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Promoting Tourism, Selling a Nation:
The Politics of Representing National Identity in the United States 1930-1960

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ABSTRACT

Promoting Tourism, Selling a Nation: The Politics of Representing National Identity in the United States 1930-1960, focuses on tourism and public culture in the United States, examining how institutions and public sites interpret their history, and the impact these representations have on community and national identity. The project centers on the United States Travel Bureau, the first federal agency tasked with promoting U.S. tourism on a national scale. Through its publicity campaigns, the Bureau attempted to distill the diversity of communities and traditions in the United States into a cohesive vision of American identity and heritage—one it promoted both at home and abroad—as the United States became a major player in world affairs and redefined its place in an international context. Balancing analysis of federal campaigns with case studies of two commemorative events, the 1939 Golden Gate International Exposition in San Francisco and the 350th Anniversary of Jamestown, Virginia in 1957, the project explores this process of cultural representation, examining how federal, state, and different groups at the local level vied to assert their visions, and the politics that shaped which voices were included and which left out.

Though a critical period in tourism history for the United States, the mid-twentieth century has largely fallen into a historiographical gap, between studies that focus on early developments from the nineteenth century into the 1920s, and those that examine the era of mass tourism beginning in the 1950s. New Deal projects and programs are most often treated in literature confined to the years of the Great Depression. By tracing the development and influence of national tourism promotion from the late New Deal through the early Cold War era, this project bridges that gap, and considers how elements of 1920s business culture and community advertising, New Deal government programs, and developments in historic preservation and the interpretation of heritage sites all combined to shape representations of national culture.
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In memory of my Grandmothers, Eleanor Modrzynski and Shirley McLennan
INTRODUCTION

*Promoting Tourism, Selling a Nation: The Politics of Representing National Identity in the United States 1930-1960,* focuses on tourism and public culture in the mid-century United States, examining how institutions and public sites interpreted their history, and the impact these representations had on community and national identity. The project centers on the United States Travel Bureau, the first federal agency tasked with promoting U.S. tourism on a national scale. Through its publicity campaigns, the Bureau attempted to distill the diversity of communities and traditions in the United States into a cohesive vision of American identity and heritage—one it promoted both at home and abroad—as the United States became a major player in world affairs and redefined its place in a changing international context. Balancing analysis of federal campaigns with case studies of commemorative events in San Francisco and Virginia, this project explores these processes of cultural representation, examining how federal, state, and different groups at the local level vied to assert their visions of America, and the politics that shaped which voices were included and which left out.

Tourism, promoted by both government and private industry, played an increasingly central role in developing and disseminating conceptions of citizenship, heritage, and national belonging in mid-twentieth century American society. Bracketed by the rise of auto-touring in the 1920s, and the post-World
War II surge in leisure travel, this formative period marked a time of expansion and redefinition, when recreational tourism assumed a more prominent role in American culture and consciousness. My research examines the tensions in how interests ranging from local communities, to chambers of commerce, to civic associations and government agencies used tourism to define themselves, and how national narratives incorporated such definitions for their own uses. It also considers how the development of the commercial travel industry intersected with this cultural project. The process of producing tourist narratives provided a space where different groups vied to assert their vision of national community and shape definitions of what it meant to be an American in the modern United States, highlighting the contestations inherent in attempting to define a national culture.

My project begins in the 1930s, using materials produced by the United States Travel Bureau (USTB) to explore attempts by the federal government to create unified narratives of national identity and represent tourism as a civic ritual that could both educate and unite the diverse populations of the United States through a shared notion of citizenship. Among the conflicts and dislocations of the Great Depression and Second World War, the government seized upon tourism as one way to provide Americans with a sense of communal identity and common heritage. The idea of using tourism to “define” America and construct nationalist visions was not a new concept. John Sears traced the beginnings of the practice during the nineteenth century, when, inspired by authors and artists, Americans conceptualized scenic attractions like Niagara Falls and Mammoth
Cave as "sacred places"—cultural monuments that defined U.S. national identity.\textsuperscript{1} It became more prominent following the Civil War, as transportation improved and the nation sought ways to reunite sectional divisions. As early as 1865, travel narratives like Samuel Bowles' \textit{Across the Continent} celebrated tourist journeys as a perfect opportunity to "see the expanding Republic in the making . . .[and] celebrate the wonders of the national landscape, the diversity of people, and the abounding resources" of America.\textsuperscript{2} Following the completion of the transcontinental railroad in 1869, cross-country tours were popularized as the best way to survey and make sense of a rapidly changing nation. More than just a pleasure trip, historian Marguerite Shaffer argued, touring the country in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century became "central to the development of a nascent national culture in the United States . . .transforming the symbolic value of the landscape [and] influence[ing] the way people defined and identified themselves as Americans."\textsuperscript{3}

Promotional campaigns like the "See America First" movement that emerged during World War I made the connection between tourism and nationalism even more explicit, characterizing national tours as the duty and

\textsuperscript{3} Shaffer, 6. In her analysis, Shaffer identifies the years between 1880 and 1940 as a particularly critical developmental time in the interaction of tourism and nationalism.
privilege of every citizen, and one that should hold higher priority and more meaning for them than trips abroad. Despite the inclusiveness implied by this rhetoric, only the wealthy (and usually white) or upper-middle class could afford the time and expense these types of journeys required. National tourism in this period served largely to re-enforce Anglo-American claims to both the full rights of citizenship, and the privilege of determining which populations could share in these rights.

By the late 1920s, however, tourism in the United States entered a new era of expansion and experimentation. More people from a greater range of social groups began to have access to leisure time for travel, as increasing numbers of workers were granted paid or unpaid vacation time. Beginning in the first decades of the twentieth century social theorists and management experts promoted paid vacation time as an antidote to the stress and strains encountered on the job by white-collar salaried workers. This movement touted several days away from work as an effective way to refresh workers, ultimately making them happier and more productive. During peak periods of labor activism and union organizing in the 1930s, corporate leaders also viewed extending vacation time to wage-earning employees as a way to smooth over labor disputes and cultivate employee loyalty.\(^4\) According to historian Michael Berkowitz’s analysis of company

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vacation plans, by 1930 nearly eighty percent of all white-collar workers received annual vacations with pay, and, despite an initial drop during the first years of the Depression, in 1937 about forty percent of wage-earning workers received paid vacations as well.⁵

The inter-war period was also a boom time in the development of promotional activities and infrastructure in the country’s tourist industry. Improved transportation networks and the wider availability of automobiles opened new areas of the country and new opportunities for touring to travelers. The National Park Service entered its period of greatest expansion, adding new sites and improving the roads, trails, and facilities in existing parks. Autocamps, tourist courts, gas stations, and roadside attractions appeared along well-traveled routes to support the growing tourist trade.⁶ Federal initiatives undertaken during Franklin Roosevelt’s administration, like the United States Travel Bureau, sought to further democratize travel in the United States, designing guides and promotional materials aimed at working-class, female, and African American travelers. In speeches and radio addresses, Roosevelt and his Secretary of Interior

⁵Michael Berkowitz, “A New Deal for Leisure,” in Being Elsewhere: Tourism, Consumer Culture and Identity in Modern Europe and North America, Shelley Baranowski and Ellen Furlough, eds, 188 and 191. Berkowitz calculates that by the onset of World War II, over twenty-five million workers had vacations with pay, and sixty million Americans spent at least one week vacationing away from home. For more on vacation patterns in the Depression era, see Aron, Working at Play, 238-245.
Harold Ickes emphasized that citizens were entitled to recreation as part of an American standard of living, helping to redefine the role of leisure travel in national life.\(^7\) Even during the first six years of the depression, vacation spending steadily increased, making tourism more integral to the economy in the 1930s than it had been to the 1920s.\(^8\)

Once solely the domain of the elite, in the decades between 1930 and 1960 tourism in the United States developed into a truly mass phenomenon. While recreational travel was not equally available to all, as it became more widely accessible it came to hold a cultural position as an integral part of the "American way of life."\(^9\) My dissertation investigates this formative period, when the proliferation of both travelers and tourist attractions provided space for

\(^7\) See for example, Harold Ickes and Franklin Roosevelt "Transcription of radio address for United States Travel Bureau, 17 January 1938," File: NPS General Publicity United States Tourist Information Bureau, Part 1 of 4, Department of the Interior Office of the Secretary, Central Classified Files 1937-1953, Box 3789, Record Group 48, NARA II, College Park, MD.

\(^8\) Berkowitz, "A New Deal for Leisure," 185. These statistics were cited in a study done by economist Julius Weinberger, "Economic Aspects of Recreation," Harvard Business Review 15 (summer 1937): 448-63. Weinberger found that the relation of tourist spending to the national income averaged 2.96% in the 1920s, but had risen to 4.37% in 1935. Warren Belasco’s study of early auto tourism Americans on the Road: From Autocamp to Motel also found that auto touring fared relatively well in the depression, even compared to other recreations like film, radio and sport. While travel hit a low point in 1932-33, it began to rebound in 1934. Belasco, 143-155.

innovation, counter narratives, and contested visions of how tourism could be used to represent heritage, community, and a changing nation.

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Though a critical period in tourism history for the United States, the mid-twentieth century has largely fallen into a historiographical gap, between studies that focus on early developments from the nineteenth century into the 1920s, and those that examine the era of mass tourism beginning in the 1950s. New Deal projects and programs are most often treated in literature confined to the decade of the Great Depression. By tracing the development and influence of national tourism promotion from the late New Deal through the early Cold War era, this project bridges that gap, and considers how elements of 1920s business culture and community advertising, New Deal government programs, and developments in historic preservation and the interpretation of heritage sites all combined to shape representations of national culture.

The project consists of four research chapters. Chapter 1: “An Outstanding Example of Intelligent Partnership between Government and Industry”: The United States Travel Bureau and Federal Tourism Promotion 1937-1942" examines the formation of the USTB as a product of the populist rhetoric, economic strategy, and public works funding of the New Deal era. Linking commercial tourism to the cultural and civic health of the nation, the first
incarnation of the USTB promoted tourism as a way for Americans to celebrate and understand their nation and its heritage, and unite through a shared travel experience. It characterized American culture as diverse yet unified, targeting a wider range of economic, racial, and ethnic groups than previous national tourist campaigns. Influenced by the growing conflict in Europe and the Roosevelt administration's "Good Neighbor" policy in the Americas, the USTB also emphasized pan-American unity, employing travel promotion as a means to shape international relations and a positive national image abroad.

The USTB marked the government's first broad-based effort to coordinate the National Park Service, state governments, civic groups, and the commercial travel and tourism industry in national heritage promotion. Initially defined simply as a central agency to develop tourism and collect and distribute literature about travel opportunities in the United States, the USTB quickly grew to serve broader ideological and cultural imperatives. Characterizing tourism as a model of "democracy-in-action," the guidebooks, ad campaigns, and radio shows produced by the bureau emphasized the community and diversity of the United States, and encouraged Americans to participate in constructing their national culture through travel. Projects like calendars promoting ethnic festivals, travel guides for African Americans facing segregation on the road, and newsletters about local attractions sought to make tourism more accessible. Using these materials, this chapter explores how the United States Travel Bureau worked to cultivate an idea of national culture that encompassed the diversity of populations and traditions.
that made the U.S. distinctive, yet also organized these elements into some kind of cohesive whole.

But how exactly was “national culture” being defined? Besides the contiguous forty-eight states, the USTB vision of nation included the U.S. territories and possessions of Alaska, Hawaii, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands, and also emphasized Pan-American unity. The USTB frequently collaborated with the travel division of the Pan American Union and the Cultural Relations bureau of the U.S. State Department on programs and publications designed to link cultural traditions, peoples, and sites across the Americas, in an effort to cement hemispheric unity in the Americas against the threat of incursions from fascist and totalitarian regimes in Europe and Asia.

The second chapter, “‘A New Spirit—Truly Western and Pacific’: Alternative Visions at the 1939 Golden Gate International Exposition,” looks at these themes in more detail. Held in San Francisco, the GGIE presented a distinct vision of the United States and its role in the world, offering an alternative to the depictions of U.S. national origins among English colonial settlements on the East coast. Alternately dubbed “The Pageant of the Pacific” and “The World’s Fair of the West,” the iconography and exhibits at the fair reoriented its narrative of American history to center on the west, and the potential for a “new empire” of trade, commerce and diplomatic relations based around the Pacific Ocean. An integration of leisure, commerce, culture, and politics characterized both the fair’s
vision for American progress, and its claims for San Francisco and the trans-Mississippi west as centers of national identity.

The USTB played a large role at the fair, hosting travel exhibits in the “Federal Building” and sponsoring an Inter-American Travel Conference that brought together government and tourism industry representatives from North and South America. Its activities provide further insight into how representations of national identity were shaped by the United States’ growing role and imperatives on the international stage. Forged as the nation confronted the rapidly changing geopolitics of the initial years of World War II, these representations reflected the tensions and often contradictory impulses—between isolationism and internationalism, U.S. leadership and reciprocal international relationships—circulating as the country worked out exactly what its global role should be.

During World War II, tourism promotion programs and leisure travel itself were both largely put on hold. The second half of this project, thus, shifts to the post-war era, examining how tourism promotion and representations of national identity changed in the context of the Allies’ victory and emergent Cold War. Chapter three, “A Return to Normalcy? Domestic Tourism in an Era of Cold War Internationalism” revisits the USTB, revived in 1947 following a suspension of activities during the war. On the home front, the agency’s sleek new media

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10 The main exception to this was travel and recreation programs organized for members of the U.S. military. See David Farber and Beth Bailey, “The Fighting Man as Tourist: The Politics of Tourist Culture in Hawaii during World War II,” *Pacific Historical Review* 65, no. 4 (November 1996): 641-660.
campaigns promoted travel as a way for Americans to reconnect and enjoy post-war life. Emphasis shifted from pan-Americanism to celebrating the United States’ democratic heritage and cultural links with Western Europe, as the USTB’s work turned towards enlisting the mass travel market in the U.S.’s ideological battle with Soviet Union. In this period, government-sponsored commemorations of historic events and landmarks became huge tourist draws, attracting thousands of visitors.

The final chapter, “‘Shaping the Character and Destiny of the American People’: Contesting Citizenship and Cultural Heritage at the 1957 Jamestown Anniversary” focuses on one example of this Cold War heritage promotion. It investigates the way Jamestown Festival interpreted the founding of Virginia colony and the early history of the United States, examining its portrayal of Jamestown—as a site of national origins and emerging democratic institutions—in the context of the debates over national identity, state authority, and civil rights taking place in the late 1950s. In the interest of creating a unified vision of national history, the anniversary events emphasized British heritage, representative government, religion, free enterprise, and a legacy of independence while glossing over more divisive topics like slavery, social conflict, and sectional divides. Yet, at the same time, the public nature of the anniversary drew local, national and international attention to these issues. The Jamestown Festival provided a platform for debates over the presentation of the past, as well as its legacy. Its story highlights both the central role that commemorative events
played in constructing ideas of citizenship and national identity, and the insight into this process that studying tourism can provide.
CHAPTER ONE

"AN OUTSTANDING EXAMPLE OF INTELLIGENT PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN GOVERNMENT AND INDUSTRY": THE UNITED STATES TRAVEL BUREAU AND FEDERAL TOURISM PROMOTION 1937-1942

Introduction

In January of 1940, Franklin Delano Roosevelt issued an official proclamation declaring the next twelve months "Travel America Year." Citing the growth of "international conflict" overseas, he called on nations in "the Americas [to] further consolidate our unity by a better knowledge of our own and each others' countries," inviting "citizens and friends from other lands to join in a great travel movement, so that our peoples may be drawn even more closely together in sympathy and understanding." 1 Roosevelt's proclamation marked the launch of a massive promotional campaign coordinated by a new federal agency, the United States Travel Bureau (USTB). Partnering with hotel, auto, railroad and other interests in the tourism industry, the USTB produced radio scripts extolling the "many splendid recreational areas" and "vast regions of widely diversified and magnificent scenery where the trailer tourist and the millionaire are equally

1 "Travel America Year," A proclamation by the President of the United States of America, No. 2383. F.R. Doc. 40-234; filed January 15, 1940. According to a USTB radio script from June, President Cardenas of Mexico also declared 1940 and 1941 as travel years in Mexico. "OGR State Broadcast, United States Travel Bureau Number One-A June 5, 1940," file: "General Publicity U.S. Tourist Information Bureau, Part 3 1939-1942," box 3789, DOI-CCF files, 5.
welcome” in the United States. It consulted with the Wm. H. Rankin advertising agency about courting sponsorship from automobile and tire manufacturers, and developing a weekly radio show that would feature attractions in each of the forty-eight states. In Latin America, the Bureau distributed Spanish and Portuguese translations of Roosevelt’s proclamation, along with fifty thousand copies of “Pictorial North America,” a travel guide, to U.S. embassies, consulates, and travel agencies. Travel films, advertisements, and syndicated newspaper features carried Travel America Year’s slogan “Travel Strengthens America. It promotes national health, wealth and unity” to audiences within the United States and abroad.  

2 The idea for “Travel America Year” and the presidential proclamation was first suggested by the American Hotel Association in a resolution passed at their annual conference on December 17, 1938. The United States Travel Bureau took up the idea and worked on formulating the campaign throughout 1939. Memorandum from Acting Secretary of the Interior Demaray, October 12, 1939, box 3789, DOI-CCF files, and American Hotel Association Press Release, December 19, 1938, box 34, DOI-Chapman files. The radio program quote can be found in the script “OGR State Broadcast United States Travel Bureau Number One-A,” which gave an overview of the campaign’s goals. An attached broadcast schedule showed the program aired on stations in forty states during the week of June 9, 1940. File: “General Publicity U.S. Tourist Information Bureau, Part 3 1939-1942,” box 3789, DOI-CCF files.

President Roosevelt and the “WPA-manned staff in the United States Travel Bureau [are] out to sell America to Americans” declared a *Washington Post* article about the campaign. It quoted USTB Chief Bruce Macnamee, who explained the economic importance of tourism—estimating “more than $6,000,000,000 will be spent on travel in the United States this year”—and noted that with travel to “Europe and the Orient clouded by war’s uncertainty,” the U.S. had “an opportunity we may never have again” to draw tourist dollars. But money was not the only concern. “As part of the ‘good neighbor’ policy,” the USTB “welcomed competition from the Latin American republics.” The bureau felt inter-American travel could build understanding between, as the *Post* put it, the “senors and senoras of Latin America” and “the New Yorker who’s never been west, the Iowa storekeeper who’s never been East, the Alabama planter who’s never been North, and the Michigan factory-hand who’s never been South.”

As can be seen in these promotional materials, Travel America Year portrayed tourism as more than just a pleasant vacation activity. Blending commerce and civics, its ambitious vision posited national travel as a panacea for the United States’ social, economic, and even diplomatic woes. This characterization typified federal involvement in travel promotion, which developed in the late 1930s. When Secretary of the Interior Harold Ickes enumerated the value of tourism to the nation on behalf of the USTB in 1940, he

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4 William Pinkerton, “Uncle Sam’s After You to See Nation First—It’s ‘Travel America Year’,” *Washington Post*. April 21, 1940, 27

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emphasized that it was “more than a major economic enterprise that offers a livelihood to hundreds of thousands of people” or “merely a means of giving pleasure to millions of human beings”:

Travel serves the tremendously important function of bringing men together, of broadening horizons and of narrowing prejudices. In short, travel is, or should be, one of the important activities of any government, particularly of a democratic government.”

The Travel America Year campaign exemplified the ways federal involvement in travel promotion during the late 1930s, in partnership with the commercial tourism industry, redefined both its role and value in national life.

Tourism Promotion & the New Deal: The Origins of the United States Travel Bureau

Secretary of the Interior Harold Ickes authorized the creation of the United States Tourist Bureau (USTB) on February 4, 1937, as a subset of the National Park Service. Using a combination of emergency Works Project Administration


6 House Subcommittee on Interstate and Foreign Commerce, National Travel Board Hearing on HR 1792 and HR 5412, 76th Cong., 1st sess., March 28, 1939, 8 and 12. See also Donald C. Swain, “The National Park Service and the New Deal, 1933-1940,” The Pacific Historical Review, 41, no. 3 (Aug. 1972): 318. The original name of the agency, “United States Tourist Bureau,” was modified in early 1938 to “United States Travel Bureau.” Ickes explained in a letter that “the word ‘travel’ seems more suitable to the intent of the bureau, namely, the
(WPA) funds, as well as a $3,500.00 donation from the American Express Company, the USTB operated on a temporary basis until June 1939 when Congress gave it its own appropriation, making it an independent agency within the Department of the Interior. Over the course of its existence, the USTB operated three domestic offices – a central office in the nation’s capital and field offices in New York City and San Francisco – giving it a presence in major port cities on both coasts. Acting as a central clearinghouse for travel information, the Bureau cooperated with state governments, civic groups, federal agencies and interests in the travel and tourism industry to “encourage, promote, and develop tourist travel to and within the United States, its territories and possessions.”

Initially defined by its charter simply as a central agency to promote tourism development and collect and distribute literature about recreational opportunities promoting of travel from a social and recreational standpoint... we believe that the word ‘travel’ is all-inclusive [while] the word ‘tourist’ seems to signify only the excursion type of travel.” Harold L. Ickes to Mr. J. Lee Harrett, July 16, 1938, file: “General Publicity US Tourist Information Bureau Feb. 4, 1937-Aug. 20, 1938,” box 3789, DOI-CCF files.


In an early organizational chart from 1938, field offices were proposed for Atlanta, Chicago, St. Louis, and Denver as well. None of these ever opened, probably due to budget and personnel constraints. A large factor in opening the San Francisco office was the World’s Fair located there in 1939-40, as well as the pull of influential Californian Senators and Representatives like George Creel. Organizational chart for USTB included in Memorandum A.E. Demaray to Secretary Ickes, January 28, 1938, file: “General Publicity US Tourist Information Bureau,” box 3789, DOI-CCF files.

in the United States, the USTB grew to serve broader ideological and cultural imperatives.

In his introductory radio address for the Travel Bureau, President Franklin Roosevelt explained to listeners that “one of the most significant trends of our time is the growing concept of government as a social institution kept constantly geared to serve the needs of the people, rather than a static instrumentality for the mere preservation of law and order.”¹⁰ Financed by emergency funds meant to stimulate the U.S. economy and staffed with WPA personnel, the USTB formed part of the Roosevelt administration’s New Deal initiatives that redefined the federal government’s role in the United States. Constructed to combat the Great Depression, the set of programs known collectively as the “New Deal”—banking regulations, labor reforms, cultural projects, unemployment benefits, retirement pensions—hailed an increased role for the federal government in its citizens’ lives. “For the first time for many Americans,” historian William E. Leuchtenburg argued in his analysis of Roosevelt in the New Deal era, “the federal government became an institution that was directly experienced…it became the government, an agency directly concerned with their welfare.”¹¹

Roosevelt himself characterized the USTB as part of this larger program, one of the “continually expanding services [offered by the federal government] to

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promote both economic and cultural growth” that could improve the standard of living for its people. For FDR, Ickes, and other proponents of the USTB, federal tourism promotion offered a way to boost both the national economic system and national morale in a time of crisis. In both their public statements and internal correspondence, they described tourism as an endlessly renewable resource. It utilized sites and points of interest already in existence, brought in money that circulated to all areas of the economy, and, it was proposed, could help sustain areas where the traditional bastions of U.S. industry—manufacturing, agriculture, mining—were in decline. With a relatively small investment of emergency federal funds, proponents hoped, USTB programs would act as “pump-priming operations” to bolster the faltering economy. “The travel dollar keeps rolling along,” USTB Chief Bruce Macnamee explained to the Washington Post, “and it benefits everybody from the syndicate that own the Waldorf-Astoria in New York to the little guy who owns a hot-dog stand along the highway.”


13 Donald Swain’s study of the National Park Service during the New Deal notes that the motives behind Park Service promotional campaigns (including those involving the USTB) became “largely economic” during the 1930s, and that almost all federal conservation activities in this period were partly initiated as “pump-priming operations.” Donald C. Swain, “The National Park Service and the New Deal, 1933-1940,” The Pacific Historical Review 41, 3 (August 1972): 317 and 327. Macnamee quoted in William Pinkerton, “Uncle Sam’s After You to See Nation First-It’s ‘Travel America Year’,” Washington Post, April 21, 1940, 27.
The vision for the federal bureau also drew from local movements and commercial organizations developed to court tourist dollars in the 1920s. As the rise of auto touring made more areas accessible to vacationers, town and community leaders grew increasingly interested in attracting tourists and the income they could provide. They created networks of community advertising organizations that "marketed the psychological benefits of vacationing to prospective tourists while simultaneously promoting the economic benefits of the tourist trade to locals." A plethora of groups, from local chambers of commerce and state governments, to regional associations like the All-Year Club of Southern California, to national organizations like the American Automobile Association engaged in promotional tourism activities, as well as related causes such as advocating for better roads, informative signage, reliable maps, and up-to-date guidebooks.

The impetus to form a government travel bureau actually came from these types of tourism organizations. By the early 1930s, the economic value of tourism and its growth into a major industry on the level of agriculture and manufacturing was widely recognized both within the industry itself, and among civic leaders. However, the United States lagged far behind Europe, Canada, Japan, and many South American nations in both the coordination and comprehensiveness of its travel system. Testimony from Congressional hearings revealed that in 1931, sixty-four nations around the world had government-sponsored tourist bureaus,

while the United States had none.15 By 1937, fifty-seven foreign countries maintained travel bureaus in the United States itself. These bureaus not only “encourage[d] travel away from the country” but also proved “exceedingly profitable to every nation engaging in them.”16 This competition, U.S. industry representatives argued, resulted in an unfavorable balance of tourist trade. According to a 1938 Bureau of Foreign and Domestic Commerce report, Americans traveling abroad (excluding Canada) spent six dollars for every one-dollar spent by foreign tourist in the United States.17

Spurred on by a growing awareness of the financial benefits of tourism, and concerns about competition with foreign governments, representatives of the travel and tourism industry met in Norfolk, Virginia in 1930. There they formed the International Travel Federation (ITF), a national organization designed primarily for lobbying the federal government to create an official travel division.18 Their efforts resulted in the “Dyer Travel Bill” (as it was popularly known), introduced by Missouri Congressman Leonidas Dyer on April 7, 1930. “Seeing America first is a bigger job than most Americans realize” Dyer told the

16 House Subcommittee, National Travel Board Hearing March 28, 1939, 13.
18 The organizational meeting for the ITF occurred at the U.S. Chamber of Commerce headquarters in Washington D.C. House Committee on Interstate and Foreign Commerce, Bureau of Foreign and Domestic Commerce Travel Division Hearing on H.R. 13553, 71st Cong., 3rd sess., January 23, 1931, 17-18.
New York Times, explaining that his tourist promotion bill would help “attract tourists to the United States as well as...encourage Americans to travel in American territory.”¹⁹

In congressional hearings on the Dyer bill, its supporters presented a multitude of benefits that federal travel promotion could provide. They ranged from the patriotic—“the tourist of today is the citizen of tomorrow”—to the philosophical—“a vacation is a builder of health, mind, body, and soul”—to the practical—“to commune with nature better fits one for the strenuous business of life.”²⁰ The main obstacle was a point voiced by North Dakota Representative Olger Burtness, who found it “almost ridiculous to assume that the government was organized for such a purpose [supporting domestic tourism] at all, or that it comes within either the letter or the spirit of the Constitution.” But Burtness did see a function for the government in encouraging tourists from abroad to visit the U.S. The federal government was best placed to facilitate visas for tourist travel (as opposed to immigration), an issue one supporting document termed “the principle deterrent to building up a greater tourist traffic from Europe.” That, argued Charles F. Hatfield, secretary of the ITF and president of the American Community Advertising Association, was exactly why the proposed travel

²⁰ These types of explanations of the value of vacation and leisure travel became increasingly common during the early twentieth century. Cindy Aron argued in her study of vacations in American culture that they reflected attempts to reconcile “the persistent and continuing American suspicion of time spent away from work” with “a culture in which the opportunity for and the desire to vacation were becoming widespread.” Aron, *Working at Play*, 235-236.
division belonged in the Bureau of Foreign and Domestic Commerce. "The United States' position in the affairs of the world is entirely different than it was before the war," he testified at the hearing, and the Dyer bill's travel division would not only help bring in foreign tourist dollars, but also promote "the realization of commercial trade and travel possibilities built on a good-will asset." Federal travel promotion could improve U.S. international relations, while boosting its economic potential.

Despite these arguments, the Dyer bill failed to gain congressional approval, and subsequent hearings in 1933 and 1935 made no further progress. By 1936, the travel industry was lobbying the Interior Department, as well as the Commerce Department. In a letter to the National Park Service's information division, Emerson Owen, the publisher of the American Hotel Association's hotel directory admonished the government to get involved in "selling America to Americans":

> Of what use are the millions expended in reclaiming and preserving the national wonders of America unless you can induce Americans to visit your show? Salesmanship does not mean a large stock of goods in the store-room. To make good, you've got to move the goods.22

Referring to the many conservation and park development projects funded through New Deal programs like the Civilian Conservation Corps and the Works

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21 All quotations from House Committee on Interstate and Foreign Commerce, Bureau of Foreign and Domestic Commerce Travel Division Hearing on H.R. 13553, 71st Congress, 3rd sess., January 23, 1931, 17-18 and 28-36.
22 Emerson D. Owen to Stuart Godwin 11 March 1936, box 4, DOI-NPS files.
Project Administration, Owen encouraged the Interior Department to put some of that funding towards informing people about travel opportunities. A partnership between the federal government and the tourist industry, he implied, could benefit the parks, the people, and the nation.

In his analysis of the origins of "mass tourism" in the United States, Michael Berkowitz traced how the intersection of the financial crisis of the depression, the search for ways to boost the U.S. economy, and the expansion of federal power in the New Deal facilitated the government’s move to finally get officially involved in the tourist market.\(^{23}\) While the previous bills proposed had never gone into effect, in 1937 Secretary of the Interior Harold Ickes had both the authority and the funds to create a federal travel bureau. He also had no qualms about instituting changes based on that authority. Using WPA appropriations he had purview over, he bypassed Congress altogether and established USTB within the National Park Service (NPS).

The mid-1930s marked a time of expansion and redefinition in the National Park Service, and the promotional goals of the USTB complemented these changes. As mentioned in the American Hotel Association letter, the development of parks and recreation held a central role in the Roosevelt administration’s economic relief program. Franklin Roosevelt himself was an enthusiastic advocate for the National Parks and frequently visited them over the course of his administration, bringing reporters and publicity in his wake. On June

\(^{23}\) Berkowitz, "New Deal for Leisure," 197.
10, 1933 he signed an executive order that greatly increased the size of the National Park Service, giving it jurisdiction over all battlefields, national memorials, national monuments, and most national cemeteries, including those previously managed by the War Department, Forest Service, and Department of Agriculture. The Civilian Conservation Corps, also formed during the Hundred Days, put young unemployed men to work making improvements to state and national park lands.

In tandem with this these improvements, the federal government stepped up its efforts increase visitation and use of these sites. The 1933 act coincided with a growing focus among NPS policymakers on the interpretation of its parks. Historical advisors within the agency forged a new policy focused on “bringing the parks to the people,” the best way, they argued, to communicate the value and significance of these areas. The USTB’s initial placement as a subset of the

24 Horace M. Albright, then director of the NPS, was the driving force behind this consolidation. He also began the Park Service’s historic preservation program and promoted expansion and greater publicity for the parks. Donald C. Swain, “The National Park Service and the New Deal 1933-1940” The Pacific Historical Review 41 no. 3 (Aug. 1972), 313-314 and “Harold Ickes, Horace Albright, and the Hundred Days: A Study in Conservation Administration” The Pacific Historical Review 34 no. 4 (Nov. 1965), 464-465. See also John Bodnar, Remaking America: Public Memory, Commemoration, and Patriotism in the Twentieth Century (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993) 170. For a more detailed explanation of this change, see Harlan D. Unrau Administrative History: Expansion of the National Park Service in the 1930s. microcard, 1983.

25 Swain “National Park Service and the New Deal,” 325.
National Park Service occurred as part of this new focus on promotion, development, and publicity.²⁶

Both Ickes and Roosevelt, however, argued there was a value in travel and recreation beyond publicity and “priming the pump” of the economy. In a speech celebrating “National Parks Year” in 1934, Roosevelt emphasized the ways “travel in America this year was both patriotically and economically sound.”²⁷ While detailing how money spent in travel circulated the economy, he also stressed “the beneficial effects of the superb natural scenery of the national parks upon jaded mentalities, and the healing influence of life in the open upon worn-out nerves and bodies.” “So,” he concluded, “travel to national parks should appeal to all—as a means of personal happiness to the self-centered, and a patriotic duty on the part of the public-spirited.”²⁸

²⁶ Donald Swain characterizes the formation of the Tourist Bureau as “the organizational culmination of the promotional efforts of the National Park Service” and a symbol of the Park Service’s “determination to increase the ‘usefulness’ of the parks.” Swain, “National Park Service and the New Deal,” 318. See also U.S. Department of the Interior, Annual Report of the Secretary of the Interior for the Fiscal Year ended June 30, Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1937 and 1938. This decision also drew abundant criticism from factions who felt the Park Service was deviating too far from its mission. ²⁷ National Parks Year was designed to publicize and promote travel to the parks, after the major expansion and reorganization of the Park Service that occurred in 1933. Roosevelt quotations from “Suggested Press Memorandum for Release by the President,” 1934, file: “Department of the Interior, Office of Information, National Park Service Miscellaneous Correspondence, June 7, 1933-1938,” DOI-NPS files. ²⁸ The idea of finding respite from the stresses of the modern world in parks and wilderness areas has a long history in American culture, and in American cultural studies scholarship. The classic study is Roderick Nash, Wilderness and the American Mind (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967). See also Leo Marx,
In his introductory radio broadcast for the USTB, Ickes broadened this idea of finding respite through travel to the National Parks to include more types of recreation. "The real strength of a nation lies in its human wealth," he explained, and these "human resources" needed to be conserved, just as natural resources were:

One of the most important phases of conservation of human resources is recreation. In our modern industrial world, with its heavy demands upon the human system, there is need for frequent relief from the mental and physical strain of our vocational activities. Recognizing governmental responsibility for providing means by which people may use their leisure to gain such relief, the Federal Government, the States, and local governments throughout the United States are providing parks and recreational programs of various kinds for the people. 29

Calling back to Roosevelt's speech about the "concept of government as a social institution kept constantly geared to serve the needs of the people," Ickes linked recreation to the welfare of the nation as a whole, and included it as part of the standard of living that the government had the responsibility to provide to Americans.

In her history of vacations in American culture, Cindy Aron argued that "the traditional balance between work and leisure [was] fundamentally altered"

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during the 1930s, "as the depression created a crisis of unemployment, overproduction, and underconsumption."\textsuperscript{30} Where once social commentators, politicians, and educators had promoted a strong work ethic and warned Americans about the dangers of too much leisure time, they now confronted a situation where "labor in the endless pursuit of wealth" was potentially damaging to the nation. People across all classes now had more leisure time, in large part because enough work was simply not available. The problem of this "new leisure," Aron found, preoccupied scholars, policy makers, and the popular press. They came to the conclusion, as an article in \textit{Colliers} magazine put it, that "the hardest work many of us have to do is to decide what to do when we are not working. We have not learned how to use our leisure pleasantly and profitably."\textsuperscript{31}

The United States Travel Bureau operated in the context of this changing relationship between work and leisure. Underlying its rhetoric and promotions was a similar goal of making leisure time productive. Its campaigns presented recreational travel as a useful activity, representing tourism as a pursuit that benefited the individual and the national community. A 1940 report, \textit{Recreational Travel at Play}, 237 and 249.

\textsuperscript{30} Aron, \textit{Working at Play}, 237 and 249.

\textsuperscript{31} Aron noted that while people waiting in breadlines certainly were not debating the use of their leisure time, statistics for recreation showed that vacationing remained at consistent levels, and even increased during the 1930s, expanding beyond its core constituency of the wealthy and middle class, to include those in the working class that could afford it. Culturally, recreation increasingly became seen as part of the American standard of living, a perception aided by New Deal programs that facilitated access to it. For statistics on recreation in the depression see Aron 238-241 and 244-246. "Time for Play," \textit{Collier's} 92 (August 12, 1933), 50, quoted in Aron, \textit{Working at Play}, 250-251.
Travel and Land Use, prepared by the USTB, praised the government’s foresight in setting aside land for parks and monuments “for the benefit and enjoyment of the people” in the United States. “This recreational investment” it argued, “has paid rich dividends; to the individual, in the form of improved health, broadened horizons, and deepened appreciation of the opportunities which life offers; to the Nation, in increased education, good-will, and prosperity.” Arguing that travel influenced people’s “intellectual and cultural development, and induces national and international understanding and unity,” the report laid out the ways recreational travel in the U.S. could help bolster Americans’ confidence in a nation battered by economic crisis and social upheaval. In particular, the report noted the value of travel promotion like that practiced by the USTB for its ability to raise “the qualitative use” of leisure.\(^3\)

Unlike a number of countries in Europe and South America, however, the United States never established a national policy that mandated vacation time for its citizens. Beginning in the 1930s, Ellen Furlough found, countries across Europe mandated paid vacation time for all workers, defining access to vacation time as “a right of citizenship bound up within a European standard of living” rather than a “privilege” or “benefit” of employment packages.\(^3\) France, for

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\(^3\) France passed a law on June 20, 1936 mandating 15 days paid vacation for all salary and wage employees who had worked one year at any job. Vacationing there however, did not become a truly mass phenomenon until the 1940s-1970s.
example, instituted paid vacations as a political right during the first days of the
Popular Front government as part of its effort to democratize access to “a variety
of leisure and cultural activities.” By 1935, fourteen countries, including Brazil,
Chile, Peru, Mexico, and Cuba as well as various European nations, had annual
paid vacation policies. Sweden granted its citizens two weeks vacation in 1938.3 4
The United States retained a more market-driven, rather than state sponsored,
model. Instead of overseeing vacation policy, the federal government partnered
with the tourist industry through the USTB.

*Civics and Commerce: The United States Travel Bureau & the Travel Industry*

“The Bureau’s work,” U.S. Travel Bureau Chief W. Bruce Macnamee
wrote to Senator Alben William Barkley while lobbying for support in the Senate,
“affords an outstanding example of intelligent partnership between Government
and industry.” He cited the USTB’s “full support and cooperation of the
railroads, air lines, bus lines, the American Hotel Association, the Automobile
Associations, and [international] steam ship lines” and predicted an estimated

Ellen Furlough, “Making Mass Vacations: Tourism and Consumer Culture in
France, 1930s to 1970s,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 40, no. 2
vacation policy was designed in contrast to those in Germany, Italy, Portugal, and
Greece designed to dismantle institutions of the Left and manufacture cultural
consent. On Sweden see Ovar Löfgren, “Learning to be a Tourist,” *Ethnologia
$150,000,000 in travel revenue for the coming year thanks to this "cooperation of
the American travel industry with the United States Travel Bureau." 35 From the
very beginning, USTB proponents in the federal government collaborated with
the tourism and travel industry in what they hoped would be a mutually beneficial
arrangement.

Many New Deal initiatives and reforms clashed with business interests,
but within the USTB, the government and industry were not at odds. Early in its
first year of operation, the USTB solicited, and received "expressions of approval
and offers of assistance from 1,250 Governor’s, Educators, and Industrialists." 36
Even the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, a staunch critic of most New Deal reform
legislation, did not object to government involvement in the travel program. In
fact, local Chamber of Commerce branches vigorously supported the USTB’s
programs and partnered with them to supply information on local attractions and
events. The national Chamber remained aloof during this period, stating that it
did not see travel promotion as a particularly valuable industry, and declining
offers to join the USTB’s advisory board. 37

35 The USTB was asking for an appropriation of $100,000 to continue its work for
the next year. W. Bruce Macnamee to Senator Alben William Barkley 17 June
1940, file: “National Park Service, General Publicity U.S. Tourist Information
Bureau July 6, 1939-May 15, 1942,” box 3789, DOI-CCF files.
36 Memorandum for Secretary Ickes from A.E. Demaray, 28 January 1938, file:
“General Publicity US Tourist Information Bureau Feb. 4, 1937-Aug. 20, 1938,”
box 3789, DOI-CCF files.
37 An agenda from the “Conference of Leaders in the Travel Industry” called by
Ickes in 1938 notes that the U.S. Chamber of Commerce was “not particularly
interested in travel promotion as an economic advantage, to date.” Dec. 17, 1938
In his analysis of tourism during the 1930s, Michael Berkowitz argued that it was actually the economic crisis of the Great Depression, along with the “New-Deal inspired conclusion...that tourism promotion could be successful only with the active participation of the federal government” that finally led the United States to take on an official role.\(^{38}\) Harold Ickes echoed this idea in his address to a convention of the American Automobile Association. The only missing element required for success and profit in the American tourism industry, he explained, was “coordinat[ion] by the Federal Government, which alone can gather together the threads and weave them into a complete pattern.”\(^{39}\) As USTB chief Macnamee put it, a federal bureau could “perform functions for the industry that the industry cannot perform for itself.”\(^{40}\) The federal government provided an over-arching organizational structure that offered a central point of access to the diverse elements of the tourism industry—from rail and steamer lines, to hotel

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\(^{38}\) Berkowitz, “A New Deal for Leisure,” 204.


associations, to state and local information agencies. One correspondent for the
Bureau envisioned this type of cooperation brought about through government
organization leading to "a Nation-wide publicizing of travel advantages, and tours
with all-inclusive costs" or even a "deferred-payment plan."

Another benefit of working with the government was the national reach of
its programs and publicity. In an essay for the USTB newsletter titled "Why a
Federal Travel Bureau?" Ruth Bryan Rohde explained "a private travel agency is
not equipped to place before the entire public a complete picture of the varied
educational and recreational facilities which lie within our borders. A
Government travel bureau has innumerable avenues for its dissemination." Though overall tourism remained a growth industry throughout the 1930s, it alsowelcomed government funding that would further support this growth.

The central office of the United States Travel Bureau, located in the
Department of Interior building in Washington D.C., took on the work of
coordinating with the tourism and travel industry. Private support and cooperation
were essential to the success of the Bureau's program and goals. The D.C. office

41 Rohde was the daughter of William Jennings Bryan. In 1929 she became one of
the first women to serve in Congress when she was elected as a representative
from Florida. In 1933 Roosevelt appointed her ambassador to Denmark, the first
woman to become an U.S. ambassador, and she served until 1936. Ruth Bryan
Rohde, "Why a Federal Travel Bureau?" "Travel and Recreation News Letter,"
No. 8, December 5, 1939, New York Office United States Travel Bureau, 3. On
Rohde's history see Sarah Pauline Vickers, The Life of Ruth Bryan Owen:
Florida's First Congresswoman and America's First Woman Diplomat
(Tallahassee, FL: Sentry Press, 2009).
42Rohde, "Why a Federal Travel Bureau?," 3.
liaised with prominent companies and associations in the commercial travel industry, organizing a "USTB Travel Advisory Board" composed of representatives from major interests who provided counsel on issues of travel promotion and the logistics of expanding tourism in the United States. Conferences between industry representatives and the federal government, like the one called by Secretary Ickes in December of 1938, provided a venue where the two groups could share information on the state of the travel business, and work towards "a cooperative plan between private agencies and the Government for a domestic travel promotion program."43

The USTB’s Official Bulletin, a monthly magazine published by the D.C. office and distributed to businesses and travel agencies, also offered a platform for government and industry to discuss tourism and travel promotion. Each issue of the magazine featured articles by leading figures in the travel market, reports from the USTB and related government bureaus like the National Park Service, State Department, and Pan American Union, and lists of resources like travel

guidebooks, calendars of events, and local festivals held throughout the United States. The *Official Bulletin* provided a rich resource on the development of the industry, and the changing role of tourism in American culture.

Government backing also lent an added sense of legitimacy and authority to the boosterism that largely characterized the tourism industry. In a plug for his radio show “March of the States” being broadcast in association with the USTB’s “Travel America Year,” Michael Young of the Rankin Advertising Co. in New York laid out the benefits of this relationship:

...whenever an advertising campaign is tied up with an official project, backed by the Government, that campaign is bound to succeed because of the implication that such campaign has the Government behind it...It will convey the impression in the minds of the listening audience that not only the State Governments, but the Government of the United States is advocating “See America First and Tour America in the Travel Year” through the medium of this program.44

USTB organizers defined their operations so they would not be in competition with travel and transportation agencies, noting again and again that they intended to remain “in the field of promotion” only and “stand firmly as a coordinating agency, staying out of the field of commercial service to travelers.”45 This limited authority reassured both the travel industry, and members of Congress. It also allowed the USTB to use the resources and experience of the industry, which had

been in the community advertising and promotion field since the early part of the century, to help shape and distribute travel materials.

In addition to the main office, the USTB operated two field offices on each coast, in New York City and San Francisco, to coordinate travel programs for each of these regions. These branches functioned primarily as tourist information centers. Geared toward providing information to the public, they promoted regional festivals and attractions, as well as travel sites across the country. Located at 45 Broadway, in the financial district of lower Manhattan, the New York branch opened first in February of 1937. Photographs of the office show a spacious interior designed to impress with tiled floors, marbled columns, and arched entryways into the main room. Display cases exhibiting travel posters and racks full of guidebooks and travel brochures flanked a central counter staffed by attendants ready to answer questions and dispense information to visitors who walked in. In addition to the public room, the building included office space for the Travel Bureau, the U.S. Information Service, and a W.P.A. Coast and Geodetic Survey.

In 1938, the D.C. office of the USTB requested that J. R. Anderson, the supervisor for the New York field office, send them a summary listing all his staff and their activities. This document, along with an investigative report launched in response to accusations that the office offered insufficient promotions on travel to

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U.S. territories and possessions, provided a unique insight into the workforce and daily operations of a USTB office. Anderson, as supervisor, oversaw work done by several different departments. The “Literature Section” maintained a stock of travel guides, maps, and brochures solicited from publishers, state travel offices, national organizations like the American Auto Association, and local chambers of commerce, while the “Information Division” handled distributing these resources to those who called, wrote, or came in with travel inquiries. Beyond simply handing out travel advice, the branch office also actively worked to publicize and promote travel in the United States. The Publicity Division, split into a writer’s and radio section, prepared press releases, feature length articles, weekly radio programs, lecture material, and produced a bi-monthly circular, the “Travel and Recreation News Letter” focused on travel news and information for the East Coast. The Exhibit Section put together dioramas and poster displays for shows and expositions across the U.S.

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47 A work operations sheet for the New York branch from 1938/1939 lists 33 staff members, with jobs ranging from stenographers and clerks, to “newspapermen,” artists, and draftsmen. Of the 33, 14 staffers were directly involved with providing tourist information and answering written or verbal queries. In May 1939, Anderson wrote to the National Park Service, requesting at least 10,000 more national maps of park areas, because they had already given out the 5,000 sent earlier in the year. “Work Operations Sheet for New York Field Office,” file: “Office Files of Oscar Chapman 1933-1953,” box 34, DOI-Chapman files, and J.R. Anderson to Conrad Wirth, memorandum, May 10, 1939, box 3789, DOI-CCF files.

The New York office came into conflict with the central D.C. branch when word reached Nelson Loomis, then head of the USTB, that it was undertaking programs beyond those set by the national board. The issue centered on a survey about travel issues for African Americans, which the New York office circulated without informing Nelson Loomis.49

By May of 1939, the San Francisco branch office was up and running at 226 Sheldon Building in downtown San Francisco, just in time for the opening of the Golden Gate International Exposition. E.K. Burlew noted the importance of having a field office on the West Coast, where it could “render a valuable service to the people of the western United States in supplying them with complete and authentic information” on recreation areas.50 The operations and activities of the San Francisco office paralleled those in New York, including its own West Coast edition of a bi-monthly newsletter called “Travel West,” and a weekly radio show on NBC called the “Question Box” which provided information on parks, festivals, and other tourist attractions in the West. The office undertook special projects, for example, working with the NPS editor Isabelle Story on radio scripts relating to San Francisco’s emergency wartime preparations. Part of the purpose

49 See Weaver to Ickes, Loomis to Weaver, and Loomis to Anderson letters, file: “General Publicity United States Tourist Information Bureau,” box 3789, DOI-CCF files.

of the two field offices was to coordinate with the two World’s Fairs planned for each city in 1939, and the related tourist traffic. As a USTB press release announced, “the two offices, working in conjunction with the New York and San Francisco Expositions, will aid materially in stimulating travel in the United States.”

National Community and International Relations

In his study of public memory and patriotism in the twentieth century John Bodnar detailed how “programs of the early New Deal…sought to revive public loyalty to and enthusiasm for American culture and traditional American historic symbols.” Tourism promotion, and the travel that went along with it were also valuable in their ability to convey messages and meaning. The USTB sought to use recreational travel promotion to re-instill a sense of pride in Americans, and help to rehabilitate the nation’s international image. The USTB focused its efforts

52 Bodnar, Remaking America, 204.
on creating "programs that would encourage Americans to see America," explaining the benefits that came from encountering sites and people via travel.\(^5^3\)

As Maguerite Shaffer's research on tourism and national identity in the early twentieth century has shown, earlier narratives about national tourism envisioned a white, native-born, middle to upper class individual as its "ideal" tourist. Promotional campaigns, like the "See America First" movement, had a nationalistic focus that set up travel within one's own country as a patriotic duty and assertion of the equality or superiority of American attractions to those overseas, and celebrated a singular American culture. While USTB projects drew on some of these same tropes and even repurposed slogans like "See America First," they promoted a different vision overall. A product of both the populist rhetoric and public works projects of the New Deal era, the USTB promotional narrative offered a more expansive vision of who and what was considered "American" than previous national campaigns. Incorporating ethnic traditions, regional attractions, and local festivals into its repertoire of must-see elements, it characterized national culture as a "unity of diversity," where the strength of the United States was drawn from the diverse people, places, and traditions that composed it.

The USTB’s rhetoric characterized travel as a model of democracy in action—an activity that left an opening for “the people” to participate in forming their own understanding of their nation. A 1936 press release from the National Park Service, for example, explained the importance of preserving America’s historic sites “as sources of inspiration and patriotism” for the nation; places where visitors “couldn’t help feeling the influence of those stirring times” in U.S. history such as the Revolutionary War siege of Yorktown, Virginia or Lincoln’s Gettysburg address.54 Tourists could choose what sites to see, thus creating their own individual experience and narrative of national heritage. At the same time, the act of travel could be a communal experience, as tourists encountered one another and collectively participated in recreational tourism.

Travel also more firmly connected the government to the people. As one writer trying to sell a radio program to the Interior Department wrote:

The idea that Uncle Sam is human enough to bother to step down from that awe-inspiring edifice in Washington to tell Maimie and Joe and Bill and Mrs. Murphy where they can go on their vacation ...will bring the

54 In 1935, the Preservation of Historic Sites Act was passed. It gave the National Park Service and the Secretary of the Interior the power to survey, preserve, and interpret historic properties that helped tell the story of the U.S.’s past. With the addition of historic sites, the NPS began emphasizing cultural and social history, as well as natural history. See “National Park System Timeline,” http://www.nps.gov/parkhistory/hisnps/NPSHistory/timeline_annotated.htm. Quotations from “Submitted by National Park Service for travel edition of the Herald-Tribune April 9, 1936,” file: “National Park Service Correspondence with the Secretary.” box 4, DOI-NPS files, and “National Parks Program April 6, 1935,” file: “National Park Service Miscellaneous Correspondence 1933-1943,” box 4, DOI-NPS files, respectively.
Government closer to the people [and] in a subtle little way, add
immeasurably to the cause of democracy.55

Heritage sites and commemorative events provided points to unite around, for
both the people and their government, strengthening a sense of national
community and common interest. In a period of growing conflict, both
domestically and abroad, the USTB’s narrative of travel as a route to “health,
wealth, and unity” offered a way for Americans to bridge divisive issues.

While the USTB cultivated domestic travel as one of its key goals, it also
emphasized looking beyond the borders of the continental U.S. both to increase
visitation to the United States, but also to broaden the perspectives of Americans
in terms of how they viewed membership in their national community and
relationships with other parts of the world. In the radio address that introduced the
Bureau, Roosevelt highlighted his conviction that the USTB “will render not only
a nation-wide but a world-wide service in the name of the United States:”

it will encourage more Americans to see and know their own country, and
that it will be regarded as a personal service bureau by the peoples of other
countries to whom we extend the hand of warmest friendship and the
friendly invitation of a good neighbor to visit America.56

Travel promotion, Ickes declared in the USTB’s introductory broadcast, was
important “for its cultural, recreational, and economic values and because of its

55 Lou Hazam, “Radio script proposal for “U.S. Vacation Guide 1939,”” and
Isabelle Story to M.W. Straus, memorandum April 3, 1939, file: “Radio Section,
Correspondence and related records 1938-1947,” box 10 of 23, DOI-Radio files.
56 “Transcription of radio address for United States Travel Bureau, January 17,
1938,” file: “National Park Service General Publicity United States Tourist
Information Bureau, Part 1 of 4,” box 3789, DOI-CCF files.
influence upon international understanding and in the development of good will."57

Promoting tourism as a form of intercultural relations was becoming more prominent in both diplomatic and private sector international relations programs during this period. This aim tapped into currents of internationalist thought that were becoming increasingly prevalent in the late 1930s. The State Department, for example, formed its Division of Cultural Relations in 1936. As the conflict of World War II and the aggressive nationalism of totalitarian regimes spread, government officials and others began to argue that the United States needed to take a stand in opposition to these ideologies, and intervene in the interest of preserving the democratic freedoms it represented. Intercultural relations, employed as a tool in foreign policy, became viewed as a way to build connections among the people of different nations. Tourism and cultural traditions, the government hoped, could be a platform for consensus, even when nations were at odds with each other over political or economic issues. The majority of USTB intercultural activities focused on Latin America, and sought to improve relations through programs encouraging travel and cultural exchange.

From its inception, the USTB emphasized national culture in the context of the United States’ growing role and imperatives on the international stage. In an article titled “Travel is Sure Cure for Provincialism” the Washington Post

advised readers “when you read that the President has proclaimed 1940 to be
‘Travel America Year’ don’t be ‘Little Americans,’ and get the notion that you
are to be limited in your travels to the 48 States and the District of
Columbia...Travel American Year means a travel Alaska Year, it means a Travel
West Indies Year, it can even mean a Travel South America Year.”^58

As one of its first major programs, the USTB produced a series of
shortwave radio broadcasts featuring information on cultural and scenic
attractions that were translated into Spanish and French and broadcast overseas.
Each state, territory and possession held by the United States received its own
individual show, which closed with remarks from its governor who offered a
personal invitation for listeners to visit.^59 This organization mirrored the USTB
emphasis on the Untied States as a “unity of diversity.” Using the existing
network of embassies and consul offices overseas, the USTB distributed
promotional materials about scenic and cultural attractions in the United States,
and contracted with international tour agencies like Thomas Cook & Whitcomb
and American Express.^60

^58 “Travel is Sure Cure for Provincialism” Washington Post. March 3, 1940.
^59 Written jointly by the USTB and American Express Company, the programs
aired weekly over the course of a year, beginning on January 17, 1938. General
Electric broadcast them over their shortwave network. Memorandum A.E.
Demaray to Harold Ickes, 29 November 1937 and E.K. Burlew to Hugh White,
Governor of Mississippi, 20 August 1938, file: “General Publicity US Tourist
Information Bureau 1937-1938,” box 3789, DOI-CCF files.
^60 Records of these activities can be found in the DOI-Radio files.
Efforts like these not only increased U.S. visibility in the world travel market, but also, as Roosevelt’s radio message implied, helped craft and spread a positive image of the United States abroad. During the interwar period, both the federal government and private philanthropic agencies increasingly included cultural relations programs as part of their foreign policy activities. In the context of increasing international tensions, the expanding war, and the growth of totalitarian and fascist movements overseas, travel promotion became one more way the U.S. emphasized its traditions of capitalism, self-determination, and freedom of choice. In an article in the 1941 Yearbook, Park and Recreation Progress titled “Confidence in the American Way” Carl P. Russell, the Supervisor of Research and Interpretation for the NPS described how tourism in the United States could aid “attainment of citizen appreciation of our national heritage:”

In the historical shrines and beauty spots of the National Park Service is a most precious part of our national heritage and ideal physical units perfectly prepared to assist the citizen in discerning what the U.S. really is...[the sites are] especially well situated to develop a national perspective in native values and democratic ways.

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Tourism, federal travel officials argued in many articles in the *Official Bulletin*, was ideally suited to celebrate the diversity of America, but also unite Americans and prepare them to defend their nation, when needed.

To help reach the mass of citizens in the United States with this message, the USTB became intricately involved in staging the 1939 Golden Gate International Exposition (GGIE) in San Francisco. With themes that centered on leisure, national heritage and global relations, and the value of recreational travel, the GGIE provided an ideal platform for USTB activities, and will be the focus of the next chapter. Though the USTB remained a minor and often beleaguered department within the vast network of New Deal federal agencies during its five-year tenure, its activities linked mass tourism coordinated by the government to the civic health of the nation, and recognized the economic benefits that the travel industry could bring to a struggling nation.
CHAPTER TWO

"A NEW SPIRIT—TRULY WESTERN AND PACIFIC": ALTERNATIVE VISIONS AT THE 1939 GOLDEN GATE INTERNATIONAL EXPOSITION

Introduction

The Golden Gate International Exposition (GGIE), or San Francisco World’s Fair of 1939, built on the man-made “Treasure Island” in the center of San Francisco Bay, presented a distinct vision of the United States and its role in the world. Alternately dubbed “The Pageant of the Pacific” and “The World’s Fair of the West,” the iconography and exhibits at the fair reoriented its narrative of American history and progress to center on the West, and the potential for a “new empire” of trade, commerce and diplomatic relations based around the Pacific Ocean. The GGIE offered an alternative to the depictions of U.S. national origins among English colonial settlements on the East coast and the futuristic vision of the concurrent New York World’s Fair. Instead of Pilgrims and Perispheres, the GGIE invoked images of the Mayan and Incan empires and the architecture of Angkor Wat, as well as the history of Westward expansion in the U.S.—Spanish missions, overland migration, the gold rush, and the modern public works projects and commercial development of the New Deal era.

The fair linked this history directly to a continuation beyond the Pacific Ocean. Bringing together nations from North and South America, Asia, the
Pacific Rim, and eleven states in the western United States, the GGIE, as one early promotion put it, intended to "lay the cornerstone of a new Pacific Empire, united in a common bond of social and commercial well-being." Its program for future commercial and diplomatic relations revolved around the U.S. being at the forefront of this vision of internationalism that the fair itself promoted.

While the focus of the GGIE (like most world’s fairs) was the future, its overall aesthetic was pre-modern, with architecture that drew on elements from Southeast Asian, Latin American, and Indian traditions mixed with a smattering of Spanish colonial-style and modern art-deco structures. And the perspective it took on the future was also distinct—the fair’s theme was leisure—not the advantages of commercial, technological, and industrial advances themselves, but "recreation as the heritage of mankind in this machine age.” In the first GGIE Bulletin published in 1937, organizers explained how “the keynote of participation in the Fair is tourist attraction, with the consequent influx of new ideas, new enthusiasm, new capital, new citizens, all to utilize the surplus of resources to be found in the Western area.” The United States Travel Bureau sponsored an exhibit on travel resources in the U.S., and hosted a conference on

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1 “1939 World’s Fair Progress Golden Gate International Exposition Bulletin” 1 no.1, 1937, Published Collections Department, Hagley Library and Museum, Wilmington, Delaware.
2 For more on the architectural influences and origins of the fair see Eugen Neuhaus, The Art of Treasure Island (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1939).
3 “1939 World’s Fair Progress Golden Gate International Exposition Bulletin” 1 no.1, 1937, Published Collections Department, Hagley Library and Museum, Wilmington, Delaware.
inter-American travel at the fair. An integration of leisure, commerce, culture and politics characterized both the fair’s vision for American progress and its claims for San Francisco and the Pacific as the center of future world networks.

The GGIE emerged at the end of a decade in San Francisco marked by a surge in local boosterism geared towards promoting the city, and the completion of two major public works projects: the San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge and Golden Gate Bridge. Concerned about economic competition from rival cities like Oakland and Los Angeles, city leaders increasingly focused on cultivating an appealing image for San Francisco as “a great, busy financial center” that was also “a cosmopolitan, pleasure-loving community of theaters, operas, cabarets, cafes, hotels and restaurants,” that could lure tourists and commercial investment alike.4 A multitude of civic organizations from the San Francisco Chamber of Commerce, to elite social fraternities like the Bohemian Club, to associations of prominent merchants and businessmen like the Down Town Association, joined in this effort. Their influence on urban planning, as Joseph Rodriguez has argued, spurred “municipal projects designed to excite the imaginations of newcomers and residents,” effectively creating “a cityscape of fantasies that would distinguish San Francisco from its rivals.”5 Calling on residents to “let civic

beauty be a civic duty,” these groups lobbied for aesthetically pleasing architecture, sponsored community festivals and historical pageants, and petitioned for districts popular among tourists, like Chinatown, to add decorative elements to “embellish” the ethnic “atmosphere and color” of their neighborhoods.6

Staging the city in this way allowed civic boosters to draw selectively on San Francisco’s history, culture, and ethnic and racial diversity to create an overall positive and romanticized image. One promotional campaign produced by the development group Californians Inc, for example, asked its readers to “consider all the things past that have left their marks on this City:”

empire builders [who] reared their marble mansions on the hills...bearded, red-shirted miners [who] sought ready pleasures and paid for them with raw gold...[and] lofty canvas straining at the yards of clipper ships beating their way in through the Golden Gate—bringing adventurers of every race and color.7

approach promoted unity and civic pride, and was an effective way to galvanize public support for municipal improvements.

6 “Beautifying Drive Under Way” January 5, 1938; “These Plans Would Benefit Chinatown” August 3, 1935; and “Developing Chinatown’s Orientalism” February 16, 1938, all in The Downtowner, San Francisco: The Down Town Association, Bancroft Library. Specific plans for Chinatown ranged from repainting street lamps and restoring original buildings, to adding “Chinese style storefronts,” displaying more Chinese lanterns, and turning St. Mary’s Square into an oriental garden. The Down Town Association’s director, W.G. Merchant led a committee that discussed these ideas with “Chinatown’s leading merchants.” For further information on their interactions with Chinese-American merchants, and staging culture for a tourist economy see Rodriguez “Planning and Urban Rivalry,” especially 71-72 on Chinatown, and 69-71 on other cultural/heritage festivals.

7 Californians Inc, “The Chapter in Your Life Entitled San Francisco 1940,” San Francisco: Californians Inc, 1940, Published Collections Department, Hagley Library and Museum, Wilmington, Delaware. Californians Inc, primarily
Fortunately, the guide explained, “the best parts of all these peoples and things and ways of life were left in San Francisco, to grow up with the city and to condition it.” Visitors could still “explore Chinatown’s narrow fabled streets [with] all the exotic sights and sounds and colors of Cathay,” stroll into the Latin Quarter’s world of “Bohemian restaurants and Spanish, Basque, Mexican and Italian shops,” watch “cargoes of silk from Japan, tea from China, spices from the Indies, coffee from lands below the equator” being unloaded on the waterfront, and “be greeted by a Padre” at the Mission Dolores.8 Presented in this tourist-friendly idealized narrative, San Francisco’s varied history filtered smoothly down to the present, where diverse residents all coexisted happily in a bustling, thriving city, free of any hint of racial or class conflict.

In fact, the “cosmopolitan mix” described in the Californians Inc. guide proved more contentious. San Francisco’s Chinese and Chinese-American residents faced a long (and ongoing) history of discrimination, and Chinatown itself was shaped by restrictive laws and regulations designed to contain

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composed of businessmen from major California companies, was an organization that promoted tourism and economic development in San Francisco and Northern California through advertising and guidebooks. For further information see Californians Inc, “Mr. Martin Brown Discovers San Francisco,” San Francisco: Californians Inc, 1938 and Rodriguez, “Planning and Urban Rivalry,” 68.

8 Californians Inc, “The Chapter in Your Life Entitled San Francisco 1940,” San Francisco: Californians Inc, 1940, Published Collections Department, Hagley Library and Museum, Wilmington, Delaware. Similar portrayals of San Francisco as a cosmopolitan world city can be found in Californians Inc guides and promotional materials dating back to the 1920s.
Labor conflict and violence rocked the city during the 1934 waterfront and general strike, the 1936 dock strike, and hotel workers went on strike in 1937 in the midst of the summer tourist season and a festival celebrating the opening of the Golden Gate Bridge. An influx of populations displaced by the Dust Bowl and the abysmal prospects faced by migrant laborers further strained city resources and relations between residents and newcomers. These examples of a city still struggling with economic depression and civic unity were exactly the type of associations boosters wanted to dispel. In its own report on the impact of tourism promotion during the GGIE, Californians Inc noted “many persons who came here with the feeling that San Francisco was a strike-ridden ‘ghost’

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city, were surprised to find that this was not so. They departed as good-will ambassadors for San Francisco."\(^{11}\)

But promotional narratives and urban planning could only take the city so far. "The Chapter in Your Life Entitled San Francisco 1940" ended with a statement warning that the delights of San Francisco, at the moment, were available only to the temporary visitor:

Tell anyone to come to California for a glorious holiday, but please advise those seeking employment not to come here at this time. We regret that present demands are insufficient to take care of all who are already here.\(^{12}\)

While this epilogue made it clear that Californians Inc meant to attract only those with money to spend or invest—people who could help support its vision of a better city—it also punctured the fantasy boosters were working so hard to create. The Golden Gate International Exposition, however, offered a bigger opportunity. Civic leaders redoubled their efforts in a bid for national and international prominence that might yet secure their desired future for the city; a bid that increasingly relied on development and tourism pursued through the fantasy cityscapes and representations of cultural heritage pioneered during these 1930s campaigns.

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\(^{12}\) Californians Inc, "The Chapter in Your Life Entitled San Francisco 1940," San Francisco: Californians Inc, 1940, Published Collections Department, Hagley Library and Museum, Wilmington, Delaware.
Western City, Pacific Gateway: Positioning San Francisco at the GGIE

Planning for the exposition began in 1934. Construction on the Bay Bridge and Golden Gate Bridge was already underway, and city business and political leaders felt staging a world’s fair in celebration of their completion would be an ideal way to promote the city. Backed by the San Francisco Chamber of Commerce and the Convention and Tourist Bureau, a group “consisting of outstanding businessmen of the city” formed a Board of Directors and chartered the San Francisco Bay Exposition Corporation to organize the fair.\(^{13}\) They elected Leland Cutler, a native Californian and prominent figure in the insurance industry, president. In addition to his business background Cutler had served three terms as president of the San Francisco Chamber of Commerce, helping to acquire funding and get the two bridge projects underway during his tenure.\(^{14}\)

The fair was an ambitious project, and as Cutler noted in his autobiography, the main obstacle was financing.\(^{15}\) Funds were required for constructing both the exposition’s buildings and its chosen site—a man-made island in the bay. Cutler and the Exposition Corporation turned to the federal government (whose Public Works Administration [PWA] and Works Progress

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\(^{14}\) Cutler, *America is Good*, 132-143. Cutler was president of the GGIE through its 1939 season. He went on to serve three terms as president of Stanford University’s Board of Trustees, his alma mater.

\(^{15}\) Cutler, *America is Good*, 181-189.
Administration [WPA] funds had financed the Bay Bridge) for assistance. Aided by George Creel, who became the fair’s federal commissioner, they acquired an appropriation of $1,500,000.00 and a federal endorsement. Creel, a prominent California Democrat probably best known as head of the Committee on Public Information during World War I, had been a gubernatorial candidate in California during the 1934 primary and also briefly held a position as Western Regional Director for the National Recovery Administration on the West Coast. Franklin Roosevelt appointed him federal commissioner of the GGIE in 1937. As commissioner he coordinated government participation at the fair, did publicity, and served as the official federal representative for meetings with foreign dignitaries and other special events held at the exposition.  

Additional money from the WPA paid for the Army Corps of Engineers to supervise dredging the bay and building “Treasure Island” on the Yerba Buena shoals, with the understanding that the island would become the site of the city’s new airport after the fair. To secure federal financing the exposition raised $760,000 in matching funds, all pledged by the sixty-member Board of Directors in a move spearheaded by Bank of America’s A.P. Giannini, and Kenneth Kingsbury the president of Standard Oil. Cutler’s autobiography recounted that

Giannini encouraged exposition board members to pledge $15,000 each to secure federal funding by proclaiming if they refused to step up, "he would give it all." The remaining funding for the GGIE came from the State of California and the private sector, particularly prominent California-based businesses and industries like Standard Oil of California, Bank of America, and Safeway. Ultimately, this coalition of local boosters, private industry, state politicians, and the federal government joined together to back the GGIE and shape its production.

San Francisco had last hosted a World's Fair in 1915, the beaux-arts Panama Pacific International Exposition that celebrated the completion of the Panama Canal and the city's rebirth after the earthquake and fire of 1906. Now with two new bridges, a federally supported exposition, and the first transpacific air route initiated by Pan American Airways in 1935, local planners of the GGIE likewise hailed the dawning of a new era for the city. The bridge projects directly linked San Francisco's peninsula, for the first time, to the industry of the East Bay and inland agricultural areas on one side, and the tourist-friendly "Redwood Empire" counties on the other. Departing from San Francisco Bay, Pan

17 For a complete list of GGIE finance committee members and an overview of GGIE planning and financing see the report "Golden Gate International Exposition a Pageant of the Pacific 1939" August 1936, file: GGIE Pamphlets/Misc, San Francisco History Center, San Francisco Public Library. Giannini quoted in Cutler, America is Good, 186. See also Robert Rydell, World of Fairs: The Century of Progress Expositions (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 121.
18 The Redwood Empire included the nine counties of San Francisco, Marin, Sonoma, Napa, Lake, Mendocino, Humboldt, and Del Norte in California, as well as Josephine County, Oregon. Represented by the Redwood Empire Association,
American’s “Clipper Ship” airplanes carried passengers, mail, and cargo across the Pacific, traveling over eight thousand miles in under six days in what Popular Mechanics lauded as “a brilliant chapter in aviation history—bold, pioneering, as thrilling as the building of the first transcontinental railroad.”19

As suggested by the quote above, in addition to their utility these projects also conveyed a sense of progress and accomplishment. Like the urban planning pursued by civic boosters during the 1930s, they were meant to capture the imagination of residents and visitors alike, providing a source of inspiration in a period of uncertainty and conflict. The organizers of the GGIE sought to capitalize on this aspect, positioning the fair in the bay in clear view of both bridges, and installing the Clipper Ship aircraft as an exhibit on Treasure Island. Incorporated into promotional campaigns for the exposition as “symbols of Western progress and achievement,” all three became icons embodying a promising future brought about through a partnership of civic and corporate

a regional organization that lobbied for highways and promoted tourism, they represented a major tourist draw for California’s north coast. For further information see “Redwood Empire, All Year Playground” in the Official Souvenir Program: Golden Gate Bridge Fiesta, 1937, 28-28A, California Historical Society, San Francisco, California. 19 Pan American Airways initiated its trans-Pacific air route from San Francisco in October 1935. It stopped at Hawaii, Midway Island, the Wake Islands, Guam, Manila, and Macau en route to Hong Kong. The Clipper Ships were Martin M-130 four-engine flying boats, able to land and take off from water. For further information see "Wings over the Pacific" Popular Mechanics (June 1935) 862-864, H.W. Magee “Around the World by Air: Part II” Popular Mechanics (March 1937) 330, “Flying the China Clippers” Popular Mechanics (April 1938) 502, and Sam Cowan “Gold Book – Golden Gate Bridge Fiesta,” 1937, 90, Bancroft Library.
interests. Text accompanying the images emphasized that these were “projects that challenge the imagination...that surpass the accomplishment of civilization down the ages [and] have turned the gaze of the world westward, where things envisioned come to reality.” Callbacks to the era of continental expansion, like the *Popular Mechanics* reference to the transcontinental railroad, further emphasized these themes and fit the progressive narrative of growth from frontier outpost to world city that the Exposition Corporation envisioned for San Francisco.

The GGIE itself was designed as a platform for this vision, a space where it could be “made tangible to the millions who will visit” and garner national attention. “Destiny points a finger of greatness to the San Francisco Bay area,” the GGIE planning committee declared in an initial report, and it “looks ahead with serene confidence to a future in which it will take its position as one of the greatest, if not the greatest, trade empires in the world.”

Organizers focused their early efforts on helping destiny along, choosing a theme for the exposition that emphasized the potential of San Francisco’s position as a coastal air and

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20 Images of the two bridges and clipper ship planes appear on a majority of the pamphlets and booklets produced to promote the fair. Quotes from pamphlets “1939 Golden Gate International Exposition on San Francisco Bay” c. 1937, Bancroft Library and “World’s Fair on San Francisco Bay, GGIE” n.d., vertical file: San Francisco Fairs, Festivals, Expositions 1930-1940, California State Library, Sacramento, California.

21 Advisory Planning Committee (R. F. Allen, Chair) to JW Mailliard, Jr., Chair, Bridge Celebration Founding Committee, Feb. 13, 1934. San Francisco GGIE 1939: Reports and Announcements, San Francisco History Center, San Francisco Public Library, 4.
seaport on the Pacific. "Destiny is geography—at least as far as cities are concerned," explained Ray Lyman Wilbur, former Secretary of the Interior and president of Stanford University, expounding on the theme in an article for the Down Town Association: "San Francisco's Golden Gate is an open door to the vast hemispheres linked together by the Pacific Ocean. This city is, therefore, destined to play an important role in the culture and commercial development of the Pacific."  

GGIE organizers employed this rhetoric of destiny to justify and help manifest their vision. Their claims, according to Kornel Chang's study of the U.S. Pacific borderlands, were part of a common discourse used to promote American ascendancy in Pacific trade throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. By characterizing the processes and material factors (technology, markets, transportation) that it took to build trade networks as something natural and inevitable, this discourse provided an a priori justification for the organizers'
commercial ambitions. In the late 1930s, the U.S. was particularly concerned with countering the expansion of Japanese power in the Pacific. Characterizing the GGIE as "a symbol of the past achievements and a prophecy for the future, of the great Western Empire and the Pacific area," organizers asserted a new era in which the U.S. led Pacific trade.

As federal commissioner George Creel emphasized to a gathering of potential financiers, it was "no mere local Exposition we are creating, but a Western Empire we are building, linked by bonds of social and commercial interest, and vitalized by the consciousness of a common destiny." With its dual themes, "Pageant of the Pacific" and "World's Fair of the West," the GGIE presented San Francisco as the keystone of a transpacific network. Facilitated by advances in technology and linked through cultural and commercial contacts, it would allow for a "new unity" between the United States and countries beyond the Golden Gate:

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23 This segment of Chang's study focused on Seattle's China Club, which was founded in 1916 with the goal of making Seattle the premiere port for the Asia-Pacific trade. Their rhetoric mirrored that from the GGIE, asserting that Seattle was the natural gateway to the Pacific, and thus destined to dominate that trade. By 1927, Seattle's port actually held a larger percentage of the China trade than San Francisco. Kornel Chang, *Pacific Connections: The Making of the U.S.-Canadian Borderlands* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), 184-185.


The wealth and romance of the West, the living tale of the Seven Seas and the mystic lands below the Equator and beyond the International Dateline—their new unity is more significant than any other single phase of the World's Fair theme. The Pacific is bridged by the swift unerring journey of the Clipper Ships; the radiating lines of domestic and foreign trade routes are drawn to a focus in San Francisco Bay. That bay itself is bridged by the two greatest spans in the world, striking the shackles that have restricted land travel... In its way, the Golden Gate International Exposition will be a third great bridge—a spiritual bridge flung around the world, leaping international boundaries... blending continents... joining distant races.²⁶

Carrying the theme of connection from the physical to the symbolic, the pamphlet presented the exposition as emblematic of a broader world vision, with San Francisco firmly at its center. This image, of San Francisco as “the gateway to the Occident and the Orient” linking the United States on one side and the Pacific world on the other, became the chief theme of the fair.²⁷

**Internationalism and National Identity: Western Heritage in the new Pacific Empire**

In its efforts to connect region, nation, and world, the GGIE asserted California and the western U.S.’s central role in a trans-Pacific network, while simultaneously laying claim to key elements of national history. The first published bulletin on the progress of the fair described “a new spirit—truly

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Western and Pacific” that animated the creation of the exposition. Headlined “Pacific Progress Inspires Fair, San Francisco Bay area represents the West and all of America in creating a Pageant of the Pacific,” it explained how “the progress of the Pacific nations and the spirit of Western achievement” became one in the fair:

Here we can show that the expansion of the Western frontier with its millions of new residents, its vast stores of natural resources, and its transportation networks, has created new and far-flung markets within a single century. A century that has seen a westward migration of industry over the trails of the pioneers...And in this machine era, the West will lead the way, through a great Fair...setting a more fruitful and more peaceful goal for the great family of nations.28

In this articulation, the “new Pacific empire” theme of the fair linked geographical, economic, and technical progress, tracing a line through a series of frontiers from the manifest destiny fueled migrations of settlers into the trans-Mississippi west, to the push for overseas markets in the U.S.’s turn-of-the century imperial projects, to the technical and industrial developments of the mid-twentieth century. It portrayed the U.S. west as continuing to pioneer commercial and cultural relations for the future, but rooted this role firmly in the momentum of almost a century’s worth of expansion.

Emphasizing the west’s continuing role in trans-Pacific development was part of how the GGIE argued against an Atlantic-dominated focus in accounts of

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28 The “new and far-flung markets” were specifically listed as “the Orient, Antipodes and Latin-America.” “1939 World’s Fair Progress Golden Gate International Exposition Bulletin” 1 no.1, 1937, 4, Published Collections Department, Hagley Library and Museum, Wilmington, Delaware.
both the nation’s past and its future. As George Creel declared, speaking at the
fair’s opening ceremonies, “the Atlantic seaboard may have been the cradle of
America, but it was in the vast stretches this side of the Rockies that the infant
republic grew up and put on bone and sinew.” He called for recognition that in
the present, “the great Western Empire is second to no other section of the
country in its contribution to the prosperity and permanence of the union.”29 The
presidential proclamation announcing the fair likewise recognized that the GGIE
would “exhibit the progress and accomplishments of the Pacific area of the United
States in science, industry and culture.”30

Both Creel’s speech and the passage from the Bulletin tapped into the
classic Turnerian narrative about the western United States. Turner, writing in
1893, posited that the process of westward expansion into the frontier definitively
shaped U.S. identity and character.31 Those involved in the GGIE, however,
countered Turner’s conclusion that the frontier (and the west’s central role) had
closed by the dawn of the twentieth-century. “To Americans mourning over the
passing of the last frontier,” wrote Philip Youtz, director of the “Pacific Area”

February 18, 1939, file: Speeches & Typescripts 1938-1940, Box 5, Creel Papers.
30 “By the President of the United States of America, A Proclamation,” November
29, 1938. File: Letters of Authorization, Bills and Resolutions, Box 2, Entry 1,
NARA-GGIE files. In contrast, the proclamation defined the New York fair as
“celebrat[ing] the one hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the inauguration of the
first President of the United States of America and of the establishment of the
national government,” firmly centered on the East Coast, and the origins of the
country’s political institutions.
31 Frederick Jackson Turner, The Significance of the Frontier in American
exhibit at the fair, "beckons a new and almost limitless opportunity for foreign contacts and reciprocal commercial and cultural exchange [in the Pacific]...the Atlantic seaboard, with its close European relations [is] no longer this nation's only point of contact with the outside world."³²

Depictions of western heritage at the GGIE reinforced this sentiment, simultaneously engaging iconic tropes and images of the region’s past, and characterizing them as the source of a vibrant, still-thriving present. The most prominent showcase for this was the “Cavalcade of the Golden West,” an open-air pageant performed thrice daily during the fair’s 1939 season.³³ A massive production, the Cavalcade featured a three hundred-foot stage, live horses, a locomotive, and a cast of hundreds performing a “streamlined history of the building of the west.” In twenty-four scenes beginning with Vasco Nuñez de Balboa and European “discovery of the Pacific—1513,” it traced colonization in

³² Philip Youtz, “Proposal for a Permanent Pacific House” c.1939-1940. GGIE Scrapbook, Bancroft Library. The idea of the Pacific as the next frontier for U.S. development and expansion has antecedents dating back to the 19th century. In his 1899 work The New Pacific Hubert Howe Bancroft wrote "We no longer have a virgin continent to develop; pioneer work in the United States is done, and now we must take a plunge into the sea...the Pacific, its shores and islands, must now take the place of the great west, its plains and mountains, as an outlet of pent-up industry.” See Hubert Howe Bancroft, The New Pacific (New York: The Bancroft Company, 1899), 13.

³³ The Cavalcade pageant, according to Lisa Rubens’ research, was one of the most popular attractions at the fair, “drawing the largest crowds and the most revenue.” For the GGIE’s 1940 season, the pageant was revised and renamed “Cavalcade of the Nation,” and scenes focusing on historic events from other regions of the U.S. were added to the production. Lisa Rubens, “The 1939 San Francisco World’s Fair: The New Deal, the New Frontier, and the Pacific Basin” (PhD diss., University of California, Berkeley, 2004), 91.
the Americas from the conquistadors through the Spanish, Mexican, and Russian eras in California, culminating in U.S. expansion to the Pacific coast. The finale was a “panorama of 400 years of progress!” which according to the souvenir program dramatized the “new achievements, torn from the wilderness as our heritage from the past...thus do we go forward in the West...blasting barriers...harnessing power...cultivating the land...building the cities!”

The Cavalcade pageant was an amalgamation with scenes that ranged from the sensational—an “Aztec human sacrifice” and vigilante justice in “Hangtown U.S.A.”—to the iconic—pioneers in prairie schooners and the “meeting of the rails” at Promontory Point, Utah. In place of realism, it depicted a west drawn from myth and fiction, incorporating conventions found in novels, Hollywood westerns, and cowboy shows. Explorers and settlers faced a wilderness of “prairies, burning desert, snow-capped mountain peaks and hostile Indians!” that posed “a challenge to American daring.” Native Americans, besides being included as part of the landscape, posed a “menace” that much like

34 All quotations in this paragraph are from the “Cavalcade of the Golden West” souvenir program. File: Golden Gate International Exposition (GGIE)—Events and Shows, San Francisco Ephemera Collection, California Historical Society, San Francisco, California.

35 My characterization of the Cavalcade here draws on work by Warren Susman and Richard Pells. Susman argued that “the discovery of significant myths, symbols, and images from the culture itself that might also serve as a basis of reinforcement or indeed the re-creation or remaking of culture itself” was a central concern in 1930s America. Warren Susman, *Culture as History: The Transformation of American Society in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), 178. Richard Pells, *Radical Visions and American Dreams: Culture and Social Thought in the Depression Years* (New York: Harper and Row, 1973).
the frontier existed to be conquered in the march of civilization.\textsuperscript{36} The pageant’s overall themes were progress and overcoming adversity, where despite all obstacles, the advance of the United States ultimately overtook the colonies and characters of the first half of the play.

With its portrayal of settlement and development in the western United States, the Cavalcade presented a history to rival national origin stories centered on the east coast. It engaged iconic and mythic moments in national history—Lewis and Clark, the transcontinental railroad, the pioneers—but added to this pantheon regional elements like colonial Spanish missions and Californio ranchers. These depictions of western heritage shaped the GGIE’s vision of the U.S., asserting the west’s place in national narratives of history and identity. It made the claim that western heritage was national heritage, broadening what the concept encompassed while still characterizing it as something quintessentially American. This perspective is perhaps best summed up in two massive murals that fronted the federal government’s exhibit building. Both depicted “the conquering of the west,” one featuring Lewis and Clark and the other featuring Gaspar de Portolá’s expedition into California.\textsuperscript{37} The ideas of progress and expansion still drove the narrative of western and U.S. history at the GGIE, but in

\textsuperscript{36} “Cavalcade of the Golden West” souvenir program, Bancroft Library.
\textsuperscript{37} Official Guide Book Golden Gate International Exposition on San Francisco Bay, Rev. ed. (San Francisco: The Crocker Company, 1939), 32. The murals were done by Works Progress Administration artists.
its vision, development and influence moved north and east, as well as east to west.

The culmination of these characterizations, the west of the present as depicted at the GGIE, was “wild” no longer. “Wild West? No! Modern Industrial West; Beautiful Scenic West!” the official guidebook advised visitors. The California state and county buildings featured modern architecture and contemporary exhibits on recreation, natural resources, agricultural and industrial development, and the Hollywood entertainment industry. In the Hall of Western States, landscapes that challenged settlers in the past were reinterpreted as “scenic wonders” with descriptions of “white, glistening salt flats,” the “perfect quiet and serenity...of still moonlit desert,” and the “beauty of native softwood” trees. Displays on rail, air, and automobile transportation told “the story of the comfort and ease” with which visitors could now travel, in contrast to their nineteenth-century predecessors. An entire building, named “Vacationland,” showcased the leisure industry and recreational opportunities available in this new west. These western exhibits and the pageantry at the GGIE all emphasized a region whose potential did not end with Turner’s proclaimed closing of the frontier, but continued to grow and change. “Industrial progress,” the fair’s

38 *Official Guidebook*, 1939. Also cited in Rubens, “The 1939 San Francisco World’s Fair,” 95. Rubens viewed the fair’s overall representation of the west as one of “a new frontier of industry and commerce.”
39 *Official Guidebook* 1939, 72-73.
promotional department explained, had made western resources readily available, but it was time to “interpret them in a new light.”

State exhibits on Treasure Island, by displaying the tourist attractions of the West will join the nations of the Pacific Basin in providing visitors a dramatic picture of the charm and glamour of the western world...that emphasizes the enjoyment of travel and leisure, and pictures industry as a contributor to recreation.

With romanticized portrayals of history and selective use of landscapes and culture, the GGIE funneled western heritage into an enterprise for the future. Remapped for tourists and investors, its modern west stood as “the glamorous lodestone of American Vacationland” and “the hub of nationwide and trans-Pacific travel...[its] world commerce flavored with adventuresome romance and cosmopolitan gaiety.” Rather than a region laid low by the Great Depression or an endpoint in national development, it offered the next stage.

An advertisement for the fair’s 1940 season featured an illustrated map that encapsulated this vision. Promising “the west at its best” it assured potential visitors that “the story of the...Western States is no less exciting today than in the fabulous forties of a century ago.” The map highlighted major tourist attractions like Yellowstone, the Grand Canyon, and the Boulder Dam, locating them in a

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41 “Be the Guest of the West in ’39” pamphlet. File: GGIE-Pamphlets-Miscellaneous, San Francisco History Center, San Francisco Public Library.
42 “Worlds Fair on San Francisco Bay 1939” pamphlet, File: GGIE Pamphlets Miscellaneous, San Francisco History Center, San Francisco Public Library.
43 “Pick up and Pack up for California’s Fair in ’40,” File: GGIE Pamphlets-Miscellaneous, San Francisco History Center, San Francisco Public Library.
landscape populated with representations of Native Americans, cowboys, movie stars, and prospectors, where deer, buffalo, cattle, and sheep roamed. Figures of tourists hunting, fishing, skiing, hiking, and sightseeing were interspersed among them.

This was a reimagining of the west, depicting a region whose image had become associated with the dust bowl and the plight of displaced farmers as a place of pleasure and abundance. A group of leaping figures massed in one corner of the map, ready to set off across the plains not as migrants in search of work, but as tourists eager to pursue recreation. The GGIE's Tower of the Sun rose as a golden beacon on the coast, drawing associations with the gold rush era mentioned in the ad's text. It stood as an icon of prosperity and opportunity for the twentieth century, where tourism, recreation, and Pacific trade would be the west's next frontier.

The reframing of the west linked the national mythos of pioneers overcoming adversity and finding success as depicted in "Cavalcade of the Golden West" to the prosperous future built on trade connections and the leisure industry envisioned by the contemporary exhibits. In fact, in the fair's narrative it was this very history that uniquely fitted western America for facing the social and economic challenges of the current depression era. The "vigor and boldness" of western states, as FDR put it in his opening address, was "a direct inheritance
from pathfinding forbearers” that would be “equally helpful in the social
pioneering that has been commanded by today’s necessities.”

This narrative exemplified a broader trend in U.S. culture of the late
1930s, documented most prominently by Warren Susman and Richard Pells,
which drew on the past as a source of inspiration and continuity for the present.
“A renewed appreciation for the habits and precedents that had sustained the
country through previous crises” characterized this interest in the nation’s history,
Pells argued, transforming “the past...into precisely the sort of compelling
‘political myth’ that could comfort the populace in an age of chaos and
uncertainty.” Susman likewise wrote of the growing importance of identifying a
culture and system of values—referred to as “the American way of life”—to
commit to during the decade. Americans turned to “heroes, symbols, myths, and
ritual” as a source of identity and unity that could “provide a new sense of
common belief, common ritual observance, common emotional sharing that the
psychological conditions of the era seemed to demand.”

Western tourism, as advocated in the regional exhibits, offered another
route for the pursuit of this national identity. “American history unfolds itself on
either side as you cross Western frontiers on broad highways” one pamphlet

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44 “Address of the President by radio from Key West, Florida on the occasion of
the opening of the San Francisco Golden Gate Exposition, February 18, 1939,” 2.
File: Publicity, Box 28, NARA-GGIE files.
45 Pells, Radical Visions and American Dreams, 314-315.
46 Susman, Culture as History, 207. On the “American way of life” see Susman,
188-194.
explained, making the connection literal, “across the great sweep of the Midwest on the Covered Wagon Trails, your path traces the wheels of pioneers over the Rockies...on the way to California.” With heritage mapped across the landscape as tourist attractions, Americans could collectively experience their country and its history. Travel, framed this way, became a type of civic ritual—a participatory activity that fostered community and a shared set of values. It was this conceptualization that FDR invoked when he lauded expositions like the GGIE for “stimulating the travel that results inevitably in a larger degree of national unity by making Americans know their America and their fellow Americans.” A more meaningful culture could be forged on the highways; the transportation and technology celebrated at the fair could help “the people” connect with the nation, and with each other.

Fair organizers tapped into this ethos to promote the GGIE. The recreation division, for example, reported that “building a sturdy citizenry for our nation of tomorrow is basically of interest to every group in the land,” and chose “Recreation as a Medium Of Achievement And The Attainment Of National

47 “Worlds Fair on San Francisco Bay 1939” pamphlet, File: GGIE Pamphlets Miscellaneous, San Francisco History Center, San Francisco Public Library.
48 For an analysis of travel as a civic ritual in the United States, see Margueritte Shaffer See America First: Tourism and National Identity 1880-1940 (Washington DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2001).
49 “Address of the President by radio from Key West, Florida on the occasion of the opening of the San Francisco Golden Gate Exposition, February 18, 1939,” 1. File: Publicity, Box 28, NARA-GGIE.
Ideals" for its theme. While commerce and development were key goals for the fair, publicity materials emphasized that the “incentive to industrial achievements [should] point to a more pleasurable and abundant life,” rather than “an over-emphasized machine age world” or “mechanical proof of man’s genius.”

Declaring “the Machine Age Fair has worn out its welcome in America,” Director Harry D.H. Connick wrote that “our 1939 expo will take a new path...a travel and a tourist Fair, it will emphasize the culture and leisure which ought to proceed from the march of industry.” All of these characterized the GGIE’s west of “charm and glamour,” of scenic and historic attractions, as more than just a bid to draw tourists, investors, and their money.

Emphasizing both community and prosperity, the GGIE crafted a vision of “the good life” that took aim at the economic, social, and psychological needs of the depression-era nation. It couched its economic and industrial goals in terms of promoting a better life, using rhetoric like that employed in the advertising industry, that promised a satisfying and more meaningful existence achieved

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through commercial markets and consumer goods. In its “new Pacific Empire,” leisure time could be made productive, “employed” in the interest of economic development, strengthening communal values, and enhancing the lives of individuals. Through its emphasis on recreation and a world “united in a common bond of social and commercial well-being,” the GGIE revamped the image of both the west and its economy, selling leisure and commerce as the way to a more balanced and integrated existence.

In its repudiation of the “machine age fair,” the GGIE also posed its idea of culture in opposition to, as Susman put it, “the failures and meaninglessness of an urban-industrial civilization,” failures made particularly manifest by the Great Depression. However, the fair’s call for a new model should not be mistaken for a wholesale indictment of the American economic and social system. Much like its remapping of the modern west, the fair sought to funnel the machine age past into a productive and prosperous future; an approach that redefined and modified existing structures in an effort to preserve the system, rather than

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53 As Susman argued, over the course of the 1930s the idea of the “American way of life” came to be identified with both economic prosperity and social stability. See Susman, *Culture as History*, 164-209. William Bird Jr. examines how this idea manifested and was promoted in advertising rhetoric in *Better Living: Advertising, Media, and the New Vocabulary of Business Leadership 1935-1955* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1999), and Lizbeth Cohen traces the confluence of citizenship and consumerism in American culture from the 1930s into the post-war era in *A Consumer’s Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2003).

54 “1939 World’s Fair Progress Golden Gate International Exposition Bulletin” 1 no.1, 1937, 4. Published Collections Department, Hagley Library and Museum, Wilmington, Delaware.

55 Susman, *Culture as History*, 164.
overthrowing it completely. The fair’s vision, organizers argued, remained rooted in “bringing the promised message of the American way of life,” albeit “in terms of rest and enjoyment; of a newer conception in the relationship of work and play.”\textsuperscript{56} For a nation still struggling to emerge from economic depression, the GGIE offered its mix of recreation, commerce, and tourist travel as a model for achieving a better nation and better world relations.

What was perhaps most interesting about the modern culmination of the fair’s western narrative was that it looked to a future not centered in the U.S. alone, but in a cosmopolitan trans-Pacific network of commerce, trade, and cultural relations. No longer on the periphery but at the center of the nation’s life, the modern west’s role was to pioneer relations in this “new Pacific Empire.” The GGIE’s vision was rooted at once in a tradition of expansion and manifest destiny, and in the broader scope of intercultural cooperation and commercial exchange that characterized the internationalist ideas exemplified in the fair’s theme building, the Pacific House. Encompassing both internationalist impulses and nationalistic pride, GGIE productions exhibited a tension between portraying the U.S. as an equal member in a reciprocal network of nations, and as a leader that would determine the shape of the Pacific world.

\textsuperscript{56} “1939 World’s Fair Progress Golden Gate International Exposition Bulletin” 1 no.1, 1937, Published Collections Department, Hagley Library and Museum, Wilmington, Delaware. William Leuchtenburg has argued that this tactic of modifying existing structures in order to preserve the system overall aptly describes Roosevelt’s New Deal policies as a whole. See Leuchtenburg, \textit{Franklin D. Roosevelt and the New Deal 1932-1940} (New York: Harper and Row, 1963).
Envisioning a “New Pacific Empire”

"Geography does not change, but the way of looking at it definitely does."\textsuperscript{57}

Positioned as a gateway between East and West, between the past and the future, the Golden Gate International Exposition presented an alternative vision for the United States and its role in world affairs. It reoriented focus to the west coast, not just geographically, but in a way, as Lisa Rubens argued, that “served to re-present San Francisco, California and the West in the national and international imaginarium. It staked a claim on the nation—to recognize the centrality of the west—in the past, present, and future—in the fabric of American life.”\textsuperscript{58} The cornerstone of this claim for national prominence was the region’s connection to a wider Pacific network; a vision not bounded by continental U.S. borders, but based in a conception of California and the United States’ identity in the context of a Pacific-centered world.

The GGIE manifested these connections, with exhibits and productions designed to re-center focus around the Pacific Ocean. Foreign exhibitors were recruited primarily from Asia, the Pacific Rim, and Latin America, while California joined in an association with ten other western states to represent U.S.

Brochures and posters promoting the fair visually reinforced the emphasis, depicting the GGIE’s iconic Tower of the Sun rising from the edge of a map or globe with the Pacific Ocean at its center. One of the most frequently used motifs in advertising the exposition, this image cut off or obscured the Atlantic coast altogether. Text accompanying such images inverted the east to west perspective, describing the western U.S. as “the region extending inland from the 1700-mile-long Pacific coast line” and declaring the GGIE would “dramatize the beginnings of a greater Pacific era, pledged to the interdependence of the nations.”

In envisioning this new Pacific era, the GGIE also defined the Pacific area that was its purview. Recent studies of the Pacific Rim/Basin have emphasized the importance of viewing the region as a constructed and contested space, shaped as much by shifting political, cultural, and commercial imperatives as by geography. As John Eperjersi noted, conceptualizations of the Pacific create a

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60 “1939 Golden Gate International Exposition on San Francisco Bay” pamphlet, c. 1937, Bancroft Library, and “A Pageant of the Pacific” pamphlet, NARA-GGIE files.
unified region out of “a vast, dispersed area of Asia and the Pacific.” While tied to a fixed geographical feature (the ocean), the boundaries are amorphous. Arif Dirlik argued that these seemingly concrete geographic terms actually “define the physical space they pretend to describe.” His research found that understandings of what the Pacific region encompassed varied—expanding or contracting “as a product of human activity” and making the key definitional questions “whose Pacific—and when.”

In its representations of what it interchangeably termed the “Pacific empire,” “Western empire,” or “Pacific area,” the exposition invented a geography of its own and attempted to set up a model for world relations. Grouping together Pacific islands countries with “the Orient, Antipodes, and Latin-America,” plus the United States, it encompassed under one overarching construct an area of complex and conflicting agendas and politics, which was also a key theater in the escalating global conflict of World War II. Its exhibits, however, “purposely omitted all mention of political problems in the Pacific

63 “1939 World’s Fair Progress Golden Gate International Exposition Bulletin” 1 no.1, 1937, 4. Published Collections Department, Hagley Library and Museum, Wilmington, Delaware. Countries included Japan, China, Australia, New Zealand, the Philippines, and areas that were then part of French Indochina and the Dutch East Indies as well as all of Latin America.
Area...to avoid subjects on which there may be partisanship and division of opinion.”64 At a time when China and Japan were actively at war, anti-colonial movements were growing in Southeast Asia, and relations between the U.S. and Japan were deteriorating, the GGIE eschewed all this to instead focus on “international amity based on peace and justice and orderly trade.” The point of the fair, according to George Creel, “was to strengthen the bonds that unite us [the U.S.] and the nations of the Pacific” and its construction of the Pacific world was shaped accordingly.65

The locus of these efforts was “Pacific House,” the theme building for the exposition. It sat at the center of the fairgrounds in the GGIE’s Pacific Basin Area, just off the series of courts that funneled visitors in from the main entrance. Surrounded by individual pavilions from Hawaii, New Zealand, French Indo-China, Australia, the Philippines, Johore, Java, the Netherlands East Indies, and Japan, Pacific House rested in the middle of a lake, a representation of nations

64 Philip N. Youtz “Proposal for a Permanent Pacific House” c.1939-1940, 8. GGIE scrapbook, Bancroft Library. Youtz was the director of the GGIE’s Pacific Area.
linked by the Pacific Ocean in miniature.66 The goal for the Area, said its director Philip N. Youtz, was to present the “geography, cultures and commercial opportunities of the Pacific” as “a single vast panorama.”67 For visitors, the physical proximity of the pavilions reinforced this idea of a united Pacific, while their location within the layout of the fair as a whole spatially linked the Pacific Area, via the California buildings, to the adjacent U.S. Federal building.

Inside Pacific House, a variety of artworks visually re-emphasized the dimensions and connections of the GGIE’s Pacific world. A ceramic fountain in the form of a topographical map, created by Bolivian-born San Francisco muralist Antonio Sotomayor, dominated the main hall. It centered on the Pacific Ocean, representing the region as a cohesive whole. On the surrounding walls, this motif repeated in a series of six illustrated murals by Mexican artist Miguel Covarrubias

that detailed the peoples, arts, economy, animals, transportation, and housing styles of the nations that ringed the Pacific. Californian Edgar Dorsey Taylor contributed another map, in stained glass, depicting the modern “trade routes that unite the Pacific peoples.” Intended to be, as one art critic pointed out, both visually engaging and informative, these artworks delineated the boundaries of the new Pacific empire. A physical manifestation of the GGIE’s vision, the installation sought to “dramatize[e] the common interests of peoples of the Pacific hemisphere and demonstrat[e] their contributions to contemporary civilization” collectively to fair visitors.

In addition to its artistic exhibits, Pacific House held a library of over 10,000 volumes. It hosted a series of public lectures on “Our Neighbors of the Pacific,” given by prominent scholars in fields ranging from science and history, to art and business. Lectures in August 1939, for example, included Berkeley professors Dr. Herbert E. Bolton speaking on “Bolivar-Liberator and Statesman”

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68 Covarrubias’ maps were based on extensive research, and sought to depict accurate information as a corrective to misrepresentations and misinformation about the Pacific Basin area. The map centering on the Pacific was designed by the U.C. Berkeley geography department to show all land areas “in a proportionate manner without the distortion and exaggeration of certain lands in detriment to others seen in more familiar projections.” Anthropologist Dr. A.L. Kroeber and Dr. Carl Sauerer, head of the geography department, also consulted with Covarrubias on details of the maps’ content. “Covarrubias Mural Maps Reproduced,” Washington Post, November 3, 1940, AM7.


70 All descriptions from “The Pacific Area Group” Official Guide Book, 79. For more details on the artworks see Neuhaus, Art of Treasure Island.
and Dr. Herbert I. Priestly on “Lower California.” To complement these educational offerings, "an excellent varied program" of films, music, and dance performances was held daily, and the building also provided space for meetings and forums, as one account put it, “relative to the unification of this far-flung area and its diversified racial types.”

Area director Philip Youtz credited Pacific House with transforming the GGIE from “a local project...into a meeting place for all the countries of the Pacific hemisphere.” It not only showcased opportunities for “commercial and cultural reciprocity” but made visitors “aware that the United States is part of a world order, not a nation that is walled within its own narrow national borders.”

A modernist architect, curator, and professor, Youtz believed museums and exhibitions had an educational mission. He advocated reaching out to the public through a combination of visual displays, written materials, and programming.

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71 Bolton was most known for his founding work in Borderlands history, and Priestly published widely on Mexican and Spanish Empire history. These topics also emphasized the inclusion of Latin America (even the Caribbean and Atlantic bordering countries) as part of the Pacific world. “Our Neighbors of the Pacific” lecture series pamphlet, Vertical File: San Francisco Fairs, Festivals, Expositions, Golden Gate Fair: 1930-1940, California State Library, Sacramento, California.

72 This programming was sponsored jointly by the Pacific House and the Institute of Public relations. Jack James and Earle Weller, Treasure island, "the magic city," 1939-1940 (San Francisco: Pisani Printing and Publishing Co, 1941), 102.

“planned as much for entertainment as for instruction” that would “yield education unconsciously and painlessly” and expand visitors’ worldview.74

Pacific House, with its blend of art, entertainment, and expertise, put this philosophy into practice. It provided a center for outreach where Youtz and his colleagues on the Pacific Area committee focused on building cultural connections within the fair’s Pacific world. Their efforts highlighted transnational influences, glossing over current divisive issues and past conflicts in the interest of constructing, as Youtz described it, “a new type of internationalism founded on mutual interest and appreciation.” Through projects like the Pacific House, he felt, the San Francisco bay area was poised to “become the capital of a new Pacific empire, founded not on conquest but on cooperation and commerce.” Rather than operating as “a purely American enterprise,” it would lead by providing a site where “scholars of different nationalities and races [were] invited to cooperate.”75

While Youtz described Pacific House’s internationalist mission as “new,” its vision of fostering international cooperation and unity through cultural activities actually had roots in the immediate post-World War I era. In the wake

75 Youtz, Permanent Pacific House, 2 and 8. For a complete list of Pacific Area Coordinating Committee Members see James and Weller Treasure Island, appendix.
of global warfare, a movement to build connections across national borders rose
to prominence among intellectuals, artists, writers, and policymakers. “Cultural
freedom and internationalism [were seen] as the key to the postwar peace,” Akira
Iriye wrote in his classic study of the movement, valued as a way for the world
community to “overcome narrow nationalisms and embrace a cosmopolitan
identity.”

Advocates of what Iriye termed “cultural internationalism” organized
new agencies like the American Council of Learned Societies (1919), the Social
Science Research Council (1923), and the Institute of Pacific Relations (1925),
that sponsored collaborative research, educational tourism, art exhibitions, and
other programs to promote intercultural exchange and link individuals through
shared culture.

Pacific House’s coordinating committee included many people with ties to
these organizations, and its programming reflected the strategies and philosophy
of their earlier internationalist projects. Committee chairman Ray Lyman Wilbur,
for example, headed the Institute of Pacific Relations (IPR) from 1925-1929,
served as a delegate to the Sixth Pan-American Conference in 1928, and worked
with sociologist and internationalist Robert E. Park on the Survey of Race

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76 Akira Iriye, Cultural Internationalism and World Order (Baltimore: Johns
Hopkins University Press, 1997), 56.
77 The ACLS was founded to represent the U.S. at the Union Académique
Internationale, another internationalist group. The IPR focused specifically on
issues and relations among Pacific Ocean nations. Cultural internationalism was
just one variant of a broader internationalist movement that also included political
(most prominently represented in the founding of the League of Nations) and
economic focuses. Iriye, Cultural Internationalism, 68-80.
Relations on the Pacific Coast in the early 1920s. Writing in 1938, Wilbur outlined a vision for Pacific House that could easily have fit in the 1920s:

We confidently hope that the era of conquest by blood and steel is passing and that in its place will come an international order based not on principles of arrogant and predatory nationalism, but on mutual respect and acquaintance among nations.

His description of the exhibit’s purpose as “dramatizing...the possibilities of friendly reciprocity along lines of scientific, esthetic, and economic interests,” and assertion that he thought “it is not possible for any one nation to create peace, but that if peace itself is undertaken cooperatively, it can be brought about” also echoed the core values of post-war cultural internationalism.

Wilbur’s hopes for the end of “conquest by blood and steel” and “arrogant and predatory nationalism” might have seemed futile in the global context of 1938. Movements for international cooperation had gained momentum

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78 Park’s perspective on cultural diffusion and race relations in this period, Iriye argues, theorized a trajectory of increasing internationalization of cultures and societies. While “national and racial consciousness” remained and at times intensified, Park saw this as a reactionary, and ultimately temporary response to the growing force of internationalism, spread in part through technologies of mass communication like radio and film that could foster a common culture among communities. Park directed the Survey of Race Relations on the Pacific Coast until it ran out of funding. Designed as a comprehensive study of social and economic conditions among Chinese, Japanese, Mexican, and other non-white populations on the Pacific coast in the U.S. and Canada, the Survey focused on community integration as well as race relations. On Park, see Iriye, Cultural Internationalism, 82-84, and E.C. Hughes et al, eds, Race and Culture: The Collected Papers of Robert Ezra Park Volume I (Glencoe, IL: The Free Press, 1950). On the Survey of Race Relations see its digitized records at the Hoover Institution, Stanford University http://www.hoover.org/library-and-archives/collections/americas/featured-collections/survey-of-race-relations.
throughout the 1920s, but the economic depression and rise of totalitarian regimes in the early 1930s disrupted their trajectory. A revival of nationalism shaped the “domestic and foreign affairs of most countries,” Iriye argued, and “cultural relations tended to be moored away from visions of an international community and anchored in formulations of national interest.” In this changing world context, it was independent organizations like those listed above, with an assist from universities and institutions like the Rockefeller Foundation, which continued efforts to foster internationalism and the cosmopolitan outlook that had defined it in the immediate post-war era.

By the late 1930s, this “legacy of postwar internationalism provided a ready vehicle for implementing [the] ideological counteroffensive” necessary “to cope with the mounting tensions in Europe and Asia created by the aggressive behavior of the totalitarian states.” And one major characteristic of this revival of internationalism was the “recognition that cultural internationalism must also be promoted among the mass of people in all countries” in hopes of achieving its goal of peace. In its concern for reaching the masses, the Pacific Area went beyond relying on a cadre of intellectuals to temper nationalistic excesses among the nations. Its organizing committee employed postwar internationalist methods to foster Pacific relations and to provide a platform that could engage the public.

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79 Iriye, Cultural Internationalism, 91-92, 94.
80 Iriye, Cultural Internationalism, 115-116. Iriye argued that one reason cultural internationalism did not become obsolete was the realization that future international conflicts would be ideological battles, as much as they were military ones.
with these ideas. As John J. Alexander said in a speech for Japan Day during the 1940 season:

A principal purpose of the GGIIE is to provide a common ground on which all peoples—particularly the countries of the Pacific—would be able to meet as friends, promoting those understandings that dispel nationalistic bigotries and divisive prejudices.81

Tourism was one key way of engaging the masses in the type of intercultural contact Youtz and Wilbur promoted as the best way to building understanding and cooperation in the world. The internationalist portions of the fair promoted Americans' engagement, encouraging them to look beyond the country's borders and consider the conceptualization of a more global, or at least, Pacific-regional, community. While much of this vision and the methods used hearkened back to an earlier era of international relations, they were employed in an effort designed to target current conditions and forestall, or at least temper, the growing nationalist conflicts of the late 1930s.

One example of the efforts to shape intercultural relations through mass leisure travel modeled at the fair was the Inter-American Travel Conference. Sponsored by the Pan-American Union, the United States Travel Bureau, and the GGIIE, this conference of government, industry, and civic organizations involved in the tourist trade met on Treasure Island from April 14-21, 1939. A major project of the pre-war United States Travel Bureau, the IATC also marked a high

point of its Pan-American efforts. Bringing together representatives of
government tourist bureaus from twenty-two countries across North and South
America, the conference proceedings laid out a plan for collaboration and focused
on how mutual tourism promotion could facilitate alliances among nations. The
purpose of the conference, as George Creel proclaimed on its opening day, was to
increase tourism and improve relations among the nations of the Americas
through a cooperative effort that involved both governments and private interests:
“By the promotion of travel, and the knowledge and acquaintance that comes
from travel, we can and will banish those prejudices that are so directly the
product of the ignorances bred by insularity.”

The idea of an inter-American travel congress was first suggested in 1934
by the Argentine Touring Club. That same year, the Pan-American Union
established a Travel Division within its organization, focused on facilitating travel
throughout the Americas. In his letter accepting the invitation to the IATC on
behalf of the United States, Secretary of State Cordell Hull emphasized that
“travel in this hemisphere has definite recreational, cultural, and economic values
and contributes to the stimulation of the spirit of genuine understanding and

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82 “Inter-American Travel Congress April 14, 1939,” File: Speeches, Typescripts
1938-1940, Box 5, Creel Papers.
83 José Tercero, “First Inter-American Travel Congress” Bulletin of the Pan
American Union, (August 1938), 465. According to Tercero, the formation of this
division originated with a resolution from the Seventh International Conference of
American States at Montevideo in December 1933.
goodwill among the peoples of the Americas,” echoing the justifications for travel
given by the USTB.84

On the IATC agenda were topics ranging from government action to
simplify visas and passport regulations for tourists, to publicity and propaganda
programs, to transportation, to encouraging cultural development and folk arts.85

Writing about the conference, José Tercero, head of the Pan American Union
Travel Division described the role he envisioned tourist travel playing in relations
between nations. He outlined an ambitious vision (just as ambitious as that of the
GGIE’s pacific empire) of what could be accomplished: “tourist travel,
independent of its economic and cultural aspects, is one of the most efficacious
means for breaching the gap between good relations of governments and
understanding, sympathy, and solidarity between peoples and individuals.”86

The conference resulted in an “essentially practical and perfectly feasible”
program for a cooperative venture between governments and tourist
organizations. Consisting of a national tourist board for each country, regional
organizations, and regular IATC conferences, the proposed system would unify
and facilitate development across national borders. In relaying the results of the
conference, Tercero emphasized the driving principals for its vision of tourism-

84 Hull quoted in Tercero. “First Inter-American Travel Congress” 467.
85 Draft of the full agenda for the IATC in Tercero, “First Inter-American Travel
Congress,” 468-470.
86 José Tercero, “Practical Pan Americanism: The First Inter-American Travel
Congress and the Latin American Good Will Tour” Bulletin of the Pan American
Union (March 1939), 150.
driven internationalism. First was ensuring the “recognition of the economic, social, cultural and political importance of tourist travel in its local, national and international aspects” and the necessity of promoting travel “with the same diligence...[as] industry, commerce and agriculture.” “Reaffirmation of the solidarity of the American nations and recognition of the prime importance of travel in inter-American relations” was the second. By combining efforts to preserve “folk customs, arts, and industries” and historic and cultural sites with commercial development and promotion, the IATC program tried to balance plans to modernize and systematize tourism across the Americas with projecting and protecting an individual heritage and identity for each nation.\(^{87}\)

The Pacific Area and the IATC both had a clear vision for the potential of their “new internationalism,” and the role San Francisco and the U.S. would play in it. The obstacles to this vision, however, also could not be ignored. In a 1939 cartoon for the \textit{San Francisco Chronicle}, artist Don Stockton commented on the real-world tensions that intruded upon the fantasy world of the fair. It depicted a Japanese visitor asking a Chinese rickshaw driver the cost of a ride to Japan’s exhibit pavilion. The driver’s angry reaction is observed by two older (presumably American) men passing by in the background, who dismiss

\(^{87}\) All quotes in this paragraph from José Tercero, “First Inter-American Tourist Congress: Its Practical Results” \textit{Bulletin of the Pan American Union} (August 1939), 473-474.
consideration of the incident saying “Let’s go back to Sally’s” (referring to Sally Rand’s Nude Ranch, a peep show on the midway). 88

Highlighting the conflict between Japan and China, which the Pacific exhibits so studiously ignored, the comic also questioned the GGIE’s internationalist mission. To what extent were fairgoers, out for a good time, invested in building a new Pacific empire? How possible was the cooperative internationalism on display in the Pacific Area, when faced with the realities of global politics in 1939? At a time when public opinion in the United States remained divided on the issue of intervention in international affairs, how many Americans might prefer to bypass these concerns altogether, like the two men en-route to the midway? 89

As much as exhibits like Pacific House sought to diffuse or overlook tensions that might draw the U.S. into the conflict, the potential of U.S. involvement in World War II was a key factor that underlay the planning and presentation of the GGIE. The fair’s themes of national unity and international

88 Don Stockton editorial cartoon, San Francisco Chronicle 2 March 1939, 3E. The two main figures in Stockton’s cartoon could also be Americans of Japanese and Chinese descent, but both are caricatured to emphasize their nationality.
mission, developed in response to the crises of the 1930s, were also mobilized in efforts to address the nation’s future. Concerned with preparedness, as much as prevention, key figures among the GGIE leadership arranged programs, events, and summits aimed at shaping international relations, as well as public opinion about the U.S.’s international role.

**Conclusion**

"The exposition was a mighty influence in strengthening the bonds of friendship between the United States and the Nations of the Pacific. In no small measure it helped induce better economic and trade relations consistent with the "Good Neighbor" policy of the U.S. government...the role it played in this connection was of primary importance at a time when most of Europe was at war."\(^{90}\)

Analyzing the culture of the 1930s, Warren Susman wrote that the issue was not simply that the 1930s produced “a new era of nationalism [where] many writers and artists and critics began to sing glowingly of American life and its past. It was rather the more complex effort to seek and define America as a culture and to create the patterns of a way of life worth understanding."\(^{91}\) The GGIE constituted part of this effort. In this sense it was a fundamentally transitional project, engaged in coming to terms with the upheavals of depression-era America, as well as envisioning the nation’s future identity and role in the

\(^{91}\) Susman, Culture as History, 157.
rapidly changing realm of international geopolitics. The GGIE repurposed history, both mythic and real, to create a politically and socially useful narrative designed to boost the nation’s faith in its institutions and itself after a decade of economic depression. It also looked to the future, with the threats of totalitarian/militarist expansion overseas, shaping an ideology that argued for an alternative option to world warfare, while also fitting Americans and their allies for the conflict ahead. Rather than an attempt to reassert old models, the GGIE’s primary concern was sorting out a way forward.

Much like the attempts to build an American Pacific in the early twentieth-century examined by Kornel Chang, the GGIE’s re-imagining of U.S. identity in the context of a new Pacific empire was forged in what Chang termed the dialectics of “seemingly contradictory impulses—globalization and nationalization, inclusion and exclusion, mobility and immobility, and cosmopolitanism and parochialism.” In its efforts to construct a unified Pacific that was also in line with U.S. prerogatives and power, the GGIE at once presented a region composed of diverse countries and cultures, yet argued they were all related. It created a harmonious vision of relations in the Pacific Area, by intentionally ignoring the tensions and conflicts which organizers admitted drove this creation. It forged a new American nationalism, in the interest of internationalism. This vision, as Chang argued, “fissured and fractured under the weight of its numerous contradictions...conflicting forces emanating from

92 Chang, Pacific Connections, 192.
multiple locations and through different actors,” but at the same time, it’s rhetoric of international cooperation and mutuality imagined a more integrated world, “a precursor to a future discourse of globalization.”93

In its 1939 guidebook, Californians, Inc. aptly described Treasure Island as a “fantasy island.” Couched in romanticism and an architectural style that was a pastiche of elements from cultures across the globe, the GGIE promised a place where “the glamour of the Orient, of the South Seas, and the Latin Americas mingle with the romance of the West, gathering into one beautiful setting the color of the Western world.”94 The GGIE provided a space where both identity and policy were hashed out; a laboratory for the type of cultural reformation that Susman, Chang, and Iriye discussed. It incorporated the multiple viewpoints, factions, and ideologies that framed the 1930s, as well as key institutions—private industry, the federal government, local civic groups, and cultural internationalist organizations—all vying for influence in shaping a vision for the country’s future. Through its selective uses of culture, landscape, and history, the fair’s “sparkling,

94 “Chart Your Trip to the San Francisco World’s Fair” pamphlet, File: GGIE Pamphlets, Miscellaneous, San Francisco History Center, San Francisco Public Library.
magic city” also created a site where relationships and the nation’s own identity could be re-imagined.95

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95 “Chart Your Trip to the San Francisco World’s Fair” pamphlet, File: GGIE Pamphlets, Miscellaneous, San Francisco History Center, San Francisco Public Library.
CHAPTER THREE

A RETURN TO NORMALCY?
DOMESTIC TOURISM IN AN ERA OF COLD WAR INTERNATIONALISM

Introduction

In 1941, publisher Henry R. Luce wrote of his conviction “that the 20th Century must be to a significant degree an American Century.” Advocating for U.S. entry into World War II, he outlined a broad vision that called upon the nation to “accept wholeheartedly our duty and our opportunity as the most powerful and vital nation in the world” and take up a defining role in international affairs. Americans, he argued, “have failed to play their part as a world power” due to one fundamental fault: “whereas their nation became in the twentieth century the most powerful and the most vital nation in the world, nevertheless Americans were unable to accommodate themselves spiritually and practically to that fact.” His solution was for Americans to re-envision their nation’s identity in terms of its global role:

As America enters dynamically upon the world scene, we need most of all to seek and to bring forth a vision of America as a world power which is authentically American and which can inspire us to love and work and fight with vigor and enthusiasm.¹

The United States Travel Bureau, revived in October 1947 following a suspension of activities during the war and renamed the "United States Travel Division" (USTD), confronted some of the very same issues considered by Luce. This chapter examines debates over the changing role of federal tourism promotion and its representations of national identity following World War II. It explores the tensions between the post-war resurgence of domestic tourism, and a federal government increasingly focused on the international issues and national defense that defined the U.S.'s emergence as a global power during the Cold War.

With the economic recovery spurred by World War II, leisure tourism became accessible to more Americans than ever before. On the home front, the U.S. Travel Division's sleek new media campaigns promoted travel as a way for Americans to reconnect and enjoy post-war life, facilitating a return to "normalcy" after over a decade of economic depression and war. Partnering with travel businesses in the private sector, the USTD worked to grow the industry, and compile statistics that could demonstrate tourism's economic value, estimated to be around ten billion dollars in 1947.² In place of the pan-Americanism of the 1930s, post-war programming emphasized the United States' democratic heritage and cultural links with Western Europe, as the USTD increasingly turned towards enlisting the mass travel market in the U.S.'s ideological battle with Soviet Union.

² Diana Rice, "The Field of Travel—U.S. Government Travel Bureau Revived," New York Times, Oct. 26, 1947, X15. The ten billion figure was a rough estimate drawn from data supplied by the travel industry. No exact calculations had been done at the time, and the USTD presented the estimate as part of its argument calling for more exact calculations and the collection of concrete statistical data.
Campaigns also linked themes of abundance, consumer choice, and free enterprise to the Division's portrayal of national heritage and values. Marketed, like home ownership or consumer goods, as a core component of the "American way of life," tourism shifted from being a benefit of New Deal government, to become part of what Lizabeth Cohen termed the "consumer citizenship" of the post-war era.\(^3\) As Voit Gilmore, a consultant for the Commerce Department informed the \textit{New York Times}, national parks and urban centers no longer embodied the whole of American identity. "Tourists coming here from abroad" he advised, "may be almost as interested in seeing a modern American kitchen, our highway networks, giant factories and supermarkets."\(^4\)

At the same time, the USTD faced constant challenges from Congress and other governmental agencies that claimed the division had outlived its usefulness. On one side, advocates for the Interior Department's continued administration of the USTD argued that a national travel agency was needed even more in this period, as a majority of Americans had the means and desire to travel domestically—but still needed guidance on how to travel, as well as reputable

\(^3\) This concept was predicated on the idea that mass access to markets, consumer choice, and purchasing power among Americans would also facilitate social and political equality. Prosperity and a "democracy of goods" could overcome class and racial divisions and barriers in society. However, as Cohen found, consumer citizenship often perpetuated these very inequities, and only masked the fractures still occurring in post-war American society. Lizbeth Cohen, \textit{A Consumer's Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America}, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2003).

government statistics on the benefits, both personal and economic, that tourism could bring. The opposing side argued that the government’s priorities (and funding) should focus on international tourism and exchange—encouraging Americans to travel abroad as another way to spread American ideals and values in the Cold War world. A rival tourism division within the Commerce Department, the Travel Branch of the Office of International Trade, was formed to oversee the distribution of ECA funds earmarked to promote travel to Marshall Plan countries in Europe. This agency in particular called for the USTD to be disbanded, claiming that the private tourism industry had developed enough to handle domestic travel promotion on its own.

Rebirth of Federal Tourism Promotion: Making a Postwar Travel Bureau

Upon U.S. entry into World War II following the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, the federal government suspended all its travel promotion activities for the duration of the war. The United States Travel Bureau put out one final issue of its newsletter, the *Official Bulletin*, for January/February 1942. The cover featured a photo of Secretary of the Interior Harold Ickes headlined “Secretary Ickes Urges Civilian Travel for Relaxation to Aid Health, Morale.” Inside, a press release from USTB chief Bruce Macnamee laid out what he purported was Ickes’ policy on wartime travel:
Ickes today recommended that civilian travel for purposes of relaxation should be continued as far as consistent with troop and material movements, as an aid in the promotion of national health and morale...[he] reaffirmed the principle of his Travel Bureau’s slogan: ‘Travel Strengthens America—it builds the Nation’s health, wealth, and unity’.5

Macnamee went on to note examples from Britain and Germany, where recreation programs had been retained even during wartime, as a way to relieve stress and strain on civilians and soldiers alike.

While the policy went over well with tourism industry leaders, who sent Ickes and Macnamee complimentary messages thanking them for their support, it did not resonate with the general public. Constituents barraged their congressmen, Ickes’ office, and newspaper editors from Tacoma, Washington to Knoxville, Tennessee with letters criticizing the editorial for promoting something as frivolous as leisure travel while the rest of the country was beginning to ration goods and services, and mobilize for war. Ickes wrote an angry memo, telling Macnamee “I deplore the issuance by you of the ‘Official Bulletin’ of your bureau for January-February, because it puts the Department and me, as its head, in an untenable position,” and excoriating him for not getting the publication cleared by the Division of Information first.6 By May of 1942, all of the USTB’s activities,

6 Harold Ickes to Bruce Macnamee, Memorandum March 14, 1942. An example of positive reaction to the *Official Bulletin* article can be found in Harold Ickes to Governor John Miles of New Mexico, February 17, 1942. Examples of critical letters include Hon. Mon C. Walgreen (Senator, Washington state) to Walton Onslow March 30, 1942, Mrs. Sibyl Thompson of Tacoma, Washington to Harold
and its funding had been suspended. Ickes refused further requests that he make
statements about recreational travel during wartime, instead suggesting that “even
broader horizons” for the travel industry might exist “when peace comes.”

True to his suggestion, as early as October 1945 Ickes began

corresponding with National Park Service Director Newton B. Drury about

proposals to revive the travel bureau. Ickes successor in Interior, Julius Krug,

also supported the idea. The travel bureau re-opened in October 1947 as a division

within the National Park Service, with a new name, the “United States Travel

Division” (USTD), and a new director, James L. Bossemeyer, who had headed the

USTB’s San Francisco office before the war. The USTD quickly resumed many

of its predecessor’s activities, producing radio shows and a monthly magazine,

printing maps of recreational areas, travel booklets, and calendars of events, and

holding conferences with agencies and businesses within the tourism industry. It

also revived the Advisory Committee, composed of twelve members drawn from


Ickes, March 18, 1942, and Hon. B. Frank Whelchel to Harold Ickes, March 13,
1942, File: “National Park Service, General, Publicity United States Tourist
7 The main exception to this was travel and recreation programs organized for
members of the U.S. military. See David Farber and Beth Bailey, “The Fighting
Man as Tourist: The Politics of Tourist Culture in Hawaii during World War II,”
Pacific Historical Review 65, no. 4 (November 1996): 641-660. Garth Cate,
Travel Promotion Manager New York World Telegram to Harold Ickes, February
22, 1943. File: “National Park Service, General, Publicity United States Tourist
Park Service, General, Publicity United States Tourist Information Bureau, Feb.
key travel organizations and government agencies, to help guide federal tourism policy.9

The United States experienced a “tourism boom” in the aftermath of World War II, as returning servicemen took trips on their way back home, and the general populace took advantage of the end of gas, rubber, and other rationing. The National Parks reported record-breaking attendance, reaching a high of about thirty million visitors in 1948, and other domestic sites benefited as well in what one tourism industry insider termed “the great spending spree, following the war.”10 In a 1949 article, the National Association of Travel Officials (NATO) estimated the U.S. travel industry’s worth was twelve billion dollars annually, instructing any doubters of that figure to note that the combined tourist revenues of just Florida and Pennsylvania amounted to fourteen million dollars.11 Those involved in the travel industry, whether from organizations like the NATO, state travel bureaus, or local Chambers of Commerce, were eager to for the federal government to partner with them again to help manage, and expand, this influx.

As for the USTD, it portrayed the resurgence of tourist travel as a sign that the United States was returning to a period of “normalcy” after over a decade of disruptions due to the Great Depression and World War II. Many of its

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10 “National Parks Attendance Up” and “Dude Ranches,” Travel USA (Vol. 1. No. 1 October 1948).
11 Florida and Pennsylvania figures are from 1948. W. Murray Metten, “National Association of Travel Officials,” Travel USA (Vol. 1, No. 6 March 1949).
promotions presented recreational travel as a way for Americans to relax, reconnect with each other, and readjust to a postwar nation in the process. The National Park Service (NPS) had begun disseminating this narrative even before the USTD was officially reinstated. In a series of short radio broadcast produced during 1946, the NPS drew a clear line between wartime and peacetime. “No more gasoline rations!” one script proclaimed, “All transport is gearing up and refitting for travel...get ready for an unprecedented flow of visitors—that’s our reconversion problem!” Another radio spot opened with “Billy” asking his father “What’re you looking at Dad? Is that a war map?” To which his father replied “No siree, son. We’re through with war maps, thank heaven! That’s one of our old automobile maps.”12 The resumption of travel signaled a new era, when gasoline and maps would be used for enjoying leisure, rather than making war.

Invoking the idea, popularized by the prewar USTB and the tourism exhibits at the Golden Gate International Exposition, that travel provided a way to know and understand the nation, the broadcasts also linked the landscapes of the parks to core American values. During the war, NPS Director Drury informed listeners, servicemen and women visited the parks:

For these defenders of our country, the Parks offered recreation in the highest sense—re-creation—restoration of body and mind—an enlarged conception of the values for which they fought...All your Parks and

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12 The scripts noted “the most persistent inquiries about national parks have come from returned veterans.” “Q & A Feature of National Park System” radio script, January 10, 1946 and “5-Minute National Park platter” radio script, 1946. File: NPS (10 minute transcripts), Box 1: Radio Section, Program A-O 1938-47, DOI-Radio.
Monuments and Historic Sites are just so many pages in the book of the Story of America.\textsuperscript{13}

Now, all Americans could view "the great places of nature and history in America," gain "the sense of kinship with great men which one finds at the scenes of great events," and walk "the hallowed ground where men have died for liberty." The parks, the announcer concluded for Drury as "America the Beautiful" began playing in the background, were more than "just a vacation spot"; they provided "an understanding of how our country came to be what we see today."\textsuperscript{14}

The USTD expanded upon this concept in its own promotional materials and campaigns. The urge to travel formed part of the national character, it argued in a 1949 booklet titled \textit{U.S. Travel: A Digest}:

\begin{quote}
The people of the United States are great travelers. We have, throughout our entire history, been of a restless, inquisitive disposition that gives us the urge to travel. This was true during the early days of our Nation when the widespread territory from the Atlantic to the Pacific was explored, developed and settled in an incredibly brief period of time, and it is true today.
\end{quote}

This comparison posited a continuous, shared set of values among Americans in the past and the present, at least for those who identified with the settlers who colonized the continent. The same impulses that motivated leisure travelers in the

\textsuperscript{13} "Q \& A Feature of National Park System" radio script, January 10, 1946 and "5-Minute National Park platter" radio script, 1946. File: NPS (10 minute transcripts), Box 1: Radio Section, Program A-O 1938-47, DOI-Radio.

\textsuperscript{14} "Host to the Nation- A one-time 30 minute Radio Script, a NPS Program," File: Host to the Nation, NPS, July 1946, Box 1: NPS Radio Section—Program File, DOI-Radio.
1940s had driven U.S. expansion, and continued to shape national culture. It was not just sites and history, but a national character that defined America and its citizens.

In her book *Inventing the “American Way”*, Wendy Wall examined the “politics of consensus” that shaped Americans’ understanding of their “shared heritage and values” in the mid-twentieth century.\(^\text{15}\) The “American way,” she argued, was a process, not a product—an effort to shape a cultural consensus pursued by diverse groups and interests. Diversity was understood as a defining feature of the American system, but faced with the uncertainties of depression, war, and civil unrest, people also sought an “unifying national ideology” that could strengthen American democracy against threats from at home and abroad.\(^\text{16}\) Beginning in the mid-1930s, where Warren Susman identified a rising concern with defining the “American Dream” or “American way of life,” the concept retained a central role in national culture even as it was continuously contested and reshaped by changing politics.

Wall opened her analysis with an account of the Freedom Train, a 1947 traveling exhibition that featured foundational American documents from the Declaration of Independence to Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address. Though presented as an expression of core values, Wall found “the project was designed to instill,


\(^{16}\) Wall, 6.
rather than simply reflect, those common mores.” Each of the many different
groups involved hoped to assert its own vision of the American way through the
train’s exhibits, in the interest of agendas that ranged from “indoctrination in
democracy” to “creating good will among various racial and religious groups” to
staving off “state socialism” by “re-selling Americanism to Americans.”
National tourism, as promoted by the USTD, functioned as another way to shape
cultural consensus. Much as with the Freedom Train, the diverse constituencies
behind the Division helped craft narratives that explained the nation to its people.
In encouraging the public to embrace a return to “normality” through travel, the
USTD helped define what “normal” was in postwar American life.

The USTD’s vision for tourism’s role did carry over some emphases from
its 1930s campaigns. It continued to portray travel as a way to connect with one’s
fellow citizens and build a sense of community. Detailing “the power of
recreational travel in enlivening and enriching the lives of the people,” U.S.
Travel: A Digest offered the proliferation of “community and regional fairs,
fiestas, rodeos, flower shows, sporting events, regattas, races” as evidence that
Americans wanted to celebrate and share their interests and local traditions with

17 Wall, 3-5. For further examples of patriotic pageantry as an expression of Cold
War ideology and efforts to shape American culture see Richard M. Fried, The
Russians are Coming! The Russians are Coming!: Pageantry and Patriotism in
Cold-War America (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998).
each other. These types of civic festivals showcased the diversity of U.S. culture, a companion article in *Travel U.S.A.* explained, representing "democracy in action." Attending the festivals, much like travel itself, allowed individuals to participate in creating a shared national culture, "and it makes one feel pretty good to have a part in that important work" the article concluded. Praising the way mobility in the U.S. "mixes people of every state" and "brings understanding," another article warned "in other lands, and among people lacking this mobility, democracy has fought hard for existence, or died."19

The majority of the Division's postwar activities focused on expanding the domestic tourism industry, and working to ensure that travel became known as a core part of the American way of life. Arguing it was a "generally accepted fact that travel as an industry is exceeded in size and value only by agriculture and manufacturing," the USTD and its industry partners called on the U.S. to recognize how integral tourism was to the economy.20 *Travel USA* carried an article "Is Travel the Third Largest 'Industry' in the U.S.A.?" that explained the difficulties in proving tourism's value when "economists and statisticians do not include it as a specific item in their calculations," and thus, fail to recognize it as a

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19 Robert Meyer Jr., "Covering All Festivals," *Travel USA* (Vol. 1 No. 11 August 1949) and "Conventions are an American Institution," *Travel USA* (Vol. 1, No. 6 March 1949).
The USTD also compiled statistics on all aspects of the industry, from numbers of travelers, to preferences in transportation, to amounts of money spent on various goods and services. It even proposed a plan to collect more comprehensive data by including a survey on Americans’ travel habits as part of the 1950 U.S. census. However, the extra questionnaire was not approved.

An additional goal of all the compilations of statistics was to demonstrate that tourism in the United States had truly become a “mass” industry. “Millions of folks, from the poor to the rich are taking vacations” today, one article in Travel USA told readers, a situation that differed greatly from that of the author’s “teen days, when travel was not so easy, there were few paid vacations, and only the wealthy took extended trips.” Another article surveyed the 1948 travel year—74% of Americans tourists traveled to destinations in the U.S., 97% of office workers were eligible for paid vacations—and concluded “travel is no longer a luxury item purchased by a relatively few people in the high income brackets.” USTD promotions presented mass tourism as an equalizing force in American society.

Emphasizing the abundance and variety of attractions, accommodations, tours,}

21 “Is Travel the Third Largest ‘Industry’ in the U.S.A.?” Travel USA (Vol. 1 No. 12, September 1949).
23 “Children and Today's Travel Market,” Travel USA. (Vol. 1, No. 2 November 1948), and “Where are they going this Year?” Travel USA. (Vol. 1, No. 6 March 1949).
and services within the U.S. travel industry, they created a scenario where all tourists had equal access to the options available, and equal choice among them. Mass tourism was essentially classless tourism.

The USTD promotions left out any references to economic, racial, gender, or other barriers that restricted travel options for different populations. This vision of democratized travel available equally to all through the market reflected the development of what Lizabeth Cohen termed the “consumer citizenship” of the post-war era. This concept was predicated on the idea that mass access to markets, consumer choice, and purchasing power among Americans would also facilitate social and political equality. Prosperity and a “democracy of goods” could overcome class and racial divisions and barriers in society. However, as Cohen found, consumer citizenship often perpetuated these very inequities, and only masked the fractures still occurring in post-war American society.24

Overall, the USTD offered a vision of domestic tourism fitted to the needs of the immediate postwar years. Travel signaled the return of “normal” life, an affirmation of community and democracy, and the potential for equality in an affluent society of abundance. While its campaigns for domestic travel were largely successful, the USTD fared less well in the realm of international travel. Confronted with the U.S.'s emergence as a post-war super-power and an

increasing emphasis on international politics and national defense, the USTD was unable to adjust to encompass the nation's global role.

“Competition in Home and Foreign Travel”: Tourism and National Identity in an Era of Cold War Internationalism

Around the same time the Interior Department revived their travel bureau, the Department of Commerce also formed a travel division. The “Travel Branch” was located within the Office of International Trade and led by Herbert A. Wilkinson. Created to promote American tourism in Europe, it was funded through the Economic Cooperation Administration, the agency that oversaw the Marshall Plan recovery program in Europe. According to Christopher Endy's study of American tourism in France during the Cold War, strengthening ties with Western Europe to build a strong “anti-Communist Atlantic Community,” became a priority following World War II. As Harry Truman, speaking in defense of the Marshall plan to Congress in 1947, put it: “Our deepest concern with the

26 The Economic Cooperation Administration was established in 1948 and managed the economic recovery program, also known as the Marshall Plan, in Europe. The promotion of American tourism to Europe became part of the Marshall Plan under the Brewster Amendment of March 1948. Christopher Endy, Cold War Holidays: American Tourism in France, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 44-45. See also C. Girard Davidson to Bossemeyer, Memorandum April 4, 1949. File: Park Service-Travel Bureau-C.G. Davidson, Box 6, DOI-Davidson.
European recovery is that it is essential to the maintenance of the civilization in which the American way of life is rooted."²⁷

As international tourism began to play a more significant role in U.S. foreign policy, Wilkinson began to argue that his Travel Branch should take over additional travel promotion duties. Targeting the USTD, he claimed having two government travel bureaus was redundant, and that the Commerce Department should have jurisdiction over anything dealing with economic issues.²⁸ The USTD attempted to retain its hold on domestic travel promotion, but eventually the priorities of international relations won out, and the USTD lost its funding.

As a 1948 article titled “There or Here? Competition in Home and Foreign Travel” in the *New York Times* argued, the jurisdictional issue between the rival Interior and Commerce travel bureaus was “a reflection of the broader political sphere”:

> [it] revolves about those who advocate concentration on America and those who relate America to the international community. It is a variation of isolationism versus internationalism, with the prize the American tourist's travel dollars...the contest for tourist trade has been keen since the war's end.²⁹

In contrast to the pre-war USTB’s dual emphasis on national culture and international awareness, the USTD faced an “either/or” proposition. The conflict

²⁷ Endy, *Cold War Holidays*, 3.
²⁸ Bossemeyer to Drury, Memorandum December 9, 1948 and Girard Davidson to Charles Sawyer, Letter October 19, 1948. File: Park Service-Travel Bureau-C.G.Davidson, Box 6, DOI-Davidson.
over jurisdiction and funding for a tourist bureau that took place between the Department of Interior and the Department of Commerce related to broader issues of ideology and politics in the Cold War era. The central debate was over where the emphasis should lie—instead of consolidating power and prestige by bringing people to the U.S., sending U.S. citizens out as tourists was the priority. The older New Deal vision no long fit with the Cold War context. By 1950, the USTD was disbanded, though the government continued to fund commemorations and develop heritage tourism in the National Parks that drew hundreds of visitors, in the mode developed by the USTB.
"SHAPING THE CHARACTER AND DESTINY OF THE AMERICAN PEOPLE": CONTESTING CITIZENSHIP AND CULTURAL HERITAGE AT THE 1957 JAMESTOWN ANNIVERSARY

Introduction

To mark the 350th anniversary of the founding of the English colony at Jamestown, the commonwealth of Virginia hosted an eight-month long "celebration" known as the Jamestown Festival. Organized through the joint efforts of a state and a federal commission, the event drew international attention and brought over a million visitors to the Jamestown area, including then Vice President Richard Nixon and Queen Elizabeth II of England. Much like the western boosters who oriented the Golden Gate International Exposition's narrative of national identity and progress to the Pacific coast, Jamestown Festival planners saw in their anniversary "the opportunity, indeed, the duty—to rededicate our State and Nation to the tradition on which our present greatness was founded."{1} Through a program of speeches, historical pageantry, military demonstrations, concerts, and exhibits, they sought both to emphasize Virginia's central role in the development of American culture and define the core values of that culture, broadcasting them to audiences at home and abroad.

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Speaking at the festival’s opening ceremonies, Vice President Nixon stressed the importance of a commemoration that showcased American ideals, particularly at a time when “the masters of the Kremlin” sought to discredit them. Jamestown, he declared, “was the beginning of a new type of society which was ultimately to revolutionize the life of the average man in both the Old World and the New;” the site where “the freedom of individual opportunity” enabled a “tiny colony [to] grow into the most powerful nation in the world.” Through its celebration of Jamestown’s success, the festival furthered the U.S.’s mission “to exemplify to the world the opportunity for all nations which pursue the goals of freedom,” and demonstrated to “hard-pressed peoples of Europe, Asia, and Africa that they, too, may realize the benefits which Americans today enjoy if they will share the faith which motivated the settler of Jamestown.”

Nixon’s oratory captured the mix Cold War patriotism and consensus ideology that shaped the Jamestown Festival’s presentation of the past. In the interest of creating a unifying vision national heritage, anniversary events emphasized British influence, representative government, religion, free enterprise, and a legacy of independence, while glossing over more divisive topics like slavery, social conflict, and sectional divides. Exhibits and programming traced how these elements culminated in the formation of the United States at the end of

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the colonial era, and then continued on to inspire the development of democratic societies on the American model across the globe. With a focus, as Virginia Governor Thomas Stanley put it, on “the stirring events of our glorious history which provides every American’s heritage,” the Festival’s historical narrative served a dual aim: to galvanize a patriotic citizenry at home, and promote the U.S.’s Cold War role as leader of the “free world” abroad.³ In this sense, it represented the culmination of goals for postwar travel and promotion begun by the United States Travel Division.

At the same time, the public nature of the anniversary provided a platform for debate over this presentation of the past, as well as its legacy. Staged in the midst of the Cold War, Civil Rights Movement, and global decolonization, the Festival’s emphasis on a supposedly all-encompassing heritage provoked questions about who could actually access the full rights of citizenship and lay claim to the values of freedom and self-determination it espoused. Public commentary and articles in the press pointed out the hypocrisy of Virginia hosting a celebration of democratic equality, while actively engaged in campaigns to uphold segregation and countermand the Supreme Court decision in Brown v. Board of Education. The “eagerness of Virginians to lay hold to a democratic

past that their present life denies,” as one letter to the editor put it, could not compensate for the fact “that their state has so miserably fulfilled her promising beginnings.”

Even as the Jamestown Festival celebrated the achievements of the United States and Virginia’s role in their development, advocates for civil rights turned the Festival’s celebration of American ideals into a call for the nation to live up to them. This chapter examines the Festival’s portrayal of Jamestown—as a site of national origins and emerging democratic institutions—in the context of the debates over international policy, state authority, and civil rights taking place in the late 1950s. Looking at the process of promoting the anniversary and the responses to it reveals how different groups vied to assert their visions of the past, and use the anniversary to shape definitions of what it meant to be an American in the present.

**Staging the Jamestown Festival**

Virginia began its preparations for the Jamestown anniversary in 1952, appointing a committee of state legislators to draft preliminary plans for the event and solicit the U.S. Congress for federal support. Their recommendations came to fruition two years later, when the state’s “Virginia 350th Anniversary

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Commission” and the federal “Jamestown-Williamsburg-Yorktown Celebration Commission” met for the first time, to cooperatively organize the festival. Members of the two commissions consisted of a mix of state and federal politicians, individuals from key historical organizations like Colonial Williamsburg, the National Park Service, and the Association for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities (APVA), as well as the president of the College of William & Mary and the director of the Virginia State Chamber of Commerce. Lewis McMurran, Jr., a state delegate from Newport News chaired the Virginia commission, while Robert V. Hatcher, a Richmond native and president of the Atlantic Life Insurance Company headed the federal commission.5

The APVA, a historic preservation organization formed by a group of elite Virginia women in 1889, and the National Park Service jointly administered the site of the original Jamestown colony. Established in 1607 on an island in the James River about fifty miles inland from the Chesapeake Bay, Jamestown became the first permanent English settlement in North America. After barely surviving a precarious first few years, it served as the 17th century capital of

England's Virginia colony, reverted to a family farm when the capital moved to Williamsburg in 1698, and hosted a Confederate fort during the Civil War. In 1893, the APVA acquired land on Jamestown Island and became the first to preserve and promote it as a heritage site. The Park Service joined them in the mid-1930s.  

Previous commemorations had primarily been the purview of the APVA, which began holding annual "pilgrimages" on the anniversary of the colony's establishment in 1895. As James Lindgren detailed in his study of the organization, the APVA viewed Jamestown as the birthplace of American culture and democracy, and characterized the site as sacred ground. During the first fifty years of its custodianship, the group built what Lindgren termed a "civil religion" around the site, developing Jamestown as a "shrine" and "mecca" to the nation's foundational values—values, it emphasized, which were derived from and

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6 The APVA initially acquired 22.5 acres on Jamestown Island, which included the remains of a colonial-era church. This land was exempted from condemnation when the National Park Service gained possession of 1500 acres of the island in 1934. In 1936, the federal government incorporated its part of the Jamestown site into Colonial National Historic Park (CNHP), which also included the Revolutionary War battlefield at Yorktown, Virginia. The relationship between the APVA and Park Service was sometimes contentious, but generally amiable. On the APVA and Jamestown see James Lindgren, *Preserving the Old Dominion: Historic Preservation and Virginia Traditionalism* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1993), especially 46, 91-107, & 221. On the National Park Service and CNHP see *JFY Final Report*, 7-13.
developed by Virginians. The annual pilgrimages served as a way to promote the APVA’s vision of the nation’s past and Virginia’s central role in it.7

The APVA pilgrimages continued into the mid-twentieth century, but the group had less involvement with the most prominent Jamestown commemoration, the 1907 international exposition held in honor of the colony’s tercentenary. Federal, state, and private donors all contributed to construct a massive fairground on Sewells Point near Norfolk, with dual piers that jutted one-hundred and fifty feet into the bay and a collection of monumental, but temporary exhibition buildings.8 Showcasing the imperial reach and naval power of the United States, the 1907 exposition was more a paean to industrial, commercial, and technological progress than a celebration of Jamestown’s historical import. Many visitors did not even make it to the island itself, where the main markers of the

7 Lindgren argued that the APVA’s mission was as much about shaping the present as preserving the past. Regarding “history as a vault of ideas and values” it “worked to ensure that traditionalist culture was preserved, established families and leaders were respected, and racial and class order was restored,” through its presentation of the past. Lindgren, Preserving the Old Dominion, 9-11. John Sears’ study of tourism’s cultural role in the 19th century found that portrayals of tourist attractions as “the sacred places of a nation or a people,” like the APVA’s at Jamestown, were quite common. They “provided points of mythic and national unity” that played a key role in early formations of national identity. John Sears, Sacred Places: American Tourist Attractions in the Nineteenth Century (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1998), 7.

8 The APVA was among the groups that first suggested an exposition for the tercentenary in 1901, but an exposition company was formed to handle the planning. Its design was typical of world’s fairs of the era. Robert T. Taylor, “The Jamestown Tercentennial Exposition of 1907” Virginia Magazine of History and Biography, Vol. 65, No. 2 (April 1957), 170 & 190.
anniversary were a memorial obelisk built by the federal government, and a separate commemorative ceremony held by the APVA.9

The Jamestown Tercentenary Exposition succeeded in bringing a new level of national attention to Virginia, but it was also a financial and organizational disaster. A mix of poor planning, distance from population centers, and lack of funding left the fairgrounds only one-third complete at its opening, and the exposition company in debt for over two million dollars at its close.10 Public skepticism born of the 1907 experience was one of the first obstacles the 1957 planning commissions faced, as Virginians expressed concerns over everything from financing and traffic, to appropriate festival themes. Even a surviving official from the 1907 fair weighed in, writing an open letter that advised organizers to avoid “a stereotyped, old-style commercial exposition” and “the luxury of temporary showplace buildings” altogether if they wanted a successful event.11

9 The initial proposal for the exposition included a historical focus, but as planning continued it largely dropped out. Theodore Roosevelt was the driving force behind the naval emphasis at the exposition, inviting navies from around the world and assembling an U.S. fleet that embarked from Hampton Roads on what became known as the “Great White Fleet’s” international tour. Taylor, “Jamestown Tercentennial,” 190, 193-199, and Lindgren, Preserving the Old Dominion, 122-125.
10 The Jamestown Exposition’s troubles were widely criticized in the press at the time, earning it the nickname “Jamestown Imposition.” Taylor, “Jamestown Tercentennial,” 200 & 206.
11 James J. Thompson, the 1907 official, is quoted in the JWY Final Report, 20. Both the state and federal final reports noted the influx of commentary and planning advice the commissions received through letter, the press, and public surveys. See Virginia Commission Final Report, 15, and Fred Frechette, “Parke
1957 commissioners sought to incorporate the APVA's emphasis on Jamestown's historical and spiritual significance, while avoiding the costly pitfalls encountered by the 1907 exposition. After conducting a study, they concluded that past commemorations had erred in being "commercial, gaudy, or overpriced," and assured the public of their intent to stage an "instructive and attractive" event, "solidly based on historical research."\(^{12}\) The state commission determined early on that "Virginia itself should be the exposition. Every existing shrine and tourist attraction should be improved and emphasized in 1957."\(^{13}\) Federal organizers agreed that the Jamestown Festival should make a lasting contribution to the preservation and appreciation of Virginia's early American heritage. "The primary mission of the celebration," Federal Chairman Robert Hatcher wrote in his report to President Eisenhower, was "to invite attention to this historic area:"

and to re-emphasize to our citizens the hardships and fortitude of our ancestors, the wisdom of the political and social economy established by them and the vast debt of gratitude the American owes them for his priceless heritage of freedom.

\(^{12}\) Virginia Commission Final Report, 15.

Its character, he assured the President, would be that of "a dignified historic exposition rather than a World’s Fair or trade exposition." 14

From their joint headquarters in Williamsburg, the two commissions outlined proposals to involve the entire state in the anniversary, encouraging communities and civic organizations to highlight historic sites and resources in their local areas. In addition to commemorative events, they sponsored extensive archival and archaeological research that provided a more complete picture of life in seventeenth-century Virginia. As Executive Director Parke Rouse Jr. explained to the Virginia Chamber of Commerce magazine, The Commonwealth, planners sought a balance between entertainment and education at the festival: "People expect color, and color is what we plan to give them. But we have not completely forgotten the scholarly aspects, and indeed, have financed considerable research."

Projects included microfilming colonial documents from England, publishing a series of twenty-three historical booklets about the colony written by prominent scholars, excavating Green Spring Plantation and part of Jamestown Island (though they did not locate the original fort), and the completion of a parkway connecting historic sites at Jamestown, Williamsburg, and Yorktown. 16

14 Robert Hatcher to President Eisenhower, April 8, 1955, quoted in JWY Final Report, 58.
16 Descriptions of all these projects can be found in the state and federal commissions’ final reports. See Report of the Virginia Commission, chapters 3, 8, and 13 and JWY Final Report, chapters 3, 5, and 7.
The main focus of Festival events centered on the “historic triangle” formed by these three sites. Located within miles of each other on the peninsula between the James and York rivers, each already hosted its own museum related to early America. The National Park Service administered Yorktown’s Revolutionary War battlefield and shared oversight of Jamestown Island with the APVA, while John D. Rockefeller Jr.’s foundation managed the restoration of Colonial Williamsburg. Taken together, Festival commissioners argued, the sites created “a triple shrine” that offered “opportunities unique in America for the dramatization of the American past and the articulation of our peculiarly American ideals.” Preserving these landscapes before they became “overrun and destroyed by increasing industrialization and urbanization” was just as essential as preserving the colonial documents and archaeological artifacts uncovered by the commissions’ researchers.17

As Hatcher’s letter to Eisenhower and numerous other planning documents made clear, the commissions had a specific story they wanted the Festival to tell about the country’s origins and identity, one that emphasized the obstacles early colonists overcame and the enduring national institutions they created. In a 1953 joint report, they laid out the interpretive emphasis for the historic triangle sites: Jamestown “the point of origin…the struggle to survive in a wilderness; the establishment of representative government; the development of

tobacco as a staple crop...and the abiding faith in God and fellowman which sustained this seventeenth-century outpost of civilization;” Williamsburg “capital of a proud and flourishing plantation society, and the political headquarters for patriots who dared to speak out boldly for individual liberties and independence;” Yorktown “where the dream of independence became a reality.”18 The concept of the historic triangle linked each site into a linear progression of developments, setting up a teleological historical narrative that culminated in the creation of the United States.19 Jamestown stood at its apex, both the origin and the endpoint the nation should return to, if it wanted to stay true to its founding values.

The value of the historic triangle, the Festival’s official program informed visitors, was its ability to tell “the story of America’s birth and growth to independence.”20 Traveling the landscape became a route to civic education. “The visitor can literally follow the march of events from Jamestown to Yorktown,” declared a Park Service report that detailed a visit by the fictitious “average American family,” the Smiths. “He can step with history...from precarious settlement to the permanence of nationhood, walking on the actual soil where

19 This teleological perspective of history is often referred to as “Whig history.” See Herbert Butterfield, The Whig Interpretation of History (New York: Norton, 1965).
much of this took place.”21 A Festival advertisement sponsored by the Perpetual Building Association took the idea even further. Describing “the hardships suffered by those brave men [at Jamestown]” as “the crucible that helped forge America’s greatness,” it assured prospective visitors that the historic triangle carried lessons that not only shaped the nation’s past, but also helped cultivate good citizenship in the present:

> You will re-discover that spirit of American courage and faith if you visit Virginia this year. Birthplace of the destiny of a young Republic, every inch of the Jamestown-Williamsburg, Yorktown area is hallowed ground. You’ll have a better understanding of what it means to be an American when you tread the soil and breathe the air of the Old Dominion.22

The sites of the Jamestown Festival put visitors in contact with this heritage. Just setting foot in Virginia was enough to inspire them to become better Americans.

In the late 1930s, promotions associated with the Golden Gate International Exposition invoked traveling the U.S.’s western landscapes as a route to national prosperity and solidarity. They sought to rouse the citizenry in the face of continuing economic depression and growing global warfare through narratives of perseverance on the frontier, where, they argued, the nation’s true character was forged. The narratives surrounding the Jamestown Festival likewise built a national mythology through tourism to heritage sites. By presenting the

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21 The proposal was presented at a joint meeting of the state and federal commissions in 1954/1955. “The Smiths of USA visit Jamestown 1957,” File: Jamestown Anniversary, Box 562, APVA Archives, 2.
landscape of the historic triangle as inherently imbued with the spirit and ideals of the U.S.’s founding generations, the Jamestown Festival naturalized its interpretation of national history and identity. It brought the “foraging of American character” back from subsequent frontiers, to the site of England’s first (permanent, North American) colony. It was a project begun with the APVA’s first pilgrimage back in 1893, incidentally, the same year Frederick Jackson Turner proposed his famous frontier thesis at the Chicago’s World’s Fair.

In a speech quoted in the *Washington Post*, Virginia Commission Chairman Lewis A. McMurran Jr. encouraged Americans to participate in the anniversary by inviting them “to come back to your home town of Jamestown—back to the place of your spiritual and hereditary birth.” The Festival would be “for naught,” he emphasized, if we do not, as a result of the celebration, comprehend and pass on to future generations the true significance of what happened—the principles which were passed on from England and developed further, leading to our present zenith of national greatness.23

Looking to Jamestown as the GGIE looked to the western frontier, McMurran presented the Festival as a national homecoming—an opportunity for Americans to reconnect with their history and a set of values, derived from English heritage, which continued to define them and the nation’s success. With its rhetoric of hallowed grounds and spiritual birthplaces, the Festival suggested these values were something sacred and eternal, rather than a set of meanings put together by

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government committees. The Jamestown Festival, however, was engaged in its own image-making project. The particular values it emphasized, as well as its interpretation of early American history as a whole, was very much shaped by the priorities and preoccupations of the mid-twentieth century context it occupied.

_A Commerce in Culture: Heritage Tourism and the Jamestown Festival_

By 1957, an established heritage tourism industry operated in Virginia. Yet, in contrast to the 1939 Golden Gate International Exposition, which celebrated the potential of a commercialized tourist landscape to generate both profit and a deeper understanding of national identity, Jamestown Festival organizers drew a clear line between their commemoration and commerce. "Our prime purpose was to conserve and preserve important historic sites," the federal final report declared, and "any form of commercial exposition would seriously encroach on this principle."24 Public promotions for the Jamestown Festival, like this example from the _Washington Post_ that emphasized the historical and educational nature of the celebration, made the same distinction:

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24 *JWY Final Report*, 34.
The Jamestown Festival of 1957 is different. It is not a profit-making venture. It is not a one-shot deal with the temporary exhibits or a world's fair with midway attractions and roller coaster and girlie shows. It is conceived in gracious simplicity to ease the step backward into history; to show the deepest roots of our Nation's heritage and the lessons there to be relearned. It is built to last for years, a permanent settlement.25

Even so, the Jamestown Festival was a part of Virginia's commercial tourist landscape. In their own 1953 report, Virginia commissioners noted that tourism was the second largest industry in the state, and declared their intent that the "Jamestown celebration should be utilized to further increase that interest...in Virginia as a major tourist attraction." Estimating at least a twenty-five percent increase in visitation due to the Festival, the commission consulted with state officials and industry leaders about the money this could bring into the state.26

Around the same time civic leaders in San Francisco were busy developing the tourist landscape of their city, Virginia boosters also turned to marketing history and heritage sites as a way to draw tourists and investors to the state. As Fitzhugh Brundage found in his study of public memory in the South, the interwar years "marked a watershed in the self-conscious commercialization of the southern past [when] the struggle to cultivate and perpetuate historical memory in the South was incorporated into the commerce of tourism."27 In Virginia, like most southern states, local civic and business groups initiated the

26 1953 Virginia Commission Report, 7 and 18.
push for tourism promotion and development. Beginning in the 1920s, organizations like the Virginia Historic Highway Association and the Virginia State Chamber of Commerce, both founded in 1924, collaborated on campaigns for better roads and national publicity that would “attract the attention of all America” to “what Virginia has to offer the visitor in the way of historical monuments, beautiful natural scenery and unexpected economic advantages.” Shortly afterward, the state government formed its own Commission on Conservation and Development, which included an entire department devoted to advertising.

Working together, the state and private organizations set out to interpret “Virginia to Virginians” as well as publicize “Virginia events, resources and advantages throughout the nation and the world.” Along with media campaigns, they encouraged the development of historic sites, lobbied for better roads and accommodations, commissioned guidebooks, and pioneered a historical highway marker program (the first in the nation) for Virginia. The promotional activities pulled Virginians and their history into these state boosters’ vision for the future, targeting residents as well as out-of-state tourists in their bid for support.

28 Quoted in “Advertising Virginia: Tourism in the Old Dominion in the Twenties and the Great Depression,” Virginia Cavalcade Vol. 44 No. 1 (Summer 1994): 31. Brundage noted that local businessmen taking the lead “in creating historical attractions which public officials then promoted” was the pattern found in heritage tourism development throughout the interwar South. Brundage, The Southern Past, 184-185.
30 “Advertising Virginia,” 32-34.
The state's tourism industry continued to grow throughout the Great Depression, as the Federal government founded new National Parks in the Blue Ridge and tidewater regions of the state, including Colonial National Historical Park. During the mid-1930s, Virginia had an estimated $73 million in travel revenue, and ranked seventh in tourism among all U.S. states. After World War II, its industry expanded even further. "Travel is no longer a pastime for the rich," the Virginia Chamber of Commerce concluded in 1946. "It is now a mass market. The bulk of tourist traveling in normal times in this country is done by persons of average means."

Historical sites like Colonial Williamsburg, once the domain of wealthy tourists and antique aficionados began to draw a wider range of visitors in the post-war era as well. Surveys conducted by the federal Jamestown commission found that:

Williamsburg is now attracting and will continue to attract the "mass" class of tourist as well as the "class" type which has heretofore been the primary type visiting Williamsburg. A wide range of visitors from wide range of income classes were inspired by the story of the Nation's beginnings...

Organizers of the Jamestown Festival likewise planned to both accommodate and appeal to the "mass class" of visitors. "The success of an imaginative enterprise

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32 Virginia Chamber of Commerce, "Travel Summary 1946" Virginia Chamber of Commerce Records, Library of Virginia. (blue binder)
33 Algin B. King quoted in JWY Final Report, 188-189.
like the Jamestown Festival depends to a large extent on the glamour and
dramatic appeal in which the concept can be clothed,” the Virginia Commission’s
final report explained in a chapter titled “Festival Promotion and Advertising.”
The “PR men call this ‘packaging,’ and to this important subject much of the
Commission’s early planning was devoted.”

This planning included a full public relations program. A July 1956 report
listed stories in national magazines like Vogue, Redbook, Colliers, Parade, and
newspapers, regional publications, films, and television segments. American
Airlines flew in eighty travel writers to boost coverage of the event. The
commissions also partnered with major industries and corporations, seeking
sponsorships and funding. The Glass Industries of America helped fund the
reconstruction of the seventeenth-century glasshouse on Jamestown Island,
Sinclair Oil produced print advertisements featuring the Festival, while Walt
Disney Studios and the West Virginia Division of Standard Oil released
travelogue films. The Color Society of America worked with the Richmond
department store Miller & Rhodes to create a collection of Jamestown
Anniversary fashions, inspired by clothing worn the year the colony was founded,
and sewn in a palette of official Jamestown Festival colors.

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34 Virginia Final Report, 65.
Miscellaneous, Mss 4V8b-18-35: Virginia 350th Anniversary Commission Papers
36 A comprehensive listing of promotions can be found in both the state and
federal commissions’ final reports.
For organizers, more publicity and a broader appeal meant more people would encounter the Festival's vision of the nation's past. Looking back on the impact of the Festival, the Virginia Commission connected this visibility to its success in promoting the state:

Never before had the spotlight of national attention played so frequently on the State, its people, and its past. As a result of the Festival and its events, the Old Dominion was presented to the world in a positive role—a state with a tradition of leadership spanning three and a half centuries.37

The organizers of the Jamestown Festival did have an interest in conveying historical information, but historical accuracy and authenticity also provided a way to sell the experience. Promotions enticed visitors by emphasizing how they would see and experience “the real thing,” masking the constructed nature of the Festival’s vision of American heritage. Assertions about authenticity and the copious amounts of research completed, along with denials of any commercial interests or associations gave weight to and verified the Festival’s narrative of the past. The elision of commerce and focus on “culture” and “accuracy” masked the ways that culture and commerce had become intertwined, both in the heritage tourism industry, and in understandings of U.S. national identity and citizenship.

37 Virginia Commission Final Report, 173.
The landscape and existing historical sites of the historic triangle were an essential part of the Jamestown Festival's structure. But the state of Virginia also commissioned a new facility to serve as the centerpiece of the anniversary. Built on a point of land within sight of Jamestown Island itself, Jamestown Festival Park formed a permanent complement to the National Park and APVA holdings there. Part living-history reconstruction and part modern museum, it featured recreations of James Fort, the three ships that first brought settlers to the colony, and "Powhatan's lodge," which focused on Native Americans at the time of contact. At the front of the site, a modern information center and two galleries dedicated to "Old World Heritage" and "New World Achievement" provided an orientation for visitors, with exhibits that "trace[d] the influence of [Jamestown's] ideas and ideals in the modern world."40

39 The land for Festival Park (now known as Jamestown Settlement) was part of a tract acquired by the Virginia Highway Department on Glasshouse Point, the mainland area adjacent to Jamestown Island paralleling Route 31. The state contributed twenty-two acres and the National Park Service added ten more to create the site. The State Conservation Commission agreed to take over future management of the park, if needed, at the end of the festival year. Virginia Commission Final Report, 24.
Designed to engage visitors through a more vivid and tangible depiction of the past, Festival Park most clearly reflected the priorities and themes that organizers had developed for the anniversary. Above all things, it emphasized the pivotal role that Jamestown, and by extension, Virginia, played in American history. The Virginia commission and other state boosters felt they had to combat an over-emphasis on the role of Plymouth colony in Massachusetts in the U.S.'s origin story. It was nothing less than a "pernicious and willful perversion of history," State Chamber of Commerce director Verbon Kemp wrote, that left the association of New England with the foundational elements of American culture foremost in the public mind.41 This rivalry had been a focus of Jamestown commemorations since the nineteenth-century, but many hoped that the scale of research and publicity for the 350th anniversary would, as a Virginia Gazette article put it, "place Jamestown, ignored in the past by many historians and other writers, in its proper historical perspective."42

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41 Verbon E. Kemp, "The Queen's Visit" The Commonwealth 24, no. 10 (October 1957), 3. James Lindgren traced earlier efforts of Virginian preservationists to garner public attention for Jamestown and counter the popularization of what they termed "Yankee" claims for Plymouth as the primary site of national origins and character. See Lindgren, Preserving the Old Dominion, chapters 5 and 6. Peter Wallenstein also noted the "rivalry between the two regions for historical primacy" in his overview of Virginia history Cradle of America: Four Centuries of Virginia History (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2007), 27.
42 Supplement to The Virginia Gazette: Jamestown Festival Edition, June 28, 1957, 1. Numerous editorials and articles, in newspapers from Richmond to New York to Los Angeles, took up this issue. Among the most extensive treatments were Virginius Dabney, "Query About the Pilgrim Fathers" New York Times September 29, 1957, 209; "The Jamestown-Plymouth Myths" Richmond Times-Dispatch November 25, 1956, 2D; and Page Smith, "Mayflower II Steals
To counter this perception, Festival Park planners devised a series of exhibits emphasizing all of Virginia's "firsts": England's first successful New World Colony, the first representative assembly, the first Anglican church building, and "America's first factory" the Jamestown glasshouse. In fact, a Virginia commission report noted, "there are few aspects of our free economy: agricultural, industrial, or commercial, that did not have their beginnings at Jamestown." Advertisements for the park invited visitors to "make 1957 your year of discovery in Virginia, the First America!" drawing a direct connection between the 1607 landing at Jamestown and the present-day United States.  

Though many of the "firsts" listed did indeed happen at some point in Jamestown's history, in its zeal to promote Virginia the park's presentation tended to overstate their significance and influence. Asked to review the plan for the "New World Achievement" exhibit, Charles Hatch, Jr., Chief of the Research and Interpretation Division for Colonial National Historical Park, replied "it seems very clear that the plan attempts to show 'Virginia in the Building of the Nation' and is not, perhaps, a record of 'New World Achievement.'" He went on to enumerate several examples:

Virginia's Thunder" Los Angeles Times July 29, 1957, B5. The latter deals with the uproar caused when an Englishman commissioned a replica of the Mayflower to be built and sailed from England to Plymouth, Massachusetts during the Festival year.

Virginia was not unique in the matter of individualism as I understand it. Did not those New Englanders have a bit of it in them?

It may be a little too much to attribute the creation of the United States of America "largely to the genius of Virginia statesmen." This is the kind of statement that could create an unfavorable impression.

In all fairness, should it not be pointed out that the seafaring stock of New England and the merchantile [sic] people of Philadelphia and New York...also "produced men uniquely qualified to establish the new nation"?

It might be better to say that the settlers turned to try industry rather than "to development of industry." For decades, most "industrial attempts" were miserable failures.

"Possibly," he concluded, "this is the necessary slant from where you are. It does, however, miss a part of the broader national meaning that Jamestown carries in its story. Jamestown belongs to the Nation as well as to Virginia." 44

The hyperbolic claims in the Festival Park exhibit plan may have been the result of overly-enthusiastic state boosters, but they also suggested a difference in perspective and intent. In his review, Hatch reminded park planners that "Jamestown belongs to the Nation as well as to Virginia." The interpretive emphasis of Festival Park, however, seemed more focused on showing how the nation itself was a product of Virginia. Its exhibits, as the Official Festival Program declared, "demonstrated how the first colonists, by their examples of leadership, enterprise, and independence shaped the character and destiny of the American people." 45 Through its commemorative activities linking Jamestown with the origins of the United States, Virginia could lay claim to values of the

45 Official Festival Program, 36-37.
colonial period that it argued came to define the nation and its culture, along with the authority to interpret them.

During the Civil War, Jefferson Davis’ second inauguration was held in the city of Richmond at the foot of an equestrian statue of George Washington, a location chosen to emphasize that the Confederate States were trying to upheld the legacy of the nation’s founders. The ceremony was held on February 22, 1862, Washington’s birthday, and in his speech, Davis drew connections between Washington’s actions, and his own:

On this the birthday of the man most identified with the establishment of American independence, and beneath the monument erected to commemorate his heroic virtues and those of his compatriots, we have assembled to usher into existence the Permanent Government of the Confederate States. Through this instrumentality, under the favor of Divine Providence, we hope to perpetuate the principles of our revolutionary fathers. The day, the memory, and the purpose seem fitly associated.  

In 1957, the state of Virginia again was at odds with the federal government, as it launched its campaign of “massive resistance” to the school desegregation order handed down by the Supreme Court in Brown v. Board of Education. As Festival Park’s interpretation of early American history celebrated Virginia’s role in shaping the nation’s past, it also established a precedent—one that made a case for the state’s prerogative to continue to define the nation in the present.

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The park's depiction of Jamestown's influence, however, did not end with the United States. "Few in the world at present fully appreciate that Jamestown was not only the beginning of Virginia and the United States," the Virginia commission declared, "but nurtured those principles of government which have become the 'way of life' for...all democratic governments." The anniversary provided "an opportunity to emphasize to the nation and to all the world the significance of Jamestown in the spread of English-speaking democracy throughout the world," and the design and layout of the Festival Park helped reinforce these international aspects of Jamestown's legacy.47

Upon entering the park, visitors first encountered the "Old World Heritage" building, sponsored by the British government. Its collection of artwork, historic documents, artifacts, and mannequin tableaux depicted the history of the colony from the perspective of the English settlers, portraying them as pioneers who brought civilization to the wilderness, including "the legacies of English religion, law, government, learning, and liberty."48 Exiting the "Old World" galleries led visitors straight to the "New World Achievement" exhibit that had received so much commentary from Charles Hatch Jr. It, of course, focused on Virginia and its role in establishing traditions of representative

government, religion, free enterprise, and independence in the United States. The last section of this building looked beyond the American Revolution, tracing "outstanding events in the lives of Virginians" from the "territorial expansion of the nation" to "the United States' influence in world affairs."49

These exhibits reflected the influence of the Cold War on the Festival's interpretation of history. The prominent focus on Jamestown as the origin of the "free world," as well as being representative of Protestant Christianity, free enterprise, and democratic government (far beyond the role these played historically) dovetailed with the image of the U.S. cultivated by the federal government during this period in its propaganda war against communism.50 An advertisement for the festival from the Norfolk and Western Railway drew these connections explicitly, declaring that in the early years, Jamestown ran under "a socialistic system." It was not until colonists acquired the "right of the individual to own, benefit and prosper directly in proportion to his individual labors [that] Jamestown began to flourish...This is the American Way."51

exhibit plan for the “New World Achievement” gallery, Charles Hatch, Jr. questioned a similar characterization there as straying too far from history, in the interest of making a political point:

It may be that some of the generalizations are too sweeping. Are you sure, for example, that the early Jamestown society was a “collective” one? It was communal, initially, by Company design yet certainly not communistic.52

The Park’s narrative linked the founding values of the United States directly to its post-war international role. Exhibit quotes like “[Virginia] was the first branch of the growing tree which has since spread representative government to one quarter of the world’s population” proclaimed the relevance of Jamestown as the origin of the “free” democratic world.53 As Under Secretary of the Interior Hatfield Chilson explained in his speech at the Park’s opening ceremonies, the Festival carried “a message not only for Americans, not only for the English-speaking peoples, but for courageous friends of civilization and liberty throughout the world.”54 Events and ceremonies from Festival Park were even broadcast on Radio Free Europe, as part of U.S. propaganda efforts designed to counter communist influence in Europe.55

54 Chilson quoted in “Festival Opens at Jamestown” Washington Post, April 2, 1957.
55 JWW Final Report, appendix on media relations.
Jamestown Festival organizers put a lot of effort into constructing a cohesive narrative about American identity and heritage that anniversary events would portray to audiences at home and overseas. However, the Festival’s pageantry and programming also offered opportunities for different groups to assert their vision of national history and heritage. Virginia Indians and African Americans, two groups which played a major role in the history portrayed at the Jamestown Festival, and also, were engaged in movements for recognition and civil rights in the 1950s, found ways to claim a place in the anniversary’s historical narrative. As the structure of Virginia (and the nation’s) longstanding social order began to change, the Festival offered these groups a public outlet to pursue rights and representation.

Virginia Indians were most prominently represented at the Jamestown Festival in a living-history section of Festival Park named “Powhatan’s Lodge.” Intended, as both the official program and state’s Report put it, to “recognize…the important part which the Indians played in Jamestown’s early history,” this exhibit area focused on the Powhatan paramount chiefdom, the confederated group of Algonquian-speaking tribes that lived in the region when the English occupied Jamestown. It featured a reconstructed dwelling made of an arched-sapling frame covered with woven cattail mats, a tobacco field, and a “dance
circle of seven poles, carved with human faces." Costumed interpreters demonstrated cooking, farming practices, and craftwork for visitors, who were free to roam through the building and grounds.

In designing the exhibit area, park staff made an effort to present a more accurate picture of Powhatan life during the seventeenth-century. Their reconstructions drew heavily on contemporary European historical sources, particularly John Smith's account of the Powhatan and Thomas Hariot and John White's sixteenth-century descriptions of coastal Algonquin tribes in North Carolina. They incorporated archaeological findings and consulted with Dr. Ben McCary, a William & Mary professor and author of a historical booklet on the Powhatan favorably reviewed in academic journals as "an admirable summary

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of the present state of knowledge about the subject." Most significantly, during the festival year, several members of the Rappahannock Tribe worked as interpreters at the park. For the first time, Virginia Indians like Doris and James Ware, who demonstrated hide tanning, basket weaving, and building a dug-out canoe at the site, represented Powhatan history and culture themselves at a Jamestown commemoration. The Chickahominy Tribe also had an official presence at the Festival. On Memorial Day, Chief Adkins presented an American flag to state officials in a ceremony staged at Festival Park.

The focus on Powhatan history, the Chickahominy flag ceremony, and the involvement of some members of the Rappahannock Tribe at Festival Park stood in marked contrast to the previous celebration of Jamestown’s 300th anniversary. At the 1907 Jamestown Exposition, aside from iconography featuring Pocahontas and her “rescue” of John Smith, the most visible Native American presence was at the “101 Ranch” a wild-west show (located in a midway area called “the

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Warpath”) that featured Indian performers from Oklahoma and the Plains, unrelated to the Powhatan of Virginia.\textsuperscript{61} Festival organizers in 1957 made a point of emphasizing their commemoration’s concern with historical accuracy and authenticity. Publicity articles, like one in Williamsburg’s \textit{Virginia Gazette} headlined “Indian Exhibits at Jamestown Festival to Show True Picture of Powhatan Era,” detailed the Festival’s efforts to “establish a truer picture and a better understanding of the Powhatan confederacy than has been shown previously” and touted how the presence of “descendants of the original tribes, dressed in authentic costumes, add to the realism of the scene.”\textsuperscript{62}

Press like this offered further validation that the Festival’s account of history was the real or true history of America’s origins, but it also made the presence of contemporary Virginia Indians more visible. In his examination of crafting identity at the 1907 fair, Frederic Gleach emphasized the importance that such visibility could provide, even when representations were problematic. Visibility through performances of “Indian-ness,” Gleach argued, was one strategy used to pursue cultural recognition and survival by Virginia Indians, as

\textsuperscript{62} \textit{Virginia Gazette} (Williamsburg, VA), “Indian Exhibits at Jamestown Festival to Show True Picture of Powhatan Era,” March 29, 1957, 27. See also “History Walks in Jamestown,” \textit{The Chicago Defender (National Edition)}, July 20, 1957, 8, which included a photo of interpreters at Festival Park, noting that they are “authentic members of the Rappahannock tribe.”
common understandings of “appearing to be Indian” became an increasingly critical marker of identity in the eyes of the state during the twentieth-century.  

### African Americans and Jamestown

The experience of African Americans, and the origins of slavery and its central role in the development of the Virginia colony received little attention or representation at the Jamestown Festival. There was no section of Festival Park dedicated to this story. In fact, the *Norfolk Journal and Guide* ran a series of articles that noted how much less of a presence African Americans had in the planning and execution of the 1957 celebration versus the 1907 anniversary.  

Festival publications noted the arrival of the first Africans at Jamestown in 1619, and this event also had a panel dedicated to it in the “New World Achievement”

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Gleach argued “while the Powhatan Indians were not invisible in all of these sources [from the exposition], the ways they can be seen reveal certain problems for their agenda of increasing their visibility as citizens of the twentieth century.”  

Primarily, they were relegated to the past, and their decline incorporated as part of a Euro-American origin mythology. John Smith’s account of Pocahontas saving him from execution has been contested since the 19th century. See J.A. Leo Lemay, *Did Pocahontas Save John Smith?* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1992) for arguments in favor, and Rountree, *Pocahontas’s People*, for arguments against.

exhibit, stating, “Negroes, slave and free, contributed an important share of labor needed for the growth and prosperity of the colony.”65 Beyond that, there was one commemorative event: an official ceremony held in Festival Park at the request of the National Memorial to the Progress of the Colored Race in America to mark this anniversary.66

On the morning of August 24, 1957, Jamestown Festival Park hosted a ceremony to memorialize “the landing of the first twenty Negroes on American soil in the year 1619.”67 Staged at the request of two groups dedicated to commemorating African American history and racial progress, the National Freedom Day Association and the National Memorial to the Progress of the Colored Race in America Association, it was the sole event devoted to these topics held during the Festival year. As the U.S. Army band played “My Country ‘Tis of Thee” and the “Star Spangled Banner,” members of the Navy conducted a flag-raising ceremony and fired a salute to Dorie Miller, the African American war hero from the bombing of Pearl Harbor. A crowd of hundreds, including six

66 Final Report, 128 and Richmond Afro-American (Richmond, VA), advertisement, August 24, 1957, 8. Virginia radio evangelist “Elder” Solomon Lightfoot Michaux directed the program, which opened with an introduction from commission chairman McMurran, and included a “log cabin hall of fame” with its own historical narrative of progress for “the Negroes’ rise from the Cabin to the Capitol” erected nearby on the Colonial Parkway.
67 Elder Lightfoot Solomon Michaux to Lewis McMurran Jr., July 3, 1957. The full list of events can be found in the ceremony program, “Joint Celebration of the Landing of the First Twenty Negroes on American Soil and the Dedication of the Pictorial Hall of Fame to the Progress of the Colored Race.” File: Special Events 1957 Folder 5, VA 350th Anniversary Commission files, Library of Virginia.
busloads of people who had traveled overnight from Harlem on a special charter, listened as the chair of Virginia’s 350th Anniversary Commission gave a welcome address. But it was a rendition of “This is Freedom Day,” an anthem celebrating emancipation, that drew “rounds of applause” from the audience.68

The proceedings then moved a few miles down the James River for the dedication of a “Pictorial Hall of Fame” exhibit “portraying the achievements of Negroes in America since 1619” at radio evangelist Elder Solomon Lightfoot Michaux’s National Memorial Park.69 With the theme of “progress from the plantation cabin to the capitol,” this portion of the program connected the pageantry and milestones in African American history to the civil rights struggles of the present. As Michaux’s brother Lewis pointed out to the New York Amsterdam News, “Negroes now own the very same location where their ancestors were first enslaved.”70 Representatives from the recently formed African nation of Ghana were in attendance, linking the ceremony’s call for rights in the U.S. to decolonization movements in Africa. Dr. Rayford W. Logan, head

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70 “To Hold Ceremonies Where Slaves Landed,” New York Amsterdam News, August 24, 1957, 4. Michaux owned the land where the Hall of Fame was located.
of the Howard University History Department, gave the keynote speech, "This Sacred Ground," in which he identified Jamestown as the origin of Africans’ struggle for freedom and rights in America, a struggle that continued three-centuries later. "How long American Negroes must continue our quest for freedom will be determined in large measure by the action of Congress on the current civil rights bill," he stated, calling for "the legislative branch" to join "the judicial and executive branches in advancing the 'dream of American democracy.'" 71

Even as the Jamestown Festival trumpeted the glories of American institutions and culture, the country was in the midst of a debate about what its central values meant, whom they applied to, and the definitions of freedom and democracy themselves. Public memory and the Jamestown heritage celebrations connected explicitly to political battles in the "Old Dominion" over integration and civil rights. Virginia was one of the key battlegrounds in the contest over federal authority versus states rights in school desegregation. Following the 1954 Supreme Court decision in *Brown v. Board of Education*, the state launched a policy known as "Massive Resistance." Orchestrated by Senator Harry F. Byrd Sr. and his powerful Democratic Party machine, it was designed to block the

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71 "Rights Bill Praised at Jamestown," *Washington Post*, August 25, 1957, A14. The legislation referred to by Logan was the Civil Rights Act of 1957, which focused on voting rights protections for African Americans and authorized federal officials to take action against anyone obstructing voters. The first civil rights legislation since Reconstruction, it was eventually passed by Congress and became law on September 9, 1957, albeit in a much watered-down version from the original. See *The American South in the Twentieth Century*, 253.
court's ruling that racial separation in public schools cease "with all deliberate speed."\textsuperscript{72}

In March of 1956, as the state and federal commissions planned Festival events to celebrate Virginia's democratic heritage, Senator Byrd helped author the Southern Manifesto, a document declaring opposition to the Brown decision and exhorting southerners to use "all lawful means" to resist school desegregation. Virginia Governor Thomas B. Stanley introduced his set of massive resistance legislation to the state's General Assembly that August. Its adoption launched the core policies for defying the court's ruling: the transfer of local pupil enrollment decisions to a state board, the ability to cut state funding to any school under integration orders, and the mandate that public schools be closed, rather than admit students of different races.\textsuperscript{73} During the festival year itself, multiple local desegregation cases were already working their way through the federal courts.

\textsuperscript{72} Harry Flood Byrd dominated Virginia politics through much of the mid-twentieth century, serving as governor of Virginia from 1926-1930, and its U.S. senator from 1933-1965. Jill Ogline Titus described Virginia during this era as "essentially an oligarchy, controlled by as few as a thousand state and local officials, the majority of whom were cogs in Byrd's legendary political machine." See Jill Ogline Titus Brown's Battleground: Students, Segregationists, and the Struggle for Justice in Price Edward County, Virginia (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011), 15-17. The ruling "with all deliberate speed" was from the 1955 follow-up hearing that became known as Brown II. Charles S. Bullock III and Janna Deitz, "Transforming the South: The Role of the Federal Government" in The American South in the Twentieth Century, Craig Pascoe, Karen Trahan Leathem and Andy Ambrose, eds. (Athens, GA: The University of Georgia Press, 2005), 250-252.

These efforts to uphold Virginia’s racial hierarchy influenced both the festival’s interpretation of colonial history and the public’s interpretation of the festival itself.

Nowhere was the clash between adherents to Virginia’s segregated social order and the growing movement for equal rights made more manifest than at a homecoming dinner honoring “distinguished Virginians” hosted by the Virginia Chamber of Commerce and Governor Thomas B. Stanley. An early festival event, the dinner was scheduled for May 17, just four days after the anniversary of the Jamestown landing, and, coincidentally, on the third anniversary of the Supreme Court’s ruling in Brown v. Board of Education. Drawing the guest list for the dinner from Who’s Who in America, planners unknowingly invited six prominent African Americans to be honorees at what was intended to be a white-only event. Upon discovering this fact (after receiving acceptances from some of the group), the Chamber of Commerce initially wired each individual, rescinding his or her invitation.

Dr. Clilan B. Powell, a New York physician, entrepreneur, and publisher of the Amsterdam News, received his invitation to the homecoming dinner in early April 1957. Signed by Virginia Governor Thomas B. Stanley, Chamber of Commerce president Frank Ernst, and bearing the state seal, the invite explained that the black tie event honored “distinguished Virginians” who had made their mark in the world, and lived out of state. Powell accepted, booked rooms for himself and his wife at Richmond’s John Marshall hotel, and printed a column
detailing this honor from his home state in the *Amsterdam News.* A few days later, Powell heard from the Chamber of Commerce again. A telegram arrived informing him “there was a mistake,” and his invitation had been rescinded. As Powell quickly discovered, the “mistake” was that Chamber staff had unknowingly invited prominent African Americans to be honorees at what was intended to be a white-only event.

Powell went public with his story, and his intent to attend unless the governor himself retracted the invite. The incident garnered attention in newspapers across the country, generating multiple articles in the *New York Times, Washington Post, Richmond Afro-American, Norfolk Journal and Guide, Richmond Times-Dispatch,* and the *Chicago Defender.* As word spread, five additional African American invitees were confirmed. The press detailed their prominent civic, educational, and political involvement: Judge Edward R. Dudley was a former U.S. ambassador to Liberia; Ella Phillips Stewart had represented the United States on a State Department-sponsored lecture tour of India, Pakistan, and...
Ceylon, and Indonesia where she spoke about "the American way of life;" Dr. St.
Clair Drake, a sociology professor at Roosevelt University, had recently returned
from a fifteen-month research trip in West Africa funded by the Ford Foundation.
Lewis Downing served as Dean of the School of Engineering at Howard
University, and Dr. William H. Gray, Jr., an educator and Baptist pastor, was Vice
President of the Pennsylvania Council of Churches and former executive director
of the Governor's Race Relations Commission. Each of them had also received
a telegram canceling their invitation.

Many of these invitees joined Powell in writing open letters to Governor
Stanley, protesting the "unwarranted slight by the State...to former Virginians of
color," and arguing that since Stanley had signed the invitation, they would only
disregard it if he personally issued a withdrawal. Pressured by national
criticism, the governor eventually agreed that all invitees would be welcome.
Ultimately, none attended, citing other business that took priority and the
circumstances under which the invitations were issued.

76 On Stewart see "Editor Boycotts Jim Crow Dinner," Chicago Defender, April
27, 1957, 1 and "'We'll be there'—2 Famous Virginians," Richmond Afro-
American, April 20, 1957, 1 & 19. In addition to serving as a delegate to the
International Council of Women and Pan Pacific Women's Conference.
Subsequent article in the Richmond Afro-American during the month of April
provided additional information on Dudley, Downing, Gray, and other African
American invitees.
77 E.R. Dudley, quoted in "Judge Answers Governor on Canceled Dinner Bid,
78 At least one white invitee, Lambert Davis (director of North Carolina Press at
Chapel Hill) refused his invite to the dinner in protest, and issued a statement
criticizing the Governor's racial policies. Robert E. Baker, "Virginian Rejects
The debacle surrounding the governor's dinner revealed the workings of racial politics and systems in Virginia in multiple ways. On the one hand, it starkly displayed Virginia's practice of racial exclusion, creating, as one _Washington Post_ article said, "an unhappy dissonance for the patriotic oratory arising at Jamestown and Williamsburg." In an attempt at damage control, one Chamber of Commerce official was quoted explaining "the concept of the dinner was to be a social event...as Virginia Negroes they [the invitees] can appreciate the distinction." Roscoe Lewis of the _Norfolk Journal and Guide_ found in this explanation only further evidence of discrimination— an implication that "Virginia-born Negroes" should know and keep "their place...even though nationally distinguished, [they] should not expect to sit and eat with Virginia-born whites." Lewis used the dinner to critique the racial system of Virginia and the inequities it sought to enforce.

Dr. Powell wrote to Governor Stanley and Chamber of Commerce President Frank Ernst, pointing out how "your recession of my invitation because of my race...embarrassed the United States before the whole world." Indeed, instances of discrimination in the United States made for bad public relations on

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81 Chester Hampton, "Jim Crow Denied Roost," _Richmond Afro-American_ (Richmond, VA), April 27, 1957, 2.
the international stage, as historian Mary L. Dudziak pointed out in *Cold War Civil Rights: Race and the Image of American Democracy*. The Cold War and the Civil Rights Movement, the two key contexts surrounding and shaping the Jamestown Festival’s narrative, were not unrelated. As Thomas Borstelmann argued in *The Cold War and the Color Line*, “American foreign relations could not be insulated from the nation's race relations in an era of maximum U.S. involvement abroad.” The 1947 President's Committee on Civil Rights report commissioned by Truman concluded that “our domestic civil rights shortcoming are a serious obstacle' to American leadership in the world.”

And finally, the act of sending and then attempting to rescind invitations to an honorary event ran contrary to the image of Virginia as a place of hospitality and good manners, an image heavily promoted in advertising for tourism and anniversary events. The *Afro-American* related how the incident “holds up for the whole world to see just how thin is the veneer of courtesy, gentility, breeding and good manners about which some segments in the Old Dominion state are wont to boast.”

The dinner pinpointed the stark clash between contemporary state policies and the celebratory narrative of the Jamestown Festival. But African Americans also adopted the Festival's narrative as their own, and used it to call for Virginia to uphold the American ideals it supposedly cherished. Civil Rights advocates used the event, with its emphasis on a heritage of liberty and democracy, as a way to point out the hypocrisy of current policies of segregation and massive resistance. John B. Henderson, writing in the *Norfolk Journal and Guide*, an African American newspaper, looked back on the early days of Virginia as a time "when her sons were in the forefront of the fight for freedom and justice" that "all Virginians [could take] pride" in. Contrasting the past with the present, he criticized the current "unjust, undemocratic and un-Christian system of segregation [that] is writing a dark, disgusting and disgraceful chapter in the fair and glorious history of the Old Dominion."86 Another article, in the *Chicago Defender*, described how neither the institution of slavery, nor segregation was inherent to the colony, but developed over time.87

In an article entitled "Jim Crow Denied Roost" Chester Hampton contrasted the "embarrassing" actions of the governor and Chamber of Commerce at the honorary dinner with the conditions at the main festival sites. He told readers of the *Richmond Afro-American* how he observed no discrimination based on race at the state and national parks, as visitors of all races toured the exhibits.

"Integration" he wrote, "has quietly become the accepted way of life" at the park, where "thousands...of all races mingled, marveled, ate and rested together on the grounds of the celebrated Jamestown Festival." Except, that is, for one marker of segregation, separate bathrooms for white and black visitors. Otherwise, he relayed, the exhibits, grounds, drinking fountains, snack bar and even the picnic area were "as free of segregation now as [they were] back in 1607 when the first settlers landed here."\textsuperscript{88} Hampton argued that the scenes at the parks provided a more fitting tribute to the true democratic heritage of the nation, and provided a working example of desegregated space.

\textbf{Conclusion}

In his synthesis of Virginia history, \textit{Cradle of America: Four Centuries of Virginia History} Peter Wallenstein argued that colonial era Jamestown and the Civil War provided the two main "frames of reference" in Virginia historical memory and commemorations.\textsuperscript{89} While memorials to the Civil War could be divisive, emphasizing Virginia's break with the national government (both in regard to the Civil War, and civil rights), focusing on the colonial past provided a

\textsuperscript{88} Chester Hampton, "Jim Crow Denied Roost," \textit{Richmond Afro-American} (Richmond, VA) April 27, 1957, 1-2. The segregated bathrooms at Festival Park received much criticism, both from museum professionals asked to evaluate the park, and in several Letters to the Editor in national newspapers, where people reported their shock at encountering them in a museum dedicated to equal rights.

\textsuperscript{89} Peter Wallenstein, \textit{Cradle of America: Four Centuries of Virginia History}, (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2007), 270-272.
way to integrate Virginia history into the narrative of national heritage.

Democracy, independence, and commerce were values, in the eyes of festival planners, which all Americans in the 1950s could unite behind. Governor Thomas B. Stanley and festival organizers wanted to focus on the positive, hoping that the festival’s celebration of “the stirring events of our glorious history which provides every American’s heritage,” would reinforce Virginia’s right to define the terms of these values, and continue shaping national identity.90

In their introduction to Being Elsewhere: Tourism, Consumer Culture, and Identity in Modern Europe and North America, Shelley Baranowski and Ellen Furlough argued that while a “deep and mutually reinforcing relationship between modern tourism and modern consumerism” exists, it is also important to consider how people and nations use tourism to “visualize an authenticity that could provide meaning beyond the marketplace.”91 On one hand, the Jamestown Festival provided an example of the powerful way commercial tourism, federal resources, and local government interests could combine to shape narratives about national identity and the U.S.’s global role. Marshalling the elements first brought together in the pre-war United States Travel Bureau, the Festival packaged historical information and Cold War ideology into a tourist-friendly heritage designed for mass consumption. Yet the festival and its focus on heritage also

90 Cited in Final Report, 8.
provided a platform for debates over the presentation of the past, and how it could be used to shape the present. Audiences were not content to simply adopt the Festival's perspective, and different groups vied to adapt its celebration of U.S. history to their causes. After observing the historic interpreters dressed as soldiers in the recreated James Fort, one journalist mused "armor is not in great demand in these days of atomic warheads." But as different constituencies discovered during the anniversary year, whether enlisted as part of Virginia's bid for national prominence, the U.S.'s ideological battle with the Soviet Union, or the struggle for civil rights, historic pageantry and federally promoted heritage tourism could become an effective weapon as well.

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92 Will Molineux, "Celastic Armor Produced in Four Hours for Use on Stage in Jamestown Dramas," *Virginia Gazette*, March 1, 1957, 17.
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