinction made between audiences and the performers in the early days of these concerts (1965-1967). In many cases the two were the same, and the dance halls themselves were sometimes communally operated on what the collective hoped would be at least a breakeven basis.

While groups such as the Haight-Ashbury Diggers helped organize free concerts in the San Francisco parks with the arrival of the "Summer of love" in 1967, a new type of musical gathering was being staged featuring acid rock groups and other eclectic performers whose talents ran from folk to jazz, and from soul to Indian classical music. The first of these was the Magic Mountain Festival held over a three day period on Mount Tamalpais in Marin County across the Bay and north of San Francisco in early June 1967. It was followed about a week later by the much better known Monterey Pop Festival down the coast near Big Sur. Over a three-day period some 30,000 to 50,000 members of the "love generation" were treated to performances by British invasion groups such as the Who, soul singer Otis Redding, folkies like the Lovin' Spoonful and the Mamas and the Papas, as well as the Grateful Dead. Two of the breakout performances were by Janis Joplin and Big Brother and Jimi Hendrix with his band the Experience, who were making their American debut. Over the next two years several other festivals were held that aspired to replicate the critical success of the Monterey Pop Festival, and, their promoters hoped, to turn a profit. Although these festivals became more focused on the performers, their form - large numbers of people camping out on the grounds and together sharing close quarters-preserved the sense that they were sites where the counterculture itself was rehearsed, performed and, one might say,

consumed, as at the be-ins.

HISTORY OF THE FESTIVAL

The Woodstock Festival happened in a kind of backhanded way. Two young New York venture capitalists, John Roberts and Joel Rosenman placed an ad in the *New York Times* stating simply "Two young men with unlimited capital looking for interesting, legitimate investment opportunities and business propositions."⁹ The ad immediately caught the eye of Michael Lang, a self-identified hippie rock promoter who had just organized his first festival with moderate success in Miami. He and his partner, Artie Kornfeld were seeking financing to build a recording studio featuring all the latest technology in the Hudson River Valley town and bohemian enclave of Woodstock (Ulster County), N.Y. The town had been known as a haven for artists and writers since the turn of the century, and by the mid 1960's had begun to attract a host of well known musicians such as Bob Dylan and the Band. Lang and Kornfeld were convinced that a studio at Woodstock would attract their trade as well as musicians from all over the country. Messrs. Roberts and Rosenman were non-pulsed by the pair's proposal, since they had already financed a recording studio and were looking now for new ventures to pursue.¹⁰ Lang and Kornfeld's prospectus had included the idea of staging a rock festival in advance of the studio's opening to both promote the studio and raise funds for its operation. That part of their proposal captured the investors' fancy and together the four men embarked upon the project of organizing a festival at Woodstock.

Lang pursued contacts in the musical entertainment industry and secured the services of John Morris, who had recently been fired as manager of Bill Graham's Fillmore East auditorium in New York City. Morris successfully signed every act that had been booked to perform at the Fillmore East that same summer. Having these and other musicians on the same bill would make the Woodstock Festival the largest gathering of rock and pop talent ever assembled on a single bill. When it was determined that there was no site in the village of Woodstock to accommodate a crowd expected to number 30,000-50,000, the group settled on the town of Wallkill in Orange County. The site they had located, although less than optimum, could be leased at a reasonable rate. Obtaining permits for such a gathering proved to be more troublesome. Only two country lanes ran into the town and law enforcement and medical personnel were few and far between. Their application for permits were eventually denied them when an ad hoc group called the Concerned Citizens Committee obtained some 2000 signatures of local residents who opposed a festival that might bring large numbers of hippie drug users into the town. Woodstock Ventures, the promoters partnership entity, instigated legal action to reverse this decision while simultaneously seeking an alternative site. Their desperate search by helicopter into what seemed like every nook and cranny within a few hours drive of New York City led them eventually to the Sullivan County dairy farm of Max Yasgur. For \$50,000 (and \$75,000 in escrow to cover damages), he agreed to lease them several hundred acres, including a 37½ acre alfalfa field that formed a natural amphitheater and would make an ideal performance space. In total, Woodstock Ventures leased 600 acres from Yasgur and other landowners for the festival grounds.¹¹

Yasgur was a well respected citizen of Bethel Township with extensive holding of rolling hills and woodlands. His health was not good which made him more receptive to deriving income from pursuits other than farming. With his assistance, the appropriate permits were obtained from the Town officials, but as news of the Festival soon spread, it stimulated local opposition. An anonymous party erected a 2½ -by-4-foot sign that read "Local People Speak Out / Stop Max's Music Festival / No 150,000 Hippies Here / Buy No Milk." The Yasgur's had been having second thoughts about their decision to lease their land to Woodstock Ventures, once it had been reported that as many as 75,000 tickets had already been sold with the prospect that perhaps 100,000 people, and maybe more, could be expected. But after they saw that sign, they were determined to go through with it.¹²

Preparations for the Festival were conducted under less than opportune conditions. Essentially there was too little time - three weeks - to get the site ready, and the organizers themselves were either inexperienced or underexperienced in the required tasks for an event of this size. To give just one example, sources document how difficult it was to ascertain how many rental privies would be needed for a crowd whose numbers could only be guessed at. No one provider of such portable toilets had a sufficient number of units available, so the promoters obtained as many as they could find throughout a regional search. That number would prove to be woefully inadequate. Another serious problem arose after the man who was hired to provide security for the Festival had arranged for 346 off-duty New York City police officers to serve as "ushers." But the day before the Festival was to open, New York's Police Commissioner prohibited anyone from his force to accept these positions, citing 1967 moonlighting regulations that proscribed police officers from taking outside jobs involving security.¹³ At loose ends for how to replace them, the promoters were able to convince members of a New Mexico commune known as the Hog Farm to constitute themselves as a "Please Force." (The commune had earlier agreed to set up a free food service and staff a tent for the treatment of those suffering the effects of bad drug trips.) Hugh Romney, a/k/a "Wavy Gravy," first among the commune's equals, entertained journalists' queries about their plans for providing security at the festival. "Do you feel secure?" Romney innocently responded. When one of the reporters answered in the affirmative, Romney quipped, "It seems to be working!" He followed this with a mock stern warning that miscreants would be put in their place by dousing them with seltzer water or targeting them with custard pies.¹⁴

The promoters had failed utterly in restricting access to the site while preparations were being made with the result that some 50,000 people had already arrived there before the fences had been completed. Realizing how difficult, probably impossible, it would be to clear the field and force those early arrivals to show their tickets at the gate, by Friday afternoon on 15 August, while gate-crashers were dismantling the fences, the fateful decision was taken to bow to reality and declare that it would be henceforth a free Festival. This guaranteed that the promoters would stand to lose money on their venture; it was mitigated only by the hope that revenue from the eventual release of the film and audio recordings would help them recoup their losses (which, more than a

decade later it did).¹⁵

The festival was supposed to have begun at 3:00 p.m., but Sweetwater, the first band scheduled to go on, was mired in traffic with all of its equipment.¹⁶ A helicopter was dispatched to find them and airlift them to the stage. Various means were used to amuse the crowd in the meantime. One of the Hog Farmers, Tom Law, sat in the lotus position on the center of the stage and led those who were willing among the 100,000 gathered in front of him through a series of yoga exercises. Meanwhile approximately 85,000 others congregated in one of the other adjoining areas. There were, for example, a pavilion set up for the display of an American Indian Art exhibit (this was the "Art" part of the "Aquarian Exposition"); a tent designated as "Movement City," where various radical political groups distributed literature and talked with visitors; an unauthorized area where dope dealers congregated to sell various types of drugs including LSD, marijuana, mescaline, and hashish; and a children's playground with elaborate equipment built on the site that was soon taken over by older "flower children."¹⁷ In the same general vicinity of the Hog Farm food service tent, there was a free stage set up for use by any party - local bands, poets, jugglers, mimes, or speakers. It reportedly saw extensive use throughout the festival. Joan Baez was perhaps the only major act who showed up to play a more intimate set on this stage; the rest were amateurs or lesser-knowns. Nonetheless, all weekend the free stage remained a focal point for those who wished to sit in close proximity to the entertainers.¹⁸

Among the most commented on recreational activities indulged in by Festival goers throughout the weekend involved swimming in one of the three lakes or ponds located near the site. One could be found behind the campgrounds near the intersection of Perry and West Shore Roads, one was "Filippini Pond" behind the crew's mess hall north of West Shore Road, and the last was east of Perry Road across from a hayfield. Local landowners lodged objections to these trespassers, but to little avail. Some of the swimmers wore suits, but soon skinny dipping became the order of the day.¹⁹ Photographers took great delight in the spectacle of young people frolicking in the nude. It was as if the Book of Genesis was being rewritten on the spot and in this new version the children of Adam and Eve had been allowed to return to the Garden of Eden, clothed as before only in their innocence. This unashamed social nudity at Woodstock established a trend for those who attended subsequent festivals.²⁰

When the festival started a few hours later, the first performer on stage was Richie Havens. He greeted the crowd by loudly observing, "We've finally made it! We did it this time -- they'll never be able to hide us again!" He later wrote in his memoir: "We were there because we felt good about ourselves, happy to be in the same place with so many brothers and sisters who shared this common bond. We were there to look at each other, meet each other, identify our support for each other. We were there to celebrate. We would share this experience the rest of our lives." It was an acknowledgment by one of the featured musicians of the Festival's roots in the be-in phenomenon. For Havens, as it would be later described by other participants, the experience was first and foremost about "[the feeling that Bethel was such a special place, a moment when we all felt we were at the exact center of true freedom." Back on stage for an unprecedented seventh

and final encore, Havens improvised the song "Freedom," which then became his signature tune. It also helped established one of the Festival's key themes.²¹

Another notable performer on that Friday was Country Joe McDonald who agreed to follow Richie Havens when Sweetwater had still not arrived. Without the rest of his band, the Fish, he agreed to play solo, something he had been contemplating doing, but not for a few years. McDonald opened his set with the infamous "Fish Cheer": "Gimme an F!" he cried out, and the crowd now numbering a quarter million enthusiastically roared back "F!" "Gimme a U!" The call-and-response ended with what had to be the loudest uttering of an obscenity ever. Together they took great delight in shouting out a word that only a few years before, when scrawled on a sheet of notebook paper on the steps of Sather Gate on the U.C.- Berkeley campus, had set in motion a protracted battle between students and administrators over what the press dubbed the "Filthy Speech Movement." Whether they thought about it or not, the Festival goers were claiming for themselves the right to use certain words in public that many of them unselfconsciously were already using in private conversation. Country Joe was followed by John Sebastian, the Incredible String Band, Tim Hardin and Joan Baez. The weekend's first downpour occurred during Ravi Shankar's set. The lightning and driving rain forced him and his accompanists to leave the stage.

The following two days witnessed numerous stellar performances interspersed with more rain that turned the stage area in particular into a quagmire. Those who braved the elements witnessed sets by the Who; Janis Joplin and her new band; Santana; Crosby, Stills and Nash making their national debut; Johnny Winter; and Blood, Sweat and Tears, among several others.²² At dawn on 18 August, Jimi Hendrix and his five-piece band the Gypsy Sun and Rainbows closed the festival. His performance has entered the realm of legend in large part because of its brilliant and inspired rendition of "The Star Spangled Banner."²³

IMPACT ON THE LOCALITY AND REGION

Opposition to the Woodstock Festival, which had driven it from its first planned location in Wallkill, N.Y., was due in part to the feeling among local residents and officials that they were ill equipped to handle the influx of tens or perhaps hundreds of thousands of people. Besides this deficiency in infrastructure and services, the opposition was also fueled by a pronounced bias against the hippie counterculture and all it represented, typically evoked by that hedonistic triumvirate of "sex, drugs and rock 'n roll."²⁴ Shortly afterward, an alternate site had been found at Bethel, some three weeks prior to the advertised start of the Festival. Soon the citizens of Sullivan County would indeed find themselves facing a crisis of unprecedented proportions as every road leading to Yasgur's farm became clogged with cars for twenty-to-thirty miles in all directions. It was the first and only time that the state actually closed a portion of the New York Thruway, after festival goers, trapped in a seemingly endless traffic jam that in places featured four, sometimes five columns of vehicles splayed across a two-lane turnpike, simply abandoned their cars and set off for the festival site on foot.

The same spirit of cooperation that was noted among festival goers was also exhibited by people on farms adjacent to the site and in neighboring communities, many of whom provided housing, food, and water upon hearing of shortages at the site. Local hospitals and schools opened their doors to assist in the treating of festival goers who had been airlifted there when they needed more urgent care than the medical professionals at the Festival site could provide.²⁵ Approximately 4,000 people were treated for "injuries, illness, and adverse drug reactions"; about ten percent of that number for the last of these complaints.²⁶

There was immediate political fallout from the Festival. In the fall election of 1969, the citizens of Bethel voted out of office Daniel Amatucci, the town supervisor who had approved the festival permit application. He was defeated by a man who ran solely on his very vocal opposition to the Festival.²⁷ Subsequently the Town adopted an ordinance banning mass gatherings in excess of 10,000 people unless a variance was obtained, effectively ensuring there would never again be a mass event on the order of Woodstock in their community. (Such restrictions were also put into effect elsewhere in the state and nation.)²⁸ Over the past three decades, the animosity between local residents who supported the Festival and those who opposed it has dissipated somewhat. Much more in evidence today is the attempt by elected officials and those charged with tourism development to play up the locality's claim to fame as the site of the original Woodstock Festival. In 1984, in observance of the Festival's fifteenth anniversary, an ad hoc committee of area citizens commissioned local welder Wayne Seward to erect a concrete monument at the site with a cast iron plaque and sculpture commemorating the event. It may be found there today near the intersection of West Shore and Hurd Roads. This historical marker serves a useful function in letting the steady stream of visitors to the site know they have arrived at their desired destination.²⁹

WOODSTOCK EXCEPTIONALISM

What made the 1969 Woodstock Festival different from all other rock festivals? The answer may be found in a combination of several factors: it featured the largest line-up of musical talent ever assembled and provided the largest live audience in history for them to showcase their talent. Several groups such as Sly and the Family Stone; Santana; Crosby, Stills and Nash; and Richie Havens regarded their performances at Woodstock as career making. Another factor was the notable lack of violence among the festival goers. Medical personnel noted no injuries caused by violence, despite the plethora of deplorable conditions already documented. The number of people treated for adverse recreational drug reactions, reported by Dr. William Abruzzi, Festival Medical Director was relatively small: around 800 cases in the three-day period, a minuscule figure in proportion to the size of the crowd (300,000-500,000) compared with later festivals that drew equal or smaller numbers of people.³⁰ More than one commentator has remarked that the feeling of elan, bonhomie, and the spirit of cooperation that marked the Woodstock Festival was due in part to the prevalence of psychotropic substances rather than hard drugs such as methadone, heroin, and cocaine, in addition to alcohol, which were much more in evidence at subsequent festivals. A number of those gatherings were also marred by outbreaks of violence and rioting.

Because nothing had been organized on this scale before, the Woodstock Festival took on the aspect of a high stakes experiment where both the organizers and those in attendance grasped the need to improvise solutions to the many challenges they were faced with. Festival goers reported feeling a sense of accomplishment and exhilaration that together they found solutions to these challenges. Later festivals tended to be better organized because of the Woodstock experience and when they were not, crowds tended to be much less willing to put up with conditions they found wanting.

SYMBOLIC IMPORTANCE OF WOODSTOCK TO THE SIXTIES COUNTERCULTURE

When talking about Woodstock's importance one needs to distinguish the event from the myth with which it is co-terminous. The myth of Woodstock was generated simultaneously with the event's unfolding and, like other cultural myths, has undergone periodic alterations and transformations down to the present time.³¹ In the strict sense of the term, myths are stories that are intended to convey larger truths which may not otherwise be verifiable; they may also provide explanations about the origins or meaning of phenomena whose facticity is beside the point. Social groups commonly create or recreate myths about themselves which serve to buttress cherished beliefs and values held by its members and signal how they collectively wish to be known. The myth of Woodstock is that in a time of military conflict abroad, racial and ethnic strife at home, when a deep social division known as the "generation gap" separated parents from children, a half a million mostly young people removed themselves from proximity to these conflicts and went "back to the garden" to "try and set [their] soul[s] free."³² Attracted by the largest lineup of popular music talent ever showcased at one venue, these young people endured inclement weather, and critical shortages of food, water, shelter, dry clothing, and sanitation facilities; in sum, most of the basic necessities of life. Despite these hardships, for three days they lived peaceably in a state of harmony and love, sharing what limited resources they had with one another. Written and verbal accounts of those who have undertaken self-described "pilgrimages" to the Festival site indicate that they do so as a way of feeling the "vibrations" that are said to inhere in the land in the aftermath of this mass ceremonial experience.³³

LONG-TERM SIGNIFICANCE

In 1969, rock critic Ellen Sander appraised the immediate impact of the Festival this way: "No longer can the magical multicolored phenomenon of pop culture be overlooked or underrated. It's happening everywhere, but now it has happened in one place at one time so hugely that it was indeed historic The audience was a much bigger story than the groups. It was major entertainment news that the line-up of talent was of such magnificence and magnitude (thirty-one acts, nineteen of which were colossal) These were, however, the least significant events of what happened over the Woodstock weekend. What happened was that the largest number of people ever assembled for any event other than a war lived together, intimately and meaningfully and with such natural good cheer that they turned on not only everyone surrounding

them but the mass media, and, by extension, millions of others, young and old, particularly many elements hostile to the manifestations and ignorant of the substance of pop culture."³⁴

Woodstock was the culmination of a transformation in American popular music that had begun with Monterey. The Monterey Pop Festival introduced the emerging acid rock bands of the San Francisco Bay Area to a wider audience estimated at 50,000 people as well as to influential record executives and producers from New York and Los Angeles. Woodstock introduced the same wide diversity of talent, albeit on an expanded scale, to a truly mass audience. And not just to those who attended the Festival. A subsequent documentary film (the Academy Award-winning, 3-hour long *Woodstock*, directed by Michael Wadleigh and released in March 1970) and several sound recordings helped establish what only two years before had been underground or avant-garde musical styles and ushered them into the mainstream.³⁵

Participating musicians, industry insiders, and rock critics and historians concur that Woodstock changed the way that popular music was programmed and marketed. Festival promoters noted the large numbers of fans who were willing to put up with often inadequate facilities and the number of festivals for a time increased after Woodstock. Promoters saw opportunities to improve their profit margin by more efficiently organizing festivals, including by placing stringent controls over the collection of tickets at the gate .. They also understood that increased ticket prices would need to be offset by offering better sanitation and protection from inclement weather. By the mid-1970s these ends were realized by moving the festivals from pastoral settings into sports arenas and convention centers and limiting the shows to a single-day or evening.³⁶ From the audience's standpoint, the provision of fixed seats, and assigned and price-segmented locations fundamentally altered the festival-going experience, diminishing the egalitarianism that had been a hallmark of the outdoor festivals. Likewise, the shift from multi-day festivals where fans camped on the site to one-day concerts limited the amount of bonding between fans and thereby diminished the sense of community that many commentators considered the *sine qua non* of the Woodstock experience.³⁷

The development of "arena rock" marked the end of the rock "vaudeville circuit," and led to the demise of the smaller concert hall venues (those having a capacity of a few thousand people) that had been the incubator of new musical styles. Several of them closed in 1970-1971, including the Boston Tea Party and Bill Graham's Fillmores' West and East, in San Francisco and New York respectively.³⁸ The arenas also gave the upper hand to the style of music called heavy metal, represented by loudly amplified guitar based and blues-inflected bands composed almost entirely of white male musicians, whose aggressive style of playing was ideally suited for filling the audible space in arena settings.

After Woodstock, musicians apprehended the seemingly insatiable demand for their music and began commanding higher fees. It thus soon proved to be no longer economically feasible to book several major bands on the same bill and keep ticket

prices within an acceptable range while maintaining profitability. This in turn led to the segmentation of the fan base. At Monterey and Woodstock, the programming of groups representing numerous genres, exposed audiences to many different musical styles at the same time, thereby giving them a keener appreciation of American popular music in all its diversity. In the years following Woodstock, however, fans were channeled into attending concerts that featured fewer acts, typically representing one or two musical styles.

Part of the Woodstock Festival's enduring legacy is the continuing efforts to counteract this trend by replicating the multi-performer/genre concert experience. Over the past three decades various parties have staged or attempted to stage successors to Woodstock, either by that name at different sites or else on or near the original site under a different name.³⁹ On the commercial side, the first festival held in homage to Woodstock occurred around the tenth anniversary date in 1979 at Parr Meadows in Long Island. It was reportedly a flop.⁴⁰

The next for-profit attempt to organize a Woodstock Festival was in summer 1989, this time under the auspices of Woodstock Ventures. It ultimately fell through when John Roberts and Joel Rosenman were unable to reach an agreement with Warner Brothers, described in the press as "the owner of most of the rights to the festival and its name." That did not stop others from trying to cash in on the anniversary commemorations: night club owner Steven Gold bought the rights to sell original festival memorabilia, including about 800 posters and 50,000 tickets to the original event. MTV and VH-1 broadcast the concert film *Woodstock* and were promoting their own line of merchandise in conjunction with Warner Brothers.⁴¹ On the non-commercial side, the Center of Photography in Woodstock, N.Y., sponsored a series of events to mark the anniversary, and members of the Rainbow Family of Living Light, a loose association of counter culturists who traced their origins of the group to the original Festival, sponsored a free-form gathering on the former site of Yasgur's Farm which reportedly attracted several thousand people.⁴² Much had changed in the preceding decade. Enough time had passed for nostalgia to have bloomed among the Woodstock generation, and for various entities to emerge who catered to that sentiment.

For the twenty-fifth anniversary in 1994 two competing commercial concerts were planned. Only the one billed as Woodstock' 94 (or "Woodstock II"), organized by Woodstock Ventures took place. It was held in Saugerties, a Hudson River town just east of Woodstock, N.Y., coincidentally at the Winston Farm, the same location that Woodstock Ventures had first considered holding the 1969 festival on. It was promoted as the Woodstock that would make money, in part through corporate sponsorship, better security, and advance sale of audio, film, and broadcast rights. Despite these preparations a crowd numbering at least 200,000 overwhelmed the gates on the first day and managed once again to turn it into a free festival by default.⁴³ A different festival had been planned at the original Yasgur Farm site, sponsored by June Gelish, the current owner. Ms. Gelish had leased the property to the Multiple Sclerosis Society, whose New York State chapter head, Robert Gersch, undertook the promotion with the expectation that all proceeds would go to his charitable organization.⁴⁴ It was, however,

soon superceded by a different proposed concert known as "Bethel '94," this one produced by Shea Entertainment with Sid Bernstein Ltd., which, after obtaining a lease from Ms. Gelish, won the approval of Bethel officials in January 1994. It was canceled in early August when only 1,650 tickets had been sold. More than 25,000 fans showed up for the weekend of 13-14 August anyway, and were freely entertained by musicians who had played at the first Festival, including Richie Havens, Country Joe McDonald, Arlo Guthrie, Canned Heat, Sha Na Na, and Melanie.⁴⁵

In mid-August 1998 the present site Owner, The Gerry Foundation, a tax-exempt charitable organization, through its wholly owned entity GF Entertainment LLC, held the first commercial concert at the site since 1969. Known as "A Day in the Garden," it featured Ten Years After, Pete Townsend, Richie Havens, Melanie, and John Sebastian, all veterans of the original Woodstock festival, plus Don Henley, Lou Reed, Joni Mitchell, and Stevie Nicks of Fleetwood Mac fame as headliners. Alternative groups such as the Goo Goo Dolls and Third Eye Blind also played to an audience that cumulatively numbered 79,000 over the three days.⁴⁶ The Gerry Foundation followed up this concert the next summer, marking the thirtieth anniversary of the Festival with a one-day show that featured nine performers, five of whom had played the 1969 Festival. Attendance, however, fell below the 10,000 mark.⁴⁷ The previous month Woodstock '99, organized by Michael Lang and John Scher, was held at the former Griffiss Air Force base in Rome, N.Y. Despite high ticket prices and a setting that was the antithesis of Yasgur Farm, the festival managed to attract more than 220,000 young people who were treated to a stellar line-up of primarily alternative rock and pop groups on three stages, programmed simultaneously. A summer heat wave coupled with what many festival goers considered gouging prices (\$4 for bottled water), the festival ended with widespread rioting and arson. At least two women were reported raped. Nearly all of the sensationalized news coverage contrasted this debacle with the more pacific, although equally stressed crowd at the original Festival.⁴⁸

CONCLUSION

What is apparent through this survey of the various gatherings, commercial and otherwise, is that although the original Festival can never be duplicated, the very notion of Woodstock retains an enduring grip upon many people's imagination. Woodstock as an idea is portable. Indeed, the 1969 Festival had been shifted from place to place in search of a site, before landing in Bethel. While festivals bearing the Woodstock name may continue to be held elsewhere, and succeed by drawing on the cache of the original Aquarian Exposition, the Yasgur Farm site will no doubt maintain its vaunted status as the authentic location of one of the Sixties' most celebrated events.

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Notes

1. So begins the essay, "The Message of History's Biggest Happening," *Time* magazine's four-page coverage, complete with several color photographs, of the Woodstock Music and Art Fair in vol. 94, (29 August 1969), 32-33.
2. It has been repeatedly asserted that the size of the audience attending Woodstock made the Festival site itself "the second largest city in New York" for those three days in mid-August 1969. Others have referred to it as the "third largest city" in the state. Which is accurate? The answer depends on which estimate one uses for the number of people present. If the largest number usually given -- 500,000 -- is accepted, then the first claim is true; if the smaller estimates (300,000-400,000) are to be believed, then the latter claim pertains. The 1970 federal census enumerated 462,783 people in Buffalo, the state's second most populous city, and 296,233 in Rochester, the next in size. Edward P. Morgan, *The 60s Experience: Hard Lessons About Modern America* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1991), 194; U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *County and City Data Book 1972* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1973). It is impossible to know how many people actually attended the Festival. Lower estimates may not have taken into account that some people left after the first day's rain, but were immediately replaced by others who continued to flock to the site until the final day. Hence varying estimates made at the site might be considered "snapshots" of the crowd's size at the moment of observation. They also do not take into consideration how many people were stuck in traffic on their way to the Festival, but were turned back by the clogged roads.
3. The stamp was issued as part of the "Celebrate the Century" series, which included stamps honoring "the most significant people, places and trends of each decade of the 20th century." The Woodstock stamp was one of fifteen representative of the 1960s that was selected from a larger number of prospective subjects by popular balloting conducted via the Internet. See the Associated Press reports "Woodstock, Civil Rights among '60s Stamp Subjects," [Muncie, Ind.] *Star Press* (23 April 1998), 3D; *idem*, "Woodstock Makes Its Way onto New Stamp," (13 Sept. 1999), 1D.
4. "Woodstock," in *The Dictionary of Cultural Literacy* ed. E.D. Hirsch, Joseph F. Kett, and James Trefil (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1993), 432.
5. This sense of agency accorded the land recurs in eyewitness accounts. A fish-eye lens photo of the festival underway, shot from within the crowd at the rim and looking toward the stage, is captioned this way: "From the stage a 35-acre field sloped upward to form a natural bowl that almost held everybody." In John Dominis and Bill Eppridge, "The Big Woodstock Rock Trip; Hundreds of Thousands of Kids Mob a Catskill Mountain Farm," *Life* magazine vol. 67, no. 9 (29 August 1969), 14B-23 at 16-17.

6. The first of these terms was coined by counterculture activist Abbie Hoffman as the title of his book *Woodstock Nation: A Talk-Rock Album* (New York: Random House, 1969) [reissued by (New York: Pocket Books, 1971) with a new epilogue]. Hoffman convinced the festival organizers (although extorted would be closer to the truth) to allocate \$10,000 to develop and equip a "Movement City" tent on the site that would be staffed by political organizers who were hopeful of radicalizing those in attendance. Unsatisfied when the Movement City compound was situated at a considerable distance from the performance site, Hoffman bounded on stage while the Who were performing. He seized a microphone and began berating the crowd for enjoying themselves while fellow cultural revolutionary John Sinclair was languishing in prison for the crime of furnishing two marijuana cigarettes to an undercover agent. Musician Pete Townsend promptly whacked Hoffman with his guitar and drove him off the stage, to the evident approval of the audience. Joel Makower, *Woodstock: The Oral History* (New York, etc.: Tilden Press/Doubleday, 1989), 107-111, 235-239; Bob Spitz, *Barefoot in Babylon: The Creation of the Woodstock Music Festival, 1969* (rev. ed.; New York and London: W.W. Norton, 1989), 164-168, 462-463.

7. Michael William Doyle, "Be-ins," in *The Sixties in America* ed. Carl Singleton (Pasadena, Cal.: Salem Press, 1999), vol. I, 66-67.

8. John Glatt, *Rage & Roll: Bill Graham and the Selling of Rock* (New York: Birch Lane Press/Carol Publishing Group, 1993), 138.

9. Classified advertisement in the *New York Times* (22 March 1967), p. 54. It is reprinted in. Joel Roseman, John Roberts, and Robert Pilpel, *Young Men with Unlimited Capital* (New York and London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1974), 15.

10. "Rocky Road to Fame, If Not Fortune: Young Impresarios Drop a Bundle in Staging Biggest Rock-Music Festival, But Win a Place in the Business Scene," *Business Week* no. 2086 (23 August 1969), 78-80 at 79.

11. Various sources offer conflicting accounts as to how much land was leased from Max Yasgur. Reports differ as to whether 600 acres was leased from Yasgur's total holdings or whether the festival occurred on a portion of his farm that totaled 600 acres. Woodstock Venture's 600-acre lease from Max Yasgur is claimed in Rosenman, et al., *Young Men with Unlimited Capital*, 96, 99, 148. The same amount of acreage is cited by Lacey Fosburgh, "346 Policemen Quit Music Festival," *New York Times* (Fri., 15 August 1969), sec. 1, p. 22; Barnard L. Collier, "300,000 at Folk-Rock Fair Camp Out in a Sea of Mud," *New York Times* (17 August 1969), sec. 1, pp. 1, 80; "Farmer with Soul: Max Yasgur," *New York Times* (Mon., 18 August 1969), sec. 1, p. 25; "Max Yasgur, Woodstock Patron," *Rolling Stone* no. 130 (15 March 1973), 10. A much larger figure is given in a contemporary article on the Festival in *Newsweek*, where it states that the event took place on "over 1,000 acres of rolling pasture land leased from a local dairy farmer." "Age of Aquarius," *Newsweek* vol. 74, no. 8 (25 August 1969), 88. In a phone conversation with Michael Lang on August 21, 2001, Lang stated that a total of 600

acres was leased for the festival site, but that not all of these were leased from Yasgur. What is consistent through the various sources is that the officially leased festival grounds totaled 600 acres.

12. Richard F. Shepard, "Pop Rock Festival Finds New Home," *New York Times* (Weds., 23 July 1969), sec. 1, p.30. A photograph of the sign published in the Middletown, N.Y. *Times Herald-Record*, is reprinted in Elliot Tiber, *Knock on Woodstock: The Uproarious, Uncensored Story of the Woodstock Festival, the Gay Man Who Made It Happen, and How He Earned His Ticket to Freedom* (New York: Festival Books, 1994), 156. Miriam Yasgur later confirmed that this sign convinced her and her husband not to break their newly signed lease. Joel Makower, *Woodstock: The Oral History* (New York, etc.: Tilden Press Doubleday, 1989), 120; Bob Spitz, *Barefoot in Babylon: The Creation of the Woodstock Music Festival, 1969* (rev. ed.; New York and London: W.W. Norton, 1989), 290-292.

13. Lacey Fosburgh, "346 Policemen Quit Music Festival," *New York Times* (Fri., 15 August 1969), sec. 1, p.22.

14. Quoted in Wavy Gravy [pseudo Hugh Romney], "Hog Farming at Woodstock," in *The Sixties: The Decade Remembered Now, by the People Who Lived It Then* ed. Lynda Rosen Obst (New York: Rolling Stone Press, 1977), 274-279.

15. Andrew Feinberg, "Wired Promoter," *Forbes* [Supplement] (27 February 1995), 26-28.

16. All information in this section is derived from Bob Spitz, *Barefoot in Babylon: The Creation of the Woodstock Music Festival, 1969* (rev. ed.; New York and London: W.W. Norton, 1989).

17. *Ibid.*, 399-400.

18. *Ibid.*, 425-426. The free stage was situated in a wooded clearing just south of West Shore Road and due east of Crystal Pond. See the map drawn by Paul J. Pugliese, GCI, in *ibid.*, [xviii-xix], which also shows the location of the playground, "Indian Pavilion," and puppet theater.

19. *Ibid.*, 400-401. Music critic Jerry Hopkins claims that "thousands washed and swam in the nude" at Woodstock and discusses the apparent liberatory effect it had on participants' consciousness. Hopkins, *Festival! The Book of American Music Celebrations* (New York: Macmillan, 1970), 136-137.

20. At Woodstock, with the hot temperatures and rain and mud, nude bathing was a practical way to cool off and get clean. However, festival goers elsewhere, even when the weather was temperate and dry, still doffed their clothing and thus continued a controversial trend that had begun with Woodstock. "This year there will be ... plenty of other 'Woodstocks' to keep the controversy crackling among both young and old.

Festivals this summer are popping up everywhere Each one flaunts anew all the Woodstock hallmarks, from drugs to nudity, and each again raises the hackles of an alarmed adult community." "Since Woodstock, drug use and nudity have become barometers of a festival's success For instance, much of the disrobing at Woodstock was impromptu -- a response to the hot sun, pelting rain, and omnipresent mud. Two weeks later, a Texas festival [the Texas International Pop Festival in Lewisville. J was held in cool, dry weather -- and people took their clothes off anyway." Edwin Kiester, Jr., "Woodstock and Beyond __ Why?" *Today's Health* vol. 48, no. 7 (July 1970), 20-25, 59-61 at 23 and 59. Public nudity was also reported at the Isle of Wight Festival in England and the Sky River Rock Festival in Tenino, Wash., held over that same Labor Day weekend in 1969. "Youths Jam 4 Rock Fairs," *New York Times* (Mon., 1 September 1969), sec. 1, pp. 1, 12; "Sons of Bethel," *Time* magazine vol. 94 (12 September 1969), 81; Robert Santelli, *Aquarius Rising: The Rock Festival Years* (New York: Dell Publishing Co., 1980), 222. The trend continued in the 1970s with the Powder Ridge Music Festival near Middlefield, Conn. See "Peace and Pot on Powder Ridge," *Time* magazine vol. 96 (10 August 1970), 11; "When the Music Stopped: A Festival of Life Dies at Powder Ridge," *Life* magazine vol. 69, no. 7 (14 August 1970), 34-37. It even led to the formation of a third political party in Woodstock, N.Y.: "Nude Swimming Issue Leads to 3d Political Party in Woodstock," *New York Times* (Tues., 2 November 1971), sec. 1, p. 40. Not to be outdone, revelers at subsequent Woodstock festivals have similarly shed their clothing and cavorted in the altogether. A 23-year-old man named Goat Bendez, who hitchhiked from Idaho to attend Woodstock '94, explained to a reporter, "I came to be nude. I saw the [*Woodstock*] movie and there were plenty of people nude." "Splendor in the Morass," *People Weekly* vol. 42, no. 9 (29 August 1994), 102-103. A photo taken of a nude man at this festival by photojournalist Kenneth Lambert even won first prize at the White House News Photographers Association in 1995, even though it was almost removed from exhibition because of its subject matter. Debra Gersh Hemadez "No Nudes Is Good Nudes," *Editor and Publisher* vol. 128, no. 6 (11 February 1995), 9-10. For controversial nudity at the 1999 festival, see "Not All Peace and Love; Bonfires Get Out of Hand at Woodstock '99," [Associated Press Report] *Star Press* [Muncie, Ind.] (Mon., 26 June 1999), 6A; Jim Sullivan, "Woodstock on TV: The Bare Maximum," *Boston Globe* (Tues., 27 July 1999), C6; "Nudestock: Troopers Probed for Posing with Naked Rock Fans," *New York Post* (Weds., 28 July 1999), i, 3.

21. Richie Havens and Steve Davidowitz, *They Can't Hide Us Anymore* (New York: Spike/Avon, 1999), 126- 127.

22. A complete list of the Festival's thirty-one performers follows, in alphabetical order: Joan Baez; The Band; Blood, Sweat and Tears; The Paul Butterfield Blues Band; Canned Heat; Joe Cocker; Country Joe McDonald and The Fish; Creedence Clearwater Revival; Crosby, Stills and Nash [and Neil Young]; The Grateful Dead; Arlo Guthrie; Tim Hardin; The Keef Hartley Band; Richie Havens; Jimi Hendrix [and the Gypsy Sun and Rainbows]; The Incredible String Band; The Jefferson Airplane; Janis Joplin; Melanie; Mountain; Quill; Santana; John Sebastian; Sha Na Na; Ravi Shankar; Sly and the Family Stone; Bert Sommer; Sweetwater; Ten Years After; The Who; and Johnny

Winter. Spitz, *Barefoot in Babylon*, xv-xvi; Woodstock '69 website, www.woodstock69.com/performer/htrn, accessed 20 August 2001.

23. In her essay "Voodoo Child: Jimi Hendrix and the Politics of Race in the Sixties," in *Imagine Nation: The American Counterculture of the 1960s and 70s* ed. Peter Braunstein and Michael William Doyle (New York: Routledge, 2001), critic Lauren Onkey has characterized Hendrix's searing performance this way:

The image of Hendrix playing the national anthem has become symbolic of the counterculture Hendrix began his instrumental version of the song by flashing a peace sign to the audience. Then accompanied only by Mitch Mitchell's psychedelic jazz drumming, he played the first few verses of the song, adhering closely to its familiar form. When he got to the line "and the rockets red glare," Hendrix let loose with a carefully orchestrated sonic assault on the audience in which his shrieking, howling guitar riffs, modulated and distorted with feverish feedback, attained the aural equivalent of Armageddon. The bombs bursting in air and ear transformed Yasgur's placid cow pasture into the napalmed and shrapnel battered jungles of Vietnam. As the song drew to a close, Hendrix solemnly intoned a few notes of "Taps," memorializing not just the slain, but perhaps his own former pro-war stance which dated back a few years to his hitch in the Army. The crowd was struck dumb by this bravura deconstruction of our national hymn, which managed to simultaneously evoke chauvinistic pride for and unbridled rage against the American way of life. These seemingly incompatible feelings found a tenuous resolution in the early morning air of a day in late summer during the Nixonian denouement. When asked a few weeks later why he played the song at, of all places, the Woodstock Festival, billed as "3 Days of Peace & Music," Hendrix responded, "Because we are all Americans When it was written it was very nice and beautifully inspiring. Your heart throbs and you say, 'Great, I'm American.' Nowadays we don't play it to take away all the greatness that America is supposed to have. We play it the way the air is in America today. The air," he continued in an understated fashion, "is slightly static." Hendrix's "Star Spangled Banner" signified a proud and revolutionary voice at the end of this successful, cooperative festival."

24. "Woodstock Pop-Rock Fete Hits Snag," *New York Times* (Thurs., 17 July 1969), sec. 1, p. 56; Richard F. Shepard, "Woodstock Festival Vows to Carry On," *NYT*. (Fri., 18 July 1969), sec. 1, p. 16; *idem.*, "Pop Rock Festival Finds New Home," *NYT* (Weds., 23 July 1969), sec. 1, p. 30.

25. Michael T. Kaufman, "Generation Gap Bridged as Monticello Residents Aid Courteous Festival patrons; Clinic Is Set Up in Town's School; Park Thrown Open for Use as a Sleeping Place," *New York Times* (Mon., 18 August 1969), sec. 1, p. 25. Despite accounts stating that two births and two deaths occurred at the Festival, only one person actually died on the site; a young man was accidentally run over by a tractor while curled up in his sleeping bag. The second fatality was suffered by a festival goer who overdosed on heroin; he passed away, however, in a neighboring hospital. As for

the births, both babies were born to women who were attending the festival, although neither delivery occurred at the site itself. One woman delivered her baby in a car trapped in traffic on Route 17B near the site, the other in a hospital after being evacuated there from the site by helicopter. Four miscarriages were also reported. Barnard L. Collier, "200,000 Thronging to Rock Festival Jam Roads Upstate," *New York Times* (Sat., 16 August 1969), sec. 1, pp. 1,31; William E. Farrell, "19-Hour Concert Ends Bethel Fair; Producer Says Town Has Asked Festival to Return," *NYT* (Tues., 19 August 1969), sec. 1, pp. 1,34.

26. Barnard L. Collier, "Tired Rock Fans Begin Exodus from Music Fair," *New York Times* (Mon., 18 August 1969), sec. 1, pp. 1,25.

27. "Woodstock Festival Costs Bethel Official His Post," *New York Times* (Thurs., 6 November 1969), sec. 1, p.38.

28. The Bethel ordinance was adopted not long after the Festival had ended. See Brady, "An Afternoon with Max Yasgur," 34. The New York Legislature passed a statute requiring a licensed physician be present to provide emergency medical care at commercial functions expecting to draw 10,000 persons or more and to last more than twenty-four hours. When the bill was signed by Governor Nelson Rockefeller, it was described as "the latest in a series of laws that were passed following the 1969 Woodstock Festival, which ... resulted in severe strains on local medical facilities." "Cut-off Notice Is Required of Utilities; Doctor-in-Crowd Law," *New York Times* (Tues., 6 June 1972), sec. 1, p. 35. See also James Lawrence Semoe, "Woodstock: 'History's Biggest Happening'," and "Fallout from Woodstock: Legal Actions in Fall 1969," in "'It's the Same Old Song': A History of Legal Challenges to Rockand-Roll and Black Music," unpublished Ph.D. thesis in mass communications, University of Iowa, 2000, 163-169.

29. Norman, "The 'Holy Ground' of the Woodstock Generation."

30. Dr. Abruzzi recorded treating 985 persons suffering from "bad trips," at the three-day Powder Ridge Festival near Middlefield, Conn., held in early August 1970. But these were from a crowd estimated at between 20,000-35,000. (The situation was aggravated by the fact that none of the eighteen top bands had been allowed to perform: local officials successfully filed an injunction against the festival on the grounds that it would constitute a public nuisance.) William Abruzzi, "The Rock Doctor Tells About 985 Freakouts," *Life* magazine vol. 69, no. 7 (14 August 1970), 37; "When the Music Stopped: A Festival of Life Dies at Powder Ridge," *ibid.*, 34-36; "Youth: Peace and Pot on Powder Ridge," *Time* magazine vol. 96 (10 August 1970), 11-12.

31. To date there has been but a single scholarly study of this topic. It usefully surveys the theoretical literature on myth, and analyzes a sample of the vast array of primarily journalistic sources on the Festival itself before reaching the conclusion that

"the Woodstock festival had become a myth," which was created and perpetuated as such by the news media. Jo Raelene Sorrell, "Woodstock: The Creation and Evolution of a Myth," unpublished M.A. thesis in mass communications, University of Nevada, Las Vegas, 1995.

32. These words are from the famed song "Woodstock," Joni Mitchell's paean to the Festival. The lyrics may be found in *Voices of the 70's: The Eloquence of Protest* ed. Harrison E. Salisbury (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1972), 89-90.

33. The first account in the literature describing "pilgrims" to the Bethel site was written less than a year after the festival by journalist John Brady, who was prevented from attending the Festival himself due to the traffic clogged roads. He finally visited the site in June-July 1970 and there recorded conversations with several individuals who had been at Woodstock the previous summer. Nearly all of them refer to being attracted to return there because of being "drawn by the vibes." See John Brady, "An Afternoon with Max Yasgur," *Popular Music and Society* vol. 3, no. 1 (1974), 24-40. Other similar accounts may be sampled in Michael Norman, "The 'Holy Ground' of the Woodstock Generation," *New York Times* (Thurs., 16 August 1984), sec. 2, p. 1; David Blum, "The Woodstock Wars: The Creators of *the* Defining Moment of the '60s Want to Try Again 25 Years Later. But a Rival Plans to Use the Original Site. So Who'll Show the Way Back to the Garden?" *New York Times* (Sun., 5 September 1993), sec. 9, pp. 1, 10; Douglas Martin, "Ideas & Trends: For Today's Pilgrims There Is No End of Holy Grails," *NYT* (Sun., 21 August 1994), sec. 4, p. 5; and Richie Havens and Steve Davidowitz, *They Can't Hide Us Anymore* (New York: Spike/Avon, 1999), 119-120, 287.

34. Ellen Sander, "Woodstock Music and Art Fair: The Ultimate Rock Experience," *Saturday Review* vol. 52, no. 39 (27 Sept. 1969), 59, 65-66. Rock critic Ellen Willis concurred with Sander about secondary importance of the music to many of those who experienced the Festival first-hand: "As for the music, though rock was the only thing that could have drawn such a crowd, it was not the focal point of the festival but, rather, a pleasant background to the mass presence of the hip community." Willis, "Rock Etc.: Woodstock," *The New Yorker* vol. 45, no. (6 September 1969), 121-124 at 122. Sander's assertion about Woodstock being "the largest number of people ever assembled for any event other than a war," a much repeated claim, was subsequently disputed by Thomas Barry, who noted that "that distinction belongs to a three-week religious festival on the Ganges attended by five million Hindus in 1966." Barry, "Why Can't There Be Another Woodstock? After a Year, the Music Business Learns How Hard It Is to Restage a Legend," *Look* magazine 34: (25 August 1970), 28, 30.

35. According to an industry insider, Wadleigh's film *Woodstock* (1970) is one of the most financially successful documentaries in history, having grossed \$75 million by 1995. Newman, Melinda, "Woodstock '94: Mixed Aftermath," *Billboard* vol. 107, no. 33 (19 August 1995), 1, 88+. Bob Weir in "Woodstock Remembered: The Artists," *Rolling Stone* no. 559 (24 August 1989), 67.

36. Jeff Samuels, "Another Woodstock Unlikely as Coin, Civic Problems Squeeze

Promoters," *Variety* vol. 258, no. 12 (6 May 1970), 85, 88; "Rock Festivals: Groovy, But No Gravy," *Business Week* no. 2136 (8 August 1970),20-21; Thomas Barry, "Why Can't There Be Another Woodstock? After a Year, the Music Business Learns How Hard It Is to Restage a Legend," *Look* magazine 34: (25 August 1970),28, 30; Simon Frith, *Sound Effects: Youth, Leisure, and the Politics of Rock 'n' Roll* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1981), 100; Bill Graham and Robert Greenfield, *Bill Graham Presents: My Life Inside Rock and Out* (New York, etc.: Doubleday, 1992),289; John Glatt, *Rage & Roll: Bill Graham and the Selling of Rock* (New York: Birch Lane Press/Carol Publishing Group, 1993), 138; Alice Echols, *Scars of Sweet Paradise: The Life and Times of Janis Joplin* (New York: Metropolitan Books/Henry Holt and Co., 1999),264-265.

37. Rollo May, "An Opinion: On Bethel and After; The Catskillian Love Feast on the Couch," *Mademoiselle* vol. 70 (November 1969),28,40; Margaret Mead, "Woodstock in Retrospect," *Redbook Magazine* vol. 124, no. 3 (January 1970), 30, 32.; David Bouchier, "Hippies, Communitarians and the Cultural Revolution," in his book *Idealism and Revolution: New Ideologies of Liberation in Britain and the United States* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1978), 139- at 151.

38. John Glatt, *Rage & Roll*, 138-139.

39. The "Woodstock" name was trademarked by Warner Brothers in conjunction with Woodstock Ventures and can only be used under license. Mary Huhn, "Woodstuck?," *Mediaweek* vol.3 (14 June 1993), 1+.

40. Jorma Kaukonen in "Woodstock Remembered: The Artists," *Rolling Stone* no. 559 (24 August 1989), 75. Critic John Morthland noted archly, "In 1979, some of the principals tried to stage a commemorative festival. They scouted from town to town in upstate New York, seeking a site by offering huge sums of money in the most cavalier show-biz fashion, but failed to find a taker. Eventually, a concert was held one afternoon on Long Island; the turnout was small and the performers (all veterans of the original event) were decrepit; if any proof was needed that rock festivals were a thing of the past, surely this was it." Morthland, "Rock Festivals," in *The Rolling Stone Illustrated History of Rock & Roll* ed. Jim Miller (2nd ed.; New York: Random House/Rolling Stone Press, 1980), 336-338 at 338. Landon Jones reflected at the time (i.e., 1979) that more than a decade seemed to have passed since the first Festival had been held. The Sixties appeared as a dimly remembered era: "In 1979, on the tenth anniversary of Woodstock, most commentators mulled it over with the kind of archaeological interest usually reserved for pre-Columbian digs." Jones, *Great Expectations: America and the Baby Boom Generation* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1980), 135. Earlier, in summer 1974, the promoters of the Watkins Glen (N.Y.) Rock Festival, which during the previous summer had established the standing attendance record of 600,000 people, sought permission (evidently without success) to hold a festival at the Sullivan County airport around the five-year anniversary date of Woodstock. "Rock Festival Sought at Airport," *New York Times* (Sun., 9 June 1974), sec. I, p. 58.

41. Steven Dupler, "MTV, WB Join to Celebrate Woodstock 20 years Later,"

Billboard vol. 101, no. 6 (11 Feb. 1989), 73.; Michael Azerrad, "Now They Spell It Woodstock," *Rolling Stone* no. 549 (6 April 1989), 17; Jeffrey Ressler, "Woodstock Anniversary Plans Taking Shape," *Rolling Stone* no. 551 (4 May 1989),20; Deborah Russell, "Woodstock Memories Available for a Price," *Billboard* vol. 101, no. 21 (27 May 1989), 48; Kevin Zimmerman, "Remembering Woodstock: Peace, Music, T-Shirts, and Ashtrays," *Variety* vol. 335, no. 8 (7 June 1989), 71; Fred Goodman, "No Encore for Woodstock," *Rolling Stone* no. 558 (10 Aug. 1989),26; John Schwartz, "Woodstock '89: A Bad Trip," *Newsweek* vol. 114, no. 8 (21 Aug. 1989),42.

42. Barry Tannenbaum, "What's What: Back to the Garden," *Modern Photography* vol. 52, no. 9 (Sept. 1988), 8; photograph captioned: "Woodstock Spirit Gathering, Woodstock, New York, 1989," in Steven Hager, "Paradise Now! Environmental Living with the Rainbow Family," *High Times* no. 182 (Oct. 1990),34-41,51-52,56-57,60, 69 at 37.

43. Janny Scott, "Woodstock Redux: New Sea of Young People; 200,000 Fans, New Music, But the Mud Looks Familiar," *New York Times* (Sun., 14 August 1994), sec. 1, pp. 1,42; Melinda Newman, "Woodstock '94: Mixed Aftermath," *Billboard* vol. 107, no. 33 (19 August 1995), 1,88+.

44. David Bauder, "Woodstock: A Divided Catskill Town Is Struggling to Deal With n and Profit From -- the 25th Anniversary of an Institution," [Associated Press Report] *Ithaca* [N.Y.] *Journal* (10 August 1993), 8B-7B; Blum, David, "The Woodstock Wars: The Creators of *the* Defining Moment of the '60s Want to Try Again 25 Years Later. But a Rival Plans to Use the Original Site. So Who'll Show the Way Back to the Garden?" *New York Times* (Sun.,5 September 1993), sec. 9, pp. 1, 10; Jolie Solomon and Robin Sparkman, "The Faithful Brace for Battle at Rock Music's Sacred Site; Woodstock: Making Hay from the Memories," *Newsweek* (6 September 1993), 61; Stephanie N. Mehta, "Insurance Family Succeeds by Knowing When to Quit," *Wall Street Journal* (11 August 1994), B2; "Woodstock Then, Woodflop Now," *U.S. News and World Report* vol. 117, no. 7 (15 August 1994), 17. *Rolling Stone* reported that a third festival, which they described as "a hippie-driven gathering called Freedomfest," was scheduled to be held near the Bethel site during that same weekend. John Milward, "Field of Dreams: The Big Business behind Woodstock '94," *Rolling Stone* no. 688 (11 August 1994), 36-37.

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Woodstock took place in 1969. With the crowd much bigger by far than anyone had expected, I agree that Woodstock might have grown huge enough to be called a "nexus." But I think the biggest thing was who the artists were that performed. So I take this opportunity to explain the significance of a very important Chinese festival: The Tomb Sweeping Day, locally known as Qing Ming Jie (清明节). Related: Learn Chinese Culture. Let's learn more about Qing Ming Jie (清明节), a. Continue Reading. The festival also signifies the changeover of the season from winter to spring, so people believe it is the perfect time for an outing, and also to plant seeds for plants or trees. Qingming Activities. Of course, the main activity of Qingming is tomb sweeping. Woodstock, the most famous of the 1960s rock festivals, held on a farm property in Bethel, New York, August 15-18, 1969. It was organized by four inexperienced promoters who nevertheless signed iconic acts such as Jimi Hendrix, Sly and the Family Stone, the Who, and Janis Joplin. A 1994 festival on the same site was better organized and more successful financially, if less legendary. In 1999 a third festival was marred by a small riot. The Museum at Bethel Woods, a multimedia exhibit space attached to a performing arts centre, opened in 2008, with the stated mission of preserving the original festival site and educating visitors about the music and culture of the Woodstock era. Get a Britannica Premium subscription and gain access to exclusive content. The Woodstock Music and Art Fair was a historic event held at Max Yasgur's 600 acre (2.4 km²; 240 ha) dairy farm in the rural town of Bethel, New York from August 15 to August 18 1969. Bethel (Sullivan County) is 43 miles (69 km) southwest of the town of Woodstock, New York, which is in adjoining Ulster County. To many, the festival exemplified the counterculture of the 1960s and the "hippie era." Thirty-two of the best-known musicians of the day appeared during the sometimes rainy weekend. The Woodstock festival of 1969 hosted iconic performers like Jimi Hendrix, Janis Joplin, and The Who for more than 400,000 people in Bethel, New York. In the last month of the last summer of the 1960s, hundreds of thousands of hopeful, optimistic young people came together and define their generation and their era as a whole. But as iconic as this festival remains 50 years later, its story is widely misunderstood to this day. For starters, even though it's known as the Woodstock festival, Yasgur's dairy farm wasn't even walking distance from the town of Woodstock - it was 43 miles away. So how did the most famous music festival in history get misnamed? Who organized it, and what myths about that weekend were mere legend and which were true? Organizing the 1969 Woodstock Music Festival. An Iconic Music Event That Made History Despite Major Setbacks. Share. The organizers of Woodstock were dazed when the festival ended. They didn't really realize that they'd created arguably the most popular music event in history. They had other things on their mind, the foremost of which was the incredible debt (over \$1 million) they'd incurred and the 70 lawsuits that had been filed against them. To their great relief, the documentary film made at the festival turned into a hit movie and the box office profits covered a large chunk of their debts. By the time everything was eventually paid off, they were still \$100,000 in the red. Daily Journal of 1969 Woodsto...