McKenzie Current

University of Oregon Undergraduate History Journal

Spring 2026

Department of History
University of Oregon
Eugene, Oregon

University of Oregon Undergraduate History Journal

Spring 2026

Published by the Department of History, University of Oregon, 1289 University of Oregon, Eugene OR 97403-1289.

Contact: uhj@uoregon.edu

Contents

A b s t r a c t s

Introduction

From the Department Head

History has been taught since the inception of the University of Oregon in 1876, and a Department of History has existed since 1901, but we had to wait until 2026 for the first publication of undergraduate student history writing. In 150 years the subjects that our faculty have taught, and about which our students have written, have changed dramatically. Early course catalogs listed “Lectures on the Results of the War,” “American Statesmanship and Statesmen,” and “classes in musical history and biography.” None of these classes appeared in the 2025/26 catalog, instead replaced by titles such as “Beer in World History,” “Precolonial Africa,” and “History of the Iraq War.” Much of the content taught in these classes had not even happened in the early days of the department (though beer of course is eternal). One thing that has not changed—and which comes through clearly in the essays submitted here—is the quality of undergraduate historical writing.

The UO Department of History has taught a number of exceptional undergrads. LaWanda Cox, who graduated in 1931, became one of the earliest professional women historians in this country and wrote a series of major works on Reconstruction. Nicholas Riasanovsky (1942) went on to teach Russian history at UC Berkeley and authored a textbook on the subject read by generations of undergrads (myself included). Joseph E. Taylor III (1990) is today a leading environmental historian, especially of fish. The writing featured here shows that Oregon history undergraduates maintain this standard of excellence, as they respond to and inspire the changing interests of the field.

McKenzie Hall became the home of the History Department in 2000 (though the building was then called Grayson), and it and its namesake river are the inspirations for our journal’s title, *McKenzie Current*. History’s flow, like a river’s, goes only one way, and all of us who ride it must look forward to navigate. But, many people around the world also conceive of history unfolding in spirals, the past appearing again and again to touch the present. Rivers meander, as the McKenzie does as it approaches Eugene to meet its confluence with the Willamette. These meanders recall the past’s tendency to reappear, like a riverbend suddenly visible again downstream, long-forgotten events once more relevant to our own lives. This is one of the reasons we continue to teach history and why our undergraduates write these papers, why History is not just past, but current.

Ryan Tucker Jones
Ann Swindells Professor
Head, Department of History, University of Oregon

Editor’s Introduction

Welcome to the first issue of *McKenzie Current: The University of Oregon Undergraduate History Journal*!

This journal features outstanding work by UO undergraduate students. In this issue, we are presenting work from Spring and Fall terms 2025 and Winter term 2026. Papers are nominated at end of term by UO history professors. From these nominations, papers are selected for publication by the journal’s editors. Papers may be of any length and may come from any level and area of study.

This year, our journal features two reflections on the experience of being a history major by graduating seniors Beatrice Kahn and Dustin J. Short, as well as thirteen historical essays by Maya Baer, Graham Burtle, Isabel Colman, Faye Dingman, Piper Filler, Meghan Hill, Rivers Hylton, Eric Monsebroten, Lily Katharine Russell, Dustin J. Short, Parker Parker, Cienna Simmons, and Paizlei Tucker. Among these papers is a great variety including contributions on the political history of the Pacific Northwest; war, resistance, and protest; the cultural politics of the Atomic Age; and the interwoven questions of memory, cultural identity, and political self-determination. The essays range from short think pieces to longer studies based on research in primary sources.

As a professor in the department, I have the privilege of reading excellent work by our students every term, and I am always learning something new. I hope you will have the same experience reading this selection of essays. We have encouraged our contributors not to overwork these papers. There will be time enough for that later. Right now, these are seeds—seeds for senior theses, seeds for internships, seeds for grad school, seeds for curiosity, seeds for life.

Every one of these papers shows off some great thinking. Read, explore, and enjoy!

Daniel Rosenberg
Professor of History, University of Oregon
Editor, *McKenzie Current: University of Oregon Undergraduate History Journal*

Ideas

Homage to the History Major

Beatrice Teals Kahn

I have a confession to make. One of the driving reasons that I entered the University of Oregon as a History major was because of my enthusiasm for the musical *Hamilton*. But my propensity for the musical parallels my journey in the History department. In both areas, I am fascinated by the people, the actors, the individuals, who comprise history. The value of the history major lies in its ability to animate seemingly objective events and dates.

My first history class was American Century with Dr. Beda. One assignment was to conduct oral history research. This led me to interviewing a family friend about his work as a parole officer. Looking back, my first-year self set the foundation for the oral history interviews I would conduct for my History thesis on Project NewGate, a federally funded prison education program sponsored by UO and previously overlooked in scholarship. History is about asking questions, not just to relevant subjects, but to ourselves.

It took me too long to question my comfort level and expand beyond my focus area of American history. By challenging myself with wide-ranging courses, I was invigorated by the material history of codfish, cannibalism in China, and the interplay between Nietzsche and German history. Part of the university experience is dabbling in new areas. I encourage continuing students to register for a class outside of your wheelhouse. It may lead you to a newfound passion. I take with me a growing list of books to read, an affinity for Chicago citations, and appreciation for the inspiring community of History faculty, staff, and students.

In the opening lines of *Hamilton's* Cabinet Battle #1, a historical take on a rap battle, George Washington, acting as the emcee, declares, "you could have been anywhere in the world tonight, but you're here with us in New York City.” Graduating history majors — we could have been in any department at UO. We faced an array of majors. For one reason or another, it feels as if the history major chose us, resulting in an exciting four years in and around McKenzie Hall.

What It Means to be a History Major at the University of Oregon

Dustin J. Short

When I began researching John Wilkes Booth's descent into political radicalization and the assassination of President Abraham Lincoln for my HIST 407 seminar on the U.S. Civil War Era, I viewed the event as merely another footnote in a broader American timeline. I knew the grand narrative, but not necessarily the intimate faces behind it. Yet, as I spent my days returning to the same shelves at Knight Library, poring over fragile texts and digital archives, my perspective shifted, not just regarding the assassination, but on the entire process of interpreting history.

The letters, personal accounts, and diary entries I read were penned well over a century and a half ago. Confronted with this immense gap in time, I began to question myself: *Who is responsible for carrying these stories forward?* More importantly, *whose duty is it to safeguard the truth when those who lived it are long gone?* Then, it clicked. This is the essence of studying history. We who analyze the past bear the responsibility of stewarding these records across the centuries. I realized that my research was no longer just about reading books to learn a thing or two; it was about dismantling a simplified cultural memory and actively reconstructing the complex reality of the human experience.

To study history is to act as a vital intermediary between the dead and the living. Through my academic work, I am constantly reminded that our engagement with the past is critical to understanding how our current world is shaped. The historian holds the key to representing voices that have long been silenced or forgotten, taking on the heavy responsibility of translating historical accounts for a modern audience. Memoirs, anecdotes, and fragmented stories must be carefully deciphered to uncover the underlying realities of a given era. Amidst the vast archives of human experience, the historian’s primary duty is to ensure that the complexities of the past are not lost to time. Ultimately, we are tasked with determining how an idea, event, or individual should be accurately remembered today.

With recent movements increasingly attempting to censor the ugly realities of the past, standing as a vanguard for the complete truth is more critical than ever. By recognizing both the triumphs and the failures of the past, we provide the context necessary for the continual growth of civilization. From moral victories to devastating consequences, we study the buried roots of the past to navigate the tangled forests of the present, and ultimately, to help plant the canopy of the future. In essence, the history major speaks for our ancestors, charting historical memory so that society might learn from its collective successes and failures for the greater good. This, I believe, is the highest duty bestowed upon a historian.

Essays

Don’t Tell Me This Town Don’t Got No Heart

An Exploration of Ken Kesey and the Grateful Dead’s Impact on the Culture and Reputation of Eugene, Oregon

Maya Baer

INTRODUCTION

Just got to poke around…

Driving down Main Street in Springfield, Oregon, you might initially believe you are passing through just another small downtown district framed by cafés, antique shops, and older brick storefronts. But almost immediately, the scenery insists on something different, something louder, stranger, and far more culturally charged than what most towns of this size and nature ever display. Bright patches of graffiti color the sides of buildings and alley walls, yet this is not ordinary tagging or abstract street art seen in most other towns. Instead, the imagery is unmistakable being that there are Simpsons characters reimagined through a countercultural lens, their yellow faces sometimes merging with swirling tie-dye patterns and Grateful Dead motifs. The effect is both playful and unique, as if Springfield and Eugene’s cultural history has reflected onto the concrete itself.

Continuing down the road in Springfield toward 4th Street, the artistic landscape becomes even more deliberate. Suddenly, Ken Kesey, Oregon’s most famous literary icon and one of America’s most influential countercultural figures, appears in towering form, a two-story mural gazing over the street. His presence is not subtle; it is a statement that cannot be ignored. As you venture further, eventually parking near the 5th Street Market in Eugene, and walking the blocks between Pearl and Jefferson, you notice that Kesey is not alone. At nearly every turn, there are tributes to the Grateful Dead, ranging from spray-painted renditions of Jerry Garcia’s mugshot to small monuments and plaques commemorating the anniversary of Garcia’s death. Even across the river in downtown Eugene, a bronze statue of Ken Kesey reading to children sits at the city’s center, suggesting that this countercultural legacy is not fringe or hidden, but openly embraced as part of the region's identity.

All of this imagery—from murals, to memorials, graffiti, and public statues—makes one thing abundantly clear. Eugene and Springfield have chosen to remember, celebrate, and even mythologize figures who traditionally exist outside mainstream historical and cultural narratives. Most American cities do not go out of their way to elevate countercultural movements; in fact, many try to forget or sanitize them from their memories. But Eugene, Oregon, stands out precisely because it refuses to do so. Instead, the city weaves Ken Kesey, the Merry Pranksters, and the Grateful Dead directly into its public landscape, acknowledging their influence not as a footnote, but as a defining feature of the local culture.

Given this unusually bold presence, it becomes impossible not to ask questions. Why here? Why Eugene? The answer lies in a history that stretches from Ken Kesey's early life in Oregon, to the Dead's legendary concerts and eventual banning in Autzen Stadium, to their unexpected role in saving a beloved local business. Each of these moments reveals the deep and intertwined impact that both Kesey and the Grateful Dead have had on the community. For that reason, it becomes difficult, if not impossible, to refute the profound importance of Ken Kesey and the Grateful Dead in shaping the identity, memory, and spirit of Eugene, Oregon.

PART ONE

The bus came by, they got on, that's where it all began…

A catalyst of both countercultural history and hippie culture, Ken Kesey was born in 1935 in La Junta, Colorado, but was primarily raised in Oregon, specifically Eugene's neighboring town Springfield. He was motivated and creative early in life. An interview with longtime friend Ken Babbs explained that this can be exemplified in his leadership in high school. One time, in a football game with a rival, one of the high schools in neighboring Eugene, Springfield High School was down. Kesey was fed up with losing and decided to take leadership into his own hands. He called a play even when, according to coaches, he did not quite have the right to do so as a player, yet the team followed. The play he called was successful and this won the game. The following year, it was Kesey that called all the plays.[1] In terms of plays, he was also well involved in the drama program at Springfield High School. Goes to show, he was creative and fit for leading from the beginning. From there, he proceeded to complete a degree in speech and communication at University of Oregon in Eugene where he also was a skilled wrestler on their team. He went on to attend Stanford University and completed a two-year creative writing program.

His time at Stanford University was transformative to say the least. It can be argued that Kesey's writing skills were solidified from this point on because he wrote both *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* and *Sometimes a Great Notion* in the following years. But, it was also LSD, a strong psychedelic drug that could enhance hallucination, that in terms of pop culture, made these years stand out. In 1959, at Menlo Park Veterans Hospital, this new adventure started with a nurse asking him a standard set of questions for a trial run for an experiment for a drug. This substance he was taking was LSD, also known as Acid. This was a new man-made psychedelic substance the United States government was doing scientific tests for many reasons under the name MK Ultra to see if one could successfully control another's mind in the context of espionage and advancement in a time where the cold war was still on its way to its peak. These experiments are notable for their popularization of LSD/Acid, however, it is lesser known that Kesey was a part of these.

After his personal experiences with these tests, everything changed. Kesey decided to get a job working for the same hospital that these experiments took place in doing general security and night watch. He then decided to steal vials of LSD/Acid for personal use. Let's just say, for a couple years there was quite a bit of formative experimentation between his writing and LSD/Acid testing that is fairly well documented. At this point, which was by the time he had written *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, he decided that it was time to change the pace.

For several years after this, in the early to mid-sixties, Kesey was floating between Northern California and Oregon doing drugs and writing hit novels. He had decided it was time for him to move onto something new. The goal was to travel from the United States' West Coast to New York where the world fair would take place in 1964. He

[1] Ken Babbs, *Cronies* (Tsunami Press, 2022).

did so on a refurbished school bus he and his friends had attempted to name further, but accidentally ended up with Furthur as its name, solidified in paint. Here on the bus, Kesey hosted an abstract type of party he named the Acid Tests. After many bumps in the road, the group successfully completed their trip and most significantly they ended linking with a young band named the Grateful Dead throughout this journey. From here the connection of the Grateful Dead and Ken Kesey was solidified. The Grateful Dead were on the bus, literally.

The Grateful Dead, who were Kesey’s match in countercultural influence, started when a young Jerry Garcia met an even younger Bob Weir at a guitar shop in San Francisco. The two instantly clicked while playing guitar together and wished to create a jugband style group. Along the way they connected with Ron “Pig Pen” McKernan who played keys and was totally passionate about the blues, then later Phil Lesh on bass though he had never held one before joining the band, Bill Kreutzmann on drums, and Mickey Hart on drums and percussion. They pursued their musical career with the name The Warlocks, which later changed to the Grateful Dead after band member Jerry Garcia was flipping through a dictionary and found the name by chance and they all agreed.

The Grateful Dead arguably have one of the most unique styles of playing and operating as a band. The music they play needs to be addressed first to understand the rest of this paper. Their live shows included their own songs such as “Playing in the Band,” “Darkstar,” or “Terrapin Station,” to rock and roll covers such as “Johnny B. Goode” by Chuck Berry or “All Along the Watchtower” by Bob Dylan, to country covers like “Big River” by Johnny Cash and “El Paso” by Marty Robbins, to traditional songs both American or not, like “Going Down the Road Feeling Bad,” “Cold Rain and Snow,” and “I Know You Rider.” This unique blend was supplemented with their style of playing which could be described as flowy, distinctive, long, and improvisational. In fact, some of their songs reached upwards of forty-five minutes long. Not to mention, most of the time, the songs blended together with a smooth improvisational jam.

In addition to a diverse music selection, every concert’s setlist was unique not only in order, but also in which songs they played, as well, each song varied each time it was played. For example, one day they could play “Dark Star” for ten minutes one time like they did at the

Greek Theater at Berkeley in October of 1968 but then another time they could play the same song for thirty minutes at the Winterland in February of 1970 and both of these renditions lead into different songs. Statistically speaking, the Grateful Dead played an identical setlist under five times between 1965 and 1995. That does not mean that there are parallel setlists out there though. Statisticians were able to create a specific statistical formula to measure the identicality of each show's setlist. For this measurement the number one is the highest meaning that each set is almost identical while zero points means each set is completely unique from the previously played shows. On this scale, the Grateful Dead scored one hundredth of a point, meaning that each show has been completely unique.[2] This is not typical of most artists to date as many of them have fixed setlists with little wiggle room for improvisation or jam.

Notably, the imagery and language of the Grateful Dead is also important to understand before the rest of this paper as well. Images associated with the Grateful Dead include a skull with a white lightning bolt through it with red and blue halves on either side of the bolt. This has been named a steal your face, a nod to their song “He's Gone” with the lyric, “steal your face right off your head” in reference to Mickey Hart's father stealing from the band but later shifted to a slang term in regards to Jerry's skillful playing and the feeling associated with listening to a long and powerful jam during one of their shows that steals your attention in the most undivided and blissful way. Other symbols include a plain white bolt, dancing skeletons and bears, and Jerry's hand which is his distinctive handprint with his half middle finger he lost as a child. All of these have been used to create a community in which Deadheads can recognize one another.

It is hard to not yet mention that the fans are arguably the reason that the Dead were able to do what they did and the way they did it. The band members state that over time in the first part of their touring career in the beginning, they slowly started to realize their fans were following them. Bob Weir noted this in a documentary when he noticed seeing the same faces in each crowd despite changing locations in the beginning of their touring career. Fans would camp around the country during all of their tours to chase the unique nature of each show. They

---

[2] Rob Radburn and Chris Love, “Digging into Concert Setlist Data: Which Artists Play the Same Songs over and Over?” Tableau, www.tableau.com.

would camp in many fashions from tents, to cars, among other methods and move from place to place with the band. They were able to support themselves on Shakedown Streets which were Deadhead vendors that sold anything from grilled cheese, to tie dye, to burritos, and more set up outside venues, most often in the parking lots. This exchange among themselves created a mini economy allowing for ticket purchases among other necessities. This ability to maintain subsistence on the road proved difficult but later affirmed the strength of Deadheads as a community. They lived for this music and understood that others did too, so they were able to continue this style of living because of one another and their love for the Grateful Dead. This passion for traveling with the band allowed their career to stay consistent in success.

Another unique factor about the Dead is that they allowed their shows to be tape recorded by their fans and turned into cassette tapes marked with their date and sometimes setlist for the purpose of trading. This practice allowed fans to expand their community to being a culture. The culture of trading allowed for fans to revisit new and old shows and create an itch for more live music. This alongside their unique setlist habits, unique playing style, culture, and more allowed for a community to build that was both iconic and stood out for its time. This along with a craving for more music allowed this fanbase to stand out.

PART TWO

Sunshine Daydream…

As their touring career continued, the Grateful Dead delivered a show in Veneta, Oregon, a town 25 minutes from Eugene on August 27th, 1972. It spanned several hours in the heat of the summer and has gone on to be one of the Grateful Dead’s best and most iconic shows and is remembered for many reasons. The first being why it happened. Ken Kesey’s family started Springfield Creamery upon their arrival in Oregon years after Ken was born and that was what supported both them and the community for many years. However, in the early seventies, the Kesey family started to struggle financially and started to look for ways to stay afloat. This was found in their son Ken, yet again, he used his longtime friends, the Grateful Dead, to create a fundraiser to bring the Kesey’s family business back. By completely building the old renaissance fairgrounds up and printing tickets on the back of old yogurt labels, the band and those around it were able to put on a successful event.

The show itself has a long story behind it that adds to the lore and legend allowing it to become one of the most beloved and recognized concerts the band played. To begin, everything was built by hand, the stage, ticketing stations, everything was built by volunteers. As well, it was extremely hot and dry. Jerry Garcia was totally convinced the one-hundred-and-four-degree weather was going to impact their playing for the worse, but it in fact was one of their best shows, ever as noted by fans and experts.

After Ken Babbs, who was a close friend of Ken Kesey, introduced, “there we go, the Grateful Dead,” the band broke into a ripping rendition of Chuck Berry’s “Promised Land” to start a strong first set. They continued their high energy throughout this first set that took concert goers through their high-spirited songs such as “Deal” while ending with a strong rendition of “Bertha.” Leaving their listeners high and wishing for more after the first set, they dove into a jam-based second set which is the home of several of the most iconic versions of “Playing in the Band,” “Bird Song,” and “Dark Star.” Other notable moments are when the fire department had to show up to spray water on the overheating crowd as a goal of preserving drinking water at the venue. Because of the lore surrounding this concert, between saving a local creamery that Oregonians still love, or the fire department coming out, whatever it might be, it is one of the most notable shows in Grateful Dead history. In fact, those who were present for this show still talk about the show and the overwhelmingly positive impact it had on the area.

PART THREE

The Long Strange Trip…

The band’s relationship with the Eugene, Oregon, area continues, in fact, the Grateful Dead have a long and strange relationship with Autzen Stadium. From playing there the first time in 1978 as the first band to ever play the stadium, for the athletic department depending on the Deadheads to fund the building of athletic structures, to being banned from 1990 through 1993, and to a football game played to honor their sixtieth anniversary in 2025 there has been a long strange relationship with Autzen Stadium.

The first time the Dead played Autzen was on June 25th, 1978, about twelve years after the project was completed. By this point in history, most venues understood the nature of Deadheads. Meaning, the expectation of this show was between forty and forty-five thousand attendees, which is large for the population of this region. Those at Autzen understood how many would flock to Eugene for this show. In fact, by nine in the morning, there were already one thousand people in line to see the band. Autzen was the place to be. The sky was cloudy but dry and the audience was ready. Since staff in the athletic department understood this group of fans, risk prevention was enforced, and there was little trouble. In fact, the traveling set of fans here boosted the economy. Fans lined restaurants and stores near the stadium and were greatly impactful during their time in Eugene. The takeaway from this experience is that while yes, Dead culture was unique and different, it was generally positive both for the economy and culture of Eugene.

The Grateful Dead have played in Oregon since their beginning and the fact that they were so close with Ken Kesey bolstered their relationship with the state. That being said, without the Dead we would not know Autzen Stadium as it is. In 2025, attendees can see a three-story suite set on the north side of the stadium. That was not there originally, rather, in 1988, Sandy Walton, the assistant financial director at University of Oregon chose to add a $1.50 surcharge onto an upcoming rock concert.[3] This surcharge was an addendum onto Grateful Dead concert tickets. So, of course, we can attribute the suites to the time the Grateful Dead came to town. It can be argued that they chose this concert to add the surcharge onto because of the dependability of Deadheads showing up. There is no way that the Dead fans were not showing up as we discovered earlier in this paper when members of the Grateful Dead started to realize they were seeing the same set of fans in the crowd each night early in their career.

Things started to shift at the turn of the decade. After the death of keyboardist Brent Mydland, the band started to become different. The culture also shifted in a way that cannot yet be put into words, such as

[3] “Deadheads’ Tickets Help Pay for New Athletic Complex,” *Oregon Daily Emerald*, August 9, 1988.

people jumping the walls and causing more problems than any time in the past. Starting in 1990, Dead shows became less safe. Those in Eugene also noticed this change. In fact, on Tuesday, October 23rd of 1990, the Grateful Dead were banned from Autzen due to concerns of drug use.[4] Their previous concerts in June garnered about sixty thousand fans, in which the university received twelve letters expressing their dislike for the energy, fans, and issues that the band brought with them. Despite little police presence at this time, the university claimed that there were many police issues. This article published in the *Daily Emerald* further explains that times may change in the future, but because of these twelve letters, the band must go on without Autzen until times change. The police captain, Dick Loveall, stated that he was surprised that the amount of people gathered and how few issues took place after but recognized at the time, these drugs were illegal and as police it was their responsibility to maintain peace and safety. It was later revealed that the reasoning for this ban had to do with image and reputation more than anything. Everyone in Eugene was disappointed by this decision to ban the Dead, especially when the police captain and athletic director both stated that there was little issue with the band and the fans.[5] The day after this announcement was made, another article was pushed out. This time, it was a criticism. The photo above the text was a three-partition comic that depicted football fans in the first column, these football fans are outside of the stadium and are drawn as rowdy, angry, drunk. The next column depicts Deadheads similarly outside of Autzen but they are smoking cannabis, playing guitar, and zen. The third column is an angry Dan Williams saying that the Deadheads are the issue despite the image clearly differentiating characteristics of each fan base. This is obviously a stab at Dan Williams and an explanation of why people are upset. Why would the behaviors of drunk, angry, and aggressive football fans be more accepted than the peaceful energy the Deadheads brought. The attitude of this article drives home the point that Dan Williams chose this ban from superficial reasoning in these twelve letters. In fact, this *Daily Emerald* article asks fans to write Dan Williams letters. Eventually, this was successful and the Dead were

[4] "Grateful Dead Banned from Autzen Stadium," *Oregon Daily Emerald*, October 24, 1990.
[5] "Grateful Dead Banned from Autzen Stadium."

unbanned in 1993 and played their final show as the Grateful Dead at Autzen in 1994.

Fear not though, this was far from the end of Grateful Dead history in Autzen despite there being no more shows from the original grouping. There was a great future ahead, Dead and Company was started in 2015 and consisted of original members Bob Weir, Bill Kreutzmann, and Mickey Hart. A unique and almost unexpected twist happened though, popular rock artist John Mayer joined them. Bob Weir had noticed him playing the song “Althea” and wished to jam with him. The two clicked and an idea was formed. Other musicians joining them would be Jeff Chimenti, Oteil Burbridge, and eventually Jay Lane after Bill Kreutzmann had to take a step away from touring. This band started touring the country and eventually landed in Autzen yet again in 2018 to play a show in one of their national tours. Similar to the first time around, fans followed them across the country, attending many shows, hosting Shakedown Streets. The Dead community was alive and well and continued to host a symbiotic relationship for a second official round.

Flashing forward yet another seven years, and the Grateful Dead’s legacy in this town was revived. There was an announcement made. One of the Ducks’ home football games would be “tie-dye out” to honor the Dead on their sixtieth anniversary. As time approached the whole town turned Grateful Dead. It is safe to say that despite challenges, the Grateful Dead fan base persevered through much and worked to maintain the community that they have.

PART FOUR

Fare Thee Well…

In the 1980s, Jerry Garcia struggled with things like diabetes and addiction in which he had received treatment for in the past, but at 53, he was still struggling with these issues as an ongoing battle. His health was starting to decline by the 1990s and on July 5th, 1995, he played songs that fans note as some of the most soulful and sad they have seen Jerry play. After this, he checked himself into a treatment center. One night in treatment, a nurse noticed Garcia had stopped snoring and went to check on him. He was no longer breathing and lifesaving attempts failed. The news was broken by Bob Weir on August 9th, and announced further by others including the *Daily*

Emerald, in fact, Jerry's death was printed on the front page of the printing on August 10th, 1995. It is also reported that initially there was a five-hundred-person memorial at Skinners Butte.[6]

Journalists took note of the importance of this event and went to interview fans, some accounts state that, "It hasn't set in yet. When it does set in, I'm going to be crying for a long time. He's flirted with death so many times. It doesn't seem real; the only constraint in your life is gone."[7] This was from a man named Dave from California. Another fan, McKenzie from New York said, "half the country has got to be in hard-core mourning… People are not going to know what to do with themselves. He was like a prophet to so many people."[8] These are two examples of how people felt at the time of Jerry Garcia's death that further exemplify the love the fans had for this culture. Feeling Jerry's absence made fans feel as if they could not move forward. Yet, they did. The feelings that came from the death of Jerry and dissolution of the band fueled the way that fans remember the band.

In fact, Ken Kesey was feeling this absence. He wrote a letter to Jerry after his death recounting details about the Acid Testing of the 60s among other memories. His feelings mirrored the same feelings that Deadheads felt, he wrote to his friend saying, "Hey Jerry—what's happening? I caught your funeral. Weird." His disbelief can be read further when he says, "and the silence left in its wake was—IS—positively earsplitting."[9] The loss that the Dead and community surrounding them felt was astounding and significant. Six years later, in 2001, Ken Kesey died of complications from a surgery in the PeaceHealth Sacred Heart Hospital in the University district of Eugene, Oregon. To this day, these losses are felt heavily in this community often resulting in commemorations.

Bob Weir joined his friends and bandmates in death on January 10th, 2026. Another loss that would be felt by many. Per personal experience as well as local social media groups, billboards were seen all around town with a picture of Bob holding his guitar with a short phrase saying, "may the four winds blow you safely home," over the top of this photo. These words come from the song "Franklin's Tower" and are used to signify the journey that Bob Weir viewed death as. This

[6] *Oregon Daily Emerald*, August 10, 1995.
[7] *Oregon Daily Emerald*, August 10, 1995.
[8] *Oregon Daily Emerald*, August 10, 1995.
[9] Ken Kesey and Ed McLanahan, "Spit in Ocean" vol. 7 (Tsunami Press, 2003), 62.

remembrance of Bob signifies the love that Eugene continues to have for the Grateful Dead as a whole.

PART FIVE

We Love You More than Words Can Tell…

If one is ever briefly glancing over Lane County in Oregon, they might not see everything in Eugene or Springfield that are dedicated to Kesey, Garcia, or the Dead, but if one looks deeper, there is a lot. Eugene and Springfield most definitely love the Dead and those surrounding this culture more than words can tell. There are so many physical reminders of this culture all over. The first example being Kesey Square located off Willamette and Broadway which has a statue called The Storyteller. It is of Kesey sitting on a bench with three others, reading a book. Donors to create this space include Phil Knight, Bill Walton, and Bob Weir. This has been a part of Eugene since 2003. In fact, residents have prioritized this statue. In 2016 there was a request to get rid of Kesey Square and remove the statue. This was blocked by the citizens, and the statue remains as of 2025.

Another example lives in front of the train station in Eugene located off Willamette street behind the 5th Street Market. Here is a monument that points to the sky and has a granite base that has many levels. The bottom level shows proximity such as UO campus being one mile away, London being over five thousand miles away, and more locations that wrap around the bottom. The top layer says hello or welcome in several languages. The middle layer has the most significance. This layer has Eugene historical events such as when the Eugene Farmers Market started among other events. One date on this rung stands out though, it states “Jerry Garcia Dies - 1995” front and center. Which means, this project was funded and put through commissions with this approval. This item being there further proves the impact the Dead had on Eugene because of the potential bureaucracy that is entwined with installing new monuments. As well, its inclusion signifies that the Dead hold a space in Eugene history. The fact that Jerry Garcia’s death is commemorated and appreciated as a part of Eugene history cements the relationship between the band and this town as well. Overall, if one walks through downtown Eugene or downtown Springfield, Oregon, they will find countless reminders that the Grateful Dead have a lasting impact on this geographical region.

PART SIX

Don't you let this deal go down…

The way the Grateful Dead are remembered can be nuanced, though. Could it be that consumerism and aesthetics took over? Many brands such as Pacsun, Hollister, or really anything trendy in recent years have sold Grateful Dead brand clothes at many points and places around the world capitalizing on the imagery and name of the band. Whether it is beer, clothes, fishing weights, or even a football team, the Grateful Dead are everywhere in 2025. Yes, it is because 2025 marks the band's sixtieth anniversary, but also this marks a time for opportunity. Examples of collaborations include Malbon, a golf company, the NBA, Wrangler, and more. However, one stands out, the collaboration between Nike, the University of Oregon, and the Grateful Dead. It is generally agreed upon that Nike has a strong hold on the University of Oregon, some going so far as calling it the "University of Nike." For context, Bill Bowerman was a coach for the school and created an iconic running shoe in which Phil Knight helped popularize. Both figures hold incredible wealth and affluence, having stadiums, research laboratories, and more named after them. Nike has funded much for the University of Oregon and there have been several discussions determining the ethical nature of the amount given to the school as most goes to science and athletics. Regardless, Nike has been the cosponsor and creator of some of the most iconic University of Oregon merchandise. This was continued by the launch of a line of merchandise with the Dead. The Nike x University of Oregon x Grateful Dead collection sold out in less than a couple days, in fact before the game even happened. While some can see this collaboration as an opportunity to profit, it can also be said that because of the location of the Nike store, it most definitely was not just that. The in store sales were exceptional because of the people, who were Deadheads, that showed up.

The notion of this post-Jerry Grateful Dead revival being just financial can be countered further. The store, Lazar's Bazar has been a place for anybody to buy anything eccentric or alternative. Customers rave about this store for its unique contents. They often ran advertisements in local Eugene newspapers, there was a shift in 2002, one of the things they advertised for was Grateful Dead memorabilia and merchandise. It could have been that a local business owner is capitalizing on the history of Eugene and understanding the relationship that the Dead created with this city, but this is not the case. The owner, Lazar, states that he found items to sell and ran advertisements based on the needs of the people.[10] Meaning, the people felt the lasting impact of this culture and requested memorabilia to remember and embrace the culture. So, while yes, major companies like Nike can capitalize off of this city with a Nike x University of Oregon x Grateful Dead collaboration, but in Eugene, the attitude towards the band has not changed. Between fans requesting Grateful Dead merch at local stores, to Springfield Creamery/Nancy's Yogurt still being around, to the Kesey family participating in the football game, and more, it is the spirit of Eugene that accepts this to continue, sixty years in the making.

CONCLUSION

Don't tell me this town don't got no heart…

From Ken Kesey's origins to the Grateful Dead's long and complicated relationship with Eugene, Oregon and the surrounding region, the cultural impact between artist, band, and place has been unmistakable and enduring. Eugene is a city shaped not only by its natural landscape and university presence but also by the energy, experimentation, and creative freedom that Kesey and the Dead helped cultivate starting in the 1960s. Their influence extends far beyond music. It touches the city's artistic identity, public spaces, local traditions, and the collective memory of generations who grew up here or who arrived seeking a community that valued openness and eccentricity, and also has been known to attract tourists in past and present times.

Evidence of this influence appears everywhere, from the spontaneous graffiti echoing Dead iconography to official city monuments honoring Kesey and the Dead's legacies. These physical markers reveal something deeper—how Eugene has chosen not to distance itself from its countercultural roots, but rather to embrace them as a defining feature of its identity. Many cities work to smooth over or commercialize their countercultural histories, being that they do not mark a blemishless community, treating them as quirky side

[10] Maya Baer (History Undergrad '26) in discussion with Lazar of Lazar's Bazar, fall 2025.

notes or uncomfortable relics that symbolize nonconformity. Eugene instead treats its past as something to be proud of, allowing it to shape values, aesthetics, and traditions. The presence of the Dead and Kesey has not been cleared of its system, rather it is celebrated, studied, passionately protected, and lived with.

What makes this relationship even more remarkable is its longevity. Even decades after the height of the counterculture movement, the energy that animated the early gatherings at the University of Oregon, the Springfield Creamery benefit in 1972, and Kesey's own creative provocations continue to be celebrated. Festivals, murals, music venues, and local businesses still carry the influence of these cultural moments. Residents from being longtime residents to newly arrived college students often speak about Eugene's openness, its creativity, and its willingness to nurture unconventional and unpopular expression, and all of these values trace back, in part, to the Dead's unforgettable presence and Kesey's explosive imagination.

Ultimately, the heart of this town does not just remember the Dead, it welcomes them, past and present, into its identity. Eugene's willingness to acknowledge and celebrate the complicated, colorful legacy of its countercultural history sets it apart from other cities of similar size and nature. The Grateful Dead may have played their last show decades ago, and Kesey may have passed long ago, but their influence continues to shape Eugene's character, creativity, and communal spirit. In embracing this legacy rather than sweeping it aside, Eugene affirms that its history is not just something to be preserved, it is something to be lived, danced to, and read.

Bibliography

Babbs, Ken. *Cronies*. Tsunami Press, 2022.

Bar-Lev, Amir, dir. *Long Strange Trip: The Untold Story of the Grateful Dead*. Amazon Studios, 2017.

Benson, Michael. *Why the Grateful Dead Matter*. University Press of New England, 2016.

Campbell, Mary. "Grateful Dead Known for Live Shows." *The Sunday Peninsula Herald*, January 28, 1979.

"Deadheads' Tickets Help Pay for New Athletic Complex." *Oregon Daily Emerald*, August 9, 1988.

Fleiss, Mike, dir. *The Other One: The Long Strange Trip of Bob Weir*. Netflix, 2015.

"Grateful Dead Banned from Autzen Stadium." From staff and wire reports. *Oregon Daily Emerald*, October 24, 1990.

"Grateful Dead Tour Statistics." Setlist.fm. https://www.setlist.fm/stats/grateful-dead-bd6ad4a.html.

Kesey, Ken, ed. Scott F. Parker. *Conversations with Ken Kesey*. University Press of Mississippi, 2014.

Kesey, Ken, and Ed McLanahan. *Spit in Ocean #7*. Tsunami Press, 2003.

Moser-Kornfeld, Anne. "Rock Icon Jerry Garcia Dies at 53." *Oregon Daily Emerald*, August 10, 1995.

Norris, John, dir. *Sunshine Daydream*. Shout! Factory, 2013.

Radburn, Rob, and Chris Love. "Digging into Concert Setlist Data: Which Artists Play the Same Songs over and Over?" Tableau. www.tableau.com.

"Students Have Power to Bring Back Dead." *Oregon Daily Emerald*, October 25, 1990.

Trappe, Daralyn. "Group Boycotts Grateful Dead Ban." *Oregon Daily Emerald*.

"Veneta." Grateful Dead. https://www.dead.net/tags/veneta.

Earnest and Thoroughly Good Women

Women's Christian Temperance Union Activism in Oregon, 1880–1920

Graham Burtle

INTRODUCTION

Temperance movements in Oregon succeeded in banning alcohol at the state-wide level years before the federal government's national prohibition of 1920 to 1933.[1] In 1914, the state of Oregon passed sweeping prohibition ordinances in 32 out of the 34 counties, effectively closing 900 saloons and 18 breweries.[2] Having achieved suffrage in 1912, Oregon women became instrumental in the legislative fight for temperance: to quote historian John Caswell, "If every vote prohibition gained in Oregon between 1910 and 1914 was a woman's, three women of four were 'dry.'"[3] The Oregon Women's Christian Temperance Union (OWCTU), an organization of local state chapters of the nationwide Women's Christian Temperance Movement (WCTU), provided women an opportunity to organize themselves and influence their communities, even expanding beyond temperance to champion causes such as wage increases for working women.[4] In coalition with other organizations such as the Anti-Saloon League, this activism created major changes in many towns: for example, Monmouth, Oregon maintained one of the most active OWCTU chapters, and the town retained its temperance laws from 1853 until 2002—the union worked with local churches to campaign for prohibition at every vote.[5] Women's activism in Oregon was

[1] John Caswell, "The Prohibition Movement in Oregon II. 1904–1915," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 40, no. 1 (1939): 80.
[2] Caswell, "The Prohibition Movement II," 80.
[3] Caswell, "The Prohibition Movement II," 81.
[4] Dale Soden, "The Woman's Christian Temperance Union in the Pacific Northwest: The Battle for Cultural Control," *Pacific Northwest Quarterly* 94, no. 4 (2003): 204–205.
[5] Kyle Jansson, "The Changing Climate of Oregon's Driest Town: Monmouth's Prohibition Ordinances, 1859–2001," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 102, no. 3 (2001): 344.

instrumental in the large-scale success of temperance throughout the state, yet local legislative gains were often lost in relatively short periods of time, resulting in many towns' return to alcohol sales before national prohibition. This dramatic shift in legislation indicates an equal shift in the electoral body's support of temperance. Was this shift in support characterized by an opposition to prohibition itself, or an opposition to the WCTU and its threat to the historically male-dominated hierarchies of electoral and legislative power? Through an analysis of primary source material including WCTU and Anti-Saloon League archival publications, local newspapers, and historical maps, this project expands on the existing literature by offering an analysis of the response to WCTU activism, rather than the process of said activism. Ultimately, the negative responses to and eventual failure of WCTU supported temperance legislation in the state of Oregon were not outwardly motivated by an overt resistance to women's activism, but a genuine resistance to temperance policy.

HISTORIOGRAPHY

A survey of the historiography of the subject yields several hundred articles on the temperance movement as a whole and a lesser but still significant number on the activism of the WCTU across the 50 states. With regard to Oregon, there is a clear lack of current and direct research on the OWCTU and its role in the prohibition movement of the state. John Caswell's series of papers on the prohibition movement in Oregon (published in 1938 and 1939 respectively) provide a background of the prohibition movement in the state, but devote little focus on the OWCTU in their broad overview.[6] Sarah Hardy's thesis at Western Oregon University explores OWCTU activism as it related to the First World War—useful for a grounding in the later periods of this paper's analysis, but lacking in analysis of direct legislative campaigning, small-town organizing, or confrontational movements past the opposition to their war policy.[7] Finally, Dale Soden's "The Women's Christian Temperance Union in the Pacific Northwest" details the broad strokes of social reform campaigns undertaken by Pacific Northwest chapters of the WCTU, including the work of local

[6] Caswell, "The Prohibition Movement I;" Caswell, "The Prohibition Movement II."
[7] Sarah Hardy, "Temperance and Beyond: The Oregon Woman's Christian Temperance Union and Progressive Reform during the First World War," Senior Thesis, Western Oregon University, 2010.

Oregon chapters.[8] This paper addresses the role of the OWCTU in small-town political organizing, temperance reform movements, and women's political identity in Oregon. Building on the existing research, this examination of the OWCTU addresses the previous gaps in knowledge and positions the organization as a central figure in not just the national prohibition movement, but in local community movements as well.

SUFFRAGE AND TEMPERANCE

The movement for women's suffrage in Oregon maintained deep ties to the movement for temperance, and both campaigns shared a number of activists among them, including the fifth president of the Oregon WCTU, Lucia Additon.[9] Suffrage presented an opportunity to leverage the votes of hundreds of women in the Union who had previously been relegated to activism without representation. However, the tension between the perceived unpopularity of prohibition and its ties to the suffragist cause through the WCTU led suffragist leader Abigail Scott Duniway to attempt a break between the two campaigns. According to historian Dale Soden, "Duniway feared that the temperance issue would frighten too many men away from voting for woman's suffrage and consequently sought to maintain a distance between the two movements."[10] Ultimately, the attempt at separating the temperance and suffragist movements failed, and suffrage remained a core tenet of WCTU activism.[11]

Duniway's fear that suffrage would be defeated as a result of its ties to temperance was proven false, as Oregon's women won the right to vote in 1912 with the active participation of the OWCTU supporting the bid for suffrage. As suffrage in Oregon saw success with help from the OWCTU, there remained the potential for a broader opposition to temperance movements based on their association with women's activism and empowerment through the OWCTU's connection to the suffragist cause. To determine how opposition to temperance was framed, it is necessary to look to a concrete example of prohibition repeal and the narrativizing of its support and opposition.

8 Soden, "The Woman's Christian," 197–207.
9 Sarah B. Hardy, "Suffrage and Temperance: Differing Perspectives," Century of Action Oregon Women Vote 1912–2012 Legacy Site, accessed November 26, 2025.
10 Soden, "The Woman's Christian," 202.
11 Soden, "The Woman's Christian," 202.

MAPPING PROHIBITION

Tillamook, Oregon, presents an opportunity to examine a specific case of town-wide prohibition spurred by a Women's Christian Temperance Union chapter (incorporated into the third district of the OWCTU).[12] To observe the physical effects of this prohibition, I refer to the Sanborn Map Company's fire insurance maps of Tillamook drawn in 1902, 1905, and 1912. Beginning in 1902, it is possible to observe three saloons in the town, at the southwest corner of 1st Ave. E. and 1st St., at the corner of 2nd Ave. E. and 1st St., and at the southeast corner of 1st Ave. E. and 1st St.[13]

[12] Lucia Additon, "Twenty Eventful Years of the Oregon Woman's Christian Temperance Union 1880–1900," Gothshall Printing Company, 1904, 5.
[13] See Figures 1–2.

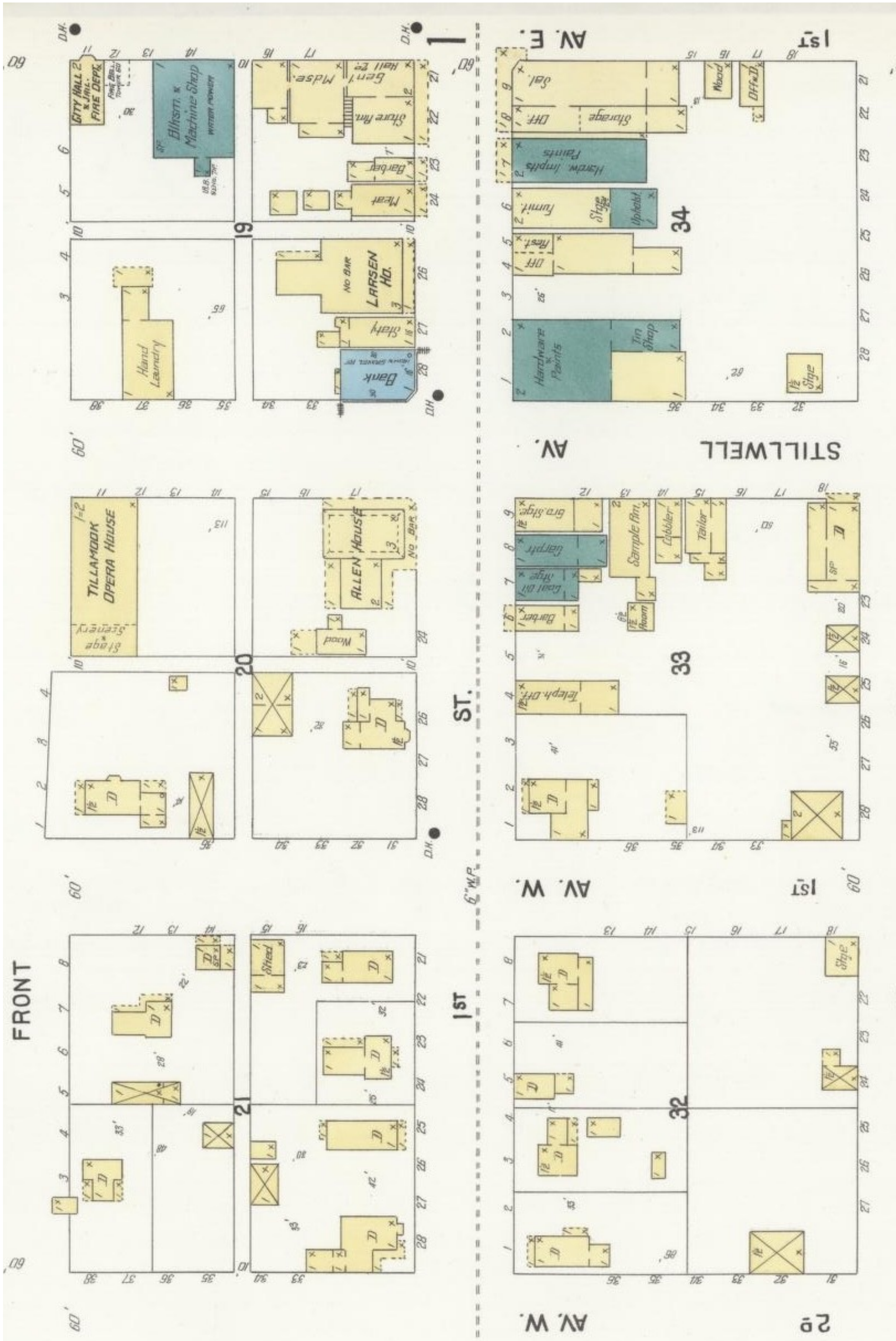

Figure 1. Sanborn Map Company, Tillamook, Oregon, 1902, Sheet 2 (oriented east). Library of Congress.

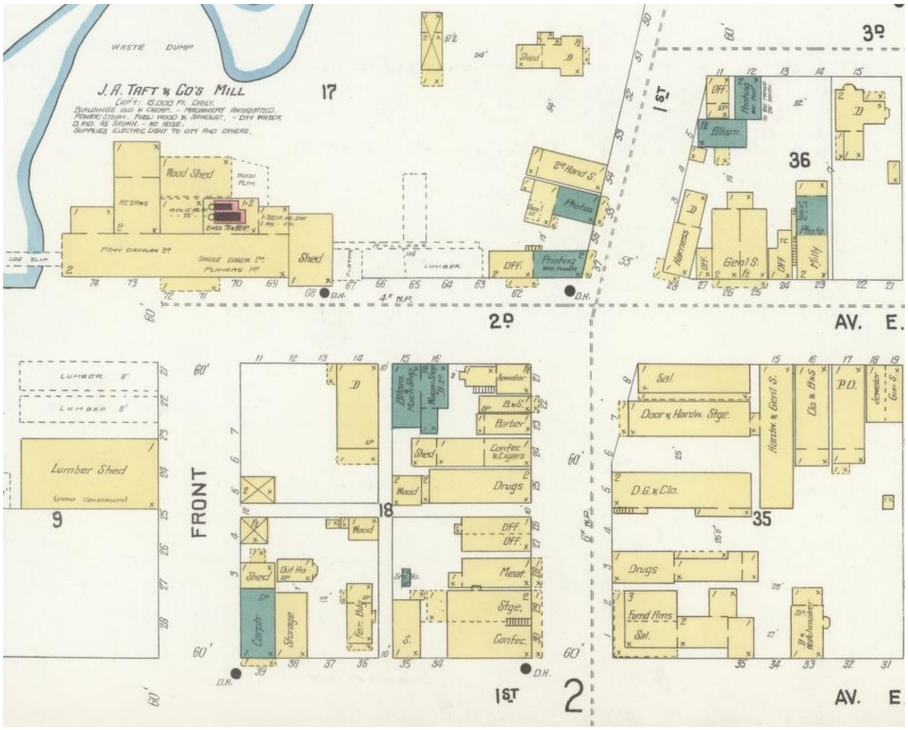

Figure 2. Sanborn Map Company, Tillamook, Oregon, 1902, Sheet 1 (oriented east). Library of Congress.

Moving forward in time to 1905, two of the town's three saloons are no longer operating—the remaining establishment, at the southeast corner of 1st Ave. E. and 1st St., has been converted into a temperance saloon (a saloon serving non-alcoholic beverages).[14] There are no available dates for the exact removal or conversion of each establishment, but the three-year range between the two maps demonstrates the speed with which the town converted from "wet" to "dry."

[14] See Figure 3.

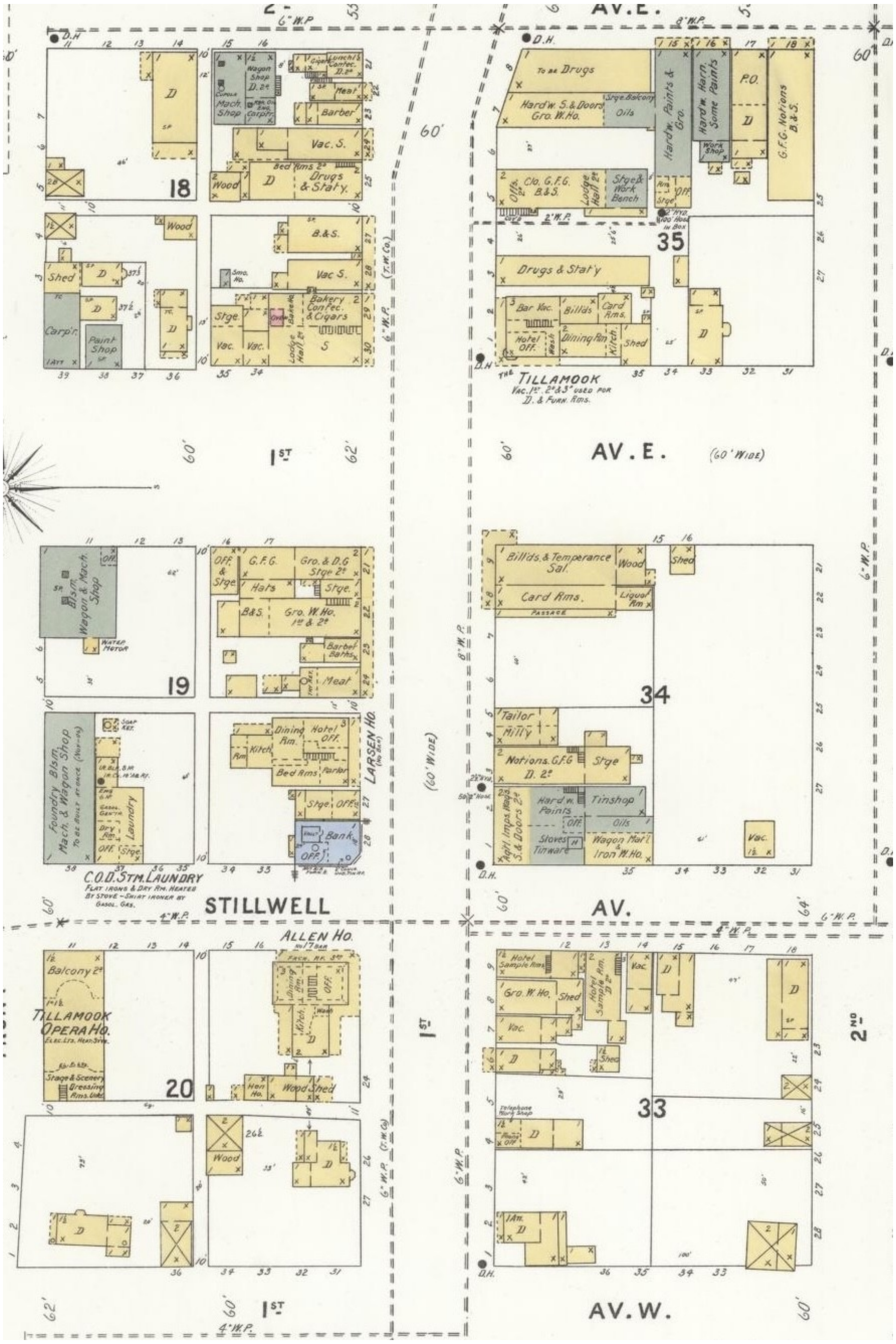

Figure 3. Sanborn Map Company, Tillamook, Oregon, 1905, Sheet 3 (oriented east). Library of Congress.

Despite this large gain for the temperance movement early on, Tillamook is somewhat unique in its prohibition journey, as by 1912 not only had the temperance saloon at 1st Ave. & 1st St. returned to operating as a normal saloon, but it was joined by four other drinking establishments, signifying an end to the town's temperance.[15] Tillamook's dramatic rise of temperance and return to liquor over a maximum period of ten years displays the volatility of support for the temperance movement, and aligns with the state-wide drop in support for temperance legislation in the late 1910s leading into the start of national prohibition.

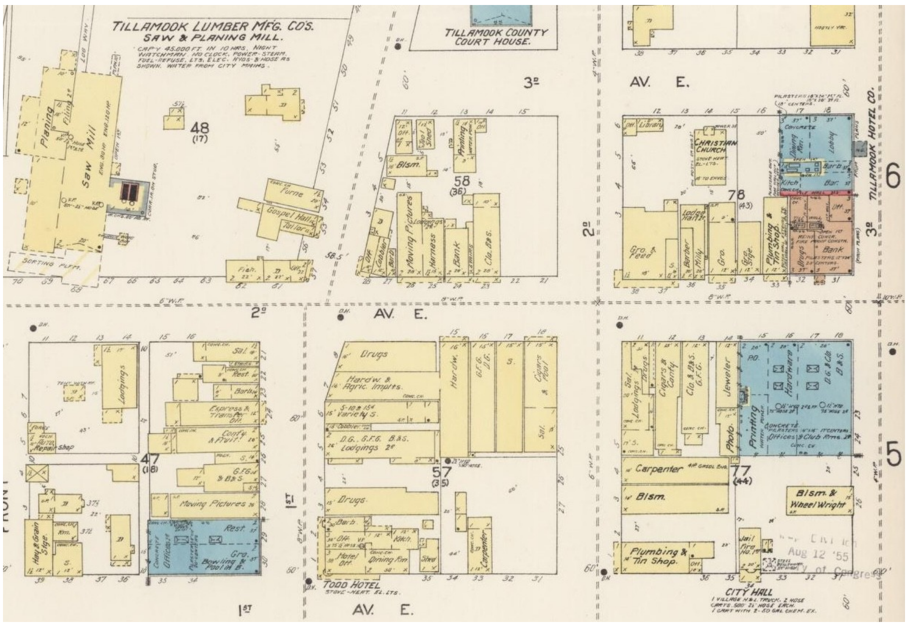

Figure 4. Sanborn Map Company, Tillamook, Oregon, 1912, Sheet 3 (oriented east). Library of Congress.

15 See Figures 4–5.

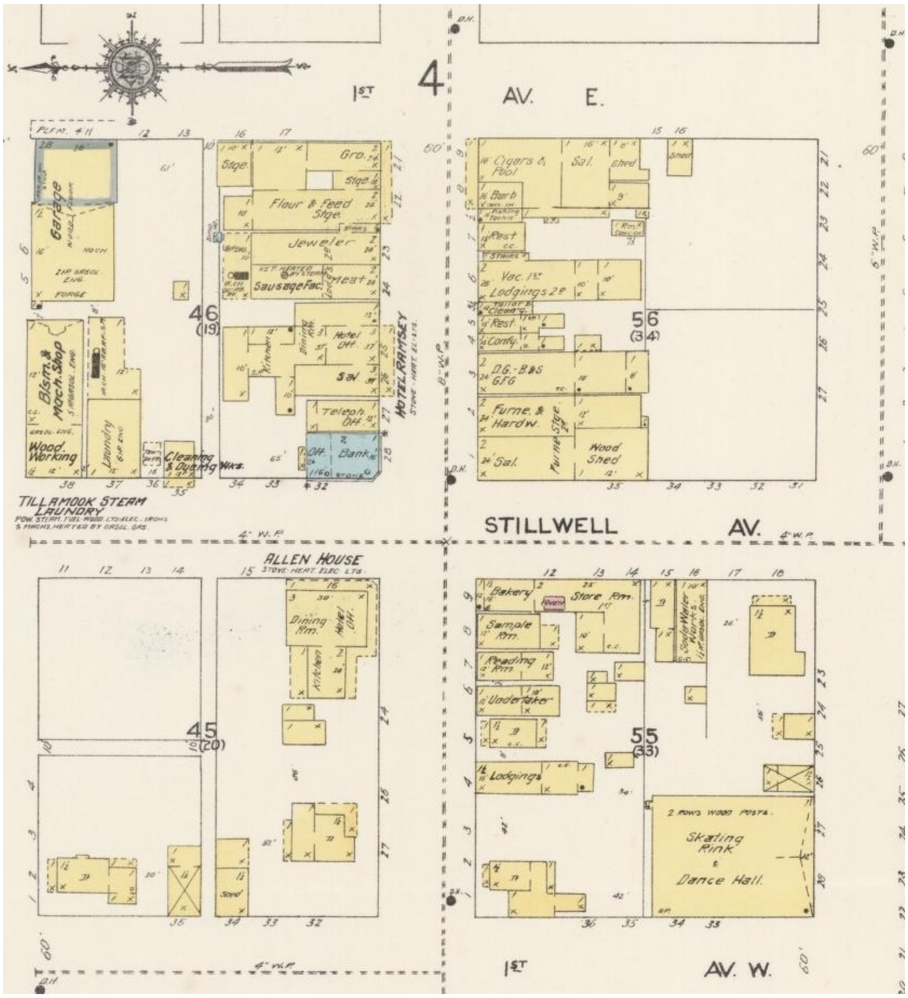

Figure 5. Sanborn Map Company, Tillamook, Oregon, 1912, Sheet 4 (oriented east). Library of Congress.

ANTI-SALOON LEAGUE

This trend in early 1900s–1910s fluctuations in Oregon’s local prohibitions is reflected in the cataloging of the Anti-Saloon League (ASL), a national temperance organization similar to the WCTU in structure and purpose yet operated primarily by men. In the 1908 edition of the *Anti-Saloon League Year Book* (chronicling the previous year, 1907), the editor Ernest Cherrington describes the state of Oregon as having “one of the best local option laws in the country.”[16] In

[16] Ernest Cherrington, *The Anti-Saloon League Year Book*, The Anti-Saloon League of America, 1908, 187.

1911, the ASL's total count of "dry" counties in Oregon stood at fifteen, although the editor notes that two attempts at state-wide prohibition were defeated by a roughly 20,000 vote margin (note this was prior to Oregon women's suffrage in 1912).[17] By 1912, the ASL Year Book displays a defeated report on Oregon's temperance movement: "At the present time there are but nine 'dry' counties in Oregon, and it is an open question as to whether these are really 'dry.' The amendment to the constitution secured by the liquor forces in 1910, according to the contention of the liquor interest, allows 'wet' cities in 'dry' counties."[18] This dramatic transition from "dry" to "wet" in a relatively short period of time at the state level mirrors the small-town example of Tillamook. Short-term gains were walked back in the years leading up to Oregon statewide prohibition in 1914. At that point in time, Oregon transformed from a site of movement failure and backtracks to a darling of the ASL, with the 1915 edition Year Book reporting: "Nine hundred saloons and eighteen breweries in ninety-eight towns were closed. Of the thirty-four counties, thirty-two showed a dry majority. Multnomah county, with Portland City, went wet by ninety-five only."[19] See Figure 6 for the ASL's map of Oregon's wet and dry counties as of January 1905.

17 Cherrington, *Anti-Saloon League Year Book*, 1911, 70.
18 Cherrington, *Anti-Saloon League Year Book*, 1912, 185.
19 Cherrington, *Anti-Saloon League Year Book*, 1915, 189.

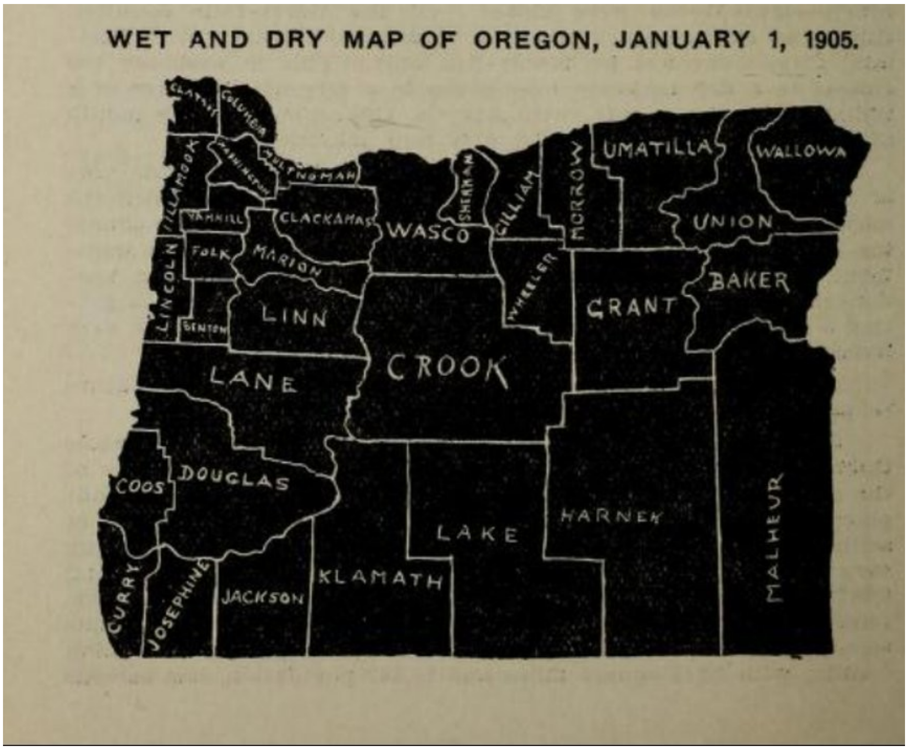

Figure 6. Ernest Cherrington, The Anti-Saloon League Year Book (Anti-Saloon League of America, 1915), 190. Black areas are "wet" counties, January 1, 1905.

The ASL maps present a solely progressive narrative of the prohibition movement. It is impossible to tell without prior knowledge the gains that were lost in the years leading up to state-wide prohibition. See Figure 7 for the 1910 and 1916 maps. With respect to the WCTU nationally, and the local OWCTU, the ASL Year Books are largely silent. No mention is made in the Oregon sections of OWCTU activism, despite it being a driving force of the movement for prohibition in the state. The contact index at the back of each publication lists WCTU officers in each edition, but little mention is made of their work in any printing of the Year Book. This could be due to a number of factors including the institution's natural focus on its own work and achievements, an intent to distance from the WCTU, or a lack of communication between the groups: there is no clear answer available in these documents, yet the ASL remains a useful source for characterizing the Oregon temperance movement's broader gains and losses over time.

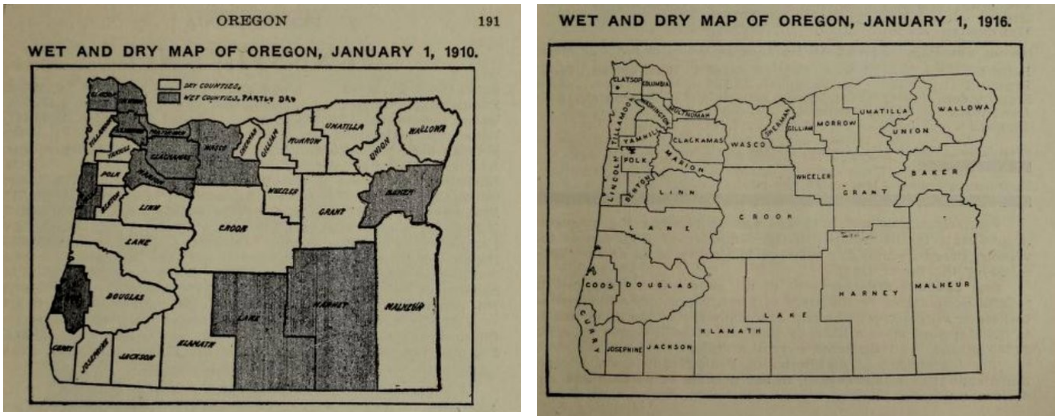

Figure 7. Cherrington, Anti-Saloon League Year Book, 191. Wet and dry maps of Oregon, January 1, 1910 (left) and January 1, 1916 (right).

NEWSPAPERS AND PUBLIC PERCEPTION

The physical manifestations of the temperance movement existed as a reflection of the legislative and social processes of the temperance campaign, both within and beyond Tillamook. The town's newspaper, *The Tillamook Headlight* (later *The Tillamook Herald*), ran a number of articles during the 1900s and 1910s addressing the temperance movements occurring throughout the town, and the battle for temperance at the state level. In 1901, the *Headlight* addressed OWCTU activism against army canteens, disparaging the efforts of those "earnest and thoroughly good women" to ban alcohol from the army.[20] The tone of the article is dismissive, writing "This is the woman's century. It began in Europe with the death of the most influential and well-balanced woman of history. It begins in America with a demonstration of misapplied power and unsteadiness of judgement in public affairs, which proves that woman still lacks logic. … There may be, and undoubtedly are, logical women in America. But they are not the women who meddle in public affairs in Washington."[21] The disapproval leveled at the WCTU activists is clearly stated, and the tone is patronizing towards their supposed misguided earnestness. Yet can this be seen to characterize the temperance movement in totality as a women's movement? The purpose of the article speaks more towards a disapproval of women's activism, and the specific issue of

[20] "Women in Politics," *The Tillamook Headlight (Herald)*, February 14, 1901, 3.
[21] "Women in Politics," 3.

prohibition in the army, rather than prohibition as a whole. In fact, the temperance movement becomes recharacterized through the years, and women's sole involvement within it is complicated by anti-temperance activism led also by women. Speaking as a voice of the town, the *Herald* published an article in 1913 with opinions on the upcoming election: with regards to temperance votes, it quickly became clear that women were not exclusively championing the pro-temperance side, but actively campaigning against it. The *Herald* writes "The dependence which the 1914 advocates are putting in the women's vote, is in our opinion, of little weight … For instance, take our own liquor fight here in Tillamook last spring. In that fight, with the women voting, the temperance people got the most severe beating they ever received."[22] This article is a stark departure from the tone of 11 years prior, marking an increasing acceptance of women as a viable political force. Rather than a denouncement of the women leading the fight for prohibition, this issue of the *Herald* demonstrates that the issue was not seen as, or voted on, as a gender binary.

WCTU PUBLICATIONS AND NARRATIVE-BUILDING

The work of the OWCTU translated to the national stage primarily through communications such as *The Union Signal* (the national WCTU's periodical compiling local chapter news and national campaigns), as well as other temperance organizations' communications, such as the *Anti-Saloon League Year Book*. *The Union Signal* in 1910 described the local organizing in Oregon being done to further the cause of prohibition: "A committee composed of five Prohibitionists, five Anti-Saloon Leaguers, and five W.C.T.U. women is managing the campaign. … The outlook is encouraging, as there is a strong temperance sentiment throughout the state, but the saloon element is fully aroused and will leave no stone unturned to sustain its position. The press in the larger cities, particularly in Portland, our metropolis, lines up with the liquor traffic, and every day articles appear bemoaning the demoralizing effect of local prohibition upon business."[23] The organizational communication is understandably optimistic about its own cause, and importantly reveals the coalition

22 Untitled, *The Tillamook Herald (Headlight)*, July 1, 1913.
23 "The Campaign in Oregon," *The Union Signal*, Vol. XXXVI, No. 12 (March 31, 1910): 12.

held in Oregon with the Anti-Saloon League: although the ASL is largely absent from small-town discourse, at the state level they did work with the OWCTU to achieve state-wide prohibition. The WCTU publications make direct mention of the support and involvement of the ASL in their movement, yet as seen from the evidence above of the ASL Year Books, the recognition of support did not extend both directions. The 1914 edition of *The Union Signal* contained two articles of importance regarding the Oregon prohibition battle, the first of which being an article written by H.R. Albee, then mayor of Portland. Albee speaks in overwhelming favor of not just the temperance cause, but women's role within it, stating: "I have always been strongly in favor of the enfranchisement of women, largely because I feel that the country needs their services as voters and that, by their votes, they will assist in the eventual overthrow of the liquor traffic, the great foe of the state, and that their direct influence upon the government will be for the general uplift of humanity."[24] Although campaigning as a politician and using this platform to garner support from the national WCTU, Albee's unflinching endorsement of women's political power is significant on its own merit. The normalization of women's role in politics and the centering of temperance as a moral rather than gender-based cause provides stronger ground for an opposition based on policy rather than women's involvement in the core of the movement. The second 1914 *Union Signal* article of relevance is an interview with Lillian Stevens, then president of the national WCTU. When asked about the importance of women's suffrage for the temperance movement, Stevens specifically references Portland women's bitter opposition to the liquor trade and its significant impact in the advancement of temperance legislation in the state.[25]*The Union Signal* further provides important context for the continuance of the prohibition movement in Oregon years later, in the 1917 edition article titled "Twelve Months under Prohibition." This article includes quotes from the Oregon governor, Portland mayor, school superintendent, district attorney, and other relevant political figures praising the state-wide prohibition.[26] These statements, published in the national WCTU

[24] H.R. Albee, "Women Voters and the Liquor Traffic," *The Union Signal*, Vol. XL, No. 3 (January 15, 1914): 5.
[25] "Outlook For National Constitutional Prohibition," *The Union Signal*, Vol. XL, No. 2 (February 5, 1914): 3.

press, suggest a direct link between the politics of the time and the women's movement supporting them.

CONCLUSION

The road to state-wide prohibition in Oregon was a convoluted path of successes and losses for the temperance movement. National prohibition, beginning in 1920, saw the end of state to state battles for temperance legislation, and at its conclusion in 1933, Oregon returned once again to being a "wet" state. The OWCTU was instrumental in achieving prohibition not just at the state or county level, but in specific towns as well. The marshalling of women to campaign for a socially and religiously righteous cause enfranchised women to make political change in their communities, and the organization played a key role in securing suffrage for Oregon's women. Following this event, Oregon saw major gains for the temperance movement as thousands of already radicalized OWCTU members were able to vote in favor of their cause for the first time, and the state passed its sweeping prohibition bill in 1914. Yet the monolith of temperance as primarily a women's movement was tested both by the WCTU's organizational connections to other male-led temperance activist groups such as the ASL, but also by a growing number of women campaigning against temperance. In towns such as Tillamook, this resulted in dramatic and quick transitions from "wet" to "dry," and local reporting noted the importance of women in the anti-temperance movement as a key factor for its success. Ultimately, the failures of the Oregon Women's Christian Temperance Union, and the temperance legislation they championed, were not due to a backlash on the basis of their gender, but a genuine opposition to temperance supported in part by newly enfranchised women whose right to vote was won, in no small part, by the OWCTU itself.

Bibliography

Primary Sources

[26] "Twelve Months Under Prohibition," *The Union Signal*, Vol. XLIII, No. 3 (January 18, 1917): 5.

Additon, Lucia. *Twenty Eventful Years of the Oregon Woman's Christian Temperance Union 1880–1900*. Gothshall Printing Company, 1904.

Albee, H.R. "Women Voters and the Liquor Traffic." *The Union Signal*, Vol. XL, No. 3 (January 15, 1914): 5.

Cherrington, Ernest. *The Anti-Saloon League Year Book*. The Anti-Saloon League of America, 1908.

Cherrington, Ernest. *The Anti-Saloon League Year Book*. The Anti-Saloon League of America, 1911.

Cherrington, Ernest. *The Anti-Saloon League Year Book*. The Anti-Saloon League of America, 1912.

Cherrington, Ernest. *The Anti-Saloon League Year Book*. The Anti-Saloon League of America, 1915.

Sanborn Map Company. Tillamook, Oregon. 1902. Sheets 1–2.

Sanborn Map Company. Tillamook, Oregon. 1905. Sheet 3.

Sanborn Map Company. Tillamook, Oregon. 1912. Sheets 3–4.

"State Suffragists Prepare for Fight." *The Oregonian*, November 1, 1912, 4.

"The Campaign in Oregon." *The Union Signal*, Vol. XXXVI, No. 12 (March 31, 1910): 12.

"Twelve Months Under Prohibition." *The Union Signal*, Vol. XLIII, No. 3 (January 18, 1917): 5.

"Outlook for National Constitutional Prohibition." *The Union Signal*, Vol. XL, No. 2 (February 5, 1914): 3.

Untitled. *The Tillamook Herald (Headlight)*, July 1, 1913.

"Women in Politics." *The Tillamook Headlight (Herald)*, February 14, 1901, 3.

Secondary Sources

Caswell, John. "The Prohibition Movement in Oregon: Part 1, 1836–1904." *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 39, no. 3 (1938): 235–261.

Caswell, John. "The Prohibition Movement in Oregon II. 1904–1915." *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 40, no. 1 (1939): 64–82.

Hardy, Sarah B. "Temperance and Beyond: The Oregon Woman's Christian Temperance Union and Progressive Reform during the First World War." Senior Thesis, Western Oregon University, 2010.

Hardy, Sarah B. "Suffrage and Temperance: Differing Perspectives." Century of Action Oregon Women Vote 1912–2012 Legacy Site, accessed November 26, 2025.

Jansson, Kyle. "The Changing Climate of Oregon's Driest Town: Monmouth's Prohibition Ordinances, 1859–2001." *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 102, no. 3 (2001): 336–351.

Jensen, Kimberly. "Woman Suffrage in Oregon." Oregon Encyclopedia (Oregon Historical Society), September 5, 2023.

Soden, Dale. “The Woman’s Christian Temperance Union in the Pacific Northwest: The Battle for Cultural Control.” *Pacific Northwest Quarterly* 94, no. 4 (2003): 197–207.

Division Within the Women’s Suffrage Movement

Abigail Scott Duniway’s Strategic Opposition to the Prohibition Movement

Isabel Colman

The women’s suffrage movement played an important role in the political and social history of the late nineteenth-century United States. Centered in the Northeast, many suffrage organizations established their headquarters in New York and surrounding states. However, almost 3,000 miles away, in the Pacific Northwest, Abigail Scott Duniway led a crucial branch of the suffrage movement. Duniway’s branch meaningfully contributed to the fight for women’s enfranchisement, since the Pacific Northwest included some of the first states to grant women voting rights. This indicates that her political strategies were at least somewhat successful. Her branch also revealed how the suffrage movement did not maintain a unified political ideology or strategy, a reality that many suffrage historians have not fully explored. This becomes particularly apparent when we examine the suffrage movement’s relationship with prohibition, another widespread, progressive political movement of the late nineteenth century.

The majority of suffragists in the Northeast supported prohibition for two reasons. They believed that a reduction in alcohol usage would improve women’s personal lives by reducing domestic abuse, and that it would increase support for the suffrage movement by creating a broader progressive political environment. In contrast to this mainstream view, Duniway opposed prohibition because she believed it would harm the women’s suffrage movement. Specifically, she believed that prohibition would not reduce alcohol consumption, would constitute a violation of personal liberty, would lead men to oppose the suffrage movement, and would incite retaliation from the liquor lobby, which encouraged anti-suffrage sentiments. Studying Duniway’s opposition to prohibition reveals how she differed from other suffrage leaders, as well as the broader complexities within the women’s suffrage movement. It also sheds light on Duniway's effective political strategy that helped suffrage gain momentum in the West.

Historians have extensively studied the suffrage and prohibition movements, and they have recounted how the vast majority of women's suffrage activists supported prohibition. In the nineteenth century, many women, not just suffrage activists, supported the prohibition movement. Their support mainly stemmed from religious beliefs and the desire to distance their families from the adverse impacts of alcohol, such as domestic abuse and neglect. Duniway stands out as a unique figure in that she politically opposed prohibition. Surprisingly, not much scholarship has highlighted Duniway's opposition to the movement. Most of the existing literature on the suffrage movement recounts how suffragists supported progressive movements, such as prohibition and temperance. But the literature does not explore how certain suffrage activists, like Duniway, believed that support for prohibition hindered the progress of the suffrage movement. Hence, this research paper will aim to discover why Abigail Scott Duniway opposed the prohibition movement through an examination of Duniway's autobiography, *Path Breaking: An Autobiographical History of the Equal Suffrage Movement in Pacific Coast States*, her speeches, and her newspaper, *The New Northwest*. Further, this research paper will examine how she strategically used her opposition to prohibition as a tool to facilitate her activism for women's suffrage. Specifically, this paper will focus on the Pacific Northwest (primarily Oregon, where Duniway lived and held the greatest influence) in the 1870s and 1880s. By focusing on these issues, historians will gain a better understanding of the history of the women's suffrage movement, the different strategies of its leaders, and how suffrage interacted with other major progressive movements in nineteenth-century America.

This paper will begin by outlining the general state of the women's suffrage movement in the United States and the American West in the late 1800s. Then, we will proceed to discuss how and why the majority of the women's suffrage movement supported the prohibition movement. From here, this paper will introduce Abigail Scott Duniway, explain why she opposed the prohibition movement, and examine how this opposition benefited the women's suffrage movement in the Pacific Northwest, where suffragists achieved early wins. Finally, this paper will demonstrate how the suffrage movement did not act with one unified voice, as many historians claim.

Abigail Scott Duniway was born in Illinois in 1834. At age 18, Duniway and her family emigrated to Oregon via the Oregon Trail, leading her family to become some of the first immigrants to the Pacific Northwest.[1] From then on, she remained in Oregon and spent her life as a women's suffrage activist and writer, living by her personal motto "Yours for Liberty."[2] Based in Portland, Duniway had a great influence across the Pacific Northwest and came to be known as Oregon's Mother of Equal Suffrage.[3] In 1871, she founded *The New Northwest* newspaper and released weekly issues for 16 years, from 1871 to 1886.[4] During this time, *The New Northwest* served as a valuable, weekly outlet for Duniway's activism and writings on women's rights and suffrage. With the motto of "Free Speech, Free Press, Free People," *The New Northwest* lobbied for women's enfranchisement and also disseminated Duniway's views on related topics.[5] This included prohibition, temperance, wage equality, and women's property ownership. *The New Northwest* also acted as a literary journal, publishing progressive poems and short stories, many authored by Duniway herself.[6]

When she finished writing for *The New Northwest* in 1886, Duniway campaigned for equal suffrage in *The Coming Century* and *The Pacific Empire*, two journals that she wrote for in the 1890s.[7] In addition, during the late nineteenth century, Duniway and her mentor, Susan B. Anthony, notably founded two influential suffrage organizations: the Oregon State Woman Suffrage Association and the

[1] Ruth Barnes Moynihan, *Rebel for Rights: Abigail Scott Duniway* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983), 28–29.
[2] Jean M. Ward, "Abigail Scott Duniway (1835–1915)," https://www.oregonencyclopedia.org/articles/abigail_scott_duniway/.
[3] Ward, "Abigail Scott Duniway."
[4] *The New Northwest*, Portland, OR, 1871–1887, Historic Oregon Newspapers, https://oregonnews.uoregon.edu/lccn/sn84022673/.
[5] Ward, "Abigail Scott Duniway."
[6] Jason Stone, "Portland, New Northwest," https://odnp.uoregon.edu/portland-new-northwest/.
[7] Ward, "Abigail Scott Duniway."

Washington Woman Suffrage Association.[8] The founding of these, and other, suffrage associations helped transform an ideology into an official movement. Janet Zollinger Giele, in *Two Paths to Women's Equality: Temperance, Suffrage, and the Origins of Modern Feminism*, explains how the organization of a social movement, through the founding of formal associations with official leaders, created the most efficient pathway to implementing reforms.[9] Specifically, suffrage associations allowed activists, such as Duniway and Anthony, to recruit members, organize conventions, and spread their suffrage message across the nation. Taken together, Duniway's suffrage activism and writings can be credited with advancing women's enfranchisement in Oregon, Washington, Idaho, and the greater U.S. West. Duniway died in 1915, but not before registering to vote in 1913.[10]

Figure 1. Abigail Scott Duniway registering to vote, February 14, 1913. County Clerk John B. Coffey stands beside her. She was the first woman to register in Multnomah County, Oregon. OHS Digital Collections, Oregon Historical Society, OrgLot139_4603.

8 "Voting Rights for Women, Women's Suffrage," Washington Secretary of State, https://www2.sos.wa.gov/elections/timeline/suffrage.htm; Ward, "Abigail Scott Duniway."

9 Janet Zollinger Giele, *Two Paths to Women's Equality: Temperance, Suffrage, and the Origins of Modern Feminism* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1995), 18–19.

10 Tiffany Lewis, *Uprising: How Women Used the US West to Win the Right to Vote* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2021), 25; Ward, "Abigail Scott Duniway."

To understand Duniway's political strategy in her campaign for women's suffrage, we must first examine the general state of the women's suffrage movement in the late nineteenth century. Here, we need to pay attention to the important role that Western and Northwestern states played in the suffrage movement, including Oregon and Washington. Before the Civil War, women's desire for equal rights and their growing discontent with traditional societal roles had led to the formation of feminist ideologies, the election of leaders to act on behalf of women's causes, and the formal founding of suffrage organizations.[11] Although the women's suffrage movement originally gained momentum in the Northeast, the movement saw its first political victories in the West.[12] Between 1869 and 1912, Wyoming, Utah, Washington, Montana, Colorado, Idaho, California, and Oregon gave women the right to vote.[13] These achievements can be significantly attributed to Abigail Scott Duniway, Susan B. Anthony, and the hard work of their suffrage associations.

In Washington, women gained the right to vote in 1883.[14] If this decision had stuck, Washington would have become the second state to give women the right to vote, behind Wyoming. However, the state rescinded the decision in 1887.[15] Once again, in 1888, Washington passed and then overturned women's right to vote.[16] As will become evident below, Washington suffrage legislation failed partly because of women's support for the prohibition and temperance movements, which hindered liquor sales and angered the liquor lobby.[17] Finally, in 1910, Washington permanently gave women the right to vote.[18] Following a similar pattern, Oregon defeated bills to enfranchise women in 1884, 1900, 1906, 1908, and 1910, until the bill finally passed in 1912.[19] Women's enfranchisement in Idaho proved easier, with a women's voting rights bill passing the first time around, in

[11] Giele, *Two Paths to Women's Equality*, 19, 23.
[12] Lewis, *Uprising*, xix.
[13] Lewis, *Uprising*, xix.
[14] Kimberly Jenson, "Woman Suffrage in Oregon," https://www.oregonencyclopedia.org/articles/woman_suffrage_in_oregon/.
[15] Jenson, "Woman Suffrage in Oregon."
[16] "Voting Rights for Women, Women's Suffrage."
[17] "Voting Rights for Women, Women's Suffrage."
[18] Jenson, "Woman Suffrage in Oregon."
[19] Jenson, "Woman Suffrage in Oregon."

1896.[20] Despite many attempts and setbacks, the Pacific Northwest included many of the first states to enfranchise women in the United States. This can be credited to the efforts of Duniway's Oregon State Woman Suffrage Association and Washington Woman Suffrage Association, which organized both women and men for the purpose of advocating for the suffrage movement and, in the men's case, voting for suffrage legislation.[21] Specifically, these suffrage organizations held suffrage conventions across the nation in order to spread awareness and garner support for the movement.[22] They also petitioned suffrage legislation to state legislatures.[23]

Because the rest of the United States viewed the West through a mythic frontier lens, the Western and Northwestern states had a strong impact on the national suffrage movement throughout the late nineteenth century.[24] The rest of the country shrouded the West in myths of "exceptional people doing exceptional things" as they expanded the country to the West Coast.[25] This allowed Western states to have a persuasive voice in the suffrage movement. Washington, Oregon, Idaho, and other influential Western states became the first states to grant women the right to vote, and the rest of the United States followed suit over the subsequent decades. This shows the power and influence that the Western suffrage movement had on the national suffrage movement. Not only did Duniway effectively lead the Western branch of the suffrage movement, along with other suffragists such as Jeannette Rankin and Helen Ring Robinson, but she also leveraged the myth of the West to influence the nation to follow in the West's footsteps.[26] In *Uprising: How Women Used the US West to Win the Right to Vote*, the scholar Tiffany Lewis explains that Duniway "expanded the ideal of the frontier hero to include white Western women, and asserted that Western women had also been tested and transformed into frontier heroines who had earned their voting rights."[27] Because this resonated with suffragists across the nation,

20 Jenson, "Woman Suffrage in Oregon."
21 Jenson, "Woman Suffrage in Oregon."
22 Jenson, "Woman Suffrage in Oregon."
23 Jenson, "Woman Suffrage in Oregon."
24 Lewis, *Uprising*, 4, 7.
25 Lewis, *Uprising*, 4.
26 Lewis, *Uprising*, 7.
27 Lewis, *Uprising*, 7.

Duniway's Western branch of the suffrage movement acquired great influence.

As most historians note, the majority of women's suffrage activists supported other progressive causes, such as the prohibition and temperance movements, and believed that supporting these causes benefited the suffrage movement overall. Suffragists supported prohibition and temperance for two main reasons. Primarily, many opposed the use of alcohol in their personal lives, since alcoholism often led to domestic abuse. In addition, they believed this support of prohibition and temperance would assist their suffrage activism by creating a progressive political environment.[28] On a personal level, many women had the desire to distance their families from the adverse impacts of alcohol, such as domestic abuse and neglect.[29] Especially in working-class communities, saloons and alcoholism were rampant, and many women suffered domestic abuse at the hands of their husbands.[30] The Woman's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) became the largest women's organization in the nineteenth century, and it persuaded many women to join the cause of supporting prohibition and temperance, with the goal of eradicating or reducing alcohol usage in their own communities.[31] Beyond their personal motivations, many suffrage activists supported prohibition and temperance for political reasons. In *Uprising*, Lewis explains that the suffrage movement's coalition with prohibition and temperance, as well as other progressive movements, contributed to the success of the direct democracy reform movement in the West, which in turn helped women gain voting rights.[32]

Suffragists supported prohibition and temperance partly because they believed that support from the prohibition and temperance movements could increase public support for suffrage.[33] By joining forces with other progressive movements throughout the United

---

[28] Rebecca Mead, *How the Vote Was Won: Woman Suffrage in the Western United States, 1868–1914* (New York: New York University Press, 2004), 60; Lewis, "Uprising," xxi.

[29] Mead, *How the Vote Was Won*, 60.

[30] Mead, *How the Vote Was Won*, 60.

[31] "Women's Christian Temperance Union," VCU Libraries Social Welfare History Project, https://socialwelfare.library.vcu.edu/religious/womens-christian-temperance-union/.

[32] Lewis, *Uprising*, xxii.

[33] Lewis, *Uprising*, xxi; Mead, "How the Vote Was Won," 2.

States, suffragists thought that they could create a larger movement and foster an overall progressive political environment.[34] They hoped that, if the country moved in a more progressive direction, more people would be inclined to support women's suffrage overall.[35] The temperance movement generally had a positive reputation among women. When female members of the temperance movement, including members of the WCTU, began to join and outwardly express their support for women's suffrage in the 1890s, the suffrage movement gained an increasingly positive reputation, especially among other women.[36] The WCTU's support for women's suffrage had the power to influence pro-temperance women who were on the fence about suffrage. It could shift them from questioning suffrage to supporting it. Hence, many suffragists supported linking suffrage with prohibition and temperance.

Interestingly, Duniway initially supported temperance and prohibition before she later revised this opinion.[37] This can be seen in early issues of her newspaper, *The New Northwest*, where she expressed support for the two movements. In the September 1, 1876 issue of *The New Northwest*, only five years into her campaign for women's suffrage, Duniway states that "The nights are made hideous with the most revolting and sickening deeds, as the result of the drinking saloons that are protected by law while engaged in their deadly work. […] Legal enactments for the suppression of this evil is the only hope. […] Thousands of women all over the land are pleading for legal power to help in this hour of peril."[38] This suggests that Duniway's initial support for the two movements might have been due to personal values and a desire to maintain safe, working-class communities and domestic relationships. It also sheds light on how suffrage could strengthen the temperance and prohibition movements, because, as Duniway states in the final line of the quote above, many women would support prohibition legislation if they had the right to vote. However, as Duniway later learned, support for prohibition did not always strengthen the suffrage movement.

---

[34] Mead, *How the Vote Was Won*, 2.
[35] Mead, *How the Vote Was Won*, 2.
[36] Mead, *How the Vote Was Won*, 2.
[37] Mead, *How the Vote Was Won*, 28.
[38] *The New Northwest*, Portland, OR, September 1, 1876, Historic Oregon Newspapers, https://oregonnews.uoregon.edu/lccn/sn84022673/.

Unlike the majority of suffragists, Duniway opposed prohibition throughout the vast majority of her career. Duniway's suffrage career coincided with the rise of the temperance movement and also the rise in temperance resistance. She recognized that, as these two clashing ideologies grew in popularity, the suffrage movement had to choose a side. Given this, her views on prohibition gradually changed as temperance resistance grew in the United States throughout the 1870s. She "[had] no faith at all" in the effectiveness or potential benefits of the prohibition movement and opposed it for four primary reasons, which will be discussed in depth below.[39] She opposed prohibition as a concept because she did not think prohibition legislation would solve the deeper issue of alcoholism and the associated domestic abuse.[40] In addition, she believed that prohibition violated personal autonomy, especially of men.[41] Therefore, she anticipated that women's support for prohibition would anger men and lead them to oppose the suffrage movement, ultimately making it harder to pass suffrage legislation.[42] Finally, she wanted to avoid retaliation from the liquor lobby, which held significant political and economic power, as well as anti-suffrage sentiments.[43] Most importantly, the liquor lobby brought forth organized opposition to suffrage.[44]

Duniway firmly believed that prohibition would not truly reduce alcohol consumption and maintained this position throughout her entire career. In her 1889 speech "Ballots and Bullets," she stated that "the men voters of Oregon and Washington still drink intoxicating liquors whenever so inclined, as they always will, whether women vote [for prohibition legislation] or not."[45] In fact, she worried that prohibition might exacerbate alcohol consumption and, subsequently, lead to more domestic disputes and abuse. If prohibition made the sale

---

39 Abigail Scott Duniway, *Path Breaking: An Autobiographical History of the Equal Suffrage Movement in Pacific Coast States* (Portland, OR: James, Kern, and Abbot, 1914), 95.
40 Abigail Scott Duniway, "Ballots and Bullets," Washington, D.C., 1889, https://asduniway.org/%E2%80%9Cballots-and-bullets%E2%80%9D-circa-january-21-23-1889/.
41 Duniway, *Path Breaking*, 136, 288.
42 Duniway, *Path Breaking*, 136.
43 Duniway, *Path Breaking*, 69, 95.
44 Duniway, *Path Breaking*, 69, 95.
45 Duniway, "Ballots and Bullets."

and purchase of alcohol illegal, Duniway knew that it would still be obtained, yet in an unregulated and potentially dangerous manner. At the Idaho Constitutional Convention of 1889, in her passionate "Equal Rights for All" speech, Duniway explained how prohibition may worsen domestic life, stating "You may cover the slum and slime with a prohibition plaster; but, be the plaster ever so strong, the virus will still exude; or, worse still, it will burrow deep and yet deeper into hidden places, marking its track by increased desolation and death."[46] Because Duniway believed that prohibition would not realistically reduce alcoholism rates, she considered it better to keep alcohol use in the open, rather than pushing it underground, where it could be harder to control and put more women at risk.

For Duniway, the campaign to ban alcohol threatened to violate personal liberties and male autonomy. In turn, this posed a significant risk to the suffrage movement because it advocated for the exact thing that suffrage tried to prevent. Women's desire for equal rights and suffrage stemmed from a desire for personal, political, and economic autonomy. Fathers and husbands had always acted as decision-makers for women, so women wanted the ability to make their own decisions in every aspect of their lives. The hypocrisy of simultaneously advocating for women's autonomy while trying to limit men's autonomy, albeit in different ways, likely would have angered men and, more importantly, violated the principles of the suffrage movement. Duniway thought this directly contradicted the goals of the suffrage movement. She stated her belief at the 1889 Idaho Constitutional Convention, and again in 1900, that prohibition "binds" and "strike[s] down other people's liberties" while suffrage "liberates."[47] She further described this view, explaining that "Every attempt of men to prohibit economic rights for women has ever since increased my feeling of opposition to any sort of prohibition which would destroy the moral responsibility, or individual right to self-control in any man or woman."[48] Duniway believed that everyone, regardless of gender, should have a right to self-government.[49] While there are strategic

---

[46] Abigail Scott Duniway, "Equal Rights for All," Boise, ID, 1889, https://asduniway.org/%E2%80%9Cequal-rights-for-all%E2%80%9D-july-17-1889/; Duniway, "Path Breaking," 139.
[47] Duniway, *Path Breaking*, 136, 288.
[48] Duniway, *Path Breaking*, 62.
[49] Duniway, "Equal Rights for All."

reasons for why Duniway opposed prohibition, which will be described below, she also simply had a moral, or even philosophical, opposition to restricting anyone's autonomy in any way.

Beyond having concerns about autonomy, Duniway worried about the potential negative responses that prohibition would elicit from men. Steadfast advocacy for prohibition by organizations like the WCTU and by members of the suffrage movement made it clear to men that women would quickly vote to make the sale and purchase of alcohol illegal if they had the right to vote. Because this felt like an encroachment on their personal liberties, many men began to criticize and renounce support for the suffrage movement. In fact, male opposition was the primary reason why suffrage legislation often failed. Duniway realized that if this resentment continued, men would continue to strike down proposed women's suffrage legislation. In her 1889 "Ballots and Bullets" speech, she illustrated the point, saying: "Whenever our demand for our right to vote is based upon an alleged purpose to take away from men any degree of what they deem their liberties, or own right of choice, we simply throw boomerangs that recoil upon our own heads."[50] Hence, to protect the movement's reputation, Duniway strategically distanced her Pacific Northwest branch of the suffrage movement from the prohibition movement. In *Path Breaking*, her autobiography published in 1914, she highlighted the dangers of supporting prohibition and facing retaliation from men:

> I wish I might convince every man in this convention that the majority of women realize, as keenly as you do, the fact that every woman who sits behind the prison bars of her present political environment, lifting her manacled hands to men and saying, "Give us the ballot and we'll put down your whisky," is not only telling a falsehood (since all the force of bullets, to say naught of ballots, could never do it unless men should voluntarily put it down themselves), but actually offers to most men the strongest possible inducement to answer, "Very well! We'll see that you don't get the ballot at all, if you intend to use it as a whip! We don't propose to let women carry a whip hand over us!"

[50] Duniway, "Ballots and Bullets."

[51] Here, Duniway reveals that both men and women alike recognize that tying suffrage to prohibition would alienate men. However, interestingly, Duniway appears to be one of the only suffragists who took this issue into account when forming her political strategy. While historians do not have data to directly support whether or not Duniway's strategy of distancing suffrage from prohibition increased male support, we can assume that it did help, especially because the Oregon State Woman Suffrage Association and Washington Woman Suffrage Association had a significant number of male members.[52]

Duniway also worried that support for prohibition would incite retaliation from the liquor lobby, which had significant political and economic power in the late nineteenth century.[53] During the rise of temperance, many suffrage activists remained hopeful, expecting the prohibition movement to reinforce the women's suffrage movement. However, this did not prove to be the case. The liquor lobby knew, as men did, that women's enfranchisement would quickly and drastically decrease the number of liquor sales.[54] Out of self-preservation, they fought against women's suffrage.[55] Later in her career, at the 1914 Progressive Party Luncheon, Duniway illustrated this point by stating that "After the church began to learn that it might use woman suffrage as a shortcut to prohibition, it began to stand in a way for [sic] the enfranchisement of women, thus eliminating one class of prohibition, and in its idea I began to see another element come up to oppose us, and that was called the liquor [lobby]."[56] Specifically, Duniway worried that members of the liquor lobby would vote against prohibition legislation so that their votes would overwhelm any votes in favor of suffrage, and the lobby would pressure legislatures to do the same.[57] This would likely defeat proposed suffrage acts or statutes. Not only did the liquor lobby fight against suffrage legislation, but it also tried to discredit women and the suffrage movement.[58] In the July 31, 1874 issue of *The New Northwest*, Duniway gave an example of this by

[51] Duniway, *Path Breaking*, 136.
[52] Ward, "Abigail Scott Duniway."
[53] Mead, *How the Vote Was Won*, 28.
[54] "Voting Rights for Women, Women's Suffrage."
[55] Mead, *How the Vote Was Won*, 28.
[56] Abigail Scott Duniway, "Progressive Party Luncheon," 1914, https://asduniway.org/progressive-party-luncheon-february-25-1914/.
[57] Jenson, "Woman Suffrage in Oregon."
[58] Mead, *How the Vote Was Won*, 48.

describing how women, when trying to fight for prohibition legislation, "were made targets for coarse wit, rude sneers, and almost brutal violence [from those] who carried the day for the whisky interests."[59] Duniway, recognizing this clash of interests, strategically chose not to give her support to prohibition and risk increasing the liquor lobby's opposition to women's suffrage. While this decision did not significantly reduce retaliation from the Pacific Northwest's liquor lobby, fear of retaliation nevertheless constituted one of the primary reasons why Duniway aimed to separate suffrage from prohibition.

Duniway's campaign to empower women to vote holds importance because it reveals division and political diversity within the larger women's suffrage movement. Suffragists did not speak with a unified voice, contrary to what many historians have believed. Different branches of the suffrage movement acted independently, rather than as one homogeneous unit. This research not only gives us insight into the suffrage movement, but also may reveal a deeper pattern about political movements in general. Although organized political movements often fight against common grievances and for the same reforms, they often have internal disagreements about how to do so effectively. This might lead different branches or activists within a specific movement to use different political strategies. In addition to the women's suffrage and broader feminist movement, we see this pattern, for example, in the United States civil rights movement. While the entire movement fought to abolish racial segregation and discrimination, activists and organizations within the movement often disagreed on what methods would be the most successful, such as peaceful versus violent tactics.

Historians often struggle to numerically measure the exact degree of success and influence that political movements have. That holds true for Duniway's strategic opposition to prohibition. However, many historians agree that her decision to distance suffrage and prohibition had a helpful effect on the fight for women's suffrage in the Pacific Northwest. Even Carrie Chapman Catt, an early-twentieth-century

[59] *The New Northwest*, Portland, OR, July 31, 1874, Historic Oregon Newspapers, https://oregonnews.uoregon.edu/lccn/sn84022673/.

president of the National American Woman Suffrage Association and supporter of prohibition, conceded that "had there been no prohibition movement in the United States, the women would have been enfranchised two generations before they were."[60] The Pacific Northwest included many of the first states to enfranchise women, which indicates that the suffrage campaigns in this region, including Duniway's, were more effective than their counterparts elsewhere.

After Oregon enfranchised women in 1912, Duniway became the first female registered voter in the state, only a few years before she died.[61] Oregon gave Duniway this honor as a way to thank her for dedicating her life to suffrage activism. Duniway expressed how meaningful this gesture was to her, stating, "I am so happy that now in the sunset of my life my fondest dream is beginning to be realized."[62] This significant honor by the state of Oregon itself indicates that Duniway's suffrage campaign had great influence and employed successful political strategies that achieved significant results.

The 19th Amendment passed Congress in 1919, four years after Duniway's death. Although suffrage became a national law in 1920, it was not ratified by all 50 states until decades later, in 1984, when Mississippi finally ratified the 19th Amendment. This marked nationwide suffrage for women in the United States. Without the efforts of Duniway and her fellow suffragists, this feat would never have been achieved. Because Abigail Scott Duniway helped lead the suffrage movement with intelligent strategies, including opposing prohibition, millions of women in the United States now possess greater political, economic, and social equality. Her legacy calls attention to the importance of strategic political activism.

---

[60] Carrie Chapman Catt and Nettie Rogers Shuler, *Woman Suffrage and Politics* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1923), 279, quoted in Moynihan, "Rebel for Rights," 209.
[61] Lewis, *Uprising*, 25.
[62] "Pioneer Oregon Suffragist Is Happy," *Oregon Journal*, October 11, 1912, quoted in Lewis, "Uprising," 25.

Bibliography

“Abigail Scott Duniway Registering to Vote.” OHS Digital Collections, Oregon Historical Society, OrgLot139_4603. https://digitalcollections.ohs.org/abigail-scott-duniway-registering-to-vote.

Duniway, Abigail Scott. “Ballots and Bullets.” Washington, D.C., 1889. https://asduniway.org/%E2%80%9Cballots-and-bullets%E2%80%9D-circa-january-21-23-1889/.

Duniway, Abigail Scott. “Equal Rights for All.” Boise, ID, 1889. https://asduniway.org/%E2%80%9Cequal-rights-for-all%E2%80%9D-july-17-1889/.

Duniway, Abigail Scott. *Path Breaking: An Autobiographical History of the Equal Suffrage Movement in Pacific Coast States*. Portland, OR: James, Kern, and Abbot, 1914.

Duniway, Abigail Scott. “Progressive Party Luncheon.” 1914. https://asduniway.org/progressive-party-luncheon-february-25-1914/.

Giele, Janet Zollinger. *Two Paths to Women’s Equality: Temperance, Suffrage, and the Origins of Modern Feminism*. New York: Twayne Publishers, 1995.

Jenson, Kimberly. “Woman Suffrage in Oregon.” https://www.oregonencyclopedia.org/articles/woman_suffrage_in_oregon/.

Lewis, Tiffany. *Uprising: How Women Used the US West to Win the Right to Vote*. East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2021.

Mead, Rebecca. *How the Vote Was Won: Woman Suffrage in the Western United States, 1868–1914*. New York: New York University Press, 2004.

Moynihan, Ruth Barnes. *Rebel for Rights: Abigail Scott Duniway*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983.

Stone, Jason. “Portland, New Northwest.” https://odnp.uoregon.edu/portland-new-northwest/.

The New Northwest. Portland, OR, 1871–1887. Historic Oregon Newspapers. https://oregonnews.uoregon.edu/lccn/sn84022673/.

“Voting Rights for Women, Women’s Suffrage.” Washington Secretary of State. https://www2.sos.wa.gov/elections/timeline/suffrage.htm.

Ward, Jean M. “Abigail Scott Duniway (1835–1915).” https://www.oregonencyclopedia.org/articles/abigail_scott_duniway/.

“Women’s Christian Temperance Union.” VCU Libraries Social Welfare History Project. https://socialwelfare.library.vcu.edu/religious/womens-christian-temperance-union/.

Warm Springs: A Tribe, A Reservation, A Nation

Faye Dingman

George Aguilar was the eighth member of his nation. In 1937, a young Aguilar was granted as member No. 0008 of the Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation.[1] He was not the eighth ever person in these tribes, most of whom have existed since time immemorial. Yet in the eyes of both a new Confederation and the older United States, he is officially one of the first to be counted. In the same year, a youthful George would begin attending the Warm Springs Indian Boarding School. Here he began to play into two systems—the school and the American. He learned some English, slowly losing his connection and ability to speak his native language, Klickitat Sahaptin. George also knew a bit of Wasco, a language spoken by many, but not all people in the reservation he grew up on.[2] Upon entering the school premises, his *wix'qam laplklalii* (hightop buckskin moccasins) were taken off his feet.[3] School rules, you have to play them. To be more "White" his Grandma-made calico shirt was snatched and some overalls patched together with some buckskin were the replacement.[4] A symbolic motif to retain some element of his cultural and familial background while working within the school's dress code. George was half-Filipino from his father and the other half was a mix of various Indigenous groups such as Cascade, Konnaach Tchunks, Wasco, Klickitat, and Tenino.[5] His ethnic background might be confusing to those who assumed he was just "Warm Springs" and that the Reservation was a monoethnic state.

Alas, this simplistic, often-American view is problematic and fails to recognize the complexity of Tribal identity. In 1937, an official status and name change for his home would symbolize an attempt to better

---

1 George Aguilar, *When the River Ran Wild! Indian Traditions on the Mid-Columbia and the Warm Springs Reservation* (Portland: Oregon Historical Society Press, 2005), xiv.
2 Aguilar, "When the River Ran Wild!" xiv.
3 Aguilar, "When the River Ran Wild!" xiv.
4 Aguilar, "When the River Ran Wild!" xii.
5 Aguilar, "When the River Ran Wild!" xii.

promote the welfare of residents like himself. No longer did he live on the Warm Springs Reservation but now would be a part of the *Confederated Tribes* of the Warm Springs Reservation of Oregon. The three Confederated tribes are the Wasco, Warm Springs, and Paiutes. Still, he was not yet a member of this new nation. It was a struggle for his caretaker to be able to find official documents proving his ethnic identity, which was required to gain membership status.[6] Based on the new rulebook, you had to prove that you belonged. His parents' and grandmother's residency was not enough. Nor was his existence sufficient enough. Instead, a foreign government has determined that you must follow it with written, legal documents. Now, he was the eighth member. George noted how 1937 was a symbolic yet also tangibly pivotal time in his life. His connection to his family and culture, his homeland, and his own identity would be forever changed by outside forces.

Modern Indigenous political and cultural identity stems from the American rendition of the Indigenous question. That is, policymakers asking what "should" the U.S. Federal government do in regards to Native people across the continent? Should they be eliminated or allowed to live within our system or left to exist independently? The responses to these questions would float through the heads of politicians and academics, morphing with time and context. When looking at modern Indigenous nations, it is clear to see that their existence, sovereignty, and relationship to the U.S. has been shaped by the leading political thought throughout time. As such, the Confederation of the Warm Springs Reservation of Oregon has multiple "starting" points—some members would say they have always existed, others point to the 1855 Treaty in which the Wasco and Warm Springs people ceded 100 million acres of land in exchange for the borders still seen today.[7] Yet these periods have some flaws. Time immemorial fails to recognize the modern reality of Indigenous life, with lifeways and government systems unfortunately different to those of the past. For example, in 1855 the Paiutes were still historic adversaries of the Warm Springs tribe and not official partners of a

---

[6] "History," Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs, 2021, https://warmsprings-nsn.gov/history/.

[7] Michael Baughman and Charlotte Hadella, *Warm Springs Millennium: Voices from the Reservation* (University of Texas Press, 2010), 15.

shared Reservation.[8] This fact also speaks to the failures of 1855 as a starting point as only two of the three tribes are included. An unclear starting point is far from a rarity in Indigenous history, yet subsequent decades would lead to a more identifiable, political pivot point.

The creation of the 1937 Constitution and By-Laws is often left out as the starting point of Warm Springs. This is despite the fact that this document created the legal and official framework for the Confederation to self-rule. It is a tangible yet symbolic answer that the Warm Springs and U.S. governments agreed upon to address the Warm Springs question. The Constitution grants the Tribes to have its own chosen form of government representation, various government agencies, and precedent to protect the use of their land and water for themselves and not for white Americans. The creation of the 1937 Constitution paradoxically established official Indigenous self-rule while also conceding into the U.S. system. This ultimately created the modern political and cultural understanding of the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs Reservation of Oregon. It formalized the tribes as a sovereign entity, yet also further formalized its cooperative relationship as a part under the oversight of the United States. The 1937 Constitution would legally formalize the territory boundaries, the system of government, who was a member, and overall created a keystone document that has been necessary in creating the Confederacy seen today. This essay will examine the historic and political climate that led to creation of the Constitution, what its aim and policies are, and the lasting impacts seen in subsequent decades.

As previously seen with the unclear creation date, “Warm Springs” itself as a label has changed due to evolving political ideas and values of accurate inclusion. This extends to language for Indigenous people more broadly. The last few decades has shown a rise in controversy and an increased awareness of what terms one should use. Indigenous identity is incredibly vast and complex, and one word fails to adequately address all. Most historians and Indigenous people prefer specific languages, such as Warm Springs or Wasco when applicable. Terms such as *Indigenous*, *Native*, and *Tribal* are also generally accepted as broader descriptors. *Indian* is a mostly outdated term other than as a legal identity and in official document and agency

[8] Census Reporter, “Census Profile: Warm Springs Reservation,” 2024, https://censusreporter.org/profiles/25200US4545R-warm-springs-reservation/; Baughman and Hadella, “Warm Springs Millennium,” 48.

titles. Focusing back to Warm Springs, there is a lack of consensus on what term to refer to the nation as a whole. Is it a *nation*? Yes, but also it is a *confederacy* and a *domestic dependent territory* and a *reservation*. However, one does not fully comprehend all aspects of Warm Springs from that nonexhaustive list. Someone like George might have one idea, while the Secretary of the Interior may have another. The valuing of whose opinion to prefer has similarly swayed throughout history. This essay will attempt to utilize varied yet mindful language to speak to the relative ambiguity of this nation within a nation.

Looking to today, the Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation is currently home to between 3,000 and 3,800 people, with a few hundred members living outside its borders.[9] This nation is a sovereign entity created to fit into the existing U.S. legal and geographical framework. The Confederacy has their own government, police force, and a hydroelectric company.[10] It exists in a similar sovereignty limbo that many other—yet not all—Indigenous nations have with the United States. Warm Springs is a nation, but in an awkward seminal space within another. There is a Constitution and an independent government, yet it has been "allowed" to be sovereign under the U.S.'s approval. It is quite paradoxical for a nation's constitution to need to be signed off by a government official from another foreign nation. Yet for the scores of Indigenous nations, reservations, and territories within the U.S. this is often the reality faced. Warm Springs is merely one answer to the Indigenous question about modern sovereignty. Many other nations have acted in similar ways with others and have made entirely different decisions to achieve their definition of sovereignty. So, is it really self-rule if an outsider grants you that power? The varying forms of Warm Springs have chosen a compromising approach to self-rule with an asterisk. While it may not be fully sovereign, like most widely understood countries, the people of Warm Springs still exist and govern their own land and people. When the historical context of the American genocide of Indigenous people is applied, it is easier to understand why Warm Springs officials made decisions that may seem flawed with a modern lens. While Warm Springs always had to give up key concessions in

9 Baughman and Hadella, "Warm Springs Millennium," 19.
10 Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs, "The People's Plan: A Comprehensive Plan for the Year 2020" (1999), 4.

negotiations it was in exchange for safety, keeping the future in mind. Compared to most Indigenous societies, these three tribes have experienced general peace with the United States, perhaps influenced by their desire to compromise. As such, the creation of the Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation speaks to the history the nation has had with the United States. Treaties are compromises. Some land versus potential none. Some protections versus potentially none. Some status to live and hunt and protect oneself versus likely none. Hundreds of years ago these separate and sometimes feuding tribes would have likely never chosen this path to a more modern nation-state with a formalized government based in written, legal doctrine with each other. Yet that is where they find themselves today, fighting for an imperfect solution trying to solve an unsolvable issue. The threat of community and lifeway erasures is what led to careful considerations when accepting second place from the enemy.

It is important to understand the history of treaties between the United States government and the many tribes that have called the Warm Springs Reservation home. 1855 is the most important year in the history of the Reservation era. It marked the first treaty in which Wasco and Warm Springs people collaborated and partnered with the United States. They conceded 10 million acres of land around the Columbia basin they had used for various purposes since time before memory. All in exchange for a shared 600,000-acre plot of land in North Central Oregon.[11] A compromise that would indicate a distinct shift in “ability and access [to] hunting, gathering, and fighting” for residents.[12] This time period would often be denoted as the “Early Days of The Reservation,” serving for many as the founding document and inception point of Warm Springs as a Reservation,[13] which was importantly not yet a confederated nation. The treaty gave the Wasco and Warm Springs cultures their own land allotments to share amongst members. These tribes had some limited contact with each other trading goods, yet different languages prevented a closer connection. Yet, when forced with the option to risk everything to keep everything or recognize the impending future and accept something,

11 Baughman and Hadella, “Warm Springs Millennium,” 14.

12 James Nason, “Review of Community and Continuity, The Museum at Warm Springs,” *American Anthropologist* 96, no. 2 (1994): 494.

13 Aguilar, “When the River Ran Wild!” 18.

their decision was made. They accepted the plea deal and would formalize a relationship not only with the U.S. Department of the Interior but also leaders and members of the other tribe. The decision to compromise and work with the U.S. Federal government would set a key precedent in Warm Springs political history. In many ways it allowed for them to continue living as closely to the ways they lived before white contact, while still accepting the power and influence of the United States. This concession also ensured a relatively peaceful and cooperative dynamic between the two entities. However, this treaty decision also speaks to the larger and unequal power balance the U.S. often displayed in legal compromises with Indigenous societies. It was their game, their rules, and itself who kept all players accountable. Not surprising, the U.S. would then fail to deliver many of their treaty promises of food, clothes, and money guaranteed to the people of Warm Springs. Entire families were given just one cup of flour for a year's worth of rations.[14] Yet, Warm Springs had no power to fight back, showing the political weakness of the Reservation at the time. This was intentional, a way to weaken Indigenous societies. This was the mid-nineteenth-century answer to the Indigenous question that would compound in further decades.

Seven years after the Northern Paiutes joined the Warm Springs and Wasco in the Reservation, the U.S. passed the General Allotment Act of 1887. Better known as the Dawes Act, this piece of legislation was an explicit attempt to disrupt the Indigenous practice of collective land by applying a system of individual land parcels to Native people.[15] This Act indicates a furthering of the Indigenous solution seen in 1855. The U.S. wanted to encourage assimilation into the American system, now with the updated focus on land ownership to farm. The Dawes Act failed to assess Indigenous people, in Warm Springs and elsewhere, generally preferring hunting, grazing, and nomadic moving as opposed to farming for their food systems.[16] This policy was flawed in recognizing the desires of the people it controlled, a common throughline in Native-U.S. policies.[17] This era also established a

[14] Baughman and Hadella, "Warm Springs Millennium," 19.

[15] Floyd A. O'Neil, Alvin M. Josephy, and E. Richard Hart, "The Indian New Deal: An Overview," in "Indian Self Rule: First-Hand Accounts of Indian-White Relations from Roosevelt to Reagan," ed. Kenneth R. Philp (University Press of Colorado, 1986), 32.

[16] O'Neil, Josephy, and Hart, "The Indian New Deal: An Overview," 30.

[17] M. Annette Jaimes, *The State of Native America: Genocide, Colonization, and Resistance* (South End Press, 1992), 77–79.

decades-long era of relative political clarity on what the United States should do with Warm Springs and other Reservations and people groups.

In the early 1930s, in a turbulent time in American history, the political consensus swayed in favor of self-rule for Indigenous societies. Ideas of self-determination as a human right were on the rise, yet not fully acknowledged until after WWII.[18] These concepts would increasingly be argued in reference to Native people by Commissioner of Indian Affairs, John Collier at this time.[19] Beyond Tribal governmental and societal reforms, Collier also had well-intentioned goals of "rehabilitat[ing]" Indigenous land and "preserving and actively promoting" Indigenous culture.[20] His political momentum would lead to several federal policy changes encompassed under the label of the "Indian New Deal." Themes of self-rule and economic development would become key aspects of this movement.[21] Like the New Deal itself, Collier helped usher in policies aimed at increasing Indigenous employment such as supporting artisans and commissioning work relief projects.[22] Yet the controversy surrounding this policy came with some saying this was just a colonial switch as now "[t]he Indian was to become a worker instead of a farmer."[23] Regardless of this contention, the Indian New Deal is not primarily referenced for its economic policies.

The Indian Relocation Act (IRA) of 1934 was the "most significant legislative accomplishment" of the Indian New Deal and is widely seen as the most relevant and consequential policy.[24] The act granted Reservations and Indigenous communities the right to self-rule by establishing constitutions, laws, and governments that would create "domestic dependent nations" within the U.S.[25] Despite the lofty ambitions of Collier, the IRA would get watered down by Congress.

---

18 Jaimes, "The State of Native America," 77–79.

19 Lawrence C. Kelly, "The Indian Reorganization Act: The Dream and the Reality," *Pacific Historical Review* 44, no. 3 (1975): 292.

20 Kelly, "The Indian Reorganization Act," 291–312.

21 Tony Tekaroniake Evans, "What Was FDR's 'Indian New Deal'?" History.com, 2025, https://www.history.com/articles/indian-reorganization-act-1934-new-deal-effects.

22 Clayton R. Koppes, "From New Deal to Termination: Liberalism and Indian Policy, 1933–1953," *Pacific Historical Review* 46, no. 4 (1977): 559.

23 Kelly, "The Indian Reorganization Act," 293.

24 "Tribal Sovereignty in the United States," Wikipedia, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tribal_sovereignty_in_the_United_States.

25 Kelly, "The Indian Reorganization Act," 297.

The final version no longer actively promoted Indigenous culture, had weaker Indigenous courts, and the option—not a mandatory requirement—to give land ownership to Tribal governments.[26] Additionally, Indigenous societies in Oklahoma would be exempt from the IRA due to frequent opposition to the policy. Collier's work and the Indian New Deal have always been incredibly controversial both by Indigenous nations at the time and historians today for what it guaranteed and for what was missing.

"Federal Indian Policy, 1933–1945" provides a handful of mixed historian perspectives on the IRA. Rupert Costo claims it was "the last great drive to assimilate the American Indians" with Kenneth R. Philp highlighting the unpopularity amongst the nations, some of which signed the Act.[27] Benjamin Reifel defends the motivations as a path to freedom and benefits such as increased college attendance rates.[28] Daven Warren agrees, noting it also marked the end of the Dawes Act era.[29] This book successfully captures the widespread controversy and array of opinions intellectuals have had over this policy. Yet academic historians were not the only ones to have differing takes.

The United States government currently recognizes 567 Indigenous tribes.[30] In the early 1930s, a total of 252 recognized tribes chose to participate in IRA negotiations. That number would get condensed into 174 voting members, as frequently smaller tribes would join together, as seen in Warm Springs. Of the 174 Tribal parties only 92 would agree to establish an IRA-approved constitution and government. And of the 92 who did accept, including Warm Springs, no two constitutions nor nations were the same. Thus the IRA's biggest flaws are revealed. This one-size-fits-all approach would again fail to be agreeable to the majority of Indigenous people. Even those who did agree had unique and differing language, goals, and protections. Warm Springs is still just one nation, and one that jumped through all the hoops to achieve an approved level of sovereignty within the U.S. It

---

26 Rupert Costo et al., "Federal Indian Policy, 1933–1945," in "Indian Self Rule," ed. Philp, 48, 58–60.

27 Costo et al., "Federal Indian Policy," 54.

28 Costo et al., "Federal Indian Policy," 60.

29 Anne F. Boxberger Flaherty, *States, American Indian Nations, and Intergovernmental Politics: Sovereignty, Conflict, and the Uncertainty of Taxes* (Abingdon, Oxon, UK: Routledge, 2018), 8.

30 Melissa L. Tatum et al., *Structuring Sovereignty: Constitutions of Native Nations* (Los Angeles, CA: American Indian Studies Center, 2014), 18.

provides just one example of the potential new solutions to the Indigenous question in 1934. Yet this is not the only path to self-rule. The two largest tribes, Cherokee and Navajo Nation, do not have IRA Constitutions. The Navajo government has always been wary of the U.S. government and cooperating with it, while the Cherokee once under the IRA rule yet democratically chose to abandon the oversight of the Department of the Interior.[31] Therefore, the modern understanding of an Indigenous nation is incredibly murky, complex, and debated. The U.S. asks who does and does not count based on who cooperates with it.[32] Indigenous governments have questioned what options they have, and how much involvement from the U.S. they can afford to be comfortable with. So while this period marks a shift in the political understanding of Indigenous sovereignty and rights, it is also just another example of the oversimplified federal policies that falter under the complexity of Indigeneity. The Indigenous question simply cannot have one answer. Still, the IRA provides a potential legal and political solution to try and nail down Indigenous sovereignty yet it ended up creating even more possibilities and permutations. It was this shift, however, that led to the modern Warm Springs Confederacy we see today. The 1937 Warm Springs Constitution was born directly out of the political framework to achieve sovereignty laid out by the IRA in 1934. This provides another layer to the history of relative cooperation and proactive negotiations between the government of Warm Springs due to the coercive policies of the United States. Like in 1855, Warm Springs was willing to work within the American system, albeit with a critical and fearful eye that now focused more on its own interests. The Warm Springs, Wasco, and Paiute tribes were given the IRA Constitution and although they were skeptical, they still agreed to what was presented to them.[33] While consistent with past decisions this agreement importantly marked the establishment of an official nation-to-nation relationship.[34]

---

31 Department of the Interior, “Department of Interior’s Indigenous Knowledge Handbook” (2024), 20.

32 Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs, “The People’s Plan,” 10; “History,” Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs, 2021, https://warmsprings-nsn.gov/history/.

33 Flaherty, “States, American Indian Nations, and Intergovernmental Politics,” 81.

34 United States Office of Indian Affairs, “Constitution and By-Laws of the Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation of Oregon: Approved February 14, 1938,” 12.

The creation of the Constitution and By-Laws of the Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation of Oregon in 1937 is incredibly significant as the specific, modern answer to the Indigenous self-rule question for the three tribes. This document formalized and reorganized the Reservation into a confederated nation in the eyes of the U.S. government and the Tribal members. Now in place were governmental structure outlines as well as legal precedent and protections for self-rule, albeit under the Americanized view of nationhood. In order to finally be able to exist freely, Warm Springs officials chose to play within the system and be under the supervision of the U.S. Federal government. So, alas they were not truly free, nor fully sovereign. Although it was likely a better alternative to full-scale cultural erasure and potential genocide or forced assimilation. As a foundational document to the creation of this Confederacy it is important to analyze the specific language of the Constitution to understand the motivations and protections ascribed within.

To start the analysis, it is important to clarify that this is a U.S. document from the Department of the Interior, created and sent to be approved by Warm Springs officials. It was originally drafted in 1937, and would not be formally adopted until 1938. Still, 1937 is understood to be the pivotal year in which the modern nation was created. It needed approval and signatures from the Commissioner of Indian Affairs of the Department of the Interior and three Tribal leadership positions.[35] It also needed approval of 30 percent of eligible Warm Springs voters.[36] The preamble opens with the motivations of this document: "to establish a more responsible and effective organization to promote our general welfare, conserve…our lands and resources…"[37] The aims were to help the people of Warm Springs. Legal protections and sovereign rule with control of land, water, and food. However in the same empowering sentence, the language must recognize the paradoxical nature of their sovereignty. The line continues: "…and our posterity the power to exercise certain rights of self-government not inconsistent with existing Federal and State laws…"[38] The American influence needed to remind the people of the true nature of how Warm Springs operated as a nation within another. The national government

35 United States Office of Indian Affairs, "Constitution and By-Laws," 11.
36 United States Office of Indian Affairs, "Constitution and By-Laws," 1.
37 United States Office of Indian Affairs, "Constitution and By-Laws," 1.
38 United States Office of Indian Affairs, "Constitution and By-Laws," 1.

must comply and exist within the U.S. and Oregon legal frameworks. Is this even true sovereignty? It is but because the United States allows it to be. This message is not unique to the opening paragraph, but is rather an early instance of the explicit reminder littered throughout the Constitution.

Act I furthers the objectives, detailing goals establishing the right to create and enforce laws as well as preserve land and homes for the people's livelihoods. Here the policymakers once more explain the inherent contradiction of this political creation: "with the aid of the [U.S.] Federal Government, a form of home rule" was established.[39] The U.S. is depicted as a helpful, father-like figure, a common motif in U.S.–Indigenous relations,[40] to establish the creation of a new self-led nation. Moving to Act III establishes membership status, an official rule on who is and is not included as a Tribal member. Those who were at least a quarter "Indian," or children of a member, were counted.[41] That was the act that made a young George Aguilar the eighth ever official member due to his ethnic background. Importantly, this act also grants the Confederacy, not the U.S. government, the ability to dictate who is and who is not a member and the power to revoke membership, a key difference from previous eras. This is an example of the explicit, legal rights granted to the people of Warm Springs by the Constitution. Act IV is also incredibly important. It provides an outline of the government with 11 members in the Tribal Council: three Tribal chiefs for the three main tribes, and two or three District Representatives for the three administrative regions within the Confederacy.[42] It also declares the term limits (life for Tribal chiefs, three years for representatives), a voting age of 21, and percentages needed for actions like impeachment or recalled elections.[43] Overall, this key act grants democratic powers and self-rule based on a hybrid system that combines elements of historic practices and American democratic values and direct representation. Another act that closely mirrors the influence of the U.S. is Act VII: The Bill of Rights. Here concepts such as freedom of speech, press, and assembly as well as

[39] Francis Paul Prucha, *The Great Father: The United States Government and the American Indians* (University of Nebraska Press, 1984).
[40] United States Office of Indian Affairs, "Constitution and By-Laws," 1–2.
[41] United States Office of Indian Affairs, "Constitution and By-Laws," 2–3.
[42] United States Office of Indian Affairs, "Constitution and By-Laws," 2–3.
[43] United States Office of Indian Affairs, "Constitution and By-Laws," 5–6.

economic opportunities and just trials bear a striking resemblance to the U.S. Bill of Rights.[44] Once more this document is a mix of U.S. government demands as well as the interests of the Warm Springs people and leaders. Act VII highlights how these desires may not all be opposing, but rather have an agreeable overlap. The American framework's influence is certainly strong, but Warm Springs policymakers also wanted protections such as these in their Constitution. Act VIII deals with land protections, granting ownership to the people currently owning and residing on it. This is a central act, taking up the most space and explicitly mentioning the "United States" as a potential separate national entity.[45] Nonmembers are explicitly barred from purchasing, trading, or acquiring Warm Springs land unless approved by the Tribal Council.[46] Article IX deals with the process of adding amendments, notably requiring the approval of the Secretary of the Interior, a politician of a separate government.

Finally, the By-Laws outline the roles of the more American-influenced positions of President and Vice President that would later be weakened in favor of the Tribal Council. Beyond roles, the By-Laws also put certain guardrails and requirements on government officials such as salary caps and no conflict of interests in political meetings.[47] Oaths are also required, once more an example of a more American political tradition being imposed over the history of the three tribes of the Confederacy.[48]

So, the Constitution and By-Laws is an important symbolic, legal, and pivotal document that encapsulates the political relationships between Warm Springs and the United States. The compromising spirit shows both a willingness to cooperate yet distinct ideas of self-rule. Thus, it speaks to the history of the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs as a whole. It formalized this history and cemented its future as a nation with home rule aided by the Federal government. Warm Springs is merely one of scores of Indigenous nations with a similarly confusing definition of sovereignty that is foreign to most other countries in the world. Yet, this Constitution has been upheld for

[44] United States Office of Indian Affairs, "Constitution and By-Laws," 1.
[45] United States Office of Indian Affairs, "Constitution and By-Laws," 6–9.
[46] United States Office of Indian Affairs, "Constitution and By-Laws," 9–10.
[47] United States Office of Indian Affairs, "Constitution and By-Laws," 9–10.
[48] Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs, "The People's Plan," 11.

nearly 100 years. It still influences and directs policy, business, and the everyday lives of Warm Springs members.

The first policy based on the sovereign precedent established by the Constitution in 1937 was the Corporate Charter in the same year. The Charter outlines specific details about how Warm Springs was able to establish itself as a corporate entity, with rights and protections. While still subject to the approval of the Secretary of the Interior, it outlined attributes like perpetual succession, membership inclusion, and corporate dividends later used in 1942.[49] Not only is this document notable for the content, but it is also significant for building off the Warm Springs Constitution as a furthering of the economic rights and protections of the Confederacy. The Corporate Charter needed the Constitution to be implemented first as this kind of legislation simply had no legal precedent before 1937. Thus, the Constitution reveals an important shift in the political sovereignty of Warm Springs. While not fully divorced from the U.S. Federal government, the Confederacy was now able to develop its own economic potential based on its own founding documents.

Some minor amendments have been made in the subsequent decades after the creation of the Constitution. Diction in Act III such as "Indian blood" was switched to "blood of the Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation of Oregon" to add a level of clarity and to move away from the American exonym.[50] Still, the term "Indian" was not unilaterally changed, a reminder of the lasting impact of the American influence on Warm Springs policy. Beyond other minor syntax and diction switches, most amendments dealt with the wages of Tribal Council politicians.[51] Here is a case of the system working. With time, the value of money changes and the Tribal Council and the Secretary of the Interior have successfully worked together a small handful of times to increase the budget on wages. However, this relationship was never fully mutually wanted. Consequently, the Secretary of the Interior, and effectively the United States government, would be removed in the 1992 Warm Springs Declaration

[49] Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs, "Constitution and By-Laws of the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs as Amended" (1992), 12–13, https://warmsprings-nsn.gov/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/const.pdf.

[50] Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs, "Constitution and By-Laws as Amended," 15–27.

[51] Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs, "The People's Plan," 11.

of Sovereignty. This indicated a shift from the more passive relationship with the U.S., to a more empowering, self-focused approach. Still, post-1937 and even post-1992 Warm Springs is still under the American imperial shadow. Despite this overhanging influence, most day-to-day economic and political endeavors had been divorced from the American model and are run through the Warm Springs government.

The relationship, both official and informal, between the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs and the U.S. has changed frequently throughout the last 200 years. However, the intellectual climate and ultimately the creation of the Constitution and By-Laws in 1937 marked the largest shift in the political, cultural, and legal understanding of Warm Springs today. In the decades after, several accomplishments have occurred due to the recognized status of the nation. These exist due to the role of government agencies and control established in 1937. From 1942 through 1967, the Warm Springs Forest Products Industries was a Warm Springs government-owned logging company.[52] Warm Springs is also home to the first Indigenous-owned dam with the Pelton Hydroelectric Project in 1955 and the subsequent Pelton Dam in 1983.[53] The profits of these endeavors would go back into the schools Warm Springs students use.[54] These state-run endeavors expanded Warm Springs power as its own nation, and not just a Reservation in the United States. Consequently, the early 1990s saw a massive legal win with the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs gaining full control over the previously contested McQuinn Strip as a part of its territory. Still, the U.S. reminds the Confederacy of its place. In 1957 the Dalles Dam, on the important cultural, economic, and food systems of the Dalles River was contested by the Tribal Council and members yet was still completed. So in 1992, the Tribal Council would declare the sovereignty of the nation, removing the role of the IRA and the Department of the Interior.

The decades after the Constitution was adopted have seen the status of Warm Springs questioned and challenged yet also solidified and expanded upon. 1937 is in many ways a continuation of previous patterns of confusing and ever-changing Warm Springs autonomous

52 Baughman and Hadella, “Warm Springs Millennium,” 19.
53 Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs, “The People’s Plan,” 12.
54 Baughman and Hadella, “Warm Springs Millennium,” 19.

status. The American legal approval and acceptance of the nation in 1937 allowed for independent economic projects and the vastly important Declaration of Sovereignty. It may not have guaranteed full sovereignty, but it paved the legal, cultural, and relational roads for the self-ruling Warm Springs nation seen today. Despite the drastic changes, members like George are generally happy with the political decisions that have allowed them to live as they do today. In the words of the Tribal Council, the Constitution and following decisions have been able to “preserve, protect, and strengthen our national sovereignty that has existed, along with our songs, dances, prayers, and longhouses, on the Columbia Plateau for countless generations.”

Bibliography

Aguilar, George. *When the River Ran Wild! Indian Traditions on the Mid-Columbia and the Warm Springs Reservation*. Portland: Oregon Historical Society Press, 2005.

Allen, Cain. “Replacing Salmon: Columbia River Indian Fishing Rights and the Geography of Fisheries Mitigation.” *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 104, no. 2 (2003). http://www.jstor.org/stable/20615319.

Baughman, Michael, and Charlotte Hadella. *Warm Springs Millennium: Voices from the Reservation*. University of Texas Press, 2010.

“Census Profile: Warm Springs Reservation.” Census Reporter, 2024. https://censusreporter.org/profiles/25200US4545R-warm-springs-reservation/.

Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs. “Constitution and By-Laws of the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs as Amended.” 1992. https://warmsprings-nsn.gov/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/const.pdf.

Costo, Rupert, Benjamin Reifel, Kenneth R. Philp, Dave Warren, Alfonso Ortiz, Floyd A. O’Neil, Alvin M. Josephy, and E. Richard Hart. “Federal Indian Policy, 1933–1945.” In *Indian Self Rule: First-Hand Accounts of Indian-White Relations from Roosevelt to Reagan*, edited by Kenneth R. Philp, 47–69. University Press of Colorado, 1986.

“Declaration of Sovereignty.” Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs, March 15, 2016. https://warmsprings-nsn.gov/treaty-documents/declaration-of-sovereignty/.

Department of the Interior Indian Affairs. “Department of Interior’s Indigenous Knowledge Handbook.” 2024. https://www.bia.gov/sites/default/files/dup/tcinfo/301_dm_7_draft_indigenous_knowledge_handbook_consultation_11.8.24_508.pdf.

Evans, Tony Tekaroniake. “What Was FDR’s ‘Indian New Deal’?” History.com, 2025. https://www.history.com/articles/indian-reorganization-act-1934-new-deal-effects.

Flaherty, Anne F. Boxberger. *States, American Indian Nations, and Intergovernmental Politics: Sovereignty, Conflict, and the Uncertainty of Taxes*. Abingdon, Oxon, UK: Routledge, 2018.

Frey, Rodney. “Tribal Governance: An Issue of Sovereignty.” L3—the Lewis and Clark Rediscovery Project, 2003.

Guiao, Rebecca Cruz. “How Tribal Water Rights Are Won in the West: Three Case Studies from the Northwest.” *American Indian Law Review* 37, no. 1 (2012). http://www.jstor.org/stable/41940647.

“History.” Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs, April 26, 2016. https://warmsprings-nsn.gov/history/.

Jaimes, M. Annette. *The State of Native America: Genocide, Colonization, and Resistance*. South End Press, 1992.

Kelly, Lawrence C. “The Indian Reorganization Act: The Dream and the Reality.” *Pacific Historical Review* 44, no. 3 (1975). https://doi.org/10.2307/3638029.

Koppes, Clayton R. “From New Deal to Termination: Liberalism and Indian Policy, 1933–1953.” *Pacific Historical Review* 46, no. 4 (1977). https://doi.org/10.2307/3638162.

Nason, James. “Review of Community and Continuity. The Museum at Warm Springs.” *American Anthropologist* 96, no. 2 (1994). https://doi.org/10.1525/aa.1994.96.2.02a00580.

O’Neil, Floyd A., Alvin M. Josephy, and E. Richard Hart. “The Indian New Deal: An Overview.” In *Indian Self Rule*, edited by Kenneth R. Philp, 30–46. University Press of Colorado, 1986.

Prucha, Francis Paul. *The Great Father: The United States Government and the American Indians*. University of Nebraska Press, 1984.

Tatum, Melissa L., Miriam Jorgensen, Mary E. Guss, and Sarah Deer. *Structuring Sovereignty: Constitutions of Native Nations*. Los Angeles, CA: American Indian Studies Center, 2014.

The People’s Plan: Comprehensive Plan for the Year 2020. Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation of Oregon, 1999.

United States Office of Indian Affairs. “Constitution and By-Laws of the Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation of Oregon: Approved February 14, 1938.”

“Warm Springs Indian Reservation Oregon.” Indian Reservation, 2025. https://www.indianreservation.info/warm-springs-indian-reservation-oregon-2/.

The Seattle General Strike

Media, Governance, and the Working Class

Piper Filler

In the early days of February 1919, Seattle came to a halt. Streetcars stopped, shipyard cranes froze in place, restaurant kitchens went dark, and even many milk wagons failed to appear on their morning routes. This silence was not indicative of disaster, but rather the effects of a broader movement to bolster the union workers of the city. For five days, from February 6 to 11, more than 60,000 workers voluntarily withdrew their labor and, through a democratically elected General Strike Committee, attempted to coordinate essential services for the city on their own terms. The 1919 Seattle General Strike has often been remembered as a dramatic but failed experiment in workers' power, a moment when government authority was suspended and citizens relied on one another to keep life going. At the same time, it became a lightning rod for fears of Bolshevism and social revolution in the tense, post–World War I "Red Scare" climate.

This paper examines the Seattle General Strike as both a local labor conflict rooted in the city's shipyards and metal trades and as a larger political struggle over who had the right to organize, govern, and define "order" in an industrial city. It begins with the long buildup to the strike in the shipyards: the wartime boom, the postwar wage squeeze, and the failed negotiations between the Metal Trades Council, federal agencies, and shipyard employers. It then turns to the formation and operation of the General Strike Committee, which, in practice, functioned like an alternative municipal government, taking over issuing permits, organizing food distribution and childcare, and coordinating which services would continue under workers' control. At the same time, Seattle's civic and business elites, led by Mayor Ole Hanson, mobilized to reassert their authority, framing the strike as an incipient revolution and calling on police, soldiers, and the national press to help crush it.

By placing these conflicts at the center of analysis, this paper argues that the Seattle General Strike was less a failed bid for revolution than a revealing struggle over the boundaries of democracy and citizenship in the early twentieth-century United States. The strike forced residents, officials, and workers to confront fundamental questions: Who "owns" the city? Is democracy limited to periodic elections, or can it also be enacted through collective workplace action and cooperative citywide planning? In tracing how the strike emerged, how it was organized, how it was represented by supporters and opponents, and why it ultimately ended, this paper uses the Seattle General Strike as a lens onto broader tensions in American labor history, examining tensions between class and state power, between radical possibilities and conservative backlash, and between visions of a more cooperative social order and the realities of capitalist governance.

HISTORIOGRAPHY

Historians of the 1919 Seattle General Strike have moved from seeing it primarily as a failed revolutionary threat to interpreting it as a complex experiment in labor power, gender, and urban governance. Writing at the height of the Cold War, Wilfrid Harris Crook treated the general strike largely as part of a broader "tragic weapon" within communist and radical strategy, emphasizing its revolutionary logic and the dangers of its supposed abuse by radicals, a framing that tended to read Seattle through anxieties about Bolshevism rather than local dynamics.[1] In contrast, Robert Friedheim's classic monograph, originally published in the 1960s and reissued for the centennial, offers the foundational narrative political and labor history of the strike, reconstructing its origins in the shipyards, the workings of the General Strike Committee, and the reasons for its rapid collapse, while largely centering union leadership and institutional actors.[2] Dana Frank shifts the focus beyond the five days in February, arguing that the strike was part of a broader project in which Seattle workers, including women and workers of color, tried to build a working-class political economy through consumer organizing such as co-ops, boycotts, and union-label

[1] Wilfrid Harris Crook, *Communism and the General Strike* (Hamden, CT: Shoe String Press, 1960).
[2] Robert L. Friedheim, *The Seattle General Strike*, Centennial Edition (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2018).

campaigns, and tracing how that project declined in the 1920s.[3] Most recently, Kathy Ferguson looks at the strike through political theory, portraying it as an attempt to "create a city to resist the state," where workers briefly constituted an alternative municipal order that challenged the monopoly of state power over urban life.[4] Together, these works map a historiographical trajectory from state- and ideology-centered interpretations towards more appreciative accounts on behalf of the workers and the effort and planning that went into the strike.

BACKGROUND

In the weeks leading up to the 1919 Seattle General Strike, the immediate spark came from the city's booming wartime shipyards, where tens of thousands of metal and shipyard workers felt that their wages had not kept pace with the inflated cost of living after World War I. Most of these workers were organized through the Metal Trades Council, which represented the various crafts in the yards building ships under federal contracts.[5] When the federal government's Macy Board refused to grant a substantial wage increase and the shipyard owners hid behind that decision, the shipyard workers walked out in January 1919. Their strike quickly became a test of power in the city. Local unions across Seattle, coming off the end of the First World War and feeling sympathetic to the shipyard workers, began to consider a more widespread movement that could benefit workers in all fields. Out of these discussions emerged the General Strike Committee (GSC), made up of delegates from dozens of unions across Seattle, which began to act as a kind of alternative authority, thoroughly planning food distribution, essential services, and strike discipline in order to keep the city functioning while the strike took effect.[6] As the GSC prepared for a citywide shutdown set for February 6, Mayor Ole Hanson and the city's established authorities grew increasingly anxious. Hanson framed the developing action as a revolutionary threat, comparing it to Bolshevik upheaval, and began maneuvering to

3 Dana Frank, *Purchasing Power: Consumer Organizing, Gender, and the Seattle Labor Movement, 1919–1929* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).
4 Kathy Ferguson, "Creating a City to Resist the State: The Seattle General Strike of 1919," *Theory & Event* 22, no. 4 (2019): 911–50.
5 Friedheim, "The Seattle General Strike."
6 Friedheim, "The Seattle General Strike."

assert municipal control and demonize the striking workers, calling in extra police and seeking federal support while also appealing to the media to echo his concerns.[7] The early negotiations between Hanson and the GSC were less about specific wage issues and more about who would run the city during the crisis: elected officials and business leaders, or a democratically organized body of workers. Thus, from its earliest days, the Seattle General Strike was not only about shipyard wages, but a deeper struggle about the balance of power between organized labor and local governance in a volatile postwar moment.

THE GENERAL STRIKE COMMITTEE

The General Strike Committee (GSC) was the institutional heart of the 1919 Seattle General Strike: a union body that tried to turn abstract ideas of "workers' power" into practical city-wide coordination. Delegates elected from over a hundred locals pooled authority in the GSC, which oversaw exemptions, food distribution, and essential services, so that the strike would demonstrate workers' capacity to organize daily life rather than simply shut the city down. The original catalyst for the strike was the shipyard workers, but as meetings continued more unions joined the movement and aligned with the GSC, shocking the local governance and the media alike. Friedheim notes, "The unanimity of sentiment and the rapidity of assent astonished and mystified those Seattleites who believed they understood the internal workings of the labor movement. In the face of all expectations to the contrary, this sentiment continued to grow."[8] At the same time, many local officials and press believed a general strike was far-fetched, and that the unions would not make good on their threat. Friedheim points out an important contribution from the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), also known as the Wobblies, in proposing the idea of a widespread strike. The Wobblies were a more radical voice and believed that the strike "if applied on a universal scale, it would be the cataclysm needed to destroy capitalism."[9] While the Wobblies were not short on passion, their more radical stance was weaponized by the press to use against all groups involved in the strike, pushing the

[7] "Mayor Hanson to Deputize 10,000: Under Which Flag?" *Seattle Star*, February 5, 1919, https://www.loc.gov/item/sn87093407/1919-02-05/ed-1.
[8] Friedheim, "The Seattle General Strike," 103.
[9] Friedheim, "The Seattle General Strike," 108.

agenda of Mayor Ole Hanson to make the strike out to be Bolshevik in nature. The GSC had to balance the internal division between radicals and progressives to effectively accomplish the strike's goals. The committee's decisions of maintaining order, keeping hospitals supplied, and carefully defining "essential" work, reflected this in-between position: labor was radical enough to run large parts of the city for five days, but still cautious about provoking outright confrontation with Mayor Hanson, federal troops, or conservative AFL leadership. The GSC thus stands in the literature as both a high-water mark of working-class organization and a case study in the limits of that power in 1919.

THE SEATTLE STAR

The Seattle Star provides a window into an important conjuncture of tensions between solidarity and suspicion, reform and radicalism that defined Seattle during the five days of February 1919. It was one of the two most widely circulated daily newspapers in Seattle, theoretically directed toward a readership of working- and middle-class citizens. Its editors regularly faced the daunting task of maintaining credibility with laboring audiences, many of whom took active part in or were directly sympathetic to the strike, while also appeasing local business interests and other forces of political authority who regarded the work stoppage as a dangerous test of civic will and social order. Because of this precarious position, the *Seattle Star's* coverage illustrates the complex role of media both as observer and active participant in molding the ways events were perceived, remembered, and ultimately understood in historical memory.

On February 6, 1919, the first day of the strike, coverage by the *Seattle Star* reveals how the paper straddled these competing loyalties. Front-page headlines deployed neutral or cautiously descriptive language, for example: "City Quiet but Paralyzed," "Workers Walk Out Peacefully," and "Volunteers Run the City Light Plant."[10] This phrasing conveyed disruption without invoking panic. The repetition of terms such as "quiet," "peaceful," and "volunteers" was to reassure readers that the strike was not anarchic or violent and was a respectable movement. In that sense, the newspaper was gently pushing against

10 "Tie-up at 10!" *Seattle Star*, February 6, 1919, https://www.loc.gov/item/sn87093407/1919-02-06/ed-1/.

increasingly popular narratives circulating in national outlets that equated any mass labor action with Bolshevik revolution. But the sly use of the term “paralyzed” implied dysfunction, planting a seed in the reader’s mind that the city was immobilized and in a vulnerable state. This mix of reassurance and alarm is representative of what communication scholars call a dual-frame strategy, in which journalists seek to manage public anxiety while sustaining the drama necessary to sell papers.

Beyond the general language and tone, there was a subtle imbalance of who controlled the narrative. More often than not, news reports led with statements from Mayor Ole Hanson or city officials, placing government authority at the front and center as the primary interpreter of events. Union voices appeared deep in later paragraphs, if at all, usually as short quotations, giving the impression that labor leaders were merely reacting rather than directing the situation. This editorial ordering reinforced the hierarchy of legitimacy: city leaders spoke for public safety and stability, while union representatives spoke for one side of a conflict. In effect, the paper maintained an illusion of neutrality while privileging the civic establishment’s viewpoint, a common journalistic tactic in times of political tension.

Another dimension of the *Star’s* framing involves its presumed audience. Because the paper’s readership was made up largely of Seattle’s working-class families, its journalists faced the task of reporting on their readers’ own participation. Its editors could neither condemn the strike without alienating readers nor endorse it fully without risking accusations of sedition. The resulting coverage read cautious and paternalistic in tone, characterizing strikers as sincere but misguided, which allowed readers to sympathize with workers’ goals while accepting the eventual end of the strike as both inevitable and for the best.

As the strike unfolded, the *Seattle Star* began to adopt cautionary language. In the February 7th issue, the front page read “Troops in Seattle!” and “Federal Forces Ready for Any Crisis in City” and “Police Guard Mayor Hanson,” inciting fear that the strike might turn violent at any second.[11] By February 8th, headlines hinted at unease within the strike leadership: “City Administration Warns Against Agitators,”

[11] “Troops in Seattle,” *Seattle Star*, February 7, 1919, https://www.loc.gov/item/sn87093407/1919-02-07/ed-1/.

"General Strike May be Called Off Today," and "Union Leaders Divided Over Next Steps."[12] This shift in focus from collective solidarity to internal division framed the strike as an unsustainable experiment rather than a functioning model of worker cooperation. And even though the General Strike Committee kept strict order during the strike, assuring milk deliveries, hospital service, and sanitation, the newspaper increasingly used words such as "radical," "agitator," and in some cases "un-American."[13] Significantly, these words were rarely assigned to individuals but rather to the strikers as a group. This rhetorical framing allowed the *Star* to preserve sympathy for local workers while also distancing itself from radicalism, mirroring broader national discourse during the first Red Scare. In this way, the reporting in the *Seattle Star* participated in what the media historian Michael Schudson has termed "objectivity as strategic ritual": rather than express an overt bias, journalists rely on selective framing, source hierarchy, and word choice to create an impression of neutrality while still guiding the reader's interpretation. Although the paper did not call explicitly for the end of the strike, by amplifying the warnings of officials and highlighting uncertainty, it framed the continuation as unsustainable and against the public's best interest. Against overtly anti-labor papers like the *Seattle Times*,[14] the *Seattle Star* could pose as balanced and practical. But all of this moderation came at a cost to the general remembrance of the strike. Instead of being remembered as a democratically functional labor movement, its image was diminished to civil disobedience and a hiccup in labor history.[15]

The visual layout of the newspaper further reinforced these textual strategies. Photographs regularly showed empty streets, idle streetcars, or city officials in conference. This imagery suggested inactivity, control, and surveillance. What was photographed but not published were the functional strike kitchens, volunteer committees, and orderly food lines that testified to the workers' self-management. This visual omission functioned as a narrative choice, erasing evidence that could have supported an alternative interpretation of the strike:

---

[12] "General Strike May be Called Off Today," *Seattle Star*, February 8, 1919, https://www.loc.gov/resource/sn87093407/1919-02-08/ed-1/?st=gallery.

[13] "General Strike May be Called Off Today." *Seattle Star*, February 8, 1919.

[14] Friedheim, "The Seattle General Strike."

[15] "To Arrest all I.W.W. Members," *Seattle Star*, February 15, 1919, https://www.loc.gov/resource/sn87093407/1919-02-15/ed-1/.

that it was an organized assertion of civic responsibility, not a descent into chaos. The absence of images of mutual aid served to reinforce the idea that power and stability still resided with the city's official government rather than its working population.

By February 11th, as the strike was winding down, the language of the *Seattle Star* shifted again, this time toward closure and relief. Headlines such as "Normalcy Returns to City" and "Strike Leaders Call Off Walkout" reinstated a sense of civic order and confirmed that local governance was back in control.[16] Credit was given to Mayor Hanson for his firm leadership and ability to overcome the disturbance, while union leaders were portrayed as acknowledging the futility of their cause.[17] In such a way, this final reframing by the *Seattle Star* helped turn the well-led and functional strike into a lesson that authority and government will always know what is best. Through tone and word choice, placement and imagery, the paper translated a radical experiment in social organization into a familiar narrative of disruption and restoration. Its coverage reassured readers that Seattle survived a dangerous moment of disorder while preserving the underlying assumption that real governance lay outside the hands of labor. The *Seattle Star* was not a passive observer of the strike but a direct influence on public opinion and on the historical perspective of the strike. Its framing decisions reveal how local media, working under national political pressure, mediated between sympathy for workers and fear of radicalism. That balancing act helped shape the enduring historical perception of the Seattle General Strike, not as a functioning moment of collective self-rule but as a fleeting episode of disruption in the march of industrial capitalism.

NATIONAL PRESS AND THE RED SCARE

While the *Seattle Star* had relatively measured coverage, national newspapers and government officials framed the strike as one symptom of a Bolshevik contagion. American elites in the years after the 1917 Russian Revolution began to fear labor unrest would morph into political revolution.[18] Attorney General A. Mitchell Palmer

[16] "Strike Called Off! No Compromise!" *Seattle Star*, February 10, 1919, https://www.loc.gov/item/sn87093407/1919-02-10/ed-1/.
[17] "Full Steam Ahead!" *Seattle Star*, February 11, 1919, https://www.loc.gov/resource/sn87093407/1919-02-11/ed-1/.
[18] Crook, "Communism and the General Strike."

introduced raids against suspected radicals, and the Department of Justice began monitoring labor organizers around the country. Major papers like the *New York Times* and the *Chicago Tribune* described the Seattle strike as a "Soviet in miniature."[19] Even though the Seattle General Strike was peaceful and functional, it was perceived to be a threat to government authority and was equated with the Bolshevik revolution. This perception and amplification by major newspapers drew a connection between local labor demands and global revolutionary movements. The portrayal of the Seattle General Strike had real consequences. By painting the strike as revolutionary in nature, it legitimized government surveillance, justified employer crackdowns, and entrenched in the public mind the association between unionism and rebellion. The *Seattle Star's* coverage used a more moderate tone, which reflects a local effort to reclaim narrative control and to reassure readers that the strike was an exercise in civic cooperation, not insurrection. But this moderation operated within limits set by national discourse. The power of Red Scare language was so great that any deviation from normal industrial relations could be cast as revolutionary.[20] In this way, the media's coverage, both local and national, helped foreclose the possibility of seeing the strike as a legitimate democratic experiment in worker self-management.

MAYOR HANSON AND THE ANTI-RADICAL NARRATIVE

Wilfrid Harris Crook's account of the Seattle General Strike dwells less on workers' experiments in cooperation than on the atmosphere of panic and anti-radicalism it provoked. He describes a city bracing for upheaval: "Businessmen took out riot insurance on their property; householders laid in heavy stocks of groceries; hardware stores unearthed lamp supplies and sold them at a considerable profit;"[21] while the press oscillated between warning workers not to "ruin their city" and threatening punishment if "Bolshevism showed its head."[22] In this framing, the key protagonist is not the General Strike Committee but Mayor Ole Hanson, whom Crook portrays as almost theatrically anti-communist. "To the outside world," Crook writes, "Mayor Hanson

[19] Crook, "Communism and the General Strike."
[20] Crook, "Communism and the General Strike."
[21] Crook, "Communism and the General Strike," 49.
[22] Crook, "Communism and the General Strike," 50.

was known as the man who refused to parlay with Bolshevism, threatened to have shot at sight the first man who tried to take over the city government."[23] Hanson's self-mythologizing, Crook notes, culminated in a public-relations campaign in which the mayor styled himself as "the Knight who slew the Red Dragon."[24] Crook's narrative thus folds the Seattle strike into a broader Red Scare era story of heroic state power standing against an allegedly foreign, Bolshevik menace, directly discrediting the strikers and casting them as enemies.

HISTORICAL MEMORY

One of the most impactful consequences of the press coverage of the Seattle General Strike did not occur during the strike, but in the days and weeks after it ended. In the days immediately following February 11, 1919, the *Seattle Star* worked hard to domesticate and diminish what the General Strike had meant, and that post-strike framing has weighed heavily on the strike's historical memory. On February 11, the front-page headline "City Speeds Up; General Strike Over"[25] already cast the event as a brief interruption in an otherwise healthy civic body, emphasizing the return of commerce and normalcy rather than the unprecedented experiment in worker self-government that had just ended. The next day's editorial, "Voice of Bolshevism Stilled," wrapped Abraham Lincoln's famous words about "government of the people" around a narrative of the strike as foreign subversion defeated, fusing patriotic iconography with Red Scare panic.[26] Paired with the Lincoln's-birthday editorial "Lincoln, the Pioneer," which claimed the strike had been a contest between Lincoln's democratic principles and ideas that would have been "abhorrent to him," the *Star* folded the end of the strike into a patriotic morality tale: Mayor Ole Hanson, the business elite, and the paper itself were cast as heirs of Lincoln defending "Americanism," while the strike was recoded as an un-American conspiracy that deserved to fail.[27] That same day, the paper printed a full page of congratulatory letters from businessmen, clergy, and civic

[23] Crook, "Communism and the General Strike," 51.
[24] Crook, "Communism and the General Strike," 51.
[25] "Full Steam Ahead!" *Seattle Star*, February 11, 1919.
[26] "Lister Quits!" *Seattle Star*, February 12, 1919, https://www.loc.gov/resource/sn87093407/1919-02-12/ed-1/.
[27] "Lister Quits!" *Seattle Star*, February 12, 1919.

leaders, one famously telling the editors “Your paper saved Seattle.”[28] This celebrated the *Star* not only for opposing the strike but for helping to restore order. By filling precious post-strike space with self-congratulation instead of serious discussion of why tens of thousands had walked out or how workers had peacefully run essential services, the *Star* helped define the strike’s meaning as nothing more than a scare successfully contained. The February 13 editorial “Getting Right” pushed the same line. While it conceded that “no strike has ever been conducted with so little disorder and with such extreme quietness,”[29] it treated that calm not as proof of workers’ capacity to govern but as a prelude to a return to normalcy: the real task now, the *Star* argued, was for unions to “get right” with public opinion and distance themselves from radicals, implicitly acknowledging the walkout as a misstep rather than a pioneering collective action.[30]

Kathy Ferguson’s account of the strike as “creating a city to resist the state” points in exactly the opposite direction: she stresses that striking workers and their families likely made up roughly half of Seattle’s population, that essential services were competently run under labor’s own management, and that the conservative backlash has often been blamed for labor’s subsequent decline, even as she argues that national 1920s trends would have eroded union power regardless.[31] By relentlessly narrating the strike as a failed Bolshevik scare rather than as a powerful, if fragile, demonstration of collective capacity, the *Star* helped ensure that Ferguson’s “city to resist the state” survived mainly in union and radical memory, not in mainstream civic identity. Dana Frank’s *Purchasing Power* picks up the story in the 1920s, showing how Seattle workers tried to sustain a sense of collective power through consumer organizing, women-led unions, and labor-owned businesses in the shadow of 1919.[32] Yet the public narrative that surrounded those efforts was still shaped by papers like the *Star*, which continued to red-bait institutions such as the Seattle Labor College as “schools for communism,” extending the earlier trope that any ambitious working-class project was un-American and

---

28 “Lister Quits!” *Seattle Star*, February 12, 1919.
29 “Labor to Clean House,” *Seattle Star*, February 13, 1919, https://www.loc.gov/resource/sn87093407/1919-02-13/ed-1/.
30 “Labor to Clean House,” *Seattle Star*, February 13, 1919.
31 Ferguson, “Creating a City to Resist the State,” 911–50.
32 Frank, “Purchasing Power.”

dangerous. Taken together, the *Seattle Star's* post-February 11 issues did more than report the end of a strike: they condensed a complex experiment into a cautionary tale about radical overreach, and that framing helped to sabotage the strike's standing in popular memory even as scholars like Ferguson and Frank work to recover its deeper democratic promise.

CONCLUSION

The 1919 Seattle General Strike is best understood not as a bungled insurrection but as a brief, fragile experiment in democratic self-rule that unsettled the existing hierarchy in an industrial city. Originating in shipyard workers' frustration that wartime promises had dissolved into postwar wage stagnation, the strike drew tens of thousands into a coordinated effort to keep essential services running under the authority of the General Strike Committee. For five days, workers proved that they could feed, transport, and care for Seattle without employers or conventional political officials, raising unsettling questions about who truly "owned" the city and whether democracy might also be enacted through collective control of production and urban life. Seattle's political and business elites, speaking through Mayor Ole Hanson and backed by police, troops, and federal power, moved swiftly to shut down that possibility.

The role of the press in the historical memory of the Seattle General Strike cannot be denied, particularly the influence of the *Seattle Star*. During the strike, the *Star's* cautious, paternalistic tone tried to appease its working-class audience, even as its choice of sources and visual emphasis consistently elevated official voices and presented the General Strike Committee as precarious and temporary. Once the strike ended, this cautious balance gave way to celebratory rhetoric about restored order and dire warnings about radicalism, a framing that national papers and Cold War–era commentators later amplified by describing Seattle as a "Soviet in miniature" defeated by vigilant authorities. Against this, Friedheim's reconstruction of the strike's mechanics, Ferguson's account of a "city to resist the state," and Frank's analysis of a broader working-class political economy all work to recover the episode as a moment of genuine organizational creativity. To remember the strike today is to hold together both what workers actually accomplished and how quickly their achievement was buried beneath stories of danger and failure, and to reopen the questions of who defines “order,” how far democratic control can reach into economic life, and whose narratives ultimately harden into history.

B i b l i o g r a p h y

Crook, Wilfrid Harris. *Communism and the General Strike*. Hamden, CT: Shoe String Press, 1960.

Ferguson, Kathy. “Creating a City to Resist the State: The Seattle General Strike of 1919.” *Theory & Event* 22, no. 4 (2019): 911–50. https://doi.org/10.1353/tae.2019.0059.

Frank, Dana. *Purchasing Power: Consumer Organizing, Gender, and the Seattle Labor Movement, 1919–1929*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994.

Friedheim, Robert L. *The Seattle General Strike*, Centennial Edition. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2018.

Seattle Star. “Full Steam Ahead!” February 11, 1919. https://www.loc.gov/resource/sn87093407/1919-02-11/ed-1/.

Seattle Star. “General Strike May be Called Off Today.” February 8, 1919. https://www.loc.gov/resource/sn87093407/1919-02-08/ed-1/?st=gallery.

Seattle Star. “General Strike Plans Going Ahead.” February 4, 1919. https://www.loc.gov/item/sn87093407/1919-02-04/ed-1.

Seattle Star. “Labor to Clean House.” February 13, 1919. https://www.loc.gov/resource/sn87093407/1919-02-13/ed-1/.

Seattle Star. “Lister Quits!” February 12, 1919. https://www.loc.gov/resource/sn87093407/1919-02-12/ed-1/.

Seattle Star. “Mayor Hanson to Deputize 10,000: Under Which Flag?” February 5, 1919. https://www.loc.gov/item/sn87093407/1919-02-05/ed-1.

Seattle Star. “Strike Called Off! No Compromise!” February 10, 1919. https://www.loc.gov/item/sn87093407/1919-02-10/ed-1/.

Seattle Star. “STOP BEFORE IT’S TOO LATE.” February 5, 1919. https://www.loc.gov/resource/sn87093407/1919-02-05/ed-1/.

Seattle Star. “Tie-up at 10!” February 6, 1919. https://www.loc.gov/item/sn87093407/1919-02-06/ed-1/.

Seattle Star. “To Arrest all I.W.W. Members.” February 15, 1919. https://www.loc.gov/resource/sn87093407/1919-02-15/ed-1/.

Seattle Star. “Troops in Seattle: Federal Forces Ready for Any Crisis in City.” February 7, 1919. https://www.loc.gov/item/sn87093407/1919-02-07/ed-1/.

Winslow, Cal. “The Origins of the Seattle General Strike of 1919: The Timber Beast.” *Monthly Review* 71, no. 10 (2020): 47–56. https://doi.org/10.14452/mr-071-10-2020-03_5.

The Pacific Northwest and the Talented Tenth

Coretta Anne Foster

The NAACP was founded in 1909 through the collaboration of African Americans and Whites to advocate for African American civil and political rights.[1] Many influential members emerged from that group, one of them being W.E.B. Du Bois. Du Bois's methodology for civil rights progress was largely explained through his theory on the "Talented Tenth," which was published in the book *The Negro Problem* by another important civil rights figure, Booker T. Washington. He described it as "the problem of developing the Best of this race that they may guide the Mass away from the contamination and death of the Worst."[2] Through this, he wanted to emphasize that raising up the successful Tenth of African Americans would help the race, which would subsequently see greater success as a whole. This arose through the context of the ending of Reconstruction, when Du Bois felt as though he had to reframe history. He intended to demonstrate the validity of the African American role in society in the present by showing that the Talented Tenth of the past have been capable of education and leadership, despite the misconceptions of Whites. Strikingly, he stated that Whites "misjudge us because you do not know us."[3]

The key aspects of the theory are: the members of the Talented Tenth were the more fortunate of African Americans, and that it was their role to uplift and reframe the African American existence. The need to prove the capability and skills of African Americans to Whites would soon find itself deeply rooted in NAACP strategy. A key example of this can be seen a few decades later through one of the Portland NAACP's founding members: Beatrice Morrow Cannady.

---

1 William Edward Burghardt Du Bois, "The Talented Tenth," in *The Negro Problem*, ed. Booker T. Washington (James Pott and Company, 1903), 1, https://search.alexanderstreet.com/view/work/bibliographic_entity|bibliographic_details|4392186.

2 Du Bois, "The Talented Tenth," 3.

3 Beatrice Cannady, Scrapbook of Beatrice Cannady: Originally Owned by Ivan Cannady, Los Angeles (Oregon Historical Society, n.d.), microfilm, Knight Library, University of Oregon, Eugene, OR.

Fig. 1. Beatrice Morrow Cannady in 1926, wearing a shawl that she made. Oregon Historical Society Research Library, CN 011493.

Cannady was a Texas transplant to Portland, Oregon who was a spokesperson for African American history, civil rights, and struggle.[4] Her list of advocacies is long and varied. She campaigned heavily against the showing of the racist film *The Birth of a Nation* and documented the Ku Klux Klan's horrific actions.[5] She gave speeches and lectures on the importance of inter-racial amicability, centering women in the conversation about race[6] and against the racist Black Codes that had existed in the Oregon Constitution and excluded minorities from settling in the state.[7] In 1919, she was even invited to join the Pan-African Congress by W.E.B. Du Bois and ran for office as representative.[8] Overall, she was a well-known figure within the African American community, becoming a key voice in the Portland NAACP. While she later remarried and left the state, her time in Oregon left a remarkable impact on the state's history of civil rights.

---

[4] Oregon Secretary of State, "State of Oregon: Woman Suffrage — Beatrice Morrow Cannady (1889–1974)," accessed February 23, 2026, https://sos.oregon.gov/archives/exhibits/suffrage/Pages/bio/cannady.aspx.

[5] Cannady, Scrapbook, Assorted Letters.

[6] Quintard Taylor and Shirley Ann Wilson Moore, *African American Women Confront the West: 1600–2000* (University of Oklahoma Press, 2003), 196.

[7] Taylor and Moore, *African American Women Confront the West*, 199–201.

[8] Taylor and Moore, *African American Women Confront the West*, 199–201.

Throughout her time as a voice of change, she maintained an enduring passion for a fight for equality and the peaceful cohabitation and reconciliation of the races. She would soon come to embody the ideal member of the Talented Tenth and use her position to uplift the African Americans around her. Her remarkable mode of fighting for civil rights and its alignment with Du Bois' theory of the Talented Tenth will be the focus of this paper.

Oregon has a complex history when it comes to African American relations. While the state prohibited slavery, it was not exactly friendly towards African Americans. The first exclusionary act was created June 18, 1844, by the provisional government, prohibiting African Americans from entering the state under the threat of punishment by whipping. By the end of the year the punishment was diminished to public labor. Following its acquisition of statehood, Oregon created exclusionary laws in 1849 prohibiting African Americans from moving in unless they were residents prior to the law's creation. Oregon voters went on to write restrictions on African Americans and their rights into their state constitution in 1857. The legal exclusion of African Americans was ended by the 14th Amendment.[9] Despite its elimination on paper, African American discrimination marks Oregon's history. Its continuation was visible in the following decades as the injustice did not magically end. It was this hardship of the African American community that Cannady advocated against.

Discussion over Cannady's work has already been conducted. Kimberley Mangun specifically examines Beatrice Morrow Cannady in her book *A Force for Change: Beatrice Morrow Cannady & the Struggle for Civil Rights in Oregon, 1912–1936*. Her book analyzes how Cannady pushed for improved relations between African Americans and Whites through her founding of the NAACP, her writings in the Portland newspaper *The Advocate*, which she would later go on to own, and her public lectures. She worked among a web of similarly-minded individuals to push for social improvements.[10]

Cannady was not the first to conduct communal places for African American discourse. Quintard Taylor's book on African American

9 Black in Oregon: 1840–1870, "National and Oregon Chronology of Events," Oregon Secretary of State, accessed February 23, 2026, http://sos.oregon.gov/archives/exhibits/black-history/Pages/context/chronology.aspx.

10 Kimberley Mangun, *A Force for Change: Beatrice Morrow Cannady & the Struggle for Civil Rights in Oregon, 1912–1936* (Oregon State University Press, 2011), 1–4.

women in the West explains that clubs for Black women rose to prominence early in the twentieth century. The clubs, such as the one found in Tacoma, gathered women for events centering on issues from art exhibit engagements to politics and eventually joining the NACW.[11] Taylor discusses Cannady's impact on Portland's African American community, calling the NAACP her "instrument for effecting… justice."[12] She protested discrimination through her publications in *the Advocate*, as well as through physical demonstrations. Taylor speaks highly of Cannady's heroic moves, from speeches to articles in *the Advocate* to protect African American rights, children and education, and work to bring the races together. He notes Cannady's insistence to bring African American life to Whites.[13][14]

While existing literature discusses Cannady's work, it does not explore the connection between Cannady and Du Bois' idea of the Talented Tenth. Both of the aforementioned works discuss Cannady's legacy through an autobiographical lens. Cannady's perspective on African American advancement existed in the important context of the broader views of the NAACP, which she was heavily connected with. Therefore, it is prudent to view her as a descendant of Du Bois' theory in order to understand her methodology of advocacy and advancement. Through analysis of books, articles, and archival records of newspapers and Cannady's scrapbook, this paper will conduct analysis on Cannady's alignment with Du Bois' theory of the Talented Tenth, and how Cannady used that to further African American rights in Portland.

A WOMAN OF CHANGE

When Beatrice Morrow Cannady was nominated for the Harmon Award in 1929,[15] something remarkable occurred. This award was granted to

[11] Taylor and Moore, *African American Women Confront the West*, 178–179.
[12] Taylor and Moore, *African American Women Confront the West*, 194.
[13] Taylor and Moore, *African American Women Confront the West*, 195–197.
[14] For those interested in further research of African American lifestyles and community in the Pacific Northwest, Taylor's other work would be a good place to start. It takes a look at broader African American cultural development in Seattle, comparing the lives of African Americans with other minority groups present in the city, such as the Asian American community. See: Quintard Taylor, *The Forging of a Black Community: Seattle's Central District, from 1870 through the Civil Rights Era* (University of Washington Press, 1994).
[15] Quintard Taylor, "Beatrice Morrow Cannady (1889–1974)," The Oregon Encyclopedia, accessed April 21, 2026,

African Americans for achievement in "literature, music, fine arts, business and industry, science and innovation, education, religious service and race relations."[16] Following her nomination, there was an outpour of support from a lengthy list of organizations and individuals. The Portland NAACP wrote to "heaprtily endorse" her, claiming she'd done "unusual work" in "bringing better understanding [between] the two races." Levi T. Pennington, the then-President of Pacific College, called her civil rights contributions "so many and so varied that a mere catalog of them might be tedious." Another writer called her "a leader among the people of her race" and that, of the people in Portland, Cannady would be the one "entitled to the Harmon Award."[17] It is evident that Cannady's actions to benefit race relations did not go unnoticed by those around her. Although she did not end up winning the Harmon Award, the support she received speaks to the impact she had on her community.

While Cannady was one of the first Pacific Northwest women to advocate for civil rights, there were other women during her time period taking up arms against racism and similar injustice. Up the coast, Susie Revels Cayton was fighting for equality as well.[18] Cayton and Cannady held similar roles in society, both being known for their writings and having their work appear in prominent newspapers of their cities. Cayton's work consisted largely of fictional representations of racism or addressed the issue in roundabout ways, whereas Cannady directly called out what she saw. At the same time, Cayton's middle-class status saw her ostracized from the African American community to an extent.[19] By contrast, Cannady was largely embraced by it. This added to her image as a member of the Talented Tenth for the focus she put on African American lives in the eyes of the White community. While Cayton was fighting for the same cause, her

https://www.oregonencyclopedia.org/articles/cannady_beatrice_morrow/.

16 Carrie Goeringer, "Harmon Foundation film "The Negro and Art,"" US National Archives, July 22, 2013, https://unwritten-record.blogs.archives.gov/2013/07/22/harmon-foundation-film-the-negro-and-art/.

17 Cannady, Scrapbook, Assorted Letters.

18 Taylor and Moore, *African American Women Confront the West*, 189–190.

19 Michelle L. Goshorn, "Susie Revels Cayton: 'The Part She Played,'" The Seattle Civil Rights and Labor History Project at the University of Washington, accessed February 24, 2026, https://depts.washington.edu/civilr/susie_cayton.htm.

methodology greatly differed from Cannady's, which could be a likely reason why their legacies are also remembered differently.

Overall, the impact that Cannady had on the African American community of Portland makes it evident that she was a part of Du Bois' theoretical Talented Tenth. However, what she did in that position needs to be further explored to understand how she furthered Du Bois' vision. It is hard to disagree with Pennington that Cannady's advocacies were so many that they were difficult to chronicle. The main aspects of her work will be covered here, but this will not be a comprehensive list.

CANNADY AND THE ADVOCATE

Through writing in the aptly-titled newspaper *the Advocate*, Cannady facilitated her own rise to prominence. Her work in the paper comprised a majority of her advocacy and shaped the fight for improved race relations in the city. In the newspaper, Cannady fought against the defeatist African American mindset that accepted the way things were. On May 11, 1929, the paper claimed that "In many aspects, we are a discouraged and beaten race" and that "unless we divorce our minds from this sort of thinking, we will ever remain at the bottom of the ladder."[20] Through the paper, she encouraged African Americans to reject the mistreatment they were experiencing and to stand up for themselves.

Beyond encouraging African Americans to change their mindsets, she spoke out against active discrimination in Portland. Throughout her years at *the Advocate*, one of her primary targets of this fight was the Ku Klux Klan. The prominence of the racist organization in the state began in Hood River in 1921. Cannady quickly raised the alarm against the group, using her position of power to share her concern with the NAACP. Unfortunately, this resulted in inaction by the government, who believed that the KKK would not continue their invasion.[21] The threat of the KKK in Oregon only grew, becoming gradually more violent, while government action remained inadequate. Cannady monitored and reported all of these incidents in *the Advocate*

[20] E. D. Cannady and Mrs. E. D. Cannady, "Failures," *The Advocate* (Portland), May 11, 1929, https://oregonnews.uoregon.edu/lccn/sn98062568/1929-05-11/ed-1/seq-2/.
[21] Mangun, *A Force for Change*, 139–141.

while criticizing the government for its shortcomings.[22] The impact of Cannady's writings is difficult to measure since there is no clear-cut success as there was in other campaigns she led. However, it is undeniable that she was raising awareness of the horrors of this group, despite the dangers of doing so. She used her position to garner influence and change, exactly as Du Bois had described. Through her writings, Cannady bravely persevered and opposed one of the most heinous organizations in U.S. history.

Beyond the acts of the KKK, Cannady greatly opposed segregation, working around it however she could.[23] She began campaigning against the state's aforementioned Black Codes, a relic that remained in the state constitution despite its vestigial nature. She opposed the laws' presence in the constitution as she saw it as a reminder of continued White oppression of African Americans. Previous attempts to have it removed were unsuccessful in 1893, 1900, and 1916, with Cannady's new campaign beginning in 1925. She used *The Advocate* to further her message, which wound up being highly publicized and being echoed in other newspapers. In the end, she was successful as the vote was tallied in her favor.[24] The fact that Cannady's campaign was able to see the removal of racist laws from the Oregon constitution speaks volumes to how prevalent her voice was within the state. As the laws were already put out of use by the federal Amendments, it would have been easy for White people to dismiss the value of the campaign as the laws had no true impact. However, the message that they carried was undeniably anti-Black. Cannady's ability to convince enough people to stand by her side is truly remarkable.

The Advocate was both Cannady's catalyst into the position of a member of the Talented Tenth, as well as her tool to use that position for African American furtherance. Like Du Bois, she rejected the position of inferiority that was expected of her on the basis of her race and fought against organizations and institutions that intended to keep her there. Through the influence in Portland she'd gained over the years, she used her newspaper to speak out against racism and create the exact kind of change that Du Bois expected of the Talented Tenth.

---

[22] Mangun, *A Force for Change*, 142–145.
[23] Taylor and Moore, *African American Women Confront the West*, 196.
[24] Taylor and Moore, *African American Women Confront the West*, 196.

THE POWER OF CONNECTION

Cannady did not limit herself to using her newspaper for change. Many of her other methods for advocacy fell in line with Du Bois' theory that a large amount of African American inequality stemmed from a disconnect between Whites and African Americans, centering around a lack of knowledge. It was this reintroduction and reframing that Cannady's other work focused on.

For a few years during "Negro History Week," as it was called at the time, she gave talks on the radio stations of Portland's top three daily newspapers. Beyond her radio talks, her writings relating to her talks were included in those local papers. The impact of her work was a flood of questions regarding the topic, as she had planned. With time, she even received requests for talks at the new stations.[25] The fact that Cannady was invited to speak at the top newspapers' radio stations not only speaks to her place in the Portland community, but to her determination to disseminate information on African Americans as well. The radio stations at which she spoke were not African American stations. While it has been established that she had a voice in the African American community, her talks for White newspapers, if for Negro History Week, were important to the reconnection of the races. Her motivation for those talks was explained in that "It is her belief that knowledge begets understanding, understanding, good-will, good-will peace and love. Therefore whenever she can possibly do so, she never fails to teach the true history of her race."[26] This is exactly what Du Bois outlined in his theory, as her work to connect the races was founded on introducing them to each other, which she successfully did during years of Negro History Weeks.

Beyond the talks she gave on the radio, she held a variety of in-person talks, speaking to people of all backgrounds. She constantly traveled, giving speeches on the importance of race relations at schools, universities, and churches, while also engaging with her listeners on an individual level.[27] Cannady welcomed curiosity and was enthusiastic to welcome anyone into the conversation who was interested.

---

[25] Cannady, Scrapbook, "NEGRO HISTORY WEEK."
[26] Cannady, Scrapbook, "NEGRO HISTORY WEEK."
[27] Mangun, *A Force for Change*, 93–98.

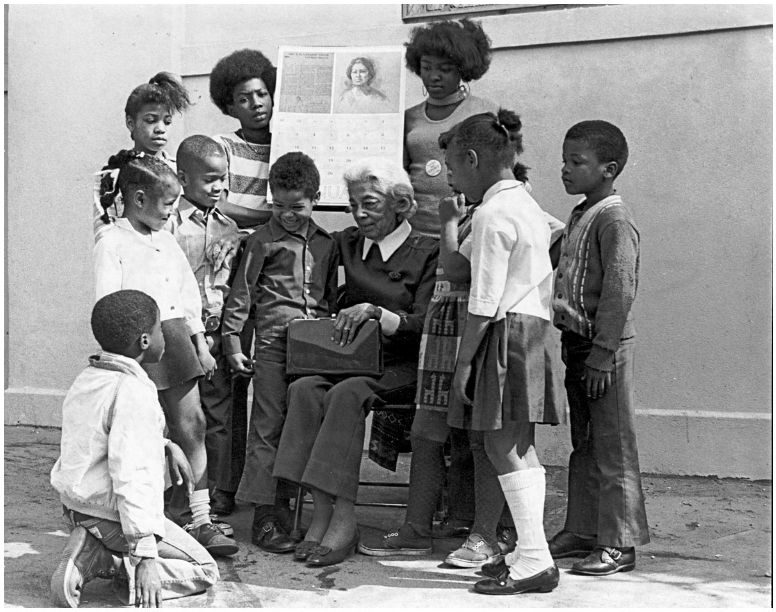

Fig. 2. Beatrice Morrow Cannady with school children in 1973. Oregon Historical Society Research Library, OrHi 51170.

Her desire to involve students extended her advocacy into the field of education. One aspect of this was described by a member of the Portland NAACP as "the obtaining of the consent of the Board of Education for all public high schools to have lecture courses on Negro History that prevalent misconceptions of the Negro held by the ordinary high school student might be done away with."[28] Cannady fought to have discussions of African Americans in the classroom, encouraging connection between races by starting at a younger age. Further engagements with the youth can be seen through aid she gave to various students' school projects,[29] or sharing books from her considerably-sized library to those who lacked access, especially for material covering African American topics or demonstrating their art.[30] Through her focus on increasing education and knowledge of African Americans with students, she was able to gain access to the youngest members of the community and help them form an interracial understanding from a young age.

---

28 Cannady, Scrapbook, Letter from the Portland NAACP regarding the Harmon Awards.

29 Taylor and Moore, *African American Women Confront the West*, 198.

30 Mangun, *A Force for Change*, 14–15.

“Interracial teas” on the porch of her home comprised another aspect of her forging of connections between the races. They soon expanded beyond her, involving two other White women in the throwing of these events, calling themselves the “Three Musketeers.”[31] This collaboration between Cannady and the other White women demonstrates notable progress towards interracial connection, representing a concrete connection between the races. Soon the attendees expanded beyond the White upper class to include a wide variety of backgrounds.[32] Cannady’s ability to attract people who would not typically be involved in conversations of race in a public forum, such as lower-class individuals, speaks to her ability to attract the attention of many. She soon decided to move the meetings into her own living room, which required attendees to literally cross the unspoken division between the races. At the time, there was a prevalent belief against White people entering the homes of Black people as they were believed to be dirty. Cannady rejected this idea and saw her home as a place where the destruction of racial separation would be possible.[33] Her use of her home to fight against racist views and force interracial interaction is a groundbreaking aspect of her work, as is her involvement of women and other minorities in the conversation. Cannady truly valued inclusion in the discussion of race, and pushed boundaries exactly as Du Bois had imagined.

31 Mangun, *A Force for Change*, 101–102.
32 Mangun, *A Force for Change*, 102.
33 Mangun, *A Force for Change*, 102.

Fig. 3. E. D. Cannady home at 26th & Brazee in Portland, about 1911. Oregon Historical Society Research Library, OrHi 638662.

CANNADY AND THE BIRTH OF A NATION

One of Cannady's greatest campaigns was her opposition to the showing of the racist movie *The Birth of a Nation*. This film is a highly controversial one, praised for its cinematography while being highly criticized for depicting "the most virulently racist imagery ever to appear in a motion picture" that depicts African Americans as "sex-crazed animals… and the Ku Klux Klan as an army of heroes, gallantly riding to the defense of the nation."[34] It is therefore quite clear why Cannady detested the movie and took up arms against the showing of it in her city. *The Advocate* described the film as "a treacherous, dangerous attack on the minority who have 'equal representation' in said theatres and performances."[35] Cannady and other Portland NAACP

[34] David Kehr, "The Birth of a Nation," The Library of Congress, 2002, https://www.loc.gov/static/programs/national-film-preservation-board/documents/birth_nation.pdf.

[35] Cannady and William Pickens, *The Advocate*, October 31, 1931.

members brought the issue of the film to attention through a letter to the mayor. Not long after, a letter by Cannady protesting the film was published by two Portland newspapers on the grounds of its racist imagery and depiction of the KKK as heroes. Along with other members of her NAACP chapter, Cannady lobbied the city council against the showing of the movie in Portland theaters. She wound up being unsuccessful in her protests, and the movie was shown upon its initial release. A subsequent re-run in 1918 was heavily protested by her, resulting in the removal of some more objectionable scenes from the film. They came close to convincing the mayor to halt it, however, wound up unsuccessful time and again across subsequent re-releases.[36] While it is hard to count the exact impact of her actions, her over 15 years of protests undoubtedly limited the showing of the film in Portland, a success that gained her great notoriety on the West Coast.[37] Cannady's enduring fight against the film highlights her dedication to the cause, as well as her unwillingness to give up the fight for race relations in Portland, and fell in line with a greater movement by the national NAACP.[38] As Du Bois had imagined, she used her position to lobby for greater justice and equality. She spoke out for those who could not, and sought the treatment she believed that her race deserved.

CONCLUSION

Beatrice Morrow Cannady was a true protégé of the Talented Tenth. Her prioritization of connecting the races on as many levels as possible was an integral part of her movement, exactly as Du Bois had outlined. Her actions were recognized by many, including Du Bois through his invitation to the Pan-African Congress, as being key to the fight for civil rights on the West Coast. By speaking out against discrimination in its various forms and seeking change through increasing interracial connections and knowledge, Cannady leaves a legacy of progress.

---

36 Mangun, *A Force for Change*, 123–133.

37 Taylor and Moore, *African American Women Confront the West*, 195.

38 For more information regarding the fight against the showing of *The Birth of a Nation*, Mary Childs Nerney was the National NAACP Secretary who wrote heavily against it. Her perspective on the film, including her rejection of edits made to it in an attempt to have it considered a less-racist portrayal, is highly noteworthy. See: "Protest against The Birth of a Nation," Multnomah County Library, April 7–June 21, 1915, https://gallery.multcolib.org/document/protest-against-birth-nation.

While this paper largely focuses on Cannady's advocacy through speech and *the Advocate*, she did much more than what was outlined here. She pushed boundaries for herself, visible through her graduation from Northwestern School of Law[39] that earned her a position among the first African American female lawyers and a greater position among the Talented Tenth. Always pushing the norm, Cannady never settled for what was expected of the African American. She was a key figure of the fight for change, largely following the blueprint of what was expected of the Talented Tenth by informing and sharing African American life with other races. Beloved by many, Cannady and Du Bois' legacy require those in power to use their positions for the good of all. They inspire others to push the boundaries of what is "normal" in society and fight for the right thing.

Bibliography

Allen, Cain. "Beatrice Morrow Cannady." Oregon History Project, 2002. https://www.oregonhistoryproject.org/articles/historical-records/beatrice-morrow-cannady/.

Black in Oregon: 1840–1870. "National and Oregon Chronology of Events." Oregon Secretary of State. Accessed February 23, 2026. http://sos.oregon.gov/archives/exhibits/black-history/Pages/context/chronology.aspx.

Cannady, Beatrice. *Scrapbook of Beatrice Cannady: Originally Owned by Ivan Cannady, Los Angeles*. Microfilm. Knight Library, University of Oregon, Eugene, OR.

Cannady, E. D., and Mrs. E. D. Cannady. *The Advocate* (Portland), 1929–1933. http://bibpurl.oclc.org/web/97931.

Du Bois, William Edward Burghardt. "The Talented Tenth." In *The Negro Problem*, edited by Booker T. Washington. James Pott and Company, 1909. https://search.alexanderstreet.com/view/work/bibliographic_entity|bibliographic_details|4392186.

Goeringer, Carrie. "Harmon Foundation film 'The Negro and Art.'" US National Archives, July 22, 2013. https://unwritten-record.blogs.archives.gov/2013/07/22/harmon-foundation-film-the-negro-and-art/.

---

[39] Cain Allen, "Beatrice Morrow Cannady," Oregon History Project, 2002, https://www.oregonhistoryproject.org/articles/historical-records/beatrice-morrow-cannady/.

Goshorn, Michelle L. “Susie Revels Cayton: ‘The Part She Played.’” The Seattle Civil Rights and Labor History Project at the University of Washington. Accessed February 24, 2026. https://depts.washington.edu/civilr/susie_cayton.htm.

Kehr, David. “The Birth of a Nation.” The Library of Congress, 2002. https://www.loc.gov/static/programs/national-film-preservation-board/documents/birth_nation.pdf.

Mangun, Kimberley. *A Force for Change: Beatrice Morrow Cannady & the Struggle for Civil Rights in Oregon, 1912–1936*. Oregon State University Press, 2010.

“National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP).” The Martin Luther King, Jr. Research and Education Institute. Accessed March 9, 2026. https://kinginstitute.stanford.edu/national-association-advancement-colored-people-naacp.

Oregon Secretary of State. “State of Oregon: Woman Suffrage — Beatrice Morrow Cannady (1889–1974).” Accessed February 23, 2026. https://sos.oregon.gov/archives/exhibits/suffrage/Pages/bio/cannady.aspx.

“Protest against The Birth of a Nation.” Multnomah County Library, April 7–June 21, 1915. https://gallery.multcolib.org/document/protest-against-birth-nation.

Taylor, Quintard. “Beatrice Morrow Cannady (1889–1974).” *The Oregon Encyclopedia*. Accessed April 21, 2026. https://www.oregonencyclopedia.org/articles/cannady_beatrice_morrow/.

Taylor, Quintard. *The Forging of a Black Community: Seattle’s Central District, from 1870 through the Civil Rights Era*. University of Washington Press, 1994.

Taylor, Quintard, and Shirley Ann Wilson Moore. *African American Women Confront the West: 1600–2000*. University of Oklahoma Press, 2003.

Widespread Anti-Library Sentiments and the First Free Public Library in Hillsboro, Oregon

Meghan E. Hill

In the early twentieth century, many new public libraries were constructed across the United States, including thirty in Oregon. An important figure driving this development was the industrialist Andrew Carnegie, who funded 1,679 public libraries in total, including many of the new libraries in Oregon. Many, but not all, Oregon citizens welcomed these new libraries. As historians have shown, among the critics, a main concern was cost. But anti-library arguments were not limited to financial concerns. In this paper, I examine other aspects of the pushback that have been less well examined in the historical literature. To do this, I draw on professional journals published annually by the American Library Association (ALA), newspaper articles from Hillsboro and other Oregon cities, and correspondence between the Hillsboro Library Committee and the Carnegie Corporation. The ALA journals detail happenings in libraries across the United States, with a handful of reports on the state of library systems in Oregon, which provide context for the newspaper articles and correspondence. The *Hillsboro Independent* and *Hillsboro Argus* contain arguments for and against public libraries from 1901 to 1915, which shed light on how the opinions of Hillsboro citizens shifted throughout the beginning of the century. Other Oregon newspapers contain similar articles, which showcase widespread anti-library sentiments. I argue that Oregon saw a trend of anti-library beliefs unrelated to taxation in the early twentieth century, which has not been previously discussed by scholars. I focus specifically on Hillsboro, where multiple citizens published their arguments against public libraries, while also discussing the larger pattern in the state as a whole.[1]

---

[1] "Andrew Carnegie's Story," Carnegie Corporation of New York, 2015, https://www.carnegie.org/interactives/foundersstory/#!/; Jim Scheppke, "Carnegie Libraries in Oregon," Oregon Encyclopedia, updated November 10, 2025, https://www.oregonencyclopedia.org/articles/carnegie_libraries_in_oregon/.

Existing scholarship concerning both the national and local history of the anti-library movement has focused most on financial arguments, specifically anti-tax arguments, and has barely treated other issues. The Portland Public Library and Library Association of Portland are explored in two essays by Cheryl Gunselman. The first, entitled "'Illumino' for All," explores the opening of the Library Association of Portland from 1900–1903.[2] Gunselman argues that the strength of the public library movement in the United States was significant in the opening of the Library Association, as it was able to reach Portland, which was quite isolated at the time. The second, "Pioneering Free Library Service for the City, 1864–1902," similarly gives a history of the Library Association of Portland and details the opening of the Portland Public Library.[3] In this second essay, Gunselman discusses pushback related to taxation against the establishment of public library services in Portland. She claims that there were "two objections" against free libraries: "the risk of political corruption" and that "individuals place a higher value on a service that they pay for, even if the payment is minimal."[4] If libraries were funded through taxation, they might have become a "political instrument," and books or other materials purchased by an individual were respected more than something acquired for free (disregarding money given through taxes) in a library.[5]

The Oregon State Library is investigated by Jim Scheppke in his essay entitled "Research Files: The Origins of the Oregon State Library."[6] Scheppke argues that "a number of … historic trends converged in Oregon in 1905 and led to the establishment of the Oregon Library Commission, today's Oregon State Library."[7] The goal of the Commission was to give guidance to any communities wishing to establish public libraries. Scheppke discusses traveling libraries,

---

2 Cheryl Gunselman, "'Illumino' for All: Opening the Library Association of Portland to the Public, 1900–1903," *Libraries & Culture* 36, no. 3 (2001): 432–464, https://www.jstor.org/stable/25548936.

3 Cheryl Gunselman, "Pioneering Free Library Service for the City, 1864–1902: The Library Association of Portland and the Portland Public Library," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 103, no. 3 (2002): 320–337, https://www.jstor.org/stable/20615252.

4 Gunselman, "Pioneering Free Library Service," 326.

5 Gunselman, "Pioneering Free Library Service," 326.

6 Jim Scheppke, "Research Files: The Origins of the Oregon State Library," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 107, no. 1 (2006): 130–140, https://doi.org/10.1353/ohq.2006.0040.

7 Scheppke, "Research Files," 131.

meant to "satisfy the need and stimulate the desire for reading materials until local public libraries could be established" and "stimulate interest in public-library development."[8] After the establishment of the Portland Public Library, others developed in "major cities such as Salem and Eugene," but "communities around the state lacked the support" needed for organizing public libraries of their own.[9]

Michael Kevane and William Sundstrom assess the widespread emergence of public libraries in their essay "The Development of Public Libraries in the United States, 1870–1930."[10] They utilize data from library surveys conducted by the federal Bureau of Education to argue that library expansion was intertwined with urban development, and often occurred most frequently in areas with high levels of immigration and ethnic diversity. They suggest that an increase in people residing in towns over larger cities had a positive impact on the amount of public libraries. Kevane and Sundstrom also claim that the "philanthropy of Andrew Carnegie played an important role in the spread of public libraries."[11] While this essay is not focused specifically on Oregon, the authors' claims can be taken into consideration regarding the history of public libraries in Oregon.

The existing scholarship provides important context for the opening of the Hillsboro Public Library, and paints a picture of the widespread emergence of the institutions in the early twentieth century. However, the literature overlooks the variety of arguments made against the opening of public libraries throughout Oregon. Any pushback mentioned by the authors is related to libraries being funded through taxation. These arguments are, of course, important to consider, but they do not paint the entire picture of anti-library sentiments during the early twentieth century. This period saw a wide variety of beliefs regarding the institutions in many towns across Oregon. While this paper focuses specifically on Hillsboro's relationship to libraries throughout the early twentieth century, its anti-library arguments will

8 Scheppke, "Research Files," 135.
9 Scheppke, "Research Files," 138.
10 Michael Kevane and William A. Sundstrom, "The Development of Public Libraries in the United States, 1870–1930: A Quantitative Assessment," *Information & Culture* 49, no. 2 (2014): 117–144, https://dx.doi.org/10.1353/lac.2014.0009.
11 Kevane and Sundstrom, "The Development of Public Libraries," 130.

be analyzed within the context of the larger trend of similar beliefs throughout Oregon, which has not previously been discussed in depth.

The year 1901 marked a significant turning point in the increase in public libraries across Oregon. According to an article in the 1905 edition of the American Library Association's *Library Journal*, written by Mary F. Isom, an Oregon librarian, the "first legislation on libraries in Oregon took place in 1901 when a public library law … [was] passed."[12] This law allowed public libraries to be funded through taxation, and gave permission for cities to enter into a contract with already established libraries instead of needing to organize a new one. Isom went on to explain that in 1905 Oregon had "only three free public libraries," being in Portland, Eugene, and Salem.[13] She then listed other types of libraries found in other cities, including free reading rooms and subscription and college libraries, none of which were located in Hillsboro. Despite the scarcity of public libraries, or perhaps because of it, "interest in the library question [was] not limited to these few towns, the community at large [was] quite awake, asking questions and seeking advice."[14] A 1909 report on Oregon libraries in the *Library Journal* states that the "number of public libraries in the state has increased from three … to 18, 14 of which are supported by taxation."[15] It was said in this report that many of these new libraries [were] the "direct result" of traveling libraries.[16] This 1909 journal and another in 1911 gave brief accounts of traveling libraries in Oregon, reporting the number of them around the state, which increases from 1909 to 1911.[17] Neither report provided further details regarding the traveling libraries, but a 1913 *Library Journal* explained that they were "branches of the commission library," referring to the Oregon Library Commission.[18]

---

[12] Mary F. Isom, "Library Conditions in Oregon: What the A.L.A. Can Do," *The Library Journal: Official Organ of the American Library Association* 30, no. 5 (1905): 279–281, https://archive.org/details/sim_library-journal_1905-05_30_5.
[13] Isom, "Library Conditions in Oregon," 280.
[14] Isom, "Library Conditions in Oregon," 280.
[15] "Oregon Library Commission," *The Library Journal* 34, no. 4 (1909): 175, https://archive.org/details/sim_library-journal_1909-04_34_4.
[16] "Oregon Library Commission," 175.
[17] "Oregon Library Commission," *The Library Journal* 34, no. 4 (1909): 175; "Oregon Library Commission," *The Library Journal* 36, no. 4 (1911): 203.
[18] "Oregon Library Commission," *The Library Journal* 38, no. 4 (1913): 223.

Shortly after the Oregon library law was passed, the editor of the *Hillsboro Independent*, D.M.C. Gault, published an article arguing that a public library should not be constructed in Hillsboro.[19] Gault explained that Portland had been offered a $100,000 grant from Carnegie to construct a free public library, and imagined what would happen if "$2000 [were] offered to Hillsboro for a library building."[20] The editor argued that Hillsboro could not "afford" to accept such a grant, given the amount of money that would be needed to purchase books and maintain the institution.[21] For context, Carnegie grants went solely toward the construction of the library building, not the acquisition of materials or upkeep of the library.[22] He then explored the idea that public libraries of any kind were not beneficial to the youth (especially young men) of the town. Gault proposed that the institutions take young men away from their homes, where they should be, and as such the project of constructing a library should not be undertaken. Gault argued that "small home libraries and home reading should be encouraged," particularly because of the high cost of obtaining books.[23] If an individual did not own a book, and must borrow a book from a friend or neighbor, they were forced to think about the subject of interest while waiting for it, which means the "subject is fastened in the mind firmer" than if they could get the book quickly.[24] If a public library were to be established, this period of waiting and analyzing would vanish according to Gault, an idea also explored in Edward Luce's response to Gault's argument, published a week later.[25]

Luce similarly pointed out the negative ramifications of a free public library, noting how much literature young people have access to: it is more "than they can or care to use."[26] He argued that denying oneself of as "much [literature] as possible and ruminat[ing]" over what has already been "hastily" read is the wiser approach to

[19] D.M.C. Gault, "Gifts and Their Burdens," *Hillsboro Independent*, April 5, 1901, Historic Oregon Newspapers, University of Oregon Libraries.
[20] Gault, "Gifts and Their Burdens."
[21] Gault, "Gifts and Their Burdens."
[22] "Carnegie Public Library, Hillsboro, Oregon," Carnegie Corporation of New York Digital Archive, Columbia University Libraries, accessed November 23, 2025, https://dx.doi.org/10.7916/d8-jqyj-jr91.
[23] Gault, "Gifts and Their Burdens."
[24] Gault, "Gifts and Their Burdens."
[25] Edward C. Luce, "The Fee Library," *Hillsboro Independent*, April 12, 1901, Historic Oregon Newspapers, University of Oregon Libraries.
[26] Luce, "The Fee Library."

acquiring knowledge.[27] Further, having teachers "inform youth" of the good books to read was a better option than spending time in a library, so they may "dodge … [the] trash."[28] Additionally, Luce argued that there simply was not much use for a library when most citizens were working all day: there are "few book-worms, some old men past the age of usefulness, some giddy young things in the fiction department, and some struggling professional men using the library."[29] Other people, however, were actively working and putting all of their energy toward "making a living for themselves," and therefore would not spend time in a public library.[30]

Other anti-library arguments were published in newspapers throughout Oregon. In 1901, the *Morning Oregonian* in Portland published a copy of an article from Salem's *Capital Journal*, which argued that there was "not as much merit in free libraries as [was] generally conceded."[31] Similarly to Luce, this article claims that there was little need for a library for working men, who either did not have time to spend in such an institution, or already owned books. This idea was furthered by the argument that only those whose "time [was] worth nothing" or were a part of the "great army of nobodies" would enjoy the "perfect storehouse of recreation" in the library.[32] Two *Coos Bay Times* articles explained common arguments against libraries. The first, published in 1908, stated that the idea that "public libraries are opening the doors to light and useless books" and are therefore a bad influence is a frequently heard "objection."[33] In 1911, the *Times* listed multiple reasons for the opposition of some citizens.[34] The library should have been paid for by citizens (not Carnegie), people should not have been taxed for something they did "not want and [would] never use," and having free books for the community "discourage[s] the

[27] Luce, "The Fee Library."
[28] Luce, "The Fee Library."
[29] Luce, "The Fee Library."
[30] Luce, "The Fee Library."
[31] "For Free Library," *Capital Journal* (Salem, Oregon), as cited in *Morning Oregonian* (Portland, Oregon), August 31, 1901, Historic Oregon Newspapers, University of Oregon Libraries.
[32] "For Free Library."
[33] "Some Reasons for Having a Free Public Library," *Coos Bay Times*, March 3, 1908, Historic Oregon Newspapers, University of Oregon Libraries.
[34] "Prosperity in Free Libraries," *Coos Bay Times*, February 4, 1911, Historic Oregon Newspapers, University of Oregon Libraries.

purchase of books for home use."[35] Additionally, there was "no evidence that free public libraries improve[d] the community materially or morally," fiction was "injurious" to readers, and most arguments in favor of libraries were based in emotion.[36] In 1913, the *East Oregonian* in Pendleton published an opposition to Carnegie libraries, on the basis of disliking Carnegie himself, rather than public libraries.[37] The article claimed that Carnegie's money was tainted, so the people of Pendleton should pay for the library themselves with their "honest" money, meaning Carnegie did not obtain his money in a way the author approved of.[38]

It was not until 1907 that an article was published in the *Hillsboro Independent* arguing for the importance of public libraries.[39] In an article entitled "Libraries and Happiness," J.C. Dana argued that the "great purpose of a public library is to promote and unite intelligence."[40] Dana went on to explore the vast knowledge one can acquire in a library, and explained their "great" belief in reading.[41] Dana argued that the best thing we can do for our own happiness is to learn, which is why libraries are of utmost importance. In this 1907 paper, it is also reported that Cornelia Marvin, the secretary of the Oregon State Library Commission, was in town to work with the Hillsboro library board on "establish[ing] a free library in Hillsboro."[42] This report also argued that a "good library … ought to be appreciated" in the coming "long winter evenings."[43] This paper showcases a significant point in the history of the Hillsboro Public Library; it contains the first mention of plans for a future public library in the town, and contains two separate arguments in favor of libraries.

Over the next few years, multiple library-related reports were made in the *Hillsboro Argus*, another Hillsboro newspaper. From July 1909 to December 1910, three articles discussing traveling libraries are

---

35 "Prosperity in Free Libraries."

36 "Prosperity in Free Libraries."

37 "Opposes Carnegie Library," *East Oregonian*, January 2, 1913, Historic Oregon Newspapers, University of Oregon Libraries.

38 "Opposes Carnegie Library."

39 J.C. Dana, "Libraries and Happiness," *Hillsboro Independent*, November 8, 1907, Historic Oregon Newspapers, University of Oregon Libraries.

40 Dana, "Libraries and Happiness."

41 Dana, "Libraries and Happiness."

42 *Hillsboro Independent*, November 8, 1907, Historic Oregon Newspapers, University of Oregon Libraries.

43 *Hillsboro Independent*, November 8, 1907.

published; the first claims Hillsboro should have a traveling library, and the other two report that traveling libraries have been sent to nearby towns.[44] These reports argued that everyone in Oregon should be aware of and utilize these books.[45] In 1913, the *Argus* reported that a “circulating library” had been “installed in our book department,” though more context as to what or where the “book department” is was not provided.[46] Regardless, this library was explained as providing patrons the ability to read new fiction books as soon as they were released for a “small expense.”[47] This, of course, means this library was not a free public library, but it was the first instance of a seemingly permanent library reported in Hillsboro.

Toward the end of 1913, the *Hillsboro Argus* began reporting on a future Carnegie Library in the town. In November, it was announced that an architect from Portland was in Hillsboro to “confer[] with the Carnegie committee, on the question of the proposed library building.”[48] It was reported that the project was possible because of the city’s agreement to support it through taxation. Brief updates were relayed during the next few months, including the plans for the building being approved by the Carnegie Corporation and that construction would begin at some point in 1914.[49] In April 1914, the *Argus* announced that the library committee had been granted $10,000 from the Carnegie Corporation.[50] The article also argued that “Hillsboro has long needed an institution of this kind,” and the cost and work of maintaining it would be justified.[51] Until December 1914, any mentions of the public library in the *Argus* were brief reports on the progress of its construction. On December 3rd, it was announced that the library will be “turned over to the city,” and that “various

---

[44] *Hillsboro Argus*, July 29, 1909; “Traveling Library is Sent to Orenco,” *Hillsboro Argus*, November 24, 1910; *Hillsboro Argus*, December 22, 1910. All Historic Oregon Newspapers, University of Oregon Libraries.

[45] *Hillsboro Argus*, November 1910; *Hillsboro Argus*, December 1910.

[46] “An Announcement,” *Hillsboro Argus*, November 27, 1913, Historic Oregon Newspapers, University of Oregon Libraries.

[47] “An Announcement.”

[48] *Hillsboro Argus*, November 13, 1913, Historic Oregon Newspapers, University of Oregon Libraries.

[49] *Hillsboro Argus*, February 19, 1914, Historic Oregon Newspapers, University of Oregon Libraries.

[50] “Money Now Ready for Public Library,” *Hillsboro Argus*, April 16, 1914, Historic Oregon Newspapers, University of Oregon Libraries.

[51] “Money Now Ready for Public Library.”

movements are already on foot to raise funds" for purchasing books.[52] On December 10th, it was reported that the library's dedication ceremony was met with enthusiasm, a full house, and many donations of money and books.[53] Seven months later, "the desire of the readers of Hillsboro [was] being fulfilled," and the number of books in the library was rapidly increasing.[54]

The Carnegie Corporation of New York's digital map, "Carnegie Libraries Across America," showcases every library funded by Carnegie.[55] Each location contains an archive of correspondence between the Carnegie Corporation and that town or library committee condensed into a single document. The Hillsboro archive is comprised of the Hillsboro Library Committee's application to the Carnegie Corporation for a grant, and the correspondence that followed.[56] On September 5th, 1913, F.A. Bailey applied for a Carnegie grant of $10,000 on behalf of the Hillsboro Library Committee (of which he was chairman) to construct a free public library. In a letter dated the same day, from Bailey and M.H. Stevenson (secretary of the Hillsboro Library Committee) to James Bertram (secretary of the Carnegie Corporation), it was reported that there was "an urgent necessity for a Library Building" in Hillsboro.[57] In his next letter, Bailey explained that Hillsboro does not have a public library, but did have multiple private libraries.[58] Additionally, there were "two ladies organizations" and other clubs which had pledged their support for the public library.[59]

After this initial correspondence, the letters between the Carnegie Corporation and Hillsboro focused on the plans for the building itself, which are not in this archive, though were described at length throughout the letters. Because grants from Carnegie were dedicated to the construction of the library, it was necessary for the Hillsboro committee to have their plans approved by the Corporation. There

52 "Public Dedication of Carnegie Library," *Hillsboro Argus*, December 3, 1914, Historic Oregon Newspapers, University of Oregon Libraries.
53 "Carnegie Library is Now Dedicated," *Hillsboro Argus*, December 10, 1914, Historic Oregon Newspapers, University of Oregon Libraries.
54 "Carnegie Library is Rapidly Increasing," *Hillsboro Argus*, July 15, 1915, Historic Oregon Newspapers, University of Oregon Libraries.
55 "Carnegie Libraries Across America," Carnegie Corporation of New York, accessed November 23, 2025, https://carnegie-libraries.carnegie.org/map/.
56 "Carnegie Public Library, Hillsboro, Oregon."
57 "Carnegie Public Library, Hillsboro, Oregon," 3.
58 "Carnegie Public Library, Hillsboro, Oregon," 4.
59 "Carnegie Public Library, Hillsboro, Oregon," 4.

were multiple disagreements or miscommunications between the Library Committee and the Corporation over various aspects of the plans, before the plans were approved and the grant released to the Committee in April 1914.

The American Library Association *Library Journals*, newspapers from Hillsboro and other towns, and correspondence between the Hillsboro Library Committee and the Carnegie Corporation showcase Hillsboro's relationship to public libraries and widespread anti-library arguments based on ideas besides taxation. The *Library Journals* provide information important for understanding the newspaper articles and correspondence by situating them in the larger context of Oregon. This context includes information about the 1901 Oregon law allowing public libraries to be funded through taxation and traveling libraries throughout Oregon.

Newspaper articles throughout Oregon document the opinions of citizens regarding public libraries, and Hillsboro's newspapers also report on the progress of their library once it is planned. As with the *Hillsboro Independent* articles, newspapers from other Oregon towns argue that public libraries should not be popularized for reasons besides or in addition to not wanting to pay taxes for them. The *Coos Bay Times* articles are not themselves arguing against libraries, but are listing commonly heard reasons for not supporting the institutions. Regardless, these articles show that anti-library arguments were widespread throughout Oregon towns during the early twentieth century, whether they were published in newspapers or not. The *Coos Bay Times* and *East Oregonian* arguments were published many years after the *Hillsboro Independent* articles were, showcasing the longevity of these arguments across the state. Anti-library arguments were not unique to Hillsboro, but were part of a larger trend of such opinions in Oregon. Of course, the arguments for or against libraries published in the papers are not necessarily representative of the opinions of all citizens of their respective towns. In fact, these beliefs were unpopular to some degree at the time, as stated by the *East Oregonian* at the beginning of their argument: "I am arrayed with the minority," implying that most people were in support of the advancement of public libraries.[60] Despite this, these arguments

[60] "Opposes Carnegie Library."

persisted throughout the early twentieth century in many towns throughout Oregon.

The later Hillsboro newspaper articles and the letters between the Hillsboro Library Committee and the Carnegie Corporation detail the process of opening the town's library and provide a timeline of the project. Though both document the same larger project, the articles and correspondence fill in parts of the story which the other is missing. The articles provide brief updates on the process of planning the library, but the letters showcase this task in depth. On the other hand, the newspapers exhibit opinions of people outside the library committee and the events following the Carnegie grant being secured, which are not shown in the letters. All in all, the *Library Journals*, newspapers, and correspondence come together to illustrate Hillsboro's journey to securing a public library, the changes in opinion in the town over fifteen years, and the anti-library sentiments across Oregon in the early twentieth century.

The history of the opening of the Hillsboro Public Library and the early twentieth century trend of anti-library beliefs in Oregon have been researched utilizing the American Library Association's *Library Journals*, newspaper articles from Hillsboro and other Oregon towns, and correspondence between the Carnegie Corporation and the Hillsboro Library Board. I have argued that Hillsboro's relationship to public libraries is part of a larger pattern of citizens arguing against the promotion of the institutions. The journey of the Hillsboro Public Library and the wider trend of beliefs that public libraries should not be established are notable in the history of public libraries in Oregon, which have yet to be discussed by scholars.

Bibliography

Primary Sources

"An Announcement." *Hillsboro Argus* (Hillsboro, Oregon), November 27, 1913. Historic Oregon Newspapers, University of Oregon Libraries.

"Carnegie Library is Now Dedicated." *Hillsboro Argus* (Hillsboro, Oregon), December 10, 1914. Historic Oregon Newspapers, University of Oregon Libraries.

"Carnegie Library is Rapidly Increasing." *Hillsboro Argus* (Hillsboro, Oregon), July 15, 1915. Historic Oregon Newspapers, University of Oregon Libraries.

"Carnegie Public Library, Hillsboro, Oregon." Carnegie Corporation of New York Digital Archive, Columbia University Libraries. Accessed November 23, 2025. https://dx.doi.org/10.7916/d8-jqyj-jr91.

Dana, J.C. "Libraries and Happiness." *Hillsboro Independent* (Hillsboro, Oregon), November 8, 1907. Historic Oregon Newspapers, University of Oregon Libraries.

"For Free Library." *Capital Journal* (Salem, Oregon), as cited in *Morning Oregonian* (Portland, Oregon), August 31, 1901. Historic Oregon Newspapers, University of Oregon Libraries.

Gault, D.M.C. "Gifts and Their Burdens." *Hillsboro Independent* (Hillsboro, Oregon), April 5, 1901. Historic Oregon Newspapers, University of Oregon Libraries.

Hillsboro Argus (Hillsboro, Oregon), December 22, 1910. Historic Oregon Newspapers, University of Oregon Libraries.

Hillsboro Argus (Hillsboro, Oregon), February 19, 1914. Historic Oregon Newspapers, University of Oregon Libraries.

Hillsboro Argus (Hillsboro, Oregon), July 29, 1909. Historic Oregon Newspapers, University of Oregon Libraries.

Hillsboro Argus (Hillsboro, Oregon), November 13, 1913. Historic Oregon Newspapers, University of Oregon Libraries.

Hillsboro Independent (Hillsboro, Oregon), November 8, 1907. Historic Oregon Newspapers, University of Oregon Libraries.

Isom, Mary F. "Library Conditions in Oregon: What the A.L.A. Can Do." *The Library Journal: Official Organ of the American Library Association* 30, no. 5 (1905): 279–281. https://archive.org/details/sim_library-journal_1905-05_30_5.

Luce, Edward C. "The Fee Library." *Hillsboro Independent* (Hillsboro, Oregon), April 12, 1901. Historic Oregon Newspapers, University of Oregon Libraries.

"Money Now Ready for Public Library." *Hillsboro Argus* (Hillsboro, Oregon), April 16, 1914. Historic Oregon Newspapers, University of Oregon Libraries.

"Opposes Carnegie Library." *East Oregonian* (Pendleton, Oregon), January 2, 1913. Historic Oregon Newspapers, University of Oregon Libraries.

"Oregon Library Commission." *The Library Journal* 34, no. 4 (1909): 175. https://archive.org/details/sim_library-journal_1909-04_34_4.

"Oregon Library Commission." *The Library Journal* 36, no. 4 (1911): 203. https://archive.org/details/sim_library-journal_1911-04_36_4.

"Oregon Library Commission." *The Library Journal* 38, no. 4 (1913): 223. https://archive.org/details/sim_library-journal_1913-04_38_4.

"Prosperity in Free Libraries." *Coos Bay Times* (Marshfield, Oregon), February 4, 1911. Historic Oregon Newspapers, University of Oregon Libraries.

"Public Dedication of Carnegie Library." *Hillsboro Argus* (Hillsboro, Oregon), December 3, 1914. Historic Oregon Newspapers, University of Oregon Libraries.

"Some Reasons for Having a Free Public Library." *Coos Bay Times* (Marshfield, Oregon), March 3, 1908. Historic Oregon Newspapers, University of Oregon Libraries.

“Traveling Library is Sent to Orenco.” *Hillsboro Argus* (Hillsboro, Oregon), November 24, 1910. Historic Oregon Newspapers, University of Oregon Libraries.

Secondary Sources

“Andrew Carnegie’s Story.” Carnegie Corporation of New York, 2015. https://www.carnegie.org/interactives/foundersstory/#!/.

“Carnegie Libraries Across America.” Carnegie Corporation of New York. Accessed November 23, 2025. https://carnegie-libraries.carnegie.org/map/.

Gunselman, Cheryl. “‘Illumino’ for All: Opening the Library Association of Portland to the Public, 1900–1903.” *Libraries & Culture* 36, no. 3 (2001): 432–464. https://www.jstor.org/stable/25548936.

Gunselman, Cheryl. “Pioneering Free Library Service for the City, 1864–1902: The Library Association of Portland and the Portland Public Library.” *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 103, no. 3 (2002): 320–337. https://www.jstor.org/stable/20615252.

Kevane, Michael, and William A. Sundstrom. “The Development of Public Libraries in the United States, 1870–1930: A Quantitative Assessment.” *Information & Culture* 49, no. 2 (2014): 117–144. https://dx.doi.org/10.1353/lac.2014.0009.

Scheppke, Jim. “Carnegie Libraries in Oregon.” Oregon Encyclopedia. Updated November 10, 2025. https://www.oregonencyclopedia.org/articles/carnegie_libraries_in_oregon/.

Scheppke, Jim. “Research Files: The Origins of the Oregon State Library.” *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 107, no. 1 (2006): 130–140. https://doi.org/10.1353/ohq.2006.0040.

An Examination of Use of Force at Portland State University on May 11th, 1970

Rivers Hylton

Something unprecedented for Portland State University (PSU) students happened on May 11th, 1970. During a peaceful student strike, where students were protesting the Kent State killings, students were clubbed down by police, leaving 32 injured and radicalizing many who were witness to events. PSU was unique in their anti-war protesting due to the cohesive and non-violent nature that was present throughout the duration of the war. While violent demonstrations were becoming more common during this time, PSU remained non-violent.[1] Despite this restraint, law enforcement responded with force. Indeed, James Gleason, the former publications officer for PSU stated “I can say without any contradiction that the police purely and simply attacked the students with to me, no apparent reason other than we’re going to teach those damn students the lesson.”[2]

Unlike today, Portland was a rather conservative city in 1970[3] — led by Republican Governor Tom McCall and conservative democratic Mayor Terry Schrunk. Due to this conservative nature, anti-war protests were not nearly as large as they were in other places like San Francisco, New York, Chicago and L.A. The small size of these “antiwarriors” (as Doug Weiskopf calls the Portland protestors),[4] is significant because of the dramatic police response. Where state violence was more common in larger or violent protests[5] it calls into question the reasoning behind attacking such a small, peaceful movement. I will argue that unlike some incidents where police or

---

1 Sarah Wittman, “The PSU Student Strike: A Legacy of Collaboration and Nonviolent Protest” (University of Oregon, 2024), 7.

2 Portland State University, “The Seventh Day,” YouTube, 1970, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FSZ-i20Z8aE.

3 Carl Abbott, *Greater Portland: Urban Life and Landscape in the Pacific Northwest* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015).

4 Doug Weiskopf, *Notes from an American Antiwarrior: Reflections of an Unapologetic Vietnam War Protest Organizer* (2025), 9.

5 Mark Rudd, *Underground: My Life with SDS and the Weathermen* (William Morrow, 2009).

National Guard acted preemptively out of fear, this violence was not a spontaneous response to disorder, but the result of deliberate decisions by city leadership, particularly Frank Ivancie, Terry Schrunk and Tom McCall, whose personal hostility towards protestors, combined with political pressure and prior patterns of repression, led them to authorize unnecessary force against a peaceful demonstration.

The small size of these protests also means that the literature available on this topic is somewhat limited due to lack of national attention. Fortunately, previous scholars from the University of Oregon have dedicated two academic papers to this topic, Sarah Wittman's undergraduate thesis[6] and Dory Hylton's dissertation.[7] Additionally, there is a brief discussion in Bill Nygren and Matt Nelson's *Radicals in the Rose City: Portland's Revolutionaries 1960–1975*.[8] Most importantly, one of the strike leaders, Doug Weiskopf, published a book[9] of his experience. In examining these sources, a gap in discussion of this event became clear: there was no thorough academic investigation into the reason the police attacked protestors outside of Weiskopf's perspective.

This paper seeks to address that gap by examining the political, institutional, social and personal context that led Ivancie, Schrunk, and McCall to cause the police response on May 11, 1970. Understanding why state violence emerged against peaceful demonstrators is not only historically significant but also relevant to contemporary issues such as the debate over military conscription. Because of the nature of ongoing violence between law enforcement and protest movements, analyzing this episode at PSU will contribute to the larger understanding of how and why authorities respond with force, especially in the absence of violence from demonstrators themselves.

KENT STATE AND THE NATIONAL CONTEXT

The Kent State killings on May 4th, 1970 resulted from a student protest against the Vietnam war's expansion into Cambodia. Three days prior, on May 1st, protestors had gotten into a confrontation with

[6] Wittman, "The PSU Student Strike."
[7] Dory J. Hylton, "The Portland State University Student Strike of May 1970: Student Protest as Social Drama" (PhD diss., University of Oregon, 1993).
[8] Bill Nygren and Matt Nelson, *Radicals in the Rose City: Portland's Revolutionaries 1960–1975* (Northwest History Press, 2013).
[9] Weiskopf, *Notes from an American Antiwarrior* (full citation above).

police downtown, built bonfires, thrown bottles at police cars and broken store windows, which had resulted in calls for the National Guard.[10] The National Guard was finally called in because, on May 2nd, protestors had set fire to the ROTC building on campus.[11] Despite the previous violence, the National Guard response on the 4th was disproportionate as the rally that was taking place was disorganized but peaceful — one person who was killed had their back turned and was fleeing.[12]

Protesting during this time was widespread, with at least one third of all U.S. campuses holding demonstrations in response to the Cambodian expansion.[13] Though protests were not something new — widespread demonstrations had been taking place since the beginning of the war and even before that with Civil Rights demonstrations beginning in 1954 — the Kent State killings marked a turning point in public opinion. Despite the overall peaceful nature of the Civil Rights Movement, there were occasionally outbursts of violence. Indeed, many of the student anti-war protestors took notes from the Civil Rights Movement, something that put many local and state administrations on high alert when it came to the Vietnam protests. Not every protest was peaceful: in 1967, in Albina, Oregon, there were two days of so-called “race riots” where Black community members “two to three hundred people threw bottles and rocks at automobiles and through store windows, while a few hurled firebombs through store windows causing $20,000 in damage at one grocery store and damaging dozens of others.”[14] Because of the destruction that extended into the second day, “police responded immediately to the flare-up. Mayor Terry Schrunk and Governor Tom McCall had alerted the National Guard and kept them close enough to respond within 10 to 15 minutes if they were needed.”[15] This shows a willingness to use force in an actually violent situation. As unrest grew across the country,

---

[10] Kent State University, “The May 4 Shootings at Kent State University: The Search for Historical Accuracy,” accessed March 6, 2026, https://www.kent.edu/may-4-historical-accuracy.

[11] Kent State University, “The May 4 Shootings at Kent State University.”

[12] Kent State University, “The May 4 Shootings at Kent State University.”

[13] Raymond J. Adamek and Jerry M. Lewis, “Social Control Violence and Radicalization: The Kent State Case,” *Social Forces* 51, no. 3 (1973): 342–347, https://doi.org/10.2307/2577139.

[14] Sarah Griffith and Trudy Flores, “Albina Riot, 1967,” Oregon History Project, 2002, https://www.oregonhistoryproject.org/articles/historical-records/albina-riot-1967/.

[15] Griffith and Flores, “Albina Riot, 1967.”

attention increasingly turned to the federal leadership that had escalated U.S. involvement in Vietnam.

Responsibility for escalating the Vietnam War fell on President Lyndon B. Johnson and Vice President Hubert Humphrey. The widespread movements scared LBJ, who knew that it would only encourage the Viet Cong and diminish the morale of troops.[16] Humphrey, privately, was somewhat against the war, but knew that in order to keep public support for it, he would need to publicly support it.[17] This public support for the war damaged his 1968 bid for president, with slogans like "Dump the Hump" becoming popular.[18] His campaign relied on a promise to stop the bombing in North Vietnam, where he admitted that "he would support the resumption of bombing if the North Vietnamese 'were to show bad faith.'"[19] Humphrey also has a disreputable past within Oregon. In September 1966, Humphrey came to Portland to deliver a speech to war supporters at the Sheraton Hotel. Outside, "one woman yelled 'stop the bomb, stop the war, bring the troops home!'" Police tried to get her to move and she fell, leading to more protestors moving in, where police subsequently injured 31 people and arrested several more from a crowd of around 200.[20][21]

Due to the lottery draft that Johnson introduced to continue the war, protests sparked up around college and high school campuses around the U.S. using tactics learned from the Civil Rights Movement.[22] Though not all remained peaceful: as Sarah Wittman notes, "movements like Students for a Democratic Society (SDS)… split due to ideological differences… [with some] turn[ing] towards violence."[23] One such group that came out of this split in 1969 was the Weatherman, who organized the Days of Rage in Chicago, which some members of the PSU protestors were arrested at.[24] Additionally, they

---

[16] Ted Finman and Stewart Macaulay, "Freedom to Dissent: The Vietnam Protests and the Words of Public Officials," *Wisconsin Law Review* 1966, no. 3 (1966): 632–723.
[17] APM Reports, "Hubert H. Humphrey — Campaign '68," accessed March 6, 2026, https://features.apmreports.org/arw/campaign68/e1.html.
[18] APM Reports, "Hubert H. Humphrey."
[19] Office of the Historian, "Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964–1968, Volume VII, Vietnam, September 1968–January 1969," 1969, https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1964-68v07/d40.
[20] Nygren and Nelson, *Radicals in the Rose City*, 53–54.
[21] Nygren and Nelson, *Radicals in the Rose City*, 53–54.
[22] Weiskopf, *Notes from an American Antiwarrior*, 2025.
[23] Wittman, "The PSU Student Strike," 7.
[24] Weiskopf, *Notes from an American Antiwarrior*, 23.

bombed several government sites from 1969–1970, with leading figures like Bernadine Dohrn appearing on the FBI's ten most wanted list.[25] Dohrn herself came to speak to the protestors at PSU in the late summer of 1968, where she kept protestors waiting and attempted to incite violence against General Westmoreland's speech that the protestors crashed at Weiskopf's suggestion.[26] Despite this direct pressure from a violent influence, PSU's "SDS chapter agreed to remain together after the national split, and continued well into the 1970s… [because of] a very strong commitment to nonviolent protest."[27]

Due to congressional support for the war, some senators made efforts to publicly shame the protestors to sway public opinion. Representative Teague of Texas in 1966 proposed a bill that would have outlawed protests against American policy when American troops are fighting.[28] Other legislators proposed legislative investigations of protestors.[29] Outside of legislation against protestors, the media initially framed the protestors as disgraceful. The Jackson Daily News called for action: "U.S. citizens who burn… draft cards and march against everything that the country stands for should be punished more than by mere heckling and jeering from on-lookers. This is the time for 'police' brutality if there ever were one."[30] However, as time went on and the outcome of the war became more grim, newspapers became more sympathetic to the cause.[31] The *Oregonian* followed this trend; Doug Weiskopf remembers that "Initially [they] gave us negative coverage, but that changed when [a] reporter… took an interest in us."[32]

While the student population was the main body of protestors, not all students and citizens believed what the protestors were doing was right. Counterpicketing was a common occurrence,[33] especially at PSU due to the conservative nature of the city.[34] At PSU, counterpicketers

---

25 Rudd, *Underground*.
26 Weiskopf, *Notes from an American Antiwarrior*, 25.
27 Wittman, "The PSU Student Strike," 7.
28 Finman and Macaulay, "Freedom to Dissent," 675.
29 Finman and Macaulay, "Freedom to Dissent," 671.
30 Finman and Macaulay, "Freedom to Dissent," 669.
31 Finman and Macaulay, "Freedom to Dissent," 663.
32 Weiskopf, *Notes from an American Antiwarrior*, 31.
33 Finman and Macaulay, "Freedom to Dissent," 667.
34 Weiskopf, *Notes from an American Antiwarrior*, 26.

were often referred to as “Jocks” and were made up of student-athletes and fraternity members.[35] The Jocks started their counter-protesting when the student newspaper *The Vanguard* became supportive of the student action against the war. Weiskopf recalls that “[the Jocks] raised funds from downtown Portland businessmen to launch their own off-campus newspaper… called … *The Times*, [with the] mission … to push back against what they saw as ‘over-represented campus leftists.’”[36] The Jocks would go on to play an important role in the events of May 11th.

TOM MCCALL

Tom McCall, the governor at the time, is generally lauded as a champion environmentalist. McCall was a supporter of the war.[37] What is not often discussed is his attempt to call in the National Guard on May 11th,[38] something that would have escalated the situation even more than the Riot Police. Weiskopf remembers that “McCall had called President Wolf[39] after the May 11th police attack on us in the Park Blocks to announce he was sending state national guard troops ‘to restore order.’”[40] The only thing that stopped the National Guard from being deployed was “Wolf threaten[ing] to publicly resign in protest if state guardsmen appeared at PSU.”[41] However, his role in this incident is relatively minor, with only the failed attempt to send in the National Guard implicating him. Although minor, to not mention this offer, as Weiskopf and President Wolf agree,[42] feels disrespectful to those who did experience violence and could have been another Kent State with one word.

TERRY SCHRUNK

Terry Schrunk played a much bigger role. Schrunk started out his career in the Air Force during WWII, and became sheriff of Portland

[35] Weiskopf, *Notes from an American Antiwarrior*, 26.
[36] Weiskopf, *Notes from an American Antiwarrior*, 26.
[37] Oregon History Project, “Tom McCall,” accessed March 6, 2026, https://oregonhist-ohp-dev.azurewebsites.net/articles/biographies/tom-mccall-biography/.
[38] Weiskopf, *Notes from an American Antiwarrior*, 60.
[39] The President of Portland State University.
[40] Weiskopf, *Notes from an American Antiwarrior*, 60.
[41] Weiskopf, *Notes from an American Antiwarrior*, 60.
[42] Weiskopf, *Notes from an American Antiwarrior*, 60.

shortly after returning in 1949.[43] He entered the Mayoral office in 1956; however, soon after he entered office he was charged with perjury for accepting bribes while he was sheriff, which he was acquitted of quickly in 1957.[44] Although there is no clear information regarding Schrunk's position on the Vietnam war, his attitude towards protestors was clear. The student strike at PSU, which began on May 4th, had set up barricades around an area west of campus called the South Park Blocks.[45] Schrunk was immediately unwilling to co-operate with protestors: "Mayor Terry Schrunk refused to acknowledge the strike's demands, and called repeatedly for 'law and order' to be maintained."[46] The strikers' "demands" were not really demands, rather issues that they wanted addressed by the local government: "1) the shooting and deaths of the Kent State students, 2) the reescalation and expansion of the Vietnam war, 3) the imprisonment of Black Panther Bobby Seale, and 4) the shipments of toxic nerve gas into Oregon."[47] The demand to free Bobby Seale may have been particularly inflammatory as it was Schrunk and McCall who had responded to the Albina riots in 1967. According to Weiskopf, Schrunk's action on May 11th was spurred by the "Jocks" "demanding that Mayor Terry Schrunk take action against the PSU protestors."[48] Indeed Schrunk sent the police down the same afternoon: "The police were accompanied by city dump trucks and work crews, clearly there to dismantle and haul away the barricades as trash."[49]

Schrunk sent down Captain Reiter to head the police force, which included "nearly every officer in the Portland Police Department."[50] Captain Reiter successfully performed his task of removing the barricades but when faced with the Hospital Tent (a first aid tent, as it came to be called)[51] Reiter ordered it removed. This was a shock as the owner of the tent had gotten a park permit "to avoid any future

[43] Phillip Cogswell, "Terry Schrunk (1913–1975)," Oregon Encyclopedia, April 15, 2022, https://www.oregonencyclopedia.org/articles/schrunk_terry_1913_1975_/.
[44] Cogswell, "Terry Schrunk."
[45] Weiskopf, *Notes from an American Antiwarrior*, 44.
[46] Wittman, "The PSU Student Strike," 40.
[47] Hylton, "The Portland State University Student Strike," 108.
[48] Weiskopf, *Notes from an American Antiwarrior*, 46.
[49] Weiskopf, *Notes from an American Antiwarrior*, 46.
[50] Weiskopf, *Notes from an American Antiwarrior*, 50, 53.
[51] It was a first aid tent.

problems."[52] Reiter responded with "Your park permit is revoked as of this moment, and you are ordered to remove yourselves from the area."[53] However, when the protestors' media spokesman Kevin Mulligan shouted "Fuck you!"[54] at the police, "it became impossible for either side to back down."[55] The protestors began to lock arms and sing "We Shall Overcome," but otherwise remained peaceful.[56] Luckily Captain Reiter took a moment to reflect, calling his superior Frank Ivancie and advising Ivancie to allow the tent to remain as "it was not blocking car or pedestrian traffic."[57] This decision was also made because of the TV and print news cameras that were present,[58] as well as because of the permit that had been legally attained from Ivancie's department as he was the Parks Commissioner.[59] Ivancie responded with the order that "Anyone who got in the way was to be dealt with harshly."[60] Due to Reiter's refusal, "Capt. Reiter was promptly relieved of duty by Commissioner Ivancie and driven away in a police squad car. He was replaced by a different police captain who was willing to follow Ivancie's orders without question."[61]

Subsequently, everyone at the scene knew that things were about to get dangerous. Professors on the scene realized this and began to plead with the police not to attack; when rebuffed, they pleaded with the students, afraid of violent tragedy.[62] President Wolf was also informed of the situation; he "had attempted to reach Mayor Schrunk by phone to desperately appeal to him not to attack his students. The mayor, however, refused to take President Wolf's call."[63] Due to the negligence of Schrunk and his "designated… point man for dealing with the student protests at PSU"[64] — Ivancie — 31 students were sent to emergency rooms with a total of 32 injured.[65]

---

52 Weiskopf, *Notes from an American Antiwarrior*, 52.
53 Weiskopf, *Notes from an American Antiwarrior*, 52.
54 Weiskopf, *Notes from an American Antiwarrior*, 52.
55 Weiskopf, *Notes from an American Antiwarrior*, 52.
56 Weiskopf, *Notes from an American Antiwarrior*, 52.
57 Weiskopf, *Notes from an American Antiwarrior*, 53.
58 Weiskopf, *Notes from an American Antiwarrior*, 53.
59 Weiskopf, *Notes from an American Antiwarrior*, 53.
60 Weiskopf, *Notes from an American Antiwarrior*, 53.
61 Weiskopf, *Notes from an American Antiwarrior*, 54.
62 Weiskopf, *Notes from an American Antiwarrior*, 56.
63 Weiskopf, *Notes from an American Antiwarrior*, 59.
64 Weiskopf, *Notes from an American Antiwarrior*, 54.
65 Weiskopf, *Notes from an American Antiwarrior*, 59.

Ivancie already had quite the reputation amongst protestors. Weiskopf recalled that “During the summer of 1967, Ivancie had expressed great disdain for the ‘counter-culture’ of long-haired teenagers… who were gathering in SW Portland’s Laird Hill Public Park. They would sing songs and play guitars and flutes. Ivancie responded by sending police squads to search the high school kids in the park for illegal drugs and then ordering them to leave. He even briefly closed all of Portland’s public parks after dark to keep ‘hippies’ or anyone else from enjoying them that summer.”[66] Weiskopf also remarked that “Mayor Schrunk could not have made a worse choice to handle the May 11th confrontation between police and striking PSU students than Frank Ivancie.”[67]

Many student protestors, including Weiskopf, had gotten their start in political activity in 1968 by becoming campaign workers for Robert Kennedy’s bid for president and, when Kennedy was assassinated, switched support to Eugene McCarthy.[68] Ivancie had a personal disdain for Kennedy,[69] claiming “he was a scroungy character.”[70] This is significant because the student protesters’ support for Kennedy and subsequent devastation when he was assassinated shortly after the murder of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. meant that Ivancie and protestors were diametrically opposed even before coming into contact with each other. Indeed, due to Ivancie’s close relationship with Schrunk, Ivancie bragged that Kennedy was only defeated in primaries in Oregon because Schrunk had endorsed McCarthy instead.[71] Schrunk had done this due to the way Kennedy had treated Schrunk when he was the U.S. Attorney General and personally testified against Schrunk in his perjury trial, pursuing Schrunk aggressively.[72]

---

66 Weiskopf, *Notes from an American Antiwarrior*, 54.
67 Weiskopf, *Notes from an American Antiwarrior*, 54.
68 Weiskopf, *Notes from an American Antiwarrior*, 23.
69 Due to Ivancie later becoming mayor of Portland, there is a series of oral history interviews in which he discusses his career, conducted by the Oregon Historical Society.
70 Clark Hansen, “Oral History Interview with Frank Ivancie [Session 01, Part 2],” OHS Digital Collections, 2001, https://digitalcollections.ohs.org/sr2980-t01s1.
71 Hansen, “Oral History Interview with Frank Ivancie [Session 01, Part 2].”
72 Finn J.D. John, “Mayors Lee, Schrunk Set Tone for Mid-Century P-Town,” #ORhistory, November 24, 2019, https://offbeatoregon.com/1911d.portland-mayors-part3of3.html.

Additionally, Ivancie had been a speechwriter during his college career at the University of Minneapolis for Hubert Humphrey while Humphrey was the mayor of Minneapolis in the late 1940s.[73] Due to the hostile response that Humphrey received in 1968 in Oregon and Ivancie's personal connection to him, it is safe to assume that the protestors' feelings about Humphrey were yet another item of personal disdain for Ivancie towards the protestors. Indeed, many of the protestors present on May 11th, including Doug Weiskopf, were also part of the crowd that protested Humphrey.[74]

Ivancie's personal politics were those of a Reagan Democrat, which speaks to his values; he clearly was someone who valued obedience.[75] When remarking on his teaching career, he said he was impressed with the school system in Portland, but the only good quality he listed was that "teachers had good discipline over their students."[76] Additionally, when remarking on the beginning of his relationship with Schrunk, he said "I liked his politics, and his war record, and his integrity."[77] When protestors refused to leave the Hospital Tent, Ivancie, spurred on by Schrunk, let his personal opinions sway his decision, meaning 32 people got hurt. James Gleason's statement that "the police purely and simply attacked the students with, to me, no apparent reason other than we're going to teach those damn students the lesson"[78] rings true when enlightened by Schrunk and Ivancie's motivations, both national pressure and personal opinion.

Indeed, students and professors who were eyewitnesses and victims to the attack had much to say about the police action. One professor, Dr. Hugo Maynard, remarked that "he had been horrified by the contorted facial expressions of pure hatred aimed at us by riot squad members just before they launched their attack. He said that as they advanced, grunting loudly with each step, that they looked 'not quite human.'"[79] Additionally, Weiskopf recalled that "The females appeared to have been singled out by the attacking cops for the heaviest

[73] Clark Hansen, "Oral History Interview with Frank Ivancie [Session 01, Part 1]," OHS Digital Collections, 2001, https://digitalcollections.ohs.org/sr2980-t01s1.
[74] Weiskopf, *Notes from an American Antiwarrior*, 23.
[75] Hansen, "Oral History Interview with Frank Ivancie [Session 01, Part 2]."
[76] Hansen, "Oral History Interview with Frank Ivancie [Session 01, Part 2]."
[77] Hansen, "Oral History Interview with Frank Ivancie [Session 01, Part 2]."
[78] Portland State University, "The Seventh Day."
[79] Weiskopf, *Notes from an American Antiwarrior*, 55.

abuse."[80] One student who was a witness, a former Vietnam veteran who had been for taking the barricades down, remarked that "the police went too far yesterday, I really believe they went too far, they overextended their authority as far as campus goes."[81] Finally, James Gleason remarked that "Until the attack by the tactical police yesterday, I was essentially in the middle… the actions by the tactical police make it clear that the process has fallen down someplace."[82] The process fell through when Ivancie and Schrunk let their political connections and personal feelings get in the way.

CONCLUSION

The events at PSU demonstrate that protestor behavior was not the determining factor in the use of force. Despite their commitment to nonviolence, students were met with violence because those in power were predisposed to view dissent as a threat and were willing to use force to suppress it. The decision to attack was not reactive, but intentional. Personal resentment, ideological opposition to the anti-war movement, and pressure from conservative political allies, like the "Jocks," created an environment in which officials were willing to authorize disproportionate force against a small, peaceful group of students. Ivancie's order to remove the Hospital Tent and "deal harshly" with those who resisted demonstrates how personal convictions and political loyalties translated directly into state violence.

Understanding this incident is important beyond the local history of Portland State University. It speaks to how decisions by individual leaders can escalate tensions and produce violence even when protest movements remain peaceful. It illuminates an ongoing history in which authorities respond to dissent not simply based on protestor behavior, but on political pressures, personal biases, and perceived threats to authority. Examining these dynamics is in service of explaining why violence continues to be perpetuated against protestors, especially in relatively small and disciplined protest movements.

80 Weiskopf, *Notes from an American Antiwarrior*, 59.
81 Portland State University, "The Seventh Day."
82 Portland State University, "The Seventh Day."

B i b l i o g r a p h y

Abbott, Carl. *Greater Portland: Urban Life and Landscape in the Pacific Northwest*. University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015.

Adamek, Raymond J., and Jerry M. Lewis. “Social Control Violence and Radicalization: The Kent State Case.” *Social Forces* 51, no. 3 (1973): 342–347. https://doi.org/10.2307/2577139.

Cogswell, Phillip. “Terry Schrunk (1913–1975).” Oregon Encyclopedia, April 15, 2022. https://www.oregonencyclopedia.org/articles/schrunk_terry_1913_1975_/.

Finman, Ted, and Stewart Macaulay. “Freedom to Dissent: The Vietnam Protests and the Words of Public Officials.” *Wisconsin Law Review* 1966, no. 3 (1966): 632–723.

Griffith, Sarah, and Trudy Flores. “Albina Riot, 1967.” Oregon History Project, 2002. https://www.oregonhistoryproject.org/articles/historical-records/albina-riot-1967/.

Hansen, Clark. “Oral History Interview with Frank Ivancie [Session 01, Part 1].” OHS Digital Collections, 2001. https://digitalcollections.ohs.org/sr2980-t01s1.

Hansen, Clark. “Oral History Interview with Frank Ivancie [Session 01, Part 2].” OHS Digital Collections, 2001. https://digitalcollections.ohs.org/sr2980-t01s1.

Hylton, Dory J. “The Portland State University Student Strike of May 1970: Student Protest as Social Drama.” PhD diss., University of Oregon, 1993.

John, Finn J.D. “Mayors Lee, Schrunk Set Tone for Mid-Century P-Town.” #ORhistory, November 24, 2019. https://offbeatoregon.com/1911d.portland-mayors-part3of3.html.

Kent State University. “The May 4 Shootings at Kent State University: The Search for Historical Accuracy.” Accessed March 6, 2026. https://www.kent.edu/may-4-historical-accuracy.

Nygren, Bill, and Matt Nelson. *Radicals in the Rose City: Portland’s Revolutionaries 1960–1975*. Northwest History Press, 2013.

Office of the Historian. “Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964–1968, Volume VII, Vietnam, September 1968–January 1969.” 1969. https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1964-68v07/d40.

Oregon History Project. “Tom McCall.” Accessed March 6, 2026. https://oregonhist-ohp-dev.azurewebsites.net/articles/biographies/tom-mccall-biography/.

Portland State University. “The Seventh Day.” YouTube, 1970. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FSZ-i20Z8aE.

APM Reports. “Hubert H. Humphrey — Campaign ’68.” Accessed March 6, 2026. https://features.apmreports.org/arw/campaign68/e1.html.

Rudd, Mark. *Underground: My Life with SDS and the Weathermen*. William Morrow, 2009.

Weiskopf, Doug. *Notes from an American Antiwarrior: Reflections of an Unapologetic Vietnam War Protest Organizer*. 2025.

Wittman, Sarah. “The PSU Student Strike: A Legacy of Collaboration and Nonviolent Protest.” University of Oregon, 2024.

On the Run in Russia

POW Attempts at Resistance from 1914–1920

Eric Monsebroten

INTRODUCTION

Over the course of the First World War, Russia captured somewhere between 1.7 to 2.4 million Austro-Hungarian soldiers.[1] The Empire was unprepared for these successes and the sudden influx of war prisoners they created. From 1914 to 1920, hundreds of thousands of men from all over the Habsburg Empire experienced life in Imperial and Revolutionary Russia. They were spread throughout the entirety of its empire. Men lived in almost every biome imaginable, and millions of men worked throughout Russia’s industrial and agricultural sectors. Some were treated like adopted husbands and sons, others like slaves. The immense variety of experiences soldiers encountered while in Russia is staggering. They lived through an Empire full of many peoples and lands in the midst of war, economic crises, and revolution.

Elsa Brändström, a Swedish nurse who spent six years amongst these war prisoners, witnessed many of the strange and contradictory experiences they faced at that time; about their experiences she wrote, “There were prisoners in Russia who at certain times enjoyed a freedom and a prosperity unknown to the prisoner of war in other countries. But their happy existence is as dust in the balance against those 600,000 comrades who perished in misery and privation or the terrible plight of the many hundreds of thousands who returned home mental and physical wrecks.”[2] POWs endured a mix of oppression, suffering, and even surprisingly good treatment—how did they respond?

[1] Adam Miodowski, “Escapes from Russian Captivity by Prisoners of War Taken on the Eastern Front (August 1914–February 1917),” *Journal of Slavic Military Studies* 34, no. 2 (2021): 303–21; Gerald H. Davis, “The Life of Prisoners of War in Russia, 1914–1921,” in *Essays on World War I: Origins and Prisoners of War*, ed. Samuel R. Williamson and Peter Pastor (Brooklyn College Press, 1983) 165–166.

[2] Elsa Brändström, *Among Prisoners of War in Russia & Siberia*, trans. C. Mabels Rickmers (Hutchinson & Co., 1929), 7–8.

Historical research has emphasized different aspects of POW experience within Russia during World War One. Historians such as Gerald Davis and Martyn Housden noted the complicated role international relief organizations played in supporting POWs; other scholars have argued that national identity, class orientation, and Bolshevik influence contributed to war prisoners' experiences.[3] What has been less analyzed is the active role common POWs played in their own captivity through small-scale resistance. Through the memoirs of seven Austrian soldiers, often published posthumously, this article will show how individual soldiers attempted to better their lives while in captivity. Historically, officer accounts have been overrepresented in memoir literature, especially in the inter-war period when most publishing and reading occurred.[4] The seven accounts used here come from prisoners of non-officer rank, opening up the lives of those POWs who encountered the harshest conditions and experienced the greatest changes of location. This class of prisoners also made up the vast majority of war prisoners. Brändström reported that official Russian policy "gave employers and their subordinates the idea that prisoners of war were beings whom they might employ and treat as they pleased."[5] These accounts demonstrate how ordinary POWs resisted abusive superiors and escaped undesirable circumstances. This article

---

[3] For national identity see: Yücel Yanikdağ, "Ottoman Prisoners of War in Russia, 1914–22," *Journal of Contemporary History* 34, no. 1 (1999): 69–85; Ivan Volgyes, "Hungarian Prisoners of War in Russia 1916–1919," *Cahiers Du Monde Russe et Soviétique* 14, no. 1/2 (1973): 54–85; Ivo Blanc, "South Slav Prisoners of War in Revolution Russia," in *Essays on World War I: Origins and Prisoners of War*, ed. Samuel R. Williamson and Peter Pastor (Brooklyn College Press, 1983) 119–148; Peter Pastor, "Hungarian Prisoners of War in Russia During the Revolution and Civil War," in *Essays on World War I: Origins and Prisoners of War*, ed. Samuel R. Williamson and Peter Pastor (Brooklyn College Press, 1983) 149–162; Josef Kalvoda, "Czech and Slovak Prisoners of War in Russia during the War and Revolution," in *Essays on World War I: Origins and Prisoners of War*, ed. Samuel R. Williamson and Peter Pastor (Brooklyn College Press, 1983) 215–238. For POW relief efforts see: Gerald H. Davis, "National Red Cross Societies and Prisoners of War in Russia, 1914–18," *Journal of Contemporary History* 28, no. 1 (1993): 31–52; Martyn Housden, "When the Baltic Sea was a 'Bridge' for Humanitarian Action: The League of Nations, The Red Cross and The Repatriation of Prisoners of War Between Russia and Central Europe, 1920–22," *Journal of Baltic Studies* 38, no. 1 (2007): 61–83. For Bolshevik influence see: Arnold Krammer, "Soviet Propaganda Among German and Austro-Hungarian Prisoners of War in Russia, 1917–1921," in *Essays on World War I: Origins and Prisoners of War*, ed. Samuel R. Williamson and Peter Pastor (Brooklyn College Press, 1983) 249–264.

[4] Iris Rachamimov, *POWs and the Great War: Captivity on the Eastern Front* (Berg Publishers, 2002), 97.

[5] Brändström, *Among Prisoners of War in Russia & Siberia*, 128.

begins by providing an overview of World War One POW experience in Russia before turning to how those men used escape attempts, strikes, evasion, and sometimes violence to resist unfair treatment. Their resistance efforts will be divided between their escapes from official supervision and the way POW resistance played out while at work. These memoirs reveal that although POWs officially had no say in where or how they worked, through resistance they nonetheless managed to guide their experiences in remarkable ways.

OVERVIEW OF POW CAPTIVITY: IMPERIAL RUSSIA

The journey from frontline capture to POW camps occurred over a few stages. The Russian army often captured POWs in large frontline maneuvers, resulting in the sudden influx of tens of thousands of soldiers. Authorities marched the freshly taken prisoners to rail hubs, from which they were transported to sorting centers deeper in Russia. The grueling journey to these train stations could last weeks.[6] Brändström wrote that prisoners “were driven along like cattle, the Cossacks drawing their sabres and forcing stragglers along with the knout.”[7] Many men died before they could make it to Russian medical facilities and received little assistance along the way. Russian doctors near the frontline generally gave POWs the same treatment they gave Russian soldiers, but supplies were always low.[8] Once soldiers reached their first train station, they were sent to facilities for documentation and sorting.[9]

The Russian government sorted POWs in three main centers: Kiev, Moscow, and Petrograd. Hospital conditions varied considerably in these locations. In Moscow doctors performed a number of unnecessary amputations, and hospitals carelessly transferred wounded POWs unsuited to travel, at times leaving them to wait outside for hours in ragged clothing. Many prisoners died as a result.[10] Petrograd in contrast had relatively good facilities, and in Kiev both

[6] Davis, “The Life of Prisoners,” 165–66.
[7] Brändström, *Among Prisoners of War in Russia & Siberia*, 37.
[8] Davis, “The Life of Prisoners,” 166; Brändström, *Among Prisoners of War in Russia & Siberia*, 36–39.
[9] Davis, “The Life of Prisoners,” 167.
[10] Brändström, *Among Prisoners of War in Russia & Siberia*, 46–55.

the most miserable and some decently good quarters might be found.[11] The Imperial Government attempted to separate Slavic and non-Slavic prisoners at this time, sending Slavs to better quality camps in European Russia and non-Slavs to Siberian camps. Russia hoped to use pan-Slavic nationalism to recruit POWs into volunteer units and attempts to provide superior conditions were intended to encourage recruitment. Rachamimov argues that these advantages were counterbalanced by a desire to use Slavic prisoners for labor.[12] She also shows that Siberian camps were not always worse than European camps, and the recruitment of Slavic POWs was not as successful as the administration had hoped.[13] By 1916 many non-Slavic prisoners worked throughout European Russia as well.[14]

After authorities sorted captives they transported them to camps. 223 major camps existed throughout European Russia, Central Asia and Siberia.[15] Classic barbed-wire prisoner of war camps, of various sizes, held hundreds of thousands of prisoners. Smaller camps in European Russia generally held about 2,000 to 10,000 prisoners, while the largest Siberian camps held up to 35,000.[16] Nevertheless, early in the war there was a severe lack of available space, and prisoners might be stored in empty theatres, earthen summer barracks, abandoned factories, and circus halls. It was not until 1916 that regularized barbed-wire camps became standardized.[17] Between 1914 and the finalization of these camps, soldiers died from critically insufficient shelter and heating. Barracks dug out of the earth in Siberia were especially brutal for prisoners.[18]

Captives travelled on the rail lines in *teplushki*, modified boxcars filled to double their normal capacity. There was one toilet and one stove per *teplushka*; latrines were always in use and the stove at its hottest only warmed its immediate vicinity, meaning that in winter the rest of the boxcar remained cold.[19] Lice and vermin infested the area,

[11] Brändström, *Among Prisoners of War in Russia & Siberia*, 40–45 and 56–57.
[12] Rachamimov, *POWs and the Great War*, 121–22.
[13] Rachamimov, *POWs and the Great War*, 94 and 118.
[14] Miodowski, "Escapes from Russian Captivity," 311.
[15] Pastor, "Introduction," 106–110.
[16] Davis, "The Life of Prisoners," 167.
[17] Rachamimov, *POWs and the Great War*, 88.
[18] Brändström, *Among Prisoners of War in Russia & Siberia*, 69–70.
[19] Brändström, *Among Prisoners of War in Russia & Siberia*, 62; Davis, "The Life of Prisoners," 167.

and corrupt guards stole the few possessions captives still had.[20] Journeys to camps within European Russia might only take a few days. Yet soldiers might endure weeks or even months of these conditions on their way to Central Asia or Eastern Siberia.[21] The trip from Kiev to Eastern Siberia, for example, was 5,500 miles long and lasted four months.[22] After arriving at their camp's closest train station, the men marched to their new prisons; these could be rather close to the station but in other cases required a 10-to-30-mile trek.[23]

The Russian Government began arranging the employment of POWs in October 1914, and prisoners began work en masse in 1915.[24] Some POW camps became sites for new factories, but many prisoners left the POW camps for work. This might be seasonal work from which they returned in the winter, but many prisoners lived on farms or industrial sites throughout the winter as well.[25] In the summer, camps were almost completely empty.[26]

By October 1916 around 1.5 million war prisoners worked throughout Russia. Gerald Davis estimated that 440,000 to 500,000 worked on military infrastructure such as roads and fortifications; 600,000 to 800,000 POWs performed farm work in European Russia, while 200,000 to 300,000 POWs worked east and south of the Urals; the rest of the men worked in industrial sectors. At that time POWs constituted 28 percent of peat extractors, 30 percent of foundry workers, and 60 percent of iron ore miners.[27] Ultimately, POWs made up around 27 percent of total industrial labor in four important industrial provinces.[28] In farm settings, where the highest percentage of POWs were employed, around one-third worked on small-holdings while the rest farmed on large estates.[29] Many historians have recorded the relative delight that POWs on smaller-holdings experienced.[30] In

---

[20] Brändström, *Among Prisoners of War in Russia & Siberia*, 62; Davis, "The Life of Prisoners," 167.
[21] Brändström, *Among Prisoners of War in Russia & Siberia*, 61; Davis, "The Life of Prisoners," 167.
[22] Brändström, *Among Prisoners of War in Russia & Siberia*, 58.
[23] Brändström, *Among Prisoners of War in Russia & Siberia*, 67.
[24] Brändström, *Among Prisoners of War in Russia & Siberia*, 125.
[25] Davis, "The Life of Prisoners," 176–179.
[26] Rachamimov, *POWs and the Great War*, 89.
[27] Davis, "The Life of Prisoners," 175.
[28] Davis, "The Life of Prisoners," 176.
[29] Davis, "The Life of Prisoners," 175.
[30] Davis, "The Life of Prisoners," 175; Rachamimov, *POWs and the Great War*, 175.

contrast the experience of men on larger estates depended upon how much interest the aristocratic owners took in their wellbeing. But as will be seen later, the prisoners' experience could certainly run counter to generalities.

EXPERIENCES WITHIN CAMPS AND HOSPITAL

The circumstances found at prisoner of war camps in Russia were often wretched. Such circumstances caused historian Peter Pastor to posit that the POW camps in Russia during World War One preceded the Gulag system that emerged later under Stalin. Pastor even went so far as to suggest that Stalin's encounter with the Krasnoyarsk POW camp in 1916 may have inspired some of his later directives.[31] POW camps formed a sort of archipelago throughout the whole Empire, facilitating huge construction projects, and resulting in brutal treatment. Other historians have pushed back on some of these claims and have attempted to show how even amidst miserable conditions there was a surprising degree of cooperation between the three eastern European Empires. These historians instead understand the limited relief successes as a way in which the Hague conventions and old connections between the European nobility worked in an incomplete but real way.[32] Despite various interpretations, there is no denying that immense tragedy, suffering, and death occurred in POW camps.

Historians have also noted aspects of camp life which ran contrary to misery. Officers especially received much better living standards, though many officers experienced what was called "barbed-wire fever," a psychological state of extreme lethargy, boredom, and depression. To counter mental atrophy many prisoners engaged in extraordinary levels of intellectual activity; they taught, learned, and even created surprising amounts of private industry during the Civil War.[33] Better-off camps accumulated libraries, held lectures, and

---

[31] Peter Pastor, "Introduction," in *Essays on World War I: Origins and Prisoners of War*, ed. Samuel R. Williamson and Peter Pastor (Brooklyn College Press, 1983) 114–117.
[32] Rachamimov challenged Pastor's interpretation. Rachamimov, *POWs and the Great War*, 123–125. Examples of inter-Empire cooperation: Davis, "National Red Cross Societies and Prisoners of War in Russia, 1914–18"; Rachamimov, *POWs and the Great War*, 161–185.
[33] Davis, "The Life of Prisoners," 179–80; Gerald H. Davis, "Prisoner of War Camps as Social Communities in Russia: Krasnoyarsk, 1914–1921," *East European Quarterly* 21 (1987): 152–156.

designed multi-stage academic courses. Men learned from university professors and a broad range of professionals who had become POWs.[34] Prisoners in these camps also established professional-grade musical and theatre groups, which at times performed for local Siberian populations.[35] Many formerly illiterate POWs learned to read while at camps, and POWs developed handicrafts, boxed, wrestled, and lifted weights to avoid lethargy while penned up in the winters.[36]

Individual prisoners could encounter both scenarios while in Russia. Adolf Gaiswinkler was captured on May 20th, 1915, in western Ukraine.[37] After an initial hospital stay, he was sent to the notoriously bad Totzkoe camp. He described the unsuitable living quarters, freezing winters, and rampant disease outbreaks. The large halls in which all the men slept had no internal bathrooms, so POWs had to go outside to relieve themselves even in bitter Russian winters in a region known to get well below zero degrees Fahrenheit. The actual toilet facilities lay far outside the sleeping quarters, so the men often relieved themselves just outside the barracks.[38] Over the course of a winter and early spring, one can only imagine the conditions constantly surrounding their quarters.

Camp authorities provided food in a large, covered area without walls, totally exposed to the elements. Soldiers were forced to consume their food in these outside areas and struggled to eat in winds strong enough to blow the soup from their spoons. Guards eventually allowed prisoners to bring food back to the barracks, yet in winter weather it would cool off along the way.[39] Gaiswinkler also complained bitterly about the callous treatment of POWs in Totzkoe, claiming that in those days nobody spoke of war crimes; yet he clearly believed some of the events he witnessed would have qualified.[40] After addressing the insufficient living conditions he stated, “But who concerned themselves over whether many thousands of prisoners

---

[34] Davis, “Prisoner of War Camps as Social Communities,” 155–156.
[35] Davis, “Prisoner of War Camps as Social Communities,” 156; Yanikdağ, “Ottoman Prisoners of War in Russia,” 76–77.
[36] Davis, “The Life of Prisoners,” 179.
[37] Adolf Gaiswinkler, “Memoir,” in *In russischer Gefangenschaft: Erlebnisse österreichischer Soldaten im Ersten Weltkrieg*, ed. Verna Moritz and Hannes Leidinger (Böhlau Verlag, 2008), 157.
[38] Gaiswinkler, “Memoir,” 163.
[39] Gaiswinkler, “Memoir,” 163.
[40] Gaiswinkler, “Memoir,” 164.

miserably died? (Aber wer kümmerte sich darum, ob viele Tausende Gefangene elend zugrunde gingen?).”[41]

Gaiswinkler transferred to Berezovskaya, another POW camp in Siberia, and in autumn 1917 he began work as an office attendant, exposing him to the opposite extreme of POW camp experiences. As part of this work, he moved into the officer living quarters: well-constructed brick buildings formerly built for the families of Russian officers. In exchange for a light work schedule, Gaiswinkler received a clean room, a steady supply of good food, and enough wages to buy sweets and cigarettes.[42] His building included a library from which he could borrow books and an up-to-date map of the current warfront. Every night group readings occurred, where an officer fluently translated Russian newspaper articles into German.[43] Unfortunately for Gaiswinkler these pleasant circumstances waned after the October Revolution.[44] Nevertheless, for a while Gaiswinkler experienced the comfort of the officer class.

Berezovskaya hosted a number of musical and theatre performances, which Gaiswinkler noted was a boon to the camp even after many of the officers’ niceties had been removed by the Bolsheviks. Gaiswinkler himself says that many concerts occurred during his time in Berezovskaya, and he makes particular note of the fine quality of the operas.[45]

POWs also experienced a mix of horrors and care within medical contexts. Gottlieb Pomberger came from an upper-Austrian farming family and had already been captured by December 1914 at the age of twenty-two. He was imprisoned at Novosibirsk when a major typhus outbreak began, which infected around half the prisoners.[46] He described the horrors that transpired in the radically underprepared camp. Dead men were dragged outside in the night, where dogs fed upon their bodies. In the day, the corpses were placed in rough sarcophagi and piled in sheds until enough had been stocked to warrant a mass grave.[47] Pomberger himself became infected with

[41] Gaiswinkler, “Memoir,” 162.
[42] Gaiswinkler, “Memoir,” 169.
[43] Gaiswinkler, “Memoir,” 169.
[44] Gaiswinkler, “Memoir,” 169–170.
[45] Gaiswinkler, “Memoir,” 170.
[46] Gottlieb Pomberger, “Memoir,” in *In russischer Gefangenschaft*, ed. Verna Moritz and Hannes Leidinger (Böhlau Verlag, 2008), 59.
[47] Pomberger, “Memoir,” 59.

typhus on April 9th, 1915. He described laying on roughly crafted planks amidst screaming, hallucinating, and dying men, where for a week he lay in high fever, unable to eat, without being helped by anyone around him. Finally, on the 16th, Pomberger was taken to a suburban hospital.[48] There he received fresh clothing, a clean bed, solid food, warm quarters, and even cigarettes from a Russian officer.[49] He recounted the warmth of being “bathed like little children by the nurses (dann wurden wir von den Schwestern gebadet wie kleine Kinder).”[50]

These examples reveal some of the worst and best experiences soldiers might face while under direct camp supervision. The scenes paint a picture of what life in the deadliest epidemics and most miserable camps looked like, yet they also show the comfort and niceties POWs could find themselves in. For both these men the treatment was arbitrary; it depended on chance more than their ethnic background, and the events demonstrate the lack of autonomy POWs had for much of their stay.

OVERVIEW OF POW CAPTIVITY: REVOLUTIONARY RUSSIA

Following the February Revolution, POW hopes rose and shattered multiple times. The provisional government initially eased restrictions on prisoners but soon reinstated them as Kerensky increased war efforts. At the same time inflation wrecked the value of officer stipends and the wages of employed POWs.[51] The Bolshevik revolution brought hopes of peace and freedom but ended up causing increased misery for many POWs. The non-officers were officially freed, but war prevented any return home.[52] Additionally, the Bolsheviks stopped supporting camps financially and dependent soldiers lost access to funding. At the same time millions of Russian soldiers returned home, reducing POW work opportunities. Despite Bolshevik promises of a quick end to the war, it continued until March, and prisoner exchanges would be delayed even further because of disparities between Russia and Germany’s POW count. While Russia held millions of Austro-Hungarian

48 Pomberger, “Memoir,” 60.
49 Pomberger, “Memoir,” 60–62.
50 Pomberger, “Memoir,” 61.
51 Davis, “The Life of Prisoners,” 180.
52 Volgyes, “Hungarian Prisoners of War,” 66.

troops, it only held around 167,000 Imperial German prisoners. In contrast Germany held 1.4 million Russians.[53]

Exchanges finally proceeded in the summer of 1918, and most prisoners in European Russia were sent home by October 1918. During the months under Bolshevik captivity, POWs endured political propaganda and coercion. International Red Guard units formed in early 1918 took over control of the camps and attempted to recruit more volunteers through extreme pressure. Historians and multiple memoirs recount that these Internationalists were often the cruelest Bolshevik agents POWs encountered.[54]

While the Bolsheviks repatriated most prisoners in Europe by October 1918, the Czech Legion's revolt cut off any route home for POWs in Siberia. This force of well-armed and organized troops formed under the provisional government, but after the Brest-Litovsk treaty the Czech nationalists refused to make peace with the Central Powers. In May 1918, conflict with Bolshevik authorities prompted the Legion to seize the Siberian railway. This helped establish the Kolchak White government and trapped POWs. The new rulers forced prisoners back into camps and treated them harshly before Austria-Hungary's collapse, after which Czech soldiers warmed considerably. From 1918 until Kolchak's collapse in 1920 POWs continued to work. In Siberia's isolated economy they became 50 to 80 percent of the region's skilled workers, creating workshops, fulfilling government contracts, and engaging in many entrepreneurial activities. At one point POWs even operated a credit union and a stock market.[55]

This only ended after the Bolsheviks retook Siberia and finally sent almost all 425,000 remaining POWs home over the course of 1920.[56]

PRISONER OF WAR RESISTANCE: ON THE RUN

Prior scholarship has explored prisoner escape attempts and the way grand escape narratives dominated memoirs published in the interwar period (1918–1939). These stories were often written in order to justify capture or cope with the shame that officers felt upon returning

---

[53] Davis, "The Life of Prisoners," 182–83.
[54] Davis, "The Life of Prisoners," 184; Anton Stieff, "Memoir," in *In russischer Gefangenschaft*, ed. Verna Moritz and Hannes Leidinger (Böhlau Verlag, 2008), 100.
[55] Davis, "The Life of Prisoners," 176.
[56] Davis, "The Life of Prisoners," 187–189.

home.[57] Dramatic efforts to return home seemed more exciting than the bored misery or tiring labor which defined most days in captivity. The motivations behind such publications are clear, and historians have established that such escapes were uncommon.[58] Yet there was another kind of escape attempt found in the memoirs of working POWs that looked quite different.

War prisoners slipped out of camps and ran away from work sites repeatedly for a variety of reasons. Some might have been avoiding a particularly laborious task, some were frustrated with wages or rations, some hated their region or boss, and some truly tried to return home. Escapees were usually quickly captured by police, beaten, arrested, and then made to work again, so in a sense such escapes failed. Nevertheless they strangely enough could succeed in drawing a prisoner away from the circumstances he was attempting to escape from. POW assertions of autonomy manifested in these escape attempts. Authorities shipped POWs about the country, neglecting, abusing, and overworking them, but despite harsh official policies POWs resisted unfair treatment in a variety of ways. This occurred especially through strategic escapes from authorities. POWs technically had no rights to appeal where they worked. The Irkutsk military district dictated, "It is the duty of the prisoners to perform all work for which they are commandeered, however hard it may be. Anyone who refuses will be sent back to the garrison, placed under a special command and treated like a convict, and this punishment will last not only one month but for the whole term of his captivity."[59] The government of Saratov ordered, "For the whole duration of the War, prisoners of war have to submit unconditionally to all regulations irrespective of their severity."[60] POWs directly challenged such directives through their strategic escapes.

Julius Schaidl, a twenty-four-year-old from lower Austria, was captured in February 1915 in the Carpathian mountains.[61] His memoir described both his successful and failed escapes. His first attempt took

---

[57] Rachamimov, *POWs and the Great War*, 9–14.
[58] Miodowski, "Escapes from Russian Captivity," 303–21; Davis, "The Life of Prisoners," 178.
[59] Brändström, *Among Prisoners of War in Russia & Siberia*, 128.
[60] Brändström, *Among Prisoners of War in Russia & Siberia*, 127.
[61] Julius Schaidl, "Memoir," in *In russischer Gefangenschaft*, ed. Verna Moritz and Hannes Leidinger (Böhlau Verlag, 2008), 138.

place around spring or early summer 1915. A bullying commander consigned Schaidl to a day's work in a flour mill, where he would have to transport extremely heavy sacks of flour. The thought of this backbreaking work prompted Schaidl to jump off the wagon taking him to the flour mill, and he found himself free. Schaidl then found a metal workshop, where he worked for the day, receiving good food and some wages. Finally, at the end of the day he simply returned to his camp. Schaidl was not caught and does not mention returning to this workshop again; he simply ran away to avoid one job and elected to return to his camp afterwards.[62]

Schaidl once again discovered a way to escape undesirable conditions when a recruitment drive for a construction project came through his camp. Prisoners could volunteer or were selected to join the construction project, which would move them out of their Siberian POW camp to a worksite on the Don river. Schaidl attempted to join this project, but the inspecting doctor rejected him, claiming he was too weak to endure the heavy labor. Nevertheless Schaidl, desperate to leave Siberia, traded places with another soldier in the departing marching column, and the authorities failed to notice. He was able to leave, despite official mandates, escaping the Siberian compound he hated and arriving in European Russia.[63]

Schaidl worked at the sluice construction until 1918 when major floods swept over the project, and authorities sent all POWs to farms upstream until the waters subsided. At this time Schaidl unhappily labored for a Cossack farmer until poor food, miserable sleeping conditions, and backbreaking work drove him to run away. He proceeded to hide in the woods, march along the roads at night, and even caught a ride with some passing Romani travelers. All his effort failed when he was eventually caught and beaten by the Cossack farmer a few days later. Nevertheless, Schaidl's failed escape resulted in his transfer to a new farm, where he worked until the sluice project resumed. Though beaten and bloodied, Schaidl did not have to continue working at his initial farm; ironically, his capture released him from that labor.[64]

---

62 Schaidl, "Memoir," 142.
63 Schaidl, "Memoir," 143–144.
64 Schaidl, "Memoir," 149–152.

By the time he returned to his construction project, civil war between the Red and Cossack forces raged in the Don region. When Bolshevik forces took the worksite and shot its leaders, no one knew whether work was to continue or what would happen to the POWs. Schaidl decided to set off alone by foot, without map, money, or even a real set of shoes. This journey would finally lead him home, but along the way he nearly died of sickness, starvation, exhaustion, and confrontations with Cossack forces. Locals helped him in various ways, reviving him when he collapsed in a field, providing lifesaving food, and illegally lifting him onto a train as it departed.[65]

The circumstances in all these events differed from each other in most regards, but they were united by Schaidl's dissatisfaction with his former location. Both his means and goals during the escapes differed. One getaway was only for a day in order to avoid hard labor. His second attempt moved him to a new position for years. His attempted escape from a farm ended in brutal failure, yet it simultaneously caused the very result he wanted, namely, to leave that farm.

Schaidl's escape goals and their results contradicted each other. He was willing to run away to avoid hard work, and he was also willing to escape his camp in order to join a challenging infrastructure project. In his most miserable failure, he achieved exactly that for which he previously hoped. Schaidl's attempts are united in his circumvention of official assignments. Although the government demanded that POWs work whatever labor was assigned to them, men like Schaidl resisted constraints and were willing to suffer physically in order to follow their own paths, often succeeding in the attempt. Schaidl was not alone in these attempts.

Another POW, Alexander Hahn, had similar experiences. Hahn was a travelling upholsterer before he was drafted in 1915 at the age of thirty.[66] In his memoirs, Hahn recounted simply walking away from farm work he did not like.[67] This, as with Schaidl, led to his quick arrest, but these arrests likewise sent him to new worksites. Hahn in one sense had no autonomy. When Hahn and other POWs were arrested after leaving a farm they were brought to a police station. The prisoners complained that as city-dwellers they were unsuited to heavy

[65] Schaidl, "Memoir," 153–156.
[66] Alexander Hahn, "Memoir," in *In russischer Gefangenschaft*, ed. Verna Moritz and Hannes Leidinger (Böhlau Verlag, 2008), 37.
[67] Hahn, "Memoir," 40–41.

agricultural labor. In response an officer told them, “what are you fussing about, as prisoners of war you must do all kinds of work! (Was stellt ihr euch an, als Gefangene müßt ihr jede Arbeit machen!).”[68] The officer’s language echoed the orders from Saratov and Irkutsk, but he struggled to respond to POW resistance. POWs were to do all kinds of work and were to be arrested if they resisted. Hahn was indeed forced to work and had no say in where he was sent. Yet Hahn repeatedly complained and refused to work at jobs he determined to be too challenging, and he was able to get a new job at multiple points as a result. This led to punishments but also new jobs and eventually better circumstances.[69]

Sometimes camps were not possible to transfer from. Harsh working conditions, like mining operations, could limit opportunities for longer-term escapes, but men still found ways to resist imposed work.[70] Johann Obermüllner was captured in June 1915 at the age of twenty-one. Following his capture, he worked in a coal-mining operation from 1915 to the summer of 1916.[71] Though Obermüllner originally volunteered for the work, he soon came to regret his decision. The POWs hated the work and found creative workarounds to avoid the mines. Obermüllner wrote that the men would frequently escape the work procession while marching to the mineshafts. Men marching back from the shafts would mark their friends with coal, so that both individuals could pretend to have recently finished their shift. This might happen multiple times along the way. Dumbstruck guards would arrive at the mine and see that half the men were missing; they would then call the camp, only to hear that the men were not there either. Meanwhile the POWs spent the day hiding in a ditch between the two locations. Obermüllner claimed he could list many more examples of such trickery, but they would take too much space in his book. Obermüllner and his fellow coal miners found various ways to vex their superiors and avoid work, despite being unable to accomplish the kind of escapes POWs on farms practiced.[72]

---

68 Hahn, “Memoir,” 40.
69 Hahn, “Memoir,” 39–41.
70 Rachamimov, *POWs and the Great War*, 111.
71 Johann Obermüllner, “Memoir,” in *In russischer Gefangenschaft*, ed. Verna Moritz and Hannes Leidinger (Böhlau Verlag, 2008), 115–116.
72 Obermüllner, “Memoir,” 120–121.

Gottlieb Pomberger had a few escape attempts as well. His first occurred during a brutal march in late December 1914. As his injured foot ached during the long march, Pomberger and a friend decided to slip past the road and hide in some bushes until the other POWs and patrol passed by.[73] Freed from authority, the war prisoners stayed the night with a generous peasant, who provided them with an abundance of food, and the next day the men set out to go further into central Russia.[74] The men made it onto a train and even received a job offer from a Russian businessman before being caught by the police, who sent them to Siberian prisoner camps.[75] In this attempt Pomberger had no clear goals besides relief from a brutal march, but his actions soon became more deliberate.

Pomberger also engaged in the previously mentioned farm breakouts practiced by other POWs. At his second-to-last job Pomberger, frustrated by a lack of wages, left his farm work and met up with a small band of other German POWs. Together, they rejected their assigned work and had a beer-drinking session in the local bar. This, like in the other accounts, ended in his arrest and imprisonment, leading to his placement at a new, far more enjoyable, farm.[76] It is yet another example of POWs assuming freedom to abandon poorly paid work. Pomberger and the others felt confident in these matters despite threats of violence and deprivation; they continued to resist even when those threats became real consequences.

His last escape came after a long stay at his final place of work, a very enjoyable farm where he became something of an adopted son. His repeated escapes from jobs resulted in such comfortable circumstances that he left in 1918 with the family's permission; they even gifted him a Russian uniform in order to cross the frontline undisturbed. He finally made it back home via Poland, where he carefully broke across the Russo-German trenches, while under the impression that if caught on the Russian side, it meant certain death.[77] This escape was not an escape from his worksite or a circumvention of a job, but an escape past the frontlines, ignoring official Soviet-German negotiations and finding a way home for himself.

---

[73] Pomberger, "Memoir," 55.
[74] Pomberger, "Memoir," 55.
[75] Pomberger, "Memoir," 56.
[76] Pomberger, "Memoir," 67–68.
[77] Pomberger, "Memoir," 74–78.

Pomberger engaged in short disappearances from his camp, an attempt to find free work in central Russia in 1914, a walkout from farm work, and a novel-like escape home through a combat area. At times he was fleeing work or trying to find it on his own. Despite strict administrative orders and at times abusive conditions, prisoners like Pomberger repeatedly forced their way into better circumstances through escapes from work and camps. Although told they must do all assigned work without resistance, POWs regularly attempted to choose which work they would submit themselves to and did so with resistance. Through such efforts they established better circumstances and increased freedoms for themselves.

Failed escapes could also destroy a POW's spirit. In the summer of 1916 Obermüllner, fed up with the miserable work conditions and tyrannical camp authorities, decided to attempt an escape home. He and another comrade set off from the coal-mining camp and travelled over 200 kilometers by night before their efforts collapsed. They hunkered down during the day and scavenged for food once their provisions ran out. Eventually, poor nutrition, worsening weather, impassable terrain, and exhaustion led Obermüllner to abandon his attempt. He turned himself in to the police, but their reaction was severe; he endured beatings, starvation, lice-infested quarters, and military tribunals before being sent back to the coalmine to continue his work. The intensity of this punishment, perfectly in line with official mandates, broke his spirit.[78] He wrote upon his return to the mines, "This time all fear was gone; I was indifferent to everything—the dream of deliverance from the misery was ended (Diesmal aber war jede Furcht verschwunden, mir war alles gleichgültig - der Traum von einer Befreiung aus diesem Elend war zu Ende)."[79]

Prisoners continually ran away, despite threats of severe punishment. At times they suffered horribly for their resistance; this severity could even break the strongest spirits. Nevertheless, POWs continued to risk consequences and escape from worksites in order to find better conditions, and they regularly succeeded.

78 Obermüllner, "Memoir," 122–130.
79 Obermüllner, "Memoir," 130.

LIFE AT WORK AND AMONGST THE PEOPLE

Life at work for POWs could vary significantly. While some sectors were almost exclusively miserable, others could afford a certain degree of comfort. Throughout all sectors soldiers did not passively accept conditions; many resisted unfair treatments. At times the peculiar freedoms, noted by Brändström and affirmed by other historians, resulted from POW initiative, only being gained after multiple job transfers.

Once again, Pomberger serves as a useful example of POW resistance in Russia. He participated in numerous strikes during his captivity. In 1915, due to strenuous working conditions and no pay, he and some other men initiated a strike. Authorities soon arrested the strikers and starved them until they gave up.[80] Pomberger then endured a few other job transfers and a multi-month internment in Siberia, before he was sent to a large estate farm in European Russia in 1916.

Within just a few weeks on this farm he and his fellow prisoners once again became unhappy with the lack of wages they received and went on strike. This led to a police crackdown; officers arrived within hours armed with whips. The strikers, trapped in a house, attempted to climb out windows in order to run out and immediately begin work in the fields, but those unable to escape were beaten by the police.[81] At this location Pomberger initially experienced inadequate provisions and brutal repression. Pomberger's strikes generally failed; they ended in beatings and a forced return to the work. Nevertheless, Pomberger continued to search for ways to improve his circumstances.

When a load of horses taken from Romania arrived on the farm, Pomberger accepted the opportunity to care for them.[82] He, like the other prisoners, had no experience with horses but was brave enough to try. Pomberger wrote with pride about how he overcame his fears and developed skill in horse care. In November 1916 orders arrived dictating that twelve men from the estate should volunteer to leave for different work.[83] Initially Pomberger did not want to depart because he "already had good work (ich eben einen schönen Dienst hatte)."[84]

[80] Pomberger, "Memoir," 63.
[81] Pomberger, "Memoir," 64–65.
[82] Pomberger, "Memoir," 65.
[83] Pomberger, "Memoir," 66.
[84] Pomberger, "Memoir," 66.

Nevertheless, his friends eventually convinced him to leave.[85] Pomberger had found good work but decided to try his luck elsewhere. He consistently took risks in order to improve his circumstances. He went on strike multiple times despite violent repercussions, and he risked a comfortable job in search of better opportunities with friends. Officially POWs were to passively accept work and its circumstances; Pomberger took every opportunity to do the opposite.

His choice to leave the horse farm did not work out well, however. He was miserable at the next job, leading to his previously mentioned farm breakout during which he and some German friends ran away for a beer-drinking binge. After this escape and a brief hold in a cell, police sent Pomberger to his last farm where he became a semi-adopted son to his hosts. While situated within this family he received great food and good accommodations. Furthermore, his hosts did not work him to the bone, granting him a gentle introduction to the harder parts of farm work. This eventually led to a real sense of purpose in Pomberger's life and moments of integration amidst the local community.[86] One of the most surprising occurrences Pomberger had took place in the winter of 1917/18. With their permission he rode alone to the train station for part of the winter on the family's sleigh, until due to increasing crime, a son from the family had to accompany him. From that point on the son carried a revolver for protection, while Pomberger was given a sword.[87]

Pomberger sought new work whenever possible and finally found the delightful family life historians have noted through such efforts. In this last occurrence he cooperated with the family precisely because all of the former stringency and distrust was gone. Rather than close monitoring, Pomberger rode for kilometers alone, until a former Russian soldier (the son) accompanied him. Pomberger only arrived at such freedoms because of his repeated escapes and protests. He initiated transfers to a variety of work sites both by official channels and illegal escapes. Through arrests, beatings, and escapes Pomberger navigated his way to a farm where he found meaningful work and close Russian companions. His story is a perfect example of how POWs

85 Pomberger, "Memoir," 66.
86 Pomberger, "Memoir," 70–73.
87 Pomberger, "Memoir," 74.

negotiated their position within their environment, even when such resistance risked serious consequences.

Soldiers resisted strict control and abusive behavior in other ways as well. Johann Obermüllner recounted a particularly abusive Cossack NCO from his time at the coalmine. This man regularly terrorized the POWs, disrupting prisoners in their quarters and during meals; he regularly barged in with knout in hand, barking orders and looking for an excuse to physically assault prisoners. The occupants endured this for a while, but Obermüllner noted the hidden anger of the men, who had to silently watch as the brute beat their friends. Finally, when one night the NCO charged into the quarters of the camp’s Reich Germans, they took their revenge. The men ambushed him upon his entrance, turning off the lights and throwing every available object within the room at him while he desperately tried to escape. Authorities attempted to hold the POWs accountable, but all the quarter’s inhabitants refused to speak. The camp could not arrest all 165 men, and so they simply went unpunished. From that point on the NCO refused to enter their room alone.[88]

CONCLUSION

Over the course of six years, millions of Austro-Hungarian POWs lived and labored in Russia. Some men experienced horrors, while others faced remarkably comfortable circumstances; many men experienced both. The majority of non-officer POWs were forced to work during this time, making up a significant share of Russian labor in some sectors. They did not get a say in where they worked or what they did. In fact official policy dictated that POWs had to accomplish any labor set before them, and POWs were required to subject themselves to their supervisors’ orders regardless of severity. Yet POW memoirs show that prisoners often found ways to resist undesirable circumstances and initiate transfers. They used strikes, escapes, and occasionally violence to establish better working and living conditions. Increased freedom and improved circumstances might only be attained after various acts of resistance. Local escape attempts proved most effective; police often initiated changes in worksites following such attempts, inadvertently promoting assertions of POW autonomy.

[88] Obermüllner, “Memoir,” 121.

Resistance was not limited to those who could find new work, and men trapped within a particular camp still attempted to avoid heavy labor and challenge unjust authorities. POW escapes and noncompliance were always risky. Their efforts failed as often as they succeeded, prompting painful government reactions. Such reactions could be severe enough to break the spirit of even willful men. Even in cases which did facilitate new working conditions, POWs often faced deprivation and violence before being transferred. In spite of these risks, prisoners continually made efforts to improve their lives.

POWs were not passive victims while in captivity. Although they faced circumstances reminiscent of later concentration camps, they found ways to express autonomy and negotiate a better lifestyle for themselves. The Russian response to such insubordination is also telling; though often vexed and prone to acts of violence, Russian authorities were limited in their retribution. When a German barrack assaulted an NCO, authorities were unwilling to resort to extreme measures against the 165 men. This tense tug of war between policing forces and POWs reveals how prisoners actively negotiated the circumstances of their captivity. It also demonstrates that while Russian forces were negligent and cruel, they did not have a murderous posture toward their captives in the way later European powers would.

Patterns of resistance thus give important insight to the nature of POW experience within Russia and its legacy throughout the twentieth century. Acts of prisoner defiance and the limitations of Russian control challenge views which present Russian POW treatment as a prototype to later human rights violations. Patterns of resistance reveal that prisoners did not simply live within the bounds established by Russian authorities; they instead pushed back against supposed norms, hoping to broaden life's possibilities even in the darkest of days.

Bibliography

Primary Sources

Brändström, Elsa. *Among Prisoners of War in Russia & Siberia*. Translated by C. Mabels Rickmers. Hutchinson & Co., 1929.

Gaiswinkler, Adolf. “Memoir.” In *In russischer Gefangenschaft: Erlebnisse österreichischer Soldaten im Ersten Weltkrieg*, edited by Verna Moritz and Hannes Leidinger, 157–183. Vol. 56. Böhlau Verlag, 2008.

Hahn, Alexander. “Memoir.” In *In russischer Gefangenschaft*, edited by Verna Moritz and Hannes Leidinger, 37–47. Vol. 56. Böhlau Verlag, 2008.

Obermüllner, Johann. “Memoir.” In *In russischer Gefangenschaft*, edited by Verna Moritz and Hannes Leidinger, 115–137. Vol. 56. Böhlau Verlag, 2008.

Pomberger, Gottlieb. “Memoir.” In *In russischer Gefangenschaft*, edited by Verna Moritz and Hannes Leidinger, 48–78. Vol. 56. Böhlau Verlag, 2008.

Schaidl, Julius. “Memoir.” In *In russischer Gefangenschaft*, edited by Verna Moritz and Hannes Leidinger, 138–156. Vol. 56. Böhlau Verlag, 2008.

Stieff, Anton. “Memoir.” In *In russischer Gefangenschaft*, edited by Verna Moritz and Hannes Leidinger, 79–103. Vol. 56. Böhlau Verlag, 2008.

Secondary Sources

Academic Books

Rachamimov, Iris. *POWs and the Great War: Captivity on the Eastern Front*. 1st ed. Berg Publishers, 2002.

Williamson, Samuel R., and Peter Pastor, eds. *Essays on World War I: Origins and Prisoners of War*. Social Science Monographs, Brooklyn College Press, 1983.

Journal Articles

Davis, Gerald H. “National Red Cross Societies and Prisoners of War in Russia, 1914–18.” *Journal of Contemporary History* 28, no. 1 (1993): 31–52. http://www.jstor.org/stable/260800.

Davis, Gerald H. “Prisoner of War Camps as Social Communities in Russia: Krasnoyarsk, 1914–1921.” *East European Quarterly* 21 (1987).

Davis, Gerald H. “The Life of Prisoners of War in Russia, 1914–1921.” In *Essays on World War I: Origins and Prisoners of War*, edited by Samuel R. Williamson and Peter Pastor, 165–192. Brooklyn College Press, 1983.

Housden, Martyn. “When the Baltic Sea was a ‘Bridge’ for Humanitarian Action: The League of Nations, The Red Cross and The Repatriation of Prisoners of War Between Russia and Central Europe, 1920–22.” *Journal of Baltic Studies* 38, no. 1 (2007): 61–83. http://www.jstor.org/stable/43212756.

Miodowski, Adam. “Escapes from Russian Captivity by Prisoners of War Taken on the Eastern Front (August 1914–February 1917).” *Journal of Slavic Military Studies* 34, no. 2 (2021): 303–21. https://doi-org.uoregon.idm.oclc.org/10.1080/13518046.2021.1990553.

Volgyes, Ivan. “Hungarian Prisoners of War in Russia 1916–1919.” *Cahiers Du Monde Russe et Soviétique* 14, no. 1/2 (1973): 54–85. http://www.jstor.org/stable/20169651.

Yanikdağ, Yücel. “Ottoman Prisoners of War in Russia, 1914–22.” *Journal of Contemporary History* 34, no. 1 (1999): 69–85. http://www.jstor.org/stable/261194.

Radioactive Relations

Atomic Anxiety and the Nuclear Family in Science Fiction

Parker Parker

The mid-twentieth century is often remembered as the peak of American exceptionalism. Children born into the Great Depression, who had grown up in a rapidly industrializing World War II America, now had the opportunity to live a life of futuristic leisure. The job market was robust, and wages could easily sustain a small family. A child born into poverty during the thirties could never have envisioned the progress their society would make in such a short period of time. Likewise, the rapid, concurrent pace of arms evolution and proliferation during the Cold War presented a nearly unfathomable new reality. At the same time, around half of all households had at least one member under eighteen, which presented a uniquely intense anxiety. The same human itch for progress that had given them their fairytale existence now seemed hellbent on destroying it and everything they loved. Unsurprisingly, this dichotomy inspired many of this generation's creatives to center their work around nuclear anxiety. A central theme in almost any of these works is the dissolution of American society and its moral tenets after the bombs fall. Some authors focused on the hypothetical loss of our economy, our government, or even the American national identity. The most visible thread in this web of apocalyptic fears was, without a doubt, the destruction of the nuclear family.

Fifteen years before the Trinity test, and thirty years before the height of the Cold War, the United States was plummeting into a depression. Unemployment was at unprecedented levels, and people who managed to maintain their employment faced pay cuts and inflation. Immigration was also on the rise following the destabilization of post-World War I Europe. Our national identity was entering a uniquely pliable state, and it was unclear what direction we would take. Then the United States entered the Second World War. Men over the age of eighteen were drafted into the armed forces, and the rest of the nation took to supporting them however they could. Tactics like rationing, or campaigns like “loose lips sink ships,” played a role, but the real impact came from our national effort to industrialize. The abundance of iron across the Midwest and advances in supply chain technology drove the United States to specialize in steel production. At certain points during World War II, the United States was responsible for half of the global production of steel. With the primary workforce away at war, women were encouraged to step past social norms and take up industrial roles. To quote economist J.D. Durand, “That a generation of women which once adopts a greater degree of participation in gainful employment tends to retain that characteristic throughout its potential working life.”[1] This opened the doors for more women to join the workforce. When veterans returned home from the war to reclaim their place in the workforce, some women remained, but many more went home. By the late nineteen forties, the United States economy was as diverse as it was robust. When this primed economy met with a generation fed entirely on wartime propaganda enforcing the concept that the fight was for the “home front” — their families or “the girl back home” — there was no question what our national identity would be. As historian Elaine May wrote, “In the postwar vision, ‘the men would be secure in stable careers, the women in comfortable homes, and together they would raise perfect children.’”[2] America became synonymous with two words: Family and Employment. With social reinforcement that childbearing and maintaining a stable household were necessary to achieve the American dream, that is what almost everyone did. To quote May once again, “The birthrate rose among all social, occupational, economic, and ethnic groups in a remarkable consensus of reproductive behavior.”[3] Soon, the United States was filled with young, hopeful families.

The industrial machine that formed the backbone of suburban America’s robust economy was a large one. It was firmly in place and here to stay after the conflict concluded, but what else could a well-oiled machine designed to support a global war effort be used for? The

---

1 J.D. Durand, *Labor Force in the United States, 1890–1960* (New York: Social Science Research Council, 1948), 168.

2 Elaine Tyler May, “The Politics of Reproduction,” *Irish Journal of American Studies* 6 (1997): 17.

3 May, “The Politics of Reproduction,” 19.

USSR's immediate commencement of its own nuclear weapons program provided an answer. The United States felt it had no choice but to enter the industrial race to build stronger bombs faster than the Soviet Union.

It was imperative to stay one step ahead of the Soviets, not only because they threatened our new position as "leader of the free world," but also because they did so as our perceived antithesis. If they could dethrone us as a global superpower under a communist system, it would have created a space within the United States for serious discussion about the effectiveness of capitalism. As historian Traci Voyles states, "Simultaneously, Cold War culture equated the protection of a sanctified white domestic sphere with the protection of the nation. During the postwar years, the heteronormative nuclear family sat at the heart of patriotic anticommunist white life."[4] This is, in effect, a continuation of World War II propaganda in the United States. Men must leave to defend their nation (through breadwinning rather than combat), and women must uphold the homeland so that men are motivated to keep up the fight. The United States government needed to demonize communism while also conflating a storybook American lifestyle as one that would be inherently white, suburban, and capitalist.

The nuclear family was a defined social structure. The man of the house was a proud father with a career that supported the rest of the family. Housekeeping and child-rearing fell to the woman. The standard was two or three children, with at least one girl and a boy. By conflating the livelihood of the average family with the health and security of the nation, a culture of paralyzing nuclear anxiety was inevitable. In Ray Bradbury's "There Will Come Soft Rains" (TWCSR), we observe an automated household that performs ritual upkeep despite the nuclear annihilation of everything else in the area. In this reality, technology had advanced to the point of fulfilling the concept of the nuclear family without any family at all. As the autonomous house says in its routine bedtime poem, "…not one will know of the war, not one will care at last when it is done. Not one would mind… If mankind perished utterly, and Spring herself, when she woke at dawn, would scarcely know that we were gone."[5] The family's activities and

4 Ray Bradbury, "There Will Come Soft Rains," *Collier's*, May 6, 1950, 4.
5 Bradbury, "There Will Come Soft Rains," 2.

social duties are maintained via the house, revealing how empty this idealized version of a household could be. Bradbury takes special care to note how the house is designed to carry on with business as usual, regardless of the inhabitants (or lack thereof). Breakfast, lunch, and dinner are prepared and disposed of at the end of each meal period. Baths are drawn and warmed, and the lawn watered by what is likely the only source of clean water for several miles. “The water pelted windowpanes, running down the charred west side where the house had been burned.... Still farther over, their images burned on wood in one titanic instant, a small boy, hands flung into the air; higher up, the image of a thrown ball, and opposite him a girl, hands raised to catch a ball which never came down.”[6] The life of this prematurely erased family, frozen in time, is emblazoned on the wall of a home that repeats their final day in perpetuity.

The interpretations of fatherhood in prospective nuclear fictions take many forms, from the mundane representations in Bradbury’s “There Will Come Soft Rains,” to Ward Moore’s cynical characterization of Mr. Jimmon in “Lot.” In “There Will Come Soft Rains,” we are presented with a skeleton of the father’s routine, from which we might piece the man together. The garage opens for his car after the house has fed him and reminded him of work. Upon his return, he sits down to a meal with his family, prepared for him by a thankless automaton. He would then retire to his throne in the living room, an awaiting armchair with a slow-burning cigar. Bradbury displays how removed from the “homefront” a nuclear father would be; gone in the morning and removed from the rest of the family until bedtime. In Ward Moore’s “Lot,” we observe a reality where society and its structures are actively falling, but the family is preserved. The story put forth in “Lot” (and “Lot’s Daughter”) parallels that of Lot in Genesis. Cities face imminent destruction. The father foresees this destruction and has long since accepted that migration is their sole shot at survival. The mother remains less convinced, unable to relieve herself of social niceties. She disobeys the word of God and turns back towards the city, causing her demise. In “Lot,” Mr. Jimmon does not receive a command from God; he spends the years of nuclear anxiety preparing for what he is convinced is inevitable. His obsession with the

[6] Traci Brynne Voyles, “Atomic Bombs: The Sexual Life of Nuclearism, 1945–57,” *American Quarterly* 72, no. 3 (2020): 654.

destruction of society results in a slow withdrawal from his role as father, dreaming of a romanticized life as a post-war *Robinson Crusoe*. He harbors a deep resentment towards his wife and sons, whom he affixes to different societal structures he dislikes. "…resentment against Molly… Jir,… and Wendell… rode up in the saliva under his tongue. Dependent. Helpless. Everything on him. Parasites."[7] His wife is too dependent on the societal structures he must leave behind to reinvent himself. His eldest son has been too exposed to the patriarchy, and Mr. Jimmon expects him to devolve into a marauder within a few years. Jir, his youngest, has only existed while Mr. Jimmon has worked and dreamed of the apocalypse. "Wendell, like Jir, was more Manville than Jimmon; they carried Molly's stamp on their faces and minds. Only Erika was a true Jimmon."[8] As they ride away from annihilation, he pushes himself to the conclusion that the only member of his family who does not represent his disdain for societal structures is his daughter. This is because he views her not as his daughter, but as an avenue for conquest, much like the land that lay before them. "…making her appear at first glance even younger than fourteen. But only at first glance; then the swell of hips and breast denied the childishness."[9] Mrs. Jimmon is described as flabby, seemingly having served her sexual purpose by providing children. She, like the society from which they fled, had been used up. Erika is young, new, and fertile. A land of promise, ripe for Mr. Jimmon's romantic ideations. In the end, he abandons his family at a gas station, continuing with Erika towards his dream.

In "Lot's Daughter," seven years have passed by. Mr. Jimmon is disillusioned with the reality that he dreamed up and ran away towards. He fails to live up to his idealized woodland life, mourning the social niceties he once chastised the "expendable" members of his family for. He fails to live up to either the social pressure of nuclear fatherhood or his self-imposed parameters for "natural" fatherhood. The only societal structure he does not divorce himself from is the patriarchal. Erika is expected to rear his child (whose name he can hardly remember) and maintain the sad excuse for a shelter they call their home. He does not view this as a failure to move on from the

7 Ward Moore, "Lot," *Fantasy and Science Fiction* 4, no. 5 (May 1953): 108.
8 Moore, "Lot," 108.
9 Moore, "Lot," 102.

superficial social values he grew to hate, but rather that such a role was natural for a woman, regardless of societal pressures. The role of the housewife was so affixed in American culture that it shines through regardless of how an author might approach it. Mrs. Jimmon and Erika both fulfill this role for the sake of their patriarch. In "There Will Come Soft Rains," the autonomous house assists the mother with her duties, in some ways replacing her. Even after the real mother is wiped from the slate, and the societal pressures have gone with the wind, the role of the housewife persists. Even in the apocalypse, women cannot escape the clutches of societal expectation.

The children of nuclear families grew up suffocated by the possibility of nuclear destruction. Some schoolchildren were given dog tags for identification in case bombs were dropped while they were separated from their families. Others were shown instructional films on how to survive an attack, with mascots like Burt the Turtle. The horror of nuclear war had to be simplified and, likewise, infantilized. In "Lot," Jir is too young to grapple with the weight of their situation. He tries to hide their dog in the car, unable to conceptualize their new food insecurity. He stirs anger in his father when he suggests they flip the radio over to that day's baseball game to combat the tension in the rest of the car, which he perceives as boredom. Leslie Crouch took an alternate approach when he explored nuclear anxiety using the perspective of a child, rather than a parent, in his short story "The Day the Bombs Fell" (TDTBF). We open with Johnny, an elementary school student on his way to school. Kicking rocks, he daydreams about the destruction of the school so he might have more time to play outside. In the background, Crouch interlaces the omnipresent nuclear anxiety of the time. "Absent-mindedly, he listened to the voice of the newscaster. '…President Green remained in his office during the night, awaiting the latest reports of the tense European situation.' Johnny yawned. Ho hum! Adults were funny, sticking around a radio like that when it was so nice out."[10] Johnny continues his way, utterly oblivious, his grasp on reality unable to extend beyond the county line. Much like Jir, the bomb is more of a mythical idea that adults throw around in heated conversation than a tangible threat. When the bombs inevitably drop, he survives by pure happenstance, slipping into a ditch. He comes to, scared and dehydrated. Scratching at his burnt skin, he

[10] Leslie A. Crouch, "The Day the Bombs Fell," *Amazing Stories*, November 1950, 102.

emerges from the rubble to search for his schoolmates. “The school — where was the school? … ‘Jeepers!’ he thought. ‘I didn’t really mean it!’”[11] He rushes home, only to find scorched earth. So beset by grief, he can only sit on what’s left of their front stoop, chin resting in his small, grimy hands. He spends the duration of the story wandering the ruins of his town with a cat he pulled from the rubble. Without the intellectual tools necessary to grapple with his sudden reality shift, he goes numb. The children of the nuclear age were asked to comprehend death and destruction in ways incomprehensible to any generation before them, which simply was not possible.

While these nuclear anxieties were global, the acute fear of losing the nuclear family, suburbia, and its social structures was specific to the global north. In Bradbury’s “The Highway,” we observe a Mexican farmer named Hernando who lives near the border. He and his wife live in a grass-roofed hut, in stark contrast to the households of American suburbia in “There Will Come Soft Rains” or “The Day the Bombs Fell.” Normally, the nearby highway is buzzing with traffic day in and day out. Today, there is silence. “Then, suddenly, as if at a signal, the cars came…The big, long black cars heading north toward the United States… He counted them until he tired.”[12] The last car pulls up to him, pleading for water to cool their fuming radiator. When he asks what all the rush is, the driver replies: “The war! It’s come, the atom war, the end of the world!” Hernando lets them on their hurried way, then gazes out to view the wind in the trees. “A sweet wind blew the smell of the jungle up to him. He could hear the river moving gently and easily on its way. The jungle was very green; everything was fresh.”[13] How could it be the world’s end? He dismisses it and heads back to work. So far removed from any societal nuclear tension, he assumes it must be an issue from which he and his wife must be exempt.

Life as a “normal” citizen during the height of Cold War missile tensions was a life lacking autonomy. Life, death, and societal formalities were held over your head by the powers that be. The only path to mental placation would be personal acceptance that life as you know it is fleeting, and it could be taken away at any time. Even white

---

11 Crouch, “The Day the Bombs Fell,” 104.

12 Ray Bradbury, “The Highway,” in *The Illustrated Man* (New York: Doubleday, 1951), 1.

13 Bradbury, “The Highway,” 1.

suburban Americans, who felt they were the global standard of safety and success, had to accept this. With the uncertainty of their future, surrounded by dangers that could feel inevitable, it is no surprise that anxiety burrowed so deeply into the cultural zeitgeist alongside pronatalism.

Bibliography

Bradbury, Ray. “The Highway.” In *The Illustrated Man*. New York: Doubleday, 1951.

Bradbury, Ray. “There Will Come Soft Rains.” *Collier’s*, May 6, 1950.

Crouch, Leslie A. “The Day the Bombs Fell.” *Amazing Stories*, November 1950.

Durand, J.D. *Labor Force in the United States, 1890–1960*. New York: Social Science Research Council, 1948.

May, Elaine Tyler. “The Politics of Reproduction.” *Irish Journal of American Studies* 6 (1997): 1–24.

Moore, Ward. “Lot.” *Fantasy and Science Fiction* 4, no. 5 (May 1953).

Moore, Ward. “Lot’s Daughter.” *Fantasy and Science Fiction* 7, no. 4 (October 1954).

Voyles, Traci Brynne. “Atomic Bombs: The Sexual Life of Nuclearism, 1945–57.” *American Quarterly* 72, no. 3 (2020): 627–660.

Radical Intimacy

The Fred Gray Association as an Adhesive Force

Lily Katharine Russell

Down a short flight of steps at 647 Broadway, the Vault at Pfaff's brought together journalists, actors, poets, and curious young men night after night.[1] Established in 1855 by Charles Pfaff, a patron of the arts, the paired cellar rooms quickly became shorthand for New York bohemia in a subterranean world that "brighten[s] up, bright eyes of beautiful young men."[2] It was here, in the cavities directly beneath Broadway's bustling city streets, that Walt Whitman found his people. The Fred Gray Association, born from the bar's culture of eased rank, was known as "a loose confederation of young men who seemed anxious to explore new possibilities of male-male affection."[3] Although the "Fred Gray Association" was never an official title used by Whitman or his peers, scholars such as Ed Folsom and Ken Price have adopted the name to describe this group of close friends.[4] Whitman notably wrote extensive poems regarding his "desires to touch and experience the 'electricity' of his comradeships with his Fred Gray associates," among them Nat Bloom, John Frederick Schiller Gray, Charles Kingsley, Charles Chauncey, Hugo Fritsch, and occasionally his roommate Fred Vaughan.[5] According to Stephanie Blalock, this is "a rarely studied group of young bachelors," and that observation suggests a need to understand them as such.[6] What we know of these

---

1 "In and About the City; Death of Charles I. Pfaff: Something About the Proprietor of the Once Famous 'Bohemia.'" *New York Times*, April 26, 1890, 2.

2 Walt Whitman, New York Notebook, Thomas Biggs Harned Collection, Library of Congress, 1861.

3 Ed Folsom and Kenneth M. Price, *Re-Scripting Walt Whitman: An Introduction to His Life and Work* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2005), 62.

4 "Projecting Whitman: The Evolution and Remediation of The Collected Writings of Walt Whitman," The Walt Whitman Archive, 2001, accessed March 17, 2026, https://whitmanarchive.org/about/archive/wwa-2000-to-2007/articlesAboutArchive/anc.00003.html.

5 Stephanie M. Blalock, *Whitman among the Bohemians*, ed. Joanna Levin and Edward Keyes Whitley (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2014), 181.

6 Blalock, *Whitman among the Bohemians*, 172.

men is largely limited to Whitman's perspective. Of the core members, only Hugo Fritsch and Fred Vaughan left any surviving correspondence, and even those letters only reflect Whitman's half of the exchange. No letters from Bloom, Gray, Kingsley, or Chauncey survive in any archive. Their own voices, feelings about what the group was and what it meant have not survived in any meaningful record. What remains is a love story told by only one of its authors, one we must review precisely as we historicize the nature and meaning of these relationships.

While some cultural historians, such as David Reynolds, emphasize the normalcy of nineteenth-century male friendship, the intentional "coding" of phrenological and matrimonial language indicates that the Fred Gray circle deliberately created a distinct and progressive space for intimacy compared to Victorian camaraderie.[7] The intimacy Whitman shared with members of the Fred Gray Association was not purely sexual. Real and profound feelings existed independently of any physical consummation. It was a love so unprecedented that Whitman himself had to construct the vocabulary to name it. Words such as magnetism and adhesiveness, which sprang from the once-acceptable pseudoscience of phrenology, formed the groundwork for a private language these men created to name a feeling the world hadn't yet named.[8] Phrenology, now discredited, was recognized and published in Victorian society as a legitimate science. Whitman seized its terminology deliberately, using "adhesiveness" — "the phrenological term for the capacity for friendship" — as a synonym for male comradeship and to make sense of his "homoerotic urges as feelings of intense male friendship."[9] This rebranding expanded the nineteenth-century science into a poetic and political movement that sheltered something far more radical. Rather than same-sex desire being an act of deviance, this framing made it a biological fact. You cannot condemn what science says a body was made to feel. The widely regarded pseudoscientific language of "adhesiveness" and "magnetism" enabled Whitman and the members of the Fred Gray Association to inhabit a

[7] David S. Reynolds,*Walt Whitman's America: A Cultural Biography* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1995), 195.

[8] John Van Wyhe, "The Authority of Human Nature: The 'Schädellehre' of Franz Joseph Gall," *The British Journal for the History of Science* 35, no. 1 (March 2002): 17–42, https://www.jstor.org/stable/4028401.

[9] Anton F. Borst, "A Chant of Dilation: Walt Whitman, Phrenology, and the Language of the Mind" (PhD diss., City University of New York, 2014), 20.

reality in which male intimacy was legitimized and their love protected, a reality that later served as the blueprint for modern queer identity. To grasp the importance of Whitman's rebrand, it is essential to understand the supposed anatomical certainty that phrenology claimed to provide.

Phrenology, developed by German physician Franz Joseph Gall in 1796, was the belief that the bumps and contours on a person's skull revealed their character, emotional capacity, and intelligence.[10] Popularized in 1810, Gall's theory held that the brain was composed of small, independent organs, each corresponding to a distinct personality trait, all of which were measurable and visible to a trained eye. The science found its most receptive audience among the white intellectual elite, who employed it to cement their authority by encoding social hierarchy as a biological fact.[11] In this way, they could mark those outside their rank as lesser by nature, not by circumstance. While debunked by some in the mid-nineteenth century, phrenology remained a popular and trusted medical science among the general public well into the nineteenth century.[12] Phrenology did not just describe their world; it justified it, and it was trusted by those who embraced and applied it.

That trust was so deep that phrenology evolved into a popular form of entertainment for a broader audience. So much so that "phrenology reigned as the favorite entertainment of society," as "Americans became very much interested in a strange force through which one person could have power over another or could see things without using his eyes."[13] Phrenology became so "sensationalized that phrenology parlors appeared in Europe and America along with 'automated phrenology machines' for self-diagnosis or as entertainment."[14] This mainstream credibility is exactly what made it so useful for Whitman. He did not stumble into phrenological vocabulary; he chose it with the precision of a poet who knew the power of the

---

10 Van Wyhe, "The Authority of Human Nature," 21.
11 Van Wyhe, "The Authority of Human Nature," 22–23.
12 Van Wyhe, "The Authority of Human Nature," 24.
13 Edmund Reiss, "Whitman's Debt to Animal Magnetism," *PMLA* 78, no. 1 (March 1963): 80, https://doi.org/10.2307/461228.
14 Emily Walhout, "Face to Face: Physiognomy & Phrenology," Preserving Heritage Collections (blog), September 24, 2012, https://archive.blogs.harvard.edu/preserving/2012/09/24/face-to-face-physiognomy-phrenology.

right word in the right context. Scholars have argued that he was "the first self-proclaimed homosexual in modern literature," and that in doing so he "succeeded in forging appropriate artistic strategies of simultaneous revelation and concealment for subtly communicating a positive image of a gay sensibility to other gay readers."[15] That strategy is nowhere more visible than in his adoption of phrenological language. He used "phrenological terms such as 'amativeness' to describe heterosexual love and 'adhesiveness' as a synonym for male comradeship," and then carefully expanded those definitions just enough to be still socially acceptable.[16] Adhesiveness, in Whitman's hands, was much deeper than the capacity for friendship; it was the biological fact that some men, like himself, were built to love other men. As the scholar Robert K. Martin argues, Whitman's homosexuality became "the source of his art, the center of his book, and the foundation of his political theory."[17] Additionally, phrenology gave him the language to lay that foundation without exposing himself to condemnation. His sexuality and masculinity weren't a crisis of belief for him; it was the very "essence of and culmination of his faith."[18]

Because the word homosexual did not yet exist, the deliberate expansion of terms like adhesiveness and magnetism was not merely concealment but invention. Whitman and the Fred Gray Association were collectively creating queer language in real time, filling a gap in the English language with the tools available to them. The phrenological terms provided a respectable veneer and a shared shorthand understood by like-minded men. This private lexicon is what distinguished Whitman from his contemporaries. It was not merely that he found a private language for his desire, but that he circulated and published it in his poetry and personal letters. Underneath the borrowed science was something radical: a sincere personal recognition and acceptance of his feelings. Whitman arrived intuitively at an argument the modern world would spend another century catching up to — that sexuality is not a choice but simply how people exist. The Fred Gray Association was not simply the audience for that

[15] David Kuebrich, *Minor Prophecy: Walt Whitman's New American Religion* (Indiana University Press, 1989), 131.
[16] Kuebrich, *Minor Prophecy*, 390.
[17] Kuebrich, *Minor Prophecy*, 131.
[18] Kuebrich, *Minor Prophecy*, 131.

language. They were its living proof that the feeling had always been there, waiting to be named. While the outside world lacked clear definitions of Whitman's desire, the poet carried his self-authored reality into the most tumultuous periods of American history. Even as he cared for the wounded in military hospitals, Whitman's correspondence continued to be grounded in the distinctive, "magnetic" language characteristic of the Fred Gray circle.

In the summer of 1863, Whitman was volunteering as a nurse in military hospitals in Washington, DC.[19] He was surrounded by severely wounded and dying men. As he nursed them, he sat with them, consoled them, touched them, and wrote letters back home to their families. It was in this context that he wrote a letter to Fred Gray member Hugo Fritsch, describing his longing to be reunited with his dear companion, Fred Gray. He voiced his desire, saying, "how I should like to see him & have a good heart's time with him, & a mild orgie, just for a basis, you know, for talk & interchange of reminiscences & the play of the quiet lambent electricity of real friendship."[20] The letter is significant both for what it openly declares and for what it reveals through its chosen language. On its surface, it evokes a man missing his friends, yet it was so much deeper than that.

The word "orgie" in nineteenth-century custom referred to carousing with wild abandon as opposed to current associations of sexual excess.[21] By employing the word "mild" before "orgie" and a "quiet lambent electricity," Whitman suggests a controlled chaos.[22] It's a night of physical closeness, so close to physical touch that lines are blurred; it's a tactile energy shared between these men. Again, he applies scientific language to explain something that Victorian society would condemn. He isn't discussing sex or a night of wild drinking, but rather the texture of their relationships. Whitman felt that men couldn't reach a "real" or unrestrained conversation without the loosening effects of alcohol; you needed the orgie with the heat of crowded bodies around a congested table to strip away inhibitions.[23] In this sense, the orgie is the fuel and the electricity, and the deep

[19] Whitman to Fritsch, October 8, 1863, 158–160.
[20] Whitman to Fritsch, October 8, 1863, 158–160.
[21] Whitman to Fritsch, October 8, 1863, 158–160.
[22] Whitman to Fritsch, October 8, 1863, 158–160.
[23] Justin Martin, *Rebel Souls: Walt Whitman and America's First Bohemians* (Da Capo Press, 2014), 64, Kindle.

emotional bond is the result. The orgie was a space for Whitman to be physically affectionate and emotionally vulnerable in a new way.

The letter continues in the same vein. Whitman writes of wanting "to be within hand's reach of you," a phrase which, given the context of Whitman's daily work, carries particular weight.[24] Whitman's hands, in 1863, were instruments of comfort and healing, laid daily on the bodies of strangers who had no choice in being in that medical tent. The desperation encoded in "hand's reach" proclaims the specific, physical ache of a man who spends his capacity for touch on everyone except the men he chose in the Fred Gray Association.[25] The intentional choice is central to understanding what Whitman means when he writes that he wants Fritsch, Fred, and Charles Chauncey to "remain a group of itself in the portrait gallery of my heart and mind, yet and forever."[26] The collection reflected the inner life of the person who assembled it. These are the people Whitman selected above all others as essential to his joy and his identity.

The most significant language in the letter, however, is matrimonial in tone. Whitman's reference to their "knitting together" and his question, "is there any better kind in life's experiences?" borrows directly from the religious and domestic language of Victorian marriage.[27] Knitting was gendered work, associated primarily with women, the home, and the patient creation of something strong from two separate threads.[28] By applying this to bonds between men, Whitman claimed dignity and merit for male same-sex intimacy that was reserved for the institution of marriage. Whitman remained a bachelor his entire life, not out of dejection but choice.[29] The Fred Gray Association gave him what marriage was meant to provide: trust, comfort, partnership, fidelity, and chosen commitment. In a time when marriage was as much a social contract as an emotional one, when vows were sworn as much for family and propriety as for feeling, what

[24] Whitman to Fritsch, October 8, 1863, 158–160.
[25] Whitman to Fritsch, October 8, 1863, 158–160.
[26] Whitman to Fritsch, October 8, 1863, 158–160.
[27] Whitman to Fritsch, October 8, 1863, 158–160; John Tosh, *A Man's Place: Masculinity and the Middle-Class Home in Victorian England* (Yale University Press, 1999), 125–145.
[28] Rozsika Parker, *The Subversive Stitch: Embroidery and the Making of the Feminine* (The Women's Press, 1984), 60–109.
[29] Ed Folsom and Kenneth M. Price, "Biography," The Walt Whitman Archive, ed. Matt Cohen, Ed Folsom, and Kenneth M. Price, accessed March 17, 2026, https://whitmanarchive.org/whitmans-life/biography.

Whitman shared with these men was by his own measure more binding.[30]

Male relationships in Victorian times were largely seen as either familial or situational.[31] Bonds were forged through work, social events, clubs, and at the bar, and were believed to be easily replicated in any new city or circumstance.[32] Whitman's despair that no other person can fill the frames in his gallery is in stark contrast to that model. The Fred Gray Association was not a club with open membership; it was a select collection of people. To be included in the gallery was to be claimed lovingly, permanently, without the need for a public proclamation to make it real. Whitman, using the coded language born in that cellar, privately claimed a relationship that society offered no public path for. These men were his. He was theirs. The bond between them was worth preserving, with the care one gives to what is most worth keeping.

What the letter to Fritsch ultimately documents is the historical record of men, under significant social pressures, creating in real time a language to describe a love the world had not yet named. Whitman was a poet, language was his primary instrument, and the words he chose throughout this letter connect to themes his era recognized as legitimate: science, nature, domesticity, and marriage. Each word was chosen with intention. Each frame was borrowed from respectability and quietly bent into something new. The Fred Gray Association was the space in which that language was tested and shared, in a time when the feeling would not wait for the English language to catch up, a century later.

By the mid-1860s, the vocabulary circulating among these men had become more confident and specific, branching beyond the safe code of scientific terminology into something direct and revealing. The knitting metaphor in Whitman's letter, for example, was not an isolated instance of matrimonial language finding its way into the correspondence of these men.[33] It was a deliberate, recurring pattern in the private correspondence of the Fred Gray Association members. The closest example is the letter to Hugo Fritsch, in which Whitman

30 Walt Whitman, *Democratic Vistas* (Washington, DC, 1871), 61, https://archive.org/details/democraticvista00whitrich.

31 Richard Dellamora, *Friendship's Bonds: Democracy and the Novel in Victorian England* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 21–23.

32 Mark C. Carnes, *Secret Ritual and Manhood in Victorian America* (Yale University Press, 1989), 63.

33 Whitman to Fritsch, October 8, 1863, 158–160.

accuses his companion Nat Bloom of having broken his "faithful troth," a term drawn directly from Victorian marriage vows.[34] The accusation is framed as a tease to a friend who has been out of touch, but the choice of "troth" is not accidental. It is not the language of an acquaintance or a friend. It was the language of permanent, binding commitment between two people, hiding behind intentional casualness. Whitman expresses a real feeling about loyalty and exclusivity within the group while retaining the plausible deniability of humor. The joke only works if the feeling behind it is real. A man does not accuse another man of breaking his marriage vow, even in jest, unless some version of that vow had been previously made.

This pattern of coded intimacy extended to how Whitman wrote about the physical beauty of these men. In his correspondence, he lingers on physical details: a man's complexion, his build, his "whiskers."[35] His clear appreciation of men's bodies and appearances went far beyond the conventions of male friendship in that era. These were not passing observations; they were the thoughts of a man who found other men beautiful.[36] The Fred Gray Association provided the necessary safety through private correspondence, allowing Whitman to voice his admiration. The Association occupied much more than the physical space of Pfaff's; these letters demonstrate that it was also an interior space where the normal conventions of masculine restraint and sobriety did not apply. A man could write about another man's beauty with a candor normally expressed only in romantic correspondence.

What is most revealing is that this internal language did not remain entirely invisible to outsiders. The Reverend Moncure Conway, an abolitionist who met Whitman for an interview during this period, described him as "hugging the water with a lover's enthusiasm," an observation made in passing but revealing in its instinct.[37] Conway had no access at that time to the Association's private communications, let alone the pet names or the marriage language captured in the letters

[34] Walt Whitman to Hugo Fritsch, [before August 7, 1863], in *The Correspondence*, vol. 1, ed. Edwin Haviland Miller (New York University Press, 1961), 123–24, The Walt Whitman Archive, https://whitmanarchive.org/item/loc.00779.

[35] Whitman to Fritsch, [before August 7, 1863], 123–124.

[36] Walt Whitman, "[New York Atlas, 19 September 1858]," New York Atlas, September 19, 1858, The Walt Whitman Archive, https://whitmanarchive.org/item/per.00424.

[37] Moncure D. Conway, "A Visit to Walt Whitman: He Recalls the Years When He Lived in Brooklyn," Brooklyn Daily Eagle, July 11, 1886, 4.

among the men. Yet his description went to the erotic imagery of a lover, rather than a friend. What the Fred Gray Association named in private, Conway perceived in public. Whitman's magnetic personality was visible to anyone paying close enough attention and legible even to those without a framework to truly understand what they were seeing and intuiting.

This was not incidental. Whitman was, by every contemporary account, a man of considerable personal magnetism, widely regarded as charming and socially compelling.[38] He moved easily within New York society and could, by the social logic of the era, have secured a conventional marriage without great difficulty. Such an arrangement would have insulated him from scrutiny and simplified his public life. However, he remained a bachelor his entire life.[39] For a man of his visibility, that was a significant choice, and it reinforced his determination to live fully with integrity to his true self. The members of the Fred Gray Association felt this in private, and observers like Conway registered it in public. Taken together, the troth letter, Whitman's love of the male physique, and Conway's observation provide evidence for something rarely preserved in the historical record: a group of men in the 1860s actively constructing and circulating a private language for same-sex male intimacy. They tested their limits in correspondence and lived within it fully enough that it became perceptible from the outside. They may not have had the word for all of this, but they had everything else.

What they had, however, did not originate in the cellar of Pfaff's. The evolution of that language began earlier, and more privately, in a domestic space that predated the poetry and the coded vocabulary entirely. Before there was a Pfaff's, before there was a Fred Gray Association, before there was a coded vocabulary of adhesiveness, lambent electricity, and faithful troths, there was Fred Vaughan. Vaughan was a stage driver from Brooklyn.[40] He and Whitman lived together in the late 1850s.[41] Same-sex cohabitation was a common practice in nineteenth-century America, a practical arrangement

38 Reiss, "Whitman's Debt to Animal Magnetism," 87.
39 "Whitman, Walt (1819–1892)," The Vault at Pfaff's, Lehigh University, accessed March 3, 2026, https://pfaffs.web.lehigh.edu/node/54162.
40 Blalock, *Whitman among the Bohemians*, 172.
41 Blalock, *Whitman among the Bohemians*, 172.

driven by cramped city conditions and economic necessity.[42] At first glance, two men sharing a home would not arouse suspicion, but the intimacy they developed went far beyond that of simple roommates. Vaughan is significant to Whitman's life because their relationship was the origin of Whitman's search to legitimize his feelings. The writings that remain portray the raw experience of two men loving one another behind closed doors. Whitman's search for meaning is rooted in the time with Vaughan, before any framework existed. The Fred Gray Association, the *Calamus* poems, and the elaborate vocabulary the Association crafted were Whitman's attempts to build a social, communal structure for something he had already lived.

In a letter dated March 19, 1860, Vaughan writes to Whitman with the casual urgency of a man in a personal relationship who is accustomed to being in close contact. He writes apologizing for missing Whitman's departure to Boston: "I called in at Pfaff's, two evenings in succession, but did not find you on hand." Vaughan adds that he is "quite anxious to hear about how matters are progressing with" Whitman and closes the message with "yours as ever."[43] On its surface, this is a friend checking in on another friend. Read against the full context of their relationship and correspondence, it is more specific than that. In her reading of this letter, Blalock argued, "Whitman and his lover … Fred Vaughan" shared a domestic life.[44] The Whitman Archive confirms as well that the two were living together while he finished his *Calamus* poems, which their love helped shape. Placing this letter in context, those poems were going to press in Boston at the time of this letter. He was anxious, calling and looking for news at Pfaff's two evenings running. He is writing to a man whose most intimate poetry is being printed for public view; poetry inspired by their romantic life together. The language had to be careful; their correspondence could be read by others. This was not wartime censorship, but the social surveillance that governed men in the nineteenth century.[45] Discretion was survival.

---

[42] Anthony E. Rotundo, *American Manhood: Transformations in Masculinity from the Revolution to the Modern Era* (Basic Books, 1993), 84–85.

[43] Fred B. Vaughan to Walt Whitman, May 17, 1860, Charles E. Feinberg Collection of the Papers of Walt Whitman, Library of Congress, Washington, DC, The Walt Whitman Archive, https://whitmanarchive.org/item/loc.00572.

[44] Blalock, *Whitman among the Bohemians*, 172.

[45] J. Willis Westlake, *How to Write Letters: A Manual of Correspondence* (Porter and Coates, 1876), 122, https://books.google.com/books?id=Pz0XAAAAIAAJ.

A March 27, 1860, letter reveals the sophistication of their coding even more fully. Writing from New York, Vaughan describes attending a lecture by Ralph Waldo Emerson, one of the most publicly revered intellectual figures in America at the time.[46] He writes that Emerson "has that in him which makes men capable of strong friendships," and quotes Emerson as saying that "a man whose heart was filled with a warm, ever enduring, not to be shaken by anything Friendship was one to be set on one side apart from other men, and almost to be worshipped as a saint."[47] Vaughan is not simply reporting a lecture; he is intentionally invoking the credibility of one of the most respected American authors to legitimize, by association, the precise feeling he shares with Whitman. If Emerson himself says that men capable of strong friendship are to be revered, then what Vaughan and Whitman have is, by Emerson's own public testimony, the highest form of human connection.

That same letter then closes with Vaughan pressing Whitman to send the draft copies of *Leaves of Grass* he had promised. "How about them proof sheets?"[48] he writes, nagging Whitman for copies he had been waiting on since March. Vaughan and the men around Whitman were not passive recipients of his poetry but active participants in its creation. They were his first readers and editors, men who understood that *Leaves* was not merely a literary project but a public manifestation of everything they had been living privately. These poems represented them, and Vaughan wanted to see them in print. By April 9, that patience had run out. Vaughan writes with barely concealed urgency: "I have written to you twice since I heard from you. Why don't you answer? Come, Walt, remember I take a deep interest in all that concerns you and must naturally be anxious to hear from you."[49] The tone is demanding, far outside the conventions of nineteenth-century male correspondence. Vaughan writes like a man who feels entitled to Whitman's attention, anxious in the way of someone who feels their loved one is far away and silent. The

---

[46] Fred B. Vaughan to Walt Whitman, March 27, 1860, Charles E. Feinberg Collection of the Papers of Walt Whitman, Library of Congress, Washington, DC, The Walt Whitman Archive, https://whitmanarchive.org/item/loc.00569.

[47] Oliver Wendell Holmes, *Ralph Waldo Emerson* (Houghton Mifflin, 1885), 234.

[48] Vaughan to Whitman, March 27, 1860.

[49] Fred B. Vaughan to Walt Whitman, April 9, 1860, Charles E. Feinberg Collection of the Papers of Walt Whitman, Library of Congress, Washington, DC, The Walt Whitman Archive, https://whitmanarchive.org/item/loc.00570.

emotional dependency the letter reveals is the other side of the electricity Whitman describes in some of his own correspondence; the feeling was not one-directional. Vaughan felt it too.

What the letter ultimately documents, however, is not emotional urgency but something more concrete: the practical, daily management of a queer life under conditions of domestic surveillance. These letters were written in a household he shared with at least two other adults, where, as Vaughan himself describes it, "Robert is drinking Tea, Mrs. Cooper is moving around the room as usual, ready to wait upon Bob even before he needs it," the daily machinery of respectable domestic life turning and watching around him.[50] Vaughan writes that Mrs. Cooper and Robert "keep asking me every evening if I have heard from Walt yet," and that if Whitman does not write soon, he will "be under the painful necessity of telling a lie to keep up your reputation."[51] Mrs. Cooper was not a landlady, but something in certain respects more consequential, likely the mother of Vaughan's roommate, Robert Cooper. As such, a maternal domestic authority was embedded in his daily life. She was present, attentive, and personally acquainted with Whitman. Her daily inquiries about his correspondence were a mechanism of social surveillance that governed respectable households in the nineteenth century. A man who did not write, who offered no account of his whereabouts and activities, invited precisely the kind of scrutiny these men could not afford. Vaughan's "painful necessity of telling a lie" was not a figure of speech.[52] It was a survival strategy, delivered in the casual register of a letter between intimates, coded as mere pleasantries just carefully enough that Mrs. Cooper herself could have read it without understanding what was being protected. The necessity of concealment that Whitman practiced in facing critics and the public world had its origins here, in the domestic spaces where the consequences of visibility were immediate and personal. The double life did not begin at Pfaff's; it began at home.

The Vaughan letters document the private architecture of life in 1860, when the group was intact, and the work of concealment was still a daily mindfulness among the association. Three years later, that structure was under a different pressure. By 1863, Whitman was in

50 Vaughan to Whitman, March 27, 1860.
51 Vaughan to Whitman, March 27, 1860.
52 Vaughan to Whitman, March 27, 1860.

Washington, the country was at war, and the Association was losing members to illness, distance, and death. In an 1863 letter addressed to Fritsch, Whitman laments the sudden loss of one of their comrades, Charles Chauncey. Chauncey, confronting death at only 25 years old, seemed to follow in the footsteps of the Pfaffian generation of men who tended to die young due to substance abuse, extreme poverty, and the cramped nature of their housing in urban Manhattan and Brooklyn. Biographical information on Chauncey is scarce, and his life remains almost a mystery outside his obituary, brief mentions in correspondence, and this letter, which immortalizes him only through the eyes of his dear friend. Unknown are his interests outside this small circle of friends, his life before the bar, and his own thoughts and feelings about the life he led. This letter serves as an elegy for the largely unnarrated lives of Chauncey and Pfaff's regulars.

None of Chauncey's correspondence or writings has been preserved; thus, the poignancy of Whitman's letters underscores the familiarity of the pair. By means of this letter in particular, Whitman muses on the "easy falling into intimacy" the two shared, the nights spent together in their entirety, and the secret words they exchanged.[53] It is Whitman to whom Chauncey would talk "freely about himself, his experiences, feelings," and all he considered "quite confidential."[54] They spent only a couple of years in each other's company, from the late 1850s until Chauncey's passing. Although Whitman never wrote of any physical intimacy shared between them in his largely uncensored journals, he writes that he "loved him then," and continues to profess his love for "him now."[55] Through these nightly confessions, it is clear that the two shared a close connection, perhaps closer than two friends would be accustomed to. And in all, they felt without touch, without the need to say it out loud, that they did love each other.

Perhaps bittersweet, but it is through the loss of a loved one that these two men allowed themselves to embrace a vulnerability not characteristic of a nineteenth-century urban man. It allowed these men to reflect on memories and realize how much they did care for each other, perhaps "more than [they] supposed." This suddenness of the

---

[53] Walt Whitman to Hugo Fritsch, [before August 7, 1863], in *The Correspondence*, vol. 1, ed. Edwin Haviland Miller (New York University Press, 1961), 123–24, The Walt Whitman Archive, https://whitmanarchive.org/item/loc.00779.
[54] Whitman to Fritsch, [before August 7, 1863], 123–124.
[55] Whitman to Fritsch, [before August 7, 1863], 123–124.

void Chauncey created in the group allowed Whitman to double down on the intensity of the exploration of their intimacies. It was now more important than ever to him to ensure his "boys" stayed close, as he was perhaps of the belief that you must spend time with people before you lose them. Often, our emotions become clear only after experiencing the loss of someone. This passing of a loved one seemed to have allowed space for greater vulnerability than men were perhaps accustomed to at the time. He sat up through the night not in desolation but in a grief that was, by morning, something closer to gratitude, for the hilarious fresh ways, the sunny smile, the confidences freely given. Without what he called "mourning thought," he chose to celebrate the man rather than the loss. What the death of Charles Chauncey made undeniable, in the privacy of that letter, was the depth of what the Fred Gray Association was. The question was what happened when that same feeling met the public world. The answer had already been composed: Walt Whitman was building the interior world of chosen love and coded language while the public world began answering the question loudly and without ambiguity.[56]

Despite the sizable support for Whitman's work, there was an equally vigorous opposition movement that published critiques in newspapers and circulated them through private correspondence. The 1855 debut of *Leaves of Grass*, in particular, garnered immediate backlash, as people sought to chastise Whitman for the sexually explicit themes within the collection. Initial reviews were anything but kind, with one review declaring "that Whitman's indecencies stink in the nostrils."[57] In 1856, the *Christian Examiner* published a notice of *Leaves of Grass* in which they declared it one of "the worst disgraces" in literary history.[58] They describe the work as "an affront to the morality of respectable people," which makes it clear they are acting on moral obligations, "bound in conscience to call it ominous and obscene."[59] They push further on the notion of libidinousness, writing: "Dante's guide through the infernal regions bade him, on one occasion, look and pass on."[60] By framing reading *Leaves* as a journey through

[56] Whitman to Fritsch, [before August 7, 1863], 123–124.
[57] Kuebrich, *Minor Prophecy*, 130.
[58] "Notices of Recent Publications," The Christian Examiner and Religious Miscellany 61 (4th ser., vol. 26), no. 3 (November 1856): 472.
[59] "Notices of Recent Publications," 472.
[60] "Notices of Recent Publications," 472.

Dante's Inferno, they render Whitman's work synonymous with sin. *Leaves of Grass* is portrayed as an act of corruption unworthy of discussion; it is relegated to silent treatment, mirroring Virgil's advice to Dante to ignore the uncommitted souls of the inferno.[61]

Another review published by *The London Critic* in 1856 similarly targeted the obscenities of *Leaves*. The author asserts that Whitman "deserves nothing so richly as the public executioner's whip."[62] They reclaim Whitman's title as poet and brand him as nothing more than a criminal for his threats to good sociability, deserving of public punishment at the hands of the state. Most famously, philosopher and essayist Henry David Thoreau visited Whitman in New York in 1856 and said of his candid treatment of the human body and sexual love, "it is as if the beasts spoke."[63] While Thoreau made clear that the pair parted as friends and that he thought the world "ought to rejoice greatly in him," he was still repelled by the uninhibited nature Whitman possessed.[64] These scathing reviewers were commonplace, as libraries refused to buy or sell *Leaves* due to public aversion to explicit sexual themes of heterosexual and homosexual sex.[65]

Whitman's own confidant and friend, Sarah Tyndale, an abolitionist and Fourierist from Philadelphia, felt troubled by the unbridled nature of his writing. In a correspondence from Tyndale to Whitman on July 1, 1857, she vocalizes her concern regarding his drafts containing "the entire nakedness of the intercourse is rather calculated to increase libidinousness in weak minds, which Heaven knows is frightfully rampant."[66] She feared that his work would inspire an increase of sexual desire in others, a fear grounded in the severe social anxieties of the nineteenth century. Whitman's poetry, particularly *Leaves of Grass*, published on July 4, 1855, sought to make sex a public and poetic theme. This abandonment of contemporary moral conventions drew widespread criticism, which labeled his writing as obscene or filthy. His work was a threat to the very fabric of morality of the time.

[61] Dante Alighieri, *Inferno*, trans. Robert Hollander and Jean Hollander (Doubleday, 2000), 1–63.
[62] "Reviews: Leaves of Grass," The London Critic 15, no. 360 (April 1, 1856): 170–71.
[63] Kuebrich, *Minor Prophecy*, 130.
[64] Kuebrich, *Minor Prophecy*, 130.
[65] Kuebrich, *Minor Prophecy*, 130.
[66] Sarah Tyndale to Walt Whitman, July 1, 1857, in *The Correspondence*, vol. 1, ed. Edwin Haviland Miller (New York University Press, 1961), The Walt Whitman Archive, https://whitmanarchive.org/item/loc.04300.

Even Tyndale, a woman of progressive ideology, "would be delighted if some of the expressions were left out."[67] There is a need from even those closest to Whitman for him to censor his work, leaving out expressions of sexuality or eroticism that scandalized even the most radical of persons. Such apprehension confirms that contemporary readers recognized the "too vivid" sexual nature of his work. Those who read his work felt strongly about it one way or another. Those who found themselves in his work, however, "hailed him as a religious prophet," as "for them, the *Leaves* was more than literary art, it was scripture."[68]

The institutional consequences were real and immediate. Whitman, working as a clerk for the U.S. Department of the Interior at the time, was recommended for termination on the grounds that "he lacked the requisite moral character for public service," evidenced by the supposed immoral content within *Leaves*.[69] The same feelings he had been quietly naming in letters with Fred Vaughan and the same adhesive love he was practicing in Pfaff's led a federal employer to declare his poetry as grounds for dismissal. The coded language the Fred Gray Association had developed was not a private indulgence; it was a necessary response to the public world. In that world, the consequences of plain expression were now explicit. And yet, the following year, Whitman walked into the center of that world, carrying the same force inside himself, and found in the war-ravaged hospitals a context in which adhesive love did not require any code at all.

The Civil War did not interrupt Walt Whitman's practice of adhesive love; it institutionalized it. Whitman arrived in Washington in 1862 to nurse his wounded brother and stayed to volunteer in military hospitals.[70] He found a new world where the urgency of war dissolved the ordinary rules governing masculine behavior. Men held one another as they died. Men wept openly in front of other men. Men gave and received comfort through physical presence in ways that would have been impermissible in peacetime. The war created, at least in the

67 Tyndale to Whitman, July 1, 1857.
68 Kuebrich, *Minor Prophecy*, 1.
69 Seth P. Waxman, "Presenting the Case of the United States as It Should Be: The Solicitor General in Historical Context," *Journal of Supreme Court History* 23, no. 2 (1998): 13.
70 Martin G. Murray, "Traveling with the Wounded: Walt Whitman and Washington's Civil War Hospitals," The Walt Whitman Archive, ed. Matt Cohen, Ed Folsom, and Kenneth M. Price, 1996, https://whitmanarchive.org/item/anc.00156.

hospitals of Washington, DC, something superficially similar to what Whitman had been building at Pfaff's: a space where male intimacy did not require justification and in which adhesive love could be practiced openly under the guise of necessity. Whitman understood this immediately. He wrote that when he visited hospitals, "it was in the simple matter of my Personal Presence, and emanating ordinary cheer and magnetism" that he "helped more than my medical nursing."[71] Here, Whitman was not merely reflecting on his personal bedside manner; he was invoking a specific therapeutic tradition of the nineteenth century.

Whitman understood this with his characteristic intuition and precision. He wrote of giving his patients, whom he regarded as his "dear suffering boys," a presence and magnetism that neither doctors nor medicines nor routine nursing support could provide.[72] He truly felt himself endowed with the power of healing, using what he believed was a sincere medical treatment to heal soldiers assigned to his wing. By "petting" these men, Whitman manifested his magnetism, functioning as a euphemism for a physical, quasi-erotic healing energy shared between men.[73] Magnetism is a familiar term Whitman had used to describe the invisible force of connection between the men he loved. In the hospital, however, it became part of healing rather than friendship. Whitman sat with the wounded men through the night. He held their hands and wrote their letters home.[74] "Through breath and touch," one account records, "he apparently has control over life and death and thus assumes the function of physician, priest, and guardian angel."[75] Regardless of the role he is fulfilling, each is described through the same lens of adhesiveness and chosen physical intimacy that began with Vaughan and continued through his relationships with Fritsch, Bloom, and Chauncey.

The war also gave Whitman a public vocabulary for his practices that his private letters could never become. He publicly advocated for

---

[71] Walt Whitman, "Memoranda During the War" (Camden, NJ, 1875), The Walt Whitman Archive, accessed March 17, 2026, https://whitmanarchive.org/item/ppp.01875.

[72] Whitman to Fritsch, October 8, 1863, 158–160.

[73] Walt Whitman to Hugo Fritsch, August 7, 1863, in *The Correspondence*, ed. Edwin Haviland Miller (New York University Press, 1961), 125–127.

[74] Walt Whitman, "The Wound-Dresser," Poetry Foundation, accessed March 17, 2026, https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/53027/the-wound-dresser.

[75] Reiss, "Whitman's Debt to Animal Magnetism," 83.

the presence of people in hospitals whose personal magnetism could soothe what medicine could not. He describes the energy in the language of feminine domesticity: "The presence of a good middle-aged or elderly woman, the magnetic touch of hands, the expressive features of the mother, the silent soothing of her presence … are precious and final qualifications."[76] It was the same move he made with phrenology, with the portrait gallery, with marriage vocabulary: finding a publicly acceptable framework for feelings and actions that, outside that frame, would have been outside the social realm of description.

We see the congruence between the private world of the Fred Gray Association and the public world of war hospitals. The men in those tents whom Whitman touched were strangers, none of whom had chosen one another. It was not reciprocal intimacy, nor was it built through years of correspondence, late nights, and shared confidences. Yet somehow Whitman brought to it the same force, the same magnetism, the same adhesiveness that defined his relationships with the men he chose and loved most. The Fred Gray Association was the laboratory, and the hospitals were the application. The vocabulary was the same because the feelings were the same. Whitman did not have one self for Pfaff's and another for war; he was his true self in every space he occupied.

Years after the war, his personal power was still visible to everyone he met. Whitman's contemporary and biographer Richard Maurice Bucke describes Whitman's physical presence and energy: "No description can give any idea of the extraordinary physical attractiveness of the man. I do not speak now of the affection of friends and of those who are much with him, but of the magnetism exercised by him upon people who merely see him for a few minutes or pass him on the street."[77] In fact, people found Whitman intoxicating, with one visitor who spent merely an hour with Whitman leaving in a state resembling "slight intoxication by champagne, or falling in love," an exaltation that lasted at least six weeks and that did not thereafter

[76] Walt Whitman, "Female Nurses for Soldiers," in *Complete Prose Works* (David McKay, 1892), 104, The Walt Whitman Archive, https://whitmanarchive.org/item/ppp.00504.

[77] Richard Maurice Bucke, *Cosmic Consciousness: A Study in the Evolution of the Human Mind* (Innes & Sons, 1901), 217, https://archive.org/details/cosmicconsciousn00buckuoft.

fully dissipate but became, as he put it, “a permanent element in his life, a strong and living force making for purity and happiness.”[78] These were not the responses of men who had been on a long journey of discovery with Whitman. They had not read *Calamus* or corresponded with him for years. These were the reactions of strangers who had no context for their feelings and no coded vocabulary. Yet they independently and instinctively defaulted to the language of love. Whitman’s magnetism wasn’t a characteristic of his poetry, but rather a biological reality of his life. Without even having to speak, men felt themselves drawn to him. What the Fred Gray Association had named in private, and what the hospitals had practiced under the cover of necessity, was simply what Whitman was: a force that exceeded the categories available to describe it, legible to anyone who came close enough to feel it.

The Fred Gray Association was not, by any conventional measure, a historically significant organization. There were no formal membership protocols, no charter, no public record of its gatherings. It was a loose confederation of young men who met in a New York City beer cellar beneath Broadway in Greenwich Village, corresponded across the distance of war, grieved their youthful dead, and loved one another in ways their era had no sanctioned language to define.[79] Yet through the written chronicles of their journeys, we see the Fred Gray Association doing something the historical record rarely captures so clearly: deliberately constructing together a language for a form of love that the public world was actively working to suppress. That suppression was concrete, taking the form of firing notices for Whitman and newspaper reviews calling for his public flogging. It took the form of libraries refusing to carry *Leaves of Grass* and even abolitionist friends asking Whitman to censor himself. The Fred Gray Association found itself in a culture so hostile to what these men felt that even those who admired Whitman the most could not understand what he was describing. These men watched the public denounce *Leaves of Grass* as a criminal act. This landscape makes the necessity of their coded language even clearer. The borrowed language for mainstream social constructs was the mechanism they used to build a protected world in the shadow of a public one that would have destroyed them all.

[78] Bucke, *Cosmic Consciousness*, 217.

[79] Catherine Clinton and Nina Silber, *Battle Scars: Gender and Sexuality in the American Civil War*, 1st ed. (Oxford University Press, 2006), 61.

That the Fred Gray Association loved one another is secondary to the fact that they loved with a full understanding of the cost, and they forged a life together anyway. The vocabulary they created moved across science, nature, domesticity, marriage, and health. Each term was chosen with intention, and each frame was borrowed from the socially legitimate and bent into something new. Whitman carried that vocabulary from the basement of Pfaff's into the hospitals of Washington, where he practiced the same adhesive love under the cover of wartime necessity. The strangers he touched there responded to it instinctively, reaching for the language of love without knowing why. The feeling required no translation. It was legible to anyone who encountered it, with or without the vocabulary to name it. Walt Whitman and the Fred Gray Association simply had the courage and the ingenuity to find words for it.

Bibliography

Primary Sources

Bucke, Richard Maurice. *Cosmic Consciousness: A Study in the Evolution of the Human Mind*. Innes & Sons, 1901. https://archive.org/details/cosmicconsciousn00buckuoft.

Conway, Moncure D. "A Visit to Walt Whitman: He Recalls the Years When He Lived in Brooklyn." *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, July 11, 1886, 4.

Holmes, Oliver Wendell. *Ralph Waldo Emerson*. Houghton Mifflin, 1885.

"In and About the City; Death of Charles I. Pfaff. Something About the Proprietor of the Once Famous 'Bohemia.'" *New York Times*, April 26, 1890, 2.

"Notices of Recent Publications." *The Christian Examiner and Religious Miscellany* 61 (4th ser., vol. 26), no. 3 (1856): 472.

"Reviews: Leaves of Grass." *The London Critic* 15, no. 360 (April 1, 1856): 170–71.

Tyndale, Sarah. Letter to Walt Whitman, July 1, 1857. In *The Correspondence*, vol. 1, edited by Edwin Haviland Miller. New York University Press, 1961. The Walt Whitman Archive. https://whitmanarchive.org/item/loc.04300.

Vaughan, Fred B. Letter to Walt Whitman, March 27, 1860. Charles E. Feinberg Collection of the Papers of Walt Whitman. Library of Congress, Washington, DC. The Walt Whitman Archive. https://whitmanarchive.org/item/loc.00569.

Vaughan, Fred B. Letter to Walt Whitman, April 9, 1860. Charles E. Feinberg Collection of the Papers of Walt Whitman. Library of Congress, Washington, DC. The Walt Whitman Archive. https://whitmanarchive.org/item/loc.00570.

Vaughan, Fred B. Letter to Walt Whitman, May 17, 1860. Charles E. Feinberg Collection of the Papers of Walt Whitman. Library of Congress, Washington, DC. The Walt Whitman Archive. https://whitmanarchive.org/item/loc.00572.

Westlake, J. Willis. *How to Write Letters: A Manual of Correspondence*. Porter and Coates, 1876. https://books.google.com/books?id=Pz0XAAAAIAAJ.

Whitman, Walt. *Complete Prose Works*. David McKay, 1892. The Walt Whitman Archive. https://whitmanarchive.org/item/ppp.00504.

Whitman, Walt. *Democratic Vistas*. Washington, DC, 1871. https://archive.org/details/democraticvista00whitrich/page/n7/mode/2up.

Whitman, Walt. "Female Nurses for Soldiers." In *Complete Prose Works*, 104. David McKay, 1892. The Walt Whitman Archive. https://whitmanarchive.org/item/ppp.00504.

Whitman, Walt. Letter to Hugo Fritsch, [before August 7, 1863]. In *The Correspondence*, vol. 1, edited by Edwin Haviland Miller. New York University Press, 1961. The Walt Whitman Archive. https://whitmanarchive.org/item/loc.00779.

Whitman, Walt. Letter to Hugo Fritsch, August 7, 1863. In *The Correspondence*, vol. 1. Edited by Edwin Haviland Miller. New York University Press, 1961.

Whitman, Walt. Letter to Hugo Fritsch, October 8, 1863. In *The Correspondence*, vol. 1: 1842–1867, edited by Edwin Haviland Miller. New York University Press, 1961. The Walt Whitman Archive. https://whitmanarchive.org/item/loc.00795.

Whitman, Walt. *Memoranda During the War*. Camden, NJ, 1875. https://whitmanarchive.org/item/ppp.01875.

Whitman, Walt. "[New York Atlas, 19 September 1858]." *New York Atlas*, September 19, 1858. The Walt Whitman Archive. https://whitmanarchive.org/item/per.00424.

Whitman, Walt. New York Notebook. Thomas Biggs Harned Collection. Library of Congress. 1861.

Whitman, Walt. "The Wound-Dresser." In *Drum-Taps*. William Whitman, 1865. The Walt Whitman Archive. https://whitmanarchive.org/item/ppp.01663_01831.

"Whitman, Walt (1819–1892)." The Vault at Pfaff's. Lehigh University. Accessed March 3, 2026. https://pfaffs.web.lehigh.edu/node/54162.

Secondary Sources

Alighieri, Dante. *Inferno*. Translated by Robert Hollander and Jean Hollander. New York: Doubleday, 2000.

Blalock, Stephanie M. *Whitman among the Bohemians*. 1st ed. Edited by Edward Keyes Whitley and Joanna Levin. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2014.

Borst, Anton F. "A Chant of Dilation: Walt Whitman, Phrenology, and the Language of the Mind." PhD diss., City University of New York, 2014.

Carnes, Mark C. *Secret Ritual and Manhood in Victorian America*. Yale University Press, 1989.

Clinton, Catherine, and Nina Silber. *Battle Scars: Gender and Sexuality in the American Civil War*. Oxford University Press, 2006.

Dellamora, Richard. *Friendship's Bonds: Democracy and the Novel in Victorian England*. University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004.

Folsom, Ed, and Kenneth M. Price. "Biography." The Walt Whitman Archive. General editors Matt Cohen, Ed Folsom, and Kenneth M. Price. Accessed March 17, 2026. https://whitmanarchive.org/whitmans-life/biography.

Folsom, Ed, and Kenneth M. Price. *Re-Scripting Walt Whitman: An Introduction to His Life and Work*. Oxford: Wiley, 2005. https://doi.org/10.1002/9780470774939.

Kuebrich, David. *Minor Prophecy: Walt Whitman's New American Religion*. Indiana University Press, 1989.

Martin, Justin. *Rebel Souls: Walt Whitman and America's First Bohemians*. Da Capo Press, 2014.

Murray, Martin G. "Traveling with the Wounded: Walt Whitman and Washington's Civil War Hospitals." *Washington History: Magazine of the Historical Society of Washington, D.C.* 8, no. 2 (Fall/Winter 1996/1997): 58–73, 92–93.

Parker, Rozsika. *The Subversive Stitch: Embroidery and the Making of the Feminine*. The Women's Press, 1984.

Reiss, Edmund. "Whitman's Debt to Animal Magnetism." *PMLA* 78, no. 1 (1963): 80–88. https://doi.org/10.2307/461228.

Reynolds, David S. *Walt Whitman's America: A Cultural Biography*. Alfred A. Knopf, 1995.

Rotundo, Anthony E. *American Manhood: Transformations in Masculinity from the Revolution to the Modern Era*. Basic Books, 1993.

Tosh, John. *A Man's Place: Masculinity and the Middle-Class Home in Victorian England*. Yale University Press, 1999.

Van Wyhe, John. "The Authority of Human Nature: The 'Schädellehre' of Franz Joseph Gall." *The British Journal for the History of Science* 35, no. 1 (2002): 17–42. https://www.jstor.org/stable/4028401.

Walhout, Emily. "Face to Face: Physiognomy & Phrenology." Preserving Heritage Collections (blog). September 24, 2012. https://archive.blogs.harvard.edu/preserving/2012/09/24/face-to-face-physiognomy-phrenology.

Waxman, Seth P. "Presenting the Case of the United States as It Should Be: The Solicitor General in Historical Context." *Journal of Supreme Court History* 23, no. 2 (1998): 3–25.

The Architecture of Assassination

John Wilkes Booth's Path to Violence

Dustin J. Short

The assassination of President Abraham Lincoln on April 14, 1865, stands as the most consequential act of political violence in nineteenth-century America, fundamentally altering the trajectory of the nation's post-war Reconstruction. Yet in the decades that followed, the ideological development of Lincoln's killer, John Wilkes Booth, came to occupy a radically simplified place in American cultural memory. What was in historical terms a deliberate, multi-year process of political radicalization was rapidly transformed into a flattened narrative of sudden madness, isolated fanaticism, or the inevitable byproduct of a defeated rebellion. This transformation did not occur organically. It emerged through a widespread cultural desire to romanticize the martyred President, thereby reducing Booth from a complex political actor into a one-dimensional villain. However, Booth's descent into extremism was a meticulously constructed progression. As a prominent Shakespearean actor born in a slaveholding border state, Booth utilized his immense fame to travel extensively across both the North and South during the Civil War. His foundational experiences within the deeply divided border state of Maryland, coupled with his extensive travels through Northern and Southern theatrical spaces, actively reinforced his profound sense of political alienation and support of the Confederacy. Rather than viewing the assassination as an abrupt, isolated, or irrational act of random violence, this paper seeks to demonstrate the murder as the culmination of a long, deliberate process of ideological radicalization heavily shaped by the political culture of the Civil War.

John Wilkes Booth occupied a uniquely liminal position in American society. Though his fierce Confederate loyalties were rooted in his Maryland upbringing, his theatrical stardom kept him tethered to Northern stages, forcing him regularly to entertain the very Union crowds he grew to violently detest. This paradox prompts a central inquiry: how did Booth's wartime experiences shape the evolution of his politics and his conviction that violence against Lincoln was morally justified? By tracing his trajectory from outspoken civilian dissenter to active conspirator, it becomes apparent that Booth's radicalization was not an inevitable product of Confederate loyalty. Instead, it emerged as a gradual, cumulative response to wartime developments, bitter familial disputes, and intense cultural isolation. These compounding factors convinced Booth that the Union government, in his eyes, had devolved into an unconstitutional tyranny, framing political violence as a patriotic necessity to save the South.

The historiographical treatment of John Wilkes Booth has undergone a notable evolution, reflecting the shifting psychological needs of the American public over the past century and a half. In the immediate aftermath of the murder, contemporary writers grappled to balance Booth's undeniable political motivations with his theatrical ego, recognizing that his actions were tethered to his identity as a performer. Compiling his reports following the assassination, early biographer George Alfred Townsend made what scholars consider the first systemic attempt to trace the assassin's movements.[1] Townsend acutely recognized the psychological catalyst of Booth's profession, noting "That Wilkes Booth was a southern man from the first may be accounted for upon grounds of interest as well as of sympathy… A false emotion of gratitude, as well as an impulse of mingled waywardness and gratitude, set John Wilkes's face from the first toward the North, and he burned to make his name a part of history, cried into fame by the applauses of the South."[2] This early historiographical attempt highlights the dual nature of Booth's radicalization between a genuine political grievance and an insistent personal vanity that sought validation from the very region he claimed to defend. Townsend understood that Booth's ideological development could not be separated from his performative nature. This suggests that the

[1] William Hanchett, *The Lincoln Murder Conspiracies: Being an Account of the Hatred Felt by Many Americans for President Abraham Lincoln during the Civil War and the First Complete Examination and Refutation of the Many Theories, Hypotheses, and Speculations Put Forward since 1865 Concerning Those Presumed to Have Aided, Abetted, Controlled, or Directed the Murderous Act of John Wilkes Booth in Ford's Theater the Night of April 14* (University of Illinois Press, 1983), 136.

[2] George Alfred Townsend, *The Life, Crime, and Capture of John Wilkes Booth: With a Full Sketch of the Conspiracy of Which He Was the Leader, and the Pursuit, Trial, and Execution of His Accomplices* (Dick & Fitzgerald, 1865), 40, http://www.heinonline.org.

assassination was, in the assassin's mind, the ultimate tragic performance designed for a specific audience. He aimed this act towards inspiring the defeated Southern population, whom he hoped would venerate him as a martyr, and at future generations who would study his act as a triumph of classical virtue against perceived tyranny, modeled upon the ancient example of Brutus striking down Caesar in defense of liberty.

However, as the nineteenth century progressed and the trauma of the Civil War faded into memory, the historiography shifted toward a sanitized national myth-making that actively stripped Booth of his complex political agency. As historian William Hanchett notes in his analysis of assassination scholarship in *The Lincoln Murder Conspiracies*, the American public increasingly sought a narrative that elevated Lincoln to a pristine symbol of national virtue, which required a corresponding simplified villain. Hanchett critically observes that as the decades passed, the historical memory of the event shifted significantly. Hanchett writes, "For most Americans, as Lincoln's reputation rose to the level of a national deity about whom nothing too good could ever be thought of or said, Booth's reputation sank to the level of a common ruffian."[3] This deliberate alteration of Booth's character served a vital cultural function for a reunifying nation. By treating Booth as a mere singular madman, the American public excused itself from confronting the lingering ideological divisions of the war. Acknowledging Booth's developed political philosophy would have required recognizing that his virulent white supremacy and constitutional grievances were partially shared by Americans of both the North and South.[4]

In the twentieth century, historians began to challenge this simplified narrative, working to restore the political and calculated dimensions of Booth's character to the historical record. In 1937, Otto Eisenschiml published *Why Was Lincoln Murdered?*, a controversial work attempting to apply scientific techniques to the assassination, arguing forcefully against the lone-madman theory. "Everything had been figured out with meticulous care. Booth was no half-crazed criminal, fired by alcoholic spirits… [he] plotted it with the brains of a psychologist who knew his theatrical crowds and with the

[3] Hanchett, *The Lincoln Murder Conspiracies*, 135.
[4] Hanchett, *The Lincoln Murder Conspiracies*, 135.

mathematical accuracy of a general charting a well-laid campaign."[5] While Eisenschiml correctly identified Booth's calculated rationality and logistical capacities, modern historiography has synthesized these early debates by utilizing rigorous archival research to situate Booth within his contemporary political environment. Modern historians stress that Booth's calculated actions were rooted in a gradual ideological radicalization shaped by his border-state origins and wartime encounters.

Validating this modern scholarly consensus requires a rigorous return to the primary record and the geopolitical realities of the 1860s, beginning with the region that forged Booth's earliest political beliefs. Arguably no region played a more influential role in shaping this than the cultural and political soil of his Maryland upbringing. Maryland's status as a slaveholding border state that remained in the Union during the war created a highly volatile atmosphere of resentment and paranoia. The federal government's suspension of habeas corpus and the imprisonment of pro-Confederate Maryland legislators confirmed the worst fears of conservative states' rights advocates. Writing for the *Maryland Historical Magazine*, historian Bertram Wyatt-Brown highlights the critical nature of these geopolitical circumstances, observing that "Maryland was the key to the assassination… efforts to retain order ignited deep resentments against the Lincoln government in Maryland. Booth was to respond in full agreement with those who sought a Rebel victory."[6] Booth eagerly adopted the collective grievances of his home state, internalizing the belief that the federal government operated illegally under a tyrannical system. Maryland's occupation offered Booth tangible evidence that the constitutional order he revered was under assault by the executive branch.

This fiercely protective border-state identity instilled in Booth an uncompromising white supremacist viewpoint, which would serve as the core of his political ideology. His understanding of "liberty" was entirely predicated on the subjugation of African Americans and a strict social hierarchy. William Hanchett explains that during his formative years at his family's Tudor Hall estate, this worldview was front and center in Booth's actions. "He maintained the proper

5 Otto Eisenschiml, *Why Was Lincoln Murdered?* (Little, Brown and Company, 1937), 108.

6 Bertram Wyatt-Brown, "Honor and Theater: Booth, the Lincoln Conspirators, and the Maryland Connection," *Maryland Historical Magazine* 104, no. 3 (2009): 303.

condescension toward slaves and was reluctant to eat at the same table even with white hired hands. He looked down upon foreigners, too, especially ignorant Irishmen, and attended secret meetings of the nativist American (or Know-Nothing) party."[7] These early prejudices demonstrate that Booth's later violent tendencies were not a sudden departure from his character, but rather the logical endpoint of a lifelong belief in a strict, racialized social order. While it seems completely contradictory to modern readers that a staunch defender of individual freedom could harbor such intense racial prejudice, society at that time simply did not equate personal independence with universal human rights.[8] For Booth, liberty exclusively meant the freedom of elite white men to govern their property, including human property, and their states without any form of federal intervention.

Such radicalization was part of a broader cultural framework shared among sympathetic border-state residents aggrieved by the political landscape of their respective states. Bertram Wyatt-Brown emphasizes that Booth's ideological development was rooted in a collective sense of violated Southern honor, observing that among his Maryland co-conspirators in the assassination, "revenge against insult was the duty of honorable men."[9] This profound humiliation catalyzed Booth's extremist transition. For Booth, Abraham Lincoln's election was not merely a political setback but a direct, personal affront that threatened his identity as an elite white man. The rhetoric of abolitionism assaulted his fundamental belief in the righteousness of the Southern hierarchy. By internalizing this perceived disgrace, Booth convinced himself that violent retaliation was vital to maintain his personal honor and social standing. He processed the shifting political landscape through a highly personalized lens where federal policy equated to individual degradation, transforming abstract constitutional grievances into a violent crusade to reclaim his fractured sense of superiority.

Furthermore, such commitment to white supremacy and states' rights was constantly tested and agitated by John Wilkes Booth's environment during the Civil War. Despite his fierce Southern loyalties, Booth's theatrical career required him to travel extensively

---

[7] Hanchett, *The Lincoln Murder Conspiracies*, 38.
[8] Hanchett, *The Lincoln Murder Conspiracies*, 38.
[9] Wyatt-Brown, "Honor and Theater," 306–307.

across the North and South. His family's widespread fame and appeal granted notable cross-border mobility, exposing him continuously to the diverse regional environments of a nation at war. Rather than moderating his views, this exposure allowed him to tap into the deep veins of anti-war sentiment running through the South and border states like his home of Maryland. As historian Michael W. Kauffman observes in *American Brutus: John Wilkes Booth and the Lincoln Conspiracies*, Booth gravitated towards conservative, anti-abolitionist rhetoric among his travels at the start of the war, leading Booth to believe "that this was a moderate view, and that those now coming into power were extremists on the far fringes of politics."[10] This experience reinforced Booth's conviction that his views were widely shared and strengthened his belief that extreme action against Lincoln was politically and morally justified.

While his travels extended as far south as New Orleans, Booth was still most recognized and popular within the theatrical circles of the North. Thus, the psychological toll of living among the people he considered his enemies cannot be overstated.[11] The necessity of maintaining a public, professional persona while internally witnessing the destruction of the Confederate armies filled Booth with a sense of self-loathing and a desire to express his Confederate sympathies. In a November 1864 letter to his mother, later preserved through his sister Asia's memoir, Booth expressed this sentiment and his outright dismissal of the Union. "For four years I have lived (I may say) a slave in the North (a favored slave it's true, but no less hateful to me on that account), not daring to express my thoughts and sentiments, even in my own home, constantly hearing every principle dear to my heart denounced as treasonable, and knowing the vile and savage acts committed on my countrymen… I have coursed my wilful idleness, and begin to deem myself a coward and to despise my own existence."[12] This profound self-loathing was intertwined with the agonizing guilt Booth harbored regarding his relationship with his mother, Mary Ann Holmes. Early in the conflict, Booth made a tearful promise to his mother that he would not enlist as a soldier in the Confederate army.

---

[10] Michael W. Kauffman, *American Brutus: John Wilkes Booth and the Lincoln Conspiracies* (Random House, 2004), 112.
[11] Kauffman, *American Brutus*, 112.
[12] Asia Booth Clarke, *John Wilkes Booth: A Sister's Memoir*, ed. Terry Alford (University Press of Mississippi, 1996), 104.

Having a close connection with his mother, this vow paralyzed him between keeping his promise and his increasing desire to openly show his support for the Confederacy.[13] As the Civil War continued, Booth's frustration at remaining a spectator to the Confederate war effort intensified alongside the mounting guilt he felt over the promise he had made. In attempting to address this conflict, he eventually took up his pen to write to his mother, intending to retract his vow. Yet, as Terry Alford asserts, attempting to write such a letter revealed his inner turmoil, as Booth struggled to articulate his thoughts and even apologized for his hesitance.[14] This moment illustrates how the war had come to dominate Booth's identity. Unable to reconcile his loyalty to his mother with his commitment to the Confederate cause, Booth interpreted his inaction as cowardice, reinforcing his deepening commitment to violence that would ultimately drive him to target Lincoln.

Such internal self-loathing fostered a virulent hatred for the northern public who supported Lincoln and the Union, a hatred that inevitably fractured his relationships with his own family. The Booth family was deeply divided by the war, and John Wilkes found himself increasingly isolated. His pro-Union eldest brother, Junius Brutus Booth Jr., attempted to defuse John's radicalism on several occasions, hoping to temper the younger actor's hateful disposition. Junius later recounted his desperate attempts to intervene, stating "My brother Edwin & brother in law C.S. Clarke would not argue with him…So I did but feel my duty as an elder brother to do all I could & prove to him that the government was doing its duty…I begged him to keep clear of [the war] for I always feared he might join the South…"[15] Junius's attempt to minimize the subjectivity of the Civil War to a mere "family quarrel" was completely antithetical to John's radical belief that the conflict was an existential battle of survival for the South against federal intervention. John vehemently rejected this pacifying view, interpreting any defense of the federal government as a betrayal of his own political principles.

As the war continued, Booth's familial tensions inevitably erupted into permanent hostility with his other older brother, the famous and

[13] Terry Alford, *Fortune's Fool: The Life of John Wilkes Booth* (Oxford University Press, 2015), 199.
[14] Alford, *Fortune's Fool*, 199.
[15] Clarke, *John Wilkes Booth: A Sister's Memoir*, 118.

staunchly pro-Union actor Edwin Booth. As John's rhetoric grew more violent and erratic, his presence became intolerable to those within the Booth family who supported the Union's war effort. In *My Thoughts Be Bloody*, Nora Titone examines the relationship of Edwin and John Wilkes Booth and their political differences, leading to the culmination of Lincoln's assassination at the hands of the younger brother. She details the disastrous final breakdown of their relationship, noting that during a fierce argument over politics, Edwin reached his absolute limit. In a "towering rage," Edwin shouted that John was a "rank secessionist" and "ordered his brother to cease his treasonable language, telling him he could not stay in the house if he persisted," as Edwin "peremptorily expelled his brother from his residence."[16] This physical and emotional expulsion was a critical junction in Booth's radicalization. Having rejected his family's moderating influence and severing his domestic ties, Booth actively sought out echo chambers of radical dissent, eventually surrounding himself with co-conspirators who validated his darkest impulses.

By December 1862, his theatrical ambition and political hatred began to merge. Arguing with his fellow actors and theater attendees in a Chicago saloon after a show, Booth mused aloud, "What a glorious opportunity there is for a man to immortalize himself by killing Lincoln!" adding "The ambitious youth who fired the Ephesian dome outlives in fame the pious fool who reared it."[17] Here, the architecture of the assassination begins to fully take shape, as Booth had begun to openly conceptualize political violence not just as a defensive necessity for the South, but as a mechanism for his own immortality. His reference to the burning of the Temple of Artemis reveals how he was already interpreting political violence through the language of historical notoriety and personal legacy. The ancient arsonist Herostratus had committed his crime solely to ensure that his name would live forever in history. Booth's admiration for this act demonstrates that he was already contemplating the power of a violent spectacle to secure lasting fame. As an actor accustomed to public attention and dramatic storytelling, Booth increasingly imagined history itself as a stage upon which an extraordinary act could elevate an individual above the anonymity of ordinary life. In this moment,

[16] Nora Titone, *My Thoughts Be Bloody: The Bitter Rivalry That Led to the Assassination of Abraham Lincoln* (Free Press, 2011), 340.
[17] Titone, *My Thoughts Be Bloody*, 275.

Booth was not merely expressing anger toward Lincoln. He was articulating a perspective in which violence could transform a disgruntled actor into a permanent historical figure.

Unable to tolerate his civilian inaction, intense guilt, and family exile any longer, Booth decisively transitioned into an active, operational participant in the Confederate war effort. To compensate for the profound guilt he harbored over his promise to his mother to refrain from military service, Booth sought alternative ways to strike at the Union. Bertram Wyatt-Brown notes that Booth "grew active in Confederate espionage particularly in 1864 and the months following," later boasting that an "uncontrollable fate" and "sacred duty" drove him to action.[18] He recognized that his notable fame provided the perfect cover for illicit activities during his travels across the North and South. Gordon Samples has argued that Booth weaponized his celebrity to smuggle essential medical supplies to the South, boasting to his sister "I have only an arm to give. My brains are worth twenty men… I have free pass everywhere, my profession, my name, my passport; my knowledge of drugs is valuable… [Ulysses S.] Grant has given me freedom of range without knowing what a good turn he has done the South."[19] This experience not only demonstrated Booth's capacity to navigate complex clandestine operations under Union scrutiny but also reinforced his confidence in his strategic judgement and ability to exploit his celebrity as a cover for acts of rebellion. This ultimately helped convince Booth that he could directly challenge the federal government's authority.

This initial venture into espionage soon escalated into an organized, financed plot to kidnap Lincoln as early as 1864. Following the discovery of his written journal entries and papers in the aftermath of the assassination, contemporary observers connected his earlier rhetoric to his later actions. A report in the *New York Times* correctly deduced the trajectory of his radicalization, noting "From a perusal of this paper it seems to have been prepared by Booth as a vindication of some desperate act which he had in contemplation; and, from the language used, it is probable that it was a plot to abduct the President

[18] Wyatt-Brown, "Honor and Theater," 310.
[19] John Wilkes Booth to Asia Booth Clarke, November 1864, in *The Unlocked Book: A Memoir of John Wilkes Booth*, by Asia Booth Clarke, ed. Eleanor Farjeon (G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1938), 115, quoted in Gordon Samples, *Lust for Fame: The Stage Career of John Wilkes Booth* (McFarland & Company, Inc., 1982), 162.

and carry him off to Virginia. If this was meditated it failed, and from making a prisoner of the president to his assassination was an easy step for a man of perverted principles."[20] The transition from kidnapping to murdering Lincoln was indeed an ideological step in Booth's process, as both actions were predicated on the absolute belief that Lincoln was, in Booth's mind, an unconstitutional dictator. Booth believed that Lincoln's wartime policies, specifically the suspension of habeas corpus and the Emancipation Proclamation, were blatant abuses of executive power that legally invalidated his presidency.[21] Within Booth's rigid worldview, Lincoln's actions had already dismantled the constitutional republic, reducing the president from a legitimate executive into an "unlawful tyrant" who could be violently targeted without regard for the conventional laws of war.

Additional testimony gathered in the immediate aftermath of the assassination further underscores how long Booth had contemplated violence against Abraham Lincoln. During the conspirators' trial, military tribunals collected eyewitness accounts revealing Booth had strategized his violent compulsions long before April 1865. Confederate engineer officer Henry Von Steinacker later recounted the actor's unwavering and almost delusional confidence in a Confederate triumph. When confronted about the South's increasingly bleak prospects, Booth scoffed, stating "If we only act our part, the Confederacy will gain its independence any how."[22] Von Steinacker interpreted Booth's remark as a veiled reference to Lincoln's future assassination, believing Booth already viewed the president's death as the Confederacy's "final resource to gain their independence."[23] Such statements reveal that Booth did not view violence as a frantic reaction to defeat, but rather as a calculated political strategy. By framing the murder as acting a "part," Booth merged the language of his theatrical profession with the logic of his political extremism.

[20] "The Murder of Mr. Lincoln.: Extraordinary Letter of John Wilkes Booth Proof That He Meditated His Crime Months Ago His Excuses for the Contemplated Act His Participation in the Execution of John Brown," *New York Times*, April 21, 1865.
[21] Gene Smith, *American Gothic: The Story of America's Legendary Theatrical Family, Junius, Edwin, and John Wilkes Booth* (Simon & Schuster, 1992), 101.
[22] Benn Pitman, "The Assassination of President Lincoln and the Trial of the Conspirators," in *The Trial: The Assassination of President Lincoln and the Trial of the Conspirators*, ed. Edward Steers (University Press of Kentucky, 2003), 38.
[23] Pitman, "Assassination of President Lincoln," 38.

Booth's conspiracy likewise demonstrates how he deliberately attempted to weaponize his theatrical world in service of this violent objective. Actor Samuel Knapp Chester highlighted how Booth leveraged his knowledge of theatrical spaces, recounting his persistent attempts to recruit him by noting that Booth "told me that the affair was to take place at Ford's Theater… He urged that the one part I would have to play would be a very easy affair… but needed some one connected or acquainted with the theater."[24] Booth's insistence that he had a substantial network of Confederate sympathizers prepared to support the plan revealed his growing belief that he was the leading figure of a wider "patriotic" conspiracy.[25] By attempting to enlist Chester for his services, Booth transformed the theatrical institution that brought him fame into a practical instrument of political violence. His efforts demonstrate a calculated and pragmatic approach to treason that stands in stark contrast to the early historiographical portrayal of Booth as an unhinged fanatic.

Central to Booth's radicalization was his effort to construct a moral justification for political violence, consciously attempting to shape how his actions and his legacy would be understood in the aftermath of the assassination. Written as a manifesto toward his eventual actions, Booth's "To Whom It May Concern" letter of November 1864 outlines the ideological foundation for his treason. He anchored his entire rationale in the preservation of absolute white supremacy, leaving no doubt regarding the primary motivator for his radicalization. He defiantly declared, "This country was formed for the *white* not for the black man. And looking upon *African slavery* from the same stand-point, as held by those noble framers of our Constitution. I for one, have ever considered *it*, one of the greatest blessings (both for themselves and us), that God even bestowed upon a favored nation."[26] In Booth's deeply warped moral framework, any attempt to dismantle the institution of slavery was a direct assault on constitutional law. Terry Alford, author of *Fortune's Fool: The Life of John Wilkes Booth*, points out that in Booth's view, the South held an "unassailable moral high ground" and believed that Northern coercion to end slavery would

[24] Pitman, "Assassination of President Lincoln," 44.
[25] Pitman, "Assassination of President Lincoln," 44.
[26] John Wilkes Booth, *Right or Wrong, God Judge Me: The Writings of John Wilkes Booth*, ed. John H. Rhodehamel and Louise Taper (University of Illinois Press, 1997), 125.

make the federal government "greater Tyrants! Than George the 3rd ever was towards our fathers!"[27] Booth genuinely believed his kidnapping plot was a righteous, revolutionary defense against a tyrannical abolitionist regime, casting himself in the role of a Founding Father defending a besieged republic.

The collapse of the Confederacy in April 1865 fundamentally transformed the logic of John Wilkes Booth's conspiracy. With Robert E. Lee's surrender at Appomattox Court House, any strategic rationale for simply abducting Abraham Lincoln ceased to exist. The Confederacy was effectively extinguished, and the political framework that had sustained Booth's kidnapping plot dissolved overnight. Yet defeat did not extinguish Booth's perceived obligation to act; it radicalized it further into full political violence. Eisenschiml observes that after Appomattox, Booth "reluctantly gave up his plan for kidnapping Lincoln," concluding that "it was no longer a matter of aiding the South–it had become a matter of revenge." Acting, in his own words, as "a Confederate doing duty upon his own responsibility," Booth redefined his mission: "His duty, as he saw it, was to kill Lincoln."[28] In this decisive moment, Booth's objective shifted from a putative act of wartime strategy to a self-assigned retributive duty against the individual he believed responsible for the South's destruction, revealing how Confederate defeat catalyzed the final, lethal stage of his ideological radicalization.

In a letter written to the *National Intelligencer* on the very day of the assassination, Booth framed his actions within the dramatic conventions he had long portrayed on stage, casting the murder as a historical, almost theatrical act of intervention. He explicitly justified the impending assassination by comparing Lincoln to Julius Caesar, utilizing classical history to depict his upcoming crime as an act of noble patriotism in the eyes of the Confederacy. He wrote "This war is a war with the constitution and the reserve rights of the state. It is a war upon Southern rights and institutions… If the South is to be aided it must be done quickly. It may already be too late. When Caesar had conquered the enemies of Rome and the power that was his menaced the liberties of the people, Brutus arose and slew him. The stroke of his dagger was guided by his love of Rome. It was the spirit and ambition

[27] Alford, *Fortune's Fool*, 101.
[28] Eisenschiml, *Why Was Lincoln Murdered?*, 378.

of Caesar that Brutus struck at."[29] By recasting the conflict itself, he framed the Civil War not as a rebellion, but as a defensive war forced upon the South by an ambitious tyrant in the North. In Booth's self-conception, Lincoln assumed the role of Caesar while Booth cast himself as Brutus, an actor in history rather than theater, delivering what he believed to be a politically justified act for the South.

Booth's compulsion to articulate his grievances against Northern society further illuminates the ideological framework underlying this declaration. As Bertram Wyatt-Brown notes, Booth viewed the wartime transformation of American society with profound hostility, particularly what he described as an emerging "Yankee commercial imperialism" that seduced Americans away from the traditional principles of white male liberty and racial hierarchy that he believed defined the nation's proper social order.[30] In this worldview, the destruction of slavery and the expansion of federal authority represented not progress but a dangerous cultural degradation that threatened the racial and social hierarchy Booth believed underpinned American civilization.[31] By portraying slavery as a protective institution and abolition as an existential threat, Booth rationalized his contemplated violence as a moral necessity rather than an act of treason. His invocation of Brutus therefore served a dual purpose: to frame Lincoln as a tyrant whose removal would restore the South's independence from federal interference, and to elevate Booth himself into the role of a classical defender of the republic, transforming political murder into what he imagined as a noble sacrifice performed for the salvation of an idealized, white-dominated past.

Even as he hid from Union cavalry forces in the frantic days following the assassination, Booth's writings reveal a man clinging desperately to his self-fashioned mythos. While in the Zekiah Swamp in Maryland, injured and attempting to flee into Virginia, Booth penned entries in his diary seeking to cement his legacy as the heroic figure he believed himself to be. He wrote, "Our country owed all our troubles to him, and God simply made me the instrument of his punishment… I care not what becomes of me. I have no desire to out-live my country."[32] This entry demonstrates the culmination of Booth's

[29] Booth, *Right or Wrong, God Judge Me*, 149.
[30] Wyatt-Brown, "Honor and Theater," 307.
[31] Wyatt-Brown, "Honor and Theater," 307.
[32] Booth, *Right or Wrong, God Judge Me*, 154.

ideological radicalization, revealing how he continued to frame the assassination within the political and moral justification he had constructed throughout the war. Despite reading universal condemnation in smuggled newspapers, he refused to accept the criminality of his actions. Instead, he doubled down on his messianic complex, transferring responsibility for the murder from his own agency to God's will. His assertion that he had no desire to outlive his country highlights the conflation of his identity with the dead Confederacy. In his isolated state, Booth could not conceive of an existence within a "forced union," preferring to die alongside the political ideology he violently failed to save.[33]

Yet the historiography and the vast majority of primary evidence reveal a far more self-serving reality beneath this rhetoric of pure patriotism. Booth's sister Asia concluded in her memoirs that his political motives were in fact linked to his massive, uncontrollable theatrical ego. Understanding her brother better than anyone, she wrote that he possessed a "…great desire to do some deed or accomplish some act that had never been done by any other man, so that his name might live in history…I firmly believe that he thought if he killed Lincoln the result would be a complete change in the position of affairs; the South would gain her independence…and that he would be regarded as the Washington of the South and the Savior of his country."[34] This tragic combination of political fanaticism and narcissistic delusion proved catastrophic not only for Lincoln, but for Booth's own legacy. As Gordon Samples asserts, following the assassination, the public reaction was absolute and destructive to his memory. Critics everywhere immediately "began to disclaim him as a very poor actor indeed," permanently erasing any memory of promise or talent within Booth's acting career.[35]

Indeed, the immediate public reaction to Booth's death in a Union cavalry standoff stood in stark contrast to the martyrdom he envisioned. Rather than being hailed as the Brutus of his age, Northern commentators unleashed a torrent of visceral hatred. William Hanchett highlights this intense public hostility by citing the *Washington Daily Chronicle's* coverage. In reflecting on Booth, the paper seethed, "He

33 Booth, *Right or Wrong, God Judge Me*, 154.
34 Clarke, *The Unlocked Book: A Memoir of John Wilkes Booth*, 157.
35 Gordon Samples, *Lust for Fame: The Stage Career of John Wilkes Booth* (McFarland & Company, Inc., 1982), 5.

died like a coward, burned out of a trap like a rat… He showed he could be a bravo before a theatrical audience, but failed to show that he could face death with the common courage of a bandit… for such carrion only infects the earth and makes a noisome stench throughout the moral atmosphere."[36] This rhetorical obliteration demonstrates how the Union public utilized the language of cowardice to counteract Booth's grand illusions. By labeling him a "rat," the press denied him the elevated status he craved, emphasizing that even in death he was unworthy of the dignity he had imagined for himself.

In the wake of John Wilkes' death and the growing public knowledge of the assassination, the Booth family name endured severe public tarnishing, staining their prominence in the theatrical world. The fallout inflicted deep and lasting trauma upon his relatives, as the violence of the assassination rebounded directly onto the family that had long been celebrated within American theatrical culture. Nora Titone captures the volatile atmosphere that engulfed the Booth household in the immediate aftermath of Lincoln's murder, noting that "extreme prejudice and wild excitement ruled the hour, and was intensified, for the time, in hearing the sound of the name 'Booth.'"[37] Lynching parties reportedly formed in several communities, and actors associated with the Booth family feared further violence from enraged citizens. The stigma proved so enduring that decades later observers still remarked upon the shadow cast by the crime. As one Edwin Booth admirer reflected with relief, "the innocent no longer suffer from the guilty."[38] Rather than achieving heroic recognition, the assassin was reduced in public memory to a reviled figure whose name symbolized cowardice and a national tragedy. The cultural need to sanctify Abraham Lincoln simultaneously demanded a simplified explanation behind his killer's intentions, ensuring Booth would remain merely an infamous madman whom Lincoln's memory could be eternally contrasted with.

Ultimately, John Wilkes Booth's evolution into an assassin represents a tragic, highly complex convergence of political radicalization, geographical alienation, and theatrical delusion. Moving from the elite, white supremacist prejudices of his Maryland youth

---

[36] Hanchett, *The Lincoln Murder Conspiracies*, 125.
[37] Titone, *My Thoughts Be Bloody*, 8.
[38] Titone, *My Thoughts Be Bloody*, 8.

through the cultural isolation of his Northern theatrical tours, Booth steadily built an impenetrable ideological framework that demanded extreme, violent action. His bitter family rivalries pushed him away from any moderating influence, while his immersion in the classical stage provided him with a romanticized, elevated persona that came to view political murder not as a criminal act, but as a dramatic and historically justified intervention worthy of the roles he portrayed on stage. Booth transformed his deep personal guilt over avoiding the battlefield and his virulent racial hatred into a misguided crusade, utterly convinced that assassinating Abraham Lincoln would miraculously save the very fabric of his world. In *American Brutus*, Michael Kauffman powerfully concludes that the irony of Booth's final act in killing Lincoln was its ultimate failure to achieve its political goals. "If Booth intended to make himself a modern Brutus, he succeeded too well. Like the assassination of Julius Caesar, the killing of Lincoln did not accomplish the conspirators' aims. It only martyred the victim, elevating him to secular sainthood and leading ultimately to the disillusionment and death of the assassin."[39] Through his desperate attempt to forge a heroic mythology out of historical defeat, Booth's radicalization serves as a chilling testament to how sustained polarization, geographic isolation, and absolute ideological certainty can legitimize extremist violence from within the very heart of a divided nation.

Bibliography

Primary Sources

Booth, John Wilkes. *Right or Wrong, God Judge Me: The Writings of John Wilkes Booth*. Edited by John H. Rhodehamel and Louise Taper. University of Illinois Press, 1997.

Clarke, Asia Booth. *John Wilkes Booth: A Sister's Memoir*. Edited by Terry Alford. University Press of Mississippi, 1996.

Clarke, Asia Booth. *The Unlocked Book: A Memoir of John Wilkes Booth*. Edited by Eleanor Farjeon. G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1938.

Pitman, Benn. "The Assassination of President Lincoln and the Trial of the Conspirators." In *The Trial: The Assassination of President Lincoln and the Trial of the Conspirators*, edited by Edward Steers. University Press of Kentucky, 2003.

[39] Kauffman, *American Brutus*, 398.

"The Murder of Mr. Lincoln.: Extraordinary Letter of John Wilkes Booth Proof That He Meditated His Crime Months Ago His Excuses for the Contemplated Act His Participation in the Execution of John Brown." *New York Times*, April 21, 1865.

Townsend, George Alfred. *The Life, Crime, and Capture of John Wilkes Booth: With a Full Sketch of the Conspiracy of Which He Was the Leader, and the Pursuit, Trial, and Execution of His Accomplices*. Dick & Fitzgerald, 1865. http://www.heinonline.org.

Secondary Sources

Alford, Terry. *Fortune's Fool: The Life of John Wilkes Booth*. Oxford University Press, 2015.

Eisenschiml, Otto. *Why Was Lincoln Murdered?* Little, Brown and Company, 1937.

Hanchett, William. *The Lincoln Murder Conspiracies*. University of Illinois Press, 1983.

Kauffman, Michael W. *American Brutus: John Wilkes Booth and the Lincoln Conspiracies*. 1st ed. Random House, 2004.

Samples, Gordon. *Lust for Fame: The Stage Career of John Wilkes Booth*. McFarland & Company, Inc., 1982.

Smith, Gene. *American Gothic: The Story of America's Legendary Theatrical Family, Junius, Edwin, and John Wilkes Booth*. Simon & Schuster, 1992.

Titone, Nora. *My Thoughts Be Bloody: The Bitter Rivalry That Led to the Assassination of Abraham Lincoln*. First Free Press trade paperback edition. Free Press, A Division of Simon & Schuster, Inc., 2011.

Wyatt-Brown, Bertram. "Honor and Theater: Booth, the Lincoln Conspirators, and the Maryland Connection." *Maryland Historical Magazine* 104, no. 3 (2009): 302–25.

Japanese Internment During World War II

A Study of a Family Separated by the U.S. Government

Cienna Simmons

> *I'm sitting in the sun on my sister's driveway under a clear blue sky in Springfield, Oregon. My* ***21-month-old*** *son proudly ferries handfuls of* ***daisies*** *to me. They grow all over my sister's lawn—little* ***clusters*** *of them* ***reaching for the sky****. As he continues to bring me* ***fistfuls****, I pick them apart and think about the American internment camps of WWII. I'm thinking of the* ***Japanese families*** *and communities torn apart and how they attempted to rebuild themselves with the scattered bits the United States Government left them with…*

In response to internment, many Japanese people did everything they could to put their lives back together while in camp. There were many successes in this endeavor—people continuing education, finding new hobbies, finding love, making friends. Significant hurdles for this collective aspiration impacted some families more than others. Keizaburo Koyama's family was one which faced the additional hardship of prolonged familial separation. The Koyamas, because of this separation, endured an internment with an added layer of anxiety. Their separation had a demonstrable negative impact on the family members' health, behavior, and emotional stability, despite their best efforts to get on with their lives.

The racial anxiety of the US government led to the Koyamas' separation. Antagonism toward immigrants had been building leading up to and especially following the First World War. Japanese people were a particularly potent target for the state department's apprehension about "potential" enemy aliens.[1] Following World War I, federal agencies became wary of so-called enemy agents within

---

[1] Tetsuden Kashima, *Judgment Without Trial: Japanese American Imprisonment during World War II* (University of Washington Press, 2003), 16.

national borders. This fear was disproportionately focused on Japanese immigrants and intensified after the Japanese occupation of Manchuria in 1931.[2]

In the late 1930s, the Federal Bureau of Investigation began targeting Japanese nationals living in the United States (Issei) as well as their children born in the states (Nisei), who were American citizens by birth.[3] On October 9, 1941, the Justice and War Departments worked together to create a framework of responsibilities for "the internment of foreign nationals," should such a project be deemed necessary in the future.[4]

Immediately following the attack on Pearl Harbor, the United States government sprang into action with plans they had cultivated before the Second World War had even begun: "The arrests made during the attack on Pearl Harbor were not spontaneous happenings but were the culmination of coordinated preplanning by federal agencies."[5] A couple months later, President Roosevelt would sign Executive Order 9066, authorizing the removal of all persons of Japanese descent residing on the West Coast to internment camps. However, this process, referred to as "evacuation," was not the policy initially responsible for separating the Koyamas.

Before Executive Order 9066, Dr. Keizaburo Koyama was already a target of the government's ire. An arrest warrant for Dr. Koyama was issued on December 8, 1941, the day immediately following the attack on Pearl Harbor. He likely did not know he was suspected of being a dangerous enemy alien when he was arrested in his dental office on December 10, 1941, at 4:00 pm,[6] nor that he had been labeled a possible enemy of the state for at least one year prior to his arrest, partially due to a glaringly unreliable informant.[7] Upon searching his

---

[2] Kashima, *Judgment Without Trial*, 15–16.
[3] Kashima, *Judgment Without Trial*, 23.
[4] Kashima, *Judgment Without Trial*, 27.
[5] Kashima, *Judgment Without Trial*, 14.
[6] "Keizaburo Koyama alias Ken Koyama alias Keisaburo Koyama," Federal Bureau of Investigation, Department of Justice, January 14, 1941, 4. Courtesy of Dr. Keizaburo Koyama Family Collection, Japanese American Museum of Oregon. https://ddr.densho.org/ddr-one-5-98/.
[7] FBI report, 1941, 1. References another report from an agent in Honolulu on December 15, 1940. Informant A stated "Ken Koyama, President of the Central Daily News, was one of the recipients of the Japanese Foreign Minister's Cup for his distinguished services abroad." This was later established to be a mistake of Informant A, who regularly mixed up Japanese names and whose sole source was a newspaper

office for evidence, they found a pamphlet written in English "advertising the 2600th Anniversary of Japan," and a receipt in Japanese for a "subscription to the *Oregon News*, a Portland Daily Japanese newspaper." John Pittenger of the Portland Police Department advised the bureau these two pieces of evidence "failed to reflect" that Koyama had "committed any criminal offenses." However, the FBI had also reviewed the records of the Portland Japanese Chamber of Commerce, which showed Dr. Koyama had paid five dollars in dues per year and, according to the FBI, this organization was involved "in many activities indicating sympathies with Japan," such as Japanese language schools and contributions to the "Japanese War Chest."[8] This, along with the simple fact that Dr. Koyama had been born in Niigata Ken, Japan on October 7, 1897,[9] was deemed more than enough justification for him to be detained as an enemy alien for nearly two years.

Dr. Koyama's wife, Teru Koyama, knew none of this when she wrote to her husband on December 30, 1941. At the time, she was just grateful she had finally found where he was being held. Born in 1898, Teru was also from Japan and had emigrated to the United States in 1916, eventually ending up studying English and Christian theology at Seattle Pacific College "where she met and fell in love with Kei, marrying him in 1927."[10] By the time Mrs. Koyama had tracked down where exactly her "dearest Kei" had been detained, Dr. Koyama was over 500 miles away from home, detained at Fort Missoula, Montana.[11]

Mrs. Koyama detailed in her letter of December 30, 1941, their son William's efforts to get a Christmas gift to his father, trying the courthouse first and then the immigration office only to be told Dr. Koyama was "no longer in Portland." She expressed worry for her husband suddenly finding himself in a cold Montana winter and

---

they had since thrown away.

8 FBI Report, 1941, 5.

9 Keizaburo Koyama, "Alien Enemy Questionaire," U.S. Department of Justice, January 1941, 1, https://ddr.densho.org/ddr-one-5-120/.

10 Weston Koyama, "Meet Teru," https://www.terukoyama.com/meet-the-koyama-family/1-meet-teru. Note: the exact dates given on the website were not used here, as other discrepancies exist between the site and the subjects' own correspondence, including the great-grandfather's birthdate. The years and locations given here match the other references to Teru in government and family correspondence.

11 Declassified document noting Keizaburo Koyama was transferred from the Seattle Washington Immigration Station to Fort Missoula, Montana on December 28, 1941 at 8:00 AM, https://ddr.densho.org/ddr-one-5-95/.

included a list of warm clothing items she had sent to him. Throughout her letter, she stressed no need for her husband to worry about the family or his unpaid bills, because she and a friend of the family were taking care of everything. Some version of the words “do not worry” would appear in almost every letter she sent him for the next two years. She encouraged him to take his detention as an opportunity to relax because he “had never had a vacation,” so maybe this was God’s way of making sure he got some rest.[12]

In the same envelope were two other letters for Dr. Koyama. One was from his oldest child, a young teen named William, and one from the youngest, Miriam or “Kiyo,” who was either seven or eight years old at the time. Both children asked him to write them soon, a plea that was to become a habit of heartache.[13] On the front of the envelope containing these three letters was a circular stamp with “Fort Missoula, Montana” along the edges and the word “CENSORED” in the middle. Similar stamps appeared on many letters to Dr. Koyama, especially in the first year of his detention, particularly while he was at Fort Missoula and later when he was at Camp Livingston. With no evidence of censorship occurring in most of the letters with those stamps (e.g. no lines blotted with ink or cut out with razors), alongside the distress of his family from not receiving letters from him often,[14] or asking why he hadn’t responded to letters they’d previously sent,[15] these stamps led me to suspect the entirety of the contents of these envelopes were items Dr. Koyama never received. This suspicion seemed to be confirmed by the presence of a receipt for the “found” property of Koyama from the Portland Police Bureau dated June 26, 1984. The description for this document on the Densho Digital Repository site read: “Large manila envelope with police evidence tag

[12] Teru Koyama to Kei Koyama, December 30, 1941. Courtesy of the Koyama Family Collection, Japanese American Museum of Oregon. https://ddr.densho.org/ddr-one-5-1/.

[13] William Koyama to Mr. Kei Koyama, December 31, 1941; Miriam Koyama to Mr. Koyama, December 31, 1941.

[14] Some examples: “Please write to me soon because I hardly get any, so please write soon,” Miriam Koyama to Mr. Koyama, December 31, 1941; “Please write me a letter,” William Koyama to Mr. Kei Koyama, December 31, 1941; “I received your letter and it made us very happy for I did not hear from you for the last three weeks,” Teru Koyama to Dr. Kei Koyama, March 23, 1942. Courtesy of the Koyama Family Collection, Japanese American Museum of Oregon. https://ddr.densho.org/ddr-one-5-10/.

[15] “I sent you a valentine and we sent pictures of us but I guess you didn’t get them,” Miriam Kiyo Koyama to Dr. K. Koyama, March 6, 1942. Courtesy of the Koyama Family Collection, Japanese American Museum of Oregon. https://ddr.densho.org/ddr-one-5-9/.

attached and filled out. Evidence tag dated 6/26/84; lists items contained as '59 letters to Kei Koyama in envelopes, 17 postcards, 6 loose letters.'"

Regardless of whether Dr. Koyama was allowed to see any of the censored letters or not, they provided a detailed history of the Koyama family's experiences following the United States of America's entrance into World War II with its official declaration of war on Japan and the implementation of mass internment of its own citizens of Japanese descent in addition to the Issei. Two trends in this first set of letters to Dr. Koyama continued throughout the entire collection: Mrs. Koyama's unshakable belief that the government will do the right thing,[16] and her children's continuous, at times desperate desire for more communication and connection with their father.[17] Mrs. Koyama's most common tendency when writing her husband was telling him not to worry while she herself was clearly worrying a lot about his health and comfort and, later, about the children's futures. The next chronological instance of this in the collection was also an excellent example of Mrs. Koyama's strong American patriotism. Ironically, this letter, too, had another "CENSORED" stamp on its envelope: "Kei, please take good care of yourself and not get sick.... I am very, very grateful to the U.S. government for the fair and just treatment."[18]

Citing a one-year subscription to a Sokoku Kai magazine, and being a member of the Japanese Chamber of Commerce which donated to Japanese war relief funds,[19] the Alien Hearing Board recommended Dr. Koyama be interned because of the "possibilities" of him being "dangerous to the peace and safety of this country,"[20] despite him having "made a good impression before the Board."[21] One week later, on February 19, 1942, Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066 and

16 "Do not worry, I always go to the government officials first and speak to them before I do anything," Teru Koyama to Mr. Kei Koyama, December 30, 1941.

17 "I sure do miss you a lot," Miriam Koyama to Mr. Kei Koyama, December 31, 1941; "With ever so much love and much courage, I remain," William Koyama to Mr. Kei Koyama, December 31, 1941.

18 Mrs. Kei Koyama to Dr. Kei Koyama, January 6, 1942. Courtesy of the Koyama Family Collection, Japanese American Museum of Oregon. https://ddr.densho.org/ddr-one-5-2/.

19 "In the Matter of the Detention of Keizaburo Koyama," Alien Hearing Board, District of Oregon, Department of Justice, February 12, 1942, 2, https://ddr.densho.org/ddr-one-5-154/.

20 Alien Hearing Board, February 12, 1942, 4, https://ddr.densho.org/ddr-one-5-156/.

21 Alien Hearing Board, February 12, 1942, 3, https://ddr.densho.org/ddr-one-5-155/.

sealed the fate of the rest of the Koyama family, along with every other family of Japanese ancestry living on the West Coast, to internment. Miriam, the youngest, wrote her father a brief but hopeful letter a couple weeks later: “When we evacuate I hope we could go where you are, and be together. I pray for you every night, and that we could be together.”[22] Dr. Koyama, apprehended and detained as an “enemy alien,” was under a different jurisdiction than his family, however, and would not be reunited with them until at least the fall of 1943. His wife, for her part, wrote to reassure him about their removal: “Do not worry about our evacuation, the government will have the full charge and if we do our part, the government will do all it can to help us.”[23]

> *… I begin to tear apart the **daisies**. I deconstruct them down to **their** basic parts: stems, middles, petals. I sort them into piles as I continue thinking about the Koyama family, trying to find what story to tell, **which part to focus on**…*

Before his family reported to the Portland Temporary Assembly Center for their evacuation, custody of Dr. Koyama had already gone through the jurisdiction of three different government agencies. His experience followed the pattern of others who were designated enemy aliens.[24] Custody of Dr. Koyama was switched to the U.S. Army on April 11, 1942, when they transferred him from Fort Missoula, Montana to Fort Sill, Oklahoma.[25] It would not be his last transfer within the chaotic system.

After the family had arrived at the Portland Assembly Center, the middle child, Eva, who was likely about 12 years old at this time, wrote: “It’s been very warm nowadays and not so very comfortable. Mother, Kiyo, William, and I feel just fine. This is the fifth day I have

---

[22] Miriam Koyama to Dr. K. Koyama, March 6, 1942.

[23] Mrs. Kei Koyama to Dr. Kei Koyama, March 23, 1942. Courtesy of Koyama Family Collection, Japanese American Museum of Oregon. https://ddr.densho.org/ddr-one-5-10/.

[24] Kashima, *Judgment Without Trial*, 105.

[25] “Office Information Record,” United States Attorney, District of Oregon, Department of Justice, stamped June 16, 1942, 2. Courtesy of Dr. Keizaburo Koyama Family Collection, Japanese American Museum of Oregon. https://ddr.densho.org/ddr-one-5-174/.

been here. I'm right now writing the letter outside."[26] Using a transfer list of internees leaving Portland Assembly Center for Minidoka at the end of the summer of 1942,[27] I found the Koyama family and their approximate ages.[28] The children's listed ages at the time of transfer were 14 (William), 12 (Eva), and eight (Miriam). After finding the Koyamas, I highlighted the names of people who were roughly the same ages as the Koyama children and then cross-referenced those names with interviewees in the Densho database. This gave me a list of narrators whose ages and camp experiences I used to corroborate and supplement those of the Koyama children.[29]

I felt this was important to do because, like their mother, their letters were all to their father or to government officials about their father. They naturally did not divulge many details of their coming of age in an internment camp to either. People reflecting on the camps in their old age, however, were not as reserved as children writing to a father in a time of war. Often, the interviews highlighted just how much all the Koyamas understated the conditions of the camps, likely with the shared goal of not stressing Dr. Koyama further. Eva's letter of May 7th exemplified this with her descriptions of it being "very warm" and "not so comfortable." Narrators, by contrast, described that spring and summer as sweltering. Jim Tsugawa described the summer heat of the Portland Assembly Center in Segment 11 of his interview. He told a story of a fire department's attempt to keep people cool backfiring terribly. They sprayed water in the hallways, but it soaked down through the plank flooring to the layers of manure underneath, releasing even more of the stench trapped there.[30] There would have been a lot of manure since the Portland Assembly Center was a livestock exposition center hastily converted to house thousands of

[26] Eva Koyama to Dr. K. Koyama, May 7, 1942. Courtesy of Dr. Keizaburo Koyama Family Collection, Japanese American Museum of Oregon. https://ddr.densho.org/ddr-one-5-11/.

[27] "Transfer Schedule From Portland Assembly Center to Eden, Idaho Relocation Center," War Relocation Authority. Courtesy of Dr. Keizaburo Koyama Family Collection, Japanese American Museum of Oregon, https://downloads.densho.org/ddr-densho-291/ddr-densho-291-24/.

[28] "Transfer Schedule From Portland," Number 260, 25. Ages are approximate, as the list contained multiple inaccuracies, including Miriam being listed as "Marian."

[29] "Transfer Schedule From Portland:" Shigeo Oka, 413, 40; George (listed as Yoshio) Nakata, 367, 36; Setsuko Tsuboi, 646, 62; James Tsugawa, 648, 62.

[30] Jim Tsugawa, Segment 11, 1:50, interviewed by Ian McCluskey, December 17, 2013. Courtesy of the Japanese American Museum of Oregon, https://ddr.densho.org/interviews/ddr-one-7-55-10/?tableft=segments.

people. The large amount of manure also guaranteed lots of pests. Tsugawa said the fly paper hanging everywhere was always "black with flies."[31]

It was more than the heat, smell, and flies that were "not so comfortable"; there was also an extreme lack of privacy in the barracks. George Nakata described the Portland Assembly Center experience in a 2004 interview: "I think it's hard for people who have not had that experience to picture this: plyboard partitions, the roof over your head was the roof of the exposition center—pigeons flying around, people next door snoring away, canvas doors…"[32] The lack of privacy extended to the communal bathrooms which lacked any stalls. Tsugawa reflected on how embarrassing it must have been for young ladies (like Eva) reaching puberty at the time.[33] "Not so comfortable" glossed over a lot of the actual experience as did the assurance everyone felt "just fine." All of them would habitually downplay the unpleasantness of their situation at the Portland Assembly Center.

The biggest example of downplaying conditions was the typhoid shots. As Shig Oka recalled, typhoid shots were supposed to be given in three individual units, but "they gave you this typhoid shot in one dose. So, a lot of people got really sick" all at the same time.[34] Nakata also recalled this and stated that "any there would remember the odor" of the livestock manure compounded with the heat and the sick.[35] Teru Koyama, however, when writing to her husband simply told him: "we all had typhoid fever shots yesterday" and were "pretty sick" but will "be all right by tonight."[36] She went on to emphasize she didn't have to miss her work duties which did not include cooking, "so by the time you be with your family, your wife will not be very much of a cook, too bad!" She concluded with assurances they were all well cared for and taking "sun baths." According to the interviews about Portland, it was

---

[31] Tsugawa, Segment 10, 1:30.

[32] George Nakata, Segment 13, 0:35, interviewed by Masako Hinatsu, August 23, 2004. Courtesy of the Japanese American Museum of Oregon, https://ddr.densho.org/interviews/ddr-one-7-29-13/?tableft=segments.

[33] Tsugawa, Segment 10, 3:28.

[34] Shig Oka, Segment 9, 2:00, interviewed by Kim Blair, July 1, 2014. Courtesy of the Japanese American Museum of Oregon, https://ddr.densho.org/interviews/ddr-one-7-74-9/?tableft=segments.

[35] Nakata, Segment 13, 5:20.

[36] Mrs. K. Koyama to Dr. Keizaburo Koyama, May 13, 1942. Courtesy of Dr. Keizaburo Koyama Family Collection, Japanese American Museum of Oregon. https://ddr.densho.org/ddr-one-5-12/.

so loud, hot, and smelly in the pavilion where the barracks were that people spent most of their time outside by necessity. Eva and her mother both framed it as a leisurely preference rather than as a coping strategy.

Alongside work, leisure and recreation activities were important to internees—keeping busy was a collective priority. The recreation department at Portland boasted a large variety of sports and hobbies, alongside weekly movies, all of which were featured in the camp newsletter, the *Evacuazette*.[37] For Mrs. Koyama, church was the camp activity she wrote most frequently and excitedly about: "Another Sunday is here and we are thinking of you so much! We are all well today and attended the Sunday School and church service…"[38] In addition to school, William kept himself busy with the Boy Scouts which he'd been involved in prior to the war.[39] He was either introduced to model plane building while at the Portland Assembly Center or it was already a hobby of his prior to evacuation: "I am building an airplane now. Cause they have started an airplane club here."[40] The *Evacuazette* announced a model plane contest in its July 24, 1942 issue.[41]

All the Koyama children attended school while at the camp. Miriam made a brief mention of having joined 4A,[42] but I did not find any specific mention of Eva's activities while at Portland. It was also likely the children attended church services and Sunday School regularly throughout internment given their mother's use of "we" when talking about going to Sunday Services and the children's frequent mentions of God and Jesus as sources of hope in their own letters.

---

[37] "Let the Rec. Dept. Do It;" "Movies Give Rec. Dept. Problems," *Evacuazette*, Vol. I, No. 11, June 23, 1942. Courtesy of Tsuguo "Ike" Ikeda, https://ddr.densho.org/ddr-densho-120-8/.

[38] Mrs. Kei Koyama to Dr. Keizaburo Koyama, May 24, 1942. Courtesy of Dr. Keizaburo Koyama Family Collection, Japanese American Museum of Oregon. https://ddr.densho.org/ddr-one-5-14/.

[39] Alien Hearing Board, February 12, 1942, 3.

[40] William Koyama to Keizaburo Koyama, July 21, 1942. Courtesy of Dr. Keizaburo Koyama Family Collection, Japanese American Museum of Oregon. https://ddr.densho.org/ddr-one-5-21/.

[41] "Model Plane Contest," *Evacuazette*, Vol. I, No. 20, July 24, 1942, 3. Courtesy of Tsuguo "Ike" Ikeda, https://ddr.densho.org/ddr-densho-120-14/.

[42] Miriam Koyama to Keizaburo Koyama, June 21, 1942. Courtesy of Dr. Keizaburo Koyama Family Collection, Japanese American Museum of Oregon. https://ddr.densho.org/ddr-one-5-16/.

While the rest of the family was at the Portland Assembly Center, Dr. Keizaburo was transferred from Fort Sill in Oklahoma to Camp Livingston in Louisiana. I did not find the exact date of this transfer, but it was completed by at least July 10, 1942, because that was the date of the first letter in the collection with Camp Livingston as the address. The separation from his family and the multiple moves to climates extremely different from the Pacific Northwest where he spent the majority of his life were likely hard on his physical and mental health. There were very few letters written by Dr. Koyama in the collection and the only clues to his health were the regular fretting of his wife after his “body and soul” and some lines from William who was often the most candid of them all about their situation: “We are all trying to do our best under these conditions… I know it’s been hard on you me and all the rest. Your hair might be turning gray but no matter what happens remember there is allways [sic] our Savior to look to.”[43] The Koyama family was filled with constant anxiety about Kei, an anxiety that only grew once the War Relocation Authority or W.R.A. transferred them to Minidoka.

> *…**I begin creating** a picture of a **flower using the broken pieces of the daisies**. It doesn’t look very good—there are a lot of holes in **it and** no matter how many more **daisies** the toddler brings me, I cannot fill **them in before his bumbling steps scatter everything all across the dusty pavement again**…*

The Portland Temporary Assembly Center was, of course, only temporary. The permanent camp was soon to follow, and like most internees from Portland, Oregon, the WRA sent the Koyamas to live in Minidoka, located in Southeastern Idaho. For those who had spent most of their lives in the Pacific Northwest, its climate and vistas were a shock to the system. Personally, I have experienced the shock from going the opposite way, having been born about 100 miles away from Hunt, Idaho, the town nearest to Minidoka. As a young child moving to Oregon, I saw the numerous big, tall trees east of the Cascades and all

---

[43] William Koyama to Dr. Keizaburo Koyama, June 21, 1942. Courtesy of Dr. Keizaburo Koyama Family Collection, Japanese American Museum of Oregon. https://ddr.densho.org/ddr-one-5-15/.

the different varieties of bushes and grasses I'd never seen before and thought this must be the extreme Oregon abundance my mother had described to me. We kept driving, though, and as we did, the cornucopia of flora surrounding us became more and more and more. We drove through the Cascades, eventually coming down the other side and into the Willamette Valley. I was absolutely stunned. I was a chatterbox-of-a-child made speechless by the sheer amount of green life bursting forth everywhere. It covered everything, it seemed, except the sky and the pavement of the road. I gaped at scenery that, to me, seemed like something out of a fairy tale compared to the high desert plain and low brown hills of sagebrush I had grown up surrounded by.

I imagined the shock the Koyamas must have experienced as I read about their journey to high desert country. It must have felt so extremely barren in comparison to their home. A place that was hotter in the summers and colder in the winters and always windy, always dusty. When I went back to visit Idaho years later, I felt exposed by the vast magnifying glass of the sky cupped around the landscape. I found several photos of the Minidoka landscape but Figure 1 was one I thought best captured the stark contrast from living in a green valley full of hills, trees, and mountains, to a flat desert plain covered in sagebrush, everything in browns and grays unless the sky was clear.[44]

[44] "View of Minidoka," 1944. Courtesy of Dell Uchida Collection, Densho Digital Repository. https://ddr.densho.org/ddr-densho-439-8/.

Figure 1. "View of Minidoka," 1944. Courtesy of Dell Uchida Collection, Densho Digital Repository. https://ddr.densho.org/ddr-densho-439-8/. CC BY-NC-SA 4.0.

The Koyamas did not go into a lot of details about their first impressions in their letters, but their dissatisfaction was apparent from the beginning. Mrs. Koyama's exclamation marks and light humor disappeared. She complained often of the dust. Miriam flat-out stated in her first letter to her father after arriving in Minidoka: "I don't like it down here, because it is too dusty and sandy."[45] William started his first letter with "we're all feeling fine," and went on to say: "About noon we always have a dust storm. And [it is] terrible. It's so thick you can't see anything."[46] In one of Mrs. Koyama's first letters from Minidoka, she complained at length about the dust storms that made her health poor: "Due to this dusty air I am not feeling so well, my chest feels heavy… but I am not sick in bed so please do not worry."[47]

---

[45] Miriam Kiyo Koyama to Keizaburo Koyama, September 9, 1942. Courtesy of Dr. Keizaburo Koyama Family Collection, Japanese American Museum of Oregon. https://ddr.densho.org/ddr-one-5-30/.
[46] William Koyama to Keizaburo Koyama, September 9, 1942. Courtesy of Dr. Keizaburo Koyama Family Collection, Japanese American Museum of Oregon. https://ddr.densho.org/ddr-one-5-30/.
[47] Mrs. Kei Koyama to Dr. Keizaburo Koyama, September 14, 1942. Courtesy of Dr. Keizaburo Koyama Family Collection, Japanese American Museum of Oregon. https://ddr.densho.org/ddr-one-5-30/.

Figure 2. Aerial view of Minidoka Internment Camp, showing the distinctive "M" shape of the barracks. Courtesy of Hashiguchi and Urakawa Family, Densho Digital Repository. https://ddr.densho.org/ddr-densho-474-121/. CC BY-NC-SA 4.0.

That particular hardship, at least, eased enough for her to help at Sunday School more regularly by the spring of 1943. Luckily for her, church was nearby. The camp was set up in a shape resembling an "M," which was more apparent from an aerial view, shown in Figure 2.[48] A map drawn by Andy Arai captured the shape of the camp with the benefit of labels.[49] The Koyamas were in Block 35 initially, which, according to Arai's map, contained a church.

---

[48] Mrs. Kei Koyama to Dr. Keizaburo Koyama, September 21, 1942. Courtesy of Dr. Keizaburo Koyama Family Collection, Japanese American Museum of Oregon. https://ddr.densho.org/ddr-one-5-33/.

[49] "Aerial view of Minidoka Internment Camp," Courtesy of Hashiguchi and Urakawa Family, Densho Digital Repository. https://ddr.densho.org/ddr-densho-474-121/.

Coming to Minidoka was a time of great personal struggle for Teru Koyama, evident in the September 14th letter especially. Her health problems made it hard for her to work in the first few months, and she worried about how she would support her family. Another challenge Mrs. Koyama faced at Minidoka was reportedly a common issue many parents faced: “Meals here are served by the cafeteria system and William and Eva practically never sit by me…I have a hard time to make all my children mind me … it’s so hard to make children mind parents here in the camp—there is no family life at all.” Only the youngest narrators recalled spending more time with their parents while at camp (those who were around Miriam’s age or a bit younger), and all others reported far less. This strain of feeling she was losing her older children to the camp life while also experiencing increasing health and financial problems eventually resulted in her occasionally skipping church, her favorite activity, because she was too tired. Overall, while in Idaho, she became increasingly lonely and depressed.[50] She wrote that she tired easily far more often while at Minidoka.

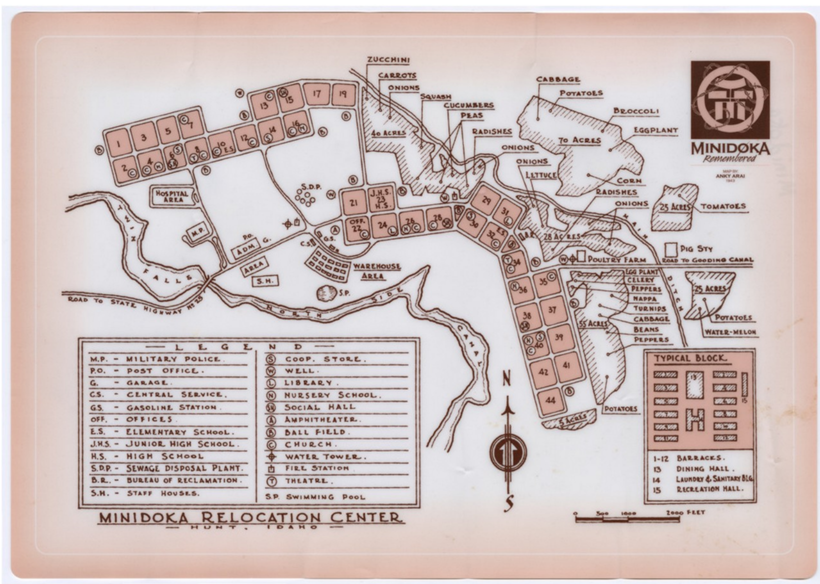

Figure 3. Allen Kichio “Andy” Arai, “Minidoka Relocation Center Map,” 1943. The Koyamas were initially in Block 35. Courtesy of Tsutomu “Tom” Fukuyama Collection, Densho Digital Repository. https://ddr.densho.org/ddr-densho-462-1/. CC BY-NC-SA 4.0.

[50] Allen Kichio “Andy” Arai, “Minidoka Relocation Center Map,” 1943. Courtesy of Tsutomu “Tom” Fukuyama Collection, Densho Digital Repository. https://ddr.densho.org/ddr-densho-462-1/.

While Teru Koyama was keeping herself busy with church and short work shifts whenever she could, she did everything in her power to keep all her children busy as well. She was determined to do this from the very beginning of their internment at Minidoka, detailing her plans to do so in the letter of September 14: "Both High School studies and boy scout activities will keep him busy… Boys of William's age must be kept busy or else they'll get in with a bad bunch." The determination seemed especially sharpened by an event that occurred very shortly after their arrival in Idaho. William had gone out rattlesnake hunting, killed a snake, and brought it home to scare his sisters with. His mother ended her longer than usual letter expressing her dismay at the dust and children's behavior with a common resolve: "We'll be glad to do whatever the U.S. government wants us to do."[51]

William was indeed kept busy with the Boy Scouts. He was listed as a soprano bugler in the *Minidoka Irrigator*.[52] A picture of Boy Scout Troop 123 was taken at some point at Minidoka (the date for it wasn't specified on the Densho database). In the back row stood the bugle players and, in that row, stood a boy with glasses and a smile on his face, a face that looked just like the pictures officially labeled as William in the Koyama Family Collection.[53] Boy Scouts weren't only important as something to occupy his time; they were something William genuinely enjoyed since before internment.

[51] Mrs. Kei Koyama to Keizaburo Koyama, September 14, 1942.
[52] "Hunt to Participate in National Boy Scout Week," *Minidoka Irrigator*, February 3, 1943, 7. Courtesy of Cherry Kinoshita, Densho Digital Repository. https://ddr.densho.org/ddr-densho-119-26/.
[53] "Boy Scout troop drum and bugle corps," Courtesy of the Bigelow Family Collection, Densho Digital Repository. https://ddr.densho.org/ddr-densho-156-24/.

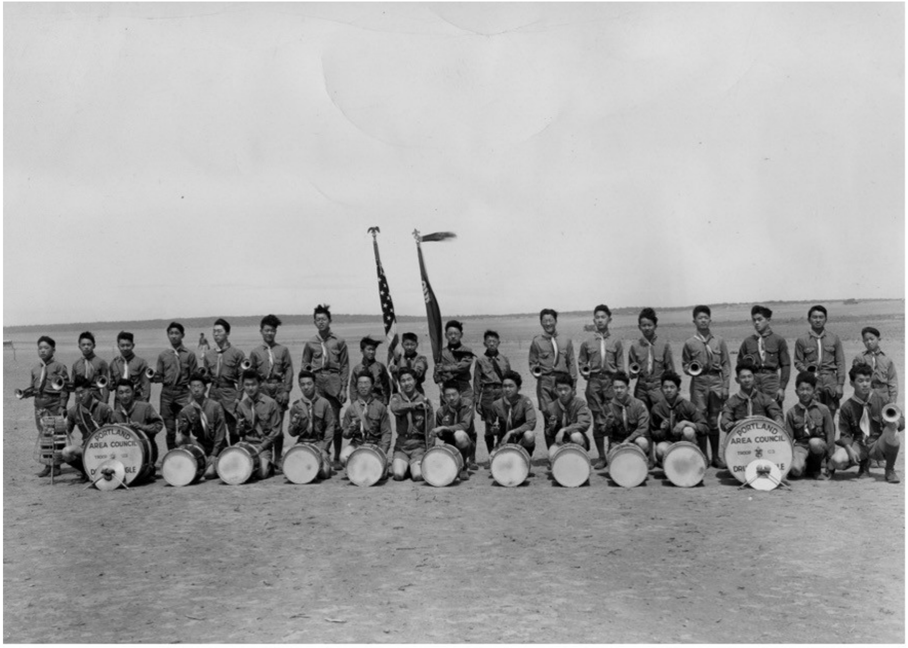

Figure 4. Boy Scout Troop 123 drum and bugle corps at Minidoka. The boy with glasses and a smile, seven from the left in the back row, is believed to be William Koyama. Courtesy of the Bigelow Family Collection, Densho Digital Repository. CC BY-NC-SA 4.0.

William's activities were the most well documented of the Koyama children. He took up model airplanes as a hobby while at the Portland Assembly Center and brought it with him to Minidoka.[54] Living in Minidoka brought with it more opportunities to explore nature, which William enjoyed immensely: "Well I just came back from the Boy Scout camp. It sure was swell out there…better out there then [sic] it is here. While I was out there some boys caught a porcupine. Gee it was cute."[55] It also brought with it a lot more burdens of responsibility on his young shoulders, especially with his mother feeling unwell far more often at Minidoka. She tired easily and sometimes was unable to work at all.

When not attending school or going on scouting trips, William sought agricultural work outside of camp. Prior to making such work trips, he performed domestic labor like chopping wood and doing

54 "Willie is building a [sic] airplane nowadays," Eva Koyama to Keizaburo Koyama, September 21, 1942. Courtesy of Dr. Keizaburo Koyama Family Collection, Japanese American Museum of Oregon. https://ddr.densho.org/ddr-one-5-33/.

55 William Koyama to Dr. Keizaburo Koyama, August 3, 1943. Courtesy of Dr. Keizaburo Koyama Family Collection, Japanese American Museum of Oregon. https://ddr.densho.org/ddr-one-5-64/.

laundry, telling his sisters to behave or he would not bring them any treats, and reminding his mother to take care of herself and send him a list of things to bring back with him so she wouldn't have to make a trip to town by herself later. His mother described him as "half young man and half child," when she reported this steady routine of work, housekeeping, and sister-scolding to her husband.[56] In addition, William continued his schooling. It wasn't detailed how other than "with the help of white friends," but according to the family website, William was one of the few who were allowed to transfer out of the camp to finish high school.[57] I found photos of William on a basketball[58] and football[59] team which seemed to corroborate this, as he is the only visibly non-white boy in either of the photos. It was unclear, but the school photo of William may also have been from the same time period and school.[60]

[56] Mrs. Kei Koyama to Dr. Keizaburo Koyama, October 2, 1943. Courtesy of the Koyama Family Collection, Japanese American Museum of Oregon. https://ddr.densho.org/ddr-one-5-72/.

[57] Weston Koyama, "Meet William," https://www.terukoyama.com/meet-the-koyama-family/3-meet-william.

[58] "Group photo of William Koyama's basketball team," Courtesy of the Koyama Family Collection, Japanese American Museum of Oregon. https://ddr.densho.org/ddr-one-5-86/.

[59] "Group shot of William Koyama's football team," Courtesy of the Koyama Family Collection, Japanese American Museum of Oregon. https://ddr.densho.org/ddr-one-5-85/.

[60] Winn Studios, "Portrait of William Koyama," Courtesy of the Koyama Family Collection, Japanese American Museum of Oregon. https://ddr.densho.org/ddr-one-5-84/.

Figures 5–6. William Koyama's basketball team (above) and football team (below). In the basketball photo William sits in the front row, second from left; in the football photo he sits fourth from left wearing number 39. Courtesy of the Koyama Family Collection, Japanese American Museum of Oregon. CC BY-NC-SA 4.0.

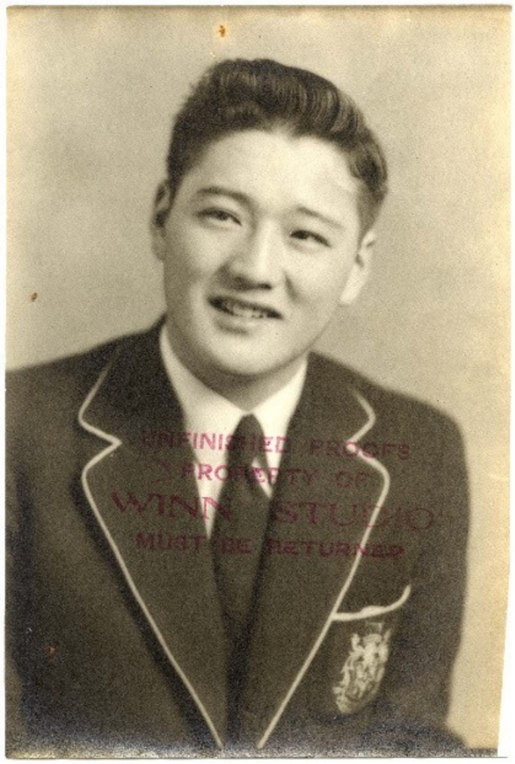

Figure 7. Winn Studios, portrait of William Koyama. Courtesy of the Koyama Family Collection, Japanese American Museum of Oregon. https://ddr.densho.org/ddr-one-5-84/. CC BY-NC-SA 4.0.

Eva was also in school, but she did not write about it often except to say she wasn't very excited about it. In August of 1943, she wrote to her father about her disappointment that school break only lasted a month. In the letter she stated she had enclosed a photo of herself and her classmates.[61] One of the letters from her mother had mentioned she and Eva had to go to Twin Falls to get new glasses for each of them, and I used this information to try to identify Eva.[62] In the photograph of "Minidoka classmates" from the Koyama Family Collection, there were only two girls with glasses and only one of those girls—in the first row on the far left—had a facial structure and nose similar to William's.[63] I

[61] Eva Koyama to Dr. Keizaburo Koyama, August 29, 1943. Courtesy of the Koyama Family Collection, Japanese American Museum of Oregon. https://ddr.densho.org/ddr-one-5-67/.

[62] Mrs. Kei Koyama to Dr. Keizaburo Koyama, June 17, 1943. Courtesy of the Koyama Family Collection, Japanese American Museum of Oregon. https://ddr.densho.org/ddr-one-5-57/.

[63] "Minidoka classmates," Courtesy of Dr. Keizaburo Koyama Family Collection, Japanese American Museum of Oregon. https://ddr.densho.org/ddr-one-5-68/.

believed this person to be Eva, and I was to find her face again later in another unlabeled photo.

Figure 8. "Minidoka classmates." The girl on the far left in the front row, wearing glasses and a dark floral skirt, is believed to be Eva Koyama. Courtesy of Dr. Keizaburo Koyama Family Collection, Japanese American Museum of Oregon. https://ddr.densho.org/ddr-one-5-68/. CC BY-NC-SA 4.0.

It's unclear if she enjoyed it as much as William did, but Eva joined the Girl Scouts while at Minidoka and her little sister joined the Brownies.[64] I managed to find a photo of a group of Girl Scouts alongside their younger Brownie counterparts at Minidoka. There were only three girls in the photo with glasses on, and only one who looked like any of the girls in the "Minidoka classmates" photo. This girl stood in the center of the second row and her hair, facial structure, and expression were nearly identical to the girl in the classmates photo I presumed to be Eva. Another girl with glasses stood immediately to her right who I deduced could be her sister, Miriam.[65]

Of all the Koyama children, Eva's letters were often the shortest and most sparse on details regarding her experiences. Most of her

[64] Mrs. K. Koyama to Dr. Keizaburo Koyama, November 10, 1942. Courtesy of the Koyama Family Collection, Japanese American Museum of Oregon. https://ddr.densho.org/ddr-one-5-43/.

[65] "Girl Scout and Brownie troops," 1943. Courtesy of Mamiya Family Collection, Densho Digital Repository. https://ddr.densho.org/ddr-densho-13-41/.

letters were simply to urge her father not to forget to write to her. There was only one letter that showed some of the emotional stress she was enduring, and that was one she wrote in a moment of acute hurt and anger in response to her father calling her fat.[66] The letter from her father (not present in the collection) was referenced by every member of the family. All of them wrote to Dr. Keizaburo about how devastated Eva had been after reading the letter, with Miriam being particularly emphatic: "When you wrote "fat" Eva on the post card, well, Eva sure did burn up, boy oh boy did she!"[67] Given the context of other letters from family friends and from her mother, calling Eva fat had likely been meant in jest. If that was the case, the tone of affectionate hazing was lost in the cruelty of space: the physical space between her and her father, the space between words written on a page and the intentions of trying to keep relationships as close to normal as possible, and space in the time since they had last actually seen one another. Eva's defiant and defensive reply to those painful words was the most she ever opened up in her letters about how she felt: "Don't you call me "fat" because I'm not fat, and another thing you always write to Miriam and Willie and it's no fair."[68] This sentence was the most Eva shared how she was feeling directly to her father. Even after spending three days severely ill in the camp hospital, there was no record of her having made any mention of it to her father, though William did.[69]

Miriam, the youngest, was the most forthcoming with her emotions surrounding her father's forced seclusion from the family. Mrs. Koyama stated it was Miriam who took the separation from her father the hardest.[70] Many of Mrs. Koyama's letters detailed the "mental

[66] Eva Koyama to Keizaburo Koyama, September 21, 1942. Courtesy of Dr. Keizaburo Koyama Family Collection, Japanese American Museum of Oregon. https://ddr.densho.org/ddr-one-5-33/.

[67] Miriam Kiyo Koyama to Keizaburo Koyama, September 12, 1942. Courtesy of the Dr. Keizaburo Koyama Family Collection, Japanese American Museum of Oregon. https://ddr.densho.org/ddr-one-5-30/.

[68] Eva Koyama to Dr. Keizaburo Koyama, September 21, 1942.

[69] William Koyama to Dr. Keizaburo Koyama, October 5, 1942. Courtesy of Dr. Keizaburo Koyama Family Collection, Japanese American Museum of Oregon. https://ddr.densho.org/ddr-one-5-39/.

[70] Mrs. K. Koyama to Dr. Keizaburo Koyama, June 22, 1943. Courtesy of Dr. Keizaburo Koyama Family Collection, Japanese American Museum of Oregon. https://ddr.densho.org/ddr-one-5-58/.

suffering" the children endured in camp.[71] All of them struggled in their own way with heavy feelings, but it was the youngest's tears reported most often in the letters: "Yesterday in the midst of play with her playmates, Kiyo began sobbing and wept for some time. This morning as I was combing her hair, she said 'Oh, I wish daddy was here with us.'"[72]

At some point while the rest of his family was at Minidoka, Kei Koyama was again transferred to a different camp with an entirely different climate—this time to Santa Fe. The transfers appeared to be without reason. Another aspect of his detention which appeared to be without reason was the fact that he remained separated from his family even after others began to be reunited with theirs.[73] I was unable to confirm to a satisfactory degree either his experiences of detention or the reasoning for him being denied reunion for so long. With the sources at hand, there wasn't any justification for the length of his detention, which lasted from early December 1941 to at least the November of 1943. While he was detained, the older children's handwriting drastically changed as they trudged through adolescence, especially William's. A hand that in 1941 had been a big, loopy scrawl with barely a space between words became a far more precise and legible script by the end of 1943. During detention, that was the primary way (perhaps the only way) Dr. Keizaburo Koyama could watch his children grow up—through the steady development of shaky hands and clipped prose to lyrical runes approaching ever greater maturity with each passing note.

The story of reunification did not exist in these documents. The collection's letters ended abruptly in the fall of 1943, presumably because they were finally reunited shortly after. Evidence for familial separation ending at least existed on the website Weston Koyama, William's grandson, set up.

Many times in my life I heard or read people speak of imprisonment and release in terms of life interrupted. The Koyamas' lives were not interrupted. Time was taken that couldn't magically be regained. Dr.

---

[71] Mrs. Kei Koyama to Dr. Keizaburo Koyama, March 8, 1943. Courtesy of Dr. Keizaburo Koyama Family Collection, Japanese American Museum of Oregon. https://ddr.densho.org/ddr-one-5-47/.

[72] Mrs. K. Koyama to Dr. Keizaburo Koyama, June 1943.

[73] "Children want you so much! They are simply sick at heart because some others are coming back and our daddy is not," Mrs. K. Koyama to Dr. Keizaburo Koyama, July 18, 1943. Courtesy of Dr. Keizaburo Koyama Family Collection, Japanese American Museum of Oregon. https://ddr.densho.org/ddr-one-5-61/.

Koyama didn't get to go back to his young teen son, pre-teen daughter, and little girl. The children he'd reunite with were forever changed by the forces of time as well as experience in hardship. Kei and Teru reuniting didn't somehow rewind reality so they could raise their children together, witness the coming of age of William and Eva together. The worry that haunted them all throughout detention had affected each of them to varying degrees. Teru and the children reported being sick far more often in the camps than pre-evacuation, especially Eva and her mother. The tone of all the letters steadily deteriorated from brave positivity to dejected persistence, with exponentially more declarations of how lonesome they felt, especially after the W.R.A. moved them to Minidoka. William quickly adopted duties befitting a head-of-household role. Before he was able to leave camp for school, even his extracurricular activities involved leadership roles,[74] though his interests seemed to be more along the lines of independent activities like building model airplanes or hunting for porcupines and rattlesnakes. Eva was often an afterthought for the family and leaned hard into that isolation from them, struggling alone with changes to her body, her mind, and her heart. Miriam cried almost every night while at Minidoka, according to her mother who said she often cried with her. It's hard to say what Kei's experience was like, but it certainly wasn't any better than what his family went through, and he faced it alone.

So, it was with huge relief I stumbled upon the website Weston had created and saw William's face. They made it through this. They rebuilt, even moved back to Portland. The fact there was a reunion offered some consolation, but it didn't erase the deep unease I felt knowing those years could never be given back to the Koyamas, an unease compounded by thoughts of all the US history of family separation inherent within the histories of slavery,[75] Indian boarding schools,[76] the prison industrial complex,[77] and 21st century immigration

[74] "I am now a pack cheif [sic] for about thirty scouts," William Koyama to Dr. Keizaburo Koyama, July 21, 1942. Courtesy of Dr. Keizaburo Koyama Collection, Japanese American Museum of Oregon. https://ddr.densho.org/ddr-one-5-21/.
[75] D. A. Pargas, "Disposing of Human Property: American Slave Families and Forced Separation in Comparative Perspective," *Journal of Family History* 34, no. 3 (2009): 251–274, https://journals.sagepub.com/toc/jfh/34/3.
[76] Anita Sinha, "A Lineage of Family Separation," *Brooklyn Law Review* 87, no. 2 (2022): 457–463, https://brooklynworks.brooklaw.edu/blr/vol87/iss2/1.

policy.[78] It was neither a new invention with the signing of Executive Order 9066 nor one soon to be retired after all Japanese people who'd survived the camps were eventually released. Family separation was a consequence of US policy toward marginalized groups and the prolonged separation of Dr. Koyama from his family was a part of this legacy.

> *The recrafted flower will always have gaps in it. It's just the unavoidable truth of* ***recreating a thing after it's been torn apart. Bringing the pieces back together doesn't change the fact they were once separated, but it can invoke the memory of what they once were and maybe, over time and new and old pieces, become something whol****…*

The first of these two photos I took on March 7, 2026, shows a cluster of daisies (*Bellis perennis*) growing in the grass as a small example of my sister's front yard. The second photo is the poorly reconstructed flower I made after tearing up the daisies. This process weirdly ended up being pivotal to me writing this paper. Before my son had randomly begun picking flowers and bringing them to me to fidget with, I'd had no idea where to start writing about the Koyama family after reading all their letters.

[77] Emma Li, "Let's Get Free: Family Policing, Prison Industrial Complex Abolition, and Transcendent Love" (Scripps Senior Theses, Claremont Colleges, 2021), 10–12, https://scholarship.claremont.edu/scripps_theses/1625.
[78] Mercedes Valadez, "Zero Tolerance at the US Border: Understanding the Impact and Consequences of Family Separation," in *Exploitation and Criminalization at the Margins: The Hidden Toll on the Unvalued*, ed. Shanell Sanchez and Taryn VanderPyl (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2024), chap. 11, pp. 227, 231–238.

 

Photographs by the author, March 7, 2026. Left: cluster of daisies ("Bellis perennis") growing in the grass, sister's front yard, Springfield, Oregon. Right: reconstructed daisy, sister's driveway, Springfield, Oregon.

B i b l i o g r a p h y

"Aerial view of Minidoka Internment Camp." Courtesy of Hashiguchi and Urakawa Family. Densho Digital Repository. https://ddr.densho.org/ddr-densho-474-121/.

Arai, Allen Kichio "Andy." "Minidoka Relocation Center Map." 1943. Courtesy of Tsutomu "Tom" Fukuyama Collection. Densho Digital Archive. https://ddr.densho.org/ddr-densho-462-1/.

"Boy Scout troop drum and bugle corps." Courtesy of the Bigelow Family Collection. Densho Digital Repository. https://ddr.densho.org/ddr-densho-156-24/.

"Girl Scout and Brownie troops." 1943. Courtesy of Mamiya Family Collection. Densho Digital Repository. https://ddr.densho.org/ddr-densho-13-41/.

"Group photo of William Koyama's basketball team." Courtesy of the Koyama Family Collection. Japanese American Museum of Oregon. https://ddr.densho.org/ddr-one-5-86/.

"Group shot of William Koyama's football team." Courtesy of the Koyama Family Collection. Japanese American Museum of Oregon. https://ddr.densho.org/ddr-one-5-85/.

"In the Matter of the Detention of Keizaburo Koyama." Alien Hearing Board, District of Oregon, Department of Justice, February 12, 1942. Courtesy of Dr. Keizaburo Koyama Family Collection, Japanese American Museum of Oregon. https://ddr.densho.org/ddr-one-5-153/.

Kashima, Tetsuden. *Judgment Without Trial: Japanese American Imprisonment during World War II*. University of Washington Press, 2003.

"Keizaburo Koyama alias Ken Koyama alias Keisaburo Koyama." Federal Bureau of Investigation, Department of Justice, January 14, 1941. Courtesy of Dr. Keizaburo Koyama Family Collection, Japanese American Museum of Oregon. https://ddr.densho.org/ddr-one-5-98/.

Koyama, Eva to Dr. Keizaburo Koyama. May 7, 1942. Courtesy of Dr. Keizaburo Koyama Family Collection, Japanese American Museum of Oregon. https://ddr.densho.org/ddr-one-5-11/.

Koyama, Eva to Dr. Keizaburo Koyama. August 29, 1943. Courtesy of the Koyama Family Collection, Japanese American Museum of Oregon. https://ddr.densho.org/ddr-one-5-67/.

Koyama, Eva to Keizaburo Koyama. September 21, 1942. Courtesy of Dr. Keizaburo Koyama Family Collection, Japanese American Museum of Oregon. https://ddr.densho.org/ddr-one-5-33/.

Koyama, Keizaburo. "Alien Enemy Questionaire." U.S. Department of Justice, January 4, 1942. https://ddr.densho.org/ddr-one-5-120/.

Koyama, Miriam to Mr. Koyama. December 31, 1941. Courtesy of the Koyama Family Collection, Japanese American Museum of Oregon. https://ddr.densho.org/ddr-one-5-1/.

Koyama, Miriam Kiyo to Dr. K. Koyama. March 6, 1942. Courtesy of the Koyama Family Collection, Japanese American Museum of Oregon. https://ddr.densho.org/ddr-one-5-9/.

Koyama, Miriam to Keizaburo Koyama. June 21, 1942. Courtesy of Dr. Keizaburo Koyama Family Collection, Japanese American Museum of Oregon. https://ddr.densho.org/ddr-one-5-16/.

Koyama, Miriam Kiyo to Keizaburo Koyama. September 12, 1942. Courtesy of the Dr. Keizaburo Koyama Family Collection, Japanese American Museum of Oregon. https://ddr.densho.org/ddr-one-5-30/.

Koyama, Teru to Dr. Keizaburo Koyama. May 13, 1942. Courtesy of Dr. Keizaburo Koyama Family Collection, Japanese American Museum of Oregon. https://ddr.densho.org/ddr-one-5-12/.

Koyama, Teru to Dr. Keizaburo Koyama. November 10, 1942. Courtesy of the Koyama Family Collection, Japanese American Museum of Oregon. https://ddr.densho.org/ddr-one-5-43/.

Koyama, Teru to Dr. Keizaburo Koyama. June 22, 1943. Courtesy of Dr. Keizaburo Koyama Family Collection, Japanese American Museum of Oregon. https://ddr.densho.org/ddr-one-5-58/.

Koyama, Teru to Dr. Keizaburo Koyama. July 18, 1943. Courtesy of Dr. Keizaburo Koyama Family Collection, Japanese American Museum of Oregon. https://ddr.densho.org/ddr-one-5-61/.

Koyama, Teru to Dr. Kei Koyama. January 6, 1942. Courtesy of the Koyama Family Collection, Japanese American Museum of Oregon. https://ddr.densho.org/ddr-one-5-2/.

Koyama, Teru to Dr. Kei Koyama. March 23, 1942. Courtesy of Koyama Family Collection, Japanese American Museum of Oregon. https://ddr.densho.org/ddr-one-5-10/.

Koyama, Teru to Dr. Keizaburo Koyama. May 24, 1942. Courtesy of Dr. Keizaburo Koyama Family Collection, Japanese American Museum of Oregon. https://ddr.densho.org/ddr-one-5-14/.

Koyama, Teru to Dr. Keizaburo Koyama. September 14, 1942. Courtesy of Dr. Keizaburo Koyama Family Collection, Japanese American Museum of Oregon. https://ddr.densho.org/ddr-one-5-30/.

Koyama, Teru to Dr. Keizaburo Koyama. March 8, 1943. Courtesy of Dr. Keizaburo Koyama Family Collection, Japanese American Museum of Oregon. https://ddr.densho.org/ddr-one-5-47/.

Koyama, Teru to Dr. Keizaburo Koyama. June 17, 1943. Courtesy of the Koyama Family Collection, Japanese American Museum of Oregon. https://ddr.densho.org/ddr-one-5-57/.

Koyama, Teru to Dr. Keizaburo Koyama. October 2, 1943. Courtesy of the Koyama Family Collection, Japanese American Museum of Oregon. https://ddr.densho.org/ddr-one-5-72/.

Koyama, Teru to Kei Koyama. December 30, 1941. Courtesy of the Koyama Family Collection, Japanese American Museum of Oregon. https://ddr.densho.org/ddr-one-5-1/.

Koyama, Weston. “History Through Letters.” Last updated June 2024. https://www.terukoyama.com/.

Koyama, William to Mr. Kei Koyama. December 31, 1941. Courtesy of the Koyama Family Collection, Japanese American Museum of Oregon. https://ddr.densho.org/ddr-one-5-1/.

Koyama, William to Keizaburo Koyama. July 21, 1942. Courtesy of Dr. Keizaburo Koyama Family Collection, Japanese American Museum of Oregon. https://ddr.densho.org/ddr-one-5-21/.

Koyama, William to Keizaburo Koyama. September 9, 1942. Courtesy of Dr. Keizaburo Koyama Family Collection, Japanese American Museum of Oregon. https://ddr.densho.org/ddr-one-5-30/.

Koyama, William to Dr. Keizaburo Koyama. August 3, 1943. Courtesy of Dr. Keizaburo Koyama Family Collection, Japanese American Museum of Oregon. https://ddr.densho.org/ddr-one-5-64/.

Koyama, William to Dr. Keizaburo Koyama. October 5, 1942. Courtesy of Dr. Keizaburo Koyama Collection, Japanese American Museum of Oregon. https://ddr.densho.org/ddr-one-5-39/.

“Let the Rec. Dept. Do It;” “Movies Give Rec. Dept. Problems.” *Evacuazette*, Vol. I, No. 11, June 23, 1942. Courtesy of Tsuguo “Ike” Ikeda. https://ddr.densho.org/ddr-densho-120-8/.

Li, Emma. “Let’s Get Free: Family Policing, Prison Industrial Complex Abolition, and Transcendent Love.” Scripps Senior Theses, Claremont Colleges, 2021. https://scholarship.claremont.edu/scripps_theses/1625.

“Minidoka classmates.” Courtesy of Dr. Keizaburo Koyama Family Collection, Japanese American Museum of Oregon. https://ddr.densho.org/ddr-one-5-68/.

“Hunt to Participate in National Boy Scout Week.” *Minidoka Irrigator*, February 3, 1943. Courtesy of Cherry Kinoshita. Densho Digital Repository. https://ddr.densho.org/ddr-densho-119-26/.

“Model Plane Contest.” *Evacuazette*, Vol. I, No. 20, July 24, 1942. Courtesy of Tsuguo “Ike” Ikeda. https://ddr.densho.org/ddr-densho-120-14/.

Nakata, George. Interviewed by Masako Hinatsu, August 23, 2004. Courtesy of the Japanese American Museum of Oregon. https://ddr.densho.org/interviews/ddr-one-7-29-13/.

“Note Detailing Keizaburo Koyama’s detention location and time.” Declassified document from the National Archives. Courtesy of Dr. Keizaburo Koyama Family Collection, Japanese American Museum of Oregon. https://ddr.densho.org/ddr-one-5-95/.

“Office Information Record.” United States Attorney, District of Oregon, Department of Justice, stamped June 16, 1942. Courtesy of Dr. Keizaburo Koyama Family Collection, Japanese American Museum of Oregon. https://ddr.densho.org/ddr-one-5-174/.

Oka, Shig. Interviewed by Kim Blair, July 1, 2014. Courtesy of the Japanese American Museum of Oregon. https://ddr.densho.org/interviews/ddr-one-7-74-9/.

Pargas, D. A. “Disposing of Human Property: American Slave Families and Forced Separation in Comparative Perspective.” *Journal of Family History* 34, no. 3 (2009): 251–274. https://journals.sagepub.com/toc/jfh/34/3.

Sinha, Anita. “A Lineage of Family Separation.” *Brooklyn Law Review* 87, no. 2 (2022): 457–463. https://brooklynworks.brooklaw.edu/blr/vol87/iss2/1.

“Transfer Schedule From Portland Assembly Center to Eden, Idaho Relocation Center.” War Relocation Authority. Courtesy of Dr. Keizaburo Koyama Family Collection, Japanese American Museum of Oregon. https://ddr.densho.org/ddr-densho-291-24/.

Tsugawa, Jim. Interviewed by Ian McCluskey, December 17, 2013. Courtesy of the Japanese American Museum of Oregon. https://ddr.densho.org/interviews/ddr-one-7-55-10/.

Valadez, Mercedes. “Zero Tolerance at the US Border: Understanding the Impact and Consequences of Family Separation.” In *Exploitation and Criminalization at the Margins: The Hidden Toll on the Unvalued*, edited by Shanell Sanchez and Taryn VanderPyl. Bloomsbury Publishing, 2024.

“View of Minidoka.” 1944. Courtesy of Dell Uchida Collection, Densho Digital Repository. https://ddr.densho.org/ddr-densho-439-8/.

Winn Studios. “Portrait of William Koyama.” Courtesy of the Koyama Family Collection, Japanese American Museum of Oregon. https://ddr.densho.org/ddr-one-5-84/.

Legacy of Environmental Contamination at the Hanford Site

Paizlei Tucker

In 1943, U.S. General Leslie Groves selected a location in Eastern Washington along the Columbia River to be the site of the world's first full-scale plutonium production plant. The barren plateau lacked a dense population, consisting mostly of farmers and Grand Coulee Dam workers, making it the perfect place for the siting of the Manhattan Project. Construction at the Hanford site began in the early months of 1943, and by September of 1944, the B-reactor was producing plutonium. Growing to an astounding 45,000 workers during the construction process, Richland, Washington, and the surrounding Tri-Cities were put on the map. Richland became home to Hanford construction workers, a large number of scientists, government officials, and their families in the years to come. The Hanford site operated continuously during the mid-twentieth century, producing the plutonium used in the "Gadget" bomb detonated during the Trinity Test on July 16, 1945, as well as the "Fat Man" bomb dropped on Nagasaki on August 9, 1945, during World War II.

The impact of plutonium production at the Hanford site was felt all over the world, with some crediting its development with ending the war. But the Hanford site has also created lasting effects on the Pacific Northwest. Although Hanford led to the growth of Eastern Washington's population and economy, it had many more negative environmental consequences for the region. Blinded by the allure of rapid innovation in nuclear technology, scientists and government agencies took part in hazardous practices and dangerous experiments without a clear grasp of their long-term repercussions. These misinformed choices subjected the water systems, animals, plant life, and even human residents of the Tri-Cities to harmful nuclear byproduct exposure, leading to higher risks of possible negative health conditions such as thyroid cancer. Even the decommissioning of the Hanford site created additional risks due to scientists' lack of understanding and the absence of regulatory programs for waste management.

Pollutants from the Hanford site contaminated waterways, which would later make their way to the poisoning of local game birds with harmful nuclear isotopes. The early methods used to cool the Hanford reactor cores polluted the Columbia River with high doses of nuclear waste byproducts. The Columbia River was essential to the Hanford site's nuclear production as the reactors used flowing river water to keep the uranium cores from overheating. The water was pumped from the river through pipes in the core, where it came into contact with thousands of uranium fuel rods before returning directly back into the river.[1] This led to extremely high levels of contamination found in plankton, fish muscle tissue, and even duck flesh. Early research began to find the potentially dangerous levels of iodine-131 (I-131), a harmful nuclear isotope, in the bodies of various game birds. Settling mainly in the thyroid, I-131 can lead to health conditions such as cancer. I-131 has a radioactive half-life of 8 days, which means it takes 8 days for it to lose half of its radioactivity. This allowed for an 8-day window for the harmful isotope to be absorbed by the animal life it came in contact with. In a study done in early 1948, researchers, concerned about the possibility of human consumption of radioactive bird tissue, tested the exposure levels from I-131 found in different birds in the area. Measured in microcuries per kilogram[2] of thyroid tissue, they found quail measuring at 3,600 and pheasants at 5,000, both being far above what is now deemed safe. The highest levels of contamination, found in bone, were from birds located between 20 and 70 miles from the cooling towers.[3]

Such high levels of radioactive contamination in waterfowl persisted and only got worse over time. The contamination was so strong that in the 1950s, scientists debated closing popular fishing

---

[1] "Swimming Upstream: Examining the Impacts of Nuclear-Age Pollution on Columbia River Salmon," National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, accessed April 22, 2026, https://response.restoration.noaa.gov/about/media/swimming-upstream-examining-impacts-nuclear-age-pollution-columbia-river-salmon.html.

[2] A curie is a unit of measurement, named after Marie and Pierre Curie, that was officially adopted in 1910. The curie measures the amount of radiation emitted by an element during radioactive decay. (The United States Nuclear Regulatory Commission.)

[3] K. Herde, "Radioactivity in Upland Wild-Fowl From Areas Surrounding the H.W. Project," HW-8668 (Richland, WA: Hanford Engineer Works, 1/26/48).

areas due to the potential public risk, though this was never carried out. Additional studies found that in some bird samples, thyroid radiation levels exceeded 80 times the daily tolerable limit.[4] Instead of implementing regulations on hunting and fishing, which some scientists saw as a bigger hazard to public relations, things like bird scare balloons and noisemakers were put in popular recreational fishing and hunting areas to scare away the birds.[5] This increased contamination was caused by an experiment done by scientists, even though they were already aware of the reactors' contaminating effects on the environment. Scientists seemed to view preventing the local waterfowl from coming in contact with the contaminated water as a better solution than preventing the amount of pollution emitted from Hanford.

In 1949, Hanford scientists conducted a classified experiment in the name of national security that further put the health of Tri-Cities residents at risk. On December 2nd, at 8 pm, scientists began to dissolve uranium slugs from the reactors' core that had only undergone sixteen days of what was normally a ninety-day cooling process. This abnormal practice was done as part of an experiment created by the U.S. Air Force called the "Green Run." Pressured by the Soviet Union's detonation of a nuclear bomb in late August of 1949, the goal of this unorthodox experiment was to measure traces of fission byproducts expelled by nuclear reactors. Scientists greatly reduced what was deemed the "safest" timeframe for the cooling process of the uranium and dissolved the "green fuel" in under twenty-four hours. By bypassing the standard procedures and filtration systems, the dissolving of the reactor cores released high levels of different harmful nuclear byproducts like Iodine-131 and Xenon-133 into the environment. Both of these radioactive isotopes can cause thyroid cancer or other thyroid issues. Scientists hoped that by releasing Iodine-131 and Xenon-133 into the atmosphere, they'd be able to gather data that would help them keep tabs on Soviet nuclear weapons progress through measuring radioactive particles released

---

4 D.E. Jenne and J.W. Healy, "Dissolving of Twenty-Day Metal at Hanford," HW-17381 (Richland, WA: Hanford Engineer Works, 5/1/50).

5 Michele A. Stenehjem, "Pathways of Radioactive Contamination: Beginning the History, Public Enquiry, and Policy Study of the Hanford Nuclear Reservation," *Environmental Review: ER* 13, no. 3/4 (1989): 95–112, https://doi.org/10.2307/3984392.

from operating nuclear reactors. The Green Run was postponed numerous times due to the specific environmental conditions needed to go through with the experiment. Things like wind direction and speed, as well as air temperature, had to be ideal to allow for sufficient data collection.[6] The public was subjected to the release of 7,800 curies of radioactive material into the atmosphere overnight. For comparison, 15 curies were released during the Three Mile Island incident of 1979, where nearby residents were evacuated for safety concerns.[7] This experiment was done in complete secrecy, as the public would not be made aware of it until the late 1980s, when documents were declassified as concern for environmental safety grew.

In addition to its potential impact on human health, the Green Run also led to high levels of radioactive contamination of nearby vegetation. Scientists Herman J. Paas and Walter Singlevich found evidence of nuclear contamination in an area 40 miles wide and 200 miles long from the nuclear vent stacks, which has extreme significance when observing what lies within that radius. Not only would that include cities like Richland, Kennewick, Pasco, and Benton City, but also large sections of farmland. Around 2,500 vegetation samples were collected over the course of three months, and around half of them were gathered after the Green Run. Before the Green Run, the area with the highest radioactive sample was found in the 200 West Gate area (see Figure 1), with 21 microcuries of I-131 per kilogram of sample. After the Green Run, the numbers were notably higher, some being as high as 12,246 microcuries per kilogram in the Route 3 region, about five miles from the 200 East area. Even the least radioactive samples taken after the Green Run were four times as potent as the most radioactive samples from before the experiment took place.[8] This had the greatest impact on the food web in the surrounding area.

6 "The Green Run," Fact Sheet #12, Technical Steering Panel of the Hanford Environmental Dose Reconstruction Project (1992), https://www.osti.gov/opennet/servlets/purl/16109635.pdf.

7 "The Green Run," U.S. National Park Service, accessed April 25, 2026, https://www.nps.gov/articles/000/the-green-run.htm.

8 Herman J. Paas, Jr. and Walter Singlevich, "Radioactive Contamination in the Environs of the Hanford Works, For the Period October, November, December 1949," HW-17003 (Richland, WA: Hanford Engineer Works, 3/2/50), 3, 12–17.

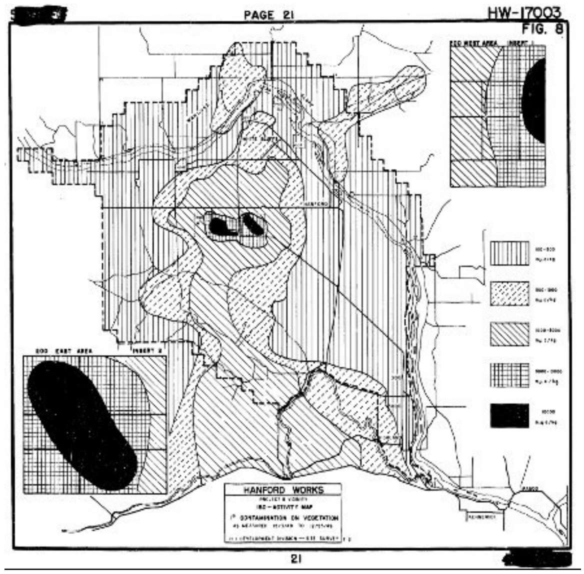

Figure 1. I-131 activity map: contamination in vegetation from the Hanford Works, October–December 1949. Herman J. Paas, Jr. and Walter Singlevich, "Radioactive Contamination in the Environs of the Hanford Works, For the Period October, November, December 1949," HW-17003 (Richland, WA: Hanford Engineer Works, 3/2/50), 21.

The contaminated vegetation worked its way up the food chain, which led to even more possible negative repercussions for humans in the area. As the Iodine-131 settled and began to dissolve on the vegetation, local farm animals that grazed the area were heavily overexposed to the radioactive material. This was found to be most prevalent in the thyroids of milk-producing animals, like cows and goats. The milk of these animals had extremely high levels of I-131, which, if consumed by humans, could have adverse effects on their thyroids. At first, scientists did not regulate any crops or animal products that could have posed a risk to the public, mainly because the link between thyroid exposure and animal milk was still not understood at the time. As a result, many people, mainly children, were exposed to dangerous amounts of I-131. The youth were affected the most because their faster metabolic rates allowed for quicker absorption of the radioactive iodine. It was not until six years after the Green Run that researchers recommended any restrictions on consumption of possibly contaminated milk or other foodstuffs. Hanford physicist Herbert

Parker said that a daily limit to ensure safe levels of exposure would be 2 quarts of milk, and even less for children.[9]

The Green Run not only contaminated the surrounding wildlife and food sources in the Tri-Cities, but it also affected the safety of the rain and drinking water. During the experiment, researchers found a significantly increased number of beta particles, a byproduct of nuclear fission, in the rainwater samples. Researchers found that the beta emitters had a half-life of around 8 days for Iodine-131. The quarterly average of beta activity was around 29 microcuries per liter sampled in the 200 East Area (see Figure 2). In that same location, the maximum sample before the Green Run was 12 microcuries per liter. Post Green Run, this number would get as high as 271.2. Not only were increased levels found in the rainwater, but also in the drinking water of the surrounding areas. According to Paas and Singlevich, "This fact is well substantiated by evidence obtained in measuring actual radioactive contamination in various water sources."[10] Some of the samples collected contained less than 10 microcuries per liter, though others, such as from the Kennewick standard station, were as high as 217.

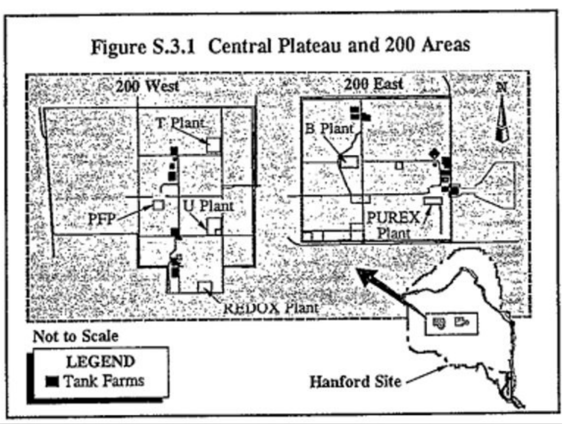

Figure 2. Central Plateau and 200 Areas at the Hanford Site, showing locations of tank farms and major processing plants. "Tank Waste Remediation System Hanford Site, Richland, Washington, Final Environmental Impact Statement," U.S. Department of Energy and Washington State Department of Ecology (1996), S-7.

9 Ian Stacy, "Roads to Ruin on the Atomic Frontier: Environmental Decision Making at the Hanford Nuclear Reservation," *Environmental History* 15, no. 3 (2010): 437–439.

10 Paas and Singlevich, "Radioactive Contamination in the Environs of the Hanford Works."

Waste management was another challenge for early Hanford scientists who had never dealt with anything remotely similar, which led to even higher levels of contamination in the areas near Hanford. Plutonium production created billions of gallons of nuclear waste. Whether it was wastewater from the reactor's cooling system or solid waste, it had to be disposed of somehow. Early methods consisted of pumping the wastewater from the reactor directly back into the Columbia River. As nuclear technology developed, so did its methods of disposal. Wastewater began to be pumped directly into the ground in large trenches or open-air pits.[11] This was the standard practice at the Reduction Oxidation plant (REDOX), which separated plutonium from uranium fuel rods, even though the scientists who operated it had begun to advocate for monitoring systems.[12] The 440 billion gallons of wastewater pumped into the ground contaminated the surrounding soil and groundwater supplies.[13] Mismanagement of waste disposal and the contamination of groundwater were not limited to the cooling process of actively producing plutonium.

The first efforts to dispose of waste produced by the reactor made the problem even worse, leading to over one million gallons of waste leaking from storage tanks into the ground. Beginning in the mid-1940s, nuclear waste was disposed of in underground "single shell" tanks. These tanks would be a short-term solution because their design only had a lifespan of around twenty years. In 1956, there was speculation that some of the single-shell tanks were leaking, which was confirmed five years later. By the 1980s, 67 out of the 149 single-shell tanks were faulty, which led to one million gallons of waste seeping into the ground. The tanks were located primarily near the 200 areas, which also happened to be the location of a large groundwater table. To solve the leaking waste issue, scientists developed a new storage model. Twenty-eight "double shell" tanks were created to securely hold the nuclear waste. This model consisted of two steel liners surrounded

---

[11] "Monitoring Hanford's Groundwater and Protecting the Columbia River," Department of Ecology, State of Washington, accessed March 15, 2026, https://ecology.wa.gov/waste-toxics/nuclear-waste/hanford-cleanup/protecting-air-water/groundwater-monitoring.

[12] Stacy, "Roads to Ruin on the Atomic Frontier," 437; "Reduction-Oxidation Plant (REDOX)," The Hanford Site, U.S. Department of Energy, accessed April 22, 2026, https://www.hanford.gov/page.cfm/REDOX.

[13] "Monitoring Hanford's Groundwater and Protecting the Columbia River," Department of Ecology, State of Washington.

by a concrete dome.[14] The ongoing impact of this failed disposal method is still an issue in the present day, as a number of tanks are actively leaking nuclear waste. According to the Washington State Department of Ecology, tank B-109 has leaked 560 gallons of radioactive waste into the ground every year since it was first detected in 2021.[15]

The harm to the environment was never the goal of Hanford nuclear scientists, but their judgments were clouded by evolving nuclear technology and a lack of knowledge. The contamination caused by Hanford's output and harmful experiments, such as the Green Run, were all done to keep the American public safe and to keep up with the Soviet nuclear program. Nuclear production was a new and rising field, and scientists were learning about these substances and their potential health and environmental impacts on the fly. Scientists did their best to understand and implement regulations with the hope of creating a safe environment for fellow Hanford employees and the public, but they sorely miscalculated the lasting power of the radioactive isotopes and the nuclear waste that Hanford was producing. They lived through a time period that preceded entities like the Environmental Protection Agency, which left concern for the impact of their operations and its related regulation in a grey area. Scientists followed the laws and regulations that were in place for them at the time, though those evolved greatly over the years.[16] In some cases, different agencies disagreed about what was deemed as good or "safe" for the happenings at Hanford. While some groups felt better safety regulations should be followed, others deemed the current operations at Hanford as perfectly safe, creating a stalemate on regulations at the site.[17] After the Green Run, people like physicist Herbert Parker were more concerned about the radiation effects on sheep and other animal life than they were about the human population. This was done not with malicious intent, but rather from a

---

14 "Tank Waste Remediation System Hanford Site, Richland, Washington, Final Environmental Impact Statement," U.S. Department of Energy and Washington State Department of Ecology (1996).

15 "Hanford Leaking Tanks," Washington State Department of Ecology, accessed March 15, 2026, https://ecology.wa.gov/waste-toxics/nuclear-waste/hanford-cleanup/leaking-tanks.

16 "Tank Waste Remediation System," U.S. Department of Energy and Washington State Department of Ecology (1996).

17 Stacy, "Roads to Ruin on the Atomic Frontier," 434.

lack of deep understanding of the long-term effects of the material they were dealing with.

They had taken part in the building of what Kate Brown coined a "Plutopia"—a society which flourished from the creation of a nuclear site, whether that meant monetarily or patriotically. Brown says, "The orderly prosperity of plutopia led most eyewitnesses to overlook the radioactive waste mounting around them."[18] In General Leslie Groves' memoir, he admits that even he was still uncertain about the possible damaging effects of radiation exposure. He mentions the harm done to the watch painters during World War I and the people who used some of the first X-rays, but more specifically about how the effects of their activities were not discovered until far after the fact. Groves makes it clear that in the wake of scientific innovation, there is always the possibility of being subjected to harm due to scientific ignorance. It goes to show that even some of the leading minds of the nuclear age believed that what they were doing was for the greater good of the public.[19]

Bibliography

Primary Sources

Groves, Leslie R. *Now It Can Be Told: The Story of the Manhattan Project*. New York: Harper & Row, 1962.

Herde, K. "Radioactivity in Upland Wild-Fowl From Areas Surrounding the H.W. Project." HW-8668. Richland, WA: Hanford Engineer Works, 1/26/48.

Jenne, D.E., and J.W. Healy. "Dissolving of Twenty-Day Metal at Hanford." HW-17381. Richland, WA: Hanford Engineer Works, 5/1/50.

Paas, Herman J., Jr., and Walter Singlevich. "Radioactive Contamination in the Environs of the Hanford Works, For the Period October, November, December 1949." HW-17003. Richland, WA: Hanford Engineer Works, 3/2/50.

Secondary Sources

Brown, Kate. *Plutopia: Nuclear Families, Atomic Cities, and the Great Soviet and American Plutonium Disasters*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2015.

[18] Kate Brown, *Plutopia: Nuclear Families, Atomic Cities, and the Great Soviet and American Plutonium Disasters* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 4.

[19] Leslie R. Groves, *Now It Can Be Told: The Story of the Manhattan Project* (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), 57.

“Hanford Leaking Tanks.” Washington State Department of Ecology. Accessed March 15, 2026. https://ecology.wa.gov/waste-toxics/nuclear-waste/hanford-cleanup/leaking-tanks.

“Hanford Nuclear Reservation.” Northwest Power and Conservation Council. Accessed February 21, 2026. https://www.nwcouncil.org/reports/columbia-river-history/hanford/.

“Monitoring Hanford’s Groundwater and Protecting the Columbia River.” Department of Ecology, State of Washington. Accessed March 15, 2026. https://ecology.wa.gov/waste-toxics/nuclear-waste/hanford-cleanup/protecting-air-water/groundwater-monitoring.

“Reduction-Oxidation Plant (REDOX).” The Hanford Site. U.S. Department of Energy. Accessed April 22, 2026. https://www.hanford.gov/page.cfm/REDOX.

“Swimming Upstream: Examining the Impacts of Nuclear-Age Pollution on Columbia River Salmon.” National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. Accessed April 22, 2026. https://response.restoration.noaa.gov/about/media/swimming-upstream-examining-impacts-nuclear-age-pollution-columbia-river-salmon.html.

“Tank Waste Remediation System Hanford Site, Richland, Washington, Final Environmental Impact Statement.” U.S. Department of Energy and Washington State Department of Ecology. 1996.

“The Green Run.” Fact Sheet #12. Technical Steering Panel of the Hanford Environmental Dose Reconstruction Project. 1992. https://www.osti.gov/opennet/servlets/purl/16109635.pdf.

“The Green Run.” U.S. National Park Service. Accessed April 25, 2026. https://www.nps.gov/articles/000/the-green-run.htm.

“Trinity: World’s First Nuclear Test.” Air Force Nuclear Weapons Center. Accessed February 21, 2026. https://www.afnwc.af.mil/About-Us/History/Trinity-Nuclear-Test/.

Stacy, Ian. “Roads to Ruin on the Atomic Frontier: Environmental Decision Making at the Hanford Nuclear Reservation.” *Environmental History* 15, no. 3 (2010).

Stenehjem, Michele A. “Pathways of Radioactive Contamination: Beginning the History, Public Enquiry, and Policy Study of the Hanford Nuclear Reservation.” *Environmental Review: ER* 13, no. 3/4 (1989): 95–112. https://doi.org/10.2307/3984392.

Abstracts

Abstracts

UO Undergraduate History Journal, Spring 2026

Don’t Tell Me This Town Don’t Got No Heart: An Exploration of Ken Kesey and the Grateful Dead’s Impact on the Culture and Reputation of Eugene, Oregon

Baer, Maya

History 407 · Professor Steven Beda

Beyond just a college town, Eugene, Oregon has an identity shaped by decades of countercultural influence rooted in the legacies of Ken Kesey and the Grateful Dead. This paper traces that influence from Kesey’s Oregon upbringing and the Merry Pranksters’ cross-country bus trip through the Grateful Dead’s landmark 1972 Veneta benefit concert, their long and complicated relationship with Autzen Stadium, and their enduring public memory in Eugene’s murals, monuments, and local institutions. Drawing on local newspapers, documentary interviews, and interviews, it argues that Eugene’s distinctive countercultural identity is not merely nostalgic but actively woven into public space, civic memory, and local commerce.

Keywords: Grateful Dead, Ken Kesey, Eugene Oregon, Shakedown Street, counterculture, Autzen Stadium

---

Earnest and Thoroughly Good Women: Women’s Christian Temperance Union Activism in Oregon, 1880–1920

Burtle, Graham

History 290 · Professor Ocean Howell

This paper examines the Oregon Women’s Christian Temperance Union (OWCTU) and its role in the prohibition movement from 1880 to 1920, with particular attention to the public and legislative responses to its activism. Drawing on Sanborn fire insurance maps of Tillamook, Oregon, Anti-Saloon League Year Books, the WCTU periodical , and local newspaper coverage from and , it argues that the failures of temperance legislation in Oregon were driven not by resistance to women’s political participation but by genuine opposition to prohibition policy, an opposition that included women themselves. The paper contributes to existing scholarship by focusing on the response to OWCTU activism rather than the activism itself and by situating small-town organizing within the broader arc of Oregon’s volatile path to statewide prohibition in 1914.

Keywords: temperance, Oregon, WCTU, women’s suffrage, prohibition, Sanborn maps

---

Division Within the Women’s Suffrage Movement: Abigail Scott Duniway’s Strategic Opposition to the Prohibition Movement

Colman, Isabel

History 290 · Professor Steven Beda

During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, suffragists across the United States worked to secure the right to vote for women. As many historians have noted, these suffragists often employed similar strategies. However, the political strategies of

Abigail Scott Duniway, a late-nineteenth-century Oregonian suffragist, demonstrate that the women's suffrage movement did not always speak with a unified voice. As part of her suffrage campaign, Duniway strategically opposed the prohibition movement, a movement that many suffrage leaders enthusiastically supported. Aside from her belief that prohibition would not reduce alcohol consumption, Duniway also maintained that it would violate male autonomy, which in turn would encourage men to oppose suffrage legislation. Prohibition would also incite retaliation from the powerful liquor lobby. A study of Duniway's writings, including her autobiography and suffrage newspaper, highlights her unique strategies and the overlooked divisions within the women's suffrage movement.

Keywords: Abigail Scott Duniway, women's suffrage, prohibition movement, Pacific Northwest, temperance, political strategy

---

Warm Springs: A Tribe, A Reservation, A Nation

Dingman, Faye

History 290 · Professor Steven Beda

The Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation of Oregon is a nation within a nation that exemplifies the story of paradoxical sovereignty for Indigenous communities in the United States. The creation of the 1937 Constitution and By-Laws establishes the rights and liberties of the people of Warm Springs under the guise of the U.S. Department of Interior's approval. While the Reservation's starting point is often tied to an 1855 treaty, this essay argues that the Constitution created out of the Indian New Deal of the 1930s is the more culturally, legally, and politically crucial origin point for the history of the modern nation. By focusing on the Indigenous struggle for sovereignty on the Warm Springs Reservation, this study demonstrates what one tribe among nearly 600 federally recognized nations had to do to exist and to protect its people.

Keywords: Indian Reorganization Act, tribal sovereignty, Warm Springs, constitution, Pacific Northwest, federal Indian policy

---

The Seattle General Strike: Media, Governance, and the Working Class

Filler, Piper

History 290 · Professor Ocean Howell

This paper argues that the 1919 Seattle General Strike is best understood not as a failed Bolshevik insurrection but as a genuine experiment in democratic self-governance whose misremembering was produced primarily through media framing. Through close reading of the day-by-day coverage, including headline language, source hierarchy, visual omission, and post-strike self-congratulation, it shows how the paper translated a remarkable experiment in worker self-management into a cautionary tale about radical overreach.

Keywords: Seattle General Strike, media framing, Red Scare, labor history, General Strike Committee, historical memory

---

The Pacific Northwest and the Talented Tenth

Foster, Coretta Anne
History 290 · Professor Steven Beda

This paper examines the advocacy of Beatrice Morrow Cannady, a founding member of the Portland NAACP, through the framework of W.E.B. Du Bois's theory of the Talented Tenth. Drawing on Cannady's scrapbook and issues of , it argues that Cannady embodied Du Bois's vision of an educated African American elite using its position to uplift the race and bridge the racial divide. Through her newspaper writing, radio talks, interracial gatherings, educational advocacy, and sustained campaign against , Cannady translated Du Bois's theory into concrete civic action in the Pacific Northwest.

Keywords: Beatrice Morrow Cannady, Talented Tenth, NAACP, Portland, civil rights, African American women

---

Widespread Anti-Library Sentiments and the First Free Public Library in Hillsboro, Oregon

Hill, Meghan E.
History 290 · Professor Ocean Howell

In the early twentieth century, Oregon witnessed a significant expansion of public libraries, including Hillsboro's receipt of a Carnegie Corporation grant and the dedication of its first free public library in 1914. These new libraries were welcomed by many but not by all. Drawing on American Library Association journals, Hillsboro newspapers, and Carnegie correspondence, this paper argues that Oregon communities expressed anti-library sentiments rooted in concerns beyond taxation, among them doubts about the moral and practical effects of public libraries on the minds and lives of young people. While existing scholarship addresses tax-based opposition, the broader ideological resistance documented here, traceable across multiple Oregon towns from 1900 to 1915, has not previously received sustained scholarly attention.

Keywords: public libraries, library history, Oregon history, Carnegie, Hillsboro, Progressive Era

---

An Examination of Use of Force at Portland State University on May 11th, 1970

Hylton, Rivers
History 290 · Professor Steven Beda

On May 11, 1970, Portland State University students engaged in a peaceful strike protesting the Kent State killings were attacked by Portland police, leaving 32 injured. Drawing on participant memoirs, oral history interviews, and secondary scholarship, this paper argues that the violence was not a spontaneous response to disorder but the result of deliberate decisions by city and state leadership. Mayor Terry Schrunk, Parks Commissioner Frank Ivancie, and Governor Tom McCall, shaped by personal hostility toward protestors, political allegiances, and prior patterns of repression, authorized unnecessary force against a nonviolent demonstration. The PSU case illuminates how individual officials' biases and political pressures, rather than protestor behavior, can determine whether authorities resort to violence.

Keywords: PSU student strike, use of force, Portland history, Vietnam War protests

---

On the Run in Russia: POW Attempts at Resistance from 1914–1920

Monsebroten, Eric
History 407 · Professor Julie Hessler

Over the course of World War One, Russia captured between 1.7 and 2.4 million Austro-Hungarian soldiers, subjecting them to six years of captivity under a very wide range of conditions. Drawing on the memoirs of seven Austrian POWs, this paper argues that common soldiers were not passive victims but active agents who repeatedly resisted their conditions through escapes, strikes, work evasion, and occasional violence. Although official policy demanded unconditional submission to assigned labor regardless of its severity, prisoners found ways to circumvent directives, initiate transfers, and negotiate better circumstances for themselves. Their resistance was rarely triumphant and often invited severe punishment, but it nonetheless shaped the contours of their captivity in ways that challenge existing narratives of POW experience.

Keywords: POW resistance, World War One, Russia, Austro-Hungary, captivity, labor

---

Radical Intimacy: The Fred Gray Association as an Adhesive Force

Russell, Lily Katharine
History 407 · Professor Timothy Williams

This paper examines the Fred Gray Association, a loose confederation of young men who gathered around Walt Whitman in New York in the late 1850s and 1860s, as a site for the deliberate construction of a private language for same-sex male intimacy. Drawing on Whitman's correspondence with Fred Vaughan, Hugo Fritsch, and other members of the circle, it argues that the Association's use of phrenological terminology, matrimonial language, and coded vocabulary was not merely concealment but invention: a collective effort to name a form of love that Victorian society offered no sanctioned framework to describe. The paper traces this language from the domestic space of Whitman and Vaughan's cohabitation through Pfaff's beer cellar, the military hospitals of Washington, and into Whitman's published poetry, arguing that the Fred Gray Association served as both the laboratory and the living proof of what would become the foundation of modern queer identity.

Keywords: Walt Whitman, Fred Gray Association, male intimacy, phrenology, adhesiveness, Civil War

---

The Architecture of Assassination: John Wilkes Booth's Path to Violence

Short, Dustin J.
History 407 · Professor Timothy Williams

The assassination of President Abraham Lincoln on April 14, 1865, has often been reduced in American cultural memory to a narrative of sudden madness or isolated fanaticism. This paper argues instead that John Wilkes Booth's decision to kill Lincoln was the culmination of a long process of ideological radicalization shaped by his

Maryland upbringing, his wartime travels across the divided nation, bitter family ruptures, and an increasingly theatrical conception of political violence. Drawing on Booth's own writings, contemporary testimony, and modern scholarship, this paper traces Booth's trajectory from outspoken civilian dissenter to active conspirator and demonstrates that the assassination was not an impulsive act but the logical endpoint of a meticulously constructed political and personal extremism rooted in white supremacy and Confederate ideology.

Keywords: John Wilkes Booth, Lincoln assassination, radicalization, Civil War, Confederacy, political violence

---

Legacy of Environmental Contamination at the Hanford Site

Tucker, Paizlei

History 290 · Professor Lissa Wadewitz

Along the Columbia River in Eastern Washington sits the world's first full-scale plutonium production plant, the Hanford Nuclear Site. Looming in the shadows of progressive nuclear technology is a grim history of environmental ruin. Over the course of its operation, the Hanford Site emitted harmful pollutants that affected the local ecosystem. Whether from daily operations or classified experiments such as the Green Run, scientists purposefully released nuclear fission byproducts into the atmosphere. Environmental harm was never the intended goal by scientists, but rather a consequence of their nescience surrounding the impact of nuclear technology. This paper examines government documents from various experiments in the 1940s and 50s to determine how lack of knowledge about nuclear technology led to environmental contamination and poor waste management. Unbeknownst to local residents, this contamination negatively impacted their health and the local food sources on which they depended.

Keywords: Hanford, environment, radiation, contamination, nuclear technology

---

Atomic Anxiety and the Nuclear Family in Science Fiction

Parker, Parker

History 473 · Professor Marsha Weisiger

During the height of the Cold War, American science fiction became a vehicle for processing the existential threat of nuclear annihilation. This paper argues that the most durable object of nuclear anxiety in mid-century speculative fiction was not the bomb itself but the nuclear family, the idealized suburban household that had become synonymous with American identity in the postwar decades. Reading Ray Bradbury's "There Will Come Soft Rains" and "The Highway," Ward Moore's "Lot" and "Lot's Daughter," and Leslie Crouch's "The Day the Bombs Fell," it shows how these texts rehearsed the destruction and persistence of gendered domestic roles even in apocalyptic conditions. Fathers flee or are effaced; mothers and daughters remain tethered to housekeeping regardless of social collapse; children are rendered incomprehending witnesses. The paper situates these literary patterns within the pronatalist culture and Cold War propaganda apparatus of postwar America, arguing that the nuclear family's centrality to national identity made its destruction the era's most legible catastrophe.

Keywords: nuclear anxiety, science fiction, nuclear family, Cold War, Ray Bradbury, Ward Moore, gender, domesticity

---

The Stress of Familial Separation: An Examination of the Koyama Family During Japanese Internment

Simmons, Cienna
History 467 · Professor Marsha Weisiger

In December 1941, Dr. Keizaburo Koyama was arrested at his Portland dental office and detained as an enemy alien, separating him from his wife Teru and their three children for nearly two years. Drawing on the Koyama Family Collection at the Densho Digital Repository, including family correspondence, FBI and Justice Department records, oral history interviews, and camp publications, this paper argues that familial separation imposed a distinctive additional layer of hardship on the Koyama family during Japanese American internment, manifesting in deteriorating health, emotional distress, and accelerated loss of childhood. By reading the family's habitually understated letters against oral histories from contemporaneous internees, the paper recovers what the Koyamas were careful not to say. It contributes a granular, family-centered perspective to the history of the internment camps and the enemy alien detention system in and around Oregon, showing how enforced separation compounded the already severe conditions of incarceration.

Keywords: Japanese internment, Koyama family, Minidoka, enemy alien detention, Densho, World War II, familial separation

---