Forty Years within the Veil: The Black West and Counternarratives of Race and Place in the Rocky Mountains

by

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Dedication

For Elliott, so that the places you call home may be more just and empathetic.

Acknowledgements

I suspect that few people, after six or seven years studying and writing in a doctoral program, feel that they are the same person at the end as they were at the beginning. In late summer of 2018, two weeks before moving from Anaconda, Montana to Ann Arbor, I learned that a persistent cough that had dogged me all year was, in fact, a chest full of tumors. I was diagnosed with Hodgkin Lymphoma and had a week of strange meetings with advisors and professors during my first week at Michigan. Even before Dr. Tycell Phillips and his team at the University of Michigan Cancer Center worked tirelessly to get me into remission and finally cancer-free, a host of people committed themselves to helping me stay in the program during treatment. Anthony Mora advised me throughout the process with a wonderful blend of empathy and assurance that I certainly needed. Professors for every class I attended were thoughtful and supportive. Matthew Spooner, Greg Dowed, and Deborah Dash Moore additionally agreed to allow me to attend via video during the month of my stem cell transplant a year before the pandemic would make everyone reluctant pros at such things. Sue Douglass and Kat Wiles are probably the most patient and helpful people I have encountered in my life, and I cannot thank them enough. Together with my committee members Anthony Mora, Stephen Berrey, Angela Dillard, and Bethany Hughes, this wonderful community of medical professionals, professors, and staff at the University of Michigan somehow pulled me through what seems a very narrow gate to the completion of this degree. I am grateful to all of you.

During the process of writing this dissertation, I received boundless, often unmerited, support and mentorship from historians in western history. Amanda Hendrix-Komoto at Montana State was the main culprit behind my M.A. thesis becoming my first book. Her inquisitive and generative fingerprints are all over the chapters that follow, not least the two on our shared place of birth, Pocatello. In the acknowledgments for *Black Montana,* I had said that every graduate student needs a professor such as you. I still feel the need to qualify that I very much did not deserve it. Thank you all the more for your continued insights and friendship.

Among the many scholars of the Black West whose work has been foundational for much of my thinking, I am also grateful to Alaina Roberts for her commitment to telling complicated stories, big and small. Moreover, Dr. Roberts' thoughtful comments and contributions to panels and roundtables we've shared over the past few years at WHA have helped me work through a number of important matters. I am very optimistic about the future of Black western studies in large part because of the number of energetic and thoughtful thinkers there, several of whom have reviewed my recent work or advised me over the years. Thank you to Herb Ruffin, Stacey Smith, Tobin Shearer, Tiya Miles, and many others for their time and comments.

This project brought me to an incredible array of libraries, archives, and institutions across the mountain west. I am thankful for the librarians and archivists at the Blair-Caldwell African American Research Library in Five-Points the neighborhood of Denver. I was assisted by more than a half dozen individuals in Pueblo at the University research center, the Pueblo County Historical Society, and the Pueblo Public Library Special Collections. I would like to especially thank Jasel Cantu at the Public library for her continued help in my ongoing search for the missing Black newspapers of Pueblo. Ellen Ryan at the ISU Special Collections in Pocatello aided my work immensely with her thoughtful questions and her wealth of local historical

knowledge. In Cheyenne, Carl Hallberg at the Wyoming State Archives was tireless not only in his assistance with my research, but also with turning much of what is chapter 3 of this study into a widely accessible article for *The Annals of Wyoming.* There are countless more researchers and writers without whose published work I would have hopelessly naive on countless fronts.

I would like to think that I am a somewhat easy person to advise, however, I am a certain that I am a nightmare to edit. Anthony Mora has been a wonderful advisor and chair these past six years. He offered incredible guidance on my research and argumentation. He also offered line edits for almost the entire dissertation. While it is perhaps certain that the reader will still stumble over the second or third clauses of one of my obtuse, gangly holdouts, most of Anthony's suggested edits carried the day. Beyond advise and edits, Anthony has also been a wonderful teaching mentor and fellow U.S. West enthusiast, something that I truly needed during my time in Ann Arbor.

I would have quickly been overwhelmed by everything had it not been for my wife, Steffany. She is the only reason I continued and why this project exists at all. The list of things I cannot and would not do without her is growing very long. I am so happy that we've ended up back where we started. My family and friends have indulged many hours of my talk about this dissertation. My Dad provided many keen insights, especially to chapters 2 and 5 on religion in Pocatello. Finally, our son, Elliott, joined us in the middle of all of "this." I began drafting chapters not long after he was born. He is now almost three years old and somehow already my best friend. He loves exploring, hiking, hammocking, and gregariously saying hello to everyone he meets. Already he seems very much at home in Montana and the West, but I hope he spends his life bending his kindness and compassion toward making it a more just and welcoming home

for everybody. This dissertation is dedicated to him. I hope it might one day help in some small way as he makes his way in the world.

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Abstract

In the years between the end of Greater Reconstruction and the start of the Great Migration, Black Americans founded communities across the Rocky Mountain West. Many of these towns prospered and grew during an era in which racial ideologies underwent profound realignment. As numerous scholars of race document, both national and regional politics along with cultural forces shaped how race was made and remade in America between 1877 and the 1920s. Black settlers in new western cities and towns navigated the ongoing social construction of race and the effects of racism in their everyday lives while participating in the co-constructing forces of place-making where they lived and made their homes. This dissertation focuses on three Rocky Mountain towns, Pueblo, Colorado, Pocatello, Idaho, and Cheyenne, Wyoming, as instructive and heretofore unstudied sites where the Black West might be grounded by a place-based analysis. Doing so allows us to better understand not only how, but where, race was made in America. In order for histories of Black western communities to offer such insights, the chapters in the second part of this dissertation argue that place-based studies of Black communities must consider and contextualize, rather than foreclose, the variegated narratives and counternarratives of the West's incredible ethnic, religious, and racial heterogeneity.

Linking the local Black histories in Part I with broader local analysis of the racialized politics of belonging and place-making, Part II urges historians of race, African Americans, and the North American West to be attentive to both the locality and relationality of racial formations.

Part I: Imagined Futures

Introduction

Within the Veil: Sovereigns and Fugitives of the Black West

> If the project is to build up a distinctly Negro community, the wiser course would seem to be to select some country where the colonists could entertain a reasonable hope of becoming dominant.
>
> —*The Denver Republican,* criticizing the plans for Allensworth, California, an All-Black Town in 1907.

> A Negro colony in California, Oregon, Colorado, or Alaska is just as reasonable as any other racial colony. The 'hope of becoming dominant' is not a necessary consideration and the thought of it occupies small space in the minds of a Negro colonist. To be a plain, free, untrammeled citizen, privileged to exercise the rights of such…is an ambition which should not subject the Negro to either the fright of his neighbors or the wild bugbears of pessimistic philosophers.
>
> —*The Colorado Statesmen,* Responding to the *Republican,* October 12, 1907.

In 1920, W. E. B. Du Bois published his acclaimed collection of essays *Darkwater: Voices from within the Veil.* The short sections range widely from historical memoir, to poetry, to utopian science fiction that presage literary trends in afro-futurism. The subtitle, which under a close reading is imprinted on almost every page, calls the audience to consider *from where* the voices attesting to Black humanity emanate. In the opening autobiographical essay, Du Bois relates that the veil was the Burghardt home of his youth in western Massachusetts. In the fantasy fiction of "The Princess," the young heroine dons an actual veil that protects her from the gaze and violent rage of the racist king. In the concluding, futuristic story, "The Comet," the veiling smoke of a

post-apocalyptic city symbolizes the ruins of an old racial order and the potential of an interracial utopian future.[1] Du Bois includes several religiously infused "credos" or statements of faith that serve to juxtapose the oppression and moral bankruptcy of his present with the nation's professed Christian morality. Yet, the credos also lay out his own vision of Black existence in an imagined future. [2] "Within the Veil" thus represents the sacred, protected space from which Black futures can be first imagined and then brought forth.[3]

The historical study of the Black West resonates with many of the chords struck by Du Bois's symbolism. Much of its history takes place in a racial geography that remains veiled from most scholarly and popular cultural discussions. This study focuses on those histories emanating from "within the veil" of place-based accounts of the Black West. African American settlers saw a future for themselves in these places during the forty years before *Darkwater* was published. In these pages, I contend that the Black West was (and is) not a scholarly abstraction, a series of historical themes or processes to give shape to our retelling of the past. Rather, the Black West of a century ago was, first and foremost, a place. This grounded approach opens one up to a fuller range of stories and experiences that shed light on the formations of place-identity and belonging. Broadly speaking, this dissertation is an account of the Black West and of race- and

[1] W. E. B. Du Bois, *Darkwater: Voices from within the Veil* (New York: Harcourt, 1920).

[2] The curious phrase "within the veil," can be traced back to a number of popular mid-nineteenth century Protestant hymns which pulled the imagery from the New Testament letter to the Hebrews. The source of Christian faith was likened to an anchor, holding "within the veil," that is, the space behind the heavy curtain separating the inner sanctum of the Jewish temple in Jerusalem from the inner-most Holy of Holies. Though Second Temple era Judaism produced numerous texts that also used the same analogy, its popularizing in Du Bois's context would certainly have been New Testament studies or, more likely, popular hymns including "My Hope is Built on Nothing Less," written by the English pastor Edward Mote and arranged by American Baptist William Batchelder Bradbury in 1863. Christian text found in Heb. 16. 19-20.

[3] On *Darkwater* themes and imagery see, Alex Zamalin, *Black Utopia: The History of an Idea from Black Nationalism to Afrofuturism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2019), 49-62.

place-making in three cities, Pocatello, Cheyenne, and Pueblo, located in the Rocky Mountains between the end of Greater Reconstruction in 1877 until 1921.[4]

Grounding Black western history sets this project at an oblique angle to various assumptions and approaches that currently have great importance to the field. Classic texts such as Nell Painter's *Exodusters* or Shirley Ann Wilson Moore's more recent *Sweet Freedom's Plains* draw attention to the theme of migration in Black western studies.[5] My focus, instead, is on the lives of Black *settlers.* African Americans on the move to and throughout the West is critical to understanding the region. Yet it cannot be the end of the story. By mainly (or sometimes only) examining migration, we unintentionally slip into an older myth of Black impermanence and even fugitivity in the American West. My goal is to disrupt that perception by offering a history of Black place-making. In the following chapters, my focus is on the towns and cities of the Rocky Mountains and expands the "where" of the Black West in scholarship. I argue that there is an often encountered, but rarely acknowledged, racial geography distinctive to the Mountain West. Between the "Black Towns" on the central and southern plains and the West Coast cities that grew after the Great Migration, dozens of major Black settlements beg scholarly attention. The three main cities of this study are themselves some of the more neglected places within this broader historiography. I argue that a place-based study of the Black West holds incredible insights for the wider study of race in U.S. history. Scores of books tackle "how race is made in

[4] The co-construction of race and place, however, was not the initial thesis. This project began as a more or less singular attempt to push Black western history towards a place-based approach. Yet, during the task of archival research, reading, and writing with a commitment to *place* and *locality* as requisite parts of my broader methodology, something admittedly unexpected happened. In an effort to be faithful and deferent to the types of stories and scholars which drew out what has become the dissertation's central thesis, I have had to return and think much more deliberately about what the "Black West" as a subject really is, and why I hold that more western and U.S. historians should take notice of it.

[5] Shirly Ann Wilson Moore, *Sweet Freedom's Plains: African Americans and the Overland Trails, 1841-1869* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2016); See also Nell Ivin Painter, *Exodusters: Black Migration to Kansas after Reconstruction* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1976).

America."[6] The following chapters will ask us to reconceptualize the *locality* of racial formations and thereby to consider where race is made in America.

This dissertation has six chapters divided into two major parts. Part I, "Imagined Futures," focuses on the Black communities of the Rockies. Chapter One begins in the Southern Colorado city of Pueblo. In a town renowned for its labor and industrial history, Black Pueblo offers a useful starting point from which to view the deeper and often ignored racial histories around themes like labor, gender, and people's working lives. Chapter Two travels north to Pocatello, Idaho, to consider how religious institutions connected and sustained so many at the edge of the Mormon cultural region. Black churches are often taken for granted as "natural" parts of a growing community. Pocatello's contentious and intriguing narrative of Black church formation, however, sheds new light on a chapter of town-building that too often passes in the dark. The final chapter in Part I turns to Cheyenne, Wyoming. Of all the possible cities and towns to examine, Cheyenne's Black history is perhaps the most perplexing and instructive. Not only was home to more African Americans per capita than any other Western city in 1910, but despite this, the historical and scholarly awareness of that community beyond its own streets has all but vanished in the years and decades that followed.

Cheyenne acts as a fulcrum in the dissertation. Part II, "Imagined Pasts," investigates the counternarratives of race and belonging in Wyoming during the Progressive Era in Chapter Four.

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[6] Several recent examples are Beth Lew-Williams, *The Chinese Must Go: Violence, Exclusion, and the Making of the Alien in America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2018); Natailia Molina, *How Race is Made in America: Immigration, Citizenship, and the Endure Power of Racial Scripts* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014); Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Barbarian Virtues: The United States Encounters Foreign Peoples at Home and Abroad,* 1876-1917 (New York: Hill & Wang, 2000); Matt Wray, *Not Quite White: White Trash and the Boundaries of Whiteness* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006); Reeve, *Religion of a Different Color*; David Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class* (London: Verso, 1991); Nell Painter, *The History of White People* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2016); Jessica Blatt, *Race and the Making of American Political Science* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018); Khalil Gibran Muhammad, *The Condemnation of Blackness: Race, Crime, and the Making of Modern Urban America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010).

The chapter analyzes a common regional form of didactic storytelling, the local history pageant. The production of the pageant that gripped southern Wyoming in 1924 serves as a useful guide through the processes of state and racial mythmaking common in the twentieth century West. Echoes of many of these same tropes and projects appeared in other cities, including Pocatello, where the broader contours of race and religion are traced through local history in Chapter Five. In this fashion, the story of the Black churches of Pocatello, as told in Chapter Two, is foregrounded amidst a city and community that assigned social power to religious practice. Local discussions in Pocatello often blurred and conflated religious differences with racial differences to project and defend that power. Finally, Chapter Six returns to Pueblo where the themes of collective or public memory have, perhaps, been most openly discussed by locals and historians.[7] Labor and labor history is often featured in these memorials and their broader discussions. Race and gender also resurface in these conversations at different times. I suggest that discussions about gender often directed or deflected the public from engaging with other forms of labor that fell outside the counternarrative of industrious, male, immigrant workers of suspect "whiteness," who slowly became "American" in Colorado's coal camps or steel mills.

The View from and through the Black West

As discussed at greater length below, this dissertation asserts that addressing the loss, silences, or erasure of Black history in these places is a project that demands a wider view of how racial ideologies propelled the counternarratives of place-making, home, and belonging in settler societies. The chapters of Part II allow a grounded study of the Black West to consider many different racial histories in those communities. Forces of racial oppression are, as Natalia

[7] See especially, Fawn-Amber Montoya, ed., *Making an American Workforce: The Rockefellers and the Legacy of Ludlow* (Boulder: University of Colorado Press, 2014); and Fawn-Amber Montoya and Karin Larkin. eds. *Communities of Ludlow: Collaborative Stewardship and the Ludlow Centennial Commemoration Commission.* Louisville, CO: University of Colorado Press, 2022.

Molina puts it, relational.[8] This was even more apparent in the profoundly heterogeneous West. What holds these histories together, then, is how race was being made and remade at the local level. Throughout, I call this the *locality of racial formations* and submit that a truly "place-based" account of Black western history must be attentive to how race operated where they lived. If we resist reverting to a narrow Black/white racial paradigm, the heterogeneous racial landscapes of the Rocky Mountain West emerge as a dynamic and consequential space.

The Black West was part of a wider story of relational racial formation in the West. Part II often steps outside obvious contextualization for a Black Western history and takes on new subjects entirely. This was not the original path I had imagined. As the research came together, a place-based methodology began, ironically, shifting the ground beneath my feet. I started by identifying and investigating place-specific themes of Black history in my three towns. I then found competing narratives of place and local belonging came to either relativize or disavow Black history. In order to be faithful to the experiences of Black westerners living in Cheyenne or Pocatello, and then to understand how their lives intersected with the ideas about race that permeated the cities where they were at home, a wholly different vision of these cities and towns came into focus.

Black settlers in Pocatello, for instance, where not just contesting their right to belong amidst a population of politically dominant white settlers. They also had neighbors who identified as Japanese, Greek, or members of many other immigrant communities. Moreover, their town sat, physically, in what had until recently been the very center of the Shoshone-Bannock reservation at Fort Hall. This geography had much to do with the history of not just Indigenous peoples, but with religious history and that of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-

[8] Natalia Molina, *How Race is Made in America: Immigration, Citizenship, and the Endure Power of Racial Scripts* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014).

Day Saints. In the case of Pocatello, as laid out in Chapter Two, I was drawn to the curious story of its Black churches. Yet I was soon forced to acknowledge that writing a place-based account of Black Pocatello, especially its religious aspects, was somewhat incomprehensible without allowing its story to seep into the archival cracks and fissures made by Pocatello's remarkable racial and religious heterogeneity. And it was, more or less, the same for the other cities and their respective thematic emphases as well. In all of these places, attempting to write about Black history became a task of locating that narrative among tangled conversations with not just white settler histories, but those of a diversity of Native peoples, Mexican, Japanese, Chinese, European immigrants, and religious minorities as well. Ideas about race and racial difference were remade not so much in legislative actions and political speeches but on the ground.

The formation of racial categories, ideologies, and how such ideas were put into practice must be studied as place-based projects.[9] Locals, both individually and communally, certainly absorbed and acted upon U.S. society's prevailing racial ideologies, but they also adapted and changed them in the process of place-making. Projecting a settler community over and against an Indigenous homeland was (and remains) a racial project. A given community curated ideas about race and belonging not only by glossing national newspaper headlines and debates, but also by returning to their own local history and working and reworking race into and through the various stories they choose to tell about themselves. This aspect of racial formation was also in a kind of dialogue with how respective racial groups came to new or differing understandings of their own identities *in that place.* Both internal and external forces in these localities highlight race's relationality. Put another way, historian Natalia Molina and many other scholars have used

[9] Cultural and historical geographers, especially those within the field of Black Geographies, hold this close to the heart of their discipline. See Pat Noxolo, "Geographies of Race and Ethnicity 1: Black Geographies," *Progress in Human Geography* 46:5 (October 2022), pp. 1232-1233.

relationality to trace *how* race is made in America.[10] I aim to argue that we might give more attention than we have to *where* race is made. "Within the veil" initially marked out a scholarly commitment to *where* the stories and voices of the Black West of this era must first be heard. But instead of focusing and intensifying Black hopes and futures into a single, audible narrative, the voices from within the veil sounded out as a cacophony of historical themes and resonances that upended my own presuppositions that such a story could be even legible apart from the West's racial diversity.[11]

The Black West, as a matter of historical investigation that is grounded in the places where it was planted by Black settlers and took root, is not an idea or theme that *forecloses* other racial histories under its own imperatives. Instead, the Black West is one of many channels that cuts through a traditionally mired and obfuscated historical record of the western American past. Like other histories, it possesses the capacity to break out of tired paradigms, racial stereotypes, and forced binaries. Rather than subsume other lives and stories beneath its own currents, I believe a carefully located study *opens* onto new potentials for how historians research and write about the remarkable racial diversity of the nineteenth- and twentieth-century West. To that end, before ending with a note on methodology, the remainder of this introduction looks to a potential historiographical bridge between our present subject and one of the most widely studied aspects of the Black West.

[10] See note 6 above.

[11] As a matter of transparency, this is something that I still struggle with. Must every historical reconstruction be so thoroughly engaged with every other relevant story that the specificity of research and analysis necessarily dissolves under the weight of the bigger picture? In a practical sense, every historian knows that the answer is no.

Black Sovereignty, Black Wests

In March 1890, an audience crowded into a modest African Methodist Episcopal church to hear a formal debate on one of the most hotly contested issues circulating in Black American society: Would Indian Territory be the solution to, as the event organizers called it, "the race question?" Since the end of Reconstruction, many Black Americans looked west, often to Oklahoma specifically, for a "promised land" in North America. Yet, those assembled for this particular meeting, and in many other such gatherings, did not look west. They looked east from Cheyenne, Wyoming, as they argued over the best methods and places to fulfill African Americans' "racial destiny." Families and individuals, nearly all of them migrants from somewhere else, had already declared "with their feet" a vision for their future in the West. The judges and audience in Wyoming, tellingly, found the affirmative argument presented by a local politician, janitor, and church leader, Charles Cushinberry, to be able, but still wanting.[12]

Of course, this was neither the end nor the extent of such discussions. In fact, hopes for a Black Oklahoma percolated through the Black press and spread in fervent conversations around meals or in barbershops up until the eve of Oklahoma statehood in 1907. At the same time, numerous other promised lands joined Indian Territory in the racial imagination of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Mexico, the Philippines, Hawaii, and, of course, Liberia were real and potential sites along a "continuum of flight" that led out of the South.[13] Notably, many of these locations reflected ambitions for U.S. imperialism. Many Black westerners looked east, west, north, and south toward all types of colonization schemes pushed by all types of schemers. Hawaii and the Philippines appeared most often in association with white speculations

[12] "A. M. E. Debate," *Cheyenne Daily Sun,* March 8, 1890, 3.

[13] Kendra Field, *Growing Up with the Country: Family, Race, and Nation after the Civil War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018), 5-6; and Michelle Mitchell, *Righteous Propagation: African Americans and the Politics of Racial Destiny after Reconstruction* (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 2004), 16-50.

and hopes of "negro colonization, abroad."[14] Other Black Americans balked at such segregationist-imperialist designs even as they closely followed the financial and political conditions in West Africa.[15] Adding to these "foreign" colonies, still more plans for Black settlements appeared west of the Great Plains throughout the early twentieth century.[16]

For their part, white journalists regarded the news of these relative late-coming projects as odd, foolhardy, and perhaps even dangerous.[17] African Americans who engaged in debates about Black Oklahoma or "Negro Colonies" across the West knew far more about both the hopes and the limits of Black colonization wherever it took place. Moreover, they understood that migration and emigration were merely gradations of the same sort of response to racial oppression and white supremacist violence. But white onlookers often could not discern how organizing new communities around maxims of self-reliance and separation fit within an emerging schema of what historian Michelle Mitchell calls ideas of "racial destiny."[18] What was the point, some whites asked, if such tactics failed to fully answer "the Negro Question" as *they* understood it? The editorial exchange between the white *Denver Republican* and the African American *Colorado Statesmen* quoted in this introduction's epitaph represents one instance of the discourse around "the Negro Question" and its western peculiarities.[19] The meager hopes for a Black state died when Oklahoma drafted its constitution and awaited admission to the Union in

[14] For white proponents of Black colonies in the Philippines or Hawaii see, Mitchell, *Righteous Propagation,* 65-69; see also, Sutton Griggs, *Unfettered: A Novel* (Nashville: Orion Publishing, 1902), quoted and discussed in Mitchell, 67; Opinions of this nature also made their way into Western Black newspapers. See, "Philippines Future Home of the Negro, So Sayeth Sen. Morgan of Alabama," *The New Age,* Butte, Montana, December 27, 1902, 1.

[15] See Mitchell, *Righteous Propagation,* 22.

[16] For a recent and useful history of Back to Africa movements, Marcus Garvey, and his place in Western U.S. history, see Holly M. Roose, *Black Star Rising: Garveyism in the West* (Lubbock: Texas Tech University Press, 2022); See also Mitchell, *Righteous Propagation,* esp. chapter 1, pp. 16-50.

[17] See quoted commentary of *Denver Republican* printed in, "Speak Up, Kansas," *The Colorado Statesmen,* October 12, 1907, 4.

[18] Mitchell, *Racial Destiny,* 3-15.

[19] "Speak Up, Kansas," *The Colorado Statesmen,* October 12, 1907, 4.

1907. Yet, one might argue that this event only redirected the energies of boosters and colonization promoters. Plans for an all-Black town called Allensworth, California took shape that same year. In 1908, a handful of Black homesteaders organized the town of Empire on the Wyoming-Nebraska border. The New Mexico community at Blackdom reached its peak population in 1908 after being founded in 1901. And throughout 1907 and the next few years, O. T. Jackson, a Black minister and entrepreneur from Boulder, campaigned in all the major towns of the Rocky Mountains soliciting investors and settlers for his new agricultural colony on the Colorado plains. Dearfield, as he named it, later became the largest and most successful of its kind west of Oklahoma with over 800 settlers at one point.[20]

The Black agricultural colonies of the twentieth century were not "new" Black towns as much as they were extensions of a preceding Black Town movement that took root on the eastern and southern plains a decade or so earlier. They bore the same ideological and hopeful fingerprints, and they came about through more or less the same methods of individual initiative, collective capital accumulation, and federal assurances through various land grant and

[20] These western and later Black Towns are treated rather inconsistently in the literature. There is still a need for a comprehensive synthesis of these particular communities. For Allensworth, see Charles Alexander, *The Battles and Victories of Allen Allensworth* (Boston: Sherman, French & Company, 1914); Dolores Nason McBroom, "Harvests of Gold: African American Boosterism, Agriculture, and Investment in Allensworth and Little Liberia," in Lawrence de Graaf, Kevin Mulroy, and Quintard Taylor, eds., *Seeking El Dorado: African Americans California* (Autry Museum of Western Heritage, Los Angeles with Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2001). For Blackdom, see Timothy Nelson, "The Significance of the Afro-Frontier in American History: Blackdom, Barratry, and Bawdyhouses in the Borderlands, 1900-1930," *Ph.D. Diss.* University of Texas, El Paso, 2015. See also Nelson, *Blackdom, New Mexico: The Significance of the Afro-Frontier in American History* (Lubbock: Texas Tech University Press, 2023); For Dearfield see, Melvin Edward Norris, Jr., "Dearfield, Colorado—the Evolution of a Rural Black Settlement: An Historical Geography of Black Colonization on the Great Plains," *Ph.D. Diss.* University of Colorado, 1980; George H. Junne, Jr. *et al,* "Dearfield, Colorado: Black Farming Success in the Jim Crow Era," in Arturo Aldama, ed., *Enduring Legacies: Ethnic Histories and Cultures of Colorado* (Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 2011); For Empire see, Todd Guenther, "Empire Builders, an African American Odyssey in Nebraska and Wyoming," Nebraska History 89 (2009), 176-200; For Black Colonies on the Western Plains generally see, Jacob Friefeld, Mikal Eckstrom, and Richard Edwards, "African American Homesteader "Colonies" in the Settling of the Great Plains," *Great Plains Quarterly* 39:1 (Winter 2019), 11-38; and Richad Edwards and Jacob K. Friefeld, *The First Migrants: How Black Homesteaders' Quest for Land and Freedom Heralded America's Great Migration* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2023).

homesteading programs.[21] These later versions, however, are unique in one important way. The geographic center from which these town builders promoted their plans, solicited investors, and reached out in the Black press was not the South or Oklahoma, but the Rocky Mountain cities along the Front Range. The town hall meetings, church assemblies, and booster speeches that drove the migration fever primarily occurred in places like Denver, Colorado Springs, Cheyenne, Boulder, and Pueblo among others. These places had a generation of Black migration and settlement already attested to the possibilities of new lands, new homes, and, in their own way, new Black towns.[22]

Though hundreds and sometimes even thousands of Black Americans made homes in these new western cities, their Blackness remained conspicuous to their many white neighbors. Had any of them paused one day in early 1907 to read, for instance, a posted broadside announcement for a public meeting about new Black communities on the Colorado plains, they may have incredulous. The *Denver Republican* certainly was as they wrote on the subject. "If the project is to build up a distinctly Negro community," the editorial stated, "the wiser course would seem to be to select some country where the colonists could entertain a reasonable hope of becoming dominant."[23] Attentive white westerners may have suddenly realized that some of their African Americans neighbors were petitioning for homesteads and land from the federal government and building communities that hoped to exercise political power in moves reminiscent of the 1870s.

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[21] The basics of the earlier Black Town movement is discussed and cited extensively below, but the clearest expositors have been Crockett, *The Black Towns*; Hamilton, *The Black Towns and Profit*; and Taylor, *In Search of the Racial Frontier,* especially chapter 5.

[22] See also O.T. Jackson and Dearfield in, "Dearfield Collection," ARL58, *Blair-Caldwell African American Research Library Collection,* The Denver Public Library; For the founding of Allensworth, see prologue to Alexander, *Battles and Victories.*

[23] Quoted in, *The Colorado Statesmen,* October 12, 1907, page 4.

A major premise of this dissertation is to resist the image of a perennially transient Black westerner. As such, the main historiographical ground it treads is that of the Black Town movement and histories of Black place-making in the context of U.S. settler colonialism. Black Americans ventured west along with, and sometimes at the bleeding edge of, settler colonial expansion. The communities they founded and the relationships that they built with their fellow westerners were imbued with somewhat recognizable forms of "settler sovereignty."[24] Sovereignty's legal and juridical parameters were a web of court decisions and constitutional mandates. Its socio-cultural boundaries were much less clear. The legal scholar James Sheehan notes that "the concept of sovereignty has to do with the relationship of political power to other forms of authority."[25] Sovereignty, therefore, is less a description of political doctrine as it is "both a doctrine and a set of activities, a way of thinking about politics and a form of political action."[26] Operating under such assumptions, many white settlers could not imagine Black Americans as possessing the same "type" of relationship to authority.

The historical record is, therefore, also replete with the presumptions of Black *fugitivity* within settler society.[27] What I have elsewhere called *Black settler sovereignty* aims to integrate these two subjectivities and represents a central, unresolved question of Greater Reconstruction. Following the ratification of Amendments 14 and 15, how could settler society, steeped as it was in the racial logics of white supremacy, Native elimination, and anti-Blackness, ever regard Black Americans as co-heirs to the lands of the Indigenous West under the common mantles of

[24] Lisa Ford, *Settler Sovereignty: Jurisdiction and Indigenous People in America and Australia, 1788-1836* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010).

[25] Sheehan, "The Problem of Sovereignty in European History," 2.

[26] Sheehan, "The Problem of Sovereignty in European History," 2.

[27] I have chosen to emphasize *fugitive* for its long historical relationship to Black freedom and for the way it might be understood within a settler colonial context. Fugitivity is a state of being *from* something. There are fugitives from the law, from the state, from the plantation. In other words, fugitivity, like sovereignty, is a relational concept between someone and power or authority.

settler or *pioneer*?[28] Black migrants did not wait for this colonial paradox to be worked out at any level of social or state authority. As it was, the forms of sovereignty that African Americans "carried with them" maintained a tangible claim to a self-determined future *and* the constant specter of illegitimacy in white settler society.[29]

Lessons from the Black Towns

The numbers of new Black Americans who moved to cities in the Rocky Mountain, Inter-Mountain, and Far West during and following World War II greatly eclipsed the entire population already in the region. Black history, as a result, rarely reaches back beyond the Great Migration at all.[30] To the east, the prominence of the Black Town movement of the 1870s to the 1880s overshadows stories of Black place-making elsewhere. While much has been written regarding the rise of Black Towns and the Exodusters of the 1870s, far less has been uncovered about the simultaneous migration and settlement of Black Americans beyond the plains. Those who set

[28] For Greater Reconstruction, see Elliott West's conceptual reconfiguration of the era see, Elliott West, *The Last Indian War: The Nez Perce Story* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009); "Reconstructing Race," *Western Historical Quarterly*, 34:1 (Spring 2003), 6–26; Elliott West, "Reconstruction in the West," Journal of the Civil War Era 7, no. 1 (March 2017). For a very helpful overview and brief historiography of Greater Reconstruction, see, Stacey L. Smith, "Beyond North and South Putting the West in the Civil War and Reconstruction," *Journal of the Civil War Era* 6:4 "The Civil War West: A Special Issue" (December 2016), 566-591. Several monographs that employ this more capacious understanding of Reconstructions are Stacey L. Smith, *Freedom's Frontier California and the Struggle Over Unfree Labor, Emancipation, and Reconstruction,* (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 2013); Edlie L. Wong, *Racial Reconstruction Black Inclusion, Chinese Exclusion, and the Fictions of Citizenship,* (New York: NYU Press, 2015); and Pekka Hämäläinen, *Lakota America: A New History of Indigenous Power,* (New Haven: Yale university Press, 2018). The convention of splitting the introductory US history survey course into two parts, halved at the conclusion of the Civil War, frequently obfuscates the profound developments of the late 1860s and 1870s by ripping them from their pre-Civil War context. In many excellent and thoughtful courses covering the second half of US history, the 1870s, by sheer lack of time in the academic calendar, are reduced to either a coda of the War, or a prologue and introductory week of lectures leading into the central historical questions and problems that confronted the modern United States. This is just one of several inherited conventions in periodization that have severed the twentieth and twenty-first centuries from eighteenth and nineteenth century issues that have long focused on colonialism or empire.

[29] Since writing *Black Montana*, newer works continue to help shape my thinking on the historical place of Black settlers. On fugitivity, see, Khalil Anthony Johnson Jr., "The Education of Black and Indigenous People in the United States and Abroad, 1730-1980" PhD Diss. (Yale University, 2016); on gradations of American Settler Colonialism, see Roberts, *I've Been Here All the While*. "Carried their sovereignty with them," see Lorenzo Veracini, *Settler Colonialism: A Theoretical Overview* (New York: Palgrave Macmillian, 2010), 3.

[30] On Black Migration after WWII, see Quintard Taylor, *In Search of the Racial Frontier: African Americans in the American West, 1528-1990* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1998), esp, chapter 9.

their sights on the towns of Colorado, Utah, New Mexico, Idaho, Wyoming, or Montana hardly seemed to have occupied the same world as the one which hoped for a Black state on the southern plains. Yet, the two are yoked by ideological and innumerable personal bonds that span more than forty years. Because of this, scholars of Black Towns, especially recent historians, can offer invaluable insights regarding the significance of Black settlement in the Mountain West after Greater Reconstruction.[31]

A number of scholars from various fields have studied the fifty or so all-Black settlements that stretched from Mississippi to California.[32] These towns took shape in a half-dozen different states and territories and over a span of several decades. Still, many historians have rightly focused on Indian Territory as the movement's epicenter. By 1890, colonizationists, town promoters, and self-described "race men" and "race women" alike called for the federal government to establish Oklahoma as an "all-Black" state. They hoped it would be a place where African Americans could be free from the violence of white supremacy and participate in a true civic life. Such schemes, as we already saw, were the fodder of Black reading clubs, fraternal lodges, church potlucks, debate societies, and, above all, the editorial pages of the Black press leading up to 1907. A belief that such a Black utopia could come to pass was driven by two

[31] A possible factor here is to consider the groundbreaking and exhaustive work that was done in the 1970s and 1980s on the eastern Plains, namely Nell Painter's *Exodusters.* On one hand, Painter offered subsequent historians a generative base of scholarship to utilize and contend with, drawing more work to that subject. On the other hand, those few historians working on Black history in more western locations often set out for themselves a much larger temporal or geographic range much less conducive to granular community histories. Synthetic works, like those of Katz, Broussard, or Taylor tend to focus on the east from the time of the Exodusters in 1877 until the 1890s or early twentieth century before moving to discuss populations in the West with much more than the cursory explanations of those communities' origins. One helpful corrective to this is Shirly Ann Wilson Moore, *Sweet Freedom's Plains*; See also Nell Ivin Painter, *Exodusters*.

[32] Though some writers have stated the number of Black towns with more confidence than others, it does not seem that anyone has found, or claimed to have located, every Black settlement that existed. The Black Homesteaders project currently ongoing at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln is likely now the best place to assess the actual extent of Black farming colonies on the Plains. See, Jacob Friefeld, Mikal Eckstrom, and Richard Edwards, "African American Homesteader "Colonies" in the Settling of the Great Plains," *Great Plains Quarterly* 39:1 (Winter 2019), 11-38.

interrelated developments. First was the dispossession of lands of the Five Tribes and other Indigenous nations in Indian Territory by the United States. Second was the proliferation of farming and ranching communities *already* founded by African Americans and Indian Freedpeople in that territory.[33] While a Black State did not happen, these two forces continued to shape the Black West.

After 1907, the communities of Oklahoma took their place alongside those in Kansas, Nebraska, Colorado, New Mexico, Wyoming, and California as quintessential and, importantly, typological, Black Towns that were supposedly unique to the history of the American West. From the 1940s until the 1990s, historians began laying out their criteria for what actually constituted a "Black Town." One of the first studies, "The All-Negro Communities of Oklahoma: The Natural History of a Social Movement," written in 1946 by Mozell Hill, had a lasting impact on the following generation's scholarship. Hill, in the words of a recent scholar, established a "recuperative gaze" for studying the Black Towns that framed their whole history as essentially an "escape" and rebuilding.[34] Though his focus was on the energies of the broader social movement and not the history of the Black Towns per se, Hill nevertheless suggested that the whole endeavor was "random" and undirected. He thus implicitly set the terms for later attempts to conceptually define Black town-building.[35]

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[33] See Field, *Growing Up with the Country*; and Alaina Roberts, *I've Been Here All the While: Black Freedom on Native Land* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2021).

[34] Sharon Jessee, "The Contrapuntal Historiography of Toni Morrison's Paradise: Unpacking the Legacies of the Kansas and Oklahoma All-Black Towns," *American Studies* 47:1 (Spring 2006), pp. 81-112.

[35] Mozell Hill, "The All-Negro Communities of Oklahoma: The Natural History of a Social Movement," *Journal of Negro History* (July 1946): 254-269. A useful account of Black Town scholarship is Sharon Jessee, "The Contrapuntal Historiography of Toni Morrison's Paradise: Unpacking the Legacies of the Kansas and Oklahoma All-Black Towns," *American Studies* 47:1 (Spring 2006), pp. 81-112. Jessee reads across genres and disciplines for the many of the underlying assumptions and categories in historical and anthropological work on Black Towns. Additionally, her assessment of Morrison's literary venture into Oklahoma for the final book in her trilogy on the hauntings of American slavery and racism—*Beloved, Jazz, and Paradise*—bears some reflection for the wider discussion of "new" Black Towns, as the fictional town of Ruby, Oklahoma was exactly that. Morrison's source world of all Black towns, Jessee suggests, was the Crocket/Hamilton arguments which stood almost alone in the early 1990s. Against and through these images of Black town building as ideological "escapism" or Black

Arguably still within the scope of this "recuperative gaze," Norman Crockett and Kenneth Hamilton each suggest various other commonalities between homesteading towns like Nicodemus on the western Kansas plains to rural farming communities on former Creek lands like Boley. In *The Black Towns,* Crockett assessed that these places were a process as much as an entity.[36] They grew first from an emancipatory ideology and worldview that refused the ongoing violence of the post-Reconstruction South by defining self-determination through mobility. That is, migration formed a distinct and, central to Crockett's thesis, a *novel* answer to "the Negro Question." A decade later, Kenneth Hamilton's *Black Towns and Profit* more intently focuses on the designs and outcomes imagined by town promoters and early investors. His study, still the most widely cited on the subject, asserts that the dominant ideology driving Black Towns was Black capitalism, not some intangible racial destiny. Both historians note that selling the idea of Black Towns in the West actually paid for a select few.[37] More than just the speculative profit that boosters hoped to gather in their exploits, the Black Towns attracted everyday people who wished to obtain land and yearned for the security to work it for more than merely subsistence. For most historians of the Black Towns, and for the early inhabitants themselves, "security" meant separation from whites. Thus, a third defining characteristic of what made a Black Town, racial separatism, joined the ideological and economic factors.[38]

To each of these three points, a new group of scholars have added more nuance, additional context, and even a few outright challenges. Black Towns, they insist, were not merely

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capitalism, Morrison could conceive of the patriarchs of Haven, who witnessed the slow dying of their community through "infiltration" of both white and the "wrong kind" of Black newcomers, being determined to found a new Black towns even further west after WWII.

[36] Crockett, *The Black Towns, xi-xiv*.

[37] Crockett, *The Black Towns*; and Kenneth Hamilton, *Black Towns and Profit: Promotion and Development in the Trans-Appalachian West, 1877-1915* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1991).

[38] Hill, Crockett, and Hamilton are each clear on this presumption and the diversity of Black Towns is rendered irrelevant in their scholarship against the backdrop of potential white settler encroachment. See Hill, 261; Though Crockett does note that "total isolation was impossible," see, Crockett, *xii,* 73; and Hamilton, esp. 127-133.

temporary products of racial idealism, or places where wealth could be realized and gathered, nor where they even uniformly "Black." This shift in perspective has largely come from new studies on Black Americans, Black Freedpeople of the Five Tribes, and their varying relationships to and within U.S. settler colonialism.[39] For decades, historians have noted the fact that Black Towns often took shape directly through processes of Native dispossession. In those earlier accounts, after a brief discussion of origins on Native land, the themes of colonialism and Indigenous people all but fade away.[40] Scholars like Kendra Field, Alaina Roberts, and Tiya Miles have insisted that we not leave the story of Black and Indigenous history decoupled after Reconstruction.[41] Building on the work of Miles, Gary Zeller, and David Chang, the new work of Roberts and Field, especially, details the tensions within Black and Freedmen communities after the 1870s. Their scholarship points to the need for a new, or at least more capacious, understanding of Black Towns than what is offered by the Hamilton and Crockett models. The challenges and necessary reorientations put forward in such works, I suggest, can also offer a fuller and more useful reckoning with Black place-making in the West.[42]

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[39] See, Quintard Taylor and Donald Grinde, "Red vs Black: Conflict and Accommodation in the Post Civil War Indian Territory, 1865-1907." *American Indian Quarterly* 8:3 (Fall 1984) pp. 211-29; Tiya Miles, *Ties that Bind: The Story of an Afro-Cherokee Family in Slavery and Freedom* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005); Gary Zeller, *African Creeks: Estelvste and the Creek Nation* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2007); David A. Chang, *The Color of the Land: Race, Nation, and the Politics of Land Ownership in Oklahoma, 1832-1929* (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 2010); Kendra Field, *Growing Up with the Country*; Roberts, *I've Been Here all the While*; and Christina Dickerson-Cousins, *Black Indians and Freedmen: The African Methodist Episcopal Church and Indigenous Americans, 1816-1916* (Champagne: University of Illinois Press, 2021).

[40] For instance, Crockett mentions the settler "run into unassigned Indian Lands" as an early Black manifestation for their hopes to found a Black state (*The Black Towns, xiii*). However, further discussion of Black Town growth as directly related to Native dispossession is generally absent.

[41] See, Tiya Miles, *Ties that Bind*; and Tiya Miles and Sharon P. Holland, eds. *Crossing Waters, Crossing Worlds: The African Diaspora in Indian Country* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006). For Field and Roberts, see discussion below.

[42] I am grateful to Tiya Miles for taking the time to speak with me after a conference panel in 2019 during which she expressed the need for a "new history of Black Towns" in passing. Though my own research went in a different direction, the type of scholarship she was no doubt referencing has profoundly shaped my thinking on this topic.

Many people stumble over histories of "Black Freedom on Native Land" and the implications such narratives possess. Assessing Black settlement in Indian Territory, Kendra Field sums up this dislocation. "While the rise of black Oklahoma was promoted as 'all-black,' and self-consciously 'domestic,'" she writes, "such an image stands in considerable contrast to the racial realities of the period, including the erasure of the multi-racial history of the South and West."[43] Crockett, for example, took for granted that Black migration to Indian Territory was a categorically *different* response to the rise of Jim Crow than was emigration to Liberia.[44] Oklahoma, though, was not a "domestic" space to be viewed apart from "foreign" lands in Africa. As Field contends, during the rise of Black migration, Indian Territory was "a region shaped by competing sovereignties, with no clear path to incorporation into the United States."[45] In this fashion, the domestication of the Black Town phenomenon often strips away any meaning that does not fall squarely into American nationalist ambitions. It also deflates the central role that Black settler sovereignty played as both a root cause and product of Black town-building in the West. That is, Black Towns rendered, as well as declared, Black settler sovereignty.[46]

In relation to the idea of racial separatism in pursuit of political domination, some have also challenged the older scholarship's definition of Black Towns as racially exclusive. The idea that communities founded upon Black Indian allotments might somehow possess no residents who were Indian or Freedmen has been thoroughly undone in the new history of Black Towns.[47]

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[43] Field, *Growing up with Country,* 3.

[44] Crockett, *The Black Towns, xi-xv.*

[45] Field, *Growing up with the Country,* 5.

[46] In other words, the presumption that Indian Territory was domestic space within national borders imputes a state-centered, expansionist settler imperative on Black migrants who claimed lands there. When we are able to see, as Field would have us, that Indian Territory's future was not so clearly defined, then we can attest that Black settlers were carrying *their* sovereignty with them. This in no ways changes the fact that, as citizens by law, Black Americans contributed to the eventual goals of American settler colonialism. It does, however, leave room for the type of racial ideology that directed Black settler colonialism both within the U.S. and without.

[47] See especially, Field, *Growing up with the Country*; and Roberts, *I've Been Here All the While.*

Moreover, late nineteenth century ideas about race and "blood" necessarily rendered every Black Town a diverse space. This was the case even if no unambiguously "white" people lived in town or on nearby farms. "Mulatto" and "mixed" racial categories often came about through painful family histories of exploitation and even sexual violence. As Field attests, they could also be employed to assert a closer relationship to authority and power in supposedly "all-Black" spaces.[48]

The racial dynamics of Black Towns thus moved in ways that illustrate how ideas of racial difference were relational and were always operative in settler colonial contexts. For this reason, these studies of Oklahoma and Indian Territory gesture to broader, and for us, relevant contexts of colonialism in the West. Precisely on this point, Roberts joins Field and previous scholars like Miles, Chang, and Zeller in detailing the many conflicts and tensions that arose between Native peoples, their formerly enslaved Freedpeople, and new Black Settlers from the United States.[49] These relationships were both personal and, at times, colonial. "This world of the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century West," Roberts argues, "was one of porous boundaries and intercommunity racial coalition, where Indian freedpeople and African Americans came together, for better and for worse, in their quests to claim land and belonging using the settler colonial process."[50]

The central argument of Roberts' book *I've Been Here All the While: Black Freedom on Native Land,* is that settler colonialism constitutes a process which can be utilized by whoever seeks to claim the land through "rhetoric, American governmental structures, and individual

[4848] Field takes on this issue most directly and explores several important lines of thought that come from this corrective. See Field, *Growing up with the Country,* esp. chapter 2, "Passing For Black." pp. 58-103.

[49] Miles, *Ties that Bind*; Zeller, *African Creeks*; and Chang, *The Color of the Land*.

[50] Roberts, *I've Been here All the While,* 72.

action."[51] Black Towns from the largest and most successful settlements like Boley, which began as an allotment owned by a young Creek Freedperson, to the smaller hamlets like Robertsville that dotted the landscape, all grew through non-white settlers wielding the colonial process to occupy lands possessed by somebody else.[52] The discourse leveraged by Black settlers was not empty talk about being "closer to whiteness" intended to placate the anxieties of other settlers and government officials. Rather Black settlers and town builders had in mind a Black racial destiny as the ideology that undergirded such rhetoric. What exactly this "destiny" was and meant also varied widely, but it still fit within the broader purposes of Black settlers claiming and making homes on Native lands.[53]

As Michelle Mitchell argues, racial destiny began as a quintessentially nineteenth-century racialist concept that narrowly determined a racial group's potential "advancement."[54] By the post Reconstruction era, Black people in the United States refashioned the idea into a much more capacious and open-ended set of debates.[55] When viewed through the history of the Black Town movement, racial destiny offers a powerful corrective to the recuperative gaze of older Black Town scholarship. To be sure, an essentialism remained tied to racial destiny which Mitchell describes as "the wide-ranging yet singular notion that black people shared a common fate."[56] The different methods that Black people championed toward this end, however, were complex

[51] Roberts, *I've Been here All the While*, 3.

[52] As I have argued elsewhere, Black settler colonialism—as a racial project—remained constitutive to, but still distinct from, American settler colonialism. Roberts' subjects demonstrate, better than any scholarship to this point, how that occurs.

[53] Central to the rhetorical justifications employed by every subsequent group of "settlers" in Indian Territory was the idea of "civilization" and its closeness to white racial hierarchies. Members of the Cherokee, Chickasaw, Choctaw, Creek, and Seminole nations were most explicit in claiming their widely attributed "civilized tribes" status as justification to displace the other Indigenous peoples already living on the land. Yet, Indian Freedpeople and Black Americans also did so with similar outcomes. Roberts, *I've Been here All the While*, 3-4; and 77-85.

[54] Mitchell, *Righteous Propagation*, 7-10.

[55] Mitchell, *Righteous Propagation*, 7-8.

[56] Mitchell, *Righteous Propagation,* 8.

and numerous.[57] Ultimately, Mitchell asserts that Black racial destiny was a form of, and a process working toward, community identity formation that did not merely rely upon a real or imagined shared past. Instead, proponents looked toward an "interdependent," imagined future.[58]

Together with the older scholarship on Black Towns, new research reorients these histories as being rooted in settler colonial projects—foreign and domestic—and in the flourishing ideas of Black racial destiny. Traditional Black Towns hoped to leverage separation from a white supremacist society in order to nurture a new sense of racial destiny after Reconstruction. They offered assurances that such communities would survive and not fall victim to theft and racial violence. They were the product and incubator of a new orientation for Black people to authority and power after Reconstruction. Black Towns were thus places where Black settler sovereignty coalesced into recognizable forms of political and civic praxis for a diverse population of Black citizens in the local sphere.

Toward a Place-Based History of the Black West

This regionally-inflected racial destiny may have been most concentrated in Black Towns, but it was not contained there. Black settlers carried their own set of ambitions and hopes as they arrived in mercurial cities and "new" towns of the West. They built their homes and neighborhoods, raised children, constructed church sanctuaries, and participated in settler society's many "inaugural" moments. In new towns, they could and did grow up with the country. If we cannot imagine that Black settlers built toward a future where they could "be a plain, free, untrammeled citizen, privileged to exercise the rights of such," then we will also be

[57] Mitchell, *Righteous Propagation,* 8. Nb. Mitchell uses "weal" rather than "wealth" twice in this section. It is unclear if the author intended to use this obsolete term for "well-being of a state" or if it is a repeated typographical error. For the flow of reading, I chose to change it to wealth as that is how weal has subsequently transformed in modern English (notably in the term commonwealth which was commonweal).

[58] Mitchell, *Righteous Propagation,* 9.

tempted to see Black migration to these places as random, and ultimately, inconsequential. At best, this version of Black western history will be locked into that recuperative gaze, always looking backwards and never ahead.[59] Drawing on Mitchell, Roberts, Field, and others, this dissertation makes the opposite claim. Assessments of "Black" Cheyenne, Pueblo, and Pocatello, demand a serious reflection on the power and context of a community's imagined future.

That context, however, involved the local reconstruction of racial categories and identities through relational modes of place-making. Other racial communities and groups had histories and told narratives of belonging that shaped and pressed upon the experience of Blackness in these spaces in undeniable ways. The study of the Black West and its imagined futures necessarily points outward toward the racial diversity of their wider communities. It is a story that proceeds from the ground on which Black westerners made their own claims about the future of a neighborhood, city, and region. It thereby opens onto an expansive understanding of race and racialization in the West.

A Note on Methodology

By the time I had completed a thesis which became a book on the Black communities of Montana, I was thoroughly dissuaded of the notion that relevant and meaningful histories of Black settlers and their communities of this era would be obvious in the archival record. In that project, and through my training in the place-based field of historic preservation, I came to rely foremost upon a consistent use and a healthy skepticism of census data.[60] Local historians living in towns like Cheyenne or Pocatello tended toward the same methods as many academic historians when it comes to using the census in the era before the internet. Census

[59] Quoted in "Speak Up Kansas," *Colorado Statesmen,* October 12, 1907, 4.
[60] See, 1910 census discussion in *Black Montana,* xv-xvii.

"compendiums" for each state, usually published a year after the enumeration, quantified and aggregated populations by city or county based on race, ethnicity, and national origin. As scholars of the New Western History pored over such documents in the 1970s-early 2000s, they wore a channel for future researchers to follow that led more and more to places with large populations. This is not necessarily a critique. As Quintard Taylor rightly points out in his survey, *In Search of the Racial Frontier,* Black history had been ignored in the West on the basis that it was imagined to be a rural space filled with empty land and vast wildernesses. In reality, its population was the most urban in the nation.[61] This study looks at more or less "urban" spaces, though using a more modest and regionally appropriate metric.[62]

Thus, historians may have misinterpreted Black populations in places like Cheyenne as insignificant or presumed them to be tied to "temporary" patterns of settlement like the military or railroad camps. Another common refrain that greeted me in local archives and libraries when I first explained my project was that a given city's Black population really only ever amounted to a tiny percentage of the whole. I was often told that I was unlikely to uncover much. In cases like Pueblo, Colorado, the fact that Black residents only ever counted about 2 or 2.5 percent glossed the reality that Pueblo was the second largest city in the state after the metropolis of Denver. Two percent of 40 and 50 thousand people is still a lot of people.[63]

Ironically, the exact opposite obfuscation occurred in Wyoming. While reading the sections of the Black Denver newspapers published in the early twentieth century, I was struck by the knowing and familiar writing style that appeared in the local community notes pages.

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[61] Taylor, *In Search of the Racial Frontier,* 21-22.

[62] Early twentieth demographers classified a city and urban area as any town with more than 2,500 people.

[63] Especially when viewed within the era's much more densely arranged local geographies, this writing-off of the significance of the one of the few Black populations that eclipsed 1,000 people is, in its own way, anachronistic as it presupposes a sprawling, disaggregated community of today.

Columns like “Notes from Pocatello,” or “Colorado Springs Clippings” felt more like personal letters than newsy snippets. Instead they seemed to be not-so-subtle road signs for Black westerners traversing a vast and, to some of them, familiar geography. Dozens of cities and towns from both sides of the Rockies chronicled their daily life in these columns. None did so more consistently or with greater literary flourish than Cheyenne.[64] Preconceptions about the West and Wyoming directed interpretations of the meaning of a thousand Black people in 1910 toward an insignificant anomaly in one of the least Black states at the time. Following the discursive roads mapped out in the pages of Black western newspapers and with the experience of work in Montana archives, I was inclined to reconsider what those numbers might actually mean. In the case of Cheyenne, no one could rightly shrug off the Black community as only a small proportion of population. Cheyenne, in 1910, actually had the largest Black population per capita of any city west of Boley, Oklahoma.[65]

The granular and personal details of the censuses and newspaper sources led me to consider about a dozen or so sites as places to study alongside Cheyenne. Since my first book covered Montana, I choose to forego Helena, Great Falls, and possibly Butte or Billings. Other towns included Boulder, Colorado Springs, Trinidad, and Canon City, all in Colorado. Ogden,

[64] For instance, Taylor includes figures on the Black Population of Wyoming that include the 1900 and 1910 census (pages 135 and 193). He also created maps and tables of urban communities that included places like Spokane and Helena, both of which had smaller Black populations than Cheyenne at the same time. Other writers like Roger Hardaway who discussed early Black figures in Cheyenne like William Jefferson Hardin did so while declaring that the city and territory had a relatively small population when in fact, even by the 1880s, Cheyenne’s Black citizens were already a “relatively” large group. In fact, that every scholar who had opportunity assess Black Cheyenne seems to have missed what was there all along is surely not an indication of collective “sloppiness.” Rather there were already powerful layers of counternarratives at work such that Cheyenne seemed a very unlikely and unpromising place for such historians to focus their efforts in the 1980s-early 2000s. See Roger Hardaway, “William Jefferson Hardin: Wyoming’s Nineteenth Century Black Legislator,” *Annals of Wyoming* 63:1 (Winter 1991), 2-13.

[65] General population *1910 US Federal Census,* Cheyenne, Laramie, Wyoming: Enumeration Districts 0076-0084, African American entries compiled by the author; For more see, Anthony W. Wood, “The Blackest City in the West: A Decade of Hope and Hardship in Cheyenne, Wyoming,” *Annals of Wyoming* 94:4 (Fall 2022), especially the introduction to the essay which contains relevant material not included in chapter 4 of this dissertation.

Utah also commended itself in similar ways. The large cities of Salt Lake and Denver presented other questions and possibilities. Both places eventually fell outside my scope for the same reason. I worried that they might overshadow the entire dissertation to the detriment of smaller cities and towns that scholars were less likely to explore. I felt that I could do neither justice while also attending to the others.

I selected three cities for thematic purposes that were attentive to place-making and that did not often recapitulate what was discussed in the others. One continuity among them, however, is both frustrating and important. No Black newspapers published in these cities exist in any archive known to me. In the case of Pocatello, this seems to simply be because no such Black paper ever existed (though that is not exactly a simple explanation in and of itself). In Cheyenne, evidence exists of a journal called *The Uplift* (1914). It may have been that it only ran for a very brief period of time, perhaps less than a few months. In Pueblo, though, evidence suggests that no less than four Black-owned papers printed from the 1880s to the 1920s. Some of these papers had runs that lasted many years. The chance that not a single copy of any edition of any of the four (if not six) Black papers exist today seems shocking. I suspect they are yet to be found, perhaps in far-flung personal papers or catalogued as "miscellaneous" in some archive.[66]

This common absence is probably a small part of why these towns are missing histories of the Black West. Previous work in Montana taught me how important the archiving of Black newspapers in Butte and Helena was in the process of historians such as Bill Lang and Quintard Taylor discovering for themselves those Black histories in the first place.[67] The fact remains that newspapers constitute the primary source-base for social historians working on poorer, working-

[66] The status and curiosities of each city's Black press are discussed in their respective chapters in part 1.

[67] See William Lang, "The Nearly Forgotten Blacks on Last Chance Gulch, 1900-1912," *Pacific Northwest Quarterly* 70:2 (April 1979), 50-57; and Taylor, *In Search of the Racial Frontier,* 212.

class, and racialized communities in this era. Even in the archives of every city I visited for this dissertation, the majority of collected and catalogued material around local Black history was a newspaper source clipped from a white periodical. However, supplemented by census and state-gathered data, uncommon but essential primary sources such as letters, photos, meeting minutes, church papers, and other voices, the print culture of the West still reveals so much of these Black communities. As I will discuss at length in Chapter Three, the letters and notes published by the Black owned Denver papers are both invaluable and so much more than run-of-the-mill community journalism. I also read widely in those papers' editorial and regional commentary to gauge and contextualize the different currents of discourse shaping the Black communities of the Mountain West. Finally, with all the reflexive questioning and reading "against the grain" that one can muster, white papers from each city can also reveal, sometimes in spite of themselves, certain contours of Black life. Since white racial imaginaries are part of the intended subject of the second half off this dissertation, such print media are ideal sources to interrogate.

I hope that readers will take these various limitations and new perspectives in mind as the following chapters attempt to describe people *in* places. Along this line, however, I have made one choice that may bother some readers. Many historians who think of their work as place-based write elegantly and creatively to convey what is often called a "sense of place." I am sympathetic and attentive to readers who either have no experience in these particular towns and want to feel "on the ground" in some meaningful way. Others, such as a few friends and colleagues who grew up in some of these cities, might want to see their town's character reflected in my writing. A "sense of place" is most often the outcome of curated projects of "place-making" which are built around a community's imagined identity and history. Thus, reinscribing a town's character as such is a great challenge when half of this study interrogates

that identity and the counternarratives that brought it about. How, though, could I rely on the claims of that identity to convey a sense of place only to turn around and call into question the racial ideologies that helped produce that identity in the first place? Instead, I invite readers to build (and maybe rebuild) an image of Cheyenne, Pocatello, and Pueblo as *places* that open up, rather than foreclose, the potential to see the diversity of Black western experiences. We can allow that history to seep into, illuminate, and be illumed by, the many spaces carved by the racial heterogeneity of the North American West. We might register the disavowal that white counternarratives have deployed to subsume the multiplicity of imagined racial futures that shaped the West. Doing so allows us to better discern how and where race was (and is) made in America.

Chapter 1 There is a River: Pueblo, Colorado

Wrapped up in the bronzed and ebony bodies are the little souls of the coming generation, and will take your and my place in Colorado and the nation

—*The Denver Star*, May 29, 1915

It had been a cold and wet winter in the Rockies in 1921. A prodigious snowpack at high elevations held back vast stores of frozen water. In the foothills to the south of Pikes Peak and in the aptly named Wet Mountains, spring and early summer thaws already did their part to fill the Arkansas River. Throughout the month of May, ice and snow slowly relented in alpine lakes and shady ravines and let loose a supercharged runoff. In 1921, however, just as the water filled arroyos and seasonal flows leading down into the Arkansas, a new storm sent torrential rains hurling toward an already saturated landscape.[1] In the riparian valleys in the Wet Mountain region, water rushed through landscapes shaped by the region's labor history. Only a century before, the water would have been effectively arrested by beaver dams all throughout the Rockies. Those innumerable snags had since vanished along with their builders, trapped relentlessly for their pelts.[2] Everywhere, but especially in the Cripple Creek area near Pikes Peak, riverbeds that once tumbled and wandered down through aspen and fir now cut straight down the hillsides. Tens of thousands of miners and their sluice boxes had robbed many streams

[1] Robert Follansbee and Edward B. Jones, *The Arkansas River Flood of June 3-5, 1921* (Washington: Government Printing Offices, U.S. Geological Survey, 1922), 1-52.

[2] See Janet Lecompte, *Pueblo, Hardscrabble, Greenhorn: Society on the High Plains, 1832-1856* (Norman, University of Oklahoma Press, 1978), 83.

of their eccentricities in the Colorado goldfields. Still further down, rain fell on the barren slopes not far from the tunnel entrances to the region's prosperous coal mines. This was a kind of irony. Coal had been proffered as the replacement to timber for use in the nation's rail and industrial furnaces. While it was the primary fuel for railroads by the end of the nineteenth century, its centrality to the economy had only intensified the need for timber in local markets. Loggers and railroad men felled forests for use as timber ties and telegraph poles. More held up the shafts where miners wrenched the coal itself from the earth. Commercial loggers used the proximity to the railroads for easy transportation of fir and pine to markets. This is not to mention the local miners and their communities who cut and milled trees for their own homes. What was not cut often still turned to smoke as the coal-fired locomotives let off embers, sparking forest fires with frightening regularity.[3]

When the rain hit the muddy slopes, their shallow soils lacked the roots of trees to hold them in place. Innumerable torrents of sludgy runoff turned the Arkansas and its many tributaries brown. Miners and their families took shelter and watched with trepidation as the usually meager flows of mountain streams pulsed past their camps and towns. Residents of Canon City at the mouth of the Royal Gorge braced for waters that tested the high riverbanks. When the water began rising on June 3, they sent word to the communities downstream such as Florence and Portland.[4] Pueblo, the region's largest city, faced the worst. Sitting at the confluence of the Arkansas River and the now bloated Fountain Creek, Pueblo had long relied on its location to take advantage of the Rocky Mountains' natural resources. In the 1840s, traders thought it an

[3] For gold in Colorado see, Elliott West, *The Contested Plains: Indians, Goldseekers, and the Rush to Colorado* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1998), 98-108; For timber, coal, and forest fire relationships see Stephen J. Pyne, *The Pyrocene: How We Created an Age of Fire and What Happens Next* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2022), 100.

[4] See flood account and survey in Robert Follansbee and Edward B. Jones, *The Arkansas River Flood of June 3-5, 1921* (Washington: Government Printing Offices, U.S. Geological Survey, 1922), 23-29.

obvious location to build a post where furs, skins, and other goods could move from the mountains and on to Taos, Santa Fe, or St. Louis. Gold, silver, timber, and other riches of the industrializing West also flowed down to Pueblo as the first railcars arrived from Denver to the north and from Kansas to east. More than just goods, Pueblo attracted a fair number of settlers in the wake of the 1859 Colorado Gold Rush. People made their way to where the rivers met did so because it was places that gathered things to itself before heading somewhere else. Rivers in, rivers out.[5]

This chapter begins our examination by outlining a kind of local racial geography that often defined the Black West in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It is, therefore, fitting that Pueblo carries the earliest Black past of any of the towns explored in this study. The famous Black mountain man and fur trapper Jim Beckwourth claimed to have erected a sizable trading post at the confluence of the Arkansas River and Fountain Creek in 1842.[6] This chapter is concerned with the working lives of Black Puebloans since that founding. The town that existed before 1880, as we will see, was not the monopolistic corporate town that later emerged.

By the twentieth century, widely circulating stories attested to Black settlement at Pueblo's first founding.[7] Indeed, this added to the tension that developed later in the 1910s and 1920s between white labor advocates, white immigrant workers, and Black, Latino, and Asian employees of Colorado Fuel & Iron Company (CF&I) as "nativity" defined a central, if incoherent, feature of white unions' claims to jobs and wages in the West.[8] The many different

[5] For early trading history of the Upper Arkansas see, Lecompte, *Pueblo, Hardscrabble, Greenhorn,* esp. 157-167.

[6] Lecompte, *Pueblo, Hardscrabble, Greenhorn,* 42-45; Numerous accounts of local history, especially those recounting Black history describe Beckwourth founding and naming the fort. See, "Pueblo blacks shared role of pioneers," *Star Journal and Sunday Chieftain,* August 13, 1978, 7A.

[7] "Pueblo blacks shared role of pioneers," *Star Journal and Sunday Chieftain,* August 13, 1978, 7A.

[8] On nativism and labor see, Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Barbarian Virtues: The United States Encounters Foreign Peoples at Home and Abroad, 1876-1917* (New York: Hill & Wang, 2000); and David Roediger, *Working Toward Whiteness: How America's Immigrants Became White* (New York: Basic Books, 2005).

labor organizations that represented Pueblo's workers suffered under the callus dominance of the company. Violence in 1913, however, changed everything in the coal camps and mill towns of Southern and Central Colorado. Among the white unions' unsuccessful demands was ending the CF&I's propensity to hire non-white workers for certain jobs. Like white labor leaders before them, labor historians looking back on this era have tended to focus on the arrival of Black male workers as the primary moment to study race in the coal fields and the steel mills of southern Colorado.[9] To do so, however, would be to resign a quarter or more of Pueblo's Black workers and wage earners to irrelevance. Black women also came to Pueblo looking for work—with and separate from—Black steel workers. As we will see, given the intense volatility of the industry, women's wages and the forms of community support that they provided may well have been the deciding factor in Black Pueblo's almost unprecedented vitality from the 1880s through 1921 and beyond.

Pueblo's racial and gender history is its labor history. Gender ideologies that upheld ideals such as the "family wage" and "immigration assimilation" require that Black working women not be subsumed beneath the more familiar narratives of industrial labor in the Rockies. Pueblo's local history underwent an immense shift in perspective following the tragic flood that inundated the city in 1921. After 1921, numerous counternarratives of race and labor took hold which persisted over the last century. The final chapter of this dissertation returns to Colorado to assess this shift and what it meant. This chapter assesses what Pueblo became in the lives and minds of its Black residents prior to the imagined past which mostly washed away that history.

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[9] See Thomas Andrews, *Killing for Coal: America's Deadliest Labor War* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010), esp. 87-106; David Wolff, *Industrializing the Rockies: Growth, Competition, and the Turmoil in the Coalfields of Colorado and Wyoming, 1868-1914* (Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 2003), 189.

The modern city of Pueblo owes its existence and unique place along the southern stretch of the Front Range to the uncertainties of US state sovereignty prior to the 1848. As Chapter Six lays out in more detail, Anglo traders residing in New Mexico felt pressured to leave Santa Fe and Taos during the tense year of 1841. A group of these men and their Mexican and Native wives and mixed race children crossed the Arkansas River, the international border at that point, and began baking adobe bricks for a trading post they named El Pueblo. The post carried on in relative obscurity until the forces of Southern Ute attacked in the first action of the US-Ute Wars which lasted from 1854-1868. From 1854 until 1867, the area around the confluence of the Arkansas and Fountain Creek where the old fort had long returned to be part the muddy banks, remained largely absent of white settlers. After the fort's destruction, however, the Front Range was in transition by the 1860s. Denver grew into a proper city and Colorado Springs vied to be the major waypoint along the road to Santa Fe, New Mexico.

In the business of trade, however, the site of El Pueblo still carried many advantages. Between 1867 and 1870, a few hundred settlers arrived and planned roads for a small town on the banks of the Arkansas-Fountain confluence. Near the site of the old fort, they plotted streets, built homes and businesses, and named the town "Pueblo."[10] In those first three years, Pueblo residents worked in a variety of jobs that often served some aspect of trade and travel down to Santa Fe. Warehouses, stables, liveries, supply stores, and private teamsters kept goods flowing through town. Farming in the valley was mildly tenable, and stock-raising also became a profitable endeavor. The 1862 Homestead Act made land along the Front Range available. The population of Pueblo grew to about 300 by 1870.[11] It was not yet a railroad town, merely a

[10] Eugene Berwanger, *The Rise of the Centennial State: Colorado Territory, 1861-1876* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2007), 16, 67, and 97.

[11] 1870 U.S. Census, Pueblo, Colorado Territory, pp. 1-18. Accessed online (https://www.ancestry.com/imageviewer/collections/7163/images/4259441_00485?ssrc=&backlabel=Return)

prospective one. As always, goods and travelers moved up and down the Front Range between the growing cities of Denver to the north and Santa Fe to the south. Expressmen, teamsters, and the porters whom they employed constituted a core sector of the early economy.[12]

Only a few hundred Black Americans lived in the Mountain West at this point. Many of these men and women had either been in the West already when the Civil War ended or had come soon after Appomattox. Guilford and Annie Budd counted among the first, if not the first, Black settlers in Pueblo. Guilford, or G.C. as he was eventually called, was born enslaved in Arkansas around 1830. Budd remained enslaved until 1863, when he likely escaped to freedom as the Union Army pushed further into southwestern Missouri in the spring. The Marshal Provost at Springfield, Missouri documented Budd's self-emancipation. Until the ultimate defeat of the Confederacy, Black men and women risked their lives to reach Union lines to find freedom during the war. Budd likely remained with the army, working as a laborer to supply the union troops. His papers from the war department barely acknowledged his humanity. Rather, they noted that his freedom came as a result of the Union claiming him as "contraband."[13]

Sometime between 1863, when he escaped, and 1865, when the war ended, Guilford Budd traveled to the Union Army post in New Mexico. Fort Union sat along the Santa Fe Trail on the way toward the Arkansas Valley. Budd found employment at a local boarding house and hotel, apparently making enough money to save up a notable sum. Where and when he met his wife, Annie, is unknown. They appear to have traveled from New Mexico to Colorado together

[12] 1870 U.S. Census, Pueblo, Colorado Territory, pp. 1-18. Accessed online (https://www.ancestry.com/imageviewer/collections/7163/images/4259441_00485?ssrc=&backlabel=Return)

[13] "Guilford Court House Budd," *Pueblo Daily Chieftain,* February 25, 1887, 3; for his emancipation, see *Union Provost Marshals' File of Papers Relating to Individual Civilians, 1861–1867*; Microfilm publication M345, 300 rolls; NAID: 2133278, War Department Collection of Confederate Records, Record Group 109; The National Archives in Washington, D.C., accessed online at https://www.ancestry.com/discoveryui-content/view/71888:2399?tid=&pid=&queryId=c9b835a9b034dddac5a82fb7ed2a7418&_phsrc=NgH115&_phstart=successSource

in 1867.[14] They may have met for the first time at Fort Union, though the 1870 census notes that she, too, was born in Arkansas and so it remains possible that the couple had escaped together in 1863 or that Guilford returned for Annie sometime after that.[15]

When the Budd's came to Colorado, they chose to settle with the first residents of Pueblo. Within a few years, about twenty to thirty other African Americans joined the couple in the tiny encampment.[16] Aside from Indian Territory, of all the western territories, Colorado attracted the most attention and organized boosterism of Black settlers. As the introduction noted, the Great Plains were quickly entering the imagination of Black colonization schemers and "racial separatists."[17] Politicians in territorial Colorado, however, had been making a different kind of promise to potential Black settlers. In 1861, the territorial legislature passed statues that extended full suffrage to "all male persons." For several years that language permitted and was perceived to intend for Black men to vote in local and territorial elections. However, as the war neared a more certain end, the legislature clarified in 1864 that they had not intended Black men to be included in previous election statues. This transparent backtracking caused immediate outrage. Committees of Black Coloradans petitioned representatives and even the state constitutional convention all to no avail.[18]

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[14] "Guilford Court House Budd," *Pueblo Daily Chieftain,* February 25, 1887, 3.

[15] See "Gilford Budd," 1870 U.S. Census, Pueblo, Colorado Territory, Roll: *M593_95*; Page: *483A. (Accessed online at https://www.ancestry.com/discoveryui-content/view/12225999:7163?tid=&pid=&queryId=c9b835a9b034dddac5a82fb7ed2a7418&_phsrc=NgH116&_phstart=successSource).*

[16] "African Americans listed in the 1870 U.S. Census, Pueblo, Colorado Territory," pp. 1-18. Data compiled by the author.

[17] For Black Oklahoma see Taylor, *In Search of the Racial Frontier,* 144-152; For more discussion and historiography of Black towns see chapter 1 of this dissertation.

[18] For Colorado suffrage fight see, Taylor, *In Search of the Racial Frontier*, 123-125; Eugene Berwanger, *The Rise of the Centennial State: Colorado Territory, 1861-1876* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2007), 44; Berwanger, "Hardin and Langston: Western Black Spokesmen of the Reconstruction Era," *Journal of Negro History,* 64:2 (Spring 1979), 101-114.

Guilford and Annie Budd settled in Pueblo the same year that advocates celebrated Black male suffrage in Colorado Territory. First under the 1867 Territorial Suffrage Act and then the Fifteenth Amendment, African Americans in Colorado became participants in the civic life of their community. Guilford clearly availed himself of these new opportunities for civic engagement. When the Budd's first arrive, they purchased land and a commercial block down in what would later be called the "bottoms." Guilford ran a successful operation as a barber until 1872.[19] During that time, he continued to build and buy new properties. Though the local paper, the *Pueblo Daily Chieftain*, never mentioned his race or his past enslavement, their frequent coverage of him suggests their silence on the matter was calculated. Reporters noted that the blocks down near the river owned by Budd eventually garnered the name "Africa." In addition to his real estate holdings, Budd made money from a successful express and freighting business after 1872.[20]

Annie also possessed quite an entrepreneurial spirit. In 1874, she purchased the struggling Delmonico restaurant which sat on the corner of Santa Fe and Second Avenues. A note from Guilford published in the paper soon after she opened reveals that Annie wisely kept her own finances and interests separate from her husband. He asked the community to consider patronizing the establishment on her own merits, "as she is doing business in her own name."[21] Indeed, the name "Mrs. Annie Budd, Proprietress" featured in almost every advertisement page of the *Chieftain* until 1877.[22] It was perhaps well that she kept her restaurant apart from Guilford's name. According to an overtly editorialized obituary for the man, much of his time in

[19] "Guilford Court House Budd," *Pueblo Daily Chieftain,* February 25, 1887, 3.
[20] "Guilford Court House Budd," *Pueblo Daily Chieftain,* February 25, 1887, 3.
[21] For Guilford's endorsement see, *Pueblo Daily Chieftain,* June 27, 1874, 4.
[22] The standard add for Annie's business appears in "Delmonico Restaurant," *Pueblo Daily Chieftain,* October 22, 1874, 4.

the 1870s was spent in pursuit of public office. He ran for congress in 1874. Later in 1877, he wrote that many friends in town encouraged him to throw his hat in for mayor of Pueblo. His actions eventually earned him the nickname, "Court House," a title that waivered somewhere between endearing and derisive.[23]

Specifically, the moniker "courthouse" appears to be connected to Budd's 1874 congressional campaign. The story, which was referenced for years in Colorado political columns, claims that Budd declared his intent to be the territorial representative in the U.S. Congress before taking control of the election process in a remarkable way. Papers at this time referred to Budd as "Hon. Budd" or Judge Budd, apparently without sarcasm, thus he many have served as a Justice of the Peace. However, Budd took it upon himself to move the location of the voting to the old courthouse building nearer his downtown property. The *Daily Chieftain* claimed Budd provided his own ballot box for an impromptu election which eventually counted well over two thousand ballots cast by Budd's friends in Pueblo, a city of only a few hundred people. Budd's obituary decades later looked back on the event when Pueblo's "oldest citizen" took over the courthouse for his election, inspected each ballot before it was cast and then claimed victory, as a comical affair. However, only Budd seemed not to be in on the joke. His obituary writer noted that his mental health began deteriorating at this point. Ultimately, his business success and general affability were not enough to save Guilford from the asylum, which he entered in 1887, around the age of 75. He passed away a few short months later.[24]

[23] "Guilford Court House Budd," *Pueblo Daily Chieftain,* February 25, 1887, 3.

[24] There is an odd sincerity to the articles of Budd and his electoral endeavors. He was the butt of many jokes and tongue in cheek remarks, but no sources appear antagonistic against him. See, "A Remarkable Election, Judge Budd Runs His Own Machine," *Pueblo Daily Chieftain,* September 9, 1874, 2. For obituary see, "Guilford Court House Budd," *Pueblo Daily Chieftain,* February 25, 1887, 3. For his mayoral bid see, "A Card," *Pueblo Daily Chieftain,* April 1, 1877, 4.

The Subjects of King Coal

Enormous fields of bituminous coal stretched eastward from the Rockies as much as forty miles under the plains in Southern Colorado. Coal mining in Northern Colorado and Wyoming supplemented the portfolios of executives at the Union Pacific Railroad, making it the first transcontinental line to exploit the region's fuel in the 1870s. In Southern Colorado, the Kansas Pacific lagged behind its competitors, beset by mismanagement and grift. William Jackson Palmer of the Colorado Coal and Iron company (CC&I) hoped to benefit from the southern roads' ineptitudes. Palmer began establishing the foundations of an industrial monopoly in the region. His land companies secured mining rights for huge swaths of the central and Southern Colorado coal fields. In 1870, he organized a railroad company, the Denver & Rio Grande, to build tracks connecting his mines in the mountains to the largest local market in Denver with ambitions to reach south to Mexico City.[25]

The towns that clustered around the shafts of the West's coal mines in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries are now almost more well-known for their prodigious ethnic and racial diversity than for their distinct and often fraught labor history. Italians, Slavs, Greeks, and Hungarians worked underground with Cornish, Irish, and English miners throughout the Rockies. In mining districts that stretched from New Mexico to Wyoming, Black coal miners often labored more closely with Mexican, Japanese, and Chinese workers than did their white American counterparts.[26] As smelters went up in Front Range towns to refine or utilize the coal locally, and railroad companies built their own facilities to take advantage of steel and fuel, these

[25] For coal fields and railroad developments, see David Wolff, *Industrializing the Rockies: Growth, Competition, and the Turmoil in the Coalfields of Colorado and Wyoming, 1868-1914* (Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 2003); 13; for Palmer, see 36-37; See also, Andrews, *Killing for Coal,* 20-33.

[26] In addition to discussions in Andrews, *Killing for Coal*; and Wolff, *Industrializing the Rockies*, see Brigida Blasi, Dana Coal miners article Brigida R. Blasi, "Rediscovering Dana: The Forgotten Black Coal Miners of Southern Wyoming," *Western Historical Quarterly,* 51:3, (Autumn 2020), pp. 237-265.

communities intensified the diversity of the outlying coal camps. Coal towns like Rock Springs, Wyoming boasted of more than fifty nationalities being present in their population. Camps like those in Cripple Creek, Walden, or Ludlow pulsed with the energy created by dozens of different cultures and worldviews pressed together under canvas shelters. Pueblo was destined to exemplify the diversity of those who lived and labored under "King Coal" as a railroad and eventually a mill-town yoked to its markets. But with train whistles and track crews still in the distance before 1872, Pueblo presaged its own urban diversity. In 1870, Prussians, Swiss, and Bavarians works as famers and freighters. Twenty-five Black residents already joined the Budd's in town. Fifty-two Mexican or Mexican Americans lived at the confluence of the rives as well. Of these, several families farmed the river bottoms north of Guilford Budd's properties for chili peppers that gave that neighborhood its name, Peppersauce Bottoms.[27]

A community of quintessential western heterogeneity awaited the imminent changes carried by the steel rails of William Palmer's railroad and coal companies. Their small settlement quickly morphed from a through-road that stretched between economic centers into a prime market in its own right. Freighters like the Bavarian, Albert Heartz who worked alongside Budd in the late 1860s and early 1870s prepared for their business to be sharply decreased or localized by Palmer's railroad. Indeed, Guilford changed careers the year the road arrived, 1872, and began work as a barber. Goods produced locally still needed to make their way to the yards, but many of the long hauls that made Budd and others in his line of work prosperous in the 1870s now went faster and cheaper by train. Other locals, including Juan García and José Penaro, might have anticipated a boon in the brick making business as stately homes and handsome business

[27] 1870 U.S. Census, Pueblo, Colorado Territory, pp. 1-18. Accessed online (https://www.ancestry.com/imageviewer/collections/7163/images/4259441_00485?ssrc=&backlabel=Return)

blocks were sure to accompany Palmer's outsized ambitions.[28] In this regard, Pueblo differed from smaller settlements like Canon City and Trinidad. In those places, Palmer neglected to bring his railroad directly into town. Instead, he purchased land at the closest points he intended the tracks to reach a community before ending the line or continuing on past. By keeping five or six miles between the Denver & Rio Grande and established towns, Palmer forced locals and other merchants to rent, lease, or purchase land nearer the depots if they hoped to capitalize on getting their goods to and from market. In this way, Palmer increased his real estate holdings and secured footings in local economies as he built his empire. [29]

While Palmer hoped, of course, to gain a monopoly on the coal markets by selling to growing fuel companies and power firms in Denver, the diverse residents of Pueblo contemplated his other central ambition. The quality of bituminous coal deposits that CC&I engineers found in the area could be used to produce and utilize coke. Only certain types of bituminous coal are suitable for coke furnaces and steel production. Thousands of workers, including permanent residents and hired laborers, counted on the construction of Palmer's steel mill in their city as they cautiously planned for a future along the Rockies. The ravenous course of railroad-fueled economies, however, snarled the best laid plans.

The Panic of 1873 arrested the national economy as many banks and railroads overextend, went into default, and became insolvent. Palmer should have been cautious, but he

[28] For Heartz see page 7 and for García and Penaro see page 12 in 1870 U.S. Census, Pueblo, Colorado Territory, pp. 1-18. Accessed online (https://www.ancestry.com/imageviewer/collections/7163/images/4259441_00485?ssrc=&backlabel=Return)

[29] Palmer had Pueblo in his sights even before forming the Denver & Rio Grande. From 1867-1869, the young man had worked as a secretary for the Kansas Pacific Railroad. Palmer and his survey teams suggested that an alternative route from Kansas to Pueblo be considered. His superiors rejected the proposal, however, and continued to build northwest to Denver as planned. Now with railroads undeveloped to the south of Denver, Palmer's new company was primed to service the area with narrow gauge tracks that arrived in Pueblo in 1872. Pueblo avoided this tactic likely because the town was already an intended destination of another southern transcontinental line, the Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe (the Santa Fe), which had reached the Kansas-Colorado border in 1873. Wolff, *Industrializing the Rockies,* 36.

believed the downturn was his chance to capture the Santa Fe Trail towns. He pushed and maneuvered investors to build south from Pueblo toward New Mexico. He bought and developed more mines at Walsenburg and El Moro south of Pueblo. The Panic, however, dramatically reduced the price and demand for Palmer's coal, even as the Front Range population grew rapidly. His counterintuitive plans proved to be exactly that. In 1878, just as the Panic was about to end, Palmer lost control of his company to competing investors at the Santa Fe Railroad.[30]

Palmer may have lost control of the D&RG for the time being, but his Colorado Coal and Land company continued to produce and the cities which surrounded them grew. An economic revival after 1878 meant that Palmer had resources to recapture his railroad from the Santa Fe, which he successfully managed in 1880. His first action after retaking the D&RG was to begin building the smelter in Pueblo. In truth, the depression had been more turbulent for men like Palmer than it was for many locals. In communities that drew life from farming, ranching, railroad, wagon freight, timber, and mining, local economies proved to be more durable and the West's settler population continued to grow. Pueblo had been a sleepy hamlet in 1870. It became a town of more than 3,000 by 1880. Both railroads, first Palmer's and later the Santa Fe, put expansion ahead of profits during the Panic and thus ensured that work and wages continued. Many more residents made a living apart from these volatile companies. Black Pueblo residents embodied this occupational diversity from the earliest years of the town's history. Most men in

[30] Palmer had angered citizens in Trinidad and Canon City, who, in turn, invested in the Santa Fe. At the same time, he focused too much in the early 1870s on coal as the primary good moved by the railroads, and allowed regional ranchers to build relationships with the transcontinental line which infused the Santa Fe with much needed cash. And, according to historian David Wolff, Palmer's vertical monopoly in the area meant that he could never truly ignore the crisis and could thus only build and expand circumspectly. Santa Fe executives, on the other hand played much faster and looser with investor's money and managed to reach Pueblo and the other Arkansas Valley towns by 1876-1877. Wolff, *Industrializing the Rockies,* 34-39.

1870 had listed as laborers or stock workers, with a handful of barbers, and most women either working at home or employed as domestics.[31]

As the city grew through the 1870s, the Black population far outpaced its modest beginnings. Of the roughly 100 Black citizens of Pueblo at the start of the 1880s (constituting roughly 2.5-3 percent of the total population), a sizable majority worked in either service industries or as self-employed professionals. Most lived within complete, family-oriented households. Seventeen people lived in households supported by a barber while fifteen people lived in homes with at least one adult who worked as a cook for local hotels. Only seventeen men worked as "laborers." Some of these may have done odd jobs for the railroad or the new steel works. Some may have been builders or employed in more skilled positions but listed as common laborers anyways. Regardless, these figures indicate that by 1880, when Pueblo was well on its way to being an industrial center, relatively few Black residents originally worked in the coal and steel industries. The Black community may have eventually become a center of Black industrial labor, but, in truth, it started with a different labor profile.[32]

Barbers, cooks, and laborers, though, did not represent the majority of workers in the early 1880s. Women working as domestics and housekeepers constituted 51 percent of the total labor force. Twenty percent of the Black population lived in households where the only wage earner listed in the census was a woman employed in the domestic service field.[33] For a city of only a few thousand, the fact that so many women found work in the homes of others may indicate something about Pueblo's class aspirations at the start of the decade. The steel works being built from 1880-1882 projected a company town where steel, coal, and railroad jobs were

[31] Wolff, *Industrializing the Rockies*, 60; and "African Americans listed in the 1870 U.S. Census, Pueblo, Colorado Territory," pp. 1-18. Data compiled by the author.

[32] "African Americans listed in the 1880 U.S. Census, Pueblo, Colorado," Entries compiled by the author.

[33] "African Americans listed in the 1880 U.S. Census, Pueblo, Colorado," Entries compiled by the author.

all under the management of the Colorado Coal and Iron Company. A clerical and managerial class filled out the middle tiers of the CC&I while wage earners including smeltermen, builders, railroaders, and miners formed the working classes. However, as of 1880, only modest numbers of men were employed to build the steel works while almost no miners lived in Pueblo. That left relatively few positions open for working men while comparable numbers of professional and middle-class employees made homes in the city. In this environment, Black men were not the first to secure jobs at the company and thus continued to find work elsewhere while Black women were able to find employment in the homes of Pueblo's more affluent residents.[34]

Nor was women's work only a secondary consideration for Black families who arrived in Colorado. Several early arrivals before the boom of the mid-1880s were women who made their way to Pueblo alone or with their children but no male partner. Lillie Wright had been born in 1854 in Louisiana before heading west as a young girl. In 1870, the teenage Lillie had just given birth to her first child, a son named William. Sometime before her next son was born in 1872, Lillie moved from Las Vegas, New Mexico to Pueblo where she worked and raised her family without an apparent partner for decades.[35] Other women like Mary McGee or Francis Logan worked during the early 1880s as live-in domestics and may have arrived in Colorado with white families. Numerous paths led Black women to Colorado in search of work and a place to make

[34] "African Americans listed in the 1880 U.S. Census, Pueblo, Colorado," Entries compiled by the author; For a comprehensive study of the Bessemer neighborhood, including early growth see, Jeffery DeHerrera, Cheri Yost, and Adam Thomas, "Forged Together in the Bessemer Neighborhood," prepared for: City of Pueblo, Colorado, Certified Local Government Grant Project, August, 2012, esp. pp. 1-27. (available online at http://www.historitecture.com/pdf/bessemer_context.pdf)

[35] Lillie Wright (nee Holyday) moved between Pueblo and Denver throughout the twentieth century. She is listed in the 1920 census as a domestic in Pueblo as well, and finally seems to have retired by the 1940s, in her early eighties. See "Lillie Holyday" and "Lillie (Lilly) Wright" in 1870 U.S. Census, Las Vegas, New Mexico Territory, Roll: *M593 895*; Page: *144A*; 1880 U.S. Census, Pueblo, Colorado, Roll: *92*; Page: *252B*; Enumeration District: *093; 1920 U.S. Census, Pueblo, Colorado,* Roll: *T625_170*; Page: *4B*; Enumeration District: *210; 1940 U.S. Census, Pueblo, Colorado,* Roll: *m-t0627-00475*; Page: *2B*; Enumeration District: *51-5. (Accessed online at Ancestry.com)*

their homes. What stands out is that a city of a few thousand, known at the time for attracting primarily unwed male industrial workers, still appeared to many Black women to be a suitable destination.[36]

That so many of these working women arrived from the deep South matters greatly. Following the end of Reconstruction, Black women faced assaults from all sides as they sought to earn a paycheck. Domestic work, which had almost exclusively been performed by Black women prior to the war, figured into a new racial calculous. Many employers, writes Joe Trotter Jr., wished to replace Black women with white and immigrant women both to increase the social distance between themselves and the freedwomen, and possibly to drive down wages for domestic work by means of competition. Indeed, advertisements searching for "white girls" to do housework appeared not only in the South, but in the Rocky Mountain West.[37] Back in the South, however, few white immigrants regarded those states as suitable homes. New, more odious, tactics therefore emerged to wrench the value from Black women's working lives. Convict labor, which infamously bridged the era of slavery and the rise of the carceral state, also expanded to include and use women in its mechanisms. Talitha LeFlouria has deftly argued that the "making of a New Southern Modernity" relied upon systems that forced Black women, as well as men, into "unwaged" labor regimes.[38]

Black men and women convict workers in the New South preformed menial labor in chain gangs, but the carceral system also quickly merged with ascendent industrial capitalism.

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[36] For "Mary McGee" see, 1880 U.S. Census, Pueblo, Colorado, Roll: *92*; Page: *253C*; Enumeration District: *093*; For "Francis Logan" see, 1880 U.S. Census, Pueblo, Colorado, Roll: *92*; Page: *253C*; Enumeration District: *093.*

[37] Joe William Trotter Jr., *Workers on Arrival: Black Labor in the Making of America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2021), 91; See also, "Wanted—White girl for general housework," *The Rocky Mountain News,* December 19, 1915, 11; "Wanted—White girl to work mornings," *The Pueblo Daily Chieftain,* 3; "Wanted—white girl for general housework," *The Pueblo Daily Chieftain,* 7.

[38] Talitha LeFlouria, *Chained in Silence: Black Women and Convict Labor in the New South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015).

Through convict leasing, the state officials orchestrated for Black women to work in coal mines and in industrial manufacturing. Amidst the pressures to both keep women's wages in private homes depressed through white-hiring programs and the methods to force Black women into new forms of unfree labor in the prison systems of the South, many Black women also looked to the North or West for better working lives. In this, agents for firms like railroads or northern manufacturing faced continuous opposition from local authorities in the form of arduous fees and fines that states levied against companies or persons who tried to entice Black workers away from sharecropping or the coal mines. Some deep-pocketed corporations could pay these costs and opened offices and scattered handbills across the South. These practices, however, exclusively targeted Black men. Part of this process also often included recruiters paying off the debts of future workers to free them from their landowners or employers. With no major organizations coordinating domestic laborers after Reconstruction, Black women who left for places like Colorado did so without any assurances of work when they arrived.[39]

Moving outside of these channels, Black women, like their labor, passed in notable silence, ignored by most onlookers. Unlike the stereotype of Black men laborers in the West, often cast as intrinsically transient (an idea we will return too presently), Black women, especially those with children formed notably stable communities that encouraged institutions like churches and social clubs.[40] In 1880, not only was roughly half of Pueblo's Black population women, but more than half of the households were supported exclusively by women's wages. This fact notwithstanding, the mid-1880s often mark the very first instances of African Americans entering Pueblo's historical record wherein single Black men arrived during a seedy

[39] Trotter, *Workers on Arrival,* 78.

[40] On Black women and community building see, Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent: The Women's Movement in the Black Baptist Church, 1880-1920* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994).

chapter of the town's nineteenth century labor history. Apart from the census, which details a stable and growing Black community, it would indeed be difficult to identify the presence of African Americans in Pueblo at all. Thus, when miners in Walsenberg and El Moro began striking in solidarity along with miners employed by both CC&I and Union Pacific operation in late 1884, and when the CC&I decided to hire and transport a train of Black men from Tennessee to break the strike, most historians have noted this action as the first involving Black labor in Southern Colorado.[41] Though it appears likely that at least some of these workers did in fact make their way to Pueblo in early 1885, the often repeated saga more appropriately belongs to a different history of how white labor leaders (and subsequent historians) re-narrated stories of race, gender, and labor from the moment of the strike in 1884 through the twentieth century. That story must wait for the final chapter of this dissertation to return to Pueblo.

The coal strike of 1884-1885 was a "red herring" in the Black history of Pueblo. Because the 1890s and the 1900s eventually became decades largely defined by prodigious numbers of Black employees at the CC&I's successor, some have uncritically assumed this group of workers to be the forerunners of the Black community. Even if a hundred or so men were sent to work in Pueblo, this would only have added to an already established community, something no sources, primary or secondary, acknowledge. Fortuitously, the 1885 Colorado census captured the population only a few short months after this event. Roughly three hundred Black residents lived and worked in town, but almost none of them listed the steel works or the Smelter as their place of employment. What is more, is that even after a five-year period in which the Black population

[41] Thomas Andrews cites the *First Biennial Report of the Bureau of Labor Statistics of the State of Colorado, 1887-1888* (Denver: Collier and Cleaveland, 1888) 140. In turn, the report in question had recalled the strike some years earlier and quoted and paraphrased a column by John L. Lewis, the secretary of the CMA in which he repeated the anecdote about arriving Black scabs. See, John L. Lewis, "The Weekly Report of the Secretary," *The Labor Enquirer* (Denver), February 21, 1885, 3.

had tripled, women still constituted roughly half the working population and no latter secondary sources claim that "trainloads" of Black women arrived in the city at any point. Indeed, so many of the 144 Black women listed in the state census appear to have been wage earners that it is accurate to say that the story of Black labor in Pueblo was relatively unattached to the CC&I, at least directly, until 1892.[42]

Black Workers Making the "Pittsburg of the West"

At some point in the first decades of the new century, a treasurer for one of Pueblo's Black women's associations approved the purchase of an iron stamp to impress the seal of their organization into official documents such as membership papers or financial receipts. No such papers remain, but the hefty iron stamp surfaced for sale in 2015. Its embossing testified to the existence of not just another Black women's club or mutual aid society, but to one known as Supreme Court of the Order of Calanthe. Not only was this order a much smaller national organization than its many counterparts, but its center at the turn of the century was still far away in Louisiana and Texas.

The Order of Calanthe had its origin in the robust world of mutual aid societies that proliferated after the Civil War. Among such groups was the Order of Pythias. Like most other such associations, Pythians excluded Black men who, in turn, organized and funded segregated associations. Black Pythians, like their white counterparts, emphasized community support and moral uplift as key tenants for members. Its women's auxiliary, the Sisters of Pythias, therefore,

[42] "African Americans listed in the 1885 Colorado State Census, Pueblo, Colorado," Entries compiled by the author.

reflected the aspirational class and uplift ideology common to Black clubwomen at the turn of the century.[43]

Yet the circumstances in Pueblo demanded something different. Though the Sisters of Pythias were the main women's auxiliary in town, the Supreme Court of the Order of Calanthe came to offer an alternative to Sisters and other women's groups. Since its founding in the deep South, the Order took a plain view of the economic straits of women and acknowledged that pressing members to be industrious wives and mothers in their own homes had little purchase with the majority of Black women who worked for wages as domestics or field laborers. Moreover, working women were those who might benefit from mutual aid the most. With a reorientation toward working Black women, the Order of Calanthe spread quickly from Louisiana to Texas and elsewhere in the South by the mid-1880s.[44]

Working women in Pueblo—already a major facet of the community both economically and numerically in the nineteenth century—came together in March 1901 to organize the Queen of the Rocky Mountains no. 3.0.0.C. chapter of the Order of Calanthe. By 1930, the Order was listed in the city directory sharing a meeting space with the Colored Knights of Pythias in Bessemer.[45] It is impossible at present to suggest the work and scope of the Queen of the Rocky Mountains in Pueblo or to know the ways that their efforts may have differed from other women's mutual aid auxiliaries other than by inferring from the national constitution of the

[43] The most helpful and comprehensive study of Black social welfare groups and the Courts of Calanthe specifically is Sylvia Hollis, "Race, Capitalism, and Social Welfare after the Civil War, 1864-1911," *Ph.D. dissertation,* University of Iowa, 2018.

[44] Hollis, "Race, Capitalism, and Social Welfare after the Civil War, 1864-1911," 179-185; and Shennette Monique Garrett-Scott, "Daughters of Ruth: Enterprising Black Women in Insurance in the New South, 1890s to 1930s," *Ph.D. dissertation,* University of Texas, Austin, 2011, 95-119.

[45] Unfortunately, nothing but the stamp remains to testify to this organization during its first three decades. Local historians and members of the Black community began searching for more information in 2015 when the stamp was first discovered, but thus far no minutes, by-laws, or membership files have been discovered. Tom Perkins, "Search for Rocky Mountain Court Order of Calanthe," *Pueblo Lore* (September 2017), 1-5. Pueblo County Historical Society Research Center. Pueblo Colorado.

Order of Calanthe. Given the existence of other women's auxiliaries in 1901, when the new chapter formed, along with the large population of working women, it is not a stretch to suggest that the Order's focus on poorer and working classes played yet another important role in stabilizing Black Pueblo in the early twentieth century. Too much was risked if clubs and other groups only pushed for support in relation to conservative self-sufficiency and uplift ideologies. The road from the 1880s to 1901, when the Queen of the Rocky Mountains chapter formed, bore the marks of many upheavals that so often left the most vulnerable workers in a society at greatest risk. On its way to becoming the "Pittsburgh of the West," however, it was Black women in the workspace that continued to uphold a vision for Black Pueblo.

The viability of that future was always in question. The industrial politics of the Rocky Mountain Front during the 1880s closed a tight fist around the city of Pueblo. Industrialists like William Jackson Palmer who focused a great deal of their personal fortunes on developing the infrastructure of the surrounding coal fields had not only turned the city into an economic driver, but in doing so, tied the community's fortunes to the volatile, entangled markets of coal, steel, and the railroads. Palmer's Colorado Coal & Iron company built the first steel mill, blast furnace, and smelting operations south of Pueblo in an area called Bessemer. Along with South Pueblo and Central Pueblo, Bessemer incorporated as its own city in 1886. The three municipalities merged to form modern Pueblo in 1894.[46] The expansion of both the steel works and the new satellite towns point to the prodigious growth that the area experience in the 1880s. The population exploded from 3,000 in 1880 to over 24,000 in 1890.[47] The strength of the

[46] For early municipal history see, DeHerrera, Yost, and Thomas, "Forged Together in the Bessemer Neighborhood," 1-27; For a useful breakdown of the steel works in the first two decades of operations see, "The Evolution of the Steel Works," *The Indicator,* August 26, 1905, 1.

[47] Department of Commerce: Bureau of the Census, *Fourteenth Census of the United States: 1920, Bulletin, Population: Colorado, Number of Inhabitants, by Counties and Minor Civil Divisions.* (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Offices, 1921), 2.

corporations boded well for their ability to maneuver in the various crises following 1893. CC&I's production and growth during the previous decade greatly over-extend the company and by 1892, Palmer lost control again to his competitors at the Colorado Fuel Company. That year they merged and formed the juggernaut CF&I.[48]

CF&I began a century-plus of dominance in Pueblo and Southern Colorado the same year another panic hit Wall Street. The mill in Pueblo, located in the growing Bessemer neighborhood, came under new oversight though the merger. The man tapped to lead the mill through the crisis was an Illinois native named Thomas W. Robinson. As the new superintendent, Robinson had sweeping power in areas like production, wages, and hiring. He had previous experience in New York and Pennsylvania, though it seems that he also spent time studying the ascendent coal culture of Alabama. By 1894, Robinson slashed wages in various departments, laid off some workers, and scaled back production when prices fell. Above all, his hiring plan earned him the withering disdain of those at the CMA, the United Mine Workers (UMW), the Western Federation of Miners (WFM), and other predominately white labor organizations.[49]

Even when production had stopped and layoffs continued, Robinson worked to bring in hundreds of Black men from steel towns in the South. This accomplished two primary goals in the eyes of bosses at CF&I. First, it continued a largely successful tactic to weaken solidarity by hiring non-white workers generally at lower wages. During the earlier 1884 strike, it had been

[48] Wolff, *Industrializing the Rockies,* 114-119.

[49] For various reports and criticisms of Robinson's early tenure see, [No title,] *The Bessemer Indicator*, September 2, 1893, 4; "Calls for Action," *The Bessemer Indicator,* March 3, 1894, 1; "It is Only a Dream," *The Bessemer Indicator,* February 17, 1894, 1; Though Robinson appears to be the main administrative force behind hiring Black workers, other reports note that some tension between the superintendent and the Black community may have soured the relationship especially when it came to local politics. On at least one occasion, newspapers accused Robinson of attempting to force Black steelmen to vote a certain ticket, both instances noted that Black voters remained independent. See, "A Rousing Rally: The Colored Voters to the Rescue," *The Bessemer Indicator,* March 30, 1895, 1; and "That Ugly Cartoon," *The Bessemer Indicator,* March 30, 1895, 4.

Italian miners who broke with the organizers of the Knights of Labor and retuned ahead of a final accord.[50] By the 1890s, labor unions were in a period of transition to new and more radical tactic. This left space open for companies to hire more workers at lower wages. Robinson accomplished the second goal by hiring Black workers from the South was to intentionally increase the number of underemployed persons living in Pueblo to help drive down wages when the mill eventually went back online. Local reporters and industry watchers at least surmised as much. In September 1893, for instance, the Bessemer newspaper reported that "T.W. Robinson intimated… that now is a good time to reduce wages…inasmuch as there is plenty of unemployed colored labor to be had."[51] If enough workers could be found, then the CF&I could offer less knowing that employees had no choice but to accept, lest some other needy soul take their place.

It was, in fact, during the months when the steel works were shuttered through the Panic of 1893, that the *Bessemer Indicator* published the earliest mention of new Black employees. Though the general tenor of the Bessemer paper softened a bit when reporting on Black residents by the 1900s and 1910s, they often failed to hide their racist contempt early on. "The general reputation of the steel works," their first dispatch in June 1893 stated, "will not be improved by increasing the number of colored working men, nor will the high standard of intelligence among the employees be augmented." These and other such notices from 1893-1894 made it abundantly clear that many in Pueblo harbored "ill-concealed discontent [about] the influx of colored laborers into the works."[52] When the mill went back online in August, a substantial portion of the 800 men who worked the first two-week run were identified as "colored experts" from

[50] See Wolff, *Industrializing the Rockies,* 94-97; and Andrews, *Killing for Coal*, 96-97.

[51] For both attitudes of locals on racial hiring and the quoted material see, *The Bessemer Indicator*, September 2, 1893, 4.

[52] "The General Reputation…" *The Bessemer Indicator,* June 17, 1893, 1.

Alabama.[53] From time to time, the papers opined in vain that these Black men—men who had worked in one of the most hostile industrial environments in Alabama—were certainly about to return to the South and let white Coloradoans alone. One reporter claimed in 1894 that "many of the imported colored laborers do not find things so congenial at the steel works as they had been led to believe, and are going back to the starting point…leaving the C. F. & I. Co. to foot their ride in the car."[54]

Such fantastical reporting notwithstanding, Black workers continued to find employment and wages at the Pueblo mills and smelter. The *Indicator* concurred that in September of 1893 "the colored man is still in favor at the steel works. Wednesday, five boilers came in from the mines for repairs and in short order a half dozen sons of Ham were gathered up about town to set to work."[55] By 1894, the first of at least four (if not six) now lost Black-owned newspapers began printing in Pueblo with very positive view of the CF&I. Quoted in the *Indicator*, the editors of the *Pueblo Times* wrote:

> We have located here the great Bessemer steel works conducted by Mr. Robinson, of the best men the sun ever shone upon and a true friend of the race; who gives employment to 1500 men, of which about 500 are colored who are scattered indiscriminately in all departments of these great works, and are receiving salaries ranging from 50c to $3.00 per day.[56]

The *Time's* appreciation of the superintendent may have been strategic or even slightly hyperbolic, but other sources suggest that white locals certainly continued to see a conspiracy or other connection between Robinson and the growing Black community.[57] It is also likely that

[53] "A Magnified Whopper," *The Bessemer Indicator,* August 12, 1893, 1.
[54] "Not So Congenial," *The Bessemer Indicator,* July 28, 1894, 4.
[55] "The Colored Man…" *The Bessemer Indicator,* September 23, 1893, 4.
[56] Quoted, "The Pueblo Times…" *The Bessemer Indicator,* November 17, 1894, 1.
[57] "Calls for Action," *The Bessemer Indicator,* March 3, 1894, 1; and "It is Only a Dream," *The Bessemer Indicator,* February 17, 1894, 1.

some of the most vociferous racism directed at Black workers emerged in tandem with the general hatred of Robinson by many whites who saw his management at "soulless" and "cruel."[58]

Regardless of motives and grand designs, the facts are that Robinson can merely be credited with implementing a hiring strategy that afforded hundreds of new Black residents the *option* to come to Pueblo in the 1890s. In line with complaints against non-white laborers, Robinson's critics loathed that he cut some jobs while preserving others. An editorial in March 1894 implored CF&I managers to send investigators to Pueblo where they would discover "that money which is taken from the men who do the actual work is going into the pockets of men who held jobs as foremen, clerks, or time keepers whose services could and should be dispensed with."[59] In addition to these managerial positions, others whom the *Bessemer Indicator* called "straw bosses" bloated the company's payrolls in a time when wages and positions evaporated for steel workers. These men and their comfortable, middle-class paychecks may have represented everything wrong with Robinson's managerial style. To another class of Pueblo residents, however, the bevy of the town's more affluent households based around these company men and the other professionals were their own type of occupational opportunity.

Black women worked as wage earners in the domestic and service industry as far back as the founding of Pueblo. The number of women earning wages from 1880 to 1885 was comparable to the number of men. Then, between 1893 and 1900, as hundreds of Black men were hired and cane to Colorado from the southern states such Alabama, Tennessee, and

[58] See, "Calls for Action," *The Bessemer Indicator,* March 3, 1894, 1; and "It is Only a Dream," *The Bessemer Indicator,* February 17, 1894, 1.

[59] "Calls for Action," *The Bessemer Indicator,* March 3, 1894, 1.

Georgia, it would be fair to expect the gender ratio to widen dramatically.[60] After all, the number of new jobs taken up exclusively by Black men in the 1890s likely exceeded the total Black population of Pueblo in 1880. No gender gap, though, appears in the census. Instead, by 1900, Black women held steady at around 48 percent of the population, a higher percentage than many western cities at the start of the century. Close analysis of the 1900 census suggests that Pueblo's economy quite nearly drew as many Black women as it did Black men. The same cannot be said of the city of Pueblo as a whole, however. The 1900 census enumerated just over 16,000 men to only 13,300 women; meaning women comprised only 45 percent of the total population.[61]

Thus, in spite of an apparent economic environment that prioritized and grew the number of Black male workers, the new century would continue a historical trend of a more complex story of gendered labor. Indeed, to the great despair of commentators in the 1890s, Black women took advantage of Pueblo's aspirational middle- and upper-class citizens to earn wages and salaries as housekeepers, maids, private cooks, and household servants.[62] Growth in the city's Black domestic workforce held steady at a time when more and more women opted out of maid, housekeeper, or cook positions in private homes for new manufacturing and industrial jobs nation-wide. Joe Trotter Jr. notes that this trend prevailed in the South, where racial tensions and personal dangers were most acute between white employers and their Black employees. Black women gladly looked to more physical work in factories as an escape from private spaces

[60] For states of origin see, "African Americans listed in the 1900 U.S. Census, Pueblo, Colorado," Entries compiled by the author. See also Department of Commerce: Bureau of the Census, *Fourteenth Census of the United States: State Compendium Colorado,* (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Offices, 1921), 43.

[61] "African Americans listed in the 1900 U.S. Census, Pueblo, Colorado," Entries compiled by the author; For gender statistics see, Department of Commerce: Bureau of the Census, *Fourteenth Census of the United States: State Compendium Colorado,* (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Offices, 1921), 37.

[62] "Calls for Action," *The Bessemer Indicator,* March 3, 1894, 1; and "It is Only a Dream," *The Bessemer Indicator,* February 17, 1894, 1.

that so often harbored latent threats of sexual violence.[63] Michelle Mitchell's landmark work on the ideology of Black "racial destiny" during the 1880s to1920s points to other pushes within Black communities to avoid domestic work for white families on the basis that it deprived Black families of mothers and wives in their "proper spheres."[64] In relation to this, movements coined slogans such as W.W.T.K., or "White Women To the Kitchen," which helped precipitate an exodus of Black domestic workers from southern homes. Trotter notes that this shift was less apparent in the North and West where competition for industrial and manufacturing jobs remained high through World War I. Though Black arrivals in Pueblo at this time still found work in private homes, their initial migrations from the South should nevertheless be couched in that region's changing landscape of work and home.[65]

Isolated from, but certainly not ignorant of, such shifts in Black domestic labor in the South, women and older girls walked from Black and ethnic neighborhoods in Bessemer and the area near the river known as Peppersauce Bottoms to stately homes in North and Central Pueblo each day or several times a week. As they passed streams of men heading the other direction toward the steelworks, their movements against the flow begin to parallel how labor studies so often move only in one direction, thereby missing half the story. In truth, Black women moved in all directions as they went about busy working lives in Pueblo in the 1900s. Forty-seven women and older girls labored as cooks, maids, housekeepers, or servants for private families. An almost equal number of women (forty-three) moved through neighborhoods and commercial districts

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[63] See Tera Hunter, *To Joy my Freedom: Southern Black Women's Lives and Labor after the Civil War* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998), Leslie Brown, *Upbuilding Black Durham: Gender, Class, and Black Community Development in the Jim Crow South* (Durham: University of North Carolina Press, 2008); Jacqueline Jones, *Labor of Love, Labor of Sorrow: Black Women, Work, and the Family, from Slavery to the Present* (New York: Basic Books, 1985).

[64] Michele Mitchell, *Righteous Propagation: African Americans and the Politics of Racial Destiny after Reconstruction* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 135-140.

[65] For W.W.T.K. and regional labor changes see, Trotter, *Workers on Arrival,* 84-85.

collecting laundry and other items that they washed, dried, ironed, and returned it to customers. Some could be seen calling at the back doors of certain homes on familiar roots through town. Others with indoor plumbing may have been fortunate enough to have the laundry delivered to their kitchens or washing rooms by a child sent on the errand. In the Bessemer area, where Japanese workers had recently moved into the old Robinson Hotel which once housed new Black smelter workers, Black women certainly would have known some of the Japanese men going about the same business.[66]

Down in Peppersauce bottom, a generally poorer and less developed part of town where many African Americans lived, washerwomen likely retrieved water from the Arkansas River or perhaps even brought soap with them to wash clothes and other items at the river's edge. Soaps, basins, and other implements of the trade also needed to be bought from retailers in Pueblo. And so, many laundry workers joined the daily movements of workers going to and fro throughout the city. Like women in Bessemer who passed Japanese men at work in the laundry business or who performed domestic labor alongside Greek or Italian women in stately homes, Black women moving about the poorer Bottoms neighborhood also lived in and traversed a racially diverse landscape. Though fewer in number during the early twentieth century, Latina women and their families raised and grew the chili peppers that gave the neighborhood its name, Peppersauce Bottoms. Mexican women married to white and American traders had helped found and build El Pueblo in the 1840s and held vital roles in the communal life of the fort. In this the Mexican

[66] This building had originally been named for Superintendent Robison, but later was changed to the Alabama Hotel; both names referenced its early Black residents. See, DeHerrera, Yost, and Thomas, "Forged Together in the Bessemer Neighborhood," 96; and "Crowd Close in to [sic] Steel Works and Want More Room for Newcomers," *Bessemer Indicator,* June 22, 1907, 1.

community shared a historic legacy with Black residents who called upon the memory of Jim Beckwourth as their city's ephemeral founder.[67]

In addition to Black laundresses and domestics, a dozen or so women also went about their days as dressmakers and seamstresses, nurses, and even a few as "day laborers." Still a few more ran lodging and boarding houses. Yet the 110 women who listed their occupation in the 1900 census likely represented less than the actual number of women who earned wages. What is more is that another group of busy Black Puebloans actually outnumbered Black women workers according to the census. One hundred and seventy-two Black girls, aged seventeen and younger, also bobbed throughout the city on more familiar roots from homes to schools and back or with their mothers on various errands. Most from the ages of five or six to seventeen were enrolled in schools. Along with a smaller contingent of young boys, the Black schoolgirls filled Bessemer and Pueblo area schools with over 200 Black children by 1900.[68]

Of the 410 adult Black women listed in that year's census, one quarter listed an occupation. For the other three-quarters, given the nature of steel work that employed many male heads of households, it seems unlikely that a number of these women did not also augment family finances with wages of one sort or another. While many Black women during the nineteenth and early twentieth century never matched the zeal of white Victorian homemakers, there were still new programs that pushed Black women to eschew wage work along ideals of respectability and uplift. As we will see shortly, Pueblo hosted its share of Black women's clubs, church groups, and other society elements that often proffered a more domestic image of Black

[67] For a full discussion of the Beckwourth-as-founder debate see chapter 6.
[68] "African Americans listed in the 1900 U.S. Census, Pueblo, Colorado," Entries compiled by the author.

womanhood. Yet this class of homemakers also came to figure into turn of the century labor movements.[69]

White labor unions in Colorado and throughout the country worked tirelessly to promote and protect what was termed the "Family Wage." The family wage not only reified the categories of male breadwinners and unpaid women's labor (as well as depressing already undervalued women's wages as essentially augmenting a family's income) but it also did so in an overtly racialized manner. Only white men could unambiguously claim their right to a family wage during a time when whiteness defined whose family actually belonged to the social *and* political domain of the "home." To a great extent, the very fact that poorer wages for non-white men often required women to work outside the home for wages confirmed in the eyes of many their own exclusive claim to wages befitting "proper" domestic sociability. Just within Pueblo, labor leaders with the Western Federation of Miners or any of the other trade and craft unions in town looked on with derision as Mexican women cooked and sold food in restaurants and on street corners; as Greek and Italian children worked as bootblacks or porters; and as Black women in the uniforms of maids, or with tubs and laundry on their shoulders passed by. They saw virtually no Chinese women at all—a product of the 1875 Page Act (to be discussed at much greater length in Chapter Five)—confirming their belief that Asian and all non-white labor deserved less compensation. Moreover, since "cheaper" labor was among the greatest threat to white workers who needed to support a family, gender and race became twin pillars that held up turn of the century antagonism by organized labor toward Black, Brown, and Asian workers.[70]

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[69] "African Americans listed in the 1900 U.S. Census, Pueblo, Colorado," Entries compiled by the author; For uplift and respectability see Mitchell, *Righteous Propagation*, 142-163.

[70] On family wages and gendered labor ideologies see, Laurie Mercier, *Anaconda: Labor, Community, and Culture in Montana's Smelter City* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2001), 39-44, 67-77; Matthew L. Basso, *Meet Joe Copper: Masculinity & Race on Montana's World War II Home Front* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013); Linda Gordon, *The Great Arizona Orphan Abduction* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001), esp. 102-104, 180-182.

Even under these conditions, women at home were not fully invisible or irrelevant to labor unions except as some kind of prop in wage negotiations. The early 1900s in Colorado and Pueblo specifically saw a different role for women emerge. Under the bolded headlines and calls to "Organize the Women," the Women's Auxiliary of Pueblo made headways in 1904 to unionize "the wives, daughters, and sweethearts of the union workingmen."[71] Like women's auxiliaries already operating in Denver, labor leaders used the new groups to advocate that women support the broader labor effort primarily through their role as consumers. Fighting to ensure that factories and manufacturers used union contracts to make a certain good only mattered if people actually purchased those goods over typically cheaper products made by non-unionized competitors. The "union label" became a prominent means by which labor advocates and consumers could identify and support the cause. For Pueblo's Black female consumers of household goods, such efforts to impact their own spending likely carried little water. Black men were unionized by the 1900s and 1910s, primarily through the Building Laborers Union which organized men employed in manual tasks around town and for the CF&I. There were also unions such as a prominent Barber's Trade Union with Black members. It is unclear when the first Black steelworkers joined white coworkers in any of the major labor unions such as the WFM or the USWA. Despite a relatively robust Black labor presence, national affiliates like the United Steel Workers and the United Mine Workers Association and its predecessors generally refused to incorporate integrated or all-Black locals.[72]

[71] "Organize the Women," *The Pueblo Labor Advocate,* October 16, 1903, 5.

[72] For Women unions see, "Organize the Women," *The Pueblo Labor Advocate,* October 16, 1903, 5; Some of the only documentation of Black unions come from accounts of local Labor Day parades and events that noted Black labor groups. For Barbers and Building Laborers see, "Labor Day Celebration was a Grand Success," *Pueblo Labor Advocate,* September 11, 1901, 1.

Whether as the wives and daughters of Black union men with consumer spending power, or as wage earners in a bustling domestic services industry in town, labor advocates and most other voices all but ignored Black women and their economic role in Pueblo throughout the 1890s and the early 1900s. Instead, most remained fixated on the steady stream of Black men arriving on trains from the South. If we follow their lead, however, our understanding of Black labor history in Pueblo will be incomplete and even incomprehensible. The superintendent of the steel works, T.W. Robinson (and his brother, William, who succeeded him in the position) valued Black workers in a large part because they helped the company tamp down wages. This was only possible if a portion of the available Black workers remained un- or underemployed forcing white steel workers and their unions to accept lower paychecks. The earning power and stabilizing presence of Black women, therefore, helps explain how Black Pueblo emerged as a vibrant industrial community despite the centrality of such a volatile and discriminating employer.

In this way, Black women formed a particularly active vanguard in what labor and gender historian Laurie Mercier calls "community unionism." In her peerless investigation of the Anaconda Company of Montana from the 1880s through the Cold War, Mercier keyed into moments when the power dynamic between unions and management swung heavily in favor of the latter. During strikes or work stoppages in Montana's mines and copper smelters, the ability of working class people to persist and remain united in a meaningful sense was often determined not by the resolve of strikers, but by the active strategies of women in the community to meet new and intensifying challenges. Community unionism, in Mercier's accounting, is the broader form of social organization that functionally rejects the narrowness of patriarchal, domestic

economics and perseveres by leaning on networks of community and mutuality.[73] Indeed, Black women and families have, at times, participated in such forms of community unionism. Even in Anaconda, the site of Mercier's own study, the first Black women's club formed in Anaconda in order to address the dire needs of that community during the shutdowns of 1921 that followed a plummeting price of copper. The Good Word Club made and distributed meals to out of work smeltermen in addition to hosting other social functions. Their community unionism is made all the more extraordinary by the fact that in 1921, no trade union or the main mine-mill local 117 in Anaconda would admit these women's husbands, sons, or brothers as members for about another decade. Even still, their motto was, "We see only the good in others."[74]

Given the manner in which the CF&I came to rely upon Black laborers in Pueblo, I suggest that a model of community unionism upheld and sustained the working lives of Black residents throughout the 1890s and into the 1910s. Moreover, the central role that Black women held was an irreplaceable factor in Pueblo taking shape as a hopeful destination for Black migrants after the turn of the century. This much is evident in the various institutions of community support that they built in the early twentieth century. Already the city was home to several Black churches of various denominations. Growing in-step with churches was also the reach and efficacy of Black clubwomen. Dinners, fundraisers, dances, recitals, and other events enriched people's lives even as they produced funds that clubwomen directed at a number of critical needs within their community.

In 1906, the clubwomen of Pueblo and southern Colorado finally realized a long-time goal to meet a desperate need of their community. Black women lived—and often outlived their

[73] For community unionism see, Mercier, *Anaconda,* 45-77.

[74] For Good Word Club see, "Montana Federation of Colored Women's Clubs Records," MC 281, Montana Historical Society Research Center and Archives.

husbands and partners—in Pueblo for decades by 1900. Widows and the elderly were among the most vulnerable and venerable residents. Similarly, Pueblo, Colorado Springs, Denver, and the many coal towns in the adjacent mountains thrived on industries with high occupational risks, especially for Black men. As a result, many Black orphans found themselves perpetually in need of care. The "Colored Orphanage and Old Ladies' Home" opened its doors in December 1906 with the support of locals and African Americans across the region. Dorcas Watson, then the state organizer of the Colorado's State Federation of Colored Women's Clubs, dedicated the new home. Others, like Mrs. Owens, the wife of Eighth Street Baptist minister J.C. Owens, were on hand to witness the founding of an institution that strengthened and necessitated relationships between Black communities of the West for decades.[75]

Pueblo's Black women's clubs played a vital role in not only supporting the needy in their midst, but they also forged many new regional connections across the Rocky Mountain West. These connections may appear standard, but they proved to be vital as the new century wore on. With some frequency, hundreds of members and officers from CFCWC convened in Pueblo for annual meetings. In turn, their officers traveled yearly to other cities and built vital networks and friendships. According to the Denver papers, it would seem that travel to raise funds for the orphanage wore familiar roads leading to Black churches, social clubs, and living rooms from Albuquerque to Cheyenne. The relationships forged in these travels became the strongest bonds of the emerging Black West.[76]

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[75] "Auspicious Opening of the Colored Orphanage and Home," *Pueblo Sun,* December 10, 1906. 3; "Pueblo News," *Franklin's Paper, The Statesmen* (Denver), December 14, 1906, 6.

[76] One particularly interesting mode of fundraising was an event in which members of the Denver and Pueblo Black Women's clubs, according to the *Colorado Statesmen,* "will appear as Navajo Indians in a charity festival… for the benefit of the Colored Orphanage and Old Folks Home." See "The Women's Club…" *Colorado Statesmen,* January 5, 1905, 2; see also, "Colored Orphanage will ask Public for Some Support," *Denver Star,* February 21, 1914, 1; "'Breaking the Light' in the Colored Orphanage at Pueblo," *Denver Star,* May 29, 1915, 1; "Report of the Colored Orphans Home," *Franklin's Paper, The Statesmen* (Denver), November 15, 1907, 2.

Black workers helped turn Pueblo into the "Pittsburgh of the West" despite the fact that a far more predicable path after Reconstruction might have been a restless community of mostly men who never stayed long enough to put down roots. Understanding that distinction requires, first, that we pause and look back to the long history of Black Puebloans who thrived before coal and steel were kings in Colorado. Had Black Alabamans stepped off trains in the mid-1890s to find a town without Black churches, businesses, reading groups, boarding houses, fraternal lodges, women's clubs, and, more generally, a history and story of Blackness, then such a robust community might not have come to pass. As this chapter outlined, women and women's labor played the defining role in that history. Even after 1893, when Black men again stepped into a new and unique narrative of industrial labor in Colorado as Black steelworkers, women continued to shore up the fraying edges of African American's working lives precisely because the CF&I's methods produced such precarity. Through it all, Black Puebloans forged a form of gender-conscious community unionism in the absence of robust interracial industry organizing.

Bessemer and the Bottoms

During the prosperous years of the early 1900s and 1910s, the shift toward greater Black stability in Pueblo somewhat divided the community. For the most part this emerged as a geographical division. Bessemer, the neighborhood directly adjacent to the mill, across the river and south of downtown, came to be home to most of the new Black arrivals while poorer residents still lived in the area called Peppersauce Bottoms. This had been the case as early as the mid-1890s when Black steelworkers lived together in the old Alabama Hotel across the street from the mill. Later, as these men bought homes or moved to other arrangements, Japanese

workers came to occupy this building.[77] In general, Bessemer was home to the more working-middle classes of the city's Black population. The community they formed quickly reflected the physical distance that existed between them and the older Black neighborhoods down by the river bottoms. Bessemer locals fielded their own all-Black baseball team which played challengers from all over town. Black Baptists from the deep south founded Bethlehem Baptist Church, a new Baptist congregation in Bessemer. The oldest Black church in town, St. John's AME, served the Bottoms community as it had since the 1870s.[78]

The deep connection to the South persisted in Bessemer in other ways, most notably the annual celebration of Alabama Day in June. Reporters for the *Bessemer Indicator* noted with almost exotic curiosity each summer when hundreds of Black steelmen accompanied a brass band that toured through the streets of the neighborhood, drawing families out of their homes to join the procession to public spaces near a local brewery. Once the picnic began, barbeques, baseball, music, and lots of ice cream punctuated the day. Celebrating Alabama Day helped build and maintain community through common backgrounds, though only a quarter or so Black residents hailed from the state. White reporters, on the other hand, continued a longer tradition of viewing all Black Puebloans as concretely "other" through a repeated association with Alabama. For instance, the papers made much less of August Fourth celebrations in town, a holiday marking a form of emancipation with ambiguous western roots.[79]

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[77] This building had originally been named for Superintendent Robison, but later was changed to the Alabama Hotel; both names referenced its early Black residents. See, DeHerrera, Yost, and Thomas, "Forged Together in the Bessemer Neighborhood," 96; and "Crowd Close in to [sic] Steel Works and Want More Room for Newcomers," *Bessemer Indicator,* June 22, 1907, 1.

[78] See, "Rowdies Attack Practice Squad in Park and Coach is Injured," *Bessemer Indicator,* March 12, 1910, 1; "Standing the Test of Time: One of Pueblo's first churches ready to turn the page," *The Chieftain,* May 10, 2004, 5A.

[79] For Alabama Day see, "Alabama Day," *Pueblo Sun,* June 15, 1907, 3; "It was Alabama Day," *Bessemer Indicator,* June 29, 1907, 1; Emancipation day events were commented on with less frequently, but the best example of white observers not really being able to identify the root of the celebration is a notice in the *Pueblo Sun* from 1909 which observed "While Aug. 4 is not the anniversary either of the issuance of the proclamation by Pres.

Whereas white papers reported on Bessemer citizens with curiosity, they usually regarded those from Peppersauce Bottoms with contempt. The area had been an early site for agriculture near the city, namely of chili peppers tended by early Mexican American residents.[80] Peppersauce was near the site of the original adobe El Pueblo. Later, in the 1870s, settlers built homes and businesses in the area. The downtown blocks of the bottoms were owned by Guilford Budd and known as "Africa." By the eve of the great flood of 1921, even white newspapers identified the neighborhood simply as the "Negro and Mexican settlement of Pueblo."[81] As the city grew, laborers hoping to escape the downtown tenements built a modest village in the bottoms during the late nineteenth century. Prone to flooding, however, the neighborhood remained neglected by the city and avoided by most newcomers if they could help it. The papers most often made mention of that part of town when discussing crime or some other unseemly event. In 1910, the Peppersauce Gang, the mostly Black baseball team garnered their nickname and reputation as the "Rowdies" in part for instances when games or practices broke out into brawls.[82]

If Bessemer, with its newly built single-family homes, parks, and middle class aesthetics represented what many newly arrived African Americans hoped for, Peppersauce represented something different. A reporter for the *Pueblo Sun* attempted to give readers a taste of the peculiarities of the Bottoms in 1909. In the fourth ward of the city that included the Peppersauce, two political candidates hosted an event with free beer and less-than-chased Victorian entertainment. "Dancing and fighting were the amusements," the reporter wrote. "Several of the

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Lincoln, or of his prior notice of the same, still it has been used as the day for commemoration of the freedom…" See, "Colored People Hold Picnic to Honor Lincoln," *Pueblo Sun,* August 4, 1909, 3.

[80] See Robert Follansbee and Edward B. Jones, *The Arkansas River Flood of June 3-5, 1921* (Washington: Government Printing Offices, U.S. Geological Survey, 1922), 23-29.

[81] "Pithy News Notes from All Parts of Colorado," *Pueblo Sunday Opinion,* September 20, 1919, 2.

[82] "Rowdies Attack Practice Squad in Park and Coach is Injured," *Bessemer Indicator,* March 12, 1910, 1.

guests left, tastefully decorated with black eyes and Grecian cupolas hung gracefully on their brows." In addition to the general mood of the crowd being one where attendees "settled their troubles with bare fists" and "No arrests were made," the most salient feature of the account was its racial commentary. "The crowd was mixed, both negroes and whites mingling and enjoying the festivities." The author even parodied society columns by including a tongue-in-cheek "Among those present" section that included the Peppersauce Bottoms Gang. The *Sun* rendered the inter-racialism as its own kind of illicit entertainment noting, "One white man became indignant because a negro danced too long with his girl…Another negro slapped a white man for dancing with a dusky damsel." Between this type of local commentary, the ubiquity of the Bottoms in the police sections, and the undesirable housing in the flood zone, many people in Pueblo viewed the neighborhood as backwards and dangerous.[83]

The Black residents of the Bottoms, however, likely drew on their longer history in the area that reached back to Guilford Budd's "Africa Block," Annie Budd's Delmonico Café, and to St. Johns AME church which first opened its doors in 1875. Peppersauce sat just north of the downtown riverfront and retained its close ties to Pueblo's history before the arrival of the steel mill. Racists in the press claimed, baselessly, for decades that the "Alabamans" living in Bessemer were merely sojourners in town, always about to return to the South where their true allegiances lay.[84] But for those in the Bottoms with a long enough memory, any pretentions about racial outsiders and interlopers were pure foolishness. Their lawns and streets may have been muddy, they worked long hours in hard jobs, and their aspirations for the future may indeed

[83] "Fourth Ward Rally Greatly Enjoyed by Those Fortunate Enough to Be Present," *Pueblo Sun,* March 24, 1909, 4.

[84] "Not So Congenial," *The Bessemer Indicator,* July 28, 1894, 4; Specific language also appeared in print such as: "The colored citizens of Bessemer are rapidly thinning out and going back to 'old Alabam,' There are few who regret their departure and fewer who saw them to the train." Quoted in *Bessemer Indicator,* July 29, 1893, 4.

have included moving to some other desirable part of town, but the daily pulse of the Bottoms had driven the city since its founding, and Black residents had been their contributing to that vitality all along.

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Thomas and Rosa Cate finished moving their printing equipment into the street level rooms at 116 W. 3rd sometime around 1920 or early 1921. Thomas, a veteran of the 24th US Colored Infantry, had been pursuing a career as a newsman for several years. Near the end of the war, Cate became a commander in the Colorado 3rd Division Infantry in 1917.[85] Cate traveled back and forth between Pueblo and Canon City at the mouth of the Royal Gorge for work and military duty it seems. In Canon City, it appears that Cate wrote for the Canon City Record, affording the sizable Black population of that mining city a fair representation in the press. In Pueblo from at least 1916 onward, Cate endeavored to break into the vibrant, if not somewhat saturated, newspaper scene. Issues of his paper, *The Megaphone* which he published with Maymie Harris of Pueblo, like all other Black journals in the city, has never been found.[86] In 1920 or 1921, Thomas and Rosa, who frequently appeared as a partner, chairwoman, or vice-president to Thomas in local Canon City affairs, managed to obtain printing equipment and offices north of downtown in the Peppersauce Bottoms. They rechristened their journal *The Rising Sun* and looked forward to a prosperous career informing the growing Black readership in southern Colorado.[87]

On June 3, 1921, rain continued to fall as it had for a week in the Upper Arkansas Valley while snow blanketed the slopes above. When the water crested the banks on June 4 and June 5,

[85] "Colored Soldiers to Guard Royal Gorge," *Canon City Record*, November 8, 1917, 3.
[86] 1916 *Polk City Directory,* Pueblo, Colorado, 198; 1919 *Polk City Directory,* Pueblo, Colorado, 202.
[87] For *Rising Sun* offices see, 1921 *Polk City Directory,* Pueblo, Colorado, 280; For Rosa's club and church work see, "New of Colored Baptist Church," *Canon City Record*, January 24, 1918, 7.

the Peppersauce neighborhood stood in the worst of the flood's catastrophic path. The torrent swept away the offices of *The Rising Sun,* and with it all the equipment and past editions of Cate's journalistic career.[88] He was not alone in this professional tragedy. Both O.L. Boyd and C.F. Albert published Black weeklies out of rooms in the Bottoms. Considering the number of Black papers that existed prior to 1921, several of which lasted many years, it is nothing short of perplexing that no issues of any have been found or archived along with Colorado's impressive and extensive historic newspaper project. Perhaps the flood waters are to blame for the loss of what must have been several vital sources of daily life in Pueblo's Black working-class neighborhood.[89]

As it was, the water that was flowing with cataclysmic abandon toward Pueblo in June 1921 did not destroy and eliminate the jobs of Black residents, though it did claim many of their lives.[90] The flood challenged a city with a white community that felt either burdened or blessed with a working-class identity, torn and bound by racial and ethnic distinctions. Already, World War I had popularized the "Americanization" of ethnic immigrants. In the very recent and very bloody labor history of their state, conflict refined and remade foreigners into brothers in a class struggle. This version of southern Colorado's past emerged with renewed fervor in the 1920s, years when the Klan dominated state's political climate, and when labor leaders pushed for a

[88] The only reference to the destruction of the Rising Sun presses and those of other Black newspapers in town comes from the unarchived but supposed published work of Dr. Elmer Wells, a professor at the University of Southern Colorado. In 1979, Wells, the only Black professor on campus, began writing local history pieces for a newspaper. He stated that "As I went to library and did research and began to interview people, I felt there was a need for a directory of some sort." Wells went on to publish a collection titled, *Pueblo Black Directory* in 1979. Newspapers ran highlights and snippets of his work ahead of publication, including a mention of the destruction of the *Rising Sun* office. See, "New Directory Outlines City's Black History," *Pueblo Chieftain,* July 28, 1979.

[89] For names and dates of other Black newspapers in Pueblo see, See, Craig William Leavitt, "Colorado Newspapers: A History & Inventory, 1859-2000," *MA Thesis,* University of Colorado, 2014, [10]59-[10]61. Nb. The paging of the thesis lists these pages as 1059-1061.

[90] For morgue and missing persons lists collected from publications the weeks after the flood, see, "Publications, Pueblo Colorado," Collection: MTAY, Box 2, Colorado State University, Pueblo Archives and Special Collections. Pueblo, Colorado.

new version of collective memory around the violence of the previous decades. These are themes that will surface in the final chapter of this dissertation. The subtle interplay of race, memory, and local history can speak to how the Rocky Mountain West's second largest Black town has remained conspicuously absent from studies of African Americans in Western labor history. For that story to have much meaning, however, we needed to first see Pueblo's Black history anew.

The working women and men of Black Pueblo certainly found many more opportunities in the era dominated by steel production after 1894, but there was already a river which watered the imagined futures of Black Puebloans. Whatever such a community hoped for in the years before 1921, it faced new challenges after workers pulled the debris from the city streets. In truth, the form of community unionism that had sustained Black families was well suited to responding to the tragedy of 1921. The Black population rebounded and grew, reaching its prominence in the 1940s and 1950s. They continued to win the battles for survival and prosperity. But in 1921, the struggle over one's place in local history and collective memory was just beginning.[91]

[91] For Black population growth see, Department of Commerce: Bureau of the Census, *Seventeenth Census of the United States: General Characteristics, Colorado,* (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Offices, 1951), table 34.pp. 47.

Chapter 2 The Black Church in Idaho's Ecclesial City: Pocatello, Idaho

Pocatello is the coming town for the Negro in the Northwest. We are glad to see hundreds come this way. It is the right place for the right kind of people. Come West, brothers!

—Charles C. Young, *Denver Star,* April 1918

Reverend Thomas L. Cate continued a weary trip north along the mountains through the first hot week of July 1921. He had traveled the West as a military man, a journalist, and now a minister and alms-seeker. He spoke to congregations in Colorado Springs, Denver, and Cheyenne along the way. They passed collection plates while he preached charity and compassion for the many Black residents of Pueblo who lost family members, friends, and all they possessed to the flood waters that tore through the central Black neighborhood of their city the previous month.[1] While calling upon other Black churches seems logical enough, the fact that such a trip was possible should not be taken for granted. By the 1920s, the far-reaching network of Black churches that Cate relied upon for his mission amounted to the most visible and durable bond between the Black communities in the Rocky Mountain West. Black Methodists in Cate's AME denomination belonged to three different episcopal districts in Rockies starting in the early 1890s: one encompassing Colorado, another for Wyoming, Montana, and Utah, and a third that counted Idaho's churches with those of Washington and Oregon.[2] In 1918, Black Baptists in Ogden, Utah likewise organized and hosted the inaugural meeting of the Rocky Mountain Baptist Association:

[1] "Cheyenne, Wyo. News," *Colorado Statesmen,* July 9, 1921, 1.

[2] "Christina Dickerson-Cousin, *Black Indians and Freedmen: The African Methodist Episcopal Church and Indigenous Americans, 1816-1916* (Champagne: University of Illinois Press, 2021), 59.

a loose community of Baptist churches and pastors from Wyoming, Idaho, Utah, and Montana.[3] These new ecclesial ties yoked together Black churches and their congregants across the region and encouraged new individual faith communities to form. At the same moment when Cate sought relief for victims of the 1921 Pueblo flood, Baptists in the railroad and reservation border-town of Pocatello in southeast Idaho culminated their decades long mission to consolidate house churches into a recognized and officially incorporated congregation. Bethel Baptist, as they named it, staked a claim at the far northwestern edge of the network of Black churches in Mountain West.[4]

Roughly forty years had passed since early Black settlers first arrived in new western towns during the 1870s and 1880s and when Thomas Cate of Pueblo set out on his journey. The story of Black church expansion in the Rockies during those consequential decades often fades into the background as a pre-supposed feature of community growth. Cast as either inevitable or even "natural," the founding of Black churches is often less understood than their surrounding communities. From time to time, writers have provided a close-up view of one church body or another.[5] These first-person church histories offer a glimpse into the personal and community commitments that shaped the origins of Black religious life across the region. Historians of the West, however, have not engaged the insights such narratives contain and thus reduce many discussions of Black churches to vaguely described "pillars" of the community.[6]

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[3] "Cheyenne News," *Colorado Statesmen*, August 24, 1918, 1.

[4] "Bethel Baptist Church," National Register Registration Form, 12.

[5] The best example of this literature is France Davis, *Light in the Midst of Zion: A History of Black Baptists in Utah, 1892-1996* (Salt Lake City: University Publishing, 1997).

[6] The description of "the Black Church" or an individual Black Church as a community "pillar" is widespread in both the scholarship on Black religiosity and in social histories in general. Henry Louis Gates Jr. opened his recent book, *The Black Church: This is Our Story, This is Our Song* (New York: Penguin, 2021), with the assertion: "No pillar of the African American community has been more central to its history, identity, and social justice vision than the 'Black Church.'" (1) In depth accounts of what makes the institutions of Black protestant churches so important, however, are centered in their historic hot spots like the mid-Atlantic, South, and cities like Philadelphia (for the AME) or Chicago (for the National Baptists).

We are left with a surprisingly limited view of Black church history in the West. One struggles to articulate basic answers to many questions about the role of the church in Black western expansion. In 1921, with a congregation at home in Colorado which had lost so much in recent weeks, Cate knew well the manifold reasons that Black churches dotted his new western geography. He counted on the sympathy of his audiences who had likewise gathered to themselves the hopes and uncertainties of the present as they looked to a future in their cities. He knew something of the investments of time, labor, and money that Black families poured into their churches and buildings. And most of all, he knew that the past and present growth of their congregations in these new western towns was anything but "natural" or inevitable. As much as Black churches might have been the central "pillars" of their communities and the cornerstone of local African American experience (with all the stability that metaphor called to mind), so too could they be sites of everyday uncertainties, asked to bear the great weight of an unjust world.

This chapter reflects upon a story about the growth and role of religious life in the Black West. It asks why and how churches came to be somewhat ubiquitous parts of the Black experience in these small communities, and, moreover, contemplates what western Black churches might tell us about the relationship of religious space to place-making and the locality of racial formations.[7] To this end, the present chapter recounts the variegated faith communities of Black Pocatellans from 1882 up through the long-awaited establishment of the town's Baptists into Bethel Baptist Church some forty years later in 1921. Pocatello also boasts a surprisingly diverse array of Black religious traditions and enterprises for a small city and a modest Black

[7] What has been written on Western Black churches (usually by members or pastors) skews toward the few congregations that eventually grew to prodigious size or achieved notable longevity. As a result, we are lacking accounts in smaller towns where the interaction of race and religion may have been quite different than in cities like Denver or Salt Lake. See Davis, *Light in the Midst of Zion;* Clementine Washington Pigford, *They Came to Colorado with the Dust of Slavery on their Backs: Information About Zion Baptist Church Its Members and Societal Affiliations, 1863-1999* (Denver: Pigford, 1999).

population. The only Black congregation with a truly stable footing in the years leading up to 1921 was the AME church. Allen Chapel (AME) succeeded where many others failed in building their own sanctuary but carried debt that the board of elders struggled to discharge for over a decade, greatly affecting their leadership in those years.[8] Black Baptists, too, had attempted to secure a building space in the early 1900s, but ultimately were forced to continue meeting in the homes of members until 1921.

In spite of the uncertainties surrounding the two largest Black protestant traditions, Black Pocatellans also organized other Christian groups and churches that ranged from a highly structured Bible study to a Christian Mission Church apparently organized by the Black Lady's Sewing Club around 1904.[9] That is to say that despite the lack of well-attended churches, handsome stone sanctuaries with stained-glass windows, wealthy members who infused such networks of community support with critical funds, or any other obvious marker of the Black Church-as-pillar of the community motif, Pocatello's residents worked hard to nurture a robust spiritual life. As such, its church history has just as much to tell us about the imagined futures of a Black community as does any leather-bound history of magnanimous congregations like Shorter AME Chapel in Denver or the long-lived churches like Cheyenne's Allen Chapel and St. John's AME in Pueblo.

Ultimately, this chapter gestures to how the experiences of Black protestants in Pocatello collectively speak to Black religious history in the West and what that can reveal about what those who made homes for themselves in these strange western places imagined for their future.

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[8] More on this point below, for the debt issues see, "Idaho," *Chicago Defender,* April 24, 1920, 11.

[9] Idaho Tompkins Purse, Mary Sanders Watkins, and Kevin Marsh, "The Triangle: A Slice of America" (A Historic Report on the Triangle Area Submitted to the Planning and Development Sources, City of Pocatello, December 2005) printed report in possession of the author, 52. Hereafter cited as Purse, Watkins, and Marsh, "The Triangle."

In the face of a multitude of factors that all pointed to Pocatello having particularly poor soil for such an endeavor, Black Pocatellans not only attempted to start a Black church but mounted their efforts again and again. For the purposes of this dissertation, I have found such an investigation necessary to include in part because, like issues of labor or community identity, religion is also a ubiquitous category of meaning across far-flung cities that otherwise may seem to have more unique features than they do in common. On one level, attending to the history of church life in Pocatello is essential because without it we are left with a deeply unsatisfying vision of a city that, on one hand, held American Christianity so close to the essence of their original settler myths (discussed in chapter 5), and on the other also produced the most segregated city of the region with the most vigilantly policed color line of any of the Rocky Mountain towns covered in this study. Furthermore, I hope that a focus on the Black churches of the city will also do much to illuminate some of what is missing in the histories of the other communities.

Religion in the Gate City

Religion emerged as a somewhat more conspicuous feature of local life in Pocatello's past than it may have in other comparably sized settlements of the late-nineteenth century. The historian Jill Gill remarks that "Idaho's published religious history looks much like the state itself: bottom-heavy and abundantly Mormon."[10] Pocatello is the historical exception. Deliberately established in 1882 upon lands seized through eminent domain at the center of the Fort Hall Indian Reservation, Pocatello flourished as a railroad town guarded under company control and with state oversight. These two points of local power, the federal government and the Union Pacific's Oregon Short Line Railroad (OSL), worked in tandem to limit the reach of the

[10] Jill Gill, "The Power and the Glory," in Adam M. Sowards, ed., *Idaho's Place: A New History of the Gem State* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2014), 108.

region's omnipresent social and economic force, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (LDS) from the 1880s well into the mid-twentieth century. The railroad consistently recruited workers from elsewhere to labor on the OSL, bypassing many locals in the region who tended to hold religious affiliations with the LDS. These transplanted settlers built up their homes and neighborhoods throughout the 1890s and thus served as a buffer between the LDS and local democratic institutions resulting in a much smaller LDS population.[11]

During the decades on either side of Idaho statehood in 1890, territorial and state governments bristled at the prospects of "Mormon culture" dominating as it did across the border in Utah. So, too, local city councils in places like Pocatello shunned "Sabbath Laws" and other moral codes associated with the Saints.[12] Later commentators noted with something approaching pride that Pocatello was "the second toughest town in the West, second only to Butte, Montana."[13] The tenderloin district and working-class neighborhood that sat next to the railroad yard delivered on much of the town's reputation. This one-dimensional association of the neighborhood with vice and crime, however, distracts from another (and conflicting) element of Pocatello's place at the edge of the Mormon cultural region. In that same neighborhood—called by various names including the Walled City (1905), the Twilight District (1912), the Restricted District (1925), and later the Iron Triangle—stood the steepled edifices of churches that included

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[11] H. Leigh Gittens, *Pocatello Portrait: The Early Years: 1878-1928* (Moscow: University Press of Idaho, 1983); and John N. Heaton, *The Bannock-Shoshones: Culture and Commerce at Fort Hall, 1870-1940* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2005), 68. Early newspaper accounts place the LDS population in Pocatello at 400 in 1895. The city's population was 4,000 in 1900. See, "Churches of Pocatello," *Pocatello Tribune,* December 28, 1895, 23; and Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Fourteenth Census of the United States: State Compendium Idaho* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1924), see table "Population of Principle Cities from Earliest Census to 1920" page 8. Available online, https://www2.census.gov/prod2/decennial/documents/06229686v8-13ch4.pdf

[12] Lawrence G. Coates, Peter G. Boag, Ronald L. Hatzenbuehler and Merwin R. Swanson, "The Mormon Settlement of Southeast Idaho, 1845-1900," *Journal of Mormon History* 20:2 (Fall 1992), 58-60; and Katherine G. Aiken, "Idiosyncrasy and Enigma: Idaho Politics," in Adam M. Sowards, ed., *Idaho's Place: A New History of the Gem State* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2014), 78-79.

[13] R. B. Bistline, "Second Toughest Town: Saloons, Prostitutes, and Skinned Cats," *Idaho State Journal (Centennial Edition),* June 21, 1982, 12.

Greek Orthodox, Roman Catholic (largely attended by Italians and Mexican Americans), a Japanese Buddhist Temple, and the locations of all the Black churches over the years including Allen Chapel and Bethel Baptist.[14] Though far more ethnically diverse, the church communities within the Triangle were part of a city-wide mosaic of heightened religiosity. Outside this geographically small, but dense neighborhood in the early 1910s, for instance, was another Catholic church, a large white Baptist congregation, Methodists and Methodist Episcopals, Congregationalists, Episcopalians, Christian Science, Lutherans, and the Fort Hall Presbyterian Church that was constructed on the reservation in 1899, followed five years later by the first white Presbyterian church in town.[15] After the rise of fundamentalism in the 1920s, numerous more brands of Pentecostals, Church of Christ, the Nazarenes, and fundamentalist Baptists joined the fray.[16]

As the only major city in the area populated by a non-Mormon majority, religious expression fused into an especially potent form of political power wherein diverse ethnic groups made claims to home and belonging through their religious heritage.[17] Before some of the more expressive counternarratives of the 1920s and 1930s tied the origins of white settlements in

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[14] For various names see, "Oral History: Pocatello's Black Community, Joseph Taylor Jones document," page 10, *The Idaho Ethnic History Project;* MC 63, Box 2: "Idaho Ethnic Demographic Data." Special Collections and Archives, Eli M. Oboler Library, Idaho State University; On churches in the Triangle see, Purse, Watkins, and Marsh, "The Triangle," 9; See also Jill K. Gill, "The Power and the Glory: Idaho's Religious History," in Adam M. Sowards, ed., *Idaho's Place: A New History of the Gem State* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2014), 108-135; Mamie O. Oliver, "Idaho Ebony: The African American Presence in Idaho State History," *The Journal of African American History* 91:1 (Winter 2006), 41-54.

[15] Leedice Kissane, *Pocatello Memories: A Collection of Columns from the Idaho State Journal* (Pocatello: Idaho State University Press, 1983), 9.

[16] Weekly church directories printed in local papers are excellent sources on the variety of church traditions in Pocatello, for instance see, "Church Directory," *Pocatello Tribune Journal,* Sunday, April 24, 1938, 3.

[17] On Pocatello and Mormonism, see Katherine G. Aiken, "Idiosyncrasy and Enigma: Idaho Politics," in Adam M. Sowards, ed., *Idaho's Place: A New History of the Gem State* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2014), 78-79; Black LDS members also faced racial exclusion since the barring of African Americans from the priesthood in 1844. See W. Paul Reeve, *Whiteness of a Different Color: Race and the Mormon Struggle for Whiteness* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), esp. Chapter 7; An insightful glimpse into the early days of religious growth in Pocatello is, "The Founding of Trinity Episcopal Church," MC 021, Box 6, Folder 20: "Historical Sketch of Trinity Episcopal Church in Pocatello, Id. 1889-1970," Special Collections and Archives, Eli M. Oboler Library, Idaho State University.

Idaho to a grand and ordained American Christian history, however, the town's first church communities were much more modest and lacked any nationalist teleology. One journalist remarked in 1895 that the first decade of the city's religious history had been a hard-won and sometimes bitter struggle for Churches of all denominations who frequently failed to keep ministers and build proper sanctuaries. Both these issues were common to up-start western towns and the Black churches of Pocatello, too, struggled to keep qualified pastors or a roof over their heads from 1900-1920. However, the reporter speaking in the mid-1890s hoped to reassure readers that (white) Christians in the city had conquered uncertainty and that all was headed in the right direction.[18] Among the greatest assets of these embattled bodies, he figured, were the interdenominational associations like women's auxiliaries, Christian Endeavor Society Sunday schools, and groups like the YMCA. Working together, Protestants and Catholics in the city outnumbered members of the LDS Ward which totaled about four hundred people according to the *Pocatello Tribune*.[19]

The vagrancies of railroad life in the 1880s had not helped nurture the religious character of the city. Indeed, the 1895 account of the local Christian churches also revealed that most had only been established in recent years. The Catholic parish formed following a visit from a regional Bishop in 1884; even then they did not build a church until 1889. The next group to put up a building of their own were the members of Trinity Episcopal Church also in 1889. Other denominations including the Congregationalists, the Baptists, and the Methodist Episcopals did not secure regular pastors or meeting houses until the early 1890s.[20] That all this activity

[18] "Churches of Pocatello," *Pocatello Tribune,* December 28, 1895, 23.

[19] The alliance of Protestants and Catholics notably produced two Catholic mayors in the 1890s. While LDS members generally voted Democrat in elections after the end of the Test Oath exclusion, Catholics in town enjoyed many some concessions from Republican protestants for their position against the LDS. See chapter 6, "Churches and Religious Life" in, JoAnn Ruckman, *"Pocatello is Our Home": Excerpts from the Pocatello Tribune, 1893-1897* (Pocatello: Idaho State University Press, 1998), 191-192.

[20] "Churches of Pocatello," *Pocatello Tribune,* December 28, 1895, 23.

coalesced nearly a decade after the city formed in 1882 speaks to the very deliberate fashion in which Pocatello's social character grew out of the isolated railroad depot in the midst of Native homelands.

Higher-ups at the railroad likewise appeared interested in the growth of Christian groups in their company town's early days. The 1899 anniversary of Pocatello's YMCA featured a former OSL officer and current head of the YMCA's Railroad Department, George McDill, as the keynote speaker. McDill spoke in glowing terms of the many new religious groups and other "churchwork" shaping railroad towns in the West. He also acknowledged that the OSL in particular approved of the YMCA's efforts and sought to employ "Christian men," who were "needed because they were reliable and safe."[21] At the same time the company selected for a preferred religious character of their workers, the federal government also limited the missionary efforts on the surrounding Fort Hall Reservation to the Presbyterian church in 1899.[22] Following the spread of the Ghost Dance in the Great Basin and southeast Idaho through the 1880s and 1890s, Indian agents were anxious to engage the Bannock and Shoshone in matters of Christianity. Eight years after Wounded Knee, Ghost Dance evangelists still maintained some followers at Fort Hall when the Presbyterian missionaries were permitted to establish a church

[21] "Y. M. C. A. Reports," *Pocatello Tribune,* March 1, 1899, 1.

[22] The first missionary sent to Fort Hall is believed to be Amelia Frost of the Women's National Indian Association. Frost arrived around 1887, but according to the later Presbyterian Missions reports, though she "had been lovingly and patiently sowing the seed of truth…so cruelly had these Indians been wronged by their white brothers that they had resisted all her efforts to win them to the white man's God." It was not until the coming of a converted Nez Perce minister, James Hayes, that enough interest and cooperation was garnered to establish the formal mission church in 1897-1899. Quoted, Belle M. Brain, *The Redemption of the Red Man: An Account of the Presbyterian Mission to the North American Indians of the Present Day* (New York: The Board of Home Missions of the Presbyterian Church in the U. S. A., 1904), 46. For more on early days of the Fort Hall Mission and Amelia Frost see, Joanna Cohen Scherer, *A Danish Photographer of Idaho Indians: Benedicte Wrensted* (University of Oklahoma Press, 2006), 67-80.

and school. Their exclusive access to the reservation stifled the ambitions of both Catholics and LDS evangelists.[23]

The growth of Christian, and especially protestant, communities and their "churchwork" in Pocatello that the *Tribune* reporter noted in 1895 likewise came fast on the heels of the Idaho's most intense period of anti-Mormon politics. Back in 1884, the territorial legislature aimed to decisively cut Mormons out of the political process. That year, in order to run as candidates in elections, sit on juries, or even vote, Idahoans had to first "swear under oath whether or not they were members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints and believed in its doctrines."[24] Swearing the oath in the affirmative effectively barred one from state citizenship. The phrase "and its doctrines" was both specific and capacious enough to implicate the oath-taker in not only membership in the LDS, but as a proponent of polygamy, which remained part of the church's teaching at that time and was, of course, illegal under federal law that governed the territories. This was, in part, a tactic of the Republicans who aimed to solidify their control and gain statehood during the Republican administrations by making an end run around the large number of Democratic Mormon voters. Even after Idaho joined the Union in 1889, however, its first constitutional convention opted to keep the language of the Test Oath and maintained *de jure* Mormon civic exclusion until its repeal in 1893.[25] The decade from 1884-1893 thus laid the groundwork for a lingering anti-Mormon atmosphere in Pocatello where the LDS never gained a local majority. This did not stop politicians like the former Idaho Governor and 1906 Senate

[23] The precursor to the establishment of the mission at Fort Hall was the building of the Agency School. John Heaton has documented that during the height of the Ghost Dance, which was the predominant religious force on the reservation from 1880s through the mid-1890s, up to "125 school age children remained in camp with their families." (112) Likewise, even Indian police sided with Ghost Dance leader throughout the 1880s by refusing to forcibly enroll children. Heaton, *The Shoshone-Bannocks,* 108-114; see also Frost

[24] Aiken, "Idiosyncrasy and Enigma: Idaho Politics," in Sowards, ed., *Idaho's Place*, 78.

[25] Aiken, "Idiosyncrasy and Enigma: Idaho Politics," in Sowards, ed., *Idaho's Place*, 78-79.

Candidate, Fred Dubois, from running on a return to the Test Oath and his own position as a protestant while stumping in Pocatello.[26]

Newspaper editorials and political speeches from the early twentieth century, however, suggest that a shift in the political rhetoric had occurred since 1893. No longer did politicians like Dubois point to the scourge of plural marriage as a cause to rally against, but instead articulated an even worse threat: the Mormons' marriage of Church and State.[27] Critics thus called upon long traditions of Protestants resisting State oversight of any kind in church matters in order to counter a (albeit a heretical sect in their view) church's oversight of their state affairs. Ward elders and LDS leaders consistently penned reassuring columns in Pocatello's journals that they had no designs whatsoever to control local politics through beholden officials who were also members. Evidence of LDS influence over Utah politics, however, did not help in their plea. In the end, politicians and political parties in Idaho, especially when visiting areas with fewer Mormons like the northern panhandle and around Pocatello, continued to appeal to their own non-Mormon religious affiliations as proof of their commitment to the separation of church and state.[28] Thus it was that following a decade of slow, but politically charged, religious growth in southeast Idaho in the 1890s, the spiritual lives of Pocatello's inhabitants emerged in the new century as an important sphere for those who sought to imbed themselves and claim belonging in the booming town.

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[26] "DuBois Closes his Campaign," *Pocatello Tribune,* November 6, 1906, 1; For a more critical view of DuBois's anti-Mormon rhetoric from 1903 see, "Fred on the War Path—Our Senior Senator Proposes to Have the Scalp of the Mormon Citizens," *Pocatello Tribune,* September 11, 1903, 1.

[27] "Attitude of Mormon Church Made Plain," *Semi-Weekly Pocatello Tribune,* October 7, 1907, 1.

[28] Gill, "The Power and the Glory," in Sowards, ed., *Idaho's Place,* 120-122.

Black Church Migrations throughout Idaho and the Rockies

Amid the cacophony of hymns and homilies, church choirs and charismatic exhortations, Black Pocatellans came together to form no less than six different congregations before World War II; four of which formed before 1921.[29] None but Bethel Baptist and Allen Chapel lasted very long. While present day observers may see such instability as evidence of a community that either lacked enough devout religionists or that it was overly sectarian and divisive, this chapter argues that Black religious history illuminates the locality of racial formations in Southeast Idaho. Black communities formed, grew, and negotiated their hopes for an imagined future while embedded within specific places and cannot be generalized into regional or national discourses of "race relations." The ecclesial world of Pocatello's residents, therefore, is the most immediate factor that should be considered when analyzing the apparent struggles of Black protestants before the Great Migration. In this frame, Black Pocatellans' consistent efforts to build up churches of their own and in their own diverse traditions speak to their desire to have faith communities attentive to their needs and beliefs. Moreover, this history is accentuated by the Black community's aspirations and awareness of the well-established links between race, power, and religion that shaped life in Pocatello since the town's founding in 1882.

Missionaries of the AME Church signaled their intent to be the first Black Christian denomination to focus their efforts on Pocatello and throughout Idaho more broadly in 1894.[30] African Methodists professed a Wesleyan (that is, Methodist) theology and doctrine but with the Episcopal form of church government. This effectively meant that the establishment of any AME

[29] Mary Watkins, member of Bethel Baptist and historian Jill Gill, author of Bethel's National Register Nomination documentation and several pieces on religious history in Pocatello, have identified the Colored Christian Endeavor group, the Christian Mission Church, Allen Chapel, and Second Baptist, all beginning between 1902-1908. Later, the Church of God in Christ and Corinth Baptist are founded in the 1930s and 1940s respectively. See Purse, Watkins, and Marsh, "The Triangle," 52. And Gill, "Bethel Baptist Church," National Register Registration Form, 8-12.

[30] Bishop B.F. Lee, "African Methodism in the Northwest," *The Christian Recorder,* September 27, 1894.

congregations needed to first follow the visit of a regional bishop and the appointment an elder and ordained minister. Historian Christina Dickerson-Cousin has written about the expansion of the AME immediately following the Civil War onto the Great Plains and specifically in Indian Territory. Dickerson-Cousin explains that the convergent factors of the AME's longtime commitment to interracial (and particularly to Indigenous) evangelism and timing of the first migration of Black Exodusters out of the South combined to center Indian Territory and the broader U.S. West as a central mission field of the AME alongside Africa.[31] However, as this took place when most western towns had few Black residents and, likely, no ordained AME minister, the new western districts (called "Conferences") of the AME in practice initiated what Dickerson-Cousin calls the African Methodist Migration. The AMM not only "helped facilitate Black migration by compelling hundreds of clergymen to move west to pastor AME churches," but also provided some assurance to people back east that the West was coming to resemble something of a hospitable social environment for African Americans.[32]

Readers of the church's popular newspaper, *The Christian Recorder,* encountered the very first mentions of Black religious life in Pocatello in 1894 when the AME bishop and missionary E. E. Makiell traveled east from Seattle following the creation of the Puget Sound Conference, the body which set out to govern AME churches in Washington, Oregon, and Idaho. Makiell found willing Black Methodists (or Baptists and Presbyterians who were happy to worship with African Methodists at that point) in "Warden Junction, Wallace, Pocatella [sic], Rocky Springs, and Boise."[33] The new religious frontier left much to be desired by early Black Methodists who

[31] See James Campbell, *Songs of Zion: The African Methodist Episcopal Church in the United States and South Africa* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995).

[32] Christina Dickerson-Cousins, *Black Indians and Freedmen: The African Methodist Episcopal Church and Indigenous Americans, 1816-1916* (Champagne: University of Illinois Press, 2021), 64-65.

[33] Bishop B.F. Lee, "African Methodism in the Northwest," *The Christian Recorder,* September 27, 1894.

lamented that "it is a new country, nothing but everlasting hills." In addition to the rough terrain, Bishop Lee, writing about Makiell's efforts, presciently observed that, among these new towns in Idaho, "every community has its 'boom,' its decline, its collapse and finally its resuscitation or its ruin; some one, some the other." How could one hope to fund and nurture a church in such volatile places? Indeed "many churches whose members are all Caucasians," Lee wrote, "have gone up in the swirl of the decaying boom."[34]

If the success of a church was always tied to the stability of its community, the AME reckoned that their efforts were thus of a somewhat more novel variety than previous work in the North, Midwest, or South. The shifting sands under church foundations mattered all the more to Black Christians. "The colored man," lamented the Bishop in the same article, "is but slightly attached to what little solidity there is; his is usually on the wind and water side, little of the Granite."[35] The precarity of Black westerners weighed upon thoughts of AME bishops and elders during the 1890s since the lack of social or financial security meant that ministers were unlikely to take churches in towns where pay must surely be poor. In fact, Lee admitted in his column that the hopes of those African Methodists who met with Bishop Makiell would likely amount to little as the entirety of the conference in Idaho, with only "eighty members and sixty probationers," could never hope to pay the cost of even one full-time minister, let alone the travels of a bishop or funds for new buildings. Thus the 1890s ended with Black Methodists in Idaho without any church buildings, ministers, or meaningful attachment to the Puget Sound Conference on the Pacific coast.[36]

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[34] Bishop B.F. Lee, "African Methodism in the Northwest," *The Christian Recorder,* September 27, 1894.
[35] Bishop B.F. Lee, "African Methodism in the Northwest," *The Christian Recorder,* September 27, 1894.
[36] Makiell seemed to be aware of the limits of his mission. Quoted in Lee's column, Makiell claimed "The work is embarrassed by the great distances from point to point…The missionary in Idaho cannot make his circuit in fewer than 1200 miles. How can eighty members and sixty probationers pay for this?" Bishop B.F. Lee, "African Methodism in the Northwest," *The Christian Recorder,* September 27, 1894.

Despite frustration in Idaho, African Methodists experienced noted success throughout the Colorado Conference region to the south. Early missionaries who advanced the AMM there, like James Woods Sanders, traversed an impressive region in their efforts. Sanders studied theology and divinity in North Carolina before migrating to Pueblo in 1884. His churchwork in the following decades, Pauline in scope, almost singlehandedly mapped the geography of the Black West: "He pastored in Colorado Springs, Colorado; Salina, Kansas; Helena, Montana; Salt Lake City, Utah; Albuquerque, New Mexico; Cheyenne, Wyoming; and Denver, Colorado," Historian Christiana Dickerson-Cousins notes. Additionally, he organized churches in Eddy and Roswell, New Mexico, and built a church in Salt Lake City worth $2,500."[37] As Sanders' travels suggest, the AMM was never merely the movement of clergy from the South or East to final destinations in the West. The intraregional migrations of ministers from town to town also did much to form the unique ecclesial character of the Black West. Ministers and their families became some of the first links between Black communities that shared little commerce or communication in the late nineteenth century.[38]

Reverends Charles Cushinberry and John Muse of Cheyenne—both discussed more in the next chapter—arrived in the West not as ministers at all, but as railroad workers or common laborers. Both men, representing the AME and Baptist traditions, enjoyed robust religious lives in Cheyenne under the tutelage of established senior pastors before feeling the call to ministry elsewhere. Cushinberry studied and became ordained in the AME church around 1890 before

[37] Dickerson-Cousins, *Black Indians and Freedmen,* 64.

[38] This nuance is not in contradiction to Dickerson-Cousins' thesis. I do not believe that she would claim that the AMM was only an east to west migration neatly organized by bishops sending out zealous ministers. Instead, her focus on the AME movement into Indian Territory merely prioritizes that idea. Her brief attention to the movements of men like James Sanders suggests a more complex regional movement of ministers in the farther West. Dickerson-Cousins, *Black Indians and Freedmen,* esp. introduction and chapter 3, "The African Methodist Migration and the All-Black Town Movement."

relocating to Butte, Montana to serve the flock of Shaffer's Chapel in the Mining City.[39] Muse is another useful and colorful figure to consider. Born in the West with deep roots in the Denver area, John became interested in ministry during the nation-wide Baptist revival era of the 1910s. Unlike African Methodists with their structured, episcopal way of doing things, Baptists who wished to become ministers had a noted advantage over their AME counterparts in that extensive seminary training was not necessarily required of them. The Baptist practice of "laying on of hands" was all that was needed to commission someone to a life of ministry. (What that practice entailed could differ widely, but the general idea is that a church and its elders or deacons were the only mediators between a hopeful pastor and his "call") [40] John Muse took a position in Eaton, Colorado near the All-Black Town of Dearfield in 1917. He frequently filled in at the pulpit in Cheyenne and eventually moved to California to lead a church in Pacific Grove.[41]

Serendipitously, one of Pocatello's earliest recorded oral histories is that of Elijah J. Harris, who came considerably later in 1917. Along with being one of the founding elders of Bethel Baptist, Harris eventually became a Baptist minister in the 1940s and served until the 1960s. Following a job flyer into a railroad recruitment office in St. Louis in 1917, Harris recalled asking the employment officer, "'man, where you shipping today?' … And he said, 'we're shipping some to Pocatello, Idaho.' I said, "Pocatella?" Harris broke into laughter and acknowledged that "I didn't know where the place was - I said, 'where's that?" One can easily imagine Harris leaning over the counter and crooning his head up at the large railroad map, his eyes following the lines across the plains northwest to where the officer was pointing. Surveying the map, Harris recalled "I looked up there to old Pocatello, way out. 'Pocatella,' I said, 'I want

[39] "Rev. Chas. Cushinberry," *Cheyenne Daily Leader*, November 28, 1891, 3.
[40] Gates Jr., *The Black Church,* 85-89.
[41] "Rev. J. T. Muse," *Colorado Statesmen,* December 13, 1919, 1.

to go to Pocatella.'"[42] Like Harris, Muse, and many others, the West also produced Black ministers of its own alongside those sent by formal organizations like the AME Church.

In fact, it would take up all too much space here to follow even just the ministers of Pocatello, Pueblo, and Cheyenne who moved extensively throughout the region, further mapping out the much underappreciated geography of the early Black West. A more documented figure whose religious life crossed the mountains many times was the U.S. Army Chaplain, Col. Allen Allensworth. Though he was one of, if not the most, famous and widely traveled Black ministers of the American West during the late 1890s and early 1900s, Allensworth also spent several years in Pocatello's orbit. His life is revealing not only for the western story it tells, but for the way that he tended to express his religious experiences through questions of theology and doctrine as opposed to "community formation" (he was a military preacher after all, not a local minister). After rising to impressive heights of social standing and military rank, he and his friends worked diligently to produce a memoir, *The Battles and Victories of Allen Allensworth,* written by Charles Alexander in conjunction with Allensworth before his death in Los Angeles in 1914.[43]

Having learned to read, write, and to study the Bible by a quaker woman who once cared for him during his childhood in slavery, Allensworth started as a traveling Baptist minister in Tennessee and Kentucky during his twenties. Somewhat ironically, his mother had named him after Bishop Richard Allen, founder of the AME Church, though the young boy likely only ever attended white-led services while enslaved. Thus when Allensworth entered the Baptist Theological Institute in Nashville, a forerunner to the Southern Baptist (white) and the NBC

[42] "Elijah J. Harris" (presumed), oral history interview, conducted c.1972. Special Collections and Archives, Eli M. Oboler Library, Idaho State University, identifier "isu_ohp_music_bethel_greek_streaming" available from https://cdm16942.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p16942coll20/id/37/rec/28.

[43] Charles Alexander, *The Battles and Victories of Allen Allensworth* (Boston: Sherman, French & Company, 1914).

(Black) jointly run American Baptist Theological Seminary, he entered a world of thoroughly Black Christian tradition for the first time.[44] His theology became intellectually rooted. His less emotive style in his teaching at first did not sit well with early congregations. One small church in Franklin, Kentucky, who paid his railroad fares in exchange for weekly sermons, complained in 1875 that "he did not 'tone' when he preached."[45] For the rest of his time spent preaching to Baptists, and especially small town or rural Baptists, Allensworth chided against those he derisively termed, "holy-toners."[46] His next church after Franklin also possessed a number of people that he described as "extremely emotional, but non-progressive." He despised the way some of his parishioners "witnessed strange sights, and experienced wonderful things when they 'come through.'" Though Allensworth called them "ignorant and superstitious," charismatic feeling of this nature would remain embedded in many churches for the rest of Allensworth's ministry.[47]

Allensworth's westward movements began when he successfully campaigned for an appointment as the military chaplain of the 24th US Colored Infantry in 1886. As chaplain, and a commissioned officer, he served men of all traditions and took several occasions in his papers to note the theological differences of his men and boasted of his own understanding of such issues. Unsurprisingly, baptism was a recurring theme in his letters. While at post at Fort Bayard, New Mexico, Allensworth officiated or organized a series of baptisms for soldiers or their families from seemingly every Christian tradition. Once, a not-particularly-devout Catholic asked the chaplain to baptize his infant. As the soldier seemed ignorant of the Catholic view on the

[44] Charles Alexander, *The Battles and Victories of Allen Allensworth* (Boston: Sherman, French & Company, 1914), 192.

[45] Alexander, *Battles and Victories,* 193.

[46] The Franklin church suffered through this lack of oratory inflection in part because under Allensworth's pastorate, the church grew from sixteen members to 160. Alexander, *Battles and Victories,* 193.

[47] Quoted, Alexander, *Battles and Victories,* 196-197.

necessity of the sacrament according to their doctrines, Allensworth simply agreed before taking the baby into town to the local priest. Nearly identical stories follow for baptisms of Methodist and Lutheran soldiers. Each time, Allensworth boasted of knowing quite a bit more about the soldiers' traditions than they did.[48]

This in itself suggests that a broader, didactic point about the chaplain's character and his situational prudence was being made in his biography. Allensworth's western travels were filled with these cross-denominational experiences. After 1897, the 24th was stationed at Fort Douglass near Salt Lake City. The news of the Black soldiers first engendered outrage and racism from the white press and community. Under Allensworth's careful instruction, the 24th slowly won over the support of the public during the years at the fort with their congeniality and discipline. In addition to preaching against excessive drinking and lewd behavior, Allensworth also garnered favor with the local white community by way of his impressive oratory skills, which were already well known wherever he traveled. He frequently gave all or portions of his popular lecture, "The Battle of Life and How to Win It" to local church groups and colleges. He also took a remarkable step of preaching with some regularity, not only across denominational lines, but also racial ones, as a recurring guest minister for the First Presbyterian Church of Salt Lake, a large and affluent white congregation.[49]

[48] Alexander, *Battles and Victories,* 273-274.

[49] Alexander, *Battles and Victories*, 297-298. At the very least this was an incredibly uncommon event for most white churches in the West. Alexander also wrote that Allensworth was given the same check payment that the church always gave to pastors who temporarily filled the pulpit. Given how uncommon this would have been, it might be right to question the event's historicity. This may have been Alexander's own flourishes, however, some things we do know about Allensworth may point to this being an accurate account. Primarily, Allensworth was someone who often endeared himself to elite and powerful whites. His lecture "The Battle of Life and How to Win It" was a classic example of racial uplift and accommodation ideologies. We also know that among Allensworth many admirers was the famous playwright and journalist, Steven McGroarty, author of the *Mission Play.* So while the premise of Black minister giving a guest sermon at a white church in the 1890s may be suspect, the premise of Allen Allensworth, one of the highest ranking officers in the US military, being asked to speak is less so.

In Salt Lake City, only a few hours away from Pocatello by the narrow-gauge railroad, Allensworth channeled his experience in cross-denominational ministry into the local "Christian Endeavor Society" that flourished in Utah's capital. Prior to the profusion of self-described "non-denominational" churches later in the century, similar inter-denominational (also called ecumenical) church groups of Baptists, Methodists, and Presbyterian styles and theologies grew in popularity around the turn of the century. The International Christian Endeavor Society (CES), founded by white protestants in 1881 and headquartered in Ohio, encouraged young members of various church bodies to exercise a protestant "ecumenicalism." In new western towns, small populations and scarce resources engendered more practical reasons that Christian Endeavor Societies grew.[50] Pocatello's CES in 1900 carried the additional function of uniting protestants together while the LDS wards had grown to the largest single denomination in the city, though still a clear minority overall.[51]

Though there had been a handful of willing Methodists among the few dozen Black residents of Pocatello back in 1894, it proved to be almost ten more years until conditions were right for a Black church. Confusion persists regarding the first Black churches in Pocatello. The white press had an annoying habit of declaring the beginnings of a church at different times when, in fact, it already existed. Worse still were the times when the paper itself had already made similar declarations. For instance, different news reports informed their readers that Allen Chapel had been founded in 1904, 1908, and once more in 1914. The third declaration is particularly egregious considering that the church had already been listed in the city directory for over a year at that point. The lack of a permanent church building with regular services likely led

[50] Roger Ottewill, "The Early Years of the Christian Endeavour Movement: Innovation and Consolidation at a Local Level, 1881–1914," *Studies in Church History* 57 (2021), 300–317.

[51] Ruckman, *"Pocatello is Our Home": Excerpts from the Pocatello Tribune, 1893-1897, I191.*

those people who were not paying close attention to the Black community to misplace well-established churches who just happened to meet in homes, halls, or in other church buildings. Stone edifices or not, though, they were still churches.[52]

Through a combination of available sources, including community memory collected for a Bethel church history by Mary Watkins during the late-twentieth century, the first mentions of a Black Christian group in town appear during 1902 to 1904. The earliest source reference comes from a Black newspaper in Butte, Montana when, in 1902, Charles Wagner of Pocatello wrote to *The New Age* that "The People of Pocatello are working to have a minister next year."[53] Even without a church in 1902, Wagner also reported that one of the early Black social organizations, the Gate City Club, carried a religious element as they appointed a chaplain, prayed before meetings, and sang hymns like "Nearer my God to Thee" at closing.[54] Black Pocatellans in 1902 may have been successful securing a minister within a year or so as the first news of a Black church appear in local papers in 1904. However, it was not the AME congregation, but a Colored Christian Endeavor Society that first formed in Pocatello.

In 1904 Pocatello's Black CES met weekly in the Presbyterian church while they worked to build their own space.[55] The fact that the first organized Black church group bore such a distinction despite not having any established Black churches to draw from could indicate that Black Christians who tried to attend Pocatello's white CES found themselves excluded from these meetings and thus needed to establish their own.[56] Since the first Black Pocatellans lack a

[52] These various founding dates are repeated without much comment in the Triangle community history study. Mary Watkins, a descendant of early Black residents from the era concurred in a history she wrote of Bethel Baptist that 1904 was the earlier of these dates for the founding of the AME congregation. See "The Triangle," 41, 52, and 59.

[53] "Pocatello," *The New Age,* September 6, 1902, 4.

[54] "Pocatello Notes," *The New Age,* July 4, 1902, 1.

[55] Purse, Watkins, and Marsh, "The Triangle," 52.

[56] Roger Ottewill, "The Early Years of the Christian Endeavour Movement: Innovation and Consolidation at a Local Level, 1881–1914," *Studies in Church History* 57 (2021), 300–317.

shared geographic origin, it should not be surprising that the men and women who gathered together in those early days quickly realized that they came from similarly disparate Christian traditions. Rural Methodists from Texas held much in common with people raised in large urban African Methodist Episcopal churches that flourished in Mid Atlantic and Northeastern states. Yet, their brothers and sisters of Mississippi, Alabama, or even Missouri who grew up exposed to different ideas about church practices like immersion versus infant baptisms, not to mention the cherished "folk" preaching style of Baptists, made it clear that crafting a functioning church body out of the whole community at the present moment would require some accommodations and sacrifices.[57]

The determination to raise money for a building suggests that the Colored Christian Endeavor Society saw themselves as something more than an inter-denomination bible study. How many weeks or months met under these auspices is unknown. Other newspapers soon commented on a group of Black Methodists forming their own church, Allen Chapel, in 1904. Speaking of the AME church, one local newspaper reported that white churches "of various denomination have volunteered to set apart a Sunday now and then for the use of the colored people until they get a building of their own."[58] Simultaneously, the Colored Ladies' Sewing Society helped form a Christian Mission Church. This group appears to have lasted a few years at least, hosting the traveling Black evangelist, Mrs. A. Lash of Denver in a building where they

[57] Taking three local church histories from Boise, Salt Lake, and Pocatello as examples, even in these sources and narratives that are not intending to showcase divisions and challenges we can see early years are often frustrated by the diversity of their congregations. See France Davis, *Light in the Midst of Zion: A History of Black Baptists in Utah, 1892-1996* (Salt Lake City: University Publishing, 1997); Mamie O. Oliver, "Idaho Ebony: The African American Presence in Idaho State History," *The Journal of African American History* 91:1 (Winter 2006), 41-54; and "Bethel Baptist Church," National Register Registration Form, which utilizes church member Mary Watkins' unpublished history of Bethel.

[58] Purse, Watkins, and Marsh, "The Triangle," 52. For more information on the creation of this document and community study, see Chapter 6 in this dissertation. Quoted from *The Pocatello Tribune,* March 4, 1904, 3. The original news report notes that "there are a great many colored people in the city, mostly of the Methodist faith."

met on North Fifth Avenue in February 1907.[59] Further, a short-lived Black Baptist church under the pastorship of Walter Dranon, called Second Baptist, began by late 1907 or January 1908. This flurry of activity indicates that the Colored Christian Endeavor Society group likely broke up (or expanded) into different mainline denominational bodies after it formed in 1904.[60]

Social Utility, Theology, and the Crooked Road to Black Ecclesial Space

Some people in the first meetings of the Colored Christian Endeavor Society or the other earliest Black churches likely cared little about, or even failed to notice, longstanding denominational distinctions at all. The men and women who stepped up to share a message or lead the Sunday School, though, might have been more aware that they were being asked to speak into and across different traditions. Too often these differences and the historical texture they illuminate can be glossed over by historians who tend to reduce religious life and faith communities to merely the dull backdrop against which they reconstruct the contours of Black history. This is especially true when the focus of study is a whole community or institution beyond the church.[61] True, historians who center faith-based communities in their analysis and who take one's professed religious convictions seriously as a driver of their actions and worldview take on substantial risk in doing so. Foremost is that faith communities are

[59] "Colored Evangelist," *Semi-Weekly Pocatello Tribune,* February 16, 1907, 2. It is also possible that the CES transitioned into the Christian Mission Church sometime after 1904 considering that the CES sought to build a building of their own and the Mission Church appears to have had one by at least 1907.

[60] Neither the Colored Christian Endeavor Society nor the Christian Mission Church surface in sources after 1907, and so a fair conclusion may be that neither group survived the start of churches that were based in the two largest national Black denominations. Moreover, the founding of Second Baptist and the expansion of Allen Chapel may have occurred through the forming and subsequent disbanding of these early inter-denominational groups.

[61] Often in tandem with preservation efforts, scholars also seek to illuminate the broader Black community in a place through a historical study of the church. Mamie O. Oliver's article on the Black Baptist church in Boise, Idaho is a good example of this method. See, Mamie O. Oliver, "Boise's Black Baptists: Heritage, Hope, and Struggle," *Idaho Yesterdays* 40:3 (Fall 1996), 23-30. Mary Watkins, a lifelong resident of Pocatello also worked on a document that proved instrumental in the nomination of Bethel Baptist Church to the National Register of Historic places. Finally, the more detailed insightful account of Black church history in the region is certainly France Davis, *Light in the Midst of Zion: A History of Black Baptists in Utah, 1892-1996* (Salt Lake City: University Publishing, 1997).

necessarily made up of individuals who rarely, if ever, are given the opportunity to meditate on and then profess for posterity their doctrinal commitments or personal theological convictions or even what their belief *means to them.* There is an unbreachable interiority to this part of a person's life that we assume knowledge of at our own peril. Following from this, churches are also made up of individuals who harbor a multiplicity of beliefs, sometimes about the very issues and doctrines that their churches profess to be foundational and defining of their theological orthodoxy. For this reason, an individual's choice of church attendance or membership is an unreliable indicator of their own beliefs.

In addition to exercising a healthy caution when interpreting and drawing conclusions about an individual's beliefs, studying a church in relation to social, political, and economic factors carries the opposite kind of baggage. The tangible actions and "utility" of that group to the community can quickly carry the overwhelming weight of analysis. Churches fed the poor, donated to hospitals, took up collections for widows, provided spaces for non-religious community functions. In the case of the Black church, they also came to inhabit a measure of political and civic power unavailable to them elsewhere. Because of these factors, what it *meant* to be a member of a faith community can problematically be interpreted as primarily *utilitarian*. When religious groups are essentialized in this way, even their theological and exegetical hallmarks (that is, the commonly held interpretations of the Bible in protestant traditions) are quickly distorted or rendered insignificant.

Theology can play a more important role in historical analysis. Daniel Bare, a historian and religious studies scholar of the Black church in the Jim Crow era, notes that during the height of the fundamentalist/modernist debates of the 1920s and 1930s that divided the Black Church as well as white protestants, theological conviction mattered. He writes:

> [It was] a meaningful identity-shaping factor in and of itself, rather than simply 'an epiphenomenon of economic or political ideology.' After all, if that were the case, then there would seem to be little reason for black religionists who faced the common sociopolitical foe of Jim Crow oppression to draw any sharp theological dividing lines over such doctrinal issues as biblical inspiration or the divinity of Jesus.[62]

Bare's focus on the theology of Black fundamentalists is but one arena where this is evident. Indeed, it is also highly relevant for Black protestants in Pocatello and we will return to this issue later. All this is not to say that Black religious life in this era did not harbor within it a healthy dose of economic and political ideology. I agree with Bare when he states, "Indeed, if theology were merely a utilitarian expression of underlying political and social motivations, then such doctrinal divisions would be utterly confounding, since they would functionally hinder the utility of religion in accomplishing its principal and elemental sociopolitical goals."[63]

The theological nuances developed by Black Christians in response to national issues like Jim Crow are now more studied. Western-regional circumstances, such as twentieth century community formation or explicit or implicit implications in U.S. colonialism, remain thoroughly absent from that scholarship. The paucity of literature on the Black Church in the U.S. West presents such a large gap in the historiography that this chapter could not hope to address issues like utility and theology fully. The dynamic stories of Black ecclesial space, however, are important places to begin. Consider the (almost) ubiquitous type of origin narrative told of many Black churches in western towns. For instance, as we will see in the next chapter, Black settlers arrived in Cheyenne with their own historical ties to certain traditions, usually Methodism or Baptist. But being so small in number, many people attended white churches when they first

[62] Daniel Bare, *Black Fundamentalists: Conservative Christianity and Racial Identity in the Segregation Era* (New York: NYU Press, 2021), 18.

[63] Bare, *Black Fundamentalists,* 18.

arrived. Even if they were liked and accepted, Black Christians nevertheless experienced the same types of exclusion from leadership and service as elsewhere in the country. As the Black community and its financial security grew with more arriving settlers, groups of Black Methodists and Baptists broke off from white churches and formed their own congregations.[64] Sadly, no scholar has addressed this at the scale of a state or region, leading to an inadequate understanding of how (or if) this altered the landscape of Black protestant Christianity in the U.S. West in the decades after Greater Reconstruction.[65]

Anecdotes of the type detailed above hardly form a model or method by which to make broad claims about the Black western church – which is why Pocatello's history proves to be ultimately so instructive. In Pocatello, none of stories or news reports that relate the beginnings of any Black church explored above fit the narrative of devout but beleaguered Christians leaving a white church to form their own. Instead both the AME and Baptist congregations (and later the Church of God in Christ and Corinth Baptist church) seem to have coalesced from preexisting house churches or from other Black churches.[66] The very fact that newspapers or other sources do not recount breakaway groups who left white churches is perhaps telling. It

[64] This was the case in Cheyenne, as we will see in the next chapter, where Annie Phillips faithfully attended and served the white Methodist church in town for almost ten years before garnering the funds to build the AME church in 1876. Another clear example of this is Billings, Montana. See, "History of Allen Chapel: Lucy Phillips, 1805-1910" Vertical File: H2011-60, *Wyoming State Archives,* Cheyenne, WY; and Wood, *Black Montana,* 208.

[65] A quick survey of most books and articles dealing with Black community history in the West show most to contain at least passing references to the existence of one or more Black churches in westerns cities and towns in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. This has meant the largest body of historical scholarship on Black churches actually comes from historic preservationists who have gone about listing and conserving historic church structures and thus document the stories of their congregations. While scholars are often hesitant to center their analysis in these sites, when local historians and members of that community are tasked with preserving their history, churches are frequently cherished as repositories of a people's most shared past. This type of history is generally not interested in elucidating the role of the "the Black Church" with its history of theology, doctrine, and social-political activism into the local sphere. But absent a regional study of this sort—and there is no "history of the Black church (of any denomination) in the US West"—local studies of African American faith communities are left untethered from wider conversations that are to be had regarding denominations, missions, theology, and so on.

[66] Purse, Watkins, and Marsh, "The Triangle," 58-59.

might have been that Black Christians were more unwelcome in these white spaces than even in the limited fashion that pervaded white churches throughout the country. Conversely, this separatism may also have reflected a more intentional action on the part of Black churchgoers responding to the hyper-local context of Pocatello's religious and political milieu.

Allen Chapel and Baptist Revivals

Allen Chapel was the only (established) church from this early period to last through the decade. It is unclear when the congregation obtained the lot on North 3rd Avenue for their church which stood until the 1960s. They seem to have begun work on the building by 1908.[67] It is possible that the construction of Allen Chapel was completed around 1913, when it was first listed and given an address in the city directory.[68] By that time in Pocatello's history, the Black community had established a Christian Endeavor Society, a Christian Mission Church, a Black Baptist church, and Allen Chapel. Over the other traditions, the AME church made the greatest strides toward stability. These efforts were clearly not apparent to white journalists or even Black outsiders who arrived with the railroad. Indeed, the white papers in town said almost nothing of these churches and failed to include them in their weekly Church news pages. In 1911, however, the otherwise thoroughly disinterested white press of Pocatello suddenly had cause to print several large stories on Black church life.

Unbeknownst to everyone in town, W. H. Brown stepped off the train in 1911 to pursue his favorite scam. Brown, a well-traveled con man, wasted no time in inserting himself into the city's various social and philanthropic circles. As usual, Brown played the part of an altruistic soul, a minister, raising money for badly needed amenities: club buildings, meeting houses, and

[67] "The Triangle," 41, 52, and 59.
[68] 1913 *Polk City Directory,* Pocatello, Idaho, 21.

church sanctuaries. Brown's cons required the presence of large Black communities who wished to enjoy the comforts of social life typically denied to them in Jim Crow America. Before leaving Pocatello, pocket's lined, he touted the great need for Black sleeping car porters to have a Porter's Club and a Black YMCA in every major Railroad town across the country. His targets were not usually Black residents, though he would take their money as well, but wealthy white elites whom he could convince to donate sums of money to a cause that also ensured the ongoing separation of Black and white social space. Especially in cities that already lacked these accommodations for African Americans, the prospect of drawing a color line while appearing to be racially progressive and sympathetic seems to have relieved quite a few white patrons from their cash in railroad towns from Peoria to Pocatello to Portland.[69]

Brown spoke with local reporters and noted that 84 Black men worked on the Oregon Short Line. He claimed to know many of them personally which might have drawn him to town in the first place.[70] He continued to paint a picture of thousands more Black railroad porters coming through town each year, but nowhere for these men to get a rejuvenating bath or good night's sleep. Moreover, he asked how it could be that Pocatello boasted hundreds of Black citizens but lacked a building of their own in which a Black church could meet. His plea printed in the *Pocatello Tribune* amounted to a finely honed argument about the needs of Black residents that both did and, in ways, did not reflect reality. He played upon the racist sensibilities of certain white readers by strategically acquiescing to the racial status quo. "The acknowledged superior race," he stated, "has always found it impossible to do well and succeed admirably in the affairs of life without both churches and leaders."[71] It seems that Brown at least knew that Allen Chapel

[69] "Uplift for Negros of Pocatello," *Pocatello Tribune,* February 25, 1911, 5; "Colored Preacher Jailed for Fraud," *Pocatello Tribune,* August 31, 1912, 7.

[70] "Uplift for Negros of Pocatello," *Pocatello Tribune,* February 25, 1911, 5.

[71] "Uplift for Negros of Pocatello," *Pocatello Tribune,* February 25, 1911, 5.

had been struggling for several months to secure a steady minister of the gospel and space to meet (though he did not mention it by name). What Brown misrepresented in his interview was the fact that the unsettled lives of Black Christian groups in Pocatello arose from rapid and unpredictable growth of the Black community rather than some moral failings of previous Black ministers, as he suggested to the reporter. He knew a problem existed but, perhaps unsurprisingly, the con man failed to offer a helpful diagnosis.[72]

Instead of poor leadership, by 1911, the growth of the Black population outpaced the capacity of many of their institutions. Even still, Brown called upon "the good white people of Pocatello to encourage another effort to do something tangible for the colored people in the way of securing a place of worship and to entertain our young men."[73] When he skipped town later with a sum of money procured from those "good white people" he may only have had a small inclination as to the actual conditions of racial segregation and social exclusion that shaped the landscape of Pocatello over the next several decades.

Brown's deception, fully exposed after his arrest in California a few years later, certainly did not help matters for Allen Chapel. The pulpit was a revolving door for much of the decade after his departure. Despite this, not long after Brown left, the AME congregation appears to have built a meeting house on North 3rd Avenue sometime between 1911 and 1913.[74] Rather than

[72] "Uplift for Negros of Pocatello," *Pocatello Tribune,* February 25, 1911, 5.

[73] "Uplift for Negros of Pocatello," *Pocatello Tribune,* February 25, 1911, 5.

[74] "Colored Preacher Jailed for Fraud," *Pocatello Tribune,* August 29, 1912, 1; Rev. Charles Clements is referenced in one source as the first minister of the AME church in 1908. See, Mamie Oliver, "Black Community folder," ISU Special Collections, MC 63 Box 2 Folder 1.

Another early minister of Allen Chapel was William Gailliard, who mustered out of the 24th US Colored Infantry in Montana around 1905—a common time and place to do so between the first and second Philippines campaigns—and sometime between 1907 and 1910 he made his way to Pocatello. 1910 US Federal Census, *Pocatello Ward 2, Bannock, Idaho*; Roll: *T624_221*; Page: *19A*; Enumeration District: *0035*; FHL microfilm: *1374234*; and 1905 *Polk City Directory,* Fort Benton, Montana, 82; Ancestry.com. *U.S., Army, Register of Enlistments, 1798-1914* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA. Search for "William Gailliard"; For AME building see, 1913 *Polk City Directory,* Pocatello, Idaho, 21.

purchasing the lot and paying for construction with gifts and church funds, however, later sources suggest that the board of elders opted to take out a substantial loan. That debt would plague the congregation until, according to a notice in the *Chicago Defender,* it was finally paid in 1920.[75] Starting in 1913 a minister named O. M. Simms took the helm of Allen Chapel. Simms's short tenure came to an end by December 1916, if not sooner. The immediate circumstances around his leaving are unknown. It was, though, at the moment of his departure that rare first-person sources from Pocatello's Black community appear in Denver's Black newspapers for several years after 1916. The reporter, Charles C. Young, himself a recent transplant from Denver, extensively opined that although the AME had more and more people coming through their doors during the years of the war-time work increases, they had insufficient resources with which to discharge their debt and support their ministers.

In the mid-1910s, Allen Chapel's sanctuary finally joined the other houses of worship that dotted the Triangle neighborhood of Pocatello. At that time, Young's columns show that denominational markers still mattered a great deal to some. Black Baptists, for their part, still preferred to meet in houses despite not having an organized congregation, pastor, or building.[76] What were these differences between Black Baptists and Methodists, especially during the 1910s? One minister of the AME church offered a unique and timely perspective into the similarities and differences of the nation's largest Black denominations following his attendance of the National Baptist Convention's annual meeting in Texas in 1912. The African Methodist Reverend J. T. S. White's helpful essay, "The National Baptist Convention as Seen through the Eyes of an African Methodist," published in the widely read *A.M.E. Review*, identified three broad points of difference that he claimed mattered to everyday churchgoers. One point, as

[75] "Idaho," *Chicago Defender,* April 24, 1920, 11.
[76] C. C. Young, "Pocatello News," *The Denver Star,* October 6, 1917, 4.

should be expected, was fundamentally theological and exegetical. The second concerned the structural elements of the Baptist church. The final point of difference was White's interpretation of the unique ways that these other two elements mixed to form a distinctly Baptist ecclesial culture.[77]

Expectedly, the singular piece of doctrinal difference that White depicted as the great divide between him and his friends at the NBC meeting was baptism. "'Unite with us on the Bible' they say'" White opined, "All good men would gladly do that: but they simply mean that you much accept their construction of the Bible. They dictate the very mode in which you must be baptized."[78] Baptism, as already suggested by Allensworth's writings, was a favorite axe to grind by both sides. White shows that even in a denominational polemical statement such as his, it would nevertheless be foolish to overlook the issue of baptism specifically—and theology more broadly—as important factors that lead to breaking of interdenominational churches. Communing and worshiping with Baptists, as White did that week in 1912, made the gulf between them in this issue virtually unavoidable. "The one idea of the Baptists," he chided, "is baptism by immersion. They feed it to their flocks in speech and song and sermon. Almost every speech delivered at the convention was dripping with wet baptismal robes."[79]

The significance of the doctrine also appears in the earliest news reports of Bethel Baptist in Pocatello's papers. The church dedicated their baptismal in the basement even while the sanctuary remained unfinished in 1921.[80] At other times, members took picnics to local swimming holes and rivers to better recreate the original setting of Jesus's baptism in the Jordan

[77] Rev. J. T. S. White, "The National Baptist Convention as Seen through the Eyes of an African Methodist," *The A.M.E. Church Review* (October 1912), 168-176.

[78] White, "The National Baptist Convention as Seen through the Eyes of an African Methodist," 172.

[79] White, "The National Baptist Convention as Seen through the Eyes of an African Methodist," 175.

[80] "Bethel Baptist Church," National Register Registration Form, 12.

River. Indeed, once the Snake River was dammed at American Falls in 1927, the new reservoir became a favorite location of Baptists of every background to plunge beneath the waters and emerge anew.[81] For some Baptists, their established differences on the doctrine of baptism would have been enough to proscribe their membership at Allen Chapel.

There was also the relevant matter of church governance that divided the two groups. The AME had discerned a more republican form of government, which, "with Episcopal supervision," saw "the wishes of the people are carried out by delegates selected by them." Juxtaposing this model was the pure democracy of the Baptists "in which each church is sovereign and independent."[82] Since it is well-established that Black churches often functioned as quasi-civic and political spaces for African Americans during Jim Crow, it is understandable that different forms of church government attracted different persuasions of political engagement. When Lacy Kirk Williams, who would eventually be president of the National Baptist Convention in 1924, noted in his 1912 address that "The individual is the biggest thing in the Baptist Church," he was met with thunderous applause. That vibrant individualism grew hand in hand with secular counterparts like racial uplift, respectability politics, and economic self-sufficiency.[83] These combinations had historical roots from Atlanta in 1895 when the NBC officially established itself at virtually the same moment when Booker T. Washington took the stage to give his infamous address espousing "racial accommodation." It was never a clean binary. Especially after its 1915 schism, the NBC leaned politically and socially conservative. [84]

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[81] "Bethel Baptist Church," National Register Registration Form, 12.

[82] White, "The National Baptist Convention as Seen through the Eyes of an African Methodist," 171-172.

[83] Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham's classic study on the Women's movement in the Black Baptist Church remains one of the best works on the relationship between "respectability" and "uplift" politics and Black Baptists. One should not lose sight of Higginbotham's claim that "Baptist women's preoccupation with respectability…appeared to swing from radical to conservative" (condensed, see full quote on Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent,* 15; see also, 145.)

[84] Prior to 1915 the loci of power for National Baptists were President and the chairman of the National Baptist Publishing Board. Since 1896, the NBC had produced published materials like hymnals, bible studies,

Meanwhile, many of the nation's leading Progressive Black ministers like Arthur Clayton Powell of New York, came from AME churches.[85]

The different models of church government, especially in Jim Crow America, thus drew different people for different reasons and Black churchgoers in Pocatello faced diverse and novel conditions as the end of the 1910s neared. In conjunction with Pocatello's strict enforcement of racial segregation and exclusion, the local economy dictated to a great extent how and where African Americans could make a living. The Oregon Short Line Railroad intentionally recruited Black southerners for certain positions as porters for sleeping cars, cooks for both workers and patrons, and as laborers in the "shops" of the railyard.[86] The great need for copper during the build-up to the US entry into World War I in 1918, transported south from Montana through Pocatello, helped grow Pocatello's population from only 4,000 at the start of the century to 27,000 people in 1920.[87] The specific role of racial hiring practices thus simultaneously ensured that Black residents could find work even as the nature of that work remained uncertain and, often, unsettled. One enlightening set of sources—the columns penned by Charles C. Young for the *Denver Star* between 1917-1918—juxtaposed the instability of working life at the shops and

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theology tracts, and even books of Christian apologetics. It had been headed since its inception by Richard Boyd, who grew the Publishing Board from a borrowed printer to the single largest Black publishing house in the United States by 1915. Matching Boyd in success and institutional power was the founding President Elias Camp Morris. Together with his protégé and eventual successor Lacy K. Williams, Morris grew the reach of the NBC from 1895 onward while it leaned heavily on the success of Boyd's publishing board to increase the convention's appeal to outside churches. The desire to control the more lucrative publishing house grew into a bitter row. At the annual meeting in 1915, in Chicago, the floodgates of animosity burst and Morris made a ploy for control of the Publishing Board, which Boyd had always maintained was an affiliated but nevertheless independent of the NBC. By the end of the meeting, Morris was victorious, but his actions split the convention, with millions of Baptists and thousands of churches joining Boyd's new National Baptist Convention of America. Morris remained president of the NBC (USA, Inc.) until his death in 1924 when Williams took the helm. See, Pelt Owen and Ralph Lee Smith, *The Story of the National Baptists* (New York: Vantage Press, 1960), 101-107.

[85] For Atlanta Compromise and NBC founding see, Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent,* 25; for Powell see Gates Jr. *The Black Church,* 139-140.

[86] For Railroad recruiting see, C. C. Young, "Pocatello News," *The Denver Star,* September 15, 1917, 5.

[87] Laurie Mercier, "Ethnic Study: Blacks," *The Idaho Ethnic History Project;* MC 63, Box 2: "Idaho Ethnic Demographic Data." Special Collections and Archives, Eli M. Oboler Library, Idaho State University.

its effects on Allen Chapel with the efforts of Black community leaders. Young's columns also give the most textured account of a Black church experience in Pocatello during the 1910s. In revealing ways, Young's brief exposition on Black life in Pocatello points toward debates—theological and practical—that led to the founding of Pocatello's oldest and only remaining Black church, Bethel Baptist.

According to Charles Young, Black Baptists in 1917 continued "holding its services at Mrs. Mack Johnson's residence at 717 South Third."[88] Only a few blocks away, AME parishioners at Allen Chapel prepared to meet the new minister assigned to them by the presiding AME Bishop. It is fortunate that Young, an energetic writer and devout member of Allen Chapel, began his weekly columns just ahead of the new Reverend's arrival in late October 1917 and continued until he departed just eleven months later. Young's perspective is one of the only voices from this era, and he gives every indication that what the AME church faced in Pocatello in 1917-1918 had been an issue for years.[89] The Bishop of the Puget Sound Conference asked Reverend James A. Duncan to trade the scenic views of the Pacific and the Santa Barbra coast for the otherworldly lava beds and scrubland of Southeast Idaho. The men and women of his new flock, including Young, no doubt recognized this dramatic change. They sought to ease the minister's and his wife's transition with a kind and hearty welcome. The congregation planned sumptuous dinners and a Thanksgiving fundraiser to integrate the couple into the church community.[90]

Young heaped praise upon Duncan following his first sermons in columns that were equal parts flattery and encouragement.[91] Beyond the walls of Allen Chapel, Young also commended

[88] C. C. Young, "Pocatello News," *The Denver Star,* October 6, 1917, 4.
[89] C. C. Young, "Pocatello News Briefs," *The Denver Star,* September 15, 1917, 5.
[90] C. C. Young, "Pocatello News," *The Denver Star,* October 20, 1917, 5.
[91] C. C. Young, "Pocatello News," *The Denver Star,* June 1, 1918, 6.

the bright prospects for Black life in Idaho of which Duncan would now be able to partake. The war-time arrivals infused Pocatello with much needed life. “Pocatello has greatly increased her population recently as many are constantly being added, besides the transients,” Young wrote.[92] Families were arriving to take up jobs and make homes. His account of this migration seems to be born out in the tripling of the Black population in the census between 1910 and 1920.[93] The bold expressions of Pocatello as the “coming town for the Negro in the Northwest” thus feel closer to real hope than loud boosterism.

Reflecting Young’s optimism, he wrote about pervasive issues outside the church and how Black residents sometimes sought to address them. The prevailing sentiment in Young’s writing’s, however, was the irksome tension between his vision for Pocatello as “the coming town for the Negro in the Northwest,” and the struggles witnessed in his church congregation which he clearly regarded at the center of his community.[94] Young hoped that many of the African American workers down at the depot and whatever families they had would not just visit or attend Allen Chapel. Rather he wanted them to become part of a community that might also give back to the church. The debt on the building suppressed the church’s growth and called its future into question. For instance, Sunday gatherings at Allen Chapel took place in the afternoon and lasted into the evening. Evening services were not unheard of, but they often were held as the second service of the day to accommodate peoples’ busy schedules. As no morning service is ever mentioned, it is perhaps the case that the congregation offered up their sanctuary to another church for Sunday use in exchange for a small rent to raise money.[95]

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[92] C. C. Young, “Pocatello News,” *The Denver Star,* October 20, 1917, 5.

[93] Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Fourteenth Census of the United States: State Compendium Idaho* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1924), see table “Population of Principle Cities from Earliest Census to 1920” page 8.

[94] C. C. Young, “Pocatello News,” *The Denver Star,* April 20, 1918, 4.

[95] Mention of service times, C. C. Young, “Pocatello News,” *The Denver Star,* May 4, 1918, 4.

Young made it clear, however, that not relieving the congregation of its debt threatened more than optimal service times. As a sympathetic voice, he asked the congregation to consider the burden that tight finances put on their new minister. "Just as you sell your brain and labor," he implored, "so does [Rev. Duncan], and he deserves to be paid regularly and promptly. High cost of living and other general commodities have increased in proportion with inflated financial conditions." Young warned that unless Duncan was able to "combat" these rising costs, "he will be unavoidably forced to suffer."[96] Such was a burden Duncan did not deserve to bear. Already Young had many times expounded upon the quality of his sermons and the growing popularity of his services for which one needed to arrive early or risk "not getting a seat."[97]

For Young, this was unacceptable in Pocatello with its "40 or 50 families, besides the floating element of men and women."[98] That a community of such a size also found their minister of the gospel "compelled to walk the streets of Pocatello, Idaho, hunting for work," was proof to Young that poor wages threatened a central part of everyday life, or, that priorities needed some adjusting.[99] Soon after the reporter's first public admonishment, he noted for readers that Duncan avoided toilsome labor by teaching for a day and night school, though this did not solve the issue that "an up-to-date, educated pastor must study daily, and devote his whole time to the study of the Bible and Church problems."[100] Whether Duncan confided in Young and expressed these particular feelings or if Young was already somehow aware and sensitive to this broader issue is unknown.

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[96] C. C. Young, "Pocatello News," *The Denver Star,* July 13, 1918, 6.
[97] C. C. Young, "Pocatello News," *The Denver Star,* June 1, 1918, 6.
[98] C. C. Young, "Pocatello News," *The Denver Star,* July 13, 1918, 6.
[99] C. C. Young, "Pocatello News," *The Denver Star,* July 13, 1918, 6.
[100] C. C. Young, "Pocatello News," *The Denver Star,* July 20, 1918, 3; quoted, C. C. Young, "Pocatello News," *The Denver Star,* July 13, 1918, 6.

Additionally, the late 1910s also presented protestants around the country with a somewhat more novel set of questions. Fundamentalism and modernism in Christian theological and cultural circles clashed and grew into a mounting controversy that would have pressed upon Duncan, Young, and many well-read church goers of the day. A "good pastor" such as Duncan valued time for the "incessant study and unusual research [required] to properly instruct the members." He lived precisely at a moment when educated people and laypersons alike endlessly debated many finer points of Christian theology. This made his job all the more challenging and fraught.[101] Indeed, by later in the 1920s, the fundamentalist debates would cut into the fabric of U.S. culture and graced the headlines of national newspapers. It began in 1915 with a series of articles edited by R.A. Torrey and C. A. Dixon, titled *The Fundamentals.* It was, somewhat coincidently, the same year that Black Baptists split into two competing conferences: the NBC and the National Baptist Convention of America.[102] Over time that schism, too, would feel the impacts of fundamentalism as the leader of the NBC from 1924-1949, Lacy K. Williams, consistently avowed his own fundamentalist commitments while his conference grew considerably eventually including Bethel Baptist in it fold by the late 1920s.[103] By 1925 cultural

[101] C. C. Young, "Pocatello News," *The Denver Star,* July 13, 1918, 6.

[102] Prior to 1915 the loci of power for National Baptists were President and the chairman of the National Baptist Publishing Board. Since 1896, the NBC had produced published materials like hymnals, bible studies, theology tracts, and even books of Christian apologetics. It had been headed since its inception by Richard Boyd, who grew the Publishing Board from a borrowed printer to the single largest Black publishing house in the United States by 1915. Matching Boyd in success and institutional power was the founding President Elias Camp Morris. Together with his protégé and eventual successor Lacy K. Williams, Morris grew the reach of the NBC from 1895 onward while it leaned heavily on the success of Boyd's publishing board to increase the convention's appeal to outside churches. The desire to control the more lucrative publishing house grew into a bitter row. At the annual meeting in 1915, in Chicago, the floodgates of animosity burst and Morris made a ploy for control of the Publishing Board, which Boyd had always maintained was an affiliated but nevertheless independent of the NBC. By the end of the meeting, Morris was victorious, but his actions split the convention, with millions of Baptists and thousands of churches joining Boyd's new National Baptist Convention of America. Morris remained president of the NBC (USA, Inc.) until his death in 1924 when Williams took the helm. See, Pelt Owen and Ralph Lee Smith, *The Story of the National Baptists* (New York: Vantage Press, 1960), 101-107.

[103] Bare, *Black Fundamentalists,* 43; Though as noted above, the independence of Black Baptist churches did not require that they adhered to Fundamentalist stances. "Secretary Banks Makes Reply," *Pocatello Tribune,* February 4, 1931, 5.

fundamentalism peaked during the Scopes "Monkey" Trial that challenged the teaching of evolutionary theory in public schools.[104]

What did Black Methodists or Baptists care about a "movement" that largely grew from the South and also harbored many virulent white supremacists as leading figures? Recent work by scholars Mary Beth Swetnam Mathews and Daniel Bare have made important and necessary correctives to prevailing understandings of race, Black protestants, and the Fundamentalist Movement.[105] Bare argues that the doctrinal imperatives that drove fundamentalism held incredible significance to many African Americans. The controversy around these imperatives mostly played out between Christian modernists and Christian traditionalists, the latter eventually naming their movement, Fundamentalism. Modernist preachers insisted that certain "old-time" beliefs such as miracles and the supernatural were premodern dispositions that ultimately hampered the future of the faith.[106] Many Black Christians felt simultaneously attacked by modernists for disparaging their deep ties to "old-time religion" at the same time that the premises of modernist theology, in the eyes of many in the Black Church, seemed to strip their faith of its essential redeeming and liberatory promises.[107] For Black fundamentalists, both

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[104] Bare, *Black Fundamentalists,*78-79.

[105] Mary Beth Swetnam Matthews, *Doctrine and Race: African American Evangelicals and Fundamentalists between the Wars* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2017); and Bare, *Black Fundamentalists*. These scholars primarily argue against the dominant reading of the movement as being wholly defined by its vocal, white southern proponents, and by a narrow focus on the later cultural battles surrounding evolutionary theory and schools. See, See Ernest Sandeen, *The Roots of Fundamentalism: British and American Millenarianism, 1800–1930* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970); George M. Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture: The Shaping of Twentieth-Century Evangelicalism,* 1870–1925 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980); and Joel Carpenter, *Revive Us Again: the Reawakening of American Fundamentalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).

[106] Bare, *Black Fundamentalists,* 20; and Mark Noll, *A History of Christianity in the United States and Canada* 2nd Edition (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2022), 344-350.

[107] As a reaction to the novel circumstances, fundamentalists engendered many new, profoundly cultural imperatives that had not characterized Protestant Christianity prior such as fighting the teaching of evolution in schools, and indeed the shift to a greater concern with the administration of public schools in general. But before this cultural turn was a set of theological imperatives. Bare and other scholars categorize the writings of the original ninety fundamentals published in 1915 within five fundamentals: the Immaculate Conception, the Divinity of Christ, the inerrancy of the Bible, the inspiration of scripture, and the doctrine of substitutionary atonement. Bare, *Black Fundamentalists,* 21.

the theology and the social utility of fundamentalism, that is, its ability to address culture, were on the table as attractive elements of a movement where some of the loudest voices were nevertheless vociferous racists. It was just attractive in different ways.[108]

Numerous Black clergymen in both the AME and Baptist traditions quickly seized upon and leveraged the language and power of fundamentalism. As Bare shows, some like the popular AME Reverend, John Albert Johnson, made a name for himself nationally as an early articulate of Black fundamentalists' social and theological confluences.[109] As a national institution, however, the AME church lagged behind the NBC's leadership and their forceful support of the fundamentals. By the 1920s leaders and speakers at Baptist conventions laid out clear, multifaceted theological statements affirming fundamental doctrines alongside their many political goals.[110] The result in both Black and white churches was an increased identification and reorganization within religious traditions. For Black Baptists, this meant revivals soon popped up across the country, including southeast Idaho.[111]

In Pocatello, the saga of ecclesial uncertainty that persisted into the mid-late 1910s was punctuated by the fundamentalist movement and the doctrinal debates it engendered. Viewed

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[108] Bare observes that one of the major distinctions between white and Black fundamentalists was the way that they chose to apply the fundamentals to society. He writes, "black fundamentalists displayed a type of social engagement markedly different from that typically associated with fundamentalism. Rather than spending the majority of their time and energy on fighting against the teaching of evolutionary theory in public schools and similar issues, black fundamentalists advocated social action and religious application that emphasized racial equality." Bare, *Black Fundamentalists,* 4.

[109] Bare, *Black Fundamentalists,* 75-78.

[110] NBC President Lacy Kirk Williams' 1925 address at the annual convention is a prime example of this novel rhetoric. See, *Journal of the Forty-Fifth Annual Session of the National Baptist Convention Held with the Baptist Churches* (Nashville: Sunday School Publishing Board, 1925), especially Williams' remarks under the heading "Contend for the Faith," 54-56. In this section of his address, Williams dismisses the modernist position out of hand and commends the side of Fundamentalism without reservation. It is also worth noting that he does so immediately before the long section on "Race Relations," a common category of NBC presidential addresses. This and all other journals of the NBC are available online through the Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives, "National Baptist USA, Inc. Annuals, 1879-1975," http://media2.sbhla.org.s3.amazonaws.com/aaa/nbc/NBC_1925.pdf

[111] On Black Baptist revivals in the 1910s-1920s, see Bare, *Black Fundamentalism,* 33-36; For regional revival in Pocatello led by Rev. C. O. Smith of Cheyenne see, "Cheyenne, Wyo. News," *Colorado Statesmen*, September 7, 1918, 5.

through a lens of their church history, we can easily dispense ahistorical assumptions that a Black church would "naturally" form as the pillar of a given Black community. In this light, the contingency is all the clearer. From 1915 until 1920, the AME chapel struggled to pay a minister's salary even as the Baptist house churches grew into the most stable community of Black worshipers in the city. At the same time, the origins of the group that first called themselves Bethel Baptist has eluded many interested researchers and preservationists. While it seems clear enough that the church incorporated in 1921 and moved into the basement of their building in 1922, the actual cornerstone of Bethel bears an inscription that the church began in 1918.[112] Historians have come up against the blithe ambivalence of the white newspapers in Pocatello in their search to confirm this date, so far to no avail.[113] But with no small amount of serendipity on our side, Charles Young, fuming about the loss of his friend and spiritual leader that same year, very much unintentionally uncovered the story behind the date carved into the foundation of Pocatello's oldest Black church.

By mid-summer, 1918, Duncan resolved to leave Pocatello. He regarded his circumstances there as too challenging to make ends meet financially. The inability of the board of elders of Allen Chapel to secure his salary was cause enough to ask the episcopate for a reassignment. His post as a schoolteacher earlier in the year apparently did not put enough food on the table as Young wrote earnestly in early August that "The Reverend has donned a suit of overalls and is playing 'safety first; at the [railroad] shops."[114] The AME conference for

[112] Elijah Harris was working as the minister in 1960 when the stone was inscribed. This is significant as he very likely was part of the Baptist house churches in 1918. Therefore, accounts that follows in the *Denver Star* should be considered a verifying source. On the cornerstone and Harris, see "Bethel Baptist Church," National Register Registration Form, 6.

[113] Professional historians and preservations at the Idaho State Historic Preservation office authored the National Register Nomination for Bethel and posed this question of the odd cornerstone date. "Bethel Baptist Church," National Register Registration Form, 6.

[114] C. C. Young, "Pocatello News," *The Denver Star,* August 17, 1918, 4.

Montana, Wyoming, Utah was set to take place in Helena during the first weeks of September. Duncan hoped to see what pulpits might be available a little farther east.[115] Even before Duncan and some elders made the train ride to Montana, the ever-devoted Young lamented the proverbial handwriting on the wall. The last straw was a picnic held by the Black Masons who wished to raise the funds to build their own lodge. According to Young, over five hundred people turned out on a Sunday afternoon, leaving Duncan to preach to only seventeen people. "No wonder the Rev. is going to leave here," Young exclaimed. "Can you blame him? He is a man of God and this town is no place for him. These people are not wanting a man of his kind. Now who will come next? No matter who the Conference sends they will never fill Rev. Duncan's place. My brethren, I am heartfelt sorry to see this noble man leave." [116]

The next sentence of that column contained an unknowing reference to some new and consequential religious rumblings. He concluded his piece abruptly, likely with news that others had paid for him to pass along: "The Holiness is carrying on a revival at 355 Center St. All are welcome."[117] Young may have used the name given by the revivalists themselves, or as is more likely, used a somewhat dismissive label for a group he did not particularly identify with.[118]

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[115] The Puget Sound Conference controlled AME churches in Idaho, however, it seems that Duncan had heard of the opening in the AME church in Missoula, so instead of going west, he went to Montana's conference meeting. This is a small detail, but perhaps it is indicative of Pocatello's isolation from the Boise or Spokane and its much closer ties to the Rocky Mountain Towns like Missoula, Butte, Cheyenne, and Salt Lake.

[116] C. C. Young, "Pocatello News," *The Denver Star,* August 24, 1918, 6.

[117] C. C. Young, "Pocatello News," *The Denver Star,* August 24, 1918, 6.

[118] The Holiness movement had it origins in the Methodist revivals in the aftermath of the Civil War in the United States. Historian of American Christianity, Mark Noll, follows the divergent set of holiness movements that splinted by the turn of the century. Pentecostals and charismatic dispensationalists were most frequently associated with the movement through the new Church of God in Christ and the Church of the Nazarene as well as other traditions including some Baptists. In 1920s, historian George Marsden also notes that though the different adherents to the Holiness movement usually identified as Fundamentalist, they were not always viewed as the central figures in the Fundamentalist/Modernist debates in their day. In Pocatello, that an AME churchgoer identified a group of Baptist revivalists as the Holiness is likely either a derisive term that was meant to draw attention to their more charismatic tenor, though it was not likely as fervent as the white Pentecostals or Nazarenes who carried the name most often. Or it was a reference to Black Baptists and their "uplift" theology that emphasized holy living. See, Mark Noll, *A History of Christianity in the United States and Canada* 2nd Edition (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2022), 346-349; "Holiness and Fundamentalism," in George M. Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2022, 3rd Edition), 117-126.

Regardless, "the Holiness" carried on for two weeks in late August and early September in Pocatello, a time when Allen Chapel was without its outgoing and beleaguered minister and other elders who were away in Montana. This may have been sheer coincidence, but the revivalists in question were not a random, travelling troupe who happened upon the city. Instead, what Young called the "Holiness people," were a deliberate, and, in all likelihood, invited group of Black men and women who had made the journey to Pocatello from Cheyenne.[119]

The next chapter will more fully introduce the minister of Cheyenne's Second Baptist Church and an "old-time religionist" firebrand, Charles O. Smith. Not too dissimilar from the circumstances in Pocatello, Smith also benefitted from a devout church member and fast friend who wrote dispatches for the other Black newspaper in Denver, *The Colorado Statesmen.* Through this interlocutor, a picture of Smith emerges as one representative of those Black Baptist preachers, steeped in traditionalist doctrine and style who were first and foremost to claim for themselves many fundamentalist distinctions during the late 1910s. Smith's overall abrasiveness, not to mention his evocative, "tonal" sermons, would have grated against the sensibilities of someone like Allensworth. His messages filled to overflowing with demons and damnation that awaited the practitioners of Cheyenne's abundant "vice."[120] Smith's meetings were part of the national revival movement that took place in both Black and white Baptist communities that focused on, among other issues, "holy living" (hence Young's terminology). They condemned drinking and swearing and all other forms of modern "licentiousness."

As the historian of evangelical Christianity George Marsden notes, Holiness revivals firmly rooted themselves in the language and cultural imperatives of the ascendant

[119] "Cheyenne, Wyo. News," *Colorado Statesmen*, September 7, 1918, 5.
[120] "Cheyenne, Wyo. News," *Colorado Statesmen*, September 18, 1920, 1.

fundamentalists.[121] Indeed, prohibition and campaigns against vice constituted a shared space of cultural engagements for white and Black fundamentalists. Like the Triangle neighborhood, Smith's congregation also lived primarily in the midst of Cheyenne's abundant saloons, brothels, and gambling halls. In this sense Smith's mission was responsive to his local conditions in Wyoming as well as the conditions on the ground in Pocatello. Smith also turned his doctrinal convictions toward a fierce opposition to racism and inequality, which we will see in the next chapter.

In 1918, the Wyoming minister "accompanied by Deacon Chas. Horn, Rev. W. H. Hudson, Mrs. J. T. Muse, and Mrs. Annie Dickerson," all of Cheyenne's large Black community, left Monday, August 19 for Ogden, Utah. They met briefly with the newly formed Baptist Association of Wyoming, Utah, and Idaho.[122] From Ogden, they took the train north to Pocatello where they arrived in time to ask Young to mention their presence in his weekly telegram to the *Denver Star,* which he curtly obliged. Smith and his associates held their revival in one of the homes previously used for Baptist meetings. If Smith's style as referenced in his Cheyenne ministry is any indication, much of the meetings focused on a rejection of vice in the Black community and a call toward racial uplift rooted in Biblical teachings.[123] The week before Duncan left for the AME meeting in Helena, he performed the infant baptism of Erma Glenn. The Baptists likely carried out their own sacramental practice in some local swimming hole or down at the Portneuf River as a centerpiece of their revivals.[124] In Helena, Duncan met with the

[121] See especially "Holiness and Fundamentalism," in George M. Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2022, 3rd Edition), 117-126.

[122] "Cheyenne News," *Colorado Statesmen*, August 24, 1918, 1.

[123] For a representative account of Rev. Smith's style see, "Cheyenne, Wyo. News," *Colorado Statesmen*, September 18, 1920, 1.

[124] For Duncan see, "Pocatello," *Denver Star,* August 31, 1918, 6; On outdoor baptisms, for instance, during the 1930s, issues with the basement baptismal forced Bethel Baptist to perform the rite "in a canal out in the country northwest of Pocatello at a place known as Bulls Eye swimming hole." Quoted, "Bethel Baptist Church," National Register Registration Form, 12.

bishop who assigned him to St. Paul AME in Missoula, Montana where he would serve for many years. The reporter in Cheyenne also noted the absence of Smith while he was away from the pulpit. By September 7, the revival in Pocatello came to a close, but Smith, his friend in Cheyenne noted, "being general missionary of the three states, is spending a week or ten days in Pocatello, Idaho, looking after the Baptist interests in that place."[125]

C. O. Smith's role in the organization of the body that eventually called itself Bethel Baptist does not seem to have been recorded in any other sources besides the community news pages of the Denver paper. Baptists had communed in some form before his arrival, perhaps even having their own building during the days of Second Baptist in 1907. Nevertheless, Smith's presence and his ability to gather his flock was an important step in that process. His place so near the congregation's beginnings also warn against defaulting to either a clear utilitarian or theological reason for the successful establishment of Baptists over a floundering AME congregation. Smith was both a theologically conservative firebrand and Progressive "race man" who spent years in Cheyenne fighting against lynching, poor treatment of Black soldiers, segregation in business, and advocating for Cheyenne as one of the preeminent Black Towns of West. Neither he nor his city would have been unknown to Black Pocatellans. And it is clear that many liked what they saw in the Wyoming revivalist.[126]

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[125] "Cheyenne, Wyo. News," *Colorado Statesmen*, September 7, 1918, 5.

[126] Smith also seems to have been in Pocatello during an incident in which Black soldiers in transport complained of mistreatment in the OSL shops and stores. The harassment prompted a response and tepid apology to the Black community by a public official. Interestingly, the event bears some similarities to one taking place just one month before in Cheyenne, when the local paper maligned Black soldiers departing from the Union Pacific depot. Rev. Smith led the charge in that city not only to elicit an apology from the paper, which was never tendered. With little recourse, Smith and other leaders of the community founded the incredibly active Cheyenne League of Colored Citizens. The investigation into the incident in Pocatello took place the week of Duncan's return from Helena. See "Cheyenne News," *Colorado Statesmen*, August 10, 1918, 1; For article that sparked outrage see, "Colored Boys Off to Rout Hun, Will Bring Home Bacon," *Wyoming State Tribune,* August 2, 1918, 1.

The same Sunday that Duncan delivered his final sermon at Allen Chapel, Smith resolved to stay a while longer in Pocatello. In his September 7 column, Young wrote despairingly, "Rev. Duncan preached his farewell sermon Sunday night, September 1st to a crowded house, and it was one of the greatest sermons of his 11 months' work in Pocatello and will long be remembered." After announcing the details of the upcoming farewell party to be held in Duncan's honor, Young once again concluded his message abruptly, "The Baptist people have organized a Baptist church here with Rev. W. Smith as pastor."[127] It is not clear if Young's reference to a W. Smith is a different person as C. O. Smith of Cheyenne. In any case, Smith returned to Cheyenne in the fall of 1918 after being contented with the new footing of the community in Pocatello.[128]

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The oral history of Elijah Harris, recorded in 1972, did not disclose why he left the South in 1917. The nineteen year old entered a railroad office one day with the intent on going anywhere else. When his eyes followed the lines on the big wall map behind the counter to where they settled on the oddly named "Pocatello," he liked the sound of it. "Pocatella," Harris repeated to himself as he opted then and there for something new.[129] When Harris arrived, however, conditions were not too dissimilar from other highly segregated cities of the South. Few places accommodated Black people and few businesses served him. Most of the Black residents could only hope to own property within the Iron Triangle neighborhood, so called because of its unpleasant location near the rail yards and between adjoining sets of tracks. Somewhere in that

[127] C. C. Young, "Pocatello News," *The Denver Star,* September 7, 1918, 8.
[128] "Cheyenne, Wyoming News," *Colorado Statesmen,* September 14, 1918, 5.
[129] Elijah J. Harris (presumed), oral history interview, conducted c.1972. Special Collections and Archives, Eli M. Oboler Library, Idaho State University, identifier "isu_ohp_music_bethel_greek_streaming" available from https://cdm16942.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p16942coll20/id/37/rec/28.

neighborhood, possibly in the home of Mrs. Mack Johnson at 717 South Third Avenue, Harris quickly met a group of Baptists like himself. Religious since childhood, Harris found great comfort and purpose in this community.

When C. O. Smith boarded his train back to Wyoming just a year later, Harris and the others carried on with the daunting task of building, keeping, and belonging to an official, established church. They pooled money and collected donations. Yet, for a year and a half, things likely looked the same as before the big revivalist from Cheyenne had arrived. Around 1920, Harris and the other Baptists secured a corner lot on Fourth and Pocatello, a main thoroughfare along one edge of the Triangle district. The following spring, the church formally incorporated as Bethel Baptist Church. Harris sent the first spade into the ground as they dug the basement into the earth, rooting their hopes in Idaho's volcanic soil. Harris recalled that their first minister, Rev. Keller, asked a carpenter's union in town to help with the framing and foundation. This was all they had the funds to accomplish at the time, but it was enough. The sanctuary above them progressed much like their own history: in fits and starts, weathering setbacks that delayed its completion while congregants worshiped primarily in the basement for almost twenty-five more years.[130]

Over the course of the 1920s and throughout the Depression years that followed, Bethel Baptist continued to grow and build up its sanctuary on North Fourth Avenue. According to Elijah Harris and his family, the congregation became the anchor point of Black life in their segregated neighborhood just as it was in so many new towns across the West. The arrival of new Black settlers during the Great Migration also heralded a renewal of Allen Chapel. It regained its

[130] "Bethel Baptist Church," National Register Registration Form, 10-12, 15.

footing and remained a stable community until the 1960s.[131] Indeed it appears that the Baptists temporarily outgrew their accommodations by 1945 when Elijah Harris and his wife, Listoria, left Bethel to start Corinth Baptist Church, the sixth different Black church in Pocatello's short history.[132] Harris returned to his role as an elder and as an interim minister at Bethel in 1960. At that time, he oversaw more building renovations and the laying and inscribing of the church cornerstone bearing that earlier founding date of 1918.[133]

Through many years of Black Pocatellans working to establish their own religious spaces, new Black arrivals to the Gate City found no less than three (and at times four) different Black churches huddled amidst the other religious structures that dotted the Triangle neighborhood on a given Sunday. Each modest edifice testified about a future and a hope to their neighbors, who likewise rooted themselves in that space. As we will discover in Chapter Five, Black Pocatellans also envisioned their own lives in Pocatello alongside Italians, Greeks, Japanese, Chinese, Irish, and Russians. Such claims bore a multiplicity of meaning: theological, liturgical, traditional, cultural, and even political. But claims of belonging in all their forms were usually contested. In Pocatello, the wrangling over the power of civic religion and different traditions in the city has fallen along ethnic and racial lines since its founding and continues to shape the region in notable ways even today. Understanding the history of those contests and how they are regarded in the present—the subject of Chapter Five—speaks to the ways in which the forces of memory making always press upon the types of narratives that people craft around

[131] Elijah J. Harris (presumed), oral history interview, conducted c.1972. Special Collections and Archives, Eli M. Oboler Library, Idaho State University, identifier "isu_ohp_music_bethel_greek_streaming" available from https://cdm16942.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p16942coll20/id/37/rec/28.

[132] Purse, Watkins, and Marsh, "The Triangle," 9.

[133] "Bethel Baptist Church," National Register Registration Form, 9-11.

an imagined past. But contending with those processes would be impossible, or at the very least fraught, without first sitting with the imagined futures that both did and did not come to pass.

In 1918, Charles Smith of Cheyenne had in mind an imagined future for the people of Pocatello, one that was "progressive" and in a city without vice, but also a future that was just and full of opportunity. This vision was Smith's hope not only for Pocatello but also for his home back in Wyoming. His return to the eastern side of the Rockies coincided with the arrival of a pandemic. No sooner did Smith share the news of his almost Pauline-missionary efforts to gather and encourage the house church in Pocatello, did he learn that all gatherings of more than five people in Wyoming had been banned by the governor and that strict quarantine measures would close the doors of Second Baptist until the Influenza subsided. What is more, he also received news of his mother's illness back in Kansas. He would have to return to nurse her back to health. Until Easter of the following year, the straight road to future stability in Pocatello and Cheyenne that he had hope for remained clouded and unpredictable.

Chapter 3 The Blackest City in the West: Cheyenne, Wyoming

In the days long gone very few Negroes tempted Fate in the Wyoming metropolis, but times have changed and herewith human flotsam from the remote corners of the world, the increasing number of the sons and daughters of Ham are finding something to do and are doing it with a very hearty good will.

—The Colorado Statesmen, 1909

Where once the hard ground yielded so little in terms of water and good soil for the benefit of trees, by 1900 the streets of West Cheyenne stretched beneath adequate, though perhaps not abundant shade.[1] Accounts of the arboreal qualities of the "Magic City of the Plains" often varied depending on when the author penned their commentary. Settlers arriving in the 1870s or 1880s from the Northeast or Midwest could hardly let a paragraph pass without a conscious, or unconscious, lamentation on the bareness of the city's streets. Trees quickly gained a value separate from a market for lumber. A lack of trees only increased the intense exposure to the elements that came blowing off the Rockies and bore down upon the adjacent plains. The wind, with no barriers to speak of, seemed to rattle through town with little regard for walls or pane-glass windows. Many thought that brick chimneys on wooden buildings could not withstand the force of the winds and would be ripped off the facades of the settlers' homes. In those days, before bricks were as cheaply available to builders, a tin stove pipe protruded from the walls or roof of the shanty, only adding to the draftiness. It was later determined that brick chimneys

[1] "A Thriving People," *Colorado Statesmen,* August 28, 1909, 1.

could, in fact, withstand the elements. Still, before consistent train service from the Union Pacific ensured access to materials, many settlers chose to defer the ideal of hearth and home.[2]

The transcontinental line from the well populated central plains to Salt Lake City carried a fair number of people through southern Wyoming in the latter half of the nineteenth century. Cheyenne, Rawlins, Rock Springs, and Green River, the towns along the UP road, saw encouraging growth. The supposed emptiness of the lands to the north of the tracks all the way to Montana and the unceded territories of the Lakota, Cheyenne, Western Shoshone, Blackfoot, and Crow, however, doomed any legitimate prospects of statehood for years.[3] Indeed, later state historians never failed to mention that there was much more talk of Wyoming being carved up and claimed by its neighbors that there was of independent statehood in the 1870s and early 1880s.[4] The pressing question was how to keep a certain percentage of those travelers and laborers who moved through the territory long enough to be counted in the census. The cattle and sheep ranching industries, along with the requisite commercial support, offered stable lives to some. The much more labor intensive jobs for the railroad and in the adjacent coal mines, though, skewed the early population male and transient.[5] The uncertain and unsettled future of towns like Cheyenne in the years after Greater Reconstruction left an opening for physical space and civic power to be claimed by traditionally marginalized groups. Many of the first Black residents moved quickly to capitalize on such conditions. Their successes, as this chapter will

[2] Frank Lusk, "My Association with Wyoming," *Annals of Wyoming* 1:1 (August 1923), 18.

[3] T. A. Larson, *History of Wyoming* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1990, second edition, revised), 49-63; see also, Richard White, *Railroaded: The Transcontinentals and the Making of Modern America* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2011); and Manu Karuka, *Empires Tracks: Indigenous Nations, Chinese Workers, and the Transcontinental Railroad* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2019).

[4] Larson, *History of Wyoming,* 236-237.

[5] On territorial censuses and populations, Larson, *History of Wyoming,* 71, 108, and 137.

show, laid a foundation for an unprecedent image of, and anxiety for, what the future might hold.[6]

Lasting through Firsting

The trajectory of aspiring Black futures—from a group of Black workers merely present at the start of a new western town, to a large Black community more or less integrated into the social space of the city—is not represented in any of the historical narratives of Cheyenne or the other cities of this study. Instead, another dynamic appears to be shaping the reformation of race in the local community and the stories people told about Black settlers. If anything is widely known about African Americans in Territorial Wyoming, it is usually the lives of notable public figures who define that knowledge, primarily Barney Ford and William Jefferson Hardin.[7] Their stories are often regretfully shallow and removed from the local context of Black community formation in which their stories most clearly resonate. However imperfect and distorting these narratives are, this chapter begins by considering these contemporary public conceptions of Black history in southern Wyoming as a type of diagnostic. The history of Black Cheyennites that follows in this chapter could too easily appear to emerge *ex nihilo*. I intend to show that the many stories which have been disavowed, subsumed, or ignored for a century or more, wait just beneath the surface of even the most familiar narratives of the Black past.

The lives and times of Ford and Hardin are sequestered, almost entirely, to the beginnings of Cheyenne, Wyoming Territory, and the West in general. I suggest this accomplishes a certain labor inherent to many narratives of U.S. settler colonialism. Storytellers of all stripes

[6] For early Black Railroad laborers in Cheyenne see, Martha Anderson, *Black Pioneers of the Northwest, 1800-1918*, archived in "African Americans" Vertical File (VF), Wyoming State Archives (WYSA).

[7] Ford and Hardin are discussed at length below. See, Eugene Berwanger, "Hardin and Langston: Western Black Spokesmen of the Reconstruction Era," *The Journal of African American History* 64:2 (Spring 1979); and Roger Hardaway, "William Jefferson Hardin: Wyoming's Nineteenth Century Black Legislator," *Annals of Wyoming* 63:1 (Winter 1991), 2-13.

intentionally and unintentionally reduce Ford and Hardin to the categories of novel "firsts" or "most liked" members of their community, banal footnotes at best. A critical reflection of their actual lives and the stories that are told about them begins an important corrective. The stories of the "first" Black person to "live here" or to "do that" seamlessly slide into the discursive abyss where those accounts are the "last" time Black people are regarded as historical agents; a powerful illustration of the ways in which historical storytelling does its work in the world.

Jean O'Brien's formulation of "firsting and lasting" in the literature of Early America argues that stories about the origins of white settler institutions and communities replacing those of Indigenous peoples accomplishes an insidious form of erasure. In these early writings white settler subjectivity was actualized through stories of "firsting" (memorializing the first white settlers to arrive, the first white marriage, or baptism etc.) while at the same time Indigenous peoples in these same places were rendered as non-subjects through stories of the "last Indian" to occupy a space or "go on the warpath" and so on. For O'Brien, "Lasting" is an active verb. Though it appears to freeze its subject into historical stasis, and thus deny them a future, "lasting" is a fundamentally ahistorical category that is always under maintenance. In this way, Indigenous peoples, persons of color, or others can be written out of local history even while they continue to live and build communities in the midst of settler space. O'Brien also draws attention to how local and vernacular history traditions are central to the project of firsting and lasting. Obvious and long standing faults in the historical record can be challenged and corrected, but if the wider formation of firsting and lasting remains in public memory, it is likely to continue the erasure of Indigenous pasts, presents, and futures.[8]

[8] Jean M. O'Brien, *Firsting and Lasting: Writing Indians out of Existence in New England* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010).

It is the curious and, ultimately, instructive place that Black settlers hold in this model that I wish to highlight. As has already been shown in Pueblo and Pocatello, despite all the ways in which historical narratives of place-making subsume Black pasts and futures, there always remain certain types of stories that stand in for all of Black history. This chapter sets out to disrupt the narratives that collapse Black firsting and lasting into the same category. If one looks into and beyond the fictions of lasting *through* firsting, one quickly finds that they are not narratives of lasting at all. They are lives and memories partitioned, mobilized for use here, cast to the side there, and always subsumed by other historical imperatives. Nevertheless, even these accounts can become ruptures in the emergent counternarrative of race and state-building in the American West that took shape throughout the twentieth century.

Some of the more prominent ruptures emanating from the Black West beg the question: "how such histories could remain unknown or misplaced by so many for so long?" The Black histories of lasting through firsting are not an account of what has transpired but rather a diagnostic through which a better mode of historical storytelling might proceed. The roots of Black Cheyenne extend much deeper and spread more widely than can be expressed through the lives of the city's notable "firsts." Before exploring those other stories, it is necessary to unsettle and recontextualize the lasting and firsting narratives and show that, despite the impulses of those who so often deployed their stories, such persons were not the first nor the last Black settlers, businesspeople, politicians, and citizens in Cheyenne.[9]

[9] O'Brien's attention to how vernacular storytelling and history writing shaped the foundation on which a later professionalized historical discipline would build is what has drawn me to lasting and firsting in Wyoming. As this and the next chapter shows, so much of the state's history is recorded for the first time after the turn of the twentieth century. Despite having more professional and institutional origins, narratives of firsting and lasting have a much greater duration as they enter the public conversation. As we will see with the following discussion of William Hardin, though the academic historians who write about him likely never intended to place him in a lasting category, but absent a much more robust contextualization of his life, that is exactly what has happened once his story became widely known.

To consider the narratives of Black lasting through firsting, one needs look no further than the enigmatic William Jefferson Hardin. Forty years of retellings since the 1980s has elevated Hardin to occupy, almost solely, the pedestal reserved for memorializing Black politicians in Wyoming's territorial era.[10] In one sense Hardin is an obvious target for this distortion. He was, after all, the first and last Black legislator elected to serve in the Territorial Assembly of Wyoming. What is strange is that it took a full century after Hardin's 1879 election for locals and historians to create the space for Hardin as the first Black elected official in Wyoming. In 1979, historian Eugene Berwanger noted that Hardin's political career was not "mentioned to any extent in early histories of Colorado" where Hardin first rose to prominence. Indeed, no major (or minor) history of Wyoming, Laramie County, or Cheyenne, from the nineteenth century until Berwanger's article includes any account of him.

Since the late 1970s, Hardin has reemerged as a central figure in the racial history of Wyoming as "The Equality State." But prior to Berwanger's treatment of Hardin in the history of Reconstruction politics in Colorado, Hardin had virtually vanished from the public record and scholarship of Wyoming over the preceding century. Historian Roger Hardaway, writing in 1991, offered a useful intervention as the first scholar to dwell on Hardin's legislative career in Wyoming (which Berwanger had not addressed at length). His footnotes also seem to suggest that the first two major surveys of the Black West by Katz and Savage in the 1960s and 1970s were published without either author even knowing about the existence of the trans-Mississippi West's first Black legislator. Absence compounded absence, and in his 600-page tome of

[10] A refreshing, but still limited history of Hardin is, Eugene Berwanger, "Hardin and Langston: Western Black Spokesmen of the Reconstruction Era," *The Journal of African American History* 64:2 (Spring 1979); A representative account is Roger Hardaway, "William Jefferson Hardin: Wyoming's Nineteenth Century Black Legislator," *Annals of Wyoming* 63:1 (Winter 1991), 2-13.

Wyoming's political history, T.A. Larson also ignored Hardin.[11] Larson's omission is the most egregious considering that, unlike other scholars writing before Berwanger, Larson clearly consulted and cited many of the same newspapers whose editors commented at length on Hardin, his role in Western racial politics, and the singular nature of his elevation to office in 1879. There is also tantalizing evidence that a latent knowledge of Hardin, though not published, bubbled up from time to time in the twentieth century. For instance, the WPA's Federal Writers Program in Wyoming was headed by the noted Western historian Agnes Wright Spring (who also went on to be the state historian of both Colorado and Wyoming). Her papers in the University of Wyoming American Heritage Center show that at some point she took an interest in researching African American history. Mentions of Hardin appear in her notes, labeled "Negro," showing that she was both aware of his race and his public service.[12]

One can hardly fault the subsequent writers who sought to redress a century of silence. In the mission to write Hardin back into state history, however, it is clear that a certain set of narrative assumptions at work have all but assured that he is viewed as a novelty, the first and last vestige of Black political power until at least the 1980s, when Liz Byrd became the "first" Black State Representative. Berwanger, who deserves much credit in rescuing his story, seems to regard Hardin's 1879 election as almost assured once he moved to Wyoming. His place within Republican circles nationally was sufficient to bring him to the attention of local elites in Cheyenne. Moreover, one could surmise from local newspaper accounts that his skill as a speaker set him apart from most other citizens.[13] According to Berwanger, Hardin "did not mind

[11] Larson, *History of Wyoming*.

[12] See folder (unnumbered) filed as "Negro" in "Agnes Wright Spring papers." University of Wyoming American Heritage Center. Collection Number 115. Box 44.

[13] "A Rare Scene," *Cheyenne Weekly Leader,* August 28, 1879, 3.

being 'the colored orator' and in fact seemed to relish the role."[14] Given this trajectory, Hardin is able to bear the full measure of his ascent to the Wyoming House chambers all alone, a task so daunting it was never replicated. This narrative, coming from a laudable place of telling the history of the "first" Black politician, eschews so much of the actual archival record that Hardin becomes a "lasting" figure. From 1879 to1979 Hardin was nearly written out of local and state history entirely. Since his reemergence, though, he has suffered an altogether different form of disappearing.

Even without the benefit of abundant sources produced by African Americans, a much fuller and more useful account of Hardin's career in Cheyenne is still possible to reconstruct from the newspaper sources of the 1870s. Against the old narrative, not only was he far from the solitary Black politician in town, but it would also be misleading to even characterize Hardin as a leader in African American civic life for years after his arrival in 1874. Rather than escaping Denver for greener political pastures, Hardin was clearly reluctant to have anything to do with politics in Wyoming Territory for a while. As such, a retelling of his story is much needed.

Hardin seemed to float into Cheyenne, to use the metaphor of the *Statesmen,* like so much human flotsam around 1874. As a young man in the 1850s and 1860s, the Kentucky school teacher took the formulaic view that the new western territories like Colorado were bound to be spaces freer and more open to those of African descent like himself during and after the Civil War.[15] In 1863, while his old Kentucky home faced the uncertainties of war, Hardin looked to Colorado Territory, which entered the Union with universal male suffrage. He arrived in Denver, delivered across the vast sea of grass along with hundreds of thousands of other settlers, just in

[14] Berwanger, "Hardin and Langston," 112.

[15] For his arrival in Cheyenne and previous work in Colorado and Kentucky see, Quintard Taylor, *In Search of the Racial Frontier: African Americans in the American West, 1528-1990* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1998), 123-124.

time for the 1864 legislature to go back on that promise of equality and exclude Black men from the franchise. Hardin publicly challenged this exclusion, eventually appealing to the 1867 Territorial Act that enshrined universal male suffrage in the Territories years before the Fifteenth amendment.[16] This gained him some notice among Republican Party circles. Though it also seems that Colorado's growing Black community grew tired of Hardin's eccentricities, including his penchant for publicly chastising other African Americans he deemed to be not civilized enough. A charge of bigamy, apparently credible, cast him out of a federal job at the U.S. Mint and from the good graces of many Black Denverites.[17] Hardin's move to Cheyenne can easily be posed as some type of phantasmic aberration: an inglorious vanishing act from history and a sudden return. Nobody seems to have asked why Cheyenne, and, more importantly what the city was like for African Americans before his sudden appearance.

In 1870, four years before Hardin came to Cheyenne, ninety-nine African Americans lived among the other 2,500 residents of the new town that had been founded around the Union Pacific headquarters at the Crow Creek crossing.[18] Certainly, originating as a railroad town facilitated the first Black laborers to come up with the city from its founding. When Fort D.A. Russell went up in 1867 as part of Grant's "peace" posturing with Indigenous nations, two or three dozen more Black men and women arrived in Cheyenne to labor at the fort.[19] Yet among the roughly thirty individuals whose work tied them to the railroad or one of its subsidiary businesses in town, more African Americans actually worked in other occupations. Those ranged from wage laborers and domestic servants to self-employed barbers (six listed) to saloon keepers,

[16] "Petition for the Right of Blacks to Vote 1868" *BCAARL,* ARL42.

[17] Taylor, *In Search of the Racial Frontier,* 124; for Black Denverites growing annoyed with Hardin see, Moya Hanson, "William Jefferson Hardin (1831-1889)" Encyclopedia entry for Blackpast.org, (February 12, 2007).

[18] "Wyoming Territory U.S. Census of Black Res. 1870" *BCAARL* ARL42.

[19] Larson, *History of Wyoming,* 28-29.

and owners and managers of boarding houses and hotels. While the Union Pacific and the military continued to bring new Black workers and soldiers to town, the Black community there already boasted a diverse foundation of livelihoods since the earliest days of settlement. Indeed, when Hardin arrived fresh from his scandal in Denver, he found the best work available to be as a barber, not with the rail workers or the laborers at the fort. Perhaps the occupation also fulfilled a desire to bend the ear of customers about issues that mattered to him.[20]

He had opportunities to recreate the prominence he once possessed in Colorado. The political spotlight called during the election season of 1874, only a few months after he settled in. That year, Black politicians held large meetings to stump for Republican leaders and encourage Black voters to cast their ballots uniformly for "the true Party."[21] This time the presence of one of Colorado's most famed speakers in their city elicited speculation and perhaps a premature edict on Hardin's political future. Ahead of one large meeting of the city's Black men and women, the *Wyoming State Tribune* reported that the purpose of the gathering was to select Black "candidates to vote for at the ensuing election. Jeremiah Graham, Thomas Williams, W. J. Hardin, Legrand Phillips, Isaac Smith, and W. Fields. Endorsed by all the Colored voters of Laramie County."[22] At first, reports from the meeting stated that Hardin made a short but eloquent defense for why those listening should "stand firm and elect the whole Republican ticket." Despite being quoted by the organizers, Jerry Graham and William McGinnis, in their dispatch to the *Cheyenne Daily News,* the paper simultaneously printed a clarification that "Wm. J. Hardin in an able letter denies having anything to say or do in reference to the colored mass

[20] "William J. Hardin," *The Cheyenne Daily Sun,* November 9, 1879, 2.

[21] "A Call to the Colored Voters of Laramie County," News Clipping of *Wyoming State Tribune* article, dated 1874, "African Americans" Vertical File (VF), Wyoming State Archives (WYSA).

[22] "A Call to the Colored Voters of Laramie County," News Clipping of *Wyoming State Tribune* article, dated 1874, "African Americans" Vertical File (VF), Wyoming State Archives (WYSA).

meeting tonight." Whatever confusion was involved, William Hardin seemed hesitant to dive headlong so quickly into the fray so soon upon arrival in his new home. Rather, he was content to ply his tonsorial craft and give speeches only rarely, waiting until city Republicans called on him in 1879.[23]

When both political parties' conventions met in Cheyenne to nominate candidates for the legislature of Wyoming Territory in 1879, the first of the post-Greater Reconstruction era, Hardin's nomination appeared to elicit the greatest enthusiasm from the audience. The *Cheyenne Leader* noted that the crowd included a good number of the Democratic conventioneers.[24] Local Republicans in Wyoming, Black and white, appeared to have dismissed the charges against Hardin in Denver as racist and jealous politicking from lesser rivals.[25] With each round of balloting, Hardin outlasted the narrowing field of challengers and the excitement in the room reached a crescendo. The evening concluded with demands for a sample of the barber's famous oratory talents, which he obliged.[26] His political contributions amounted to little in his two sessions in the legislature, as the Democrats controlled both chambers and the Territorial Governor, John Hoyt, a Republican with little appetite for partisan conflicts, pressed little in terms of legislative action.[27]

Within his own community, though, Hardin would not have been considered, by any means, the only Black politician. Evidenced from the sources that misplaced Hardin near the center of Black Republican politics in 1874, there was already an avid base of Black voters and speakers who labored for candidates and the Republican party in Cheyenne. The meetings that

[23] "The Colored Mass Meeting," *Cheyenne Daily News,* August 25, 1874, 2; For retraction see page 3 in same issue.
[24] "A Rare Scene," *Cheyenne Weekly Leader,* August 28, 1879, 3.
[25] "William J. Hardin," *The Cheyenne Daily Sun,* November 9, 1879, 2.
[26] "A Rare Scene," *Cheyenne Weekly Leader,* August 28, 1879, 3.
[27] Larson, *History of Wyoming,* 136.

took place in the 1870s were not novel. As early as 1869, during one of the first city elections, Barney Ford and William C. Randolph convened a mass meeting of the city's Black citizens. According to the Republican paper in town, the meeting "was well attended, and comprised something over a hundred men who listened with evident deep interest to the arguments brought forward by the various speakers."[28]

Hardin served two terms in Wyoming's Territorial assembly. He moved on shortly after 1881, passing away a decade later in Utah. His political success no doubt emerged partially from his outstanding skills as a speaker and debater; even his opponents could not deny this. But he also arrived in Cheyenne during a upswell of Black political action at the end of the Reconstruction Era West and during a period when Wyoming Republicans had consistently failed to control the process of shaping laws and policies over their Democratic rivals. White Republicans suffered in local elections under the accusations that they also failed to operate independent of the powerful Stock Growers Association that controlled much of the Republican Party's agenda in Wyoming. To white Republicans, Hardin's regional and national clout as a Party operator seemed likely to energize their base in Cheyenne and Laramie County. There can also be little doubt that his appearance, which was variously described as having "no resemblance in his features to the African Race" and "more like an Italian or Frenchmen than a colored man," convinced some to accept him on racialist terms.[29] Any such pretentions, however, had to be held over and apart from Hardin's steadfast and public claims to his own Blackness and

[28] "Colored Men's Meeting," *Cheyenne Weekly Leader,* August 25, 1869, unidentifiable page, archived "African Americans" VF, *WYSA*.

[29] "William J. Hardin," *The Cheyenne Daily Sun,* November 9, 1879, 2.

his close association with the large Black community in Cheyenne and the Rocky Mountain West.[30]

How, if at all, did white Cheyennites regard this broader Black political base? Indeed, their understanding of the political realm likely looked quite different than it did for many Black residents of the city. Locked out of most official political spaces, African Americans keenly illustrated all the ways in which the personal was political.[31] At this register, the political lives of Black Cheyennites after 1877 were also their lives of labor, either for large corporations like the railroads, the government, for private businesses, or for themselves. Their political lives were also their social lives, wherein building homes, raising families, and nurturing myriad associative networks all required physical space to do so. Therefore, as everyday people engaged in political acts in this broad sense, the first outwardly and self-described "politicians" among the Black population looked to have a hand in social and civic affairs outside of any office.[32]

The everyday entanglements of the personal and political is perhaps most evident in the life of the hotelier, Barney Ford. In similar ways to Hardin, Ford, too, has been regarded as Cheyenne's notable first successful, Black entrepreneur. Ford's legacy, along with his substantial wealth, ensured that his life would remain a central part of Black history on the Rocky Mountain Front. Ford used his presence (and capital) at the founding of the town to buy up lots on which he built his resplendent Interocean Hotel in 1875. This space became a central part of social life

[30] Moya Hanson, "William Jefferson Hardin (1831-1889)" Encyclopedia entry for Blackpast.org, (February 12, 2007); For Cheyenne's deadlocked politics see, Larson, *History of Wyoming,* 134-139.

[31] Robin D. G. Kelley, "'We Are Not What We Seem': Rethinking Black Working-Class Opposition in the Jim Crow South," *The Journal of American History* 80:1 (June 1993), 75-112; Barbra Ransby, *Ella Baker and the Black Freedom Movement* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003); Bruce A. Glasrud and Cary D. Wintz, eds. *Black Americans and the Civil Rights Movement in the West* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2019).

[32] Land as political power in Settler Societies see, Patrick Wolfe, "Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native" *Journal of Genocide Research* 8:4 (December 2006), 387; see also, Eve Tuck and K, Wayne Yang, "Decolonization is not a Metaphor," *Decolonization*, *Indigeneity, Education & Society* Vol. 1:1 (2012) 1–40.

in Cheyenne as the finest such establishment. Reminiscences of the mid-1870s frequently pointed to balls and dances held at the Interocean, sometimes with reference to the race of its owner, but often not. Yet his place within public memory is similarly locked into a narrow category which he, and he alone, occupies. As has already emerged in the discussion of Hardin, Ford engaged in a much broader building of community. Before his own splendid commercial success in Cheyenne and Denver, Ford busily went about with other Black residents organizing political meetings before the ink was even dry on the city charter. Ford's active life in electoral and local politics are nearly absent from these remembrances. Indeed, while scholars like Quintard Taylor and Berwanger credit Hardin with advocating for suffrage in Colorado, no historian has also noted Ford's name on that same original petition.[33]

Other Black politicians who held office were not even as conspicuous as was Barney Ford. Wyoming statehood quickly became a real possibility in 1889. With the excitement of self-rule, as it was often framed, came the at-large elections for numerous new officials for the state government and legislature.[34] Charles Cushinberry, another longtime Black citizen of the Cheyenne, owned property and held janitorial contracts for downtown buildings in the late 1880s.[35] In 1890, Black residents and other Republicans rallied to have Cushinberry placed on the ticket as a legislative officer (not a representative). This was not his first foray into public life. In 1886, he ran for House of Representatives in the Territorial Assembly but finished last. However, Wyoming State Archivist Carl Halburg, however, noted that Cushinberry managed to poll over a thousand votes, just 320 behind the runner up.[36] In 1887, Cushinberry also served on

[33] Taylor, *In Search of the Racial Frontier,* 202-203; Berwanger, "Hardin and Langston: Western Black Spokesmen of the Reconstruction Era"; and "Petition for the Right of Blacks to Vote 1868" *BCAARL,* ARL42.

[34] Larson, *History of Wyoming,* 263-265.

[35] 1883 *Polk City Directory*, Cheyenne, Wyoming, 57.

[36] "1800's Black Community was Big Part of Cheyenne," *Wyoming Tribune-Eagle,* clipping in "African Americans" VF, *WYSA*.

the jury of a high profile trial of a Texan "six-shooter fiend" charged with first-degree murder in Laramie County. Local papers praised the jury selection as "a representative body composed of honest, truthful, and reliable citizens." No mention of his race appeared in the paper, but his occupation as a janitor seemed to round out the livelihoods of the others which included a jeweler, a carpenter, a capitalist, a dairyman, a grocer, a machinist, and G.W. Gill, who was then serving as the deputy secretary of the territory. When this eclectic group of men found the defendant guilty, the law required that he be hanged.[37]

Beyond taking part in sending a white criminal to the gallows, Cushinberry and his contemporaries more likely saw their political lives taking place in other spaces. The local African Methodist Episcopal church sponsored a debate night in 1890 that took up the "question" of Black statehood in Indian Territory. Although hopes for a "Black Oklahoma" as it was known, were always incredibly slim, that did not stop Cushinberry and another presenter, D. D. Moore, who served as the secretary for both the local Black Elks Lodge and Black Masons, from arguing in favor. The judges were not swayed by their points and sided with those who doubted that an all-Black territory would "fully solve the race question."[38]

Following the convention during which Cushinberry secured a nomination as a legislative official, he faced off with a Democratic challenger, George Baxter. The race was on a larger ticket that included, as one paper claimed, multiple former Confederates. It may have been all the more satisfying, then, when Cushinberry and his friends celebrated a major political victory that November, one that few subsequent historians have commented on. Certainly, his absence in the record as the first Black elected official in Wyoming's state history could be because the position

[37] "He Will Be Hung," *Cheyenne Daily Leader,* September 7, 1887, 3.

[38] "A. M. E. Debate," *Cheyenne Daily Sun,* March 8, 1890, 3; On "Black Oklahoma" see, Taylor, *In Search of the Racial Frontier*, 143-152.

to which he was elected was that of legislative janitor.[39] In tangible ways, Cushinberry's new office reflected his political life outside the halls of the statehouse as well. His career in Cheyenne up to that point had been managing and directing the cleaning and upkeep of downtown business buildings.[40] Nevertheless, present-day viewers may regard it as demeaning; his contemporaries likely believed it was an unthreatening and small concession that was needed to secure the Black votes on the rest of the ticket; but Black Cheyennites likely saw it as tacit recognition of their civic personhood and evidence that their political action in other areas would not likely be ignored in the future.[41]

Ultimately, the historical imaginaries primed by lasting through firsting discourses are continuations of a politics of belonging wherein white publics determine a figure's place and significance within their collective past and present. They are always reactionary counter-narratives that proceed from the foundational assumption of Black *fugitivity* white settler narratives of the past. Historians should also pause and ponder the ways in which these occlusive stories did not emerge from thin air in the late twentieth century. White citizens of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries constructed a view of Black Cheyennites, their neighbors, that

[39] For claim of "Confederates" and general election information see, "Political Salad," *Cheyenne Daily Sun,* August 24, 1890, 5; It is possible that the election for a legislative office of janitor may have occurred before the constitution allowed for such a post. The *Cheyenne Daily Leader* of January 16, 1890 reported: "The election of Chas. Cushinberry to be House Janitor has been set aside until the office has been created by the legislature." (page 3) It did this and by February Cushinberry was participating in legislative functions in Laramie. See "Solons in Laramie," *The Daily Boomerang,* Laramie, February 5, 1890, 4.

[40] "He Will Be Hung," *Cheyenne Daily Leader,* September 7, 1887, 3; see also Carl V. Halburg, "1800's Black Community was Big Part of Cheyenne," *Wyoming Tribune-Eagle,* clipping in "African Americans" VF, *WYSA*.

[41] Whatever future Cushinberry's public service life in Cheyenne might have held past 1891 was cut short by other ambitions and his daughter's illness. Though his work and political career likely kept him quite busy, Sundays would always find him in church. Following a number of years serving as a deacon of the congregation at Allen Chapel, Cushinberry was ordained as a minister by the AME episcopate and called to take charge of the AME church in Butte, Montana where a change of climate might also help his family. He likely kept his property in Cheyenne as the local paper from time to time would comment on his presence in the city attending to business and visiting old friends. "Rev. Chas. Cushinberry," *Cheyenne Daily Leader*, November 28, 1891, 3.

delegitimized, reduced, and distorted their past and present role in the city's settler politics, continually pushing their history beyond the borders of public memory.

Barney Ford's memory was distorted and pressed into the narrower confines of the business world, while Hardin and lesser-known individuals like Cushinberry were reduced as less significant and quickly forgotten actors in the political realm. Other figures from Chyenne's Black past faced counternarratives of delegitimization. When Tilford Ashford, a Black saloon owner, was gunned down during an altercation with an unruly customer in the summer of 1909, the *Cheyenne State Leader* regarded the murder as the death of the city's "most prominent colored politician."[42] Though Ashford certainly did not hold any office at the time, the paper made it explicitly clear that his political life was foremost his ability work the levers of power at City Hall. For instance, at the time of his murder, though Ashford had been in court for charges of gambling at his establishment "he was permitted to continue his business, although Fred Collins, another negro who conducted a saloon a few blocks away, was compelled to go out of business by the revokal [sic] of his license" for the exact same charges.[43] White residents of Cheyenne looked at Ashford's connections and success as proof that he engaged an unseemly, though widespread, form of political action.

There may have been some truth in this, after all the Black newspapers in Denver also reported that Ashford had been a politician.[44] The *Leader* flatly claimed, "that he controlled a large element of the colored vote and he is said to have used this power to further his own business and political ends."[45] Yet when he was murdered in 1909, the weekly dispatches to the African American papers in Denver only mentioned the affair in passing and certainly did not

[42] "Til Ashford Shot to Death," *Cheyenne State Leader,* June 27, 1909, 1.
[43] "Til Ashford Shot to Death," *Cheyenne State Leader,* June 27, 1909, 1.
[44] "T. W. Ashford," *Colorado Statesmen,* July 3, 1909, 5.
[45] "Til Ashford Shot to Death," *Cheyenne State Leader,* June 27, 1909, 1.

give the impression that the political "boss" of Black Cheyenne was no more.[46] Ashford may well have been influential in numerous ways since his arrival in Cheyenne in 1884, but he was far from the scion of the Magic City's Black community.

The telling Ashford drama can be thought of as an attempt by the white press—along with their readers who clamored for the story—to set a narrative and to render a certain type of imagined past for the city's Black residents. They could spill oceans of ink memorializing a Black politician because his realm of the political was both illegitimate and fit racist preconceptions of Black power that still lingered long after Reconstruction. But it was likely also the case that they felt comforted that "the Negro politician" as a social category in their city, had become vacant in Ashford's death. Despite the fact that other African Americans in town likely enjoyed more prestige within the Black community as political actors—such as Mary Baker whose work as a regional and national clubwoman inserted her into many important conversations, or either of Cheyenne's Black ministers—neither the *Leader,* nor any other white paper in town commented on a Black politician once Ashford's body was laid to rest. Before William Hardin became the last Black politician during his revival in the late twentieth century, Ashford, too suffered a type of lasting.

The politics of belonging were also at work within the Black community, not just against it. On the streets of West Cheyenne, other imagined futures and imagined pasts had been growing for years by the start of the second decade of the new century. The distinct political foundations which included Hardin, Ford, Lucy Phillips and many others, labored to integrate and anchor the Black community to the future political affairs of the city. The fruits of that labor became more evident. The year after Ashford died, census figures indicated an unexpected trend. The capital

[46] "T. W. Ashford," *Colorado Statesmen,* July 3, 1909, 5.

had lost thousands of residents since 1900, from 14,087 down to 11,320. But, of all the racial groups in the city, the Black population was the only one to grow.[47] These demographic realities collided during the 1910s, making Cheyenne the Blackest in the West in as a matter of population percentages. But it had become more than that as well. Over the course of four decades, the countless daily acts that kindled hope for a different kind of future also helped root Black Cheyenne to the windy, treeless plains. It is to those stories that we now turn.

Place-Making and Belonging in West Cheyenne

Of the roughly 300 African American railroad workers and the handful of other laborers who were on hand at the Fourth of July celebration in 1867 that doubled as Cheyenne's founding, perhaps a third or more of them remained there at the Crow Creek crossing to see how the new town might pan out.[48] The 1870 census lists 99 Black Cheyennites, while news reports of those first political meetings in 1869 suggest even more African Americans had come than represented in the first census.[49] Many residents encamped in tents, rough-hewn timber cabins, or sod structures that formed the first enclaves before streets and city blocks gridded the open plains. A number of Black laborers and their families pitched their tents to the west of the train depot, a little north of the tracks. Generally, one of the first acts to root themselves in this new place would have been to establish a church. But for almost a decade, Black worshipers congregated with their white neighbors. Then, in 1875, Lucy Phillips, a revered member of community, led a small group of African Americans who had previously worshiped at the Methodist Episcopal Church on Central Avenue to form their own church. In 1876, Allen Chapel

[47] Dept. of Commerce and Labor Bureau of the Census, *Thirteenth Census of the United States Taken in 1910, Statistics for Wyoming,* 568.

[48] Martha Anderson, *Black Pioneers of the Northwest, 1800-1918*, "African Americans," VF, *WYSA*.

[49] "1870 Territorial U.S. Census of Wyoming Black Res.," *BCAARL*, ARL42; and "Colored Men's Meeting," *Cheyenne Weekly Leader,* August 25, 1869, unidentifiable page, archived "African Americans" VF, *WYSA*.

became the first African Methodist Episcopal (AME) congregation in the territory, then standing at the corner of Eighteenth and Thomas streets.[50] That section of town, often called West Cheyenne and centered around Bent and O'Neil Avenues and roughly 14th to 19th streets, came to be home to over seven hundred Black residents by 1910. Its extraordinary growth amidst a much more modest-sized city of about 11,000 (which had lost over twenty percent of its residents since the last census) made Cheyenne home to the highest percentage of Black residents and sixth largest total Black population of any western city in the early twentieth century.[51]

West Cheyenne drew upon the industriousness of its diverse population and formed its own type of business district of boarding houses, saloons, and barbershops early in the town's history. The 1883 city directory and the 1880 census lay out a clear image of the Black neighborhood that includes Jerry Graham's bar and retail liquor store at 310-320 Seventeenth Street; an eatery owned by Samuel Ramsey nearby; A. W. Green's Laundry on Eddy Avenue; and Mrs. M. S. Shannon's popular Café Restaurant on Ferguson. A half dozen or more Black Barbers plied their trade from either shops that they owned alone or with partners and from informal set-ups like that of E. Thornton Toliver, who ran his business in the alley between O'Neil and Bent Avenues.[52] These enterprises, though often modest, helped anchor the owners and their networks of family and friends to the thriving commercial district of Cheyenne. Moreover, and somewhat more uniquely for a small city, these first generations of Black businesses were followed by new ventures. After the turn of the century, Ashford's saloon and the Three Trays bar and restaurant flourished (and found a certain infamy) during the years when the Buffalo Soldiers came to

[50] 1883 *Polk City Directory*, Cheyenne, Wyoming, 119., 25; "History of Allen Chapel," H2011-60, *WYSA*

[51] "Cheyenne News, Notes, and Correspondence in the *Colorado Statesmen* and the *Denver Star,* 1905-1924," complied by the author.; for population rankings of the largest Black urban populations (minus Cheyenne) see Taylor, *In Search of the Racial Frontier,* 193.

[52] 1883 *Polk City Directory*, Cheyenne, Wyoming, pages: 68, 71, 76, 81, 82, 83, 86, 90, and 115; "Wyo. Terr. U.S. Census of Black Res. 1880" ARL42, *BCAARL*.

Cheyenne. James Gaskins' Livery business and Grocery became the first Black-owned food and supply store in West Cheyenne in the 1910s; his success was followed by Stackers Grocery in 1918. All met the many daily needs of the community.[53]

These forms of enterprise most often flourished away from the central parts of downtowns. While white-owned bars or brothels occupied the liminal spaces of growing western cities, Black businesses in these same areas were not always the "negro dives" as papers frequently painted them to be.[54] Bars, restaurants, club rooms, and other forms of community meeting places could all coexist beneath the same roof. Moreover, their close proximity to the homes and work of much of the Black community would have meant that such establishments were not the sole quarter of "ruffians" or "bad characters." Democratic opponents of the Territorial governor in 1882, John Hoyt, openly condemned him for his patronage of Black-owned establishments.[55] Hoyt was by no measure a drunk or "man of loose morals" as it would have been put in his day, but rather described as a "highly educated world traveler with the soul of a poet and the mind of a reformer and conservationist."[56] More the kind of man who spent

[53] For Gaskins' Grocery see, 1910 U.S. Census, Cheyenne Ward 3, Laramie, Wyoming; Roll: T624_1746; Page: 6A; Enumeration District: 0084; FHL microfilm: 1375759; and Stackers Grocery see, "Cheyenne News," *Colorado Statesmen*, March 23, 1918, 4.

[54] The events sensationalized in the press around a murder-assault at the "negro dive," Three Trays Saloon, owned by a Black woman named Maggie Fly, are difficult to piece together and apparently never reached a resolution in the press. In the summer of 1904, white soldiers from the Eleventh Infantry who frequented West Cheyenne establishments came to have more and more altercations with Black residents. In July, a group of soldiers harassed a number of Black men outside the Three Trays. One soldier, Walter Jones shot and killed the young William Carpenter, son of a prominent Black barber and a bootblack in Albert Palmer's shop. In the fray someone fired a shot at Jones, who, months later, succumbed to his injuries and died. The police and white press believed the shooter to have been John Baker, because he owned a gun, though he claimed that his wife Mary had taken it while he went out for the night. Police determined it had not been fired and ultimately did not charge Baker, who, less than ten years later became a police officer himself. Much of the reporting of the events worked tirelessly to disparage Mrs. Fly's establishment, Baker and his wife, and, to a certain extent, decried the behavior of the soldiers, not so much because one committed murder, but because they drank heavily and patronized West Cheyenne's many Black bars and restaurants. See, "Bloody Riot at Midnight," *Wyoming Tribune,* July 5, 1904, 1; and "Jones to Go under Knife," *Cheyenne Daily Leader,* September 18, 1904, 8.

[55] These accusations were made by opponents within his party, likely Stock Growers, who requested that the President appoint a stauncher Republican to press their agendas. Larson, *History of Wyoming,* 139.

[56] Larson, *History of Wyoming,* 134.

time contemplating life on the top of a mountain rather than at the bottom of a glass, his patronage of Westside establishments probably helped those businesses garner greater respectability.

A closer inspection of the comings and goings of West Cheyenne and its residents highlights other important elements of what made the city so unique. First, from the 1870s and until at least the 1910s, West Cheyenne had always been a blended neighborhood ethnically, as well as economically. The census in 1910 places most of the 726 Black residents in this part of town in addition to some 100 to 200 hundred Japanese men working for the railroad. Among the homes and business of the Black community also lived various groups from parts of Russia and Greece that the census taker seemed unsure how to record using the census' racial categories. Eventually he bucked conventions and landed on "other."[57] A large number of the more clearly identifiable white residents closest to these streets and blocks that came to the US as immigrants from European countries. From its founding, the West side housed many new arrivals, those seeking more affordable costs of living, and closer access to railroad and downtown worksites. In this way, the diverse nature of the neighborhood ensured that it would remain socially and geographically integrated with the day-to-day workings of Cheyenne.[58]

The early city directories and censuses also reveal that the West side was home to both white and Black business interests that developed alongside one another. While the capitol and downtown areas held many of the town's white collar, professional, and governmental work, most grocers, dry goods retailers, bars, boarding houses, general stores, and such operated in the

[57] On "other" racial census category see, *1910 US Federal Census,* Cheyenne, Laramie, Wyoming: Enumeration Districts 0082, Sheet 6, for a common example. Japanese residents and workers appear most prominently in the Black neighborhood enumerated in census districts 0082-0084, especially sheets 16 and 17 of ED 0084.

[58] *1910 US Federal Census,* Cheyenne, Laramie, Wyoming: Enumeration Districts 0076-0084, African American entries compiled by the author.

same neighborhood where most African Americans worked and resided. So that while Cheyenne would have many challenging years in the 1890s and 1900s, Black Cheyennites at least did not additionally struggle with many of the effects of commonly employed racist practices that separated or removed prosperous business districts away from Black neighborhoods. The cause of this distinct kind of integration is harder to define. It may have simply been that white Cheyennites lacked the will to under-develop the parts of town where non-white residents lived as economic development as a whole lagged between 1890 and 1910. Or, as we have already seen, Black politicians and business leaders who remained active from 1867 onward may well have been pushing against a type of politics that would have so disadvantaged their community. By the mid-1880s, when Cushinberry, Ford, and Hardin had all left Cheyenne, others had quickly moved to take their place. In the hands of men and women like H.C. Jefferson, Mary and John Baker, and James and Edith Gaskin, to name just a few, the prospects of the Black community's imagined future, for better or worse, could not be uprooted from the sun-hardened ground of West Chyenne.

Along these streets, a wider array of voices than merely those of the influential Black business elite or successful politicians could be discerned. The diversity captured in the censuses from 1880 to 1910 was not only racial. Cheyenne's Black citizens themselves defied any easy or anticipated social, economic, or gender classifications. Not long into the 1870s, the community already bucked trends by not being not a transient cohort of single male workers. Even if most of the unattached male wage laborers in the city lacked family or economic roots to the front range, Cheyenne was also home to a large number of single Black women working in a variety of

professions, a situation that doubtlessly added to the vibrancy of Black life of the town and perhaps offered many young people enough cause to stay at least a while.[59]

Likewise, the number of families with children indicates other factors that may have pressed upon residents' imagined futures. Young couples with their infant children who had been born in Missouri or Kansas reveal themselves to be new arrivals. Twelve middle-aged couples in 1910 raised four or more children whose birth places read much like two decades of Black mobility and optimism: an oldest child might be born in Tennessee, the next Nebraska, then Wyoming, Wyoming, Wyoming. A handful of parents reared a second or third generation of Black westerners in the shadows of the Rockies, themselves and their parents being born in Colorado, New Mexico, or California.[60] Certainly, the imperatives of civic or political action would have been different for working parents whose recent lives were defined by the search for stable homes than they were for established single or wealthy Black businessmen.

All this is to suggest that a Black community such as the one in Cheyenne would have had numerous voices vying for space and priority concerning the issues of their day and how they might rise to meet the needs of the future. Other Black communities across the West after Greater Reconstruction often recorded these voices and debates in the pages of local newspapers. Indeed, the presence of Black journals themselves is often interpreted, rightly, as evidence that readers often held different positions on various topics.[61] But from 1867 until at least 1914, Cheyenne did not have a Black newspaper to give voice to its incredible diversity and prodigious

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[59] *1910 US Federal Census,* Cheyenne, Laramie, Wyoming: Enumeration Districts 0076-0084, African American entries compiled by the author.

[60] *1910 US Federal Census,* Cheyenne, Laramie, Wyoming: Enumeration Districts 0076-0084, African American entries compiled by the author.

[61] Gayle Berardi and Thomas Segardy, "The Development of African American Newspapers in the American West," *Journal of Negro History* 75:3-4 1990), 96-111; See also, Anthony W. Wood, *Black Montana: Settler Colonialism and the Erosion of the Racial Frontier, 1877-1930* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2021), especially chapter 3.

growth. It may have been that local media climate of Cheyenne was so saturated (with at one point as many as half a dozen papers being published in the city) that a lack of advertisers doomed any new journals.[62] Additionally, from the early 1900s on, Denver's Black press offered affordable options for Cheyennites to get the news and regional affairs in short order by way of the railroad. In fact, the only reference to Cheyenne's one Black paper, the *Uplift,* is found in the pages of the *Denver Star.* To date, no copy of the *Uplift* has been found. If it still survives, it is likely that the editor, John Muse, only printed one or two issues as his burgeoning ministry life took his focus away to Colorado later that same year.[63]

As the introduction of this dissertation discussed, the surprising lack of a Black paper is no doubt a major contributing factor to Cheyenne's near total absence in historical writings on the Black West. However, many of the types of voices that often appear in local papers still exist, though they were never printed in Cheyenne. In fact, what does exist actually far exceeds what researchers typically look for during newspaper studies. As I have argued in previous work, local "news from" and gossip columns in Black papers are treasure troves for historians seeking to understand how the Black West took shape and formed across the vastness of the region. The news from Cheyenne, compiled for columns printed in Denver papers from the mid-1900s onward, quickly evolved from newsy briefs during 1905-1908 into a cohesively structured series of weekly correspondence from multiple members of the Black community to readers at home and across the West. Taking note of how sources from elsewhere depicted the many changes wrought in Wyoming illustrates just how coherently a future for Black life had coalesced in this unassuming city which lay in the shadow of the Rockies by the end of the 1910s.

[62] Discussion of Cheyenne's many newspapers see, Larson, *History of Wyoming,* 239-241.
[63] "Cheyenne News," *Denver Star,* September 12, 1914, 4.

Correspondence from within the Veil

To research Black life along the Front Range of the Rocky Mountains, researchers inevitably have to navigate the concentration of Denver-centric sources that can easily over-shadow less populous neighboring communities. Though the Black population of the Mile High city grew precipitously in the 1930s and after World War II, the Five Points neighborhood directly east of downtown Denver had long served as a hub for African Americans in the West.[64] It proved to be a fruitful place for journalistic endeavors, supporting competing Black papers for many years. In the pages of both the *Denver Star* and the *Colorado Statesmen,* readers encountered abundant evidence that Cheyenne held a place of special significance within the mental geography of Black westerners. Both papers began as four to six page journals, often with an entire sheet dedicated to local and regional news sent from neighboring towns. Papers could offer small stipends, perhaps just enough to cover the cost of postage and materials, for reporters who lived in cities including Canon City, Pueblo, and Trinidad far to the South, Colorado Springs, Boulder, and Fort Collins closer to home, and even more far-flung cities like Cheyenne, Ogden, Salt Lake, and Pocatello.[65] Cheyenne's contributions to these pages were far and away the most consistent and extensive during the 1910s when a more systematic practice of news collection from these cities began. Even before the robust writings appeared, Cheyenne maintained its presence in the Denver papers through the local writings about residents of Denver itself. Each and every week, references could be found of a young Denver man wedding his sweetheart in Allen Chapel in West Cheyenne, or reports of the Searchlight Club, the African American women's organization from Cheyenne, coming to the city for business or to take part

[64] See, Clementine Washington Pigford, *They Came to Colorado with the Dust of Slavery on Their Backs, 1863-1999* (Three volume uncirculated manuscript) *BCAARL.*

[65] See n. 69 about the *Denver Star* and *Colorado Statesmen.*

in the region's club affairs, or even just little mentions of the constant stream of visitors to and from the capital to the North.[66]

A yearly buzz around Cheyenne never failed to mount in the summer months as the Frontier Days festival and rodeo approached. The papers recorded the names of Denverites and other Black citizens from as far south as Pueblo as they traveled north. Reporters from Denver went in official capacity to Frontier Days most years and wrote lengthy, and often glowing, stories of the old western cavalcade and the many joyous dinners and parties held in the homes of Black Cheyenneites once the lingering summer sun dipped below the mountains.[67] In the weeks after, they continued to talk about residents of the city, and of those from farther south, who slowly trickled back into or through Denver. These sources show that many of those who traveled for Frontier Days made a point to stay and visit a while, no doubt leading to many of the relationships that persisted and appeared in the newspapers throughout the rest of the year.[68]

While Frontier Days certainly drew many people to Cheyenne in the early twentieth century, other towns and cities boasted exciting fairs and festivals as well. Yet, Cheyenne could offer hospitality for Black visitors in ways that other places in the West could not. "After an absence of four years," a reporter for the *Statesmen* proclaimed in 1909, "representatives visited Cheyenne, Wyo. Years ago when we were there the town was a lusty infant, up to the brim with promises of future growth and importance. The lapse of time has fulfilled our expectations and we found a city full of the western spirit and energy."[69] The *Statesmen* arrived in Cheyenne to take in first Frontier Days since the arrival of the Nineth Cavalry. He expressed that the pride

[66] "City News," *Colorado Statesmen,* August 04, 1906, 5.
[67] "Wyoming Frontier Days Carnival," *Colorado Statesmen,* August 12, 1905, 7; Denverites also booked excursion train tickets from Five Points to Cheyenne, see "Hot Time in the Old Town. Excursion Train to Frontier Days," *Colorado Statesmen,* August 11, 1906, 5.
[68] A good example is the local news briefs of the *Colorado Statesmen,* August 31, 1912, 5.
[69] "A Thriving People," *Colorado Statesmen,* August 28, 1909, 1.

was "enough to swell every Negroe's [sic] heart…to note the appreciation and admiration of the vast throng of for the soldier boys," who "rode with the finished grace of the trained soldier, performing feats of horsemanship." While the newcomers garnered much appreciation, the permanent Black residents were also a point of pride.[70] Indeed, Black visitors to Cheyenne could expect to find accommodations in any number of places owned by members of their community. Pearl Johnson kept a large boarding house on the West side, John Baker and H. C. Jefferson both had accumulated substantial property holdings and rented houses and rooms throughout the city, and in the mold of Barney Ford, who had left Cheyenne decades before, the Davis Hotel on West Seventeenth street was the premier Black-owned hotel at the time.[71]

After rekindling their affection for Chyenne in 1909, the *Statesmen* began publishing more lengthy pieces on both the new soldiers and letters from the townspeople regarding life to the North.[72] Through the lens of only the wild days of summer fairs and rodeos, when Black visitors wandered the streets of West Cheyenne and marveled at the home their hosts had made for themselves, much of the struggle it took to nurture their hopes and their homes can be easily missed. From the writings of Mary Baker, John and Martha Muse, Clarence Toliver, and perhaps other anonymous authors that filled columns over the next decade, a more complicated, tragic, and inspiring story emerges. The correspondences printed in the *Star* and the *Statesmen* were sometimes deeply personal in nature and often broke from the formulaic way newspapers of the day recounted the comings and goings of city folk. The authors made judgements about events that occurred within the community that they felt were positive and brought growth just as they

[70] "A Thriving People," *Colorado Statesmen,* August 28, 1909, 1.

[71] Ben Davis owned the Davis Hotel. See, "Cheyenne, Wyo. News," *Colorado Statesmen*, January 25, 1919, 5.

[72] "Cheyenne News," *Colorado Statesmen,* July 3, 1909, 1; "A Thriving People," *Colorado Statesmen,* August 28, 1909, 1; and "From San Juan to Cheyenne," *Colorado Statesmen,* September 3, 1910, 4.

judged others as regressive and detrimental. They praised the accomplishments of promising young people alongside scathing admonishments of others' vices and "moral failings." They celebrated new family members entering the world and lamented the loss of life more often then was their lot. In print, and in public, these writers give us a very different kind of accounting of Black life and the tensions that existed between hope and reality.[73]

Reading between the lines of these dispatches, we also can discern an ongoing struggle for local authority and power within the upper echelons of Cheyenne's Black society. Briefly, we might think back and consider why it was that Till Ashford, who was murdered in 1909, received so little mourning in the weekly updates in the Denver papers. Earlier in 1905, while his business thrived, the reporter for the *Statesmen* took the new year as an opportunity to extoll the many successes of Black Cheyennites. The "roster of…leading and influential citizens" included many men and women of the city, including Tilford's brother William, and other people who owned property and businesses.[74] Tilford Ashford did not make the list. Later, news of the Ashford killing in the Black papers of Denver amounted to only two short sentences and a follow up memo on the funeral.[75] Conversely, the white newspapers in Cheyenne printed full-page stories on the murder and talked at great length about the ways they imagined that Ashford had leveraged power in City Hall through an undisputed control of the Black vote.[76]

At the very least, the disconnect in the two reports suggests his status as "boss" was disputed. Nevertheless, his absence from the list of great citizens may confirm that Ashford indeed trafficked in the type of influence that grated against the moralistic "politics of

[73] For judgment and condemnation of moral failings see, "Cheyenne, Wyo. News," *Colorado Statesmen*, January 8, 1921, 5; For praise of the city's young people see, "Cheyenne, Wyo. News," *Colorado Statesmen*, April 10, 1920, 1; Also see, n. 88 regarding the Gaskin Sisters.

[74] "Cheyenne, Wyo.," *The Statesmen*, December 22, 1905, 4.

[75] "T. W. Ashford," *Colorado Statesmen,* July 3, 1909, 5.

[76] "Til Ashford Shot to Death," *Cheyenne State Leader,* June 27, 1909, 1.

respectability" that the various writers clearly referenced in their columns.[77] From such limited sources, the moralizing tone and reformist politics that infused the letters from Cheyenne by no means stand in for a ubiquitous position of the whole Black community. Rather we are left to contemplate that this new set of voices challenged certain ways of the old political operators who forged their own survival in the community. Perhaps these voices were present from the very beginning, but the medium in which they entered the archive, local newspapers, peaked after 1900.

Starting in 1905, the *Statesmen* carried full pages of local columns from towns across the West. Though some of these bore impressive and elaborate headings that covered much of the pages like "Our Neighbor the Capital on the North" the content mostly stuck close to the movements of a few citizens and what would have been called "newsy briefs" about the meetings of clubs or church groups. Unlike the writers that came later, these early columns generally offered little or no context or further insight into life in Cheyenne.[78] During a several year period from 1906-1909 when the name changed to *Franklin's Paper, The Statesmen,* and into the era of new management after 1912, the *Denver Star,* as it was renamed, included frequent, though often unremarkable notices from Cheyenne in its daily news page. The *Colorado Statesmen* (see note below on the confusing names) began to compete with Franklin's journals after 1909. It printed a few longer notices titled "Cheyenne Siftings" that appeared in late 1909 but ceased with any regularity until January of 1918 when Clarence Toliver began

[77] The cold-blooded and senseless murder of Til Ashford's nephew, William Ashford Jr. conversely was lamented greatly by the community in 1918. See, "Cheyenne News," *Denver Star,* March 9, 1918, 4; and "Cheyenne, Wyo. News," *Colorado Statesmen*, March 9, 1918, 1.

[78] The paper known first as *The Statesmen* was founded in Denver in 1888. In 1898, the paper was purchased by George Franklin, and in 1906, he renamed it *Franklin's Paper, The Statesmen.* Then in 1912, Franklin's son renamed the paper again to the *Denver Star* to avoid confusion with the *Colorado Statesmen* which had been formed with the original editor of the *Statesmen* sold the original paper to Franklin. See "About the *Denver Star/Statesmen*," https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83025514/

penning the long weekly report, "Cheyenne, Wyo. News." During that absence, the *Star* published pieces not quite every week, but at least once a month from 1913 until 1915. The first columns were organized with accounts of visiting and traveling individuals and a "Social News" section that discussed gossip, the health and wellbeing of various community members, and various church and friendly gatherings. Since the affairs and eventual departure of the Baptist Reverend Washington are the only references to church functions in the letters of 1913, it is safe to assume that the author was a member of Second Baptist. Two steadfast members of that congregation, John and Martha Muse, seem likely to have written for the *Star* especially during the 1910s when John's brother Charles Muse worked as a managing editor for the newspaper.[79]

Then, starting in January of 1914, Mary Baker took over as the correspondent for the *Star*. Baker's work was also significantly more personal and revealed details that did not often appear in "newsy briefs." For instance, rather than merely noting that "Mr. Siegel George spent Christmas in Cheyenne," Baker also detailed that "he stopped as usual at the Ruse boarding house." Or noted that Cheyenne's Chief of Police, W. J. McClement was her guest on Christmas Day. Baker was also much more open and transparent about the little, joyous parts of life, such as the quality of singing recitals or the precious nature of a new children's club, "the band of Busy Bees," that mimicked the social clubs of the member's parents and fostered community bonds.[80]

Unfortunately for researchers, the very busy and interesting lives of Mary Baker or John and Martha Muse meant that they contributed less frequently from 1913-1918. Though John Muse penned the occasional column or editorial, he spent a great deal of time attending to his diverse work life. Throughout the 1910s, he held a comfortable clerical position for the Union

[79] See "About the *Denver Star,*" on chroniclingamerica.loc.gov.

[80] "Notes from Cheyenne," *Denver Star*, January 03, 1914, 2: "Busy Bees" comments see, "Cheyenne, Wyo.," *Denver Star*, January 17, 1914, 2.

Pacific company store. Eventually, as its foreman, he had enough rank and responsibilities to hire his own secretary, the young Ruby Gaskin, daughter of the beloved patriarch of the Black community, James Gaskin, in 1917.[81] On top of his railroad position, John and Martha ran a local grocery store on the 800 block of West Nineteenth Street. They seem to have taken over as the Black grocers when James Gaskin moved on from his shop to become the rural mail carrier in Southeastern Wyoming. When their business, Staple and Fancy Groceries, was damaged in 1913, the Muses sent out notices requesting all of their former customers to return once repairs were finished.[82] The Muses also led devout Christian lives. The couple started a Baptist mission church and school in Eaton, Colorado just across the border, not far from the Black Town of Dearfield in 1917. Serving the farming community that met at the Bethel Baptist Mission seemed to occupy much of their time and, more importantly, took their ear away from the city for several days each week.[83]

Like the Muses, Mary Baker found her regular updates to the *Star* more challenging to deliver especially during the busy summer seasons, for which she tendered several apologies. In 1914, she also served as the president of Colorado Jurisdiction of Colored Women's Clubs. That year in particular, her service took her to New York for the National Association meeting at which she was the only representative of the West. Besides her own civic schedule, Mary and her husband John began expanding their restaurant in the late 1910s and even purchased a large west side brick building that they remodeled into a prominent hotel in 1919.[84] While John looked to fit the traditional mold of Cheyenne's Black business elite from the 1870s and 1880s, his family

[81] "Cheyenne, Wyo. News," *Colorado Statesmen*, July 27, 1918, 1.

[82] 1913 *Polk City Directory*, Cheyenne, Wyoming, 155; "Notes from Cheyenne," *Denver Star,* March 22, 1913, 4.

[83] "Eaton Colorado News," *Colorado Statesmen,* December 8, 1917, 4.

[84] For expansion of real estate holdings see, "Cheyenne, Wyo. News," *Colorado Statesmen*, June 28, 1919, 5; For Mary being busy, see "Cheyenne, Wyo.," *Denver Star*, January 17, 1914, 2; and "Notes from Cheyenne," *Denver Star,* September 12, 1914, 4.

history, membership in the AME church, and activity in reformist circles suggest that John and Mary rather saw themselves more akin to the new "movers and shakers" of the Black community after 1910. John worked in various fields and occupations during his life in Cheyenne including as a waiter, a UP clerk, and even a police patrolman for the city in 1911-1913 where he made the notable arrest of Oscar White, a well-known murderer on the lam from his crimes in Casper. After leaving the police department, John expanded his own restaurant and built a lucrative hotel and real estate career.[85] John's grandmother, Lucy Phillips, who founded Allen chapel in 1875, had long represented this "productive" element in the Black community. When she died in 1910 at the age of 106, Phillips was widely considered the most revered resident in all of Cheyenne.[86]

Because the authors' personal lives both impacted when they contributed as well as the content of much of their writings, the years from 1909 through middle of the next decade are characterized as an incredibly energetic and busy time for Black Cheyennites. Many of the children of the old families had grown and began graduating high school or started other life pursuits. Nolle Smith was one of the only Black graduates of Cheyenne High School in 1910. The updates in the *Star* followed his promising life with gusto as he entered West Point, moved to Denver, and eventually relocated to Hawaii where he enjoyed the start of a long military and

[85] "John Baker," 1910 U.S. Census, Cheyenne Ward 3, Laramie, Wyoming; Roll: T624_1746; Page: 6A; Enumeration District: 0083; FHL microfilm: 1375759; "John Baker," *Polk City Directory*, Cheyenne, Wyoming, 1911, 51; John Baker arrests murderer see, "Cheyenne Wyo.," September 13, 1913, 3.

[86] "History of Allen Chapel: Lucy Phillips, 1805-1910" H2011-60, *WYSA*; Baker and Phillips census info 1910 U.S. Census, Cheyenne, Ward 3, Laramie, Wyoming; Roll: T624_1746; Page: 6A; Enumeration District: 0083; FHL microfilm: 1375759; It is possible and even likely that as the *Statesmen* became the preferred paper of folks in Cheyenne, if indeed it did, then the Muses and Bakers may have contributed columns for that paper as well. On several occasions, Toliver is mentioned to be out of town, meaning that some other author took up writing responsibilities that week. The reasoning for separate authors in the different papers primarily comes from the different patterns of individuals that are mentioned each week. For instance, the comings and goings of families like H.C. Jefferson and James Gaskin as well as the club operations of the Searchlight club (where DeMarge Toliver was the secretary) are consistently featured in *Statesmen* columns. Conversely, *Star* columns commented on the lives of the many other Gaskins like Simon and Orlando, as well as the Smiths and the Ashfords, prominent families who receive little attention in the *Statesmen.*

political career.[87] After Smith, numerous members of the large Gaskin family, including sisters Virgil and Ruby, graduated and became young professionals in town. Virgil, it was said, "enjoys the unique distinction of being the only colored stenographer actually employed by a white professional man in the state."[88] They also detailed the lives of the AME minister Rev. Jeltz and the newly arrived Baptist preacher C. O. Smith. Jeltz garnered much praise for his youth and progressive energy in the city, while Smith's hardened religiosity and civic pride earned him many friends. Both men eventually moved on from Cheyenne, Jeltz becoming an Army Chaplain, and Smith to new ministries farther West. When Smith left his flock, his friend Clarence Toliver comically recalled his fire and brimstone style had so affected church goes in Cheyenne that when less than perfectly upstanding Christian friends passed away, members of Second Baptist would not ask Smith to conduct the funeral for fear that he would preach damnation on them even while they laid in the casket.[89] Smith garnered a reputation as

[87] The collections of the Wyoming State Archives contain a considerable amount of information on Smith including a biography written by a friend of his in Hawaii. See, "Nolle Smith," H2001-58, *WYSA*.

[88] "Cheyenne News," *Denver Star*, May 4, 1918, pg. 6; Virgil's story is a heart-wrenching example of the ways in which the news from Cheyenne columns went well beyond what one could readily expect to learn from newspaper sources. In addition to my suspicion that Virgil penned at least a few of the letters to the *Denver Star,* she appears frequently as a rising figure in her community's many institutions. Coming out of the quarantine during the Spanish Flu, Virgil continued her promising career as a stenographer until a young man from Lincoln, Nebraska visited town and took notice of the young woman. Quickly into their courtship, Virgil fell ill for weeks, possibly with pneumonia or a flu virus. Albert J. D. Bowen remained in town while she convalesced. By the end of March, the two had announced their engagement at a party. They married on June 3, 1919. The two oldest daughters of James Gaskin had married and left town in the week. Ruby, the younger gave birth to a healthy baby girl in November, which gave occasion for Virgil to return to Cheyenne for the first time since her wedding. In December of 1920, Virgil and Albert welcomed a baby boy at their home in Nebraska, but Virgil suffered many complications during the birth. For the next few months, the paper kept readers updated on her condition and her families travels to and from Lincoln. In February 1921, James returned with his daughter to Cheyenne to be at home with the large Gaskin family. There were signs that she might improve in April, including the optimistic news that Albert returned to Lincoln. Tragedy struck quickly in April when Alice, Virgil's 11 year old sister was seriously injured in a car accident and later died. Within weeks, Virgil's condition also reversed, and she passed away at the age of 24. James and Hattie Gaskin had lost two daughters in a matter of weeks. Clarence Toliver, a close family friend and the reporter for the *Statesmen,* was distraught almost to the point of disbelief in his letters. See multiple issues of *Colorado Statesmen,* "Cheyenne News, Notes, and Correspondence in the *Colorado Statesmen* and the *Denver Star,* 1905-1924," complied by the author.

[89] Jeltz to be Army Chaplin see, "Cheyenne, Wyoming News" *Colorado Statesmen,* September 14, 1918, 5; C.O. Smith arrives see, "Notes from Cheyenne," *Denver Star,* September 12, 1914, 4; and for Toliver's entertaining account of Rev. Smith's "fire and brimstone" character see, "Cheyenne, Wyo. News," *Colorado Statesmen*, September 18, 1920, 1.

more than just a hardnosed revivalist. Upon his arrival to the city in 1914, he and John Muse teamed up to edit and manage the now lost newspaper, *The Cheyenne Uplift.* Based upon its title and historical context of the 1910s, one can surmise that the editors aimed to affirm Black civic progress in their community by encouraging the accumulation of property and capital while presenting a clean image of moral uprightness and racial pride. The letters from Cheyenne included the names of close to one hundred different people over the years who were noted as taking part in this morally upright and often deeply religious community.[90]

While the different authors maintained close friendships with each other, frequently recounting for readers dinners and parties that they attended at each other's homes, still, they generally reported on different cliques and groups of associates within the Black community. The two papers' columns eventually started overlapping in January 1918. The author of the *Star*—possibly still Mary Baker, though it no longer bore her name as the author as it had from 1914-1915—tended to begin with a recap of the AME church news and various clubs like the Young Peoples AME Improvement society, Women's Missionary and Mutual Society, and the Frontier Literary Society events of the past month. In concurrent issues, the *Statesmen* commented more often on Baptist news and the business community more generally. Also, the very fact that two separate correspondences continued after 1918, as well as the slightly different social circles that each reported wrote about, reminds us that Cheyenne remained vibrant and diverse.[91]

The most constant and vociferous writer of the group only began writing columns in the *Statesmen* in January of 1918. Clarence Julius Toliver was born at Rock Island Illinois in 1868.

[90] "Notes from Cheyenne," *Denver Star,* September 12, 1914, 4; see also "Second Baptist Church (Cheyenne, Wyo.) Records," 1929-1951. University of Wyoming American Heritage Center. Collection Number 03010; and "History of Allen Chapel," H2011-60, *WYSA*.

[91] "Cheyenne News, Notes, and Correspondence in the *Colorado Statesmen* and the *Denver Star,* 1905-1924," complied by the author.

His father, Thornton Toliver, likely arrived in Cheyenne by at least as early as 1883, when he is listed as a barber operating in the alley between O'Neil and Bent Avenues, the very heart of the Black neighborhood.[92] Following the death of his first wife, Mary, in 1904, Clarence moved to (or perhaps returned) to Wyoming sometime in the early 1910s from Illinois where he had been laboring for the railroad.[93] In 1919, Clarence married De Marge Dewese (*nee* Thompson) whose birth in 1872 is sometimes credited as the first African American birth in the newly created Wyoming Territory (though unlikely as William Jones is listed as an infant in the 1870 census being born in Cheyenne in late 1869).[94] The Tolivers remained devout members of Second Baptist for the rest of their lives, though numerous columns make it appear as if Clarence also frequented services at Allen Chapel in the evenings or on Wednesdays, which gave him much insight as to the quality of the preaching and services there which he often commended to his readers. His commitment to the spiritual well-being of his neighbors likewise never waned. Up until the last years of his life, Toliver worked tirelessly during the hard times of the Depression and Second World War to find and keep a suitable pastor for the church, documented in many lengthy and often desperate letters that he wrote to the Baptist Home Mission Association in Chicago.[95]

Common to reports written for both Denver papers, but especially pronounced in Toliver's columns, the primacy of church functions in nearly piece emphasized that the authors

[92] "E. Toliver" listed, 1883 Polk City Directory, Cheyenne, Wyoming, 90.

[93] "Clarence Toliver," U.S. Census, 1910, Rock Island Ward 5, Rock Island, Illinois; Roll: T624_321; Page: 1A; Enumeration District: 0121; FHL microfilm: 1374334.

[94] DeMarge is referenced in a short essay entitled "Blacks in Wyoming" as the first Black child born in Wyoming Territory. However, the 1870 census indicates that at least one child, William Jones, had been born there in the late 1860s, several years before DeMarge was born in 1872. For DeMarge Toliver see essay archived in, "African Americans" VF, *WYSA*; For Jones see, "Wyoming Territory U.S. Census of Black Res. 1870" *BCAARL* ARL42.

[95] See Toliver with Rev. Theo Lovelace, Baptist Home Mission Office in, "Second Baptist Church (Cheyenne, Wyo.) Records," 1929-1951. *AHC* Collection Number 03010.

viewed the AME and Baptist congregations as the pillars of the larger Black community (though the previous chapter's exploration of the Black Church in Pocatello would warn us against assuming that Toliver took the stability and value of such community institutions for granted). Expounding upon the weekly sermons, sometimes twice a day, Sunday school messages, choir programs, and a great many "revival" services taking place in their city took up a good deal of space.[96] But those paragraphs also amounted to a very particular type of appeal to African Americans on the fence about relocating to Cheyenne. Against the image of a rough military installation or dusty, lawless Cowtown—both images that were becoming dominant in popular culture depicting Wyoming and the West generally—Black Cheyennites hoped to project a progressive, racially open town which desired certain types of citizens who exuded that certain type of "western spirit."[97]

In addition to centering religious affairs in their letters, the authors also condemned common vices. After Prohibition in 1920, Toliver's exuberance at the prospects of banishing "Old John Barleycorn," a delightful anthropomorphic metaphor for alcohol consumption, could not be hidden. "Old John Barleycorn's body is molding in the grave." he began, "Old Cheyenne is no more. Within its borders are a new people, with new ideals. Homes are neater and better furnished, the people neater and better dressed, and their hearts and minds seeking higher and better pleasures."[98] Such hopes for a changed community did not necessarily stop with the Black citizenry. Black Cheyennites of this social moment equally hoped that their white neighbors would also reform themselves into decent folk. For years, Black residents of West Cheyenne

[96] For a few accounts of revivals see, ""Cheyenne, Wyo. News," *Colorado Statesmen*, February 15, 1919, 5; March 1, 1919, 1; and, July 17, 1920, 1.

[97] For "Western spirit" see, "A Thriving People," *Colorado Statesmen,* August 28, 1909, 1.

[98] "Cheyenne, Wyo. News," *Colorado Statesmen*, February 14, 1920, 3; see also, "Cheyenne News," *Colorado Statesmen,* July 5, 1919, 5.

made their way in the midst of white patrons to bars and brothels. On more than one occasion, white men put out from these establishments accosted Black residents. In one illustrative event, Sam Bell, a white man who worked for the UP was charged and found guilty of firing two shots from his revolver through the window of old Frank Martin's home on Dillon Street in April of 1918. Martin, who was affectionately known as "Dude" survived the incident. The randomness of the attack unsettled Black residents who already had reason to doubt the commitment of the police to their protection.[99]

From when the Nineth Calvary arrived in 1909 (though they departed to the U.S.-Mexican border in 1912) until the Red Summer of 1919, reports from Cheyenne often portrayed a very busy and profoundly optimistic community.[100] The Young People's Improvement Society and other church groups associated with Allen Chapel and Second Baptist put on plays, theatrical comedies, bake sales, musical rehearsals, and literary recitations. Albert Taylor, H. C. Jefferson, John Baker, and other enterprising residents continued to buy up buildings and even whole city blocks as part of African Americans' growing real estate holdings in the city. John Baker was so successful by 1920 that his finances allowed him to pay for the renovation of the AME sanctuary that his grandmother, Lucy Phillips, helped build forty-five years before. Albert Taylor, one of West Cheyenne's premier barbers, worked and saved for years before he began taking note of the bustling, but cramped quarters of the Black neighborhood around his centrally located shop. Taylor bought several plots on the northern edge of town where there was room to build new single family homes with spacious yards next to wide streets. His part of town evidently attracted many of the more affluent Black residents. The Rhone family, who lived in Laramie before

[99] "Cheyenne, Wyo. News," *Colorado Statesmen*, April 13, 1918, 5; Martin's census info 1910 U.S. Census, Cheyenne Ward 3, Laramie, Wyoming; Roll: T624_1746; Page: 15A; Enumeration District: 0082; FHL microfilm: 1375759; "Cheyenne, Wy. News," *Colorado Statesmen,* August 24, 1918, 1.

[100] "The World in Paragraphs," *Colorado Statesmen,* September 14, 1912, 2.

coming to the capital, built a home in Taylorsville as it came to be known. There, a young Liz Byrd recalled playing and visiting family before growing up to be an educator and the first Black women to serve in Wyoming's legislature during the 1980s.[101] Beyond the metrics of wealth and property, numerous weddings and births of children elicited glee from the writers as if they were sharing the news with their closest friends. Yet even as the most prosperous decade of the Black community neared its end, already signs of the hard times ahead began to surface.

Neither West Cheyenne, Taylorsville, nor any other part of town managed to evade the pestilence that cut through North America and the World after 1917. Before, during, and even well after the so called Spanish Flu hit, the sick-list of Black residents falling ill or convalescing at St. John's Hospital took up more and more lines in the Denver papers. In March 1918, months before Wyoming confirmed its first case of influenza, a foreboding wave of pneumonia crested on the community. In one morbid dispatch, Toliver hopefully reported that the critically ill William Christian—whose illness had appeared in previous weeks—had improved such that he could again stand and walk, before he sadly informed readers that "Mrs. Wm. Christian and her mother, Mrs. P. Anderson" had contracted the virus. He continued, "Rev. Muse and his Family, Mrs. Muse; Mr. C. Dickerson and his family, wife, daughter, and son; Mr. A. Palmer, Mr. Austra Smith, Mr. Charles Johnson, Mr. James Randle, and wife; Mr. George Ballanger, Mrs. E. Nolan and Mrs. E. West" were all ill. In Mrs. West's case, "The doctor has announced that Mrs. West's condition is critical, having a severe case of pneumonia." For Clarence Toliver, himself, he wrote, "The reporter is sick but is trying his best to be well by Easter."[102]

[101] "Liz Byrd" interviewed by John Ravage, March 27, 1981, "John W. Ravage Papers," 1803-2007. University of Wyoming American Heritage Center. Collection Number 400048. Series II. "African American Research," Box 9; For Albert Taylor and Taylorsville area see, 1920 U.S. Census, Cheyenne, Laramie, Wyoming; Roll: T625_2027; Page: 6B; Enumeration District: 43.

[102] "Cheyenne, Wyoming News," *Colorado Statesmen*, March 30, 1918, 4.

While it had been reported that Cheyenne averted much of the Spanish Flu in its first wave and did not take its toll until the fall and winter of 1918, a long season of ill health had already settled into his community.[103] The much-loved Dude, who had survived a would-be murderer's bullets that April, passed away from pneumonia in August. Then from September 21 to January of 1919, no letters came from Cheyenne, the longest period of silence in Toliver's writings. When news did appear, the anonymous report was ominous. "With nearly 6,000 cases of Spanish influenza reported, the epidemic in Wyoming became so serious that the State Board of Health increased the severity of the quarantine regulations by forbidding children on the streets and the gathering of more than five persons under any circumstances." Hundreds of serious cases filled Cheyenne's hospital, spilling into makeshift emergency wards that took over public buildings throughout the city. It is not clear if word of Cheyenne's dire predicament came to the *Statesmen* from Toliver or by other channels.[104] When the regular correspondence did resume in January Toliver explained that "About three months under the ban of the Spanish influenza, the church doors were closed." As one could imagine, proscriptions against the types of gatherings at church, society events, and civic clubs that structured much of everyday life for Black Cheyennites, had not passed lightly. When the church doors of Second Baptist reopened January 5, John Muse filled the pulpit for C. O. Smith, who was caring for family in Kansas. His sermon title, alluding to apocalyptic passages in the Book of Revelation, captured the moment well: "These Are They That Come Up Out of Great Tribulations." Toliver declared the message of his friend to be "soul-stirring."[105] In all, 780 people died in sparsely populated Wyoming in a span of only a few months.[106] Despite the heartache, Toliver searched for news that would uplift

[103] "Cheyenne Clamps Lid on Influenza," *Colorado Statesmen,* October 26, 1918, 7.
[104] "Cheyenne, Wyo. News," *Colorado Statesmen*, January 18, 1919, 4.
[105] "Cheyenne, Wyo. News," *Colorado Statesmen*, January 18, 1919, 4.
[106] Larson, *History of Wyoming,* 404.

and comfort his readers and friends. The sumptuous wedding of Hazel Stanley to Jackson Lewis Jr., officiated by Muse, kicked off a season of nuptials that had likely faced postponement during the quarantine. Newlyweds included Julia Shirley and William Jones, Ruby Gaskin and Albert Burris (who had actually eloped during the pandemic), as well as the rumor, Toliver speculated, "that three or four other weddings will be announced in the near future."[107]

When the "Great Tribulation" ended, and those who died passed into memory, Cheyenne's Black residents and social clubs jumped into the local fundraising drive for the new Memorial Hospital. Many of the leading families of the Black community made small pledges of five to ten dollars, receiving a hearty praise from Toliver in the paper whenever they paid up. But just as they exited one catastrophe, new ones seemed to be hitting near and far during those years.[108] In 1919, after the white supremacist violence in Chicago that began the Red Summer, Black club men and women came together to donate forty dollars to Race Riot Defense fund. Two years later, a massive flood swept away the homes and dwellings of the working poor in Pueblo, Colorado, with many Black families among the displaced and killed. Thomas Cate of Pueblo arrived in Cheyenne seeking donations in July and found a sympathetic and generous audience at Allen Chapel.[109]

The racial animosity of some of their white neighbors and city officials also began to intensify following national and regional trends in racist laws, practices, and organized violence against Chinese, Japanese, Mexican American, and Black citizens and residents. The organization of Black citizens in Cheyenne that formed in 1918 to address these mounting offenses seemed to have a new issue to take up each week. The formation of the Cheyenne Civic

[107] "Cheyenne, Wyo. News," *Colorado Statesmen*, January 18, 1919, 4.
[108] "Cheyenne, Wyo. News," *Colorado Statesmen*, June 19, 1920, 4.
[109] For Chicago fund see, "Cheyenne, Wyoming News," *Colorado Statesmen*, November 29, 1919, 5; For Pueblo Flood victims relief see, "Cheyenne, Wyo. News," *Colorado Statesmen*, July 9, 1921, 1.

League of Colored Citizens (CCLCC) followed an incendiary and slanderous column regarding the departure of several hundred Black WWI draftees from Cheyenne in August 1918. The *Cheyenne Daily Tribune* published a blatantly fictionalized account that painted the five hundred Black Cheyennites who gathered to bid farewell to the soldiers as a hapless congregation of Sambo caricatures. The outcry was swift and total. "[A] mass meeting was held at the A. M. E. Church Saturday evening, when vigorous protests were made in speeches denouncing the unfair action of the paper in publishing what they termed 'a joke,' but which is a grave reflection on the moral status of our men who are going forward to fight for all America, regardless of color." Those gathered resolved to "brand, denounce, deplore, and condemn said article as slanderous, insulting, and keenly unpatriotic, to the entire citizenry of our city," and further "recommended that the United States District Attorney and the state council of defense be requested to make a thorough investigation into the management of said paper."[110] Though the CCLCC that established itself that night sought to leverage wartime sedition and anti-patriotism charges, it seems that the only outcome of that event was a widespread boycott of the paper and a new civic and political organ through which to act.

The CCLCC proved a useful resource for community activism and engagement. Their stated mission was to "organize the best brains of the city in educational movement seeking the solution of some of the great problems related to social, racial and industrial progress; to provide for study of questions of the city, state and national import, to aid in the crystallization of the most enlightened public opinion, and when desirable, to promote legislation in accordance therewith."[111] Meetings occurred each week on Thursdays in alternating church buildings.

[110] "Cheyenne News," *Colorado Statesmen*, August 10, 1918, 1; For article that sparked outrage see, "Colored Boys Off to Rout Hun, Will Bring Home Bacon," *Wyoming State Tribune,* August 2, 1918, 1.

[111] "Cheyenne, Wyo. News," *Colorado Statesmen*, February 14, 1920, 3.

Participants wrote and read essays on topics of race and nation. Toliver, who served as the organization's secretary, made one surprising address on the need for the community to come together and combat the rising price of rents that had inflated during and after the Depression of 1920. As several of the members of the CCLCC—Ben Davis, John Baker, and H. C. Jefferson—owned commercial and rental properties, his concerns may have directed not only at the wider community, but toward the men who actually had some power in the matter.[112]

The organization also saw itself as an important conduit through which the rest of Cheyenne might engage with and grow closer to the Black community. The CCLCC and the Searchlight Club both organized the first Republican clubs in the Black community since as far back as the days Barney Ford and William Jefferson Hardin.[113] During the hospital fund drive, Toliver and the members of CCLCC asked people not to donate individually, but to give to the organization's coffers instead. Just as the community had given to the Chicago Race Riot defendants and the Roosevelt Memorial Association *as a community*, he implored readers to "give through the Cheyenne Civic League of Colored People [sic], thereby securing recognition" presumably from the white community, "as a racial unit."[114] This and other efforts on the part of the CCLCC and the leading families consciously attempted to challenge any and all poor perceptions about the wider Black community held by white residents and authorities. The reporter wrote knowingly and derisively of some who engaged in certain vices or were idle, but their larger fears of growing racial hatred in their city, as they could well see happening elsewhere in the country, were not unwarranted.[115]

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[112] Toliver wrote a lot about home ownership and the problem with high rent and cost of living facing Cheyenne. See. "Cheyenne, Wyo. News," *Colorado Statesmen*, May 1, 1920, 1; and "Cheyenne, Wyo. News," *Colorado Statesmen*, May 8, 1920, 4.

[113] "Cheyenne, Wyo. News," *Colorado Statesmen*, October 9, 1920, 1.

[114] "Cheyenne, Wyo. News," *Colorado Statesmen*, June 19, 1920, 4.

[115] "Cheyenne, Wyo. News," *Colorado Statesmen*, January 8, 1921, 5; also "Cheyenne, Wyo. News," *Colorado Statesmen*, January 15, 1921, 1.

Trouble began in the closing days of 1920 the way it so often did, with a white woman accusing a Black man of "manhandling her." The woman, identified by the *Wyoming State Tribune* as Mrs. Odom, claimed that a Black man named Arthur along with an accomplice, broke into her West side home where a struggle occurred before the two men fled. According to the *Tribune,* she knew the name Arthur because they were new neighbors whose back doors opened close to each other. The paper also suggested that the two were introduced previously by Mrs. Lucy Davis, who, with her husband, owned the prosperous Davis Hotel. The description of Arthur that Mrs. Odom gave the police identified him as both dark and tall, wearing a white hat. Yet, the police raid that quickly spread through all corners of West Cheyenne "brought in all shades, colors, and heights. They arrested two school boys 14 years of age and twenty other men ranging in height from five feet two inches to six feet six inches."[116] Where once John and Mary Baker had dined with the old Chief of Police on Christmas Day, the new man, Chief Embrey, was heard ordering his "squad of minions to arrest every 'nigger'" in West Cheyenne. Toliver's damning account almost appears subdued compared with the hysteria printed in *Tribune* article of December 31. The reporter claimed that along with Lucy Davis, the Cheyenne Police arrested twenty-five other subjects in a sweeping raid that "police and sheriffs of three states kept a grim tab on every auto and train that moved in the guarded area."[117]

Not until January 22 could Toliver report that "The last of the 'manhandlers' held in custody by the REAL manhandlers was tried in Judge Edward's court on Monday…The judge discharged him and said the police had no proof of an assault committed."[118] The CCLCC and

[116] "Cheyenne, Wyo. News," *Colorado Statesmen*, January 8, 1921, pg. 1.; Wyoming State Tribune, December 31, 1920, pg. 1-2.

[117] "White Woman Attacked by Negros; Police Combing City for Her Assailants," *Wyoming State Tribune*, December 31, 1920, pg. 2.

[118] "Cheyenne, Wyo. News," *Colorado Statesmen*, January 22, 1921, 1.

the reporter for the *Statesmen* issued blistering condemnations of the police for weeks after. They also seemed ready to double down on the organizational strategy they had been pursuing. A Black Elks lodge reformed weeks after the raid, and by summer, the CCLCC with the women's Searchlight Club organized Cheyenne's first chapter of the NAACP.[119] Such a response may have felt prudent given that the white paper that reported on the raid had gone to great lengths to besmirch the characters of Ben and Lucy Davis as well as John and Mary Baker whom they sought to implicate in the events through proximity or direct association with he accused.[120] Throughout these tumultuous times, the dispatches from Cheyenne grew longer, more verbose, and, notably, moved from page four to the front page of the *Statesmen,* which by 1921 boasted of being the largest Black journal in the West.

The visions of moral uplift propagated by Black elite, the many revivals hosted by Churches urging more to take up a Christian value system, and new and renewed community institutions could not hide the reality that the imagined futures that many African Americans believed they could manifest in Chyenne faced dark days ahead. It had never been a "Negro utopia," but for decades at least it seemed that Black citizens had their hands on a project of place-making. Even as the many disillusions crept into this group of citizens, given a voice in the Denver papers, Clarence Toliver took a page from white settler institutions of his day to shore up the unraveled edges of his community's hope in the future by returning to the past.

Toliver's history lessons spanned the centuries, including several weeks on the valiant role of the Black man, Crispus Attucks, who died during the Boston Massacre in 1770. Most of his research, however, dealt with the more recent past. "In the [s]pring of 1880," he began, "a

[119] "Cheyenne, Wyo. News," *Colorado Statesmen*, January 1, 1921, 1; NAACP, "Cheyenne, Wyo. News," *Colorado Statesmen,* July 2, 1921, 1.

[120] "White Woman Attacked by Negros; Police Combing City for Her Assailants," *Wyoming State Tribune*, December 31, 1920, pg. 2.

little band of Christians settled in the city. The leading members of the band were David Jones and Nancy Jones, Malcom Mattson and his wife Mary, Mrs. Perry Doane and Mrs. Mary Blue, all from Atchison, Kansas." He recorded the names and deeds of "the early pioneers and founders of Second Baptist Church [who had] long since passed away" and noted that it was the Black Masons of the Western Star Lodge No. 6—a group founded by Barney Ford and others in the late 1870s—who raised the funds to buy a lot and construct the sanctuary. Lest any of his fellow Baptists felt that Cheyenne had grown foreign in any way, Toliver sought to remind them how far back the Black presence in Wyoming went.[121] In subsequent letters, Toliver took up the histories of the Searchlight Club as well as the AME Improvement Club. whose first president in 1918 had been Virgil Gaskin. Clarence's wife, DeMarge, compiled and essay the following year about the founders of the Searchlight Club "who came to the Golden West to cast their lot for the good of the community they selected to help build." She extolled the present members to continue to labor as their predecessors, who, when they began, "happiness and peace prevailed; each and every one was anxiously waiting to do their part and be a part of what is now passed a history of this grand club women, who little dreamed of the pleasure we are enjoying today because of their foresighted view of the S. L. C. future."[122] For years, optimism persisted in the face of many heartaches and challenges.[123]

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The late 1910s and early 1920s were years that the various interlocutors for the *Statesmen* from Cheyenne both chronicled the beginning of exciting social and cultural milestones such as new Black women's society organizations, youth groups, and fraternal clubs, and also recounted the

[121] "Cheyenne, Wyo. News," *Colorado Statesmen,* February 28, 1920, 8.
[122] "Cheyenne, Wyo. News," *Colorado Statesmen*, April 9, 1921, 1.
[123] "Cheyenne, Wyo. News," *Colorado Statesmen,* April 03, 1920, 1.

histories of older Black community institutions for readers across the Rocky Mountain West. Clarence Toliver penned many of these accounts as a way to remind his friends and neighbors that, though the winds of persecution would blow, Cheyenne was the Blackest city in the West because, like an old tree with deep roots, it could still offer reprieve in the present as it had in the past. Though many of the issues on his mind were particular to the Black community, as the next chapter will show, this type of didactic response to settler anxieties also appeared in the publications of Cheyenne's elite white social institutions a few years later.

The interconnected lives of Black men and women, like John and Martha Muse, Mary and John Baker, Clarence and DeMarge Toliver, James and Hattie Gaskin, Albert and Edith Taylor, the city Reverends Smith, Jeltz, and Endicott, along with several dozen others filled the columns of the *Denver Star* and the *Colorado Statesmen* thus forming a type of testimony. More than merely a close-knit group of friends and associates, these individuals clearly projected an image of a "Black Progressive" (and often property-owning class) who regarded and valued their wealth in terms of both material and moral capital. For decades they invested that capital into a future for themselves in Cheyenne. Nurturing that vision often took the form of a politics of respectability. In many cases, as the historian Ruth Higginbotham argues, respectability politics could not be reduced to acquiescence to a narrow set of white expectations or bourgeois aesthetics. Instead, it formed an active register in a wider politics of survival.[124] In Cheyenne by the end of the 1910s, the politics of respectability clearly went beyond mere survival to become a politics of place-making and belonging as well. Almost exactly forty years after the end of Greater Reconstruction, events across their state noticeably altered the urgency with which these individuals would safeguard and pursue that future.

[124] Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent: The Women's Movement in the Black Baptist Church, 1880-1920* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993).

Wade Hamilton "was taken from the jail and hung on the bridge near the end of Elk Street" in Rock Springs, Wyoming on Tuesday night, December 11, 1917. Accused and arrested for the attempted assault of a white woman, a mob of Rock Springs residents, for the second time in the recent past, formed to assert the primacy of racial exclusion through murder and intimidation. They pulled him from the hands of law enforcement which held Hamilton on a $12,000 bond, and dragged the Black man through Rock Springs, past the short, gnarled shrubs and trees too young to be of use, to the sturdy bridge at the end of the street where he was killed.[125] A year later in the nearby town of Green River, Wyoming, another white mob seized Joel Woodson, a Black man who had shot and killed Edward Miller inside a restaurant, lynching him on a telegraph pole outside the Union Pacific Railroad depot building where he had worked as a janitor. The murderers, apparently not content with the impact of their crime, plotted to drive the remaining Black residents of Green River away. Through a series of escalating and one-sided claims of an impending "race riot" in which whites made it clear that any means necessary would be taken to defend themselves and their property from this phantom threat, perhaps a dozen or more Black people gathered their belongings and fled to Utah.[126] Yet another year later sometime in early 1919, a mob threw an unnamed Black railroad worker who had visited a white prostitute from the second-story stairs of a saloon in the small town of Hudson, Wyoming, killing him and leaving him in a shallow grave on the edge of town.[127]

The shocking resurgence of racially motivated lynchings reverberated across the state, adding deep fear and uncertainty to the lives of African Americans in Wyoming. DeMarge

[125] Todd Guenther, "'The List of Good Negroes': African American Lynchings in the Equality State," *Annals of Wyoming* 81:2 (Spring 2009), 14

[126] Guenther tracks these developments well in his article. See, Guenther, "The List of Good Negroes," 19; "Negroes Flee Green River," *Casper Daily Tribune,* December 12, 1918, 1.

[127] Guenther, "The List of Good Negroes," 17-18; 20

Toliver and others from the Searchlight Club and CCLCC watched with reserved hope from the viewing deck of the balcony in the State legislature in 1919 as Wyoming's anti-lynching law was read aloud, a bill they had a hand in writing.[128] However, the instances of racism and mistreatment continued to escalate for the next several years. Only a few months following the 1921 raid that saw Black men and women rounded up indiscriminately in their own community, the massacre in Tulsa confirmed that such circumstances could turn catastrophically deadly. The cataclysmic flood of lynchings of the late 1910s were reason enough for Black Cheyennites to fear that Wyoming's lawless days of mob rule in the Wild West had just begun.

[128] Rev. Jeltz of Allen Chapel penned a passionate letter in the *Wyoming Tribune* that condemned the lynching on December 13, only days after Hamilton's murder, and called on Governor Houx to ensure that justice "at home" would be secured. Houx responded in the same issue promising an investigation, but the bill would not make its way to Wyoming's legislature for a full year. For Jeltz' letter, see "Rev. Jeltz Protests at Rock Springs Lynching," *Wyoming Tribune,* December 13, 1917, 1-2. For Houx's response see, "Houx Demands Full Investigation of Lynching of Negro," *Wyoming Tribune,* December 13, 1917, 1. *Colorado Statesmen*, February 22, 1919, 4.

Part II Imagined Pasts

Subsuming Black Futures and the Counternarratives of Settler Memory

Sometime around 1977, the State History Museum in Cheyenne asked the public for any information and materials regarding the early Black pioneers of the city and state. Ralph F. Jones, who had grown up in Cheyenne during the 1900s-1920s, courteously obliged and penned a two-page letter to the museum staff. Despite his verbosity, Jones could recall only one Black man, Jim Gaskin whom he knew to be a mail carrier friendly with his father. His letter also noted that, through his own "expertise" as a historian of the Open Range era, he could confirm that certain cattle companies around the state had once employed a Black cowboy or two. Putting aside the glaring ubiquity of Black Cowboys in Wyoming and Colorado, looking back on this source from the 1970s, one may have a right to wonder how he could not have known of Nolle Smith, his contemporary in school, who became a kind of hometown hero through his military career? Was it possible that he forgot all the Black faces of his youth in Cheyenne as he no doubt moved about the city. His father knew Jim Gaskins, but did Jones not also know any of his five sons or their large families? There is little doubt that his letter was a well-intentioned effort to commend the memory of family friend to local historians in Cheyenne, but many more questions naturally surface between the lines of his handwritten epistle.[1]

[1] "Letter from Ralph F. Jones to Wyoming State History Museum, 1977," "African Americans" Vertical File (VF), Wyoming State Archives, Cheyenne. (WYSA).

The chapters of Part I likewise beg the question "how could such histories of the Black West remain unknown by so many for so long?" By way of delving further into the "how" of that inquiry, privileging "where" this narrative-labor is accomplished is also critical to understanding the potency and durability of racial ideologies and anti-Blackness in the new cities and towns of the West. The second half of this dissertation, therefore, folds back upon itself to reexamine the histories of Cheyenne, Pocatello, and Pueblo in a broader racial frame.

The organizing theme of place and, specifically, *locality*, must be addressed, and to a degree, defended once again. In one sense, the great value of local studies is that good community histories are often capable of revealing both the exceptions and the rules of community formation and personal experiences. That is, even when a place is unique, its story can still shed light on much of what is common to how places are made. Indeed, I rely on this throughout Part I by only choosing to focus on particular parts of a town's history rather than attempt a comprehensive account of each city's Black past. Pueblo's labor history is distinct, but the experiences of Black women and families building out a viable network of community support amidst a volatile market in an extractive industry is hardly singular to southern Colorado. Likewise, Pocatello may appear to possess an odd path toward established Black churches, but for that reason, it also lays bare many of the common, historical tensions inherent in constructing faith communities throughout the Black West. And though Cheyenne may have been an anomaly as the Blackest city in the West without much subsequent historical analysis, we also see the shared experiences of hope and anxiety that gripped many prosperous Black communities by the 1920s in America. Therefore, mine has been a more kaleidoscopic view of local history in the Black West.

Part II moves in another direction, but, ultimately, toward the same end. A predominant theme developed in the next three chapters is the *locality of racial formations* or, put another way, where race is made in America. Within community histories of Black and other ethnic groups, one must necessarily engage with the racial ideologies that were operative at that moment in time. This means that, embedded throughout the entire project of making sense of how a community experienced a place as "home," that process is already mediated by ideas about race and common understandings of how people and groups were racialized. In this way, telling the story of a Black western town will always possess an "outside-in" dimension. That is, how and what white Americans and Americans writ-large talked about, believed about, and acted upon one's Blackness in part shaped the experiences of Black people wherever in the country they lived. The studies of anti-Blackness and the "making of Race in America" is a genre of serious historical scholarship all to itself. Yet the social constructiveness of race also demands that categories like Black, or Asian, or Mexican, or Native are always in the process of being remade to greater or lesser degrees.[2]

The question, more specifically, of *where* race is remade is also a vibrant field of study. Borders and borderlands emerge as one potent site of remaking in many histories. The elasticity between borders as "fixed" locations and the reality of their mobility and reach gives a certain internal logical for how race, the concept, become embodied by individual humans at sites where the unequal powers of personal and state sovereignties are forced through such dense corridors.

[2] A small selection of more recent titles in this body of scholarship includes, Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Barbarian Virtues: The United States Encounters Foreign Peoples at Home and Abroad,* 1876-1917 (New York: Hill & Wang, 2000); Matt Wray, *Not Quite White: White Trash and the Boundaries of Whiteness* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006); Reeve, *Religion of a Different Color*; David Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class* (London: Verso, 1991); Nell Painter, *The History of White People* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2016); Jessica Blatt, *Race and the Making of American Political Science* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018); Khalil Gibran Muhammad, *The Condemnation of Blackness: Race, Crime, and the Making of Modern Urban America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010); Pascoe, *What Comes Naturally*.

Other scholars have looked toward far more abstract sites for the remaking of race. Peggy Pascoe's work on laws proscribing bans on interracial marriage reveals a world of clerical and local officers haphazardly and in piecemeal fashion actually defining the porous boundaries of who counted as what race. In forms and legal briefs, through interviews with lawyers, and by snap decisions of local clerks in innumerable county court houses, a more ubiquitous set of racial categories emerged during the first half of the twentieth century.[3]

Somewhere between physical border checkpoints and abstracted layers of bureaucracy, I believe there is another arena where historians should attend to the remaking of race in America. Local communities certainly absorbed and acted upon prevailing racial ideologies, but they also adapted and changed them in the process of place-making. The citizens of a given community curated ideas about race and belonging not only by glossing national newspaper headlines and debates, but also by returning to their own local history and reworking those ideas through the various stories they choose to tell about themselves. George Sanchez has focused on this much neglected element of racial formation in his work on the multiracial Los Angeles neighborhood of Boyle Heights. Though set in a highly urban space with a population larger than any of the cities discussed in this dissertation, Sanchez similarly articulates "that racialization is a historically *grounded* process in which groups form their own racial identities in relation to their neighbors."[4] One of the most basic observations about the history of race in the United States that should follow from this is that even when certain widespread racist beliefs are challenged and fall out of use at a larger public level, often, those assumptions remain mostly unchallenged

[3] Pascoe, *What Comes* Naturally; Other notable contributions to this are, see also Molina, *How Race is Made in America*; George J. Sanchez, *Boyle Heights: How a Los Angeles Neighborhood Became the Future of American Democracy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2021); and Kelly Lytle Hernández, *Migra!: A History of the U.S. Border Patrol* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010).

[4] Sanchez, *Boyle Heights,* 8. My emphasis.

at the local level where they have been infused within older and meaningful narratives of a community's history and identity. This is not to say that the locality of racial formations is somehow at the "roots" of racial thinking, merely that it is among the deeper and poorly explored cracks that give those ideologies cover from generation to generation.

How does one best begin to delve into these murky depths? Starting, as I have, with the history of Black communities and their citizens, I wish to flag and avoid a potential pitfall. If a deeper understanding of race and its relationship to local history—specifically how ideas about race changed over time to affect those people living within a given place—is the goal, then focusing only on narrowly confined binaries of Black and White race "relations" will only obscure the evidence. As such, chapters 4-6 do not necessarily take Blackness or Anti-Blackness as singular or, rather, dualist focal points in their exploration of race in Cheyenne, Pueblo, and Pocatello. Rather, what I am interested in is understanding various *counternarrative communities* and the imagined racial pasts they curated during the twentieth century. This is a conceptual bridge which is best not rushed across. My usage and application of counternarratives and counternarrative communities builds somewhat slowly throughout the following chapters. Before bringing this conceptual labor to its denouement in chapter 6, we might attempt to gather up all the meaningful strands of this concept into a single, albeit thick, descriptive cord.

Counternarrative communities might be better defined by what they do, rather than by what they are. Counternarrative communities assemble and curate stories about history, sometimes including myths and apocryphal tales, in ways that offer a shared sense of meaning and experience for a people in a particular place. These expressions flow thick with settler memory even as they can sometimes reject the substantive claims of white settler supremacy and create space for new kinds of belonging. Finally, such contradiction is possible because

counternarrative communities are built by diverse peoples drawing upon an equally diverse set of stories. My definition begs some important clarifications. Counternarrative communities might not be formulated *a priori* in overt opposition to Indigenous narratives and the communities those stories have sustained and nurtured. Since counternarrative communities do not always aspire to wield political power or control land, more overt objections over preemptive Indigenous claims to sovereignty and territory often (but not always) fall away entirely or are retained from earlier accounts as faint echoes. However, counternarrative communities do operate around the basic claim of belonging. As such, forms of settler countersovereignty, as Manu Karuka has argued, frequently emerge as the "common sense" that asserts one counternarrative community should determine the meaning of home and belonging over and against both Indigenous peoples and, importantly, other counternarrative communities.

It is the relationality of racial scripts, as Molina would phrase it, that gathers the stories we tell about ourselves around a particular place and the people who call and contest it as home. The locality of racial formations, its relationality, and its grounded-ness, then, is a primary catalyst transforming stories about the "past" into stories about "us." We do not merely live "with" counternarratives—the meaning and form of those stories are always relational—instead we live "within" counternarrative communities. My goal is to let a study of the Black West in these towns be our guide into the ways that race operates in those complex spaces.

We return to Cheyenne, Pocatello, and Pueblo, not to simply understand what happened to the Black community per se, but to pull apart the intricacies of settler memory, the Progressive Era's anxious shift to knowledge production in the name of US "state-building," and the regional imperatives that played key roles in defining citizenship and belonging. Attending to this task, the following chapters speak to the community histories from part one with various degrees of

direct reference. For instance, chapter 4 considers a web of sources, including a short-lived, but beloved, local history pageant, Wyoming's first state history journal, and a wide array of writings from the 1870s-1920s collected by the Works Progress Administration (WPA) Federal Writers Project. Explicit attention to the Black history of Cheyenne or southern Wyoming in these sources is practically non-existent. Implicitly, however, they speak to how so little of that era of racial diversity remains known by the public and scholars alike.

In previous work, I argued that "colonial erosion" might be productively studied as an ongoing process by which both the intangible and tangible markers of home and belonging suffered the long-term consequences of "eliminatory settler logics."[5] In that book, sites of colonial erosion were very much the empty lots that once held historic, Black-owned homes or businesses, bizarre and seemingly disregarded census records, or even the widespread belief that some people were necessarily omitted from fundamental markers of local place identity. As such, "erosion" is meant to elicit an image of the omnipresent forces shaping a landscape, sometimes slowly like glacier, other times in catastrophic events like floods. I felt this was an apt metaphor as many of the questions that drove my research did not have self-evident or obvious answers. What happened to the dynamic and growing Black communities in Montana around the turn of the century? It felt quite a bit like a geologist observing odd patters of sediments, embankments, or earthen deposits and asking what type of erosion, or combination of erosive forces, produced the present landscape, and how might that pattern of sedimentation still be shaping the landscape. That is, how is colonial erosion still acting in the *present* contests over race in our communities?

The following chapters are somewhat more narrowly focused. As I came to understand that erosion, or any other single idea for that matter, seldom held the key for describing such

[5] For a fuller exposition on colonial erosion see, Wood, *Black Montana,* esp. the introduction.

forces at scale, it became clear that an aspect of erosion, silencing, erasure, and so on, that is almost always present is a deceptively simple one: narrative. The *stories* that people and communities tell about themselves have tremendous power. In the metaphor, narratives are the winds blowing, the floods raging. Indeed, as I sought to conclude *Black Montana,* I felt there was no better way than to affirm the significance of stories than by leaving readers with a single Black woman living in a small Montana town and the stories she *told about herself.* That individual, Rose Gordon, professed a very different story about herself *in* local history.[6] At the heart of what I called erosion was less an unstoppable and preordained process than it was the quiet tension between narratives and counternarratives of home and belonging. My beloved geologic metaphor had reached its limits. In a settler colonial society, following the work of Manu Karuka, we can see that narratives told by white settlers that make a claim to belonging are always also counternarratives to a preexisting claim and story of Indigeneity.[7] Black narratives thus often countered the counternarrative in more or less expected ways. Yet there was also the echo of a different type of story told by African Americans moving west which positioned their narratives at oblique angles to the standard racial logics of American settler colonialism. As we saw in Part I, their imagined Black futures portended something very unlike the ubiquitous whitening of the West that permeates much of the region's cultural imagination.

What became of potential Black futures, then? How could such substantial legacies become fugitive in local history? My intention in Part II of "Forty Years within the Veil" is to outline the creation and curation of the different narratives and counternarratives which shaped the racial geography of the Black West in the Rocky Mountains. As innumerable stories of the

[6] This theme in Gordon's writing has since been explored by Michael K. Johnson in *A Black Woman's West: The Life of Rose B. Gordon* (Helena: Montana Historical Society Press, 2022). Also see the epilogue of *Black Montana.*

[7] Karuka, *Empires Tracks,* 1-19.

past are told, retold, and even performed, the characters, lessons, and assumptions of the stories' tellers and listeners become a swift current that *subsumes* other stories that might articulate different pasts.[8] Subsuming narratives of race, place, citizenship, or belonging thus do not need to fully erase or silence other histories, though it can and often does slip, over time, into such a project. Indeed, the way that stories of the "first" Black person so effortlessly become the "last" stories of Blackness that matter means that narratives of Blackness do not always disappear entirely.[9]

For instance, chapter 6 retells the creation of the counternarrative communities of Pueblo and Southern Colorado's coal mining and milling towns. As we saw in chapter 1, Pueblo possesses a distinctive labor history that included Black women and men working toward security and stability for future generations. However, the predominate narrative of labor in Southern Colorado quickly became one in which solidarity, conflict, and immeasurable loss among the region's diverse workers largely overcame nineteenth century racial hierarchies. Of course, such narratives culminated in Greeks, Italians, Slavs, and Irish laborers becoming "white." Recent scholarship has upheld and contextualized certain aspects of this view, while also noting the ways in which the expansion of white working identity also sought to eliminate

[8] See, Lucy Maddox, *Removals: Nineteenth-Century American Literature and the Politics of Indian Affairs* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 15-28, and 35; Katrina Phillips, *Staging Indigeneity: Salvage Tourism and the Performance of Native American History* (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 2021); Cedric Robinson, *Forgeries of Memory and Meaning: Blacks and the Regimes of Race in American Theater and Film before World War II* (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 2007).

[9] Centering places and spaces helps account for this simultaneous presence and absence of Black history in the West. In her introductory essay on the subfield of Black Geographies, Pat Noxolo contends that the discipline of Geography at large possesses "anti-Black histories, spatial logics and [racist] conditions of knowledge production." Black Geographies resist such logics by attesting to "the space- and place-making agency of Black thought and communities." Reflecting the language of Black Geographies, Part I was about the "place-making agency of Black thought and communities." Noxolo continues, "In other words, Black Geographies frame Black spatialities as always im/possible: always erased and yet always present." See, Pat Noxolo, "Geographies of Race and Ethnicity 1: Black Geographies," *Progress in Human Geography* 46:5 (October 2022), pp. 1232-1233.

"Mexican labor" in the mining economy of the West.[10] And yet, while recent historians, keenly attuned to racial ideologies in the worlds they study, problematize simplistic narratives of overcoming racial differences, the stories of actual Black workers in the Colorado coal and mill towns remains almost fully subsumed in historical scholarship as in popular memory.

Partially, as I will argue, this is because *certain* narratives of Black labor history have always been highlighted, told, and retold going all the way back to their first reports in local newspapers. In Pueblo, Trinidad, and the nearby mining districts, journalists and labor historians alike retell the stories of when the "first train loads" of Black workers were brought in by company men during the various strikes only for those Black workers to learn of the circumstance upon arrival and refuse to cross the picket lines. This narrative very nearly encompasses the entirety of Southern Colorado's published Black labor history before WWII. Unfortunately, this account of "lasting through firsting" has stood in for the experiences of Pueblo's Black working-classes. Narratives of Black men from *elsewhere*, who affirmed local commitments to class consciousness before presumably *leaving* town have taken the place of a more robust and factual Black labor history. Such accounts are not fictionalized, nor are they unimportant. Rather they illustrate how patterns of storytelling often dictate what can be known.

In other cases, such as Wyoming, the narratives that countered Black futures cannot be traced in such a linear fashion back to a single source as Colorado's transient and the not-to-be Black strike breakers. Instead, as the next chapter will argue, numerous counternarratives were marshalled into a type of epistemological framework in response to an anxious moment when elite white Wyomingites looked nervously to their representation in national culture and media

[10] Especially, Andrews, *Killing for Coal*; Wolff, *Industrializing the Rockies*; and Leigh Campbell-Hale, *Remembering the Ludlow but Forgetting the Columbine: The 1927-1928 Colorado Coal Strike* (Boulder: University of Colorado Press, 2023).

amidst a difficult recession that threatened to unveil the impermanence of settler projects. The stories retold there are filled with narrative "ruptures"—unconscious or unavoidable acknowledgements of Black lives and history in their midst—but adhere to a settler colonial common sense and didactic fervor which sought to bring about a (white) progressive modernity.

In all of this, the historical (or fanciful) stories that a group of people call upon to facilitate the creation of a community of belonging nevertheless speak of Black history in hushed tones that hover somewhere between outright ignorance of the past on one hand and the settler colonial impulse to leave unsaid what "could go without saying" on the other.[11] For instance, in 1920s Pocatello, the dramatic story of a Black lawmen "circling the wagons" around the AME church in a potential shootout with the KKK circulated within and outside of the Black community. But at the same time, the very context of that event—a racist backlash against the large Black community in Pocatello that anchored itself to multiple Black religious congregations in town—could and did go without saying. What mattered most in Pocatello's local context was the bifurcated creation of place—one legitimate, pious, and tied to local history, and the other morally suspect, irreligious, and racially deviant. The "racial and religious scripts" that many in the white community read from in the early twentieth century could not abide plots and characters that challenged this counternarrative.

Finally, Part II is also concerned with tracing the curation of history and memory that took place in these three cities, contributing manifestly to the subsummation of their respective racially heterogeneous pasts, presents, and futures. Such practices, however, are also at the whim of a much more fluid conceptual grid that shapes how individuals could regard and speak about race in the first place. That is to say, curating collective memory is always an epistemic project.

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[11] Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), 3.

Memory cannot be assumed to be passive or to have formed beyond the reach of certain racial and settler colonial imperatives. In his influential study, *Settler Memory,* Kevin Bruyneel posits that settler memory "is inherent to the popular politics, discourse, and debates about race in the United States, and in U.S. political life in general. [… It] not only undermines the effort to understand Indigenous people's politics and settler colonialism in the U.S. context, but also stalls the effort to advance the conversation around race itself."[12]

Though he does not dwell on it, one early point in particular resonates strongly with place-based studies of racial formations. "Just as memories make a house a home," he writes, "collective memory can make a space into a place and speak to a collectivity's relationship to land and legacy that threads together a sense of identity and meaning over time."[13] Bruyneel's aim to is argue that the ongoing presence/absence of Indigeneity in collective memory is central to the making and remaking of race in the US and that we fail to understand that dynamic at our peril. He also incorporates a much more nuanced account of Blackness into his work than do many scholars of settler colonialism in the North American context. Indeed, an entire chapter of *Settler Memory* is given to James Baldwin's consistent reuse of "cowboys and Indians" rhetoric to critique a white settler masculinist hegemony (though Bruyneel argues that Baldwin is not immune from the workings of settler memory and thus leaves out the "settler" part of his critique).[14]

In the chapters that follow, stories and narratives bearing the presence/absence of Indigeneity are ubiquitous. Especially in a western context, this is not really surprising. Much has been written about the modern West's obsession with Indians, a trend that was never

[12] Bruyneel, *Settler Memory,* 2-3.
[13] Bruyneel, *Settler Memory,* 13-14.
[14] Bruyneel, *Settler Memory,* 76-110.

confined to Hollywood or the pages of western novels. Indeed, often before the nation at large was so fully introduced to this genre, its antecedents structured the stories told and retold by local settler communities. For this reason, the locality of racial formations is also a register of settler memory as well. This is what is meant in my earlier definition of counternarrative communities, namely that they *flow thick with settler memory.* At work in local spaces, settler memory similarly "stalls the effort to advance the conversation around race itself" in the very places where individuals actually go about the most fundamental, daily tasks of making and maintaining a community.[15] Such a way of being in the early twentieth century West had to contend with a world of not only Indigenous people to retain and disappear, but Mexican, East and South Asian, Pacific Islanders, Mormons, a bevy of not-quite-white immigrants, and Black settlers from across the diaspora as well. Settler memory collapses, confuses, and obfuscates non-white peoples in pursuit of a politically expedient counternarrative of the Western past. It is to that force at work in local history that we now turn.

[15] Quoted Bruyneel, *Settler Memory,* 3.

Chapter 4 Pageants of Progress

Let the "movies" and the fictionists continue to give to the public, for its entertainment, their oftentimes charming pictures of fictitious Westerners, but let the public be taught that the pictures are inaccurate, that the average Western pioneer was a constructive citizen, a builder of empire, and not a "two-gun" killer.

— Philip Ashton Rollins, in the *Annals of Wyoming* (1923)

He who wins Wyoming must become part of all that went into her making.

— Teton, the Great Spirit of the Mountains, in Mabelle L. DeKay's *Vedauwoo: A Pageant of Fact and Fancy* (1924)

In the wooly days of the 1860s and 1870s, settlers in southeastern Wyoming kept somber diaries detailing the hardships of the country. In the most desperate stories they told, water and shelter often failed. Along the banks of the area's few rivers and streams, horses and cattle ate what timber settlers did not fell for cover and fuel when the grass withered or became buried in ice and snow. The pines of the higher elevation did not extend down onto the nearby plains in sufficient quantities. Trees along the water quickly were used up for homes, businesses, and the oft-romanticized wooden plank walkways of the railroad and Cowtown that bleached and burned in the constant sun.[1] Even as settlers in Wyoming's southern cities eventually planted aspen, elm,

[1] "Coutant Notes," *Annals of Wyoming,* 1:1 (August 1923), 14. Taken from unpublished notes for Charles Coutant's proposed three-volume history of Wyoming Territory, "Coutant Notes" appear to be collected by the State Historian Frances Beard and republished in the early issues of *Annals.* "[T]he first substantial wooden building…the material of which had to be cut and hauled from the foothills 'twenty miles away.'" (pg. 14); The diary of the wife of the first Territorial Governor described Cheyenne: "The wind blew at the rate of many miles an hour, cresting in me a sensation of being taken along with it, and the entire absence of trees and vegetation made the picture bleak and unattractive." See "History of the Diocese of Cheyenne," Wyoming WPA Subject File, 1375 Laramie County Towns, 59.

and willow to offer shade to their neighborhoods, thousands of railroad ties and telegraph poles, harbingers of modernity, still outnumbered the trees.

Amid the competing cultural symbols of modernity on one hand and idealized landscapes of western myth on the other, asserting a "real" account of western history and identity took on renewed urgency. Wyoming ended the 1910s in drought, war, and plague. Yet, among the many challenges facing the settlers of the state, foremost on the minds of a small, but influential, group in Cheyenne and Laramie was their state's perception in both the historical and the cultural imagination of the nation. The talented Mabelle Land DeKay returned to her home from Princeton University in 1920 to begin graduate school and teach drama at the University of Wyoming. Within a few years, she propelled this group's progressive message to many thousands of Wyoming residents. Mabelle Land grew up in Laramie where her father worked as the director of the fish hatchery. In the state's only university town, she gravitated to a life of education, becoming a schoolteacher in her late teens. She married a local bank clerk, Charles DeKay in the early 1900s before the young family moved east where she pursued degrees in English literature.

Once she returned, DeKay quickly dove head-long into a project of historical representation through her position as the University of Wyoming's theater director.[2] Sometime in the early 1920s, she began writing a massive outdoor pageant of Wyoming's history. Its author

[2] Mabelle DeKay's biography is difficult to piece together in large part due to the common misspellings of her name. "Mabelle" is how she spelled her name on her master's Thesis. It is also the spelling most frequently used by the local paper in Laramie, which I suspect she would be apt to correct the editors if they were in error. Census and other official documents spell her name Maybelle, Mabel, and May Belle. Her place of birth also seems to change, Iowa, Canada, and by the 1940s, France is recorded. It seems most likely that she was born in 1881 in Canada to American parents before returning to Wyoming in 1890 as a child. As an adult she is easier to track in the record as she frequently kept both her middle initial, A., and her maiden name Land (Mabelle A. Land DeKay) which is at the very least, conspicuous. However, it does not seem that Mabelle and Charles married in Wyoming, but she does appear as teaching for the University in 1910-1915. For DeKay censuses, see, 1910, 1920, 1930, and 1940 U.S. Federal Census, Laramie, Albany County, Wyoming: Ancestry.com search for "Charles W. DeKay."

had lofty ambitions. Although the production, which she titled *Vedauwoo***,** never reached the popularity of nationally known western cultural touchstones, like Owen Wister's *The Virginian* from 1909 or the 1923 James Cruze silent film adaptation of *The Covered Wagon*, it nevertheless made quite an impression on the thousands of residents of southern Wyoming when it premiered in 1924.[3]

What was this short lived, but dazzling, production that sought to address the anxious and uncertain citizenry of the Equality State? DeKay declared that her pageant was a tale "of fact and fancy" expressed through the historical drama of Wyoming.[4] Its fanciful elements came both from her own imagination—one steeped in Elizabethan storytelling—but also from her students in the drama school who collectively contributed ideas for Wyoming's supernatural and folkloric pantheon of sprites and fairies based on their own childhood recollections.[5] At one level, it is a remarkably difficult production to "summarize." Tellingly, rather than having scenes, DeKay wrote the pageant in episodes. The plot was thoroughly disaggregated by episodic stories and dances. Its titular character Vedauwoo, a young, unrefined, and somewhat impetuous spirit, and the beautiful woman, Wyoming, whom Vedauwoo is determined to woo, dance about the huge rocks of an impressive geological formation that formed a natural amphitheater. After being firmly rebuffed in his romantic advances at the end of the opening episode, Vedauwoo is

[3] Owen Wister's *The Virginian* is prominently celebrated by the University of Wyoming American Heritage Center and Archives in Laramie, which features the Owen Wister Reading Room. The novel, often considered to be the first nationally regarded stand-alone work in the western genre, has remained a stalwart feature in Wyoming's local lore, despite, as historian Sarah Deutsch has written, Wister "favored scale over democracy. The hero of the novel is no lone individualist but a good ranch manager willing to work outside the law to serve the interests of his cattle baron boss against the forces of a too rampant democracy prone to acquit ranch hands who pilfered cattle from their bosses." That locals lionized the defenders in Johnson County, about which Wister was clearly referring, and cherished his novel taking the exact opposite position, is a curious bit of cognitive dissonance. However, the tension is representative of some of the broader concerns about western representation discussed in this chapter. Quoted in, Sarah Deutsch, *Making a Modern U.S. West: The Contested Terrain of a Region and Its Borders, 1898-1949* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2022), 21.

[4] Mabelle Land DeKay, "Vedauwoo (Earthborn): A Pageant Based on Fact and Fancy," M.A. Thesis, (University of Wyoming, 1925), 1-3. (Hereafter cited as: DeKay, "Vedauwoo Pageant.")

[5] DeKay, "Vedauwoo Pageant," 2-3.

instructed by the wise Spirit of the Tetons to learn from "all that went into [Wyoming's] making." Only by learning of her "history" can Vedauwoo hope to be successful in uniting with his unrequited love. The next four episodes purported to offer the audience a dramatized "fact" of the state's history along with its folklore. Each historic episode—beginning with the "Genesis of the Indians," then a retelling of "The Pathbreakers" which covered the arrival of the first white settlers, then the "Passing of the Open Range," and finally a "Pageant of the Seasons"—had a didactic lesson for the young Vedauwoo as he tried to learn how to make the beautiful Wyoming fall in love with him. Finally, after the climax at end of the "Passing of the Open Range," wherein Vedauwoo bids farewell to the cowboy, sees the coming of railroad and university, and receives his diploma, the final episode witnesses the long awaited nuptials of Wyoming and her now ideal(ized) groom.[6] The allegory was not subtle. DeKay invited the audience to learn vicariously through Vedauwoo how to win Wyoming's heart and become part of the state's promising, progressive future.

DeKay was very proud of the work she put into constructing her entertaining history and civics lesson. She touted her multi-year studies of history in the writings of men and women like local historian and lawyer Philip Rollins, the ethnomusicologist Natalie Curtis, as well as Wyoming's most eminent scholar and acclaimed "pioneer" citizen, Dr. Grace Hebard. While she named and cited many of the books that she consulted by these authors, her pageant premiered just months after numerous essays regarding the "true nature" of the pioneer days in Wyoming Territory laced the pages of the state's new history journal, *Annals of Wyoming.* The State

[6] I recognize this is a thin plot-summary. However, to convey each episode's individual scenes in summary would be somewhat tedious and, I think, not add very much to a broad understanding of the pageant's narrative arch. I discuss the content of important moments later on in the chapter. Vedauwoo's trajectory only reaches points of tension and change at the culmination of each episode. The production as a whole is "spectacle-driven" rather than causal or logically progressing from one scene to the next.

historian, Frances Beard established the journal just as DeKay began writing in 1923. With the exception of Curtis, all of the local Wyoming scholars that DeKay relied upon also contributed to *Annals*.[7] Indeed, the journal became the primary space where progressive and historical thinkers considered the importance of the past to their ever changing present. Situated firmly within this vein, DeKay carried herself as a progressive woman with a strong faith in the merits of education and a cautious intrigue of the rough and rowdy days gone by of her western home. She tired of the nationally-known "Old West" narratives that drove an emergent genre of novels and films. Her intensely western intellectual milieu shaped DeKay's desire to craft a story of Wyoming and its people grounded in local culture rather than in eastern or popular commercial expectations.[8]

This chapter ponders the widespread attempts to collect and curate public memory about Wyoming's history during the 1920s and the state's quickly fading "pioneer" days. Local educators and social elites like DeKay self-consciously entered into a project of place-making. In the process their efforts reveal much about racial formations in their communities.[9] Deepening economic uncertainties certainly exacerbated the widespread anxiety of an embryonic western identity during the 1910s and 1920s. What outsiders saw or read of Wyoming in films and novels—as well as the challenges of a high costs of living, failing banks, and waning streams of new settlers to the state by the late 1910s—no doubt propelled these intellectuals to act when and

[7] For Beard, see front matter and "Foreword" as well as "Notes (Historian)," *Annals of Wyoming,* 1:1 (1923), 2, 14, 15; see also, Phillip Rollins, "To the State Historian," *Annals of Wyoming,* 1:1 (1923), 6.Rollins, "To the State Historian," *Annals of Wyoming,* 1:1 (1923), 6.

[8] DeKay, "Vedauwoo Pageant," preface, pp. 1-2. (n.b. The pagination of the script restarts at page 1 with each new episode.)

[9] DeKay is very much working with and responding to a national theater and western cultural milieu. Differing slightly from the popular forms of the genre such as Buffalo Bill's Wild West show, which also told linear stories of progress and the march of U.S. "civilization," local history pageants such as "Vedauwoo" and others deployed the progress motif from a more static geography. Rather than traversing the West with the story of progress, early history pageants such as *The Mission Play* allowed progress to pass through a local space. See, William Deverell, *Whitewashed Adobe: The Rise of Los Angeles and the Remaking of its Mexican Past* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004).

how they did. Fears of economic depressions and misguided cultural representations were also expressions of other racial and settler colonial anxieties that saturated the worlds of nascent imperialists and white progressives alike.[10] In the previous chapter on Cheyenne as the Blackest city in the West, we began a place-based history of southern Wyoming's largest city whose focal point was the lives and experiences of Black westerners. Present in the sources they left behind and the visions for a future in that place which they projected, were twin expressions of both hope and deep-seeded anxiety especially around the themes of racial and local belonging. The final sections of Chapter Three thus shed light on various instances and patterns of violence and exclusion directed toward that large Black community. Being Black in Cheyenne, Wyoming, therefore, always contended with the power and force of counternarratives that drew the lines around local belonging.

By telling only carefully selected narratives of Blackness, if any at all, white intellectuals in the Rocky Mountain West flattened local racial history over which they sought to build a white, progressive, settler modernity.[11] This chapter seeks to illustrate the efficacy of such projects by highlighting where counternarratives of race and place intersected with and drew upon hopes for the future and from the intensification of racial anxieties. This is an example of a *localized* and *relational* analysis of race and place. A place-based history of the Black West can and should invite a deeper examination of the locality of racial formations, or a study of where race was made in America. As such, I suggest these two seemingly disparate histories—a history of the Blackest city in the West, and the relational history of how others assigned value to race and belonging in that very same place—should be seen as embedded within a singular story.

[10] On this connection see, Marilyn Lake, *Progressive New Worlds: How Settler Colonialism and Transpacific Exchange Shaped American Reform* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2019).

[11] A full exposition on race and narrative subsummation of Black Futures is laid out in the introduction to Part II of this Dissertation.

Collective memory, as Kevin Bruyneel aptly puts it, "can make a space into a place just as memories for an individual can transform a house into a home."[12] We should therefore be more attentive to forces of memory making: the racial ideologies and settler colonial common sense that such projects deployed, and, not to be forgotten, the types of "places" that have been wrought by those regimes of settler memory.

The *Vedauwoo* pageant could not be missed as a cultural work that used *history* to talk about the *future.*[13] Thus, it is an excellent subject from which to proceed as it was overly concerned with the process of transforming "space into place." By the final act of the production, *Vedauwoo* invites the audience to witness and celebrate the arrival of the modern West and to ensure that they, too, were marked with the correct and acceptable character traits to be at home in the Wyoming of the future. Through a spectacle of notable merit and widespread community performance, DeKay offered her vision of what the citizenry of Wyoming needed to make theirs a robust and viable society.[14] This chapter is about how one particularly thick cord of counternarratives. It asks how stories of race and place were constructed and conditioned, what factors pressed upon their retelling, and how they shaped local spaces. Rather than merely looking *at* DeKay's work, this chapter looks through *Vedauwoo* at the history of southern Wyoming. It allows the pageant—in its script, performances, and source material—to serve as a

[12] Kevin Bruyneel, *Settler Memory: The Disavowal of Indigeneity and the Politics of Race in the United States* (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 2021), 13-14.

[13] To distinguish between the title of the pageant and its titular character, the production will be *Vedauwoo,* in italics and the character will be Vedauwoo.

[14] The author does not mean race in a Classical sense of "family" orientation, not least because the pageant itself mentioned whiteness and white skin on almost every page. See conversation in the conclusion of this chapter and language of race and ethnicity used in, "Racial Elements and Folklore," Wyoming WPA Subject File 1163 Albany County Folklore, esp. page 1.

guide *along the archival grain* in order to see how racial ideology infused Progressive Era stories and structured settler colonial epistemologies at the state and local level in Wyoming.[15]

Of Fact and Fancy

DeKay knew that the first act of her pageant needed to be clear and captivating for the sake of storytelling. It also needed do a lot of work to win over the fifteen hundred audience members from Laramie and Cheyenne who drove to the auspicious outcropping of rocks halfway between their two cities. People were bound to begin formulating their first opinions of *Vedauwoo* perhaps an hour or more before the show even began. In June 1924, families and friends piled into cars or perhaps hopped off the train and walked up toward the pink granite boulder batholiths where DeKay demanded her production be experienced. The dramatic setting posed its own risks. What if excessively heavy rains fell before opening day? The automobiles of the day would have struggled mightily on muddy roads, especially cars and trucks bearing many extra passengers. Over 250 actors and their elaborate costumes, not to mention a full orchestra, had to make it to the remote location well ahead of time. For these reasons, the pageant could not be easily rescheduled. Even if people managed to brave the elements how thin would their patience be at the opening curtain? She could not risk a slow start.[16]

Next, her decision to create a mostly novel cast of spirits and allegorical characters—some were reminiscent to names appearing on Wyoming's maps, some obvious Shakespeare

[15] I use Ann Stoler's critique of colonial archies that she lays out in *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009). A more detailed section using these methods comes later in the chapter.

[16] The primary review of opening day in *The Laramie Republican-Boomerang* noted: "It is hard enough to give a smooth performance in the best equipped auditorium in the world, but when your stage is many miles from town and everything, including the water you drank, had to be transported so far, anyone, except such a person as Mrs. DeKay, would have been daunted. Add to this that, although it did not rain yesterday, the temperature was more like that of November than June, and also that most the wind blew a gale instead of a zephyr, and one can faintly appreciate the magnitude of yesterday's achievement." See, "Pageant Proves Big Success," *The Laramie Republican-Boomerang,* June 9, 1924, 6.

knock-offs, others entirely of her own imagination—of whom the audience would have to encounter, learn, and follow over the course of several hours, deepened her challenge. Luckily, opening day was at least dry, though unseasonably cold and windy. Reports suggested that the huge crowds arrived in good spirits and with some anticipation that it would be a performance of special magnificence.[17] DeKay's all-important hook for her audience during the opening moments was a young man dressed in buckskin watching the first scene unfold without having to say a word. Through him, the onlookers listened to the otherworldly and magnanimous voice of the Tetons who summoned Wyariel, a young "Spirit of the West" and tasked him with making "Wyoming."[18] Then Teton called forth the title spirit, Vedauwoo and instructed him to watch as Wyariel, along with multiple sprites, fairies, and the trickster Elf-man, worked together to determine what the character of Wyoming must be. The dances and lines of the opening scene fused imaginative readings of Shakespearean folktales with Edenic overtones to craft an unmistakable creation narrative. Mountains were wrought, the prairies given their grass and wind, flowers found their color and dances, brooks given their babbling voices. There to witness the very origins of the entity "Wyoming," was the white man, John Colter, famous for "discovering" the Yellowstone country in the early nineteenth century.[19]

The presence of a white man whose act of "discovery" necessitated the beginning of history itself would have been almost common sense for an audience saturated in the United States' long literary tradition. Historian Jean M. O'Brien writes of such literary claims that they "argue implicitly that authentic history begins with the arrival of English people."[20] More than

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[17] "Pageant Proves Big Success," *The Laramie Republican-Boomerang,* June 9, 1924, 6.

[18] Wyariel seems to be a play on Shakespeare's *The Tempest* character, Ariel, but with the "WY" (Wyoming) prefix.

[19] DeKay, "Vedauwoo Pageant," episode I., pp. 2-12.

[20] Jean M. O'Brien, *Firsting and Lasting: Writing Indians out of Existence in New England* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), 2. Several other insightful studies in this area are, Coll Thrush, *Native Seattle: Histories from the Crossing-Over Place* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2007); Den Ouden, *Beyond*

just its immediate cultural context, the written sources that the DeKay indicated in her script pushed the narrative in this direction. DeKay drew upon a group of writers, primarily her senior colleague, Dr. Grace Hebard (who was herself personified in the pageant as Clio, the Muse of History), all of whom inherited and propagated certain tropes in historical writing. Histories like Hebard's *The Pathbreakers from River to Ocean: The Story of the Great West from the Time of Coronado to the Present* (1911) promised to enable "the *future citizens* to familiarize themselves with the brave deeds of these earliest inhabitants in an unsettled and unorganized territory."[21] Following Hebard and most of her contemporary scholars, DeKay simultaneously began with creation *and* Euro-American "explorers" in part because a white, American national citizen embedded in that place was both the intended audience and the ideal outcome of such works. It seemed obvious and even necessary, therefore, to include a character like John Colter. Through him, the audience could become witnesses to and participants in the supposed beginnings of history itself.[22]

As discussed at the beginning of the Chapter Three, O'Brien has artfully shown that some of the earliest forms of literature and history in the United States were concerned with telling stories of "firsting" and "lasting." In such accounts, local authors detailed the "first" white child born in this town, or the "first" wedding to be solemnized in that county, and so on. In many cases, these firsts reveal that they were concerned primarily with the history of social and settler institutions like governments, schools, or marriage and the family, rather than the exploits of individuals *per se*. They were also always about race, whiteness, and the disavowal of

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Conquest: Native Peoples and the Struggle for History in New England (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2005).

[21] Grace Raymond Hebard, *The Pathbreakers from River to Ocean: The Story of the Great West from the Time of Coronado to the Present* (Lincoln: The University Publishing Company, 1923 edition.) *v*.

[22] Coutant, like Hebard and other "western" proto-regionalists also began with the explorers rather than with the pre-European era. See, Charles Coutant, *The History of Wyoming from the Earliest Known Discoveries: In Three Volumes. Volume I* (Laramie: Chaplin, Spafford & Mathison printers, 1899).

indigeneity, evidenced most poignantly through the latter category of "lasting." These were usually contrived stories of the "last" Indigenous man or woman to "occupy" a certain plot of land or to go "on the war path." Stories of Native disappearance not only suggested to readers that the land and social institutions that govern it were now fully "civilized," but that the white residents of that place were also "native" through settler replacement.[23]

Vernacular histories of this type began appearing with the first printing presses in the early America and continued to be written as new counties or towns were founded and organized. The U.S. West, too, is replete with such accounts, usually published in the second half of the nineteenth century. Venturing into local city and county historical societies across the region, librarians can almost certainly furnish a researcher with thick, leather bound volumes with titles like *The History and Economy of Arapahoe County* perhaps written in the 1860s or early 1870s during the height of Greater Reconstruction. Wyoming's situation bore certain singularities in this regard. Not only was Wyoming late to statehood compared to California, Colorado, or Oregon, but the writing of these early histories was further delayed by uncertain and constantly shifting jurisdictional boundaries during the 1860s-1890s. Some counties, such as Johnson County in the north central portion of the state was not formed or even populated with whites until well into the 1880s on account of the political and demographic power of the Lakota, Crow, and Northern Cheyenne nations. Natrona County, for instance, formed by legislative commission in 1888, was carved out of Carbon County in the year before statehood in 1890. It took two more years to be fully established. The old lines of the county lasted only twenty years before it took on more territory from Fremont County. Small changes occurred again in 1911. About five years after this shift, a "Mr. Mockler of Casper" finally felt assured enough as to the borders of his

[23] O'Brien, *Firsting and Lasting,* esp. chapter 2., and pp. 102-104.

study area to begin a *History of Natrona County* that he completed in 1923. Eight years later, the borders changed again.[24]

Prior to this lurching start, Wyoming was also somewhat unique for its notable lack of "official" territorial histories. Indeed in the late 1880s, just as statehood appeared on the horizon, a local teacher and amateur historian, Charles Coutant, set out to complete a three-part history of Wyoming. Only his first volume appeared briefly in print. Later, unpublished material from Coutant's notes helped the state history journal fill out many of the territories notable "firsts." Coutant's first volume was the exception to the rule however and most accounts of early territorial life in Wyoming and the inevitable tales of firsting and lasting were left to be penned and published in local newspapers. Many of these stories may have faded from memory altogether, existing only on a microfilm reel in the state archives if not for the intense interest in recovering local histories that accompanied the WPA era Federal Writer's Project during the depression.[25]

The pattern across many of the sources collected and annotated by the FWP workers was an overarching interest in narratives of place. Very few of their documents seemed concerned with the details of industry: the amount of gold and coal pulled from the ground or the number of bales of hay produced in this year or that. Such were the "facts" that filled so much of traditional county or state histories. Instead, the FWP read and delighted in the drama of local stories. Some

[24] Frances Beard noted: "Mr. Mockler of Casper has recently published his History of Natrona County. This is the first of the Country Histories to appear and is a valuable addition to any library. Mrs. Charles Stone has her History of Uinta County nearly completed." It appears from this statement that there were no official county histories of this type yet published by 1923, which is quite surprising. See "Notes (Historian)," *Annals of Wyoming,* 1:1 (1923), 14-15. For border changes see, "Natrona County, Wyoming," online, https://www.wyohistory.org/encyclopedia/natrona-county-wyoming. Accessed 1/25/22.

[25] Charles Coutant, *History of Wyoming Territory*; Two collections in Wyoming's Federal Writers Project files that exemplify this are, "Early History of Eddy Street," Wyoming WPA Subject File 180, Wyoming Towns, Cheyenne History, pp. 1-64; and "Local Government in Albany County before Wyoming Territory was Organized," Wyoming WPA Subject File 1161, Albany County, Laramie, pp. 1-135, esp. 10-17.

events like the adventures of Jim Bridger or building of local landmarks made frequent appearances. Recalling the spring of 1871 seventeen years later, the *Laramie Boomerang* printed a long story of when enormous hogs overran the city of Laramie in the thousands, prompting a lasting appeal from the citizens to keep up a plan of civic pride and beautification. The article had an element of humor to it, but the FWP author included it to speak to the first enacting of local commission code in Laramie.[26] Depression era workers also found and republished claims about the first white child born in a particular place, details that often required a fuller accounting of race than the simple presence or absence of "whiteness." When one commentator in 1888, Walter Deming, penned a short piece on the birth of the first white child in Cheyenne for the local paper, he felt compelled to clarify that, "As a matter of fact, I doubt whether there were any progeny of the 'red men' or Africano [sic] citizens in Cheyenne before E. J. [Smalley] arrived." Though Deming apparently meant his statement to be an affirmation of white nativity, the documentary rupture he left behind is one of many instances that speak to the very diverse origins of Cheyenne.[27]

In comparison to other parts of the U.S., Wyoming seemed uniquely bereft of written history to reformers and educators like DeKay. All the more reason, she figured, to produce a pageant, a form of theater with a track record of didactic potential. Differing in important ways from plays or other types of local theater, pageants relied upon musical spectacle as well as drama to convey the main thrust of the director's vision. Dances featuring dozens or even hundreds of performers, could be elaborately choreographed in ways to suggest to the audience some fundamental feature of the storyline or characters. Often, racial, ethnic, and cultural

[26] See "The Birth of Laramie's Civic Pride," catalogued in "Local Government in Albany County before Wyoming Territory was Organized," Wyoming WPA Subject File 1161, Albany County, Laramie, 13-17.

[27] See, "A Book that Tells the Story of the Men who Made Cheyenne," catalogued in "Early History of Eddy Street," Wyoming WPA Subject File 180, Wyoming Towns, Cheyenne History, 15.

markers became the central performative aspects of pageant dances. Additionally, because dialogue was also limited or spread out across many hours of the production, songs and performances needed to continue to move the story or develop central ideas where traditional theater would rely on spoken lines to develop the plot and character. Spectacle driven pageants usually managed this by drawing on stories already known to the audience with only a few surprises or twists were included here and there.[28]

DeKay's choice of this medium to tell her sweeping story had widespread precedent in the U.S. West in the early twentieth century. History pageants were common on major anniversaries across the country.[29] West of the Mississippi, pageants embodied an early regionalism somewhat similar to how minstrel shows played to distinctly Southern aesthetics. There was the spectacular international success of William Cody's Wild West show. Buffalo Bill productions bore important similarities to pageants, both with their enormous casts and often linear progression through widely known "historical" events. At the height of Wild West shows' national popularity, local community drama groups became mainstays in western towns as a result of the rise of the "little theater" movement. Community-based dramatists largely supplanted the traveling theater troupes based in large US and European cities. In this way, many western cities and towns hoped to channel the proven successes of Wild West-themed productions toward telling the local and regional history of their communities. Quite often, as

[28] The literature on historical pageants is wide ranging and can be found in multiple disciplines including Theater Studies, History, and Native American Studies. Theater Studies in particular has commended many thorough readings of the productions themselves and how the performative elements reflect a wider culture. See Katrina Phillips, *Staging Indigeneity: Salvage Tourism and the Performance of Native American history* (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 2021); David Glassberg, *American Historical Pageantry: The Uses of Tradition in the Early Twentieth Century* (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 1990); William Deverell, *Whitewashed Adobe: The Rise of Los Angeles and the Remaking of its Mexican Past* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004); Rebecca Coleman Hewett, "Progressive Compromises: Performing Gender, Race, and Class in Historical Pageants of 1913," PhD Diss. (University of Texas, 2010).

[29] Glassberg, *American Historical Pageantry,* 9-14.

historian Katrina Phillips argues, large-scale outdoor theatrical productions also were hoped to be economic boons to locales that lamented the passing of Old Western aesthetics and perhaps hoped to regain the financial prosperity of an earlier era.[30]

The localized nature of the history on display meant that racial identity and whiteness often took center stage. Phillips' detailed history and cultural ethnography of Pendleton, Oregon's century-old *The Happy Canyon Indian Pageant and Wild West Show* illustrates how performances of race and Indigeneity functioned as the central appeal of these productions. They obscured Native history through the reification of white settler identity. While Indian Pageants sometimes paired with Wild West shows, other cities, like Eugene, Oregon, produced shows such as the *Sunset Trails Pioneer Pageant* in 1929 that overtly focused on the history and heritage of nineteenth-century white pioneers. The writer of *Sunset Trails,* W. F. G. Thacher, opened the prelude of that pageant with dances of children dressed as fairies, sprites, butterflies, the waters, flowers, but also Indians. Though episodes one and two also featured Indigenous characters and dances (performed by white actors in red-face), the addition of Indian characters in the dances of the unreal and non-human was not subtle or innocuous.[31]

Even more than some of her contemporaries, DeKay stuck closely to a didactic formula of historical pageantry pioneered most notably by John Steven McGroarty in his Southern California sensation, *The Mission Play* which premiered in 1912. McGroarty composed a theatrical production depicting the travels of Fr. Junipero Serra in establishing the mission

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[30] Louis S. Warren, *Buffalo Bill's America: William Cody and the Wild West Show* (New York: Knopf, 2005); Robert Rydell, *Buffalo Bill in Bologna: The Americanization of the World, 1869-1922* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005). See DeAnna M. Toten Beard, "The Litter Theater Movement," in Susan Belacsco, et. al. *A Companion to American Literature* (New York: Wiley & Sons, 2020). On outdoor pageants as tourism, see Phillips, *Staging Indigeneity.*

[31] Phillips, *Staging Indigeneity,* 26-49; For "Sunset Hills" see, W.F. Thacher, "Sunset trail: Sunset Trail celebration, Eugene, Oregon, July 25, 26, and 27, 1929: including a complete program for 'The Sunset Trail,' a Pioneer Pageant," Pageant Program available online through Oregon State University Libraries and Google Scholar.

system of California in the eighteenth century. It was intended to serve several purposes. First, as business, the owner of the Mission Inn in San Gabriel east of Los Angeles enlisted McGroarty, a well-known poet and journalist at the time, to write a play that could take advantage of the burgeoning tourist market in Southern California. But as the historian William Deverell, suggests, the play resonated with the public largely through the paradigm of the twentieth century's anti-Mexican racism which shot through the production. *The Mission Play* showed that the once glamorous heritage of Spanish California as adulterated by, and forced into decline by the Mexican national period. In the early twentieth century context of Los Angeles's racial landscape, and during the upheavals brought on by the Mexican Revolution, the lessons of the pageant were intended as commentary on the present and future of the city.[32]

DeKay organized her pageant along the trajectory of five episodes which she trusted her audience to know well ahead of time. These featured stories of the land's natural beauty, accounts of Indians, the coming of the Pioneers, the passing of the Open Range which culminated in a progressive settler modernity, and, finally, it concluded with a Pageant of the Seasons representing the future. However, departing from the formula of *The Mission Play,* she also sought to create a folkloric foundation to her story. While the ideas behind each individual episode may have been familiar to her audience, the plot itself—the wooing of the feminine Wyoming by the spirit Vedauwoo—was a novel construction that needed to guide her audience through history.[33]

In every such pageant, including *Vedauwoo,* nineteenth- and twentieth-century racial ideologies always waited in the wings and were never far from the spotlight. Contrasting these productions also reflects a certain *locality of racial formations.* Because these pageants emerged

[32] Deverell, *Whitewashed Adobe,* 218-222.
[33] DeKay, "Vedauwoo Pageant," see preface, 1-3; and episode I, 1-12.

through local forms of narrative storytelling in addition to the widely held beliefs about racial difference, we are drawn to instances where race appears to be operating in unexpected or divergent registers. For instance, whereas Hispanic and Indigenous figures appeared as human actors and were essential to working out the racial logics of a story like the *Mission Play,* they could be rendered as fleeting, non-human actors according to the racial imperatives of the *Sunset Trails* pageant in Oregon. Similarly, while Buffalo Bill productions and most Wild West shows required Indigenous peoples to "play Indian" alongside white actors to achieve the expected western dynamic, this, too, upended many eastern tropes that held that white settlers and Native people only briefly shared space in time or place. The local differences in how race and stories of non-white peoples appeared on stages throughout the country is, in part, evidence of how race is always being remade and constructed in U.S. history.[34]

In DeKay's script, just as much is revealed in what is left implicitly white as it is when race is explicitly mobilized. The main stories and themes of *Vedauwoo* also told of historical developments that, off the stage and in the real world, actually gave rise to the West as a racially heterogenous place. Acts, songs, and dances that represented the gold rushes or the building of the railroads, not to mention the rise of modern cities, consistently disavowed the existence of Black, Indigenous, Asian, Mexican and other Latinx westerners through silence and an all-white cast. But it was not merely representation where pageants failed to convey the West as it was. With race as both the backdrop and subtext, the plots of history pageants offered distinct stories of progress from "savagery to civilization" and from the presence and power of racial "others" to the maturation of white, national citizens in the very spaces where the audience lived and made

[34] Though primarily dealing in matters of policy and official acts, Molina's articulation of "racial scripts" in the process of race-making maps incredibly well on the cultural forms of racial thinking, that were actually scripted. See Molina, *How Race is Made in America.*

their homes. In place of the abstractions of Turnerian frontier history, local pageants were concrete in their articulations of a similar thesis.

However, because *Vedauwoo* ended with a depiction of a rapidly arriving, and idealized, modernity as opposed to culminating in the present**,** the racial messiness of the real Wyoming in which her audience actually lived still needed to undergo modernization (i.e. become white) before mirroring the final scene in which Vedauwoo and Wyoming are fully and finally bound to one another. The penultimate episode, for instance, ended with the blasts of train whistles on the air and the cowboy riding off, literally, into the sunset. When the fifth episode began and Vedauwoo collected his diploma from the university president, one might wonder if any of the young men in attendance who may have attended school and worked as cowboys and ranch hands experienced some kind of dissonance.[35]

DeKay wrote her titular character, Vedauwoo, as a young man tasked to personify these progressive journeys. He needed to witness and learn from the various stages of history in order to understand what ideals Wyoming demanded of her suitor. At the end of the play, Vedauwoo could display the necessary character traits that would cause Wyoming to fall in love with him. Vedauwoo was always played and depicted as a white man. Harold Gilbert was cast in the original 1924 production, for which he was so proud that he eventually titled his 1990 (unpublished) autobiography, *Vedauwoo***.** DeKay played with the standard settler trope of white nativity through her main character. Not only was John Colter present at the creation of Wyoming's and Vedauwoo's characters in the opening episode, but it was widely noted in press releases leading up to June 1924 that "Vedauwoo" was an Arapaho Indian word meaning "earth-born" signifying that he was "of this place." DeKay later explained that "Earthborn" had been

[35] DeKay, "Vedauwoo Pageant," episode V; Also see Cedric Robinson, *Forgeries of Memory and Meaning.* Longer discussion in the fn. here on popular culture and racial regimes.

the original title of the play, but she hoped to further express the "native" quality of her character by using an Indigenous word, furnished to her by the priest at Fort Washakie.[36]

In significant and sometimes baffling ways, Vedauwoo's character offered variations on both national and Western tropes of masculinity and civilization. There can be no doubt that transformation of the title character into a refined, educated western man drew heavily on decades of writings by figures like Theodore Roosevelt who saw the West as a space where constant struggle and even violent race war refined both whiteness and masculinity for the new imperial age.[37] Coming to an understanding of a "primitive" Wyoming, the struggles of the first pioneers, and the romanticism of the solitary life on the range fit a clean allegorical mold first cast during anxious debates about gender and the West which emerged at the end of the increasingly urban and industrial Gilded Age. But, in truth, what constituted the "ideal man" was hardly coherent and DeKay's characters shared the era's tortured logic. Vedauwoo needed a free spirit, but not detached from responsibility. He needed to be in touch with nature, but not to be "a part of it." He had to be strong and virile, but, above all, to exhibit self-restraint in his mission of progress toward modernity and civilization in Wyoming.[38] The Historian Gail Bederman writes of the era's gender ideologies that prominent figures and writers like "[G. Stanley] Hall, Roosevelt, and [William T.] Sedgwick invoked 'civilization' to combine a variety of ostensibly

[36] Newspapers in the 1920s, and DeKay in her script preface, explain that the name "Vedauwoo" was furnished to her by the Rev. John Roberts who lived at Fort Washakie on the Wind River Reservation. She asked if there was a word that meant "earthborn" or "earthborn spirit" in Arapaho. It remains unclear if his response was a faithful representation of an Arapaho word at all. The organization that puts on the vertical dance version of the pageant since the 1990s claims on their website that the word he gave was not "Vedauwoo" but "bi-ito'o'wu" which was then angelized by DeKay. This seems likely since, according to the Dictionary of the Arapaho Language (4th edition, 2012), biito'owu' is the noun meaning "earth" (or clay). For online dictionary see, https://homewitharapaho.files.wordpress.com/2015/03/arapaho-dictionary1.pdf. For Vedauwoo organization website, https://www.vedauwoo.org/vertical-dance/.

[37] For Roosevelt's understanding of the West see, Monica Rico, *Nature's Noblemen: Transatlantic Masculinities and the Nineteenth-Century American West* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013), 170-182.

[38] These dichotomies are clearly established in each episode first by the qualities that Teton instructs Vedauwoo to observe, and then by the nature of Wyoming's rebuke at the end of the episode.

contradictory ideologies of manhood. The logic of 'civilization' gave coherence to these potentially confusing blends of manliness and masculinity." The popularized vision of one who could present "self-mastery and unrestrainable passion, refinement and savagery" by the mid-1910s was the "natural man."[39]

The costuming of the main characters—a task which DeKay attended to herself—clearly depicted just such a natural man for the audience. Harold Gilbert's striped, animal-hide outfit with gold cuffs evoked an indigeneity that was more African than North American. As Gilbert shared scenes with Wyoming, played by Crete Wood, gowned in white, though with a shortened hem and a bobbed haircut very indicative of the 1920s-styled modern woman, the pairing easily evoked the duo of Edgar Rice Burroughs's wildly popular Tarzan of the Apes and Jane. The audience may have been bemused or accepting of the jumbled symbolism. It mixed together the American Indian name of the main character, his African jungle garb, and a setting and cast more like a western-themed *Midsummer's Night Dream*. The jumble of images, however, aligned well to address multiple intersections of race, gender, citizenship, and power in Wyoming of which DeKay seemed especially concerned.

Throughout the first episode of the pageant, DeKay expounded upon what she saw as the intrinsic characteristics of the natural world of Wyoming, and by the extension of her metaphor of Wyoming as a woman, the ideal of western femineity. Characters lined up in the first episode to give "gifts" to Wyoming. The Presence of the Plains introduced himself as "an infinite passion for the unattainable"; Mirage exclaims "I am Hope, and enlightening vision"; from the characters "Silence and Solitude she [Wyoming] will find a peace that passeth understanding and the truth

[39] See Gail Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 217-218.



Figure 1 Promotional material showing Harold Gilbert in costume, 1924. Accessed Online at https://www.vedauwoo.org/vertical-dance/.

that sets men free." Other figures like the spirits of "Laughing-Water" and "Wild Rose" teach Wyoming to "see all the beauty of the world" and have "a fragrance of a free personality."[40] Moreover, these—and many more—traits were couched in a set of assumptions about qualities a person needed to be "at home" in that place. So far, DeKay had not disrupted too much of the era's gender ideology. Wyoming, the woman, defined the domestic characteristics of "home," while Vedauwoo, the man, sought to conquer and subdue.

[40] DeKay, "Vedauwoo Pageant," episode I, quoted pp. 4, 5, and 6.

The guiding gender logics flowed not only from prevailing social expectations clearly identified in her folkloric origin story, but also from DeKay scholarly interlocutors. Mabelle DeKay looked to her colleague at the University of Wyoming, Grace Hebard, as first among the many voices she hoped would echo through the rocks of Vedauwoo Glen.[41] Grace Raymond Hebard (1861-1936) was the most recognizable figure in Wyoming's cadre of women public intellectuals and political and social reformers.[42] In her own time, she boasted a long and multifaceted career of crafting "Wyoming" as a place. Her first job after arriving in 1882 was as the draftsmen for the office of Surveyor General which was busy "locating, fixing, and charting the boundaries of the soon-to-be state."[43]

Many white women within settler colonial states, and within Wyoming specifically, effectively made use of "unsettled" state institutions to garner more political and social power still unavailable to women in the US elsewhere.[44] Hebard claimed women's supposed freedom in Wyoming was somehow intrinsic to the land itself. "On July 4, 1836," she wrote of the small caravan of men and women who traveled west to proselytize at the Whitman mission in Oregon

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[41] DeKay, "Vedauwoo Pageant," preface, 2, 3.

[42] On Grace Raymond Hebard the most useful account is "Marking Wyoming: Grace Raymond Hebard and the West as Woman's Place," in, Virginia Scharff, *Twenty Thousand Roads: Women, Movement, and the West* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003); A fascinating theoretical piece on Hebard and Agnes Wergeland and their roles in crafting the UW American Heritage Center and a critical reading of the archival space itself is, E. Cram, "Archival Ambience and Sensory Memory: Generating Queer Intimacies in the Settler Colonial Archive." *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies* 13:2 (2016), 109-129; Tiffany Lewis, "Marking America's Progress in the West: Grace Raymond Hebard's Domestication of Wyoming, Women's Rights, and Western Expansion," *Cultural Studies/Critical Methodologies* 13:1 (2013), 47-57.

[43] The historian Virginia Scharff, who has written eloquently of Hebard's place within the making of the U.S. West and its gender politics, notes that she "began her life in Wyoming as an agent of imperial geography, in a country so late conquered by force of arms, still so thinly settled." Hebard was keen to recognize that the project of settler colonization and imperial state-building was just as much about the narratives that animated public life than it was about the cartographic aspirations of American empire. Scharff, *Twenty Thousand Roads,* 96, and 94-97.

[44] See Margaret Jacobs, *White Mother to a Dark Race: Settler Colonialism, Maternalism. And the Removal of Indigenous Children in the American West and Australia, 1880-1940* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009)*;* Marilyn Lake, *Progressive New Worlds: How Settler Colonialism and Transpacific Exchange Shaped American Reform* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2019); Linda Gordon: *The Great Arizona Orphan Abduction* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999); Cathleen Cahill, *Federal Fathers and Mothers: A Social History of the United States Indian Service, 1869-1933* (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 2011).

Territory. "The missionaries," She claimed, "moved over to the Pacific side of the sloping pass, 'with Bible in one hand and the American flag in the other fell upon their knees, took possession of the land as the home of American mothers and the church of Christ.'"[45] Hebard and other scholar-suffragists in the West searched the historical record for any and all symbols of women's political power during their regional and the longer national campaign for the right to vote.[46]

DeKay found that white pioneer women served as useful emblems both to define a regional past and set the course for a progressive western modernity. Featured in the "Pathbreakers" episode of the pageant, the presence of women alters the narrative away from ruckus acts of masculinity by announcing the arrival of the "home-makers." Yet, immediately the specter of race returned. Indians—noble, spiritual, and disappearing in the previous episode—suddenly return as "hostile" and "savages" in the presence of white women. This cause Teton to call forth the Army to "stand in between civilization and savagery." By way of a familiar settler logic, the presence of white women ushered in the era of state violence as a response to the "threat" of racial others. In this way, DeKay's, Hebard's, and other reformers' gender politics could not be represented without the racial logics of Wyoming. In this landscape, the defense of white womanhood against Indians was only one facet.[47]

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[45] Grace Raymond Hebard, "The First White Women in Wyoming," *The Washington Historical Quarterly* 8:1 (Jan. 1917), 30.

[46] Some Hebard Biographers have noted the energy with which she pursued a history of Sacagawea that first highlighted her vote, along with York, to stay the winter at the Pacific as the first vote cast by a Women in North America. She also was convinced, with dubious information, that Sacagawea died and was buried as an old woman at Fort Washakie on the Wind River Reservation. There is no evidence for this, however. See, Pennie L. Magee, "What Ever Happened to Sacagawea? The Debate between Grace Heard and Blanch Schroer," unpublished paper, 2012, online at https://dspacep01.emporia.edu/bitstream/handle/123456789/2130/Magee%20Vol%2037%20Num%201.pdf?sequence=1

[47] DeKay, "Vedauwoo Pageant," episode III, 6-7. For an excellent examination of Anti-Indian Racism and Maternalism, see Jacobs, *White Mother to a Dark Race.*

In the early debates around women's suffrage in Wyoming during 1868, issues of gender equality and of the social power it might consolidate were never far from settler colonial and imperial anxieties about race regardless of which side of the debate one looks. Historian Virginia Scharff observes that many western men regarded women as "unreliable" allies in the imperial project to enshrine white supremacy in the nation's institutions. Commentators in Cheyenne reflected this in print with almost too much transparency. White Democrats warned that either unworthy or degraded white women would have an undue influence on politics, or worst still, that upstanding white women may yield to the temptations of power to fully upend the gender *and* racial status quo. One observer claimed: "I remember seeing a lady, the wife of a candidate for office, standing at the counter of a beer saloon drinking beer with a parcel of colored men." This man claimed that beyond her keeping non-white company, the woman's status as "well-educated, and entirely respectable" mattered little as "she was so intensely interested in her husband's success that she resorted to this means of getting votes for him. I saw this same lady and a schoolteacher of Cheyenne in their buggies driving colored men and women, and even known harlots, to and from the polls."[48]

Historians of Wyoming's suffrage fight have noted many sentiments like this one that decried a breach of racial decorum, but none have paused to consider the documentary and archival rupture taking place. Here the very critical ways in which race and gender are fused, not merely in an intersectional sense but as constitutive parts of the same contest over access to political power, is subsumed in the more central and well-known narrative. In the passage above, it seems that most readers have regarded the buggies and wagons of Black men and women or the curiously phrased "parcel of colored men" at the Cheyenne saloon to be mere phantasmic,

[48] Scharff, *Twenty Thousand Roads,* 90.

rhetorical devises rather than *actual* Black residents of the city. This rupture may not be a fully accurate portrayal because it seems unlikely that the large and politically active Black community in Cheyenne needed the prodding of white women to exercise the franchise. The first decades of the city's history have more than ample evidence of African American political clubs and meetings taking place on a regular basis to recognize that it was not women's suffrage alone that challenged the status quo.[49]

Critics of women's suffrage in 1868 feared it would unravel the edges of white supremacy. Their twentieth century heirs' reassertion of settler colonial maternalism and imperialism might have assuaged some of those fears by the 1920s. As Scharff noted of Grace Hebard, there was hardly a more full-throated supporter of western imperial expansion.[50] Ultimately, the beginning of DeKay's pageant imparted such lessons for the cultivating of both white settler masculinity and femininity. As already mentioned, some of the ways in which gender operated were expected. Other parts of the pageant put a twist on those expectations. Western white femininity was first and foremost discriminating. At the end of the first episode, Vedauwoo's advances on Wyoming are repelled as he does not yet possess the proper traits of one who could yet hope to win her heart. She is passive in that the imperative to act remains with Vedauwoo throughout the pageant, but she is also the active force compelling him to change and "modernize." Wyoming, a woman, is the gatekeeper at the borders of belonging. If the desired character of a man was a standard set by progressive women, then the implicit caveat to that was that the discerning woman was white.[51]

[49] "Colored Men's Meeting," *Cheyenne Weekly Leader,* August 25, 1869, unidentifiable page, archived "African Americans" VF, *WYSA*.

[50] Scharff, *Twenty Thousand Roads,* 94.

[51] DeKay, "Vedauwoo Pageant," esp. the endings of episodes II and III.

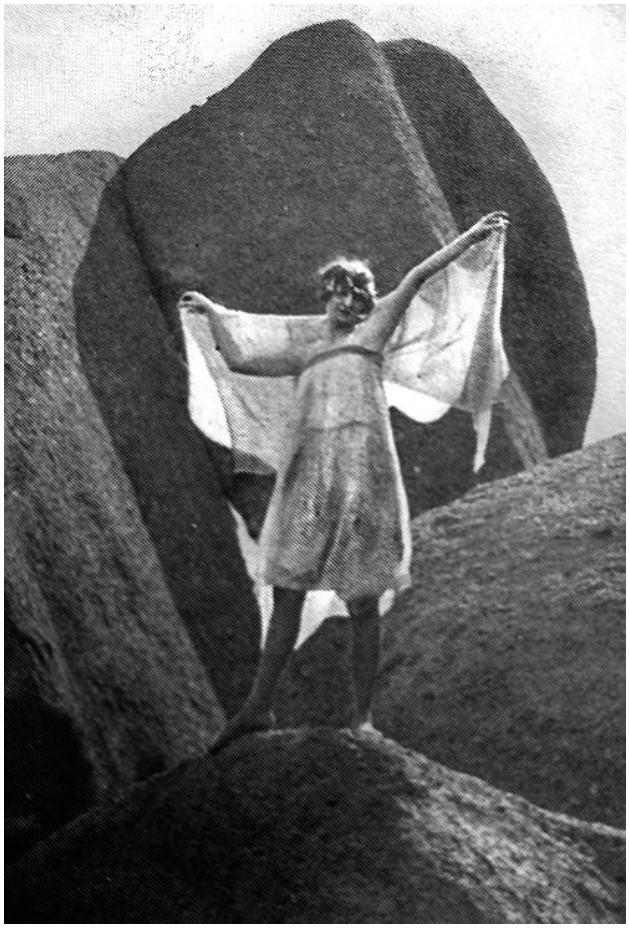

Figure 2 Crete Wood in character as Wyoming, Vedauwoo Glen, 1924. Accessed online at https://www.vedauwoo.org/vertical-dance/.

Epistemic Anxieties and the Wooing of Wyoming

The strong baritone voice of Albert Bowman, director of the University Agricultural Extension Agency and the much lauded choice to embody the spirit of the Tetons in the pageant, certainly had his work cut out for him on opening day. He strained, but with noted success, to project his lines over the howling wind to reach the spectators sitting beneath the trees at the rear of Vedauwoo Glen. Crete Wood, who played Wyoming, fortunately spoke so little that being drowned out by the elements hardly mattered at all to the audience. Harold Gilbert recalled the challenges of the first performance decades later in good humor, but generally took pride in his deliverance that day, difficult as it was to be seen and heard by all. As the title role, Gilbert had

the task of being the only character in the pageant that needed to portray some type of dynamic growth over the course of the performance. Through episode one, the University of Wyoming football standout leapt around the rocks looking in on the fantastical procession of dancers as Wyariel and Teton narrated most of the events. At the end, Bowman, hidden in the rocks (he was a disembodied voice from the mountains, after all) called the character Vedauwoo to his mission: "Wyoming belongs to those who love, and serve, and sacrifice." Gilbert called back to the rocks, "My whole life long I'll learn to love." "Then learn of the Indian," the voice of the Tetons responded, "how the Great Mystery speaks to Man through his works; how the Spirit Father, who made all things, is in everything; how Man with every breath of air draws in the life of the Great Spirit."[52]

In the preface that accompanied the script which she submitted as her M.A. thesis the following year, DeKay explained that her primary source material for the second episode was Natalie Curtis's *The Indians' Book.* From Curtis, DeKay emphasized what she saw as the continuity (rather than rupture) of Indigenous religious beliefs with many of the basic observations of western Protestant Christianity. "It is interesting to note that the primitive Red Man, long before he came in contact with civilization," she began, "had many ideas in common with the white races." Among them, DeKay claimed, were:

> The belief that man may best commune with the divine through fasting, solitude and prayer; that man has an astral or soul body, which may, even in life separate from the physical body and, this is means he receive divine revelation;…that the earth is round; that man as put on this earth for a definite purpose; that man may be healed by faith; that

[52] For quoted lines see, DeKay, "Vedauwoo Pageant," episode I, 12; For actors and conditions, see, "Pageant Proves Big Success," *The Laramie Republican-Boomerang,* June 9, 1924, 6.

all men should be united in brotherhood; that life is everlasting; that the world was made in kindness "covered with love and finished with beauty."[53]

DeKay wanted her "Genesis of the Indian" episode to show that white settlers were not really violent conquerors who overturned the moral universe in the land now called Wyoming. Rather, she imagined a harmonization of spiritual beliefs and, as such, claimed that white settlers took on a similar mantel that the Indigenous peoples of Wyoming, too, had carried before their arrival.

The great irony, of course was the incoherence of declaring at the beginning of episode that, "like the whites," Indians believed in an everlasting soul and a moral imperative to care for the land, before that vision of Indigenous peoples vanishes at the end of episode two only to be replaced by characters named "Naked Savages" or "Indian Scouts" in episode three. DeKay's declaration of a kingdom of brotherhood and beauty, it seems, was a rhetorical nod to some imagined past. It was certainly not in line with Du Bois's opening *credo* in *Darkwater***,** which, in 1920, used almost identical language to describe his aspirational hope for the future.[54]

Like many "friend of the Indian" styled reformers of her day, including Curtis herself, DeKay read over the subtleties of the seventy Indigenous authors who contributed knowledge of songs, dances, folklore, and beliefs to *The Indians' Book* in 1907. DeKay eagerly took the words of the Cheyenne leader, Hiamovi, also known as High Chief, who declared his wish that through the book, whites would "know that the Indian people was made by the Great Mystery for a purpose."[55] That purpose, in her reading, was to furnish settlers with a deeper appreciation for all the meaning and moral lessons that the lands of North America would impart to its new

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[53] DeKay, "Vedauwoo Pageant," preface, 1-2.

[54] On offensive character descriptions see DeKay, "Vedauwoo Pageant," cover page for episode III; W. E. B. Du Bois, *Darkwater* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, & Co., 1920), 2.

[55] Quoted, Hiamovi (High Chief) in the Foreword of Natalie Curtis Burlin, *The Indians' Book: An Offering by the American Indians of Indian Lore, Musical and Narrative, to Form a Record of the Songs and Legends of the Their Race* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1907).

occupants. However, DeKay disregarded High Chief's claim that distinct Indian peoples, like his own Cheyenne, had something unique to offer American culture. Instead, DeKay presented a non-descript Indigenous folk belief that was roughly her own. Thus, her pageant episode entitled "The Genesis of the Indians" contained no representations or origin stories of actual Indigenous peoples such as the Lakota, Cheyenne, Arapahoe, Crow, or Shoshone. Instead, "Holy Man," a Native character introduces the audience to legends of the four spirits—Black Bear, Mountain Lion, Wild Cat, and Wolf—which DeKay admitted was a "composite" of various stories contained within *The Indians' Book.* When Holy Man "vanishes" at the end of the episode, it is clear that he has fulfilled the task laid out for him by the Great Mystery, to bequeath the land and its stories to the impeding settlers.[56]

Despite the abrogation of actual Indigenous histories in the pageant, the need for an ongoing, if backgrounded, Native presence points to one distinct western take on O'Brien's firsting and lasting paradigm. Given that Wyoming is a white modern woman, Vedauwoo is a white native man—though still unfulfilled in his racial destiny—and nearly all of the supernatural realm of episode one (save Indian Paintbrush) is populated by white characters, the racial logics are given meaning by the presumed tensions between whites and Indians. Indigenous peoples *needed* to remain and share space with whites for much longer to achieve the expected western narrative dynamic. It would not do for Indians to disappear from her pageant too quickly.[57]

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[56] DeKay, "Vedauwoo Pageant," preface, 1; and episode II, esp. 10-11.

[57] DeKay tells a unique type of "lasting" narrative in Episode I. Her Native character "Holy Man" "vanishes" at the end of the episode, but Indians are characters throughout the rest of the pageant. One can read Holy Man as the "Noble Savage" trope whose passing is lamentable. The Indians who remain are thereafter given names like "Naked Savage," "Indian Scout," and other such representations common stereotypes of the western genre. At the end of episode four, when the only historical Indigenous character, Shoshone Chief Washakie, compels his people to be removed to the reservation, the lasting of the Indians is complete in the pageant. In this way, DeKay can write a lasting of "Indian nobleness" while at the same time keeping Indian caricatures in her western story, who eventually, are "lasted" as well.

There were also the performative questions surrounding the white, likely college aged, people acting in Red-face during "The Genesis of the Indian" as well as depicting the Indigenous characters in the following episodes. Where did these children and young adults learn to "play Indian?" The source of their performances, ironically, seem to be the very same popular media that DeKay, Rollins, and others found so objectionable in its depiction of white pioneers and western history. Phil Deloria argues for the perennial place of "playing Indian" within American culture reaching back to the nation's founding. Prior to films, which had already begun circulating by the 1920s, theatrical performances and the ever popular Wild West Shows likely offered the budding thespians in Cheyenne and Laramie a framework for Indian caricatures. While DeKay believed her source material would produce an "authentic" portrayal of Indigenous peoples, it remains likely that her all-white cast merely drew upon widespread performative stereotypes.[58]

Though "real" Indigenous peoples—in either person or performance—did not take the stage in Vedauwoo Glen, Deloria reminds us that the fictionalized version of "the Indian" onstage necessarily stood in reference to existing Native Americans who remained simultaneously present and absent in American consciousness.[59] In a pageant that was not only about the making of national citizens but also expressly about the making of "Wyoming," that is, a place-making project, Kevin Bruyneel's formulation of settler memory is apt. Over the course of an hour of dances and songs telling of the four spirits and the story of Holy Man, as well as the episode that follows, DeKay's story subsumed the violent settlement of Wyoming into a

[58] Some of the older actors might have been able to draw from their experience with Shoshone, Arapaho, or other Native individuals whose wider worlds encompassed southern Wyoming, or that they based elements of the performance on Indian actors and participants in Wild West shows and Rodeo performances. See, Phil Deloria, *Playing Indian* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998).

[59] Bruyneel, *Settler Memory,* 13-14.

narrative of passive and inevitable territorial transfer but does not erase "Indians" as a backdrop to her story. Reflecting upon the disappearance of Holy Man and the creation of Wyoming-as-territory, Vedauwoo declares that he now knows what he must do to woo Wyoming. Over the wind howling in Vedauwoo Glen, Harold Gilbert took the hand of young Crete Wood and declared, "I shall win Wyoming with the strange charm of the Indian love song." He professed:

> When you look upon me I am satisfied / As flowers that drink the dew. / Your breath is their fragrance at evening / In the moon-of-fading-leaf. / When you are beside me, / My heart sings, dancing before the wind-spirit / In the moon-of-strawberries. / I tremble with love as the reeds by the river; / I burn as the dusk in the contented West; / I await thee as hills wait the morning; / I desire thee as eagles the storm; / I claim thee as silence claims the stars.[60]

Wood turned to the crowd to deliver Wyoming's rebuke of the impetuous Vedauwoo. "You are not my lover, you desire vainly," she stated coldly. "You are like the wild bird and the beast, a part of nature, but you do not understand her."[61] However much DeKay sought out Curtis's work to lend an "authentic" Indigenous folk world to her songs and dances or imposed certain religious and ideological continuities between the beliefs of Indigenous peoples and settlers, it seems that DeKay was nevertheless unable or unwilling to shed racists tropes that positioned Indigenous peoples as a part of the natural world, but not the modern one.

Natalie Curtis insisted that she was but a "pencil in the hand of the Indian." Scholars like Fredrick Hoxie have suggested that Native-white collaborations such as DeKay's source in *The Indians' Book,* can be read as Indigenous peoples attempting to "talk back to civilization."[62]

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[60] DeKay, "Vedauwoo Pageant," episode II, 9.
[61] DeKay, "Vedauwoo Pageant," episode II, 10.
[62] See, Frederick Hoxie, ed. *Talking Back to Civilization: Indian Voices from the Progressive Era* (Boston: Bedford/St. Martins, 2001); Michelle Wick Patterson, *Natalie Curtis Burlin: A Life in Native and African American Music* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2010); "'A Pencil in the Hand of the Indian': Cross Cultural Interactions in Natalie Curtis's *The Indians' Book,*" *Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era* 9:4 (Oct. 2010), 419-449.

Michelle Wick Patterson concurs and argues that High Chief and Curtis's other Indigenous interlocutors "sought to shape popular representations of their tribes."[63] The irony of DeKay's blatant disavowal of this perspective through the rebuke of Vedauwoo spoken by Wyoming at this point in the pageant is that a similar desire to shape popular representations of her own home state was the expressed purpose of her pageant and the wider epistemological thrust of her intellectual community.

The new mass-ness of the media world in the US stirred up anxieties and responses of this sort for all groups. At the same moment that High Chief and others worked with Curtis on compiling authentic songs, dances, and folklore, D. W. Griffith's first attempts to lengthen the feature film included several scripts centered on Indian characters (some of whom were Indigenous actors who often had to play out white supremacist tropes on screen). Similarly, in line with his scholarly program which emphasized the unique contributions that African Americans could make to human society, W. E. B. Du Bois wrote and produced the history pageant "The Star of Ethiopia" in 1911. This took place just ahead of the release of Griffith's *Birth of a Nation* and during an era in which Black-face minstrel shows were the most popular form of musical entertainment in the country**.** The previous chapter noted also that Clarence Toliver, somewhat anticipating Wyoming's turn toward historical memory-making, began penning the Black community's own history and contribution to the founding of Cheyenne and Wyoming Territory by the early 1920s. At the same time, his columns demanded the end of racist caricatures and misrepresentations of Black Cheyennites in the white press, portrayals which he believed led to violence and injustice.[64]

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[63] Patterson, "A Pencil in the Hand of the Indian," 419.

[64] On Griffith's Indian films, see Deloria, *Indians in Unexpected Places* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2004), 76 and 85; On Du Bois, see, Rebecca Hewett, "'Looking at One's Self through the Eyes of Others':

If High Chief worried that whites would deny the humanity and existence of Indigenous peoples, or if Toliver rightly feared violence against his community, we she also ask what DeKay and others in Cheyenne and Laramie reform circles feared. What was the cost of ostensible "misrepresentations" in the media and culture to Wyoming? In 1923, just a year before *Vedauwoo* premiered, a white lawyer in Cheyenne, Phillip Rollins summed up his "epistemic anxiety" quite clearly in an essay printed in *Annals***.** Claiming to quote an unnamed Australian soldier to make his point, Rollins suggested: "Unless the Americans substitute a truthful picture of the Western pioneer in place of the libelous caricature that now prevails, that caricature someday will rise up and haunt future Americans as Botany Bay has haunted us. Why don't the Americans advertise the actual Western pioneer, and thus convert a national liability into a national asset."[65] At first glance, the comparison between the U.S. West and Australia's penal colony at Botany Bay suggests that the primary concern is a "libelous" depiction of the first settlers as criminals, vagabonds, and otherwise those outside the law and decent society. But deeper still, lurks the anxious fear that western colonization and state-building might be maligned and delegitimized precisely at the moment when the West needed more settlers, investment, and boosterism, not a widespread belief that places like Wyoming lionized criminals and ruffians and the lawlessness in which they thrived. Thus Rollins concluded that the new "western" genre could "continue to give to the public, for its entertainment, their oftentimes charming pictures of fictitious Westerners, but let the public be *taught* [emphasis added] that the pictures are inaccurate, that the average Western pioneer was a constructive citizen, a builder of

Representations of the Progressive Era Middle Class in W. E. B. Du Bois's The Star of Ethiopia," *Theater History Studies,* Vol. 30 (2010), 187-201.

[65] Phillip Rollins, "To the State Historian," *Annals of Wyoming,* 1:1 (1923), 6.

empire, and not a 'two-gun' killer."[66] In short, the epistemic anxiety, like that of handwringing colonial officials in Asia or Africa, was the legitimacy and persistence of empire.

Jeremiads against the "fallacious lawlessness" of the American West sometimes struggled to identify precise targets of critique while still balancing the mythic figures of the Old West atop their pedestals. At the risk of toppling their heroes like Custer, Buffalo Bill, Calamity Jane, Jim Bridger and others whose proximity to Wyoming's history was often cherished by locals, historians and cultural critics picked carefully through their collective past and often found the ultimate culprits of misrepresentations to be racially-suspect whites or transplanted, faux-westerners. The state historian and editor of *Annals***,** Frances Beard (whose husband had just finished his tenure on the Wyoming Supreme Court), dedicated a great deal of space in the early issues of *Annals* to addressing what she felt was the core of the representational issue by pulling together the writings of an earlier generation.[67] In 1885, William Nye, then Wyoming's most notable, if sometimes loathed, newsman and self-ascribed humorist in the lineage of Mark Twain, described the challenges facing the state's image through a tale about the vanity of a "bad young man from New Hampshire" who tried to make a go of it as a "real" westerner. Even before this easterner could partake of the vices of chance and women, Nye suggested the first of many tells as to his outsider status (aside from his poorly chosen sidearms and fanciful "duds") was that he followed the call of "a large colored man" who beckoned him to stay at the "Interocean HO-tel!!" Despite the fact that Barney Ford, the Black man who built and owned the Interocean in those years, had very much managed to carve a space near the center of social life in Cheyenne, his race still rendered him in the eyes of Nye and local white readers as an easy

[66] Rollins, "To the State Historian," *Annals of Wyoming,* 1:1 (1923), 7.

[67] For Beard, see front matter and "Foreword" as well as "Notes (Historian)," *Annals of Wyoming,* 1:1 (1923), 2, 14, 15.

narrative device to lament (or perhaps explain) their city's wide reputation as a difficult and anything-goes type of place.[68]

Nye penned his (likely fictional) encounter with the easterner as a way to critique the validity of such images of Wyoming. That is, he suggested to readers that the more cosmopolitan assumptions of eastern visitors not only meant they would dress out of style, but they would also foolishly stay and eat at a Black-owned hotel and believe they had seen the "real" Cheyenne. Worse still, when these outsiders inevitably used their last few dollars to buy a train ticket back East, the details and embellishments of their western adventures would populate the minds of other easterners who looked at Wyoming with either voyeuristic fascination or contempt.

Finding ways to associate ostensibly incorrect visons of the West with racial "others" was only half of the project. The other half involved a rehabilitation of stories involving white pioneers and settlers. For instance, in his *Annals* column, Rollins decried the representation of fur trapper and notorious "mountain man" Jim Bridger as a drunk in the 1923 movie, *The Covered Wagon,* based on a book of the same name by Emmerson Hough. Rollins suggested that Bridger was no heavier a drinker than any other mountain man of his day, a claim that hardly seemed to exonerate his subject.[69] DeKay sought to balance this part of Bridger's character in *Vedauwoo* as well. In the central scene of episode three, the crowd in Vedauwoo Glen demanded that the characters of David E. Jackson and Jim Bridger perform the "Shooting of the Cup." In the original folk story, which DeKay found retold in Hough's *The Covered Wagon,* Jackson and Bridger show off their impressive marksmanship by shooting a clump of mud or a silver dollar

[68] Bill Nye, "The Holy Terror: Bill Nye Interviews a Bad Young Man from New Hampshire," *Annals of Wyoming* 3:1 (July 1925), 94-95.

[69] Rollins, "To the State Historian," *Annals of Wyoming,* 1:1 (1923), 6-7; In the third issue of *Annals,* Beard and the advisory board which included Hebard, decided to devote a fair about of the issue to Maj. General Grenville Dodge's biography of Bridger, which was certainly among the most laudatory. See, "Biographical Sketch of James Bridger," *Annals of Wyoming* 1:3 (January 1924), 1-11.

out of the handle-hole of a tin cup filled with whisky and perched atop each other's head. Importantly, this takes place after a full day and night of heavy drinking. DeKay may have bristled at the drunken revelry of the story but could not forsake it in her pageant. Her compromise was to have Bridger decline Jackson who suggested before they shot: "Spose'n we have snort now?" Instead, Bridger responsibly counters, "After we both shoot, we kin drink." Though something of the original legend may have been lost, crowds still adored the scene.[70]

DeKay included a pivotal scene in episode four, "The Passing of the Range," that addressed "the Spirit of Lawlessness." Just after the shooting of the cup but before the "noble" cowboy figure rides off, quite literally, into the setting western sun over a rocky ridge, audiences in Vedauwoo Glen delighted in the antics of a rowdy bunch of cowhands playing cards around a fire as they contemplated driving an entire flock of sheep and its shepherd off a cliff to preserve the range grass for their boss's cattle. Their names would have suggested to the onlookers that the men, Skinny Joe, the Kid, the Rebel, and Black Bart, represented different quadrants of undesirable figures from the range era. The desperate thug (Skinny Joe), the shrewd criminal (the Kid, alluding to Billy the Kid), the former confederate (the Rebel), and the "gentlemen bandit" (Black Bart) all represent tropes that continue in the western genre to the present.[71]

DeKay used the criminal and outsider status of the gang to depict the "Spirit of Lawlessness." In the pageant, the "Spirit of Lawlessness" whips the four men into a dancing frenzy before they go off to commit their crimes. Like Nye's "bad young man from New Hampshire," Vedauwoo is temporarily entranced by the spectacle of their dance before he catches a glimpse of Wyoming's scornful ire brought on by his gravitation toward the wrong type of character. DeKay's own gender ideologies altered the existing virtues of masculinity here.

[70] DeKay, "Vedauwoo Pageant," episode III, 3.
[71] DeKay, "Vedauwoo Pageant," episode IV, 10-13.

Where figures like Theodore Roosevelt looked to violence and struggle as necessary, or where Burroughs's celebrated Tarzan for his mercurial violence, DeKay suggested that rather than a passion that men must control and use, violence was a stage of human development that needed to be progressed beyond. While not all tales of lawlessness or violence had to be fully expunged, in DeKay's narrative, they did need to be contextualized according to the didactic course of Vedauwoo's attempt to woo Wyoming.[72]

As we have seen, in "The Pathbreakers" and "The Passing of the Range," DeKay developed a central conceptual frame for who could and who could not be "at home with Wyoming." Her assumptions would not have been foreign to her audience. The themes of these episodes mirrored a wider discourse about western "heritage" and the changing meaning of the "pioneers." Speaking directly into this public debate, DeKay used the narrator of these episodes, Clio the Muse of History, to dictate which parts of the "pioneer spirit" were laudable and deserving of reverence and commemoration and which were anachronistic.[73]

For DeKay's waffling protagonist and his audience, instruction regarding the "Pioneer Spirit" became a site of what Stoler calls "epistemic anxieties."[74] It was not merely the fear that outsiders and future generations would learn "the wrong" kind of history about the West and its early white settlers. Rather from the vantage point of a thinly settled state with meager or embryonic institutions, Wyoming's circle of historians and reformers worried that "authentic"

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[72] In this section of the pageant, DeKay is trafficking in some prevailing stereotypes of lawless westerners. However, rather than suggesting that these men are representative of contemporary westerners, she uses them as a narrative foil. Interestingly, though DeKay, Hebard, and others praised Owen Wister, his title character in *The Virginian* very closely fit the mold, not of the celebrated cowboy figure in Vedauwoo, but of the cowhands around the fire. Like them, Wister's unnamed protagonist, is a loyal cattleman who is pushed beyond the law at times.

[73] The ambiguous way that DeKay introduces Clio as Dr. Grace Hebard in her preface to the pageant script leaves open the possibility that Hebard herself performed the lines of the Muse. DeKay says: "The third episode is based largely on Dr. Grace Hebard's *The Pathbreakers* from which it takes its name. Clio, the muse of history, represents the author of this work. Her lines are for the most part quotations from *The Song of Three Friends* and *The song of Hugh Glass* by Neihardt." DeKay, "Vedauwoo Pageant," preface, 2.

[74] Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain*.

accounts of the past would struggle to find a toehold in a culture awash with other narratives. Ultimately, the rehabilitated versions of white settler myths for popular consumption not only had to portray their subject as a "constructive citizen, a builder of empire, and not a 'two-gun' killer," but they also had to avoid the many documentary ruptures that told of a more diverse West filled with Mexican American citizens with much deeper claims to land and property, Black cowboys and businesswoman making their way in the world, or Asian railroad workers and labor organizers outmaneuvering the state or hostile employers in an era of exclusion. Such a vision would, in the minds of these reformers, not have enticed white settlers to their state at a moment when growth was desperately needed. The different ways that accounts of the West's profound diversity were either broken up, deemphasized, or erased entirely reveal a "colonial common sense." This, Stoler writes, included shifting coordinates of "'what was unwritten' because it could go without saying and 'everybody knew it.'"[75]

Subsuming Racial History in Vedauwoo Glen

The fifth and final episode, a "Pageant of the Seasons" was the pinnacle of DeKay's moral tale as it finally featured the union of Wyoming and Vedauwoo, but it was a mere afterthought to many of the reviewers and audience members. Those individuals noted that the real climax had been the stories of the pioneers and cowboys. [76] Episode four ended with the deeply romantic cowboy ballad and Vedauwoo literally receiving his degree from the University president, all of which very nearly compelled Wyoming of Vedauwoo's merits. In perfect cadence with the late progressive era, DeKay ended the most dramatic episode, "The Passing of the Range" with the arrival of the University, Vedauwoo's gaining of knowledge and

[75] Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain,* 3.

[76] For comments on the anti-climax of the final episode, see, "Pageant Proves Big Success," *The Laramie Republican-Boomerang,* June 9, 1924, 6.

enlightenment, and the fruition of the state's institutions. Though the pageant still told of various treasured or romanticized ideals of the Old West, it nevertheless conveyed that such stories were ultimately not sufficient to become modern, authentic citizens of the West. For instance, Wyoming shunned Vedauwoo's Indian song as bestial and ignorant; his pioneer aesthetics were quaint and uncivilized; after donning the hat and six-shooter of the Cowboy and professing his love still Vedauwoo could not succeed for he was still too prone to lawlessness and adhered to individualism to a fault.[77]

Of course, the real world that her audience actually inhabited stood in stark contrast to each episode's moral platitudes. The Northern Arapahoe, Eastern Shoshone, Crow and Northern Cheyenne had retained reservation lands, though greatly reduced in parts of their ancestral territory. They stepped into the "modern" west, whatever that actually meant, along with everyone else. The same year *Vedauwoo* premiered, many citizens of those Native nations also gained the right to vote and hold citizenship in the U.S. state.[78] Against the notion that settlers moving west and claiming homesteads constituted an epoch in Wyoming's history that was never to return, by 1924, most of Wyoming remained "vacant" in terms any nineteenth-century settler would have understood. Throughout the early 1900s and 1910s, the world-famous Old West showman William F. Cody had invested decades of his show's profits to develop the farm and rangeland around the Wyoming town just east of Yellowstone National Park that bore his name. Fickle privatized irrigation and reclamation projects proved fully inept to attract any actual settlers. When he died in 1917, Cody had stated "All my interests are still with the West—the

[77] DeKay, "Vedauwoo Pageant," episode IV, 15-16.

[78] See, Henry Stamm IV, *People of the Wind River: The Eastern Shoshones, 1825-1900* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1999); and Daniel McCool, Jennifer Robison, and Susan Olson, *Native Vote: American Indians, the Voting Rights Act, and the Right to Vote* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007); Stephen Kantrowitz, "Jurisdiction, Civilization, and the Ends of Native American Citizenship: The View from 1866," *Western Historical Quarterly* 52:2 (March 2021), 189-208.

modern West." By the premier of *Vedauwoo* seven years later, most of his interests remained where he left them, waiting for hardy "pathbreakers" to make their way across the arid plains.[79] And most tellingly, the noble but dangerous life on the range, as she saw it, may have passed, but many of the unseemly elements of that era which DeKay so disliked had not gone anywhere. During the entire decade leading up to the staging of the pageant, the "Spirit of Lawlessness" played one more, violent movement. In 1919, the lynching of an unnamed Black man in Hudson, Wyoming was the last in a depressingly long string of racial lynchings which catapulted Wyoming into the inglorious position of having more extra-legal mob killings of Black men in relation to its overall Black population of any other state in the U.S.[80]

Regardless of a somewhat anti-climactic ending and social commentary that seemed deeply out of step with reality at times, reviewers of the pageant raved that it was bound to be a pillar of local culture for generations. One paper even declared after a tour of the amphitheater with DeKay ahead of the production itself that "those familiar with script and cast confidently expect it to become a national institution."[81] After one more run in Vedauwoo Glen in 1928, along with a handful of productions in Laramie auditoriums because of weather in 1931, the grand pageant of Wyoming's history and folklore disappeared. Harold Gilbert, the young man who played Vedauwoo in the 1924 pondered why it had ended; suspecting that the sheer scale of it all meant that it could never be a regular show because "there was only one Mabelle DeKay."[82] It is also a likelihood that the show could not have been profitable to continue on during the

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[79] Deutsch, *Making a Modern U.S West,* 30.

[80] Todd Guenther, "'The List of Good Negroes': African American Lynchings in the Equality State," *Annals of Wyoming* 81:2 (Spring 2009), 2-33. (Especially 23-24.)

[81] "Visit Amphitheater where University to Give Symbolic Play," *The Laramie Republican-Boomerang,* May 2, 1924, 7.

[82] Harold Gilbert, "Vedauwoo," unpublished autobiography, 134. Harold and Hila Gilbert Vedauwoo Materials, 1990. Acc. #2722, Box 1, American Heritage Center Archives, Laramie, Wyoming. See also, "Vedauwoo (Earthborn) June 5, 1931, Pageant Program," Colleges and Universities—University of Wyoming—Entertainment & Programs, C686, Vertical Files, American Heritage Center, Laramie, Wyoming.

Depression. She had secured only $1,000 from the Board of Directors at the University to put on the first production. Though reports were that ticket sales far surpassed the cost, DeKay herself seemed wary of the fact that nearly all parts of the production from costuming to musical accompaniment had to be done by amateur student laborer, and that such a model had its own immense challenges.[83] Some have suggested that she and Charles DeKay divorced sometime after 1928 and was subsequently terminated from her University position. However, many state documents and censuses after the 1930s and 1940 continue to show Mabelle and Charles living together and listed as husband and wife. Additionally, even if a law did exist prohibiting the employment of single women, as suggested, it was not very often followed as Dr. Grace Hebard famously remained single throughout her long tenure at the University of Wyoming.[84] Rather than a divorce, which has no documentary evidence, the 1940 Wyoming Census records that the couple's residence in 1935 was Sioux City, Iowa. Thus it seems that as a banker Charles' work life was strained during the Depression, causing him to temporarily relocate elsewhere.[85] Whatever brought about its abrupt end, the pageant quickly faded into the local myths in Laramie and Cheyenne, surfacing every once in a while, perhaps when visitors or younger generations inquired about the meaning of the name given to the boulder outcroppings halfway between the two cities just to the north of the Lincoln Highway (later Interstate-80).[86]

[83] "Racial Elements and Folklore," Wyoming WPA Subject File 1163 Albany County Folklore, 15.

[84] It is entirely unclear where the idea of her divorce has come from. See "Vertical Dance" page for the current production's history of the pageant and DeKay, vedauwoo.org/vertical-dance/.

[85] The 1940 census is unique in that it recorded a person's residence place in 1935. See, 1940 U.S. Federal Census, Laramie, Albany, Wyoming; Roll: m-t0627-04568; Page: 5A; Enumeration District: 1-8.

[86] Today, Vedauwoo Glen attracts a very different type of tourist: climbers. Through this new pastime, however, something of a renaissance of the pageant has emerged at the intersection of the place's various uses. Since 1997, the pageant has been revived and adapted to a modern audience, only now it is largely performed on the face of the rock itself, with actors suspended in the air as the story is told not with racialized dances of Indians but with feats of acrobatics and "vertical dancing."

As it was performed just four, possibly five times, *Vedauwoo* likely did not saturate the culture of southern Wyoming with its damaging anti-Indian, pro-settler ideologies as effectively as it might have done had it ever achieved the running success of pageants like *The Mission Play*. Unlike other large outdoor productions which included Old West, Cowboys, and Indian themes that scholar Katie Phillips identifies as "salvage tourism," it seems clear enough that DeKay produced *Vedauwoo* to address epistemic anxieties, not financial ones.[87] The pageant is thus a little known, but densely aggregated, collection of counternarratives intended to shape collective, local identity in southern Wyoming. Anne Haggard, a resident of Cheyenne and a member of the university board of trustees noted in a letter to DeKay's supervisor in the drama school that "Interest in *Vedauwoo* is very keen in Cheyenne. I don't know of when anything of local character has evoked such enthusiasm and an attitude of cooperation. The idea of presenting the traditions of Wyoming with beauty, along with strength—the predominating spirit—seems to me to be something we are all hungry for a relief from the wild west chord which has been so sadly overdone."[88] To all those who came to watch *Vedauwoo*, contemporary expressions of regional exceptionalism, white settler supremacy, and a commitment to historical progressivism were clearly reflected in the production.

Though the pageant did not continue for long, it retained a close association with conversations about identity for at least another decade and took its place in a wider discussion of race. The author(s) who complied the 1937 Albany County FWP document on "Racial Elements and Folklore," argued that "Wyoming's racial elements and traditions represent a compound of Indian, European and eastern American influences."[89] Identifying the ethnic

[87] Phillips, *Staging Indigeneity.*
[88] "Racial Elements and Folklore," Wyoming WPA Subject File 1163 Albany County Folklore, 16.
[89] "Racial Elements and Folklore," Wyoming WPA Subject File 1163 Albany County Folklore, 1-2, 10.

heterogeneity of Wyoming's citizens was an important step in unifying diverse traditions into a collective "folk." However, the "right type" of diversity was just as important. Following Bruyneel's theory of the absence/presence of Indigeneity in American life and politics as function of "settler memory," the FWP writer acknowledged that Indian mythology and history shaped contemporary, white Wyoming culture. At some moments, the author also went farther to engage in acts of erasure and racial disavowal, par excellence. "At Rock Springs" the town infamous for the mass murder of Chinese residents in 1885, "is to be found the 'melting pot' of the State. About this common centre, Italians, Greeks, Russians, Finns, and Irish have mingled in a fraternal atmosphere." Not only are the Chinese conspicuously absent from this list (as indeed they had been driven out a half century before) but as historian Brigida Blasi has shown, a large, permanent contingent of Black coal miners lived in Rock Springs as well.[90]

According to the document's author, because the variety of (European) national origins, the relatively small number of cohesive "individual groups…such as the Chinese, Negroes, Italians, and the Greeks," and the short period of settlement, they reasoned that "tradition and folk-lore have had little time to crystalize into a form peculiar to the State and its environment." The entire discussion of the "racial elements" in Wyoming was, of course, leading up to the author's central point of interest: Mabelle Land DeKay's history pageant.

At forty-three pages in length, "Racial Elements and Folklore" was filed along with the Albany County documents, though it generally discussed Wyoming at large, suggesting its author or authors lived in or near Laramie. The second half of the document was comprised of various stories of Indian legends under the heading: "Folklore and Folkways" and was clearly

[90] "Racial Elements and Folklore," Wyoming WPA Subject File 1163 Albany County Folklore, 10-11; Brigida R. Blasi, "Rediscovering Dana: The Forgotten Black Coal Miners of Southern Wyoming," *Western Historical Quarterly* 51:3 (Autumn 2020), 237-265.

attributed to a Jean M. Barrett. The first half, however, listed no author. It began with many of the statements about race and diversity as referenced above. The author used that discussion as a preface to the dozen pages which recounted the history of *Vedauwoo*. The material on the play, its creation, and its community response appeared in the first person, penned by Mabelle DeKay herself. Granted, with only partial documentation, it is impossible to know if DeKay was the FWP worker who, along with Jean Barrett, produced the document, or if the material written in her voice was merely taken from some other source. However, as the rest of the document judiciously uses quotation marks and often cites its sources. Therefore, "Racial Elements and Folklore" may very well be a meditation on Wyoming's real (and imagined) racial diversity from DeKay's point of view and connected to her life's work. The clearly articulated racial ideology that takes shape through the FWP document is consistent with the original production of Vedauwoo as well. In a moment of many uncertainties, Wyoming's future citizens needed a collective sense of identity and a memory of their origins around which to cohere. Against many "harmful" narratives about her home state, DeKay offered a *counternarrative* of her own. Its racial "elements" thus amalgamated into a new whole. It subdued and harmlessly incorporated Indigeneity. Whiteness (of most nationalities) was prized and celebrated. It fully excised or never mentioned racial others, like the Chinese. And it warily regarded other communities that were socially "suspect," as some "element" of a bygone era and thus jettisoned from the episode that lay ahead. DeKay caricatured such groups as men, plotting acts of lawlessness and playing a hand of poker around a campfire – a convenient foil to the progressive vision of Wyoming's future.[91]

[91] The "authorship" is likely something that cannot be known for certain. DeKay did reside in Laramie again by 1938 when this document was collected. Jean Barret's name appears prominently in the upper margins starting on page 21. The first twenty pages, however, do seem to be coherently arranged and contain the first person

♦ ♦ ♦

The archival grain, along which *Vedauwoo* flows, is hewn in long, parallel lines even to the present. The legacy of Wyoming's public and historical institutions some of which were founded by Frances Beard, and nurtured by the efforts of Grace Hebard, Phillip Rollins, Agnes Wright-Spring, and even Mabelle DeKay, shaped the narratives of memory and meaning in ways that long outlived their generation. The stories they told quickly subsumed those of people of color. As I suggested in the introduction to Part II, subsummation does not deny the existence of something (something like a long and regionally significant history of Blackness) *a priori*. Instead, settler epistemologies that operated and were formed through subsummation posited the ultimate *banality* of some narratives within a white, more "authentic" counternarrative. Narrators picked and chose convenient or novel spaces where blackness could persist or where any number of Black "firsts" could double as Black "lasts." Such counternarratives linger.

Even today, when public institutions across the West are at pains to offer a fuller and more representative history through their collections, so often what is *brought to them* by the public in the form of family papers or valuable antiques falls also along the old grain. While I researched in the state archives for this and the previous chapter, three times in the space of a single day, the archivist had to inform well-meaning patrons that they did not need their grandfather's collection of historic cattle-brand booklets, a worn copy of *Annals of Wyoming,* or some other piece of western ephemera. These, no doubt, already took up too much precious space in the stacks. But community engagement of this type represents the collection process that stretched all the way back to the first years of the institution in 1923 in Cheyenne. For many

Vedauwoo material that, at some point, was written by DeKay herself. "Racial Elements and Folklore," Wyoming WPA Subject File 1163 Albany County Folklore.

years, Frances Beard and the board printed all the acquisitions that the state's museum and archive had received quarterly. Diaries and manuscripts by "pioneer" citizens and "Old Timers," "Indian Saddles" and a "horseshoe found on [the] Custer Battlefield," and the papers of Grace Hebard, all made their way into collections by way of public donations.[92] That is to say, the public commends to their institutions what they already think matters to the stories they hold dear.

Similarly, by the late 1930s, when FWP writers searched nineteenth century newspapers for nuggets of historical significance, they seldom reprinted the "ruptures." Instead, as these researchers added more layers to the historical foundations in Wyoming, they found comfort in many of the old stories. Of course, they paid special attention to important "firsts" and "lasts." It seems the FWP writers had a clear mind about which stories mattered. What mattered, moreover, fit well with the world of fact and fancy that DeKay had imagined a decade earlier. Absent are nearly all articles and accounts of Black communities or their many social, fraternal, or church functions. No mentions of Barney Ford, Charles Cushinberry, or even William Jefferson Hardin. From time to time recorders found obituaries of "pioneer" era Black residents from across the state, but never mused upon the lives of young Black people cut short by illness or mob violence. The force of such a redacted counternarrative continues to labor and shape a collective memory of race and belonging. The logics of this "imagined past" were first harnessed and propelled by the inertia of the incredibly anxious moment of the early twentieth century when different racial pasts and futures vied for space in Wyoming and elsewhere in the West.

[92] "Accessions, December 31, 1923 to March 31, 1924," *Annals of Wyoming* 1:4 (April 1924), 20.

Chapter 5 Racial-Religious Scripts

We may be as tough and just such all-around reprobates as Governor Rollins says we are, but we are not quite as far down in the scale of iniquity as the benighted wretches who are lost to both God and Civilization in the barrens of Idaho!

—*The Nashua Weekly Telegraph*, Nashua, New Hampshire, 1899

As a matter of fact, Pocatello has six churches and eight church societies, and for her size is better provided for the decorous worship of God than any town or city in New Hampshire is or ever will be.

—*The Pocatello Tribune*, in response to the Nashua Weekly Telegraph, 1899

For many decades, 89 year-old Ezra Meeker nurtured an obsession with the Oregon Trail, its history, and its myth. He participated in its history first as a boy, and later retraced it several times by foot, horse, and wagon. In his nineth decade of life, he did so once more by automobile.[1] Standing on a shrub plain in 1920 north of Pocatello, he clearly regarded his own travels as an encapsulation of the rise of American modernity. Addressing a crowd of history buffs and lovers of local lore, Meeker regaled his listeners with a long speech about the unexpected and unintentional actors in this drama. The hinge of American imperial history, he claimed, was a specific event taking place in 1834 on the eastern edge of the contested Oregon country. Moreover, its significance overflowed into and through the stories that people then told

[1] Ezra Meeker, "Meeker, Ezra, Speech Delivered at Site of Old Fort Hall," page, 6, *ISU Special Collections and Archives*, MC 12, Box 4, Folder 8, Eli M. Oboler Library, Pocatello, Idaho. Hereafter cited as Meeker, "Speech at Old Fort Hall."

about it. Of those narratives that related U.S. expansion to the West Coast, Meeker acknowledged, "how much of that story is true, and how much is fiction, matters not."[2]

The willingness to engage with myths that were more than historically suspect allowed "place-makers" to blur the lines between history and fiction. In the 1910s and 1920s, Meeker's studies and fascination with the history of the Oregon Trail led him to search for the site of the original Fort Hall that once stood somewhere north of Pocatello on Bannock and Shoshone lands. The site had been lost to common knowledge among white locals while the city grew in the 1880s.[3] The trading post built in 1834 by Nathanial Wythe served as a vital stop along multiple routes of travel and commerce during the mid-nineteenth century. The 1867 treaty with the Bannock and Shoshone, however, located the old fort squarely within the boundaries of the proposed reservation. Whites abandoned the structure and built a new Fort Hall in 1870 further to the north.[4]

In 1920 virtually nothing of the original structure was apparent to the untrained eye. Neither the building nor any of the history associated with the fort's trading days interested Meeker for the moment. Instead, he drew upon the site's documentary connection to the arrival of Protestant missionaries to the Oregon Territory. According to the writings of Wythe, the leader of the 1834 expedition, the site where the fort was later constructed also happened to be where

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[2] Meeker, "Speech at Old Fort Hall," 5.

[3] In a 1920 editorial published before he arrived to give his speech, Meeker suggested to a reporter that the area be excised from the reservation and designated a National Park. He further worried that the proposed American Falls Dam on the Snake River would leave the site under fifty feet of water. Neither of these things came to pass and the area can now only be reached with permission from tribal officials. See, "Plans for Preserving Site of Old Fort Hall: Ezra Meeker, Nonagenarian, Sends Greetings to Pocatello People," *Pocatello Tribune,* June 29, 1920, 4; For local memory of the land rush in 1908, see, "Dust Flew When Whites Rushed for Indian Land," *Idaho State Journal (Centennial Edition),* June 21, 1982, Sec. 1, page 11.

[4] Meeker's role in the rediscovery is attested to in the original 1933 and 1934 Old Fort Hall Pageant, which dedicated a scene to his archeological work. See, "Days of Old Fort Hall Historical Pageant and Frontier Fair, program," page 1, *ISU Special Collections and Archives,* MC 063, Box 1, Folder 12, Eli M. Oboler Library, Pocatello, Idaho; See also, "Plans for Preserving Site of Old Fort Hall: Ezra Meeker, Nonagenarian, Sends Greetings to Pocatello People," *Pocatello Tribune,* June 29, 1920, 4.

the company's missionary, a Methodist minister named Jason Lee, preached a notable sermon on July 4. Since the group had just recently passed over the continental divide into the contested Oregon Territory, this, in the mind of Meeker and other later observers, was thus the "first sermon" to be delivered "west of the mountains."[5]

From his vantage point of American modernity in 1920, the entire missionizing effort was probably off base, he argued. He was quick not to disparage his subjects. "I have profound respect for the motive," he qualified, "and admiration of the heroism displayed by the actors in the great drama of Jason Lee, Marcus Whitman…and a host of other men and women who, prompted by religious zeal…were willing to sacrifice themselves on the altar of duty."[6] It was the object of their efforts that Meeker, standing on Native reservation land as he spoke, questioned. "They shot at one mark," he claimed, "the conversion of the Indians, and missed their aim, and hit another, the advancement of civilization to western coast of the continent."[7] Meeker's speech at the original Fort Hall site emphasized the noble futility of "converting the heathens" even as he celebrated the imperial machinations of the missionary ideals.[8]

This was no trifling affair. Indeed, Meeker posited that "the ownership of the Oregon Country hung in the balance" in 1834.[9] He considered Lee and his sermon to have been the catalyst for Wythe choosing that location for the fort. Lee had been advised by a mentor to preach to the Indians. Wythe may have agreed to the construction of the fort for the season in

[5] This interpretation of Lee's sermon, of course, is rife with issues. Not least of which is because any claim to a nineteenth century "first" naturally excludes centuries of Spanish Catholicism and the innumerable masses and homilies delivered by Christian clergy "west of the mountains" as Meeker put it. Meeker, "Speech at Old Fort Hall," 1-2, 4-6.

[6] Meeker, "Speech at Old Fort Hall," 2.

[7] Meeker, "Speech at Old Fort Hall," 2.

[8] Meeker, "Speech at Old Fort Hall," 2-6; Additionally, Ezra Meeker's life in the Pacific Northwest in the 1840-1850s is documented in his autobiographical history, Ezra Meeker, *Pioneer Remembrances of Puget Sound: The Tragedy of Leschi* (Seattle: Lowman & Hanford Stationery and Printing Co., 1905).

[9] Meeker, "Speech at Old Fort Hall," 5.

1834 to in some way accommodate Lee, or at least in Meeker's reasoning. Therefore, Meeker argued, without this first sermon Fort Hall might not have been constructed at all. Without Fort Hall, the American claim against practical British sovereignty would have been deeply hampered.[10]

It was a tenuous claim to say the least. Yet, the modest plaque that now marks the site of Lee's sermon and the original Fort Hall is a testament to how ephemeral the connection of myth or history to physical space must be to commence the project of memory work described by political scientist Kevin Bruyneel. Place-making requires not only a sense of the past but must also retain a kind of grounded quality that asserts the right of a community to be, not just anywhere and anyway, but in *this place* and organized in *this way*.[11] Fort Hall, however, sat inconspicuously in a field on a reservation far from daily settler life. Therefore, for that particular story to have any meaning, people needed to find new ways of rehearsing and retelling this counternarrative of place and origins. The chosen medium for the delivery of these racial and religious scripts should not be all that surprising.

The Old Fort Hall History Pageant premiered in 1933 with scenes from Wythe's expedition, Lee's sermon, the Oregon Trail, and other western stories that lasted over three hours from curtain to curtain. The following year, the producer and writer, Vio Mae Powell, revised her script to fit the theme of the fort's centennial celebration. The festivities included a Sun Dance performed by Native residents of Fort Hall, parades, speeches, and lectures. The whole schedule lasted from the Sun Dance ceremony on July 31 to August 10, 1934. Well over 1000 community

[10] Evidence for this in his speech is thin to non-existent, but as he said of the resulting rumors of eager Indian converts which drew so many missionaries to the West, "how much is fact and how much is fiction, matters not." Meeker, "Speech at Old Fort Hall," 5.

[11] For Bruyneel, this involves the dialectic of Indigenous absence/presence in all histories of settler place-making. For instance, the silent Shoshone or Bannock onlookers in 1834 are imagined to be the original cause of the first sermon before disappearing as convenient narrative devises in the expansion of the U.S. imperial nation-state to the Pacific. Bruyneel, *Settler Memory,* 2-3; Meeker, "Speech at Old Fort Hall," 1.

members participated in some part of the pageant during the festival. Such intense memorialization was deemed a necessary expenditure during the height of the depression. The pageant's program declared: "The history of Pocatello of the West is still in the making and the next few years are to be important to the history of the city."[12] In truth, the history of Pocatello was still in the making in more ways than just what was meant by the pageant director in 1934. Yes, the challenges of the Great Depression meant that the community's future (and thereby its future history) were ongoing. The pageant and other forms of cultural production also functioned as history in the (re)making.[13]

As I argued in the previous chapter, the recapitulation of collective myths is common in such times of upheaval. In Pocatello, religion and race provided the "scripts" for the reproduction of these counternarratives. As a kind of document, a relational formulation, and even a tool for storytelling, "scripts" are powerful for the ways in which they endure beyond the original "production." As Molina argues, "What once served to marginalize and disenfranchise one group can be revived and recycled to marginalize other groups."[14] They can always be taken up again and repurposed for new use. In 1982, during Pocatello's centennial celebration, this is exactly what happened with the Old Fort Hall Pageant. The physical 1934 script was discovered, repurposed, and adapted for more "modern" audiences. The "racial-religious scripts" of the

[12] Original program Quoted in "Days of Old Fort Hall Historical Pageant and Frontier Fair, program," page 1, *ISU Special Collections and Archives,* MC 063, Box 1, Folder 12, Eli M. Oboler Library, Pocatello, Idaho.

[13] The Old Fort Hall Pageant is perhaps bears a serendipitous parallel with the subject of Chapter 5 and the Vedauwoo pageant to be sure, but in many ways, it is entirely predictable and more akin to *The Mission Play* with its national and religious overtones. "Days of Old Fort Hall Historical Pageant and Frontier Fair, program," page 1, *ISU Special Collections and Archives,* MC 063, Box 1, Folder 12, Eli M. Oboler Library, Pocatello, Idaho.

[14] Natalia Molina, *How Race is Made in America: Immigration, Citizenship, and the Endure Power of Racial Scripts* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014), 7.

original pageant did not just persist in the 1982 revision, the durability of the themes of place-making and origins were the point.[15]

This chapter traces the history, the use, and the adaptation of racial-religious scripts in Pocatello and the surrounding area from the mid-nineteenth century up through the latter half of the twentieth. As we saw in Chapter Two, the Black community and its cherished, if embattled, religious institutions grew up in Pocatello at a time when categories of religious otherness or orthodoxy shaped life in the city. White settlers had already articulated and rearticulated racial-religious scripts for decades by the time the Black community found its footing in Pocatello as the largest racial minority in the 1920s. This chapter begins with nineteenth century constructions of the "Heathen" and the "Heretic" as categorical figures in white settler debates about national, regional, and, especially, local belonging. Yet, a less acknowledged feature of this was how broader conversations about religion and racial difference in Pocatello become fused to

[15] In my usage, "racial-religious scripts" is doing double duty and references several scholars beside Molina. The historian and religious studies scholar, Judith Weisenfeld, has deployed the term "religio-racial" to further expound upon the formation of Black and other racialized identities. Weisenfeld's subjects in *New World A-Coming: Black Religious and Racial Identity during the Great Migration* (New York: NYU Press, 2016), belong to groups outside Black Protestantism who understood "individual and collective identity as constituted in the conjunction of religion and race." (5) These movements, like the Nation of Islam or Ethiopian Hebrew Congregation, drew upon their religious identity and difference as a tactic in service of, and a foundation upon which they built, their rejection of anti-Black racism in the United States. Going further, Weisenfeld suggests that all religious groups in the U.S. might be seen as religio-racial "given the deeply powerful, if sometimes veiled, ways the American system of racial hierarchy has structured religious beliefs, practices, and institutions for all people in its frame." (5) My aim here is not to argue for or against Weisenfeld's claim, since my use of a similar term does not refer exclusively to the process of self-identification. Rather, by calling upon Molina's work, racial-religious scripts are to be understood as the relational, outward-face mechanism of articulating, creating, or giving meaning to racial difference though religious history, language, and ideas.

Other religious studies scholars have informed how I think about the comingling of these terms as well. In her recent work, *Heathen: Religion and Race in American History,* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2022), Kathryn Gin Lum argues that religion functions as essential, binding category in the paradox of racialization that is simultaneously hierarchical (difference in degree as one approaches whiteness) and binary (simply white and non-white). Exploiting or overlooking difference between groups has long been a feature of racial states and societies. Lum suggests that "the heathen's importance to racial clumping" is a vital if often overlooked part of critical race studies. In addition, see also: Anthea Butler, *White Evangelical Racism: The Politics of Morality in America* (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 2021); Jemar Tisby, *The Color of Compromise: The Truth about the American Church's Complicity in Racism* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2019); Paul Harvey, *Bounds of their Habitation: Race and religion in American History* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2016); Amanda Hendrix-Komoto, *Imperial Zions: Religion, Race, and Family in the American West and Pacific* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2022).

specific places (and spaces) in the city. A pattern emerged of infusing physical space with religious meaning that remains ambiguously racialized to this day. Black Pocatello stood, literally, at the confluence of these processes. Their churches countered the belief that the Black and ethnic neighborhood, later known as the Iron Triangle, had grown from and represented a kind of irreligious and immoral space within an otherwise ecclesial city.[16] Outsiders' views of the eastside changed only marginally from it being a sequestered and even quasi-carceral space at the beginning of the twentieth century, up through city's centennial celebration. This was evident in the ways in which local journalists and politicians used the neighborhood's decline in the 1970s to elide the history of racism in Pocatello. Molina uses the idea of racial scripts to illustrate "how race is made in America." The longer view of racial-religious scripts in Pocatello's history can help us ponder *where* race is made in America.

Heathens and Heretics in Greater Reconstruction Idaho

White Protestants and Catholics living in Pocatello returned to their homes following Ezra Meeker's Fort Hall speech in 1920. At that time, they could not deny that that the religious zeal of the movement begun in 1830 by Joseph Smith had indelibly marked the history of their corner of Idaho and the entire Great Basin.[17] As scholars, including W. Paul Reeve and Amanda Hendrix-Komoto argue, certain theological assertions made by the early Latter-day Saints placed the group not only on the outskirts of Protestant respectability, but also outside whiteness and

[16] Sources and newspapers indicate that the name of the neighborhood slowly changed over time. I mainly refer to the area by its most consistent geographic name, the eastside. Names like the Walled City and the Twilight Zone referred to the area's reputation as a redlight district. The name the Iron Triangle or the Triangle came about sometime in the 1920s-1940s. I use it interchangeably with the eastside primarily because it is the term by which the neighborhood is still known. On name changes see, "Oral History: Pocatello's Black Community," page 10, *ISU Special Collections and Archives,* MC 063, Box 2, Folder 1, Eli M. Oboler Library, Pocatello, Idaho.

[17] Lawrence G. Coates, Peter G. Boag, Ronald L. Hatzenbuehler and Merwin R. Swanson, "The Mormon Settlement of Southeastern Idaho, 1845-1900," *Journal of Mormon History* 20:2 (Fall 1994), 45-62; and Merle W. Wells, "Origins of Anti-Mormonism in Idaho, 1872-1880," *Pacific Northwest Quarterly* 47:4 (October 1956), 107-116.

national belonging.[18] Even before the issue of polygamy upended domestic assumptions of the nineteenth century, Joseph Smith's prophecies regarding the identity of Indigenous peoples in North America and the Pacific, along with the developing theology of embodiment, thrust the new religious movement into murky waters and in tension with the racial ideologies of the mid-nineteenth century. Smith's prophesies articulated a theological eschatology in which Indigenous peoples, supposedly the descendants of the lost tribes of Israel, needed to be "restored" in order to usher in the final stages of the Kingdom of God.[19]

What this restoration theology looked like became an early point of shock and even ridicule among non-Mormons. Hendrix-Komoto notes that the Saints' belief regarding the embodiment of God pointed to the divine as a man of flesh and blood with hungers and desires, and not a triune being beyond the bounds of the material world. This was heresy of the worst order among Protestants and Catholics alike. It also suggested that a deity bound to a physical body (and Saints who became Gods themselves with their own physical bodies intact) were thus beings with "raced" bodies as well.[20] "Their willingness to foreground Native Americans in their theology," Hendrix-Komoto writes, "only deepened outsiders' suspicions. White Protestants in the United States feared that Latter-day Saints were blurring the boundaries between whiteness and people of color."[21]

In addition to the isolating implications of physical embodiment, Latter-day Saints soon transgressed another social boundary that had always been implicitly racialized: marriage. While

[18] W. Paul Reeve, *Religion of a Different Color: Race and the Mormon Struggle for Whiteness* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), esp. 55-59; Amanda Hendrix-Komoto, *Imperial Zions: Religion, Race, and Family in the American West and Pacific* (Lincoln: university of Nebraska Press, 2022).

[19] On "Restoration Theology" see, Hendrix-Komoto, *Imperial Zions,* 25-31; see also, Benjamin Park, *Kingdom of Nauvoo: The Rise and Fall of a Religious Empire on the American Frontier* (New York: Norton, 2020).

[20] Hendrix-Komoto, *Imperial Zions,* esp. 25-27.

[21] Viewed from within the theology expounded by Smith, this was an unproblematic aspect during the nineteenth century as he claimed Indigenous people had been darkened as punishment for past rebellion, and once restored, would be made "white and delightsome" again. Hendrix-Komoto, *Imperial Zions*, 37.

plural marriage practices also reinforced some connection in the minds of non-Mormons between the Saints and Indigenous peoples, historian W. Paul Reeve argues that the theological underpinnings of polygamy, which included expansive networks of kinship and adoption, worked along with restoration theology such that accusations of racial miscegenation soon followed. If Latter-day Saint men took many wives in order to bring about an interconnected, domestic Kingdom, and if the restoration of non-white peoples was also part of that same Kingdom building, then interracial marriage was imagined to be a certain feature of Mormon polygamy. [22]

Aware of such charges, early white Mormons first attempted to address the question of interracial marriage when church leaders discovered that Black Latter-day Saints were not only ordained members of the priesthood, but also married to white women. In 1847, western and eastern contingents of Latter-day Saints leaders met in Winters Quarters, Nebraska to convene on the case of Walker and Enoch Lewis, an African American father and son from Massachusetts. Walker had been ordained as an elder in the priesthood in the small Mormon community of Lowell. It was his twenty-year-old son Enoch's marriage to a white woman and their child, however, that drew the attention of William Appleby, a leading figure in the eastern church. The Lewis case and an earlier case involving a Black man named William McCary, began the piecemeal process that led to the priesthood ban and temple restrictions for Black Saints.[23] Reeve notes that the question of the racial exclusion of Black members was somewhat unsettled from 1847 to 1849. The impending revelation of Mormon polygamy complicated Brigham Young's decision on the matter. "Before the Saints acknowledged polygamy, Brigham Young declared a

[22] Reeve, *Religion of a Different Color,* 9-10; and Hendrix-Komoto, *Imperial Zions*, 35-36.

[23] This saga is expertly analyzed in chapter 4, "Black, White, and Mormon: Amalgamation," of Reeve, *Religion of a Different Color,* 106-139.

racial priesthood ban, a move away from blackness that," according to Reeve, "did little to stem the tide of outside racial contempt."[24]

For non-Mormons, banning full Black participation, and even codifying a form of Black servitude in the 1852 Utah constitution, could not assuage their anxieties. Racial suspicions had already pushed the Saints beyond the accepted category of Whiteness just as wagon trains had carried the faithful beyond the boundaries of the nation into Northern Mexico.[25] In the 1840s and 1850s Latter-day Saints began altering the material and spiritual relations of the Indigenous peoples living in the Great Basin and Snake River region. Shoshone and Bannock peoples felt the mounting pressure of settlers moving along the Oregon Trail and the expansion of Latter-day Saints from the south for some time already. As Ned Blackhawk shows, the tribes of the Great Basin and on the western slopes of the Rockies suffered the effects of violence unleashed far to the south from Spanish colonists and from the privations associated with the fur trade across the region since at least the end of the eighteenth century.[26] Even with increasing challenges, Shoshone leaders such as Chief Pocatello—who initially agreed to join the Saints' new communities and faith before leaving after getting an unpleasant, closer look—intended to assert their own territorial control by pushing back against white settlers in the region.[27]

As Shoshone-Bannock bands and other Great Basin Indians attempted to hold off encroaching settlers, the Federal government pursued an escalation of violence culminating in the heinous Bear River Massacre in southeastern Idaho Territory in 1863. Saints and other white

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[24] Reeve, *Religion of a Different Color,* 139.

[25] Reeve, *Religion of a Different Color,* 143.

[26] Ned Blackhawk, *Violence Over the Land: Indians and Empires in the Early American West* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006).

[27] A definitive, if not recent, biography of the Northwest Shoshone headman is Brigham Madsen, *Chief Pocatello: The "White Plume"* (Salt Lake: University of Utah Press, 1986); For early Shoshone interaction with Latter-day Saints in the 1840-1850s, see John W. Heaton, *The Shoshone-Bannocks: Culture and Commerce at Fort Hall, 1870-1940* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2005), 37-39.

settlers cheered the news that General Patrick Connor had routed a Shoshone and Bannock camp in January of that year. The accounts of Bear River preserved through families and tradition, as related by Northwestern Shoshone scholar and leader Darren Perry, attest to the tragic violence of the massacre of over 250 men, women, and children. Perry also draws our attention to the ways such trauma tore through the fragile desert band society for generations. Following the massacre at Bear River leaders of many non-equestrian Shoshone and Bannock bands considered their precarious position as they moved closer to large settlements like Boise City.[28] Other equestrians, like the bands under Chief Taghee's leadership who signed the Soda Springs Treaty in 1863, hoped to maintain some autonomy from settlers and continued to travel to hunt bison and other large game in Colorado and Montana Territories.[29]

In 1867, however, Chief Taghee saw the prospect of relocating to the newly formed Fort Hall Reservation as better than risking treaty negotiation failure altogether or being forced to relocate to Wyoming as a "subchief" under Washakie at Wind River. As the most influential chief remaining in Idaho, Taghee agreed to take his bands to Fort Hall's 1.8 million acre Reservation.[30] The 1870s were profoundly difficult years for those living at Fort Hall. The failures of federal Indian policies paired with neglect and a callous disregard for Indigenous life. Hard winters compounded meager agency rations and put the health of residents in dire straits. Estimates of the total Shoshone-Bannock population at Fort Hall in 1868 reached up to 3,000 during the early

[28] On Bear River, see Darren Parry, *The Bear River Massacre: A Shoshone History* (Salt Lake: By Common Consent, 2019); On Great Basin peoples' response see, Heaton, Heaton, *The Shoshone-Bannocks,* 39-42.

[29] Unfortunately, as historian John Eaton notes, such travels took Taghee's bands far from Snake Country. When the amended treaty returned from Congress, the Shoshone aligned under Taghee were not present to resign, and thus did not receive any annuities or rations, a devastating blow for his ascendent leadership. Over the course of signing five treaties that followed the Bear River Massacre, power among the Shoshone and Bannock bands shifted toward the northwest, where many lived in refugee camps outside Boise, or to the east, where Eastern Shoshone leader, Washakie, proved to be a shrewd diplomat with whites in Wyoming. Some people choose to forgo the horrendous conditions in Boise or the uncertain leadership of equestrians like Taghee and left to live in the Wind River Country. Heaton, *The Shoshone-Bannocks,* 42-47.

[30] Heaton, *The Shoshone-Bannocks,* 47.

years when movement on and off the reservation to hunt and gather remained possible. By the outbreak of the 1877 Nez Perce War, federal officials sought to close the borders of Fort Hall. In 1878, with most bands present, the first reliable count enumerated only 1,705 people. That figure would fall again by over twenty percent in 1907. Hunger, smallpox, and the costly Bannock War of 1878 all weakened the health and security of the Shoshone and Bannock peoples.[31]

Within a few years, the Union Pacific Railroad negotiated to claim lands on which to build tracks north to Montana and west to Oregon along with a small townsite to supply workers at a railroad yard along the banks of the Portneuf River. Pocatello Junction, which whites named after the famous Shoshone chief of the 1850s who had rebuffed the Mormon invitations, grew in the very center of the reservation. It became a point from which further displacement and loss of Native territory would flow. Though the townsite had been claimed, the railroad had only secured "a 200-foot trackside cession located in the middle of the reservation." This did not hamper the rush of "railroad workers, speculators, merchants, and farmers."[32] One row of company-built houses abutted the reservation so closely that the lean-to kitchen additions all "illegally encroached the reservation a few feet." Early occupants claimed that "the Indians knew if they ever got in, they were entitled to devastate the kitchen of its contents."[33] It was not until 1887 that Congress approved a formal agreement for the Union Pacific to purchase the Pocatello townsite from the Shoshone-Bannock. By that point, white squatters lived presumptively on Native lands without fear of retaliation and even began laying out neighborhoods, buying lots, and planning the sites of schools and churches.

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[31] Heaton, *The Shoshone-Bannocks,* 48-53.

[32] Quoted in Heaton, *The Shoshone-Bannocks*, 106.

[33] Minnie F. Howard, *Early Life and Times of the First Congregational Church of Pocatello* (uncirculated manuscript edition, 1928, held by the Midwest Genealogy Center, digitized by FamilySearch International, online at https://www.familysearch.org/library/books/records/item/652503-early-life-and-times-of-the-first-congregational-church-of-pocatello?offset=), 13. Hereafter cited as Howard, *First Congregational Church of Pocatello.*

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George Tendoy, Chief of the Lemhi band of Shoshone at Fort Hall, stepped up and addressed a district court in Pocatello. In his hands he held two objects: a tail of twelve eagle's feathers and a worn Bible. "We are different people," he began, "two different bloods, now we are united but we don't know the motives of each other." He held aloft the eagle tail and explained, "You don't understand the meaning of this eagle tail, and I don't understand thoroughly the meaning of the Bible. I have been here four days listening to find out the truth. Now we will lay this Bible aside, and now I use this," with the feathers still in the air, "as the only authority."[34]

The Lemhi Shoshone chief came to address an alleged murder perpetrated by three young men of his band. Tendoy made his late appeal on the grounds of different cultural practices and procedures. If it was true that the young men caused the victim's death, then the Shoshone had a way of redressing such wrongs. Proper renumeration could not be accomplished in an American courtroom, especially if the young men spent a lifetime in some far away prison or worse. This sort of scenario played out time and again across the continent as settler courts drew up jurisdictions and legislatures passed laws openly hostile to ongoing Indigenous sovereignty. Much of the nineteenth century's history of Indian/settler jurisprudence saw appeals like that of Tendoy fall on deaf ears or be challenged and litigated into oblivion. Likewise major cases involving murder had, since the 1830s, been more likely to eschew any remnants of legal pluralism and have a verdict rendered by a white judge when white victims were involved.[35]

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[34] "Transcripts of Remarks by Chief Tendoy, Pocatello, Idaho, June 21, 1925," page 1, *ISU Special Collections and Archives,* MC 38, Box 1, Folder 1, Eli M. Oboler Library, Pocatello, Idaho.

[35] On legal history and settler jurisprudence see, Lisa Ford, *Settler Sovereignty: Jurisdiction and Indigenous People in American and Australia 1788-1836* (Cambridge: University of Harvard Press, 2010); "Transcripts of Remarks by Chief Tendoy," 1-9; and "Trial Remembrances by Judge O.R. Baum, 1925," *ISU Special Collections and Archives,* MC 38, Box 1, Folder 2, Eli M. Oboler Library, Pocatello, Idaho.

But at this and quite a few other points, Tendoy's appeal broke with such expectations. For instance, no white persons had been involved in any aspect of the crime. Nor did it take place in Pocatello or on some other white "property." The three young men arrested and the older man who died were all Shoshone. The act took place unambiguously on Fort Hall lands. The chief's carefully prepared statements, delivered through an interpreter, echoed through Pocatello's austere but elegant district courthouse. Additionally, this was not 1885 or 1895, but 1925. In this context, Tendoy did not solely appeal to an Indigenous way of contesting white legal hegemony. Rather, he knew his audience and chose to build his case squarely upon the blurred lines between law and religious ethics. Most surprising, perhaps, is that by the end of his speech to the bench, it was clear to all listening that he was wildly successful.[36]

If a truer sense of justice was to be done, Tendoy explained, even if (in fact, especially if) the men were guilty, then radical leniency was the only way to ensure that the law did not raise up one set of religious expectations and place them on the accused. Such a ruling would hang over the whole community of Shoshone who drew their "only authority" from a different source, symbolized by the feathers he brandished throughout his stand. When the judge issued his ruling, guilty, the immediate sentencing was quite lenient, with no more than a year for any of the three. The judge sent all the men to the state prison in Boise. When it came time for two of the men's parole hearing later in 1926, the governor and the warden seemed baffled at the brevity of the sentence which had only just been handed down. Some reports indicate that perhaps the parole board and warden were hesitant to follow the judge's opinion for release. Hearing of this, Tendoy implored the Judge in the case, O.R. Baum, to speak on behalf of the men at the hearing. A

[36] "Transcripts of Remarks by Chief Tendoy," 1-9; and "Trial Remembrances by Judge O.R. Baum, 1925," *ISU Special Collections and Archives,* MC 38, Box 1, Folder 2, Eli M. Oboler Library, Pocatello, Idaho.

delegation of Bannock and Shoshone from Fort Hall traveled to Boise and pitched their lodges on the warden's lawn until the proceeding concluded and the men were released.[37]

Perhaps something can be gleaned from this unexpected outcome many decades after Pocatello's settlers first faced their distinct place vis-à-vis the neighbors whom they kept at arm's length and defined as either heretics or heathens. Local and state power operated carefully when religion played a central part. Protestants and Catholics in Pocatello, even in 1925, looked warily at what they perceived to be a theocracy at the state level in Utah and at the local level in nearby towns like Idaho Falls or Rexburg. One needed to attest non-Mormonism, the easiest way to do so remained a firm Protestant identity. Yet, at the same time, being too strident in the elevation of religious hegemony in the public sphere weakened Pocatellans' primary rhetorical argument against Mormonism. It appears Tendoy knew exactly how to exploit this delicate balance of power to his advantage.[38]

However, conditions for such possible victories were still some way off during Pocatello's early years. The Presbyterian mission established in 1887 at Fort Hall embodied a standard Protestant response to heathenism in the latter nineteenth century that was still focused on religious conversion rather than political contingency.[39] Whites came to regard Indigenous lands and reservations as more fully colonized and deemed them "domesticated." This accompanied a shift in the religious language around the mission field.[40] Most Protestant denominations in the nineteenth century established a "home" mission and a "foreign" mission.

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[37] "Transcripts of Remarks by Chief Tendoy," 1-9; and "Trial Remembrances by Judge O.R. Baum, 1925," *ISU Special Collections and Archives,* MC 38, Box 1, Folder 2, Eli M. Oboler Library, Pocatello, Idaho.

[38] On anti-Mormonism in Idaho see, Lawrence G. Coates, Peter G. Boag, Ronald L. Hatzenbuehler and Merwin R. Swanson, "The Mormon Settlement of Southeastern Idaho, 1845-1900," *Journal of Mormon History* 20:2 (Fall 1994), 45-62; On rhetoric and anxiety about separation of church and state see Gill, "The Power and the Glory," in Sowards, ed., *Idaho's Place,* 120-122.

[39] Joanna Cohen Scherer, *A Danish Photographer of Idaho Indians: Benedicte Wrensted* (University of Oklahoma Press, 2006), 67-80.

[40] Lum, *Heathen*, esp. 186-189.

Home mission societies and institutions focused on the well-being of churches in the continental U.S. and addressing the material, spiritual, and theological needs of their flocks "at home." Foreign Mission organizations, conversely, looked to the wider world and intensely discussed and even created the category of the heathen" as the object of their work abroad.[41] Indigenous peoples occupied uncertain space in the Protestant mission landscape between home and foreign and between heretic and heathen. In certain ways, the Ghost Dancers at Fort Hall and elsewhere across the American West might been classified along with the followers of Joseph Smith as those led astray by a false heretical prophet. In other ways, if most Ghost Dancers had never converted to Christianity, they could not really be "heretical." And yet, Sunday school and missionary materials such as maps and pamphlets were clear that, by the 1890s, the heathen world was that beyond the boundaries of the U.S. nation state, not within it. Church groups and missionaries imagined heathens who lived in squalor in the "dark," "wild," and "savage" lands of Africa and Asia, on yet undiscovered Pacific islands, Latin America, or deep in the jungles of the Amazon. When pressed, though, many Pocatellans would nonetheless have placed their neighbors at Fort Hall in this category. Indeed, even Latter-day Saints felt the burden of some of these scripts. "Protestant pastors, U.S. senators, and respected journalists," Hendrix-Komoto writes, "cast the church as an 'Oriental' religion that accepted sexual practices unbecoming of white men."[42] But, by and large, too much effort went into rhetorically "reclaiming" their western home for it to remain a font of heathenism. Besides, by the 1890s, individuals and church communities inclined to such conversations were awash in raging debates around a different affront to their religious partitioning of the world.[43]

[41] On home and foreign mission fields, see, Lum, *Heathen*, esp. chapter 3, "Landscapes."
[42] Hendrix-Komoto, *Imperial Zions,* 31.
[43] Lum, *Heathen*, 7-19.

In Pocatello, the greater source of religious fervor and anxiety was not the few remaining Ghost Dancers or unconverted Indians living on the surrounding reservation but the arrival of hundreds of Asian men heralding from countries unambiguously part of "heathen lands." Unlike many older cities in Idaho Territory that had been populated in the 1870s when Chinese miners and railroad workers comprised over thirty percent of the non-Indigenous population, Pocatello was home to somewhat modest numbers of Chinese residents from 1882-1920. After successive laws limiting Chinese immigration in the 1880s and 1890s, Japanese immigrants replaced the dwindling Chinese community at many jobs on the OSL and in other service industries in Idaho. By 1900, 360 Japanese lived in Bannock County to only 52 Chinese.[44]

Both Chinese and Japanese people occupied space in many Protestants' mind as "heathens." Recent scholarship at the intersection of race and religious studies, including that of Kathryn Gin Lum, has set out the ways in which religious and racial difference have been co-constitutive in the process of defining national belonging. Those persons labeled heathens by white Christians practiced a religiosity that was exotic in its otherness. More than merely "non-Christian," heathenism in the nineteenth century was defined in part by a rejection of monotheism, institutional church structures, and, most importantly, bore some connection to the Black and Brown peoples living beyond the lands of medieval "Christendom."[45] Thus while foreign missionary societies in various Protestant congregations obsessed over heathen lands "out there" in the global south, workers from Asia in particular who were drawn into world

[44] On population and demographics, see, "Bannock Country (Oneida County) 1870-1980," Idaho's Ethnic Heritage Demographic Data, *ISU Special Collections and Archives,* MC 63, Box 2, Folder 1, Eli M. Oboler Library, Pocatello, Idaho; On Chinese in Idaho, see, Mercier, "Confronting Race and Crafting Community: Idaho's Ethnic History," in Sowards, ed., *Idaho's Place*, 169-174.

[45] On early rhetorical and geographic creation of heathens and Christendom in medieval Europe, see, Lum, *Heathen,* 27-34.

markets in the North American West brought their religious traditions with them as the nation debated the meaning citizenship during Greater Reconstruction.[46]

"After the passage of the Reconstruction Amendments," writes literary scholar and historian Edlie Wong, "anti-Chinese political discourse began overtly emphasizing the inassimilable religious otherness of Chinese immigrants, recoding Asiatic racial difference in terms of 'heathenism.'"[47] Asian inassimilability was in part grounded in a gender imbalance that had been codified in laws like the Page Act of 1875 which, in practice, sexualized most Chinese women as prostitutes and thus excluded female immigration from China.[48] Though some Asian men may have converted to Christianity, the impossibility of most to marry (a result of widespread racism, anti-miscegenation laws, and very few Asian women living in the U.S.) meant that nineteenth century ideals of Christian domesticity remained unattainable. In this way, Asian labor, derided as "coolieism" by imperialists and xenophobes may have been a perceived threat to white, wage laborers in the gold fields and along the railroad, but it was the religious aspect of Asian men undermining of the domestic sphere that was incommensurate with Greater Reconstruction's mission to remake the "home." If the home was the microcosm of the reconstructed nation, as Richard White argues, then outsiders to Christian domesticity were also outsiders to national belonging and citizenship. [49]

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[46] Two useful books on the relationship between heathen discourse and Reconstruction politics are Edlie L. Wong, *Racial Reconstruction: Black Inclusion, Chinese Exclusion, and the Fictions of Citizenship* (New York: New York University Press, 2015); Joshua Paddison, *American Heathens: Religion, Race, and Reconstruction in California* (Berkeley: University of California, 2012).

[47] Wong, *Racial Reconstruction,* 71.

[48] For Page Act within a broad history of Immigration restriction, see Kevin Kenny, "Mobility and Sovereignty: The Nineteenth-Century Origins of Immigration Restriction," *Journal of American History* 109:2 (September 2022), 284-297; For Page Act, see An Act Supplementary to the Acts in Relation to Immigration, ch. 141, 18 Stat. 477 (1875).

[49] Mia Ngai, *The Chinese Question: The Gold Rushes and Global Politics* (New York: Norton, 2021), esp. 82-85; and Richard White, *This Republic for Which It Stands: The United States during Reconstruction and the Gilded Age, 1865-1896* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), esp. chapter 4.

"Heathen" became an elastic category that, according to Lum, served as a barometer by which to measure whiteness and citizenship. This act of measuring became one way that religion remained part of preexisting, operative racial scripts well after overtly appealing to religious difference fell out of fashion.[50] It also meant that one's religious sameness or acceptance could be qualified by one's racial categorization. As one of thirteen charter members of Pocatello's First Congregational Church, Hong Sling (or Ah Sling) witnessed this bifurcated acceptance in Idaho in the 1880s and early 1890s. Sling first encountered Congregational missionaries in China as a child in the 1860s. He ran away from his home in 1875, arriving in San Francisco the same year the Page Act was signed. Like many other young men from Southern China, Sling worked on railroad crews organized by labor contractors and sent throughout the West. His education provided in the missionary school allowed him to leverage his command of English to secure better work in the West. In the story retold by his church in Pocatello, Sling impressed a foreman by having memorized and be able to write out every stop along the Union Pacific line. By the time the railroad began building the OSL from Wyoming to Oregon and the Utah line north from Salt Lake to Montana, Sling worked as the company store clerk for Pocatello Junction.[51]

Sling's command of English and noted business acumen protected him from many people who initially sought to take advantage or abuse the Chinese man in his late twenties working at this isolated depot. However, in the mid-1880s, at the height of the prolific violence against Chinese laborers, the Mountain West was still not a safe place for Sling regardless of his value and esteem in the eyes of his bosses. Sling thus also formed other bonds of "respectable" community. When Rev. W.H. Bonnell opened the first church services in 1887, Sling was the only person, other than the visiting superintendent of the Congregational Home Mission Society

[50] On heathenism as a racial "Barometer," see Lum, *Heathen,* 129-150.
[51] Howard, *First Congregational Church of Pocatello,* 20-22.

of New York, to have had any prior affiliations with the Congregationalists at all. As per the glowing histories written by his church, Sling was a pious and much appreciated founder. In line with the era's emphasis on missionary work and conversion of the "heathen world," Sling's presence in the pews was evidence of their church's global reach. Of the original thirteen founders, Sling was the only member aside from Bonnell to warrant extended personal commentary as "the church's first foreign born member." Sling may have stayed in Pocatello indefinitely, but in 1892, he was recruited by the Union Pacific to be a central figure in the company's Chinese Exhibit at the Chicago World's Fair. Sling's prolonged absence from Idaho effectively ended his work as shopkeeper in town and ultimately led to his returning to Hong Kong where the author of the *First Congregational Church History* believed his friends would be happy to know he had retired.[52]

Hong Sling's cultural acceptability—his religious orthodoxy and language skills among other things—did not extend to a permanence in the church or local community he helped found. His friends did not regard his repatriation as a loss, presumably because only once he had returned to China, could he have married and raised a family in the Christian faith, a near impossibility while he remained in Idaho in the early 1890s. Further, as a restored and reconciled "heathen" Sling continued to exist in the minds of White settlers in Idaho as a "barometer" of their own racial standing amongst a growing population of other non-Christian Asian men. Pocatello's large Japanese population (along with a few dozen Chinese) after 1900 continued to bear the force of these evolving racial-religious scripts.[53]

[52] Howard, *First Congregational Church of Pocatello,* 22.

[53] "Bannock Country (Oneida County) 1870-1980," Idaho's Ethnic Heritage Demographic Data, *ISU Special Collections and Archives,* MC 63, Box 2, Folder 1, Eli M. Oboler Library, Pocatello, Idaho.

As the Union Pacific started construction of the OSL, the UP contracted with companies which supplied Japanese workers. Groups of workers called section crews labored at different points along the OSL in mobile encampments typically of a few dozen to a few hundred people. As construction shifted to ongoing maintenance, W.H. Remington, an Idaho businessman who held the contract for Japanese labor along the entire OSL, sent Harry C. Kumamoto to Pocatello in 1897 to repurpose one of his eastside properties into an acceptable headquarters.[54] It was originally intended to function solely as an administrative hub where the labor contractors could base their operations. However, several news reports would instead suggest that the building came to be an important social and even political space of meeting for Japanese residents in the city. As a result, a steady population of about 400-500 Japanese residents made temporary and permanent homes in the area, a stability which allowed some men to pay for their wives and families to join them. Within a few years of the headquarters' construction, the 1900 census reveals that nearly ten percent of Pocatello's population was Japanese.[55]

Everyday interactions with Japanese residents in town combined with an active decade of Japanese and American international relations to keep the rhetoric of heathenism circulating in local parlance. In 1898, the Japanese Vice Consul, Miki Saito, made a rather eventful visit to the headquarters in Pocatello. Saito appeared to have come to discuss matters with his fellow countrymen, and not with their employers or other city officials. After departing the train, the diplomat headed straight to the eastside, brushing off questions from annoyed reporters eager to get his statement on the recent U.S. annexation of Hawai'i and the ongoing Spanish-American War in the South Pacific. Perhaps his curtness had something to do with the tensions that had

[54] *Pocatello Tribune*, June 9, 1897, 8.

[55] Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Fourteenth Census of the United States: State Compendium Idaho* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1924), see table "Population of Principle Cities from Earliest Census to 1920" page 8.

been unfolding since the previous day. In preparation for the visiting dignitary, Japanese men at the headquarters decided to raise the Japanese flag over their building. The visage of "the flaming red ball on the white field…[floating] on the free American breezes," drew a resentful crowd of whites to the street outside. They declared that if the American flag was not placed above the Japanese banner, then this territorial affront might lead to international hostilities.[56]

Two telling details shine through the journalist rhetoric and storytelling of the *Tribune,* the local paper reporting on the events. First is that when the mob arrived, the persons they encountered were not the white administrative employees of Remington's labor company, but the Japanese railroad workers themselves. They were the ones with apparent control over the physical space. The second point of interest followed from this: flying a Japanese flag without an American one above it, especially when only Japanese nationals were involved and in anticipation of a Japanese Imperial minister, in their minds, somehow threatened the territorial sovereignty of the United States. Had white employees of Remington raised the flag as some kind of gesture to the dignitary, it is unlikely that a mob would have formed. The white citizens of Pocatello must have known it was otherwise and that this was but one manifestation of workers claiming Japanese space in Pocatello.[57]

The threatening response to this claim illuminates that "space," in this sense, had several affective registers in settler communities. Like other racial groups including African Americans, Greeks, and Mexicans, Pocatello's press used the commonplace language of "colony" when speaking of the Japanese at this point in time. At face value, the term called to mind the novel, transient, or outpost quality of a group. Rendering the Japanese of the eastside neighborhood as the "the Japanese colony" in town suggested to readers that the "little brown men" in their midst

[56] "Miki Saito, Japanese Consul," *Pocatello Tribune*, June 22, 1898, 5.
[57] "Miki Saito, Japanese Consul," *Pocatello Tribune*, June 22, 1898, 5.

were only temporary incursions into their white, racial space.[58] But such language belied other anxieties as well. In one breath, "colony" might assure readers that the Japanese were temporary necessities and excluded from the "native" political sphere (in this case the domain of white Idahoans). Yet in another breath, "colony" also whispered ominously into the ears of a *settler* society. What if, like themselves, these Japanese colonists, were actually here to stay?[59]

White Americans in the 1890s, it turns out, committed a great deal of time to this proposition. Edlie Wong discusses the explosion of the popular "Chinese Invasion" literature that reached its height just as the Japanese population in Pocatello soared. This counterfactual genre explored the consequences of failing to execute full Asiatic exclusion through the prospects of Chinese settler colonialism in North America.[60] Striking parallels exist in some of the early scenes in these racist works of fiction with what whites in Pocatello perceived in 1898 during the Japanese consul's visit. In the counterfactual "histories" written throughout the 1880 to the 1890s, a failure to restrict Chinese immigration led to Asian workers establishing colonies across the West Coast where emissaries of the Chinese empire began setting up political outposts from which they overthrew local, state, and eventually the national government. The flying of Chinese banners was a common motif in the literature to symbolize the early challenge of U.S. sovereignty.[61]

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[58] For this language, see "A Glorious 4th of July," *Pocatello Tribune,* June 19, 1907, 1. In this piece, Japanese, Italian, and Greek communities are called "colonies" in contrast to Americans. All these groups were mentioned as bringing an "international flavor" to Pocatello's Fourth of July Celebrations. See also the Visit of the Methodist minister to "The Japanese Colony" in which the author still calls them Little Brown Men, see "Occident Meets the Orient in Japanese Banquet to Honor Visiting Missionary," *Semi-Weekly Tribune,* June 20, 1908, 1.

[59] One particularly revealing use of "Colony" and the tensions it inspired came in 1907 when it was discovered that a number of Japanese individuals had been mistakenly buried, not in the designated Japanese cemetery in Pocatello, but in the "regular" white burying grounds, discussed below. See, "Another Japanese War," *Pocatello Tribune,* May 11, 1907, 2.

[60] Wong, *Racial Reconstruction,* esp. chapter 3, "American Futures Past."

[61] In P.W. Dooner, *The Last Days of the Republic* (San Francisco: Alta California Publishing House, 1880), news that the Chinese forces had taken control of the South came by way of a "report to the effect that the flag of the Chinese Empire was floating from all the public buildings and fortifications of the South." (205) Similarly, in China, Dooner imagined: "No sooner had the information been flashed to China, that her faithful residents had unfurled the

Extending the lessons of the Chinese invasion genre to encompass U.S.-Japanese relations during the late 1890s also had a certain internal logic within an anxious, settler-colonial common sense. As the reporter of the *Tribune* wrote in 1898, he was himself anxious to speak to the Japanese representative regarding the tensions building between their nations around U.S. imperialism in the Pacific.[62] Within a decade, Japan shocked western powers by handily defeating Russia and asserting its own imperial qualifications. Readers in the 1890s and 1900s thus encountered Chinese invasion literature and its explicit warning not to ignore the next turning point in history's unfolding when things might be primed to take a different trajectory. Many could look to current events as see just such a turning point.

Within a decade of the Saito incident, journalists in Idaho mused on a different type of threatening, counterfactual future. Rather than working out the possible conquest of the American West by an Asian empire, they wondered if local events in Pocatello would trigger "Another Japanese War" in which the federal government itself would lay siege to the Gate City. In May 1907, locals in Pocatello discovered that a number of Japanese railroad workers who had died in recent years had been interred "amongst the graves of white people in the regular cemetery."[63] The city council declared their intention to exhume and rebury the bodies in the Japanese section. The journalist at the *Boise Weekly News* sidestepped the actual horror of such an action and opportunistically used the situation to satirize Theodore Roosevelt's recent Gentlemen's Agreement which had followed the "San Francisco School Question."[64] Using rhetorical suppositions (rather than plain counterfactuals), the author imagined that, based on the

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flag of the empire over the most fertile and productive regions of the New World, than she called into active service all the wonderful energies of her empire, to carry to a successful issue the work so daringly begun." (211)

[62] "Miki Saito, Japanese Consul," *Pocatello Tribune*, June 22, 1898, 5.

[63] "Another Japanese War," *Pocatello Tribune,* May 11, 1907, 2.

[64] On the Gentlemen's Agreement of 1907, see Roger Daniels, *The Politics of Prejudice: The Anti-Japanese Movement in California and the Struggle for Japanese Exclusion* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).

logic of the recent agreement with Japan to protect students from forced segregation in California, it would naturally follow that Pocatello was about to draw the full attention of the President to ensure "that those Japs are permitted to be buried just the same as are the most favored whites." "Will Pocatello be threatened by siege with land forces," mused the journalist, "and will the Navy be sent up the Snake river thence by the new irrigation canal for the Fort Hall lands and add to the terrors of the assault?"[65] At this point any question as to whether the author cared for the dignity of the deceased disappeared and his real target, Roosevelt's foreign policy, came into focus. Shear absurdity lampooned the scene of "the city…reduced to a proper state of submission" and being forced to witness white government and police officials "bowing the apologetic knee to…the Japanese Colony of the Gate City."[66] This snippet of localized, racial satire mirrored the robust genre of Asian invasion literature and used similar tactics to caution and critique what the various authors saw as the inadequate racial exclusion of the U.S. state.

Readers and observers could identify cautionary tales, if so inclined, in more than just major political events such as Chinese exclusion policies in the 1880s or the Gentlemen's Agreement of 1907. In Chinese invasion literature, the utterly confounding nature of Chinese religious difference obscured the attack on American "morals" in these novels as well.[67] In the first book in the genre, *Last Days of the Republic* (1880), Peirton W. Dooner expounded upon "the theological views of the Coolie" in the chapters leading up to the eventual overthrow of California. Chinese spirituality was "about as incomprehensible as his social and political peculiarities." Chinese immigrants and elites along the coast quietly subverted the moral will of

[65] "Another Japanese War," *Pocatello Tribune,* May 11, 1907, 2.
[66] "Another Japanese War," *Pocatello Tribune,* May 11, 1907, 2.
[67] Additionally, Chinese funeral practices intrigued and befuddled whites in the American West, prompting them to further speculate and expand the religious and "moral" chasm between white Christians and Chinese "heathens." Some of the most effuse writings on Chinese cultural practices in the West center on funerals. For description a good analysis, see Mark T. Johnson, *The Middle Kingdom under the Big Sky: A History of the Chinese Experience in Montana* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2021), 132-134.

the U.S., an important step in its eventual conquest, by using Confucius as a smoke screen for practical "demonology" expressed through the "noisy annual festivals" and the "persistent worship of nondescript figures of impossible beings." While Chinese could claim a religion that Dooner's narrator regarded as "theoretically acceptable," in *Last Days* their religious practice was "the very incarnation of injustice, oppression, and sexual vice."[68]

Wong argues that "these fictions exploited the bifurcating power of counterfactual thinking—the cleaving of the present in parallel and simultaneous tracks—in their fantastical efforts to reinvigorate race's explanatory power."[69] Though the fate of Chinese Exclusion was largely settled by the late 1890s, the issues still at hand—immigration, debates around citizenship, and the ongoing negotiation of categories like "settler" and "whiteness"—propelled counterfactual thinking as a key metric by which to articulate what, exactly, was at stake in these matters. In Pocatello, questions regarding religious difference and social participation were easily folded into these types of counterfactual imaginaries. For instance, Latter-day Saints had only recently gained access to political and civic inclusion in Idaho in 1894. A decade of exclusion saw non-Mormon lawmakers in Idaho effectively deploy Utah as shorthand "counterfactual" of "what could happen" if Mormon cultural and political influence was not checked. In this way, the activation of any racial script that illustrated the potentiality of an alternate set of political relations could just as easily call in to question the religious status quo.[70]

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[68] Dooner, *Last Days of the Republic,* 65.

[69] Wong, *Racial Reconstruction,* 132.

[70] This genre is an equally useful stie to investigate a different valence of imagined pasts. It's self-conscious, rather than sincere, fictive rendering of history along racial lines lays out many of the same assumptions about how narratives are constitutive parts of community building. Wong writes that the genre "asks readers to imagine how altered relations of racial power might produce alternate historical paths." (133) Participation in this project, even passive participation through consumption, requires that the actual relations of racial power are understood to a degree. Wong calls upon Priscilla Ward's observation that imagined communities "requires the act of remembering, even if, as in [Benedict] Anderson's formulation, it is the deliberate act of remembering, collectively, what to forget." (148) The genre imagined a racial future in which the threat to whiteness was Asiatic, thus

A scene involving hundreds of foreign, non-white workers consulting with their political leaders under the banner of an Asian empire in the heart of Idaho might have been taken from an early chapter of Dooner's *Last Days of the Republic* or Vinton's *Looking Further Backward*. Such obvious parallels, however, were not needed to activate Pocatello's counterfactual anxiety. Opportunities for racial suspicion abounded in the 1890s and 1900s as the Japanese community branched out from their headquarters and into the adjoining eastside neighborhood. Some men who had arrived with the OSL chose to substitute or supplement their work on the railroad as cooks and personal chefs. At least one Japanese-run restaurant opened in the eastside in the 1900s while other entrepreneurs opened boarding houses, general stores, and a "small hospital." Roy Yokota, a Japanese arrival around 1905, opened a "pool hall, bathhouse, and barbershop" within the eastside neighborhood. Another man, Roy Hanaki, even ran the successful Idaho Photo Studio, lasting from the early 1900s until the 1950s.[71]

Creating spaces outside the acceptable labor contracts of the railroad was important, but often dangerous. In 1898 Idaho passed an unenforceable, but rhetorically deadly, anti-alien labor law that banned all persons from contracting with non-citizens. It was aimed at groups not eligible for or in pursuit of naturalization. Its focus, therefore, was clearly Asian men. Several Idaho counties tried to sue the Union Pacific for hiring Japanese workers but even journalists recognized the futility of such appeals as the state law clearly violated federal laws. The Supreme Court held that non-resident aliens were entitled to find employment.[72] The law was, therefore,

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nullifying the "Negro Question" while it also recast the violence of American settler colonialism though chronicling the dispossession of native (white) American lands. (Wong, 148)

[71] For Pocatello's Japanese community see, Purse, Watkins, and Marsh, "The Triangle," 4-5.

[72] Journalists doubted whether the law's provisions held any legal merit, a Boise reporter noted "This [an attempt to removed Japanese workers in northern Idaho] is done under an act of the Fourth session which makes it unlawful for a corporation to employ aliens. By common consent this law has been permitted to remain a dead letter for the reason that it has not been regarded as valid." see "After the Little Brownies," *Pocatello Tribune,* June 10, 1899, 1.

either regarded as merely symbolic of the prevailing exclusionary racial ideology, or as completely fantastical. The racial-religious scripts at work in its common sense, however, were neither.[73]

During the years of the Russo-Japanese War, tensions rose further in Pocatello even as the U.S. remained neutral, and the local press often sympathized with the Meiji Empire.[74] The rhetoric reflected the inseparable quality of local racial and religious scripts. As a form of direct commentary on both the war and on Japanese eateries in town, the White House Café ran ads in the *Tribune* in 1904-1905 that simply read: "Some people may like the Heathen better than the civilized—we don't, WHITE HOUSE CAFÉ."[75] As a form of marketing, it would seem that the racist proprietors believed customers in Pocatello would respond to their racial and religious othering of the Japanese in their midst. The coverage of the conflict in Manchuria often made such racial and religious connections clear even when they made a pro-Japan argument. In one front page column that flayed the expansionism of Russia, the *Tribune* reporter intended to make an appeal for the right of Japan to assert their own territorial sovereignty. The writer called upon the language of *Plessy v. Ferguson* by stating that "Russia appears to be of the opinion that the

[73] Japanese residents of Idaho learned of how quickly even a law with no legal "teeth" could still turn explosive in 1908. To the west in Idaho's capital, Boise, owners of "a large tract of land" who wished to plant a fruit orchard outside the city turned to the owner of local Japanese restaurant to supply them with workers to clear and prepare the land. When it was discovered by local whites, the Japanese businessman "was warned by white workingmen that his restaurant would be blown up if he did so." After he withdrew his men, the landowners sought to hire a group of Greek men for the same job. The would-be vigilantes then donned masks, armed themselves, and mounted horses in true Klan fashion and surrounded the Greek camp to deliver their ultimatum: leave the country within a day, or face the deadly consequences. As "aliens" as well, and still outside the ever-shifting boundaries of whiteness, the Greeks also incurred the wrath of the mob. However, they appealed for protection from the local sheriff while they completed their work. Though the lawman and the workers feared "serious trouble," the threat ultimately seemed to have rung hollow. At least it was for the Greeks. The Japanese restauranter was so shaken by the events that he sold his business and left Boise. See, "Race Troubles in Idaho," *Pocatello Semi-Weekly Tribune,* January 22, 1908, 3.

[74] For a recent work the Russo-Japanese War, see Cees Heere, *Empire Ascendant: The British World, Race, and the Rise of Japan, 1894-1914* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019), esp. chapter 2; for commentary in Idaho, see "A Heathen Nation," *Pocatello Tribune,* March 18, 1904, 2.

[75] For an example of the White House Café ads, see *Pocatello Tribune,* November 14, 1904, 2.

Heathen has no rights which the Christian is bound to respect."[76] Along the West Coast and in national newspapers, the racialization of religious difference among Asian peoples had long been the norm. In Pocatello, the war marked a noticeable shift from the labor-oriented derision of Japanese OSL workers as "little brown men," to the more commonly used "heathen."[77]

To be sure, Japanese religious difference did become more obvious to whites in Pocatello. The eastside neighborhood eventually became home to a Japanese school and Shinto Buddhist Temple.[78] The transition towards the more religiously inflected racial ideology on display in Pocatello accompanied forms of racial exclusion. The segregation of the eastside as the primary non-white residential neighborhood and vice-district took shape during the first and second decades of the new century. In the early 1900s, only a small section of the eastside carried an explicit reputation for sexual vice. The redlight district in early Pocatello came to be known by its most unsettling feature: its prison-like walls. The blocks along South First between Lewis and Bonneville were surrounded by a tall fence enclosure that, rather than keeping the respectable citizens out, seemed to have been understood as keeping the women who worked as prostitutes there, in. More than one early columnist ominously referred to sex workers in the "Walled City" as "inmates."[79] The Walled City lost its moniker around 1908 when the city council voted to tear down the fences around the brothels and expel its occupants. The neighborhood bounded by the tracks went through various names including the Twilight Zone and the Restricted District before

[76] "A Heathen Nation," *Pocatello Tribune,* March 18, 1904, 2.

[77] See, "Occident Meets the Orient in Japanese Banquet to Honor Visiting Missionary," *Semi-Weekly Tribune,* June 20, 1908, 1; "After the Little Brownies," *Pocatello Tribune,* June 10, 1899, 1; and "Little Brown Men, Jap Laborers Thought They Would Strike," *Pocatello Tribune,* August 7, 1897, 1.

[78] Purse, Watkins, and Marsh, "The Triangle," 10; In addition to the presence of Japanese Buddhists, a growing number of Japanese Methodists also met in the city. In 1908, a visiting missionary from Japan spoke with a group at the Methodist Church in Pocatello. See, "Occident Meets the Orient in Japanese Banquet to Honor Visiting Missionary," *Semi-Weekly Tribune,* June 20, 1908, 1.

[79] Good examples of this are, "A Case of Burglary" *Pocatello Semi-Weekly Tribune,* November 16, 1908, 5; and "County Attorney Gray Issues Orders to Close Walled City and Drive Fallen Women from Town," *Pocatello Tribune,* June 26, 1907, 1.

becoming known as the Iron Triangle.[80] Like the original carceral intonations of the Walled City, the later names reflected the area as sequestered space reserved for both racial otherness and for lives and habits that transgressed Christian moral codes. The Japanese residents were just the first and most openly targeted community to be categorized by the Triangle's racial and religious auspices. Others followed.

In 1899, all of the church buildings that served as both tangible and rhetorical bastions of white Christianity and as bulwarks against encroaching heathens and heretics, stood outside the neighborhood home to the Walled City red-light district, the Japanese headquarters, and homes to nearly all of the city's 500 to 600 non-white residents.[81] In this way, the elements that challenged that image were effectively shuttered away. White settlers went about rendering abstract commitments to a certain religious character as a legible—and thus politically powerful—feature of their community and its history. The real and fictive walls around the non-white and "irreligious" eastside point to a central mechanism by which white Pocatellans achieved this dialectical othering and community actualization. Racial real estate restrictions strengthened the segregated status of the eastside over the next several decades, forcing those persons who maintained suspect religious attachments into the Triangle. The clean façade of the area as some kind of racial and religious sacrifice zone, however, crumbled in the 1910s and 1920s as its residents insisted on building their own spiritual communities and religious institutions.

[80] On the neighborhood's various names see, "Oral History: Pocatello's Black Community," Idaho's Ethnic Heritage Demographic Data, *ISU Special Collections and Archives,* MC 63, Box 2, Folder 1, Eli M. Oboler Library, Pocatello, Idaho.

[81] This number is only reflective of those people counted in the 1900 census, many more may have lived there as well but were not enumerated due to the transient nature of rail road work in Idaho. See "Bannock Country (Oneida County) 1870-1980," Idaho's Ethnic Heritage Demographic Data, *ISU Special Collections and Archives,* MC 63, Box 2, Folder 1, Eli M. Oboler Library, Pocatello, Idaho.

Defending Sacred Space

Pocatello's distinct Black church history laid out in Chapter Two should not be put aside or considered only tangential to the other narratives around place identity or the rise of racial-religious scripts presented above. The mission for a Black church in Pocatello began as early as 1892 and slowly gained momentum during the 1900s when a flurry of church formation commenced. That history can now be placed within a fuller context and a longer trajectory of the area's religious and racial past. The Japanese Buddhist temple on the 100 block of North Fourth Avenue likely began around 1900 when Japanese railroad workers secured the building for use as a school for their children. This may have been the first religious institution of any longevity in the neighborhood. From 1902 until 1913, various Black Protestant denominations also mobilized within the eastside to construct various buildings of their own. African Methodists succeeded in erecting the first permanent Christian church in the neighborhood when Allen Chapel went up in 1913.[82]

Such progress for worshipers in the Triangle flew in the face of long-established ideas about the area as irredeemable. In 1890, Pocatello's white First Congregational Church built a small Sunday School building east of the tracks. Later church historians claimed that though it had been a "respectable neighborhood" when they started, it soon proved an unsuitable site for religious worship. "It heard the gospel story for two years," one church historian wrote, "and then succumbed through increasing saloon encroachment…Instead of a church in this place with happy families, the neighborhood became a den of vice, thanks to the saloon, and today the police estimate that seventy-five percent of the crime of the city has been committed in its vicinity."[83]

[82] Purse, Watkins, and Marsh, "The Triangle," 10.
[83] Howard, *First Congregational Church of Pocatello,* 35.

Incompatible with religious morals, the eastside's drunken licentiousness supposedly forced the Sunday School to close in 1892. From the vantage of those church historians writing in 1920, this neighborhood trend had only worsened in the intervening years.

Racial covenants kept newly arriving Asian and Black Pocatellans tied to the area's poor and destitute housing. However, for immigrant workers with tenuous claims to the era's definition of whiteness, other factors led to them taking up residence on the eastside. William Caravellis began as an interpreter for the OSL's many Greek speaking workers. He soon turned toward labor recruiting, returning to his native section of Greece to hire men from whom he would exact one dollar a month from their contracts. These arrangements often included the agent paying for passage and keeping workers in the U.S. under some form of debt until they could pay. Caravellis, though well-spoken of, was an exacting man. He hired his fellow nationals and paid for them to come to Pocatello during times of intensifying conflicts in Greece and the Balkans. In the end, most Greek residents of Pocatello rented from Caravellis and remained in the Triangle.[84]

A major reason for the Greek community's generational ties to the otherwise undesirable area had much to do with another part of Caravellis's efforts and background. He happened also to be the son of an influential Greek Orthodox priest. In 1909, Caravellis announced he would donate one of his eastside properties to the community for the construction of a church. While both the Japanese Buddhist temple and Allen Chapel might have been described as humble or even austere structures, the Byzantine Revival style building on North Fifth Avenue was an impressive edifice in every way. Its dome and ornamentations connected its worshipers to

[84] On Caravellis see, Purse, Watkins, and Marsh, "The Triangle," 9; and "Italians, Not Greeks, Says Caravelis," *Pocatello Tribune,* November 10, 1906, 1; "New Church in Gate City," *Pocatello Semi-Weekly Tribune,* July 31, 1909, 1; "Left for Home—Father Caravellis," *Pocatello Semi-Weekly Tribune,* August 9, 1916, 8; and "Former Resident Dies in California," *Pocatello Tribune,* April 13, 1939, 5.

tradition and a homeland but "as one descendant recalled, 'the establishment of the church was a good indication that the Greek immigrant was in Pocatello to stay.'"[85]

Greeks joined other European immigrants, including smaller numbers of Russians and Serbians, who may have shared similar Orthodox faith traditions. Around the same time, Italians whose numbers also grew during the 1910s, pushed for a new eastside Catholic Church. St. Anthony's celebrated its first mass in 1914.[86] The two impressive buildings of St. Anthony's and the Greek Orthodox churches along the eastside's prominent throughfares, the Japanese Buddhist temple, the modest chapel of the AME, and the slowly emerging sanctuary of Bethel Baptist after 1921 all functioned as spaces within the dense triangle neighborhood that countered longstanding beliefs about the area's irreligious character. Yet, each church remained "raced" spaces in the eyes of white Protestants living outside the Triangle. Consequently, contesting race and place by means of racial-religious scripts only intensified during the 1920s when the Black community became the largest minority group in the area.[87]

The eastside neighborhood of Pocatello may have been out of place in the surrounding majority-Mormon towns of the Snake River and Great Basin regions, but the ethnically diverse space actually had many analogues in Western cities where industrial, mining, or agricultural jobs relied upon immigrant and non-white workers. And like many other diverse industrial towns in the 1920s, Pocatello, too, experienced an intense revival of the Ku Klux Klan. Accounts of Klan activity in Idaho clearly indicate the terrorist group's intense focus on "one-hundred percent

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[85] Quoted in Purse, Watkins, and Marsh, "The Triangle," 9.

[86] Ostensibly, St. Joseph's on the west side of town was too far for people to travel. Father August Bandizzione successfully advocated for a new neighborhood church to serve his primarily Italian flock, also making Pocatello the first town in Idaho to have two Catholic churches. Decades later, when migrant farming programs slowly increased Southeast Idaho's Mexican population, St. Anthony's would also be the spiritual home to many Latinx residents and migrants. Purse, Watkins, and Marsh, "The Triangle," 9-10; "New Church Dedicated," *Pocatello Tribune,* July 6, 1914, 1.

[87] Purse, Watkins, and Marsh, "The Triangle," 65-66.

Americanism." This specific rhetoric was, in an important sense, a direct confrontation to the eastside's large number of "hyphenated Americans."[88] In this, Idaho's Klan history does differ from its neighbor, Montana in instructive ways. Many mid-century historians in that state, faced with the fact that many of the Klan's hotbeds in central and eastern Montana were home to few or no African Americans, tended to decenter the anti-Black ideological core of the KKK. In Pocatello, the largest Klan demonstration took place in 1924, around the time when the Black community became the largest minority group in the city. As a result, much of what has been written about the Klan in Pocatello does hold both its anti-Black and anti-immigrant threads together as part of a fuller story.[89]

The central drama of the Klan in Pocatello took place during 1923 and 1924 and the tensions between a group professing a white Christian nationalism and the defiance of non-white religious spaces stand out. The *Tribune* (which appears to be at the very least to be tolerant of, if not sympathetic to, the Klansmen in their city) printed fragments of speeches, member actions, and events related to the Klan throughout Idaho.[90] With only the concurrent newspaper accounts of the rallies and cross-burnings, one may be left with the impression that that inflection point for the Klan in the city was, in fact, the diverse population of the eastside as well as various nativist and Democratic policy planks that galvanized white Americans leading up to the 1924 election.

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[88] Laurie Mercier, "Idaho's African Americans," page 27, in Laurie Mercier and Carole Simon-Smolinski, eds. *Idaho's Ethic Heritage Historical Overview* (Washington D.C.: Office for Equal Opportunity, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, Idaho Centennial Commission and the National Park Service, March 1990). Hereafter cited as Mercier, "Idaho's African Americans."

[89] On history and writing on the Klan in Montana, see Anthony W. Wood, *Black Montana: Settler Colonialism and the Erosion of the Racial Frontier, 187-1930* (Lincoln, University of Nebraska Press, 2021), 210-213; "Monster Crowd Views Parade and Ku Klux Klan Ceremonies," *Pocatello Tribune,* September 16, 1924, 5; "Ku Klux Held a Ceremonial," *Pocatello Tribune*, May 8, 1923, 5.

[90] While the paper did report on several violent Klan activities in the South, its treatments of the two main Pocatello rallies are entirely free of critiques or anything that addressed the Klan's violence. See, "Monster Crowd Views Parade and Ku Klux Klan Ceremonies," *Pocatello Tribune,* September 16, 1924, 5; "Ku Klux Held a Ceremonial," *Pocatello Tribune*, May 8, 1923, 5.

One could also look to the 1920 census to determine that the African American population, then approaching 400 people, likely felt that much of the Klan activity was in certain forms directed at them.[91] These are useful, but only partial, contexts for retelling this chapter in Idaho's racial history. To do it justice, the history of Black Pocatellans stands as a significant and indispensable factor in the contests over sacred space in Pocatello during the height of the Klan presence. Accounting for this helps make sense of some of the conflicting memories and narratives around these dark days that have passed down into the history of the Triangle neighborhood.

The year 1923 seems to have been especially prodigious for the AME and Bethel Baptist congregations. Weekly or monthly updates penned for the *Chicago Defender* centered church life, sometimes exclusively, and offer a rich view of a rapidly growing spiritual community. In January 1923, the basement sanctuary of Bethel Baptist was in use multiple days a week for a Baptist Young People's Union group (B.Y.P.U), Sunday schools, regular services, and a new women's group. The Willing Workers Club busily raised money through dinners, likely for the building fund.[92] Allen Chapel had recovered from the challenging days of the 1917-1918 and was holding two full services a week. In March, two more church groups, the Ladies Progressive Club made up of AME members and the Semper Fidelis Club organized by Listoria Harris, wife of Elijah Harris and future matriarch of Bethel Baptist, also held meetings in her home. Not to be outdone in their organizing, the women of Allen Chapel also put together a second group meeting under the auspices of the Mite Missionary Society. It seems likely that some of these gatherings were not denominationally exclusive either. The AME church restarted the Christian

[91] "Bannock Country (Oneida County) 1870-1980," Idaho's Ethnic Heritage Demographic Data, *ISU Special Collections and Archives,* MC 63, Box 2, Folder 1, Eli M. Oboler Library, Pocatello, Idaho.

[92] "Idaho," *Chicago Defender,* January 27, 1923, 14.

Endeavor Society group, which would indicate a level of ecclesial interaction between the two churches.[93]

As I have argued already in Chapter Two, this subsequent explosion of activity and religious community formation was not merely the product of a larger Black population, but the result of decades of organizing and institution building on the part of Black Pocatellans who understood the power of racial-religious scripts that could be and often were wielded against them. Thus, when the Klan began making inroads into local political and commercial sectors, holding rallies, cross-burnings, and other demonstrations at the very moment of the Black community's hard-won vibrancy, many perceived the threat as directed toward their religious spaces. Oral histories complied for the Idaho Ethnic Heritage Project in the 1980s and 1990s attest to the widespread memory of the Klan's intent to attack Black properties including churches. Mary Watkins, a local historian and member of Bethel Baptist was born after these events but interviewed family and friends of the previous generation. Their memories reveal a much more antagonistic Klan than just the fiery public displays recorded in the papers.[94]

Throughout 1923 and 1924, Black residents watched warily as rallies and speeches drew hundreds of their fellow Pocatellans. Rumors began circulating after such events that inflamed Klansmen in town were planning attacks on specific residents or buildings. In each event, local Black residents made shows of force, signaling their willingness to meet any Klan violence with

[93] For all this activity see, "Idaho," *Chicago Defender,* April 14, 1923, 16.

[94] Mary Watkins research on this period for the Bethel Baptist Church history is cited by Mercier and others writing on the Triangle, Klan history, and African Americans in Pocatello. The memories of Black residents notably differ from that of white residents like Orrin D. Wardle, who wrote his own memories of the Klan for a local history column in 1979. Wardle claimed that "I would like to report that there were hundreds [of Klan members] present, but my memory tells me there only one or two dozen." This may have been in 1922, he remembered, but that somewhat begs the question about the well-documented and much larger public rallies and parades that were held in 1923 and 1924. Wardle, for his part, diminished the Klan presence in Pocatello. Needless to say, harmless and small groups of men performing secret rituals up in the hills is not how the Black community remembered those same years. See, Orrin D. Wardle, "Venture into Ku Klux Klan Den Here Marks Ex-Resident's 1920s Memories," *Idaho State Journal,* November 11, 1979, 10 (sec. C).

armed resistance. Some residents who caught wind of such threats gathered friends and barricaded the front of their homes. During one Klan ride through the eastside, local memory recalls that Black men with rifles climbed onto the roofs as the hooded men passed by. The most stirring account of these events, however, all center around threats made against the AME church and the singular man who rallied to its defense.[95]

Known to later generations only as "Yellowstone Jack," Don De Shirlia was as enigmatic a character as they come. He spent two turbulent decades in Pocatello and sometime in 1923 or 1924, Triangle residents recalled that Yellowstone Jack gathered an armed posse of men and posted up at Allen Chapel in response to a rumored threat. Hearing of the armed defenders, the Klansmen seem to have dissuaded of their violent intent and dispersed. The story of how Yellowstone Jack saved the church building from Klan torches also included the important detail that Yellowstone Jack had served as a member of the Pocatello police department. This shifted the retelling from simply a story of community-based resistance to white supremacists to one that placed Black Pocatellans on the side of law and authority while the Klan took on the mantel of the lawless mob.[96]

Considering the embarrassment suffered by the Klan during their rides through the Black neighborhood, it is perhaps understandable that the Klan-sympathizing *Tribune* did not run a piece on the events of the night. However, they did have many things to write about Yellowstone Jack over the years, much of which complicates and possibly corroborates some of the local memory regarding his defense of Allen Chapel. Upon returning from the war in Europe, Don De

[95] Mercier, "Idaho's African Americans," 28; and Mary Watkins, "Early Pocatello, Idaho: Vignettes of a Vibrant Black Community," pp. 5-7. *ISU Special Collections and Archives,* MC 063, Box 1, Folder 12, Eli M. Oboler Library, Pocatello, Idaho.

[96] Mercier, "Idaho's African Americans," 28; and Mary Watkins, "Early Pocatello, Idaho: Vignettes of a Vibrant Black Community," pp. 5-7. *ISU Special Collections and Archives,* MC 063, Box 1, Folder 12, Eli M. Oboler Library, Pocatello, Idaho.

Shirlia joined the Pocatello Police Department as a "plainclothes" officer. He was the first Black officer to serve the city. One night in 1919, De Shirlia and his white partner discovered a bootlegger's shed near Brady Park. Charged with cracking down on local bootleggers, the two officers entered the outbuilding by removing a padlock on the outer door. While De Shirlia's partner, a man named Duffy, left to find the sheriff, a young man, Charles Akins, returned to his still and surprised De Shirlia who was waiting in the dark. A fight ensued during which officer De Shirlia shot and killed Akins.[97]

The notion of a Black police officer shooting and killing the son of a well-known white resident in the middle of the night raised the hackles of many Pocatellans. Charles Akins's father sued the Department and De Shirlia was arrested for first-degree murder and removed from the force. The charge brought by Akins was that the two officers had entered the outbuilding without a warrant, and that his son could not have known that ununiformed and Black De Shirlia was law enforcement. Such conditions constituted a right to resist, making his death a cold-blooded murder. A month later, the jury disagreed with the plaintiff. They cleared De Shirlia of all charges, but the police department declined to reinstate him.[98] By all accounts he spent the next decade in one violent altercation after another. By 1931, Yellowstone Jack had twice been arrested for shootings and had spent time up in Montana's state Prison at Deer Lodge on charges of assaulting a police officer with a deadly weapon.[99]

While newspaper sources regarding De Shirlia only depict a violent man from 1919 onward, local Black memory continued to regard him as the Black police officer until at least

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[97] "De Shirlia is in Custody of Sheriff Mabey," *Pocatello Tribune,* October 10, 1919, 1; and "De Shirlia Case Ends Acquittal," *Pocatello Tribune,* November 20, 1919, 7.

[98] "De Shirlia Case Ends Acquittal," *Pocatello Tribune,* November 20, 1919, 7.

[99] "De Shirlia Gets Prison Term on Assault Charge," *Pocatello Tribune,* March 26, 1925, 6; "Mann Johnson Shot in Leg by Don De Shirlia," *Pocatello Tribune,* September 2, 1927, 10; "'Yellowstone Jack' Victim of a Heavy Load of Buckshot," *Pocatello Tribune,* April 5, 1931, 1; "Negro Back in City Jail," *Pocatello Tribune,* May 17, 1931, 6.

1923. In fact, a second reading of the many altercations that he was involved in reflect a man who remained willing to act as a community enforcer, albeit, outside the law. In one account from 1927, De Shirlia was arrested after he prevented a robbery at the Black pool hall owned by his friend Ben Carrothers. Police arrived and arrested De Shirlia because his course of action involved shooting the would-be thief in the knee almost immediately after the man produced a knife.[100] The public record of De Shirlia's time in Idaho and Montana from 1919 until the 1930s all point to a man willing to use violence in defense of himself and those he cared about. Despite the fact that he had not been a police officer throughout the summers of Klan activity, he certainly retained his hard reputation among white residents who rightly feared that he was the sort of man who shot first and asked questions later.

Other details of the historical record point to a real threat against the church. In May 1923, the first of several large Klan parades took a course from downtown through the west side of town out to the western bench hills where crosses burned as new members joined the 150 Klansmen.[101] The next year, a much larger rally in September moved along a different route through the eastside, along Pocatello and Third Avenues to the spot just east of town where they burned crosses.[102] This procession, therefore, would have directly passed both the AME church on Third, the still under construction Baptist church on Pocatello and Fourth, and the Greek Orthodox church as well. The speeches made by Klan leaders that day also suggest that the ethnically mixed and ostensibly irreligious eastside neighborhood had become a specific target of the group. Speakers railed against bars and pool halls, bootlegging, and un-American groups who were threats to "American Christianity." Taking up older racial-religious scripts, the Klan warned

[100] "Mann Johnson Shot in Leg by Don De Shirlia," *Pocatello Tribune,* September 2, 1927, 10

[101] "Ku Klux Held a Ceremonial," *Pocatello Tribune*, May 8, 1923, 5.

[102] Mary Watkins, "Early Pocatello, Idaho: Vignettes of a Vibrant Black Community," pp. 5-7. *ISU Special Collections and Archives,* MC 063, Box 1, Folder 12, Eli M. Oboler Library, Pocatello, Idaho

that hyphenated American immigrants, Catholics, and Jews were all unable to assimilate into a Christian nation.[103] Moreover, two of the most high-ranking Klan members who spoke in Pocatello from 1922-1924, Grand Goblin Lewis Berger and H.F. Mow, were both Protestant ministers.[104] Their parade through the eastside in 1924, with its many saloons, Black homes, Japanese restaurants, Greek labor unions, and other evidence of cultural and racial "mixing" left little doubt in any resident's mind that the ideological and religious affront the Klan warned against was also a spatial and territorial one. Though we cannot know for certain, it is probable that the threat made against Allen Chapel and the legendary stand of Yellowstone Jack took place in conjunction with the 1924 Klan rally.[105]

Contested Memory in the Triangle

This chapter has sought to lay out a genealogy of racial-religious scripts in the history of Pocatello and its Triangle neighborhood. In doing so, my purpose has been to illustrate yet another valence of a broader argument about the ways in which race was made not only through national racial discourses and policy decisions, but through the local adaptation and use of racial ideology to curate collective identity and memory. Drawing on the work and language of historian Natalia Molina, it is not just "how race is made in America," that interests me, but also "where race is made." In the previous chapter we saw that the categories of race and belonging could be given meaning and power through performances of settler epistemologies that resonate

[103] "Monster Crowd Views Parade and Ku Klux Klan Ceremonies," *Pocatello Tribune,* September 16, 1924, 5; "Ku Klux Held a Ceremonial," *Pocatello Tribune*, May 8, 1923, 5.

[104] "Boise Cases Due Activity Ku Klux Klan," *Pocatello Tribune,* February 24, 1923, 5; Mercier, "Idaho's African Americans," 27-28.

[105] It is not all that surprising that the defense of Allen Chapel would have been preserved in Black community memory while not even being mentioned by the White Press. Had the *Tribune* been a critical voice against the Klan, it is more likely that they would have run pieces detailing the group's many embarrassments in the eastside and the Black neighborhood's armed retorts to Klan rumors. As it was, however, showing the local Klan in a poor light was not on the agenda of the Tribune or its editors.

into the present. In Pocatello, then, we might conclude by asking how racial-religious scripts have continued to be taken up or contested since the 1920s.

The history of preservation and memorialization of the Triangle neighborhood affords us a prescient window into ongoing contests over memory and meaning. As the centennial of Pocatello's founding approached in 1982, the once vibrant Triangle district had already suffered the hard effects of western deindustrialization, stagflation, and persistent economic challenges to its working-class inhabitants. Buildings where Black barbers had once plied their trade, public spaces where numerous social groups met, and newsstands that sold copies of the *Denver Star* or the *Chicago Defender* had been replaced by metal warehouses or empty lots. Segregation and redlining had their intended consequences as hardworking Black residents saw their homes devalued and were entirely unable to purchase properties outside the depreciating neighborhood. When residential segregation ended in fits and starts during the 1950s and 1960s some Black Triangle residents bought homes throughout the city. Many younger residents grew up and left for university or work outside of Idaho altogether. In the 1960s, Allen Chapel finally closed its doors after nearly six decades. Corinth Baptist, which was temporarily established in the 1940s to meet the needs of the many Black Baptists in town, shuddered in 1960 and Elijah Harris returned to the pulpit of Bethel, then the only remaining Black church in Pocatello.[106]

In 1982, the *Idaho State Journal* printed a special issue on the town's illustrious history that included a heavy dose of frontier mythology. Articles with titles like "More than One Hundred Years Ago, Pocatello was Frontier," "Murder Helped Create Town's Government," "Indians on War-Path Isolated Pocatello before 1882," and "Indian Rights-of-Way Talks Paved Way for Railroad," made nostalgic and complementary reading materials for residents already

[106] On neighborhood decline, see Purse, Watkins, and Marsh, "The Triangle," 11, 50-51; On Black church closures, see "Bethel Baptist Church," National Register Registration Form, 10-11.

immersed in those forms of historical counternarratives.[107] They may even have provided some background for those people who went to see the 1982 reprisal of the "Days of Old Fort Hall Pageant."[108] But the origins of the eastside cropped up only in those stories about its supposed depravity. Even in the single history column that spoke of the city's Japanese residents, the eastside as an ethnic neighborhood and community space was not cherished.[109]

As the celebratory atmosphere faded over the next few years, residents of the Triangle neighborhood were primed to push for a more lasting form of recognition and preservation. The first steps came a few years later as Idaho celebrated its own one hundred years of statehood in 1989. Historians Laurie Mercier and Carole Smolinski began the "Idaho Ethnic Heritage Project" aimed at documenting the state's racial and cultural diversity to coincide with the anniversary. Mercier, herself one of the country's foremost advocates for and experts on conducting oral histories, found a willing and able partner in Mary Watkins of Pocatello. They interviewed other members of the Black community in the Triangle. Watkins's "Early Pocatello, Idaho: Vignettes of a Vibrant Black Community," joined with and prompted other public history endeavors including an NAACP-funded history documentary on the Black community in Pocatello and her own research into Bethel, where she remains an active member.

As Watkins, Idaho Purce, and other Black Triangle residents set about working for the preservation of their own history, their many neighbors also sought to bring their stories of the area to light. In 2005, Idaho State University history professor Kevin Marsh, Idaho Purce, and Mary Watkins finished their collaboration on documentation of the eastside titled, "The Triangle:

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[107] Clippings of these articles and the centennial edition, see "ISJ Centennial Edition, Pocatello" Vertical file, *ISU Special Collections and Archives*, Eli M. Oboler Library, Pocatello, Idaho.

[108] "Days of Old Fort Hall Historical Pageant and Frontier Fair, program," *ISU Special Collections and Archives,* MC 063, Box 1, Folder 12, Eli M. Oboler Library, Pocatello, Idaho.

[109] "Japanese Call Pocatello Home," *Idaho State Journal (Centennial Edition),* June 21, 1982, no page, clipping file in "Idaho's Ethnic Demographic Data," *ISU Special Collections and Archives,* MC 063, Box 1, Folder 12, Eli M. Oboler Library, Pocatello, Idaho.

A Slice of America." It contained sections of descriptive history, condensed accounts of important events, short synopses of various ethnic histories, a selection of primary sources from newspapers, historic photos, maps, and census records. Several homes and old business buildings remained to document and save, but the *piéce de résistance* of the extant cultural resources were the Triangle's churches. Many of these buildings, along with remnants of their once vibrant congregations, had persisted. Along with Bethel, the Greek Orthodox Church, and St. Anthony's, which by the 1990s served a larger number of Mexican and Mexican American parishioners, all carried long histories that attested to their ongoing cultural and religious relevance.[110]

The committee for the preservation and memorialization of the neighborhood came together in 2008 to erect an impressive historical marker engraved with the names of many prominent residents over the years. The group stuck with Marsh, Watkins, and Purce's use of the triangle and "slice of America" language to emphasize the area's diverse past. Consciously or not, this imagery was a subtle repudiation of the common "melting-pot" trope that abounded in mid-late twentieth century discourses around ethnic immigration. Sadly, many of the local stories that ran in papers following the monument dedication failed to grasp this distinction. The counternarrative was alive and well.

In some articles, the effects of a half-century of racial segregation seemed lost on some journalists who took the attention on the Triangle as an opportunity to delve into their town's "lost" history. With its colorful past of prostitutes, bootleggers, gun fights, ethnic minorities, and fading working-class aesthetic, the Triangle was perfect for a certain type of reflection. Rather than seeing the effects of racism as the root cause of the area's decline, instead, desegregation

[110] Purse, Watkins, and Marsh, "The Triangle," 9, 25.

became a culprit that essentially "broke up" the closeknit ethnic community there.[111] Reporters misread local Black reflections on how the community had persisted in the face of such struggles through mutual support. Instead of offering a nuanced critique of local history, columns bore headlines such as "Triangle Residents 'Didn't Understand Segregation,'"[112] There was also a fair amount of "melting pot" rhetoric that helped readers understand the end of the Triangle as merely a result of the "natural" assimilation of people who were once not white enough or not fully American.[113] Finally, headlines declared what the authors of the neighborhood study had never intended at all: "Life in the Triangle: Neighborhood known for its ethnic diversity now only a memory."[114]

Resigned to an inert past, we might ask how the Triangle's racial-religious scripts could surface again. Of course, memory-scape is a perfect stage for the return of these scripts. In 2021, following the construction of Pocatello's first Latter-day Saint Temple, a revealing article ran in the papers. In conjunction with the new complex, the Saints organized local authors to research and write histories of all the towns in Idaho where a temple stood. The elderly couple in charge of Pocatello's history came upon the Triangle in their research. Its diverse history intrigued them as well, although they appeared to be interested at first for the area's cultural relevance to the present considering "the nationwide emphasis on diversity and melding or inclusion of various

[111] This is also somewhat reflected in the Purse, Watkins, and Marsh, documentation. However, their account does not shy from the fact that residential decline in the area was precipitated by housing segregation over the past century. See Purse, Watkins, and Marsh, "The Triangle," 11.

[112] "Triangle Residents 'Didn't Understand Segregation,'" *Idaho State Journal,* September 27, 2009. Clipping file "Cities, Pocatello" Vertical file, *ISU Special Collections and Archives*, Eli M. Oboler Library, Pocatello, Idaho.

[113] "A True Melting Pot," *Idaho State Journal,* September 27, 2009. Clipping file "Cities, Pocatello" Vertical file, *ISU Special Collections and Archives*, Eli M. Oboler Library, Pocatello, Idaho.

[114] "Life in the Triangle: Neighborhood known for its ethnic diversity now only a memory." *Idaho State Journal,* November 2, 2009, "Cities, Pocatello" Vertical file, *ISU Special Collections and Archives*, Eli M. Oboler Library, Pocatello, Idaho.

races and cultures" was "an ongoing political theme."[115] Seemingly immune to the fact that the largest population in the Triangle had been a Black community whose men were barred from the Mormon Priesthood, and willing to overlook all the religious history of the area that did not include the Latter-day Saints, the authors happily pointed to the racial and ethnic diversity of the host city of the new temple as a boon to their own religious community's historical narrative.[116]

In the midst of old and renewed counternarratives reading from familiar scripts, the other more faithful narrative of Pocatello's past continues as well. I became aware of this final stage in the neighborhood's historical narrative through a family friend, and resident of Pocatello. The small booklet produced by the preservation commission captivated my friend Kathy's interest. As I explained my intent to write about the Black churches during one visit, she immediately and enthusiastically suggested that I investigate the Triangle for its racial and religious significance. Public history presentations, lectures, and walking tours have drawn her and other Pocatello residents into an altogether different counternarrative than what had dominated for the past century. It may not be a perfect account, but it is much closer to a historical account that could attest to what this dissertation has called an imagined future for Pocatello's Black community and one that opens up onto the West's racial and ethnic heterogeneity. That counternarrative can yet tell a history that challenges and shapes what Idahoans believed about the meaning of home.

[115] Dean and Nancy Hoch, "The Triangle – A Slice of America," *Idaho State Journal,* August 9, 2021. https://www.idahostatejournal.com/community/the-triangle-a-slice-of-america/article_8d34708b-8e7e-523b-9d0a-39fd26400c9f.html

[116] Dean and Nancy Hoch, "The Triangle – A Slice of America," *Idaho State Journal,* August 9, 2021. https://www.idahostatejournal.com/community/the-triangle-a-slice-of-america/article_8d34708b-8e7e-523b-9d0a-39fd26400c9f.html

Chapter 6 What is Pulled beneath the Current

"Great opposition was developed to the destruction of the tree, and one Dr. Thomas Worral published a 30-page pamphlet denouncing the city council for perpetrating 'a black, foul and damning crime.' A section of the tree was preserved and set up by E. H. Martin at the old Union Station, where it was a source of wonder to the stray 'tenderfoot' who stopped at Pueblo for lunch."

—*Camp & Plant,* April 30, 1904, commemorating the felling of Pueblo's "Big Tree" in 1883 which stood in the center of South Union Ave.

A somber, and yet defiant, river of men and women flowed through downtown Denver on February 28, 1885. Ice and sleet pelted their faces and turned to freezing, ankle-deep slush beneath the marchers' feet. Through wind they shouted and sang songs.[1] A year earlier, in the winter of 1884, the Crested Butte Mine disaster claimed 59 lives, touching off the first major contestation in Southern Colorado's coal country. The next year did not see full-scale work stoppages. Over the course of many months, however, various unions arranged under the Knights of Labor and the Coal Miners Amalgamation (CMA) managed to fashion a phalanx of solidarity to pressure the company to make certain concessions on wages and safety and greater worker freedom by the end of summer, 1885.[2] Indeed, *freedom* emerged as a buzzword in labor circles. John L. Lewis, then the Secretary of the Coal Miners Amalgamation, had done much to propel a freedom discourse in his weekly columns in the *Labor Enquirer.* During the February 1885 march through Colorado's capital, Lewis led the strikers, undeterred that he had fallen and

[1] "King for a Day," *Labor Enquirer,* Denver, Colorado, February 28, 1885, 1.
[2] On the disaster and the 1884-1885 Strike see, Andrews, *Killing for Coal,* esp. pp. 121-156.

"soiled his pantaloons" in the icy muck. Behind the secretary, a large banner read: "We are Freeborn Men, Not Slaves."[3]

Whipping in the wind and outlining the visage of John Lewis, these words echoed a generalized union appeal to free men and free labor. It also pointed to a very loud and ongoing controversy that Lewis himself had been fanning since early that same month. In the previous issue of the *Labor Enquirer,* Lewis set the issue most clearly before his readers: "The white race freed the colored people from slavery, and will the colored men, now, when they become acquainted with the fats in the case, place the yoke of bondage upon their deliverers?"[4] Flowing from his pen, a peculiar counternarrative of Black labor history in Colorado thus surfaced in many local papers from February to May of 1885. State workers at the Bureau of Labor Statistics reproduced (and embellished) the story and cited Lewis's article in 1888.[5] On the eve of the next major strike in 1894, labor leaders again referenced the specter of "colored labor" arriving from the South to "enslave" white miners.[6] The racial anxiety that Lewis mobilized so effectively at the end of the 1884-1885 strike persisted long after the event in question. The arrival of at least a few dozen to as many as 150 Black workers from Tennessee in early February 1885 reappears in modern historical scholarship as recently as Thomas Andrews' ground-breaking history of the Ludlow Massacre, *Killing for Coal* (2008). Andrews no doubt came across this story due to his thorough research, yet the singularity of the event, as Lewis might have told it, is somewhat retained in *Killing for Coal*. Andrews' writes that "The First African Americans, meanwhile,

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[3] "King for a Day," *Labor Enquirer,* Denver, Colorado, February 28, 1885, 1.

[4] John L. Lewis, "The Weekly Report of the Secretary," *Labor Enquirer,* Denver, Colorado, February 21, 1885, 3.

[5] For controversy see, "Two Coach Loads," *Pueblo Daily Chieftain,* February 17, 1885, 4; John L. Lewis, "The Weekly Report of the Secretary," *Labor Enquirer,* Denver, Colorado, February 21, 1885, 3; John L. Lewis, "The Weekly Report of the Secretary," *Labor Enquirer,* Denver, Colorado, February 28, 1885, 3; For report see, *First Biennial Report of the Bureau of Labor Statistics of the State of Colorado, 1887-1888* (Denver: Collier and Cleaveland, 1888), 140.

[6] "Miner's Manifesto—Mass Meeting Last Night," *Pueblo Daily Chieftain,* June 24, 1894, 5.

arrived in the southern fields aboard shuttered trains during the strike of 1884."[7] The history of Black Pueblo expounded in Chapter One is an important corrective. After all it would have come as a great surprise to the hundreds of established Black residents of Pueblo to hear news that the "first African Americans" in town might be arriving at the depot. The saga of the Tennessee miners, though, has other curiosities and ruptures to consider.

Several Colorado papers quoted sources that said several train cars, or about 150 men, arrived from Chattanooga early in February in the midst of the 1884-1885 coal strike and at a key moment in the troubled, ongoing negotiations.[8] The train stopped in Denver before moving on to Pueblo. As Lewis unfurled his argument and various rhetorical questions regarding Black workers placing the "yoke of bondage on their deliverers," the notion that these men did not "have all the facts" took shape.[9] Never one possessed of a sterling reputation for burgeoning interracial organizing, John Lewis absolved the men to a degree that bordered on patronizing them as "shamefully led astray" and "innocent victims of the company's hellish designs." In turn, the train's windows were thus blackened (if not in real life, than at least in the retelling) so that the men could not see the picket lines that they crossed. This gave rise to a hope that they would refuse to work as "scabs" and return to the South. In his February 21 column, Lewis angled for an impression of interracial solidarity by stating that "I cannot believe [they will choose to work] before it is actually done."[10] A spinoff of this part of the story appeared months later with reports that dozens of Black miners who had moved through Pueblo

[7] Andrews, *Killing for Coal,* 103.

[8] Pueblo's paper gave the most exact number writing "The C.C. & I. Company have shipped in from Tennessee about 150 colored laborers." *Pueblo Daily Chieftain,* February 22, 1885, 5; see also, "Two Coach Loads," *Pueblo Daily Chieftain,* February 17, 1885, 4; and, John L. Lewis, "The Weekly Report of the Secretary," *Labor Enquirer,* Denver, Colorado, February 21, 1885, 3.

[9] John L. Lewis, "The Weekly Report of the Secretary," *Labor Enquirer,* Denver, Colorado, February 21, 1885, 3.

[10] John L. Lewis, "The Weekly Report of the Secretary," *Labor Enquirer,* Denver, Colorado, February 21, 1885, 3.

to the mines at Walsenburg and El Moro now were appealing to the Governor, stating that the CC&I had mislead them in Tennessee about the nature and availability of the work. Those reports did not appear in papers until May 1885, and still rumors that the Black men onboard the "shuttered" trains refused to work once the state of the Strike had been made clear to them circulated freely throughout February and early March.[11]

What exactly happened, how many people came on the trains in 1885, and who stayed or worked in what part of the coal industry, is for now (at least) likely to remain opaque.[12] Company men, who spoke with reporters after the May story broke about Black workers appealing to the Governor, disputed the original number of men brought from Tennessee saying only a few dozen arrived and not 150.[13] All other (and more contemporaneous) reports lean toward the larger number. In Pueblo it was reported that "Two coach loads of colored people were brought into the city yesterday [February 16] afternoon on the Denver and Rio Grande train and taken to Bessemer, where it is said they will be employed in unskilled labor about the works."[14] On February 18, the "rumor in the streets" of Pueblo added new information. According to the *Chieftain,* some of the men who arrived that week were soon to be on their way to the mines in El Moro and Walsenburg. However, the next week again brought uncertainty. In addition to placing the total number of people at 150, a short note from the editor urged residents to keep an open mind: "We have always thought that if a colored man behaved himself better than we did, then he was our superior." Following this opening, the line of thought (though

[11] "Complaints from Workmen," *Pueblo Daily Chieftain,* May 27, 1885, 4; in addition to Lewis' description of the trains, the writers of the *First Biennial Report of the Bureau of Labor Statistics of the State of Colorado, 1887-1888* (Denver: Collier and Cleaveland, 1888) also claimed the cars were "shuttered" see page 140. None of the contemporaneous newspaper reporting from Pueblo where the trains actually arrived make such a claim, however.

[12] The new and expansive archives of the Colorado Fuel & Iron Company in Pueblo are stilling being cataloged as of early 2024. If any Company documentation about this incident still survives it may exist in these unopened collections.

[13] "The Colored Miners," *Pueblo Daily Chieftain,* May 28, 1885, 4.

[14] "Two Coach Loads," *Pueblo Daily Chieftain,* February 17, 1885, 4.

muddled by some very poor grammar) seems to be advocating for a "wait and see" posture toward the Black newcomers, concluding that "We should view all questions from a rational, and not a prejudicial standpoint."[15]

A few rhetorical flourishes by Lewis about Black men refusing to place the yoke of bondage on white workers notwithstanding, it follows logically that many of the new arrivals in 1885 chose to stay and work in some capacity. This seems clear precisely because labor leaders continued to bemoan the introduction of "colored labor" after the February march through Denver. More specifically, the arrival of Black men in Pueblo gave fuel and context to one of Lewis' favorite arguments, namely white slavery. When news of the trains first arrived on February 14, Lewis waxed that manager of the CC&I were "worthy of slaveholders in every sense." He continued, "Talk about freedom! The darkest days of slavery, and the most inhuman treatment to which the colored race was subjected equaled by no means the condition of the white slaves to-day at El Moro."[16] The week of the February 28 march in Denver saw his column again claim that "The importation of colored labor and maintaining a large body of guards is estimated to cost the company four times the amount which the old hands and skilled men are willing to work for."[17] After the march, Lewis did let a week pass without mentioning Black laborers but filled the void with a warning for miners in Wyoming that "a large number of Chinese will be ready for shipment into Wyoming early in the summer."[18] September of that year, of course, would see the single most deadly day for Chinese workers in the American West during the Rocky Springs Massacre.

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[15] "South Side Splinters," *Pueblo Daily Chieftain,* February 22, 1885, 5.

[16] John L. Lewis, "The Weekly Report of the Secretary," *Labor Enquirer,* Denver, Colorado, February 14, 1885, 3.

[17] John L. Lewis, "The Weekly Report of the Secretary," *Labor Enquirer,* Denver, Colorado, February 28, 1885, 3.

[18] John L. Lewis, "The Weekly Report of the Secretary," *Labor Enquirer,* Denver, Colorado, March 7, 1885, 3.

Lewis' consistent racist and anti-black rhetoric was soon echoed and affirmed by the Knights of Labor of Colorado, Kansas, New Mexico, Utah, and Wyoming during their March 10 convention in Pueblo. In a lengthy resolution on CC&I managers, they concluded that "we look upon the introduction of colored labor into the nines of El Moro and Walsenburg as unmistakable evidence of Danforth's intent to reduce labor in the mines of Colorado."[19] The reference here to El Moro and Walsenburg certainly imply the convention was speaking directly of the Tennessee train, yet the accepted idea that "colored labor" necessarily meant a challenge to organized labor formed a logic that persisted not only during strikes but at all times. From this, other questions follow. What of the majority of workers who stayed in Pueblo rather than going on to the mines? And had the CC&I scheduled a train of 150 people with the singular intent to introduce only a handful of that number (27 by their statement of May 28) to mines where strikers refused to work? [20] There remains one source, a single sentence published in the *Chieftain,* that helps us gain clarity. On March 1, the local paper in Pueblo confirmed that "All the colored people have left here for the mines, the women having followed the men this week."[21]

Even scholars who rightly view Lewis' particular narrative with caution might not have ever been guessed that Black *women* were part of the notorious train of "workers" if not for this one small archival rupture in the *Pueblo Chieftain.* Though a few dozen people went on to the mines, it seems equally clear that most stayed, worked, and presumably lived, in Pueblo. Indeed, a handful of married couples in the 1885 census and newly arrived since the 1880 count, are

[19] Resolutions of the convention quoted at length in, John L. Lewis, "The Weekly Report of the Secretary," *Labor Enquirer,* Denver, Colorado, March 14, 1885, 3.

[20] "The Colored Miners," *Pueblo Daily Chieftain,* May 28, 1885, 4.

[21] "Clear Grit's Grist," *Pueblo Daily Chieftain,* March 1, 1885, 5.

listed as natives of Tennessee, though one can only speculate whether or not they were among the passengers.[22]

The dominant counternarratives of Blackness and the American West blot out the distinctive and instructive history that might otherwise be imagined. Some of these counternarratives are not those of outright absence, but instead reveal the ways that the Black West is often subsumed in the currents of historical storytelling. In 1885, John Lewis partially revealed the stories of Black laborers in Colorado in order to win discursive points in an ongoing battle between capital and labor. His assumptions that "colored labor" led to "white slavery" meant that Black Americans could not be genuine part of labor-oriented "counternarrative communities."

Between 1880 and 1885, when the state of Colorado conducted a census count, the proportion of Black women working and providing for households remained stable at around 50 percent of the overall Black working population. Here, gender parity and the analytical questions it raised (see Chapter One) demanded that both women's history and broader themes of gender be part of any worthwhile account of racial and gender history in that place. The vicissitudes and uncertainties of life in a coal company town unveiled the local, intersectional construction of race, gender, and labor themes in southern Colorado's past. Black men faced double exclusions, first from better paying work at the mills and smelters, and second from equal and robust representation in the labor unions. Black women, therefore, worked in ways that allowed them to out-maneuver the whims of company and union disregard for their stability and security. In a city that saw a half-dozen major work stoppages or strikes in its dominant industry from the early 1880s until the 1920s, Black women, as much if not more than men, where the cornerstone of

[22] "African Americans listed in the 1885 Colorado State Census, Pueblo, Colorado," Entries compiled by the author.

their community's hope for a future in Pueblo. The apparent ways that gender and labor fused in this racial history now points the present chapter toward a thread of narratives and counternarratives about local belonging that likewise exposed consonant connections between race, gender, and labor.

The previous two chapters focused on the creation of and participation within counternarrative communities in Cheyenne and Pocatello. Pueblo now offers us an opportunity to consider how different communities navigated and created space with competing narratives. Pueblo, more than the other two cities both retains its historical racial diversity into the present and, perhaps for that very reason, has been most concerned and busy with the lapidary projects of re-narrating the past to make space for a diverse citizenry. Pueblo's counternarrative communities have a rich and instructive history, but they can obscure much as well. The burden of this final chapter is to show that, though certain elite and powerful elements in white settler society at moments tried to assert a singular controlling story into which all people had to participate, or risk being put out, still other counternarrative communities did not always bend toward this hegemonic expression of racial belonging. By the post-flood era of Pueblo's history, various counternarratives held open a radical space for racial and ethnic diversity. Though these forcefully pushed against some logics of white settler supremacy, they just as often trafficked in accepted gendered ideals that recast and even erased the lives of working women—and with them much of the Black history of early Pueblo—in service of these other stories. In episodes of real crisis, various ethnic, racial, and economic groups, including African Americans, assembled the various "stories they told about themselves" into a counternarrative community that could, and largely did, survive the imminent deluge. The stories that ground a history of gender, race,

and labor, in Pueblo, however, reach back well before the events of 1885 or even the town's founding.

Myth and History in El Pueblo, 1841-1867

Running water, convenient timber, plenty of forage, and proximity to multiple Indigenous nations willing to trade all appealed greatly to the small group of Americans who first built a post on the northern bank of the Arkansas in summer 1841. The site positioned the owners to capitalize on trade with Taos and Santa Fe markets in Mexico across the river. Additionally, the various bands of Southern Utes, dwelling in the mountains to the West, frequented the location on their way to hunt Buffalo on the plains. Initially, they accepted the new post and its trade goods in their territory. Within ten years, overland migrants to California similarly sought out the goods and shelter within the sloping adobe walls of El Pueblo.[23]

Despite its many advantages, the decision to build a trading post on the U.S. Mexico border in 1841 came about because of a general decline in the fortunes of its mountain men founders. That section of the south-central Rockies had been in the crossroads of raiding, trading, and trapping endeavors for centuries already. Hardly any beaver remained in the riparian habitats of the Pikes Peak or Wet Mountain region.[24] One of the founders of El Pueblo, Matthew Kinkead, also noted the declining number of bison robes brought by Native hunters returning to Taos from the Southern Plains. In response he tried to establish a bison "ranch" a few miles above where the Fountain met the Arkansas. Others soon joined Kinkead, his partner, Dick Wooten, and their wives, all of whom traveled from Santa Fe. These men had recently felt pressure from Mexican officials to leave New Mexico. From 1840-1841 Texan ambitions and

[23] Lecompte, *Pueblo, Hardscrabble, Greenhorn,* 39-40, 45.
[24] Lecompte, *Pueblo, Hardscrabble, Greenhorn*, 83.

conceits regarding their claim to portions of the northern Mexican Territory worried many residents in Santa Fe and Taos. Before the bungled Santa Fe Expedition of 1841 proved the Republic's desire for New Mexican lands, Americans living in the Mexican trade towns withered under fearful and suspecting gazes. Many, like Kinkead and Wooten, avoided the possible conflict by preemptively leaving Mexico. The new adobe fort that they built on the Arkansas was almost as close to Taos as one could be while still in the U.S.[25]

Exactly *who* built the structure was a point of disagreement hashed out in the various commercial autobiographies of the mountain men. John Brown offered the soundest evidence of his hand in construction. His writings note that a few dozen or so men and their Mexican and Native wives worked to get the adobe walls in place during the fall of 1841.[26] All other sources fit with this timeframe, except one. Inscrutable as ever, Jim Beckwourth crashes through the historical record of the Mountain West with a sly abandon. Perhaps wisely, few historians (and none recently) have attempted to assess his many claims and sum up his bizarre yet exhilarating life. Beyond the facts of his birth in 1798 in Virginia to a white enslaver father and Black enslaved mother, and his eventual escape from bondage into the great West where he lived among the Crow in what is now Montana, little can be said for sure.[27] In 1856, *The Life and Adventures James P. Beckwourth, Mountain Man, Scout, and Pioneer, and Chief of the Crow Nation of Indians,* raised eyebrows from San Francisco to New York to London. Many of the early western historians who fondly poured over the generation of mountain men like Kit Carson and others openly detested the Black man whose stories of the West rivaled all others.[28]

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[25] Lecompte, *Pueblo, Hardscrabble, Greenhorn*, 39.

[26] Lecompte, *Pueblo, Hardscrabble, Greenhorn*, 41.

[27] Quintard Taylor, *In Search of the Racial Frontier,* 49-52. and Shirley Anne Wilson Moore, *Sweet Freedom's Plains,* 26-29.

[28] Beckwourth is unique among the so-called "mountain men" insofar as he has no modern academic biographer. Nor does he appear with more than passing reference in any histories of the fur trade or settlement of the Rockies. However, since his autobiography details his travels across the region, he does appear, briefly, in a wide

While they, and subsequent scholars, can point to obvious exaggerations and a few impossibilities in his narrative, perhaps most frustrating to early twentieth-century historians was Beckwourth's knack for managing to be demonstrably present at so many critical turning points in Western history. He trapped beavers in the Colorado Rockies as early as 1826. He married two Crow women in Montana while obtaining some recognition as a military and political figure within the tribe. He followed or blazed every notable trail in the West it seemed. He found passages through mountain ranges that seemed a barrier to the weather itself. He was variously a hunter and a guide, a trapper and a trader, a horse thief, a gold miner, and, twice, a would-be revolutionary. In 1845 he fought with the *californios* against the Mexican state. Later, in 1847, he sided with the Americans in Santa Fe during the end of the U.S.-Mexican War. His exploits pepper the writings of so many other mountain men that historians of the era cannot afford to dismiss his account entirely.[29]

In 1842, Beckwourth arrived at El Pueblo with a retinue of stolen horses which he "liberated" from californio rancheros in an act of spontaneous "patriotism." His account claimed that Luisa Sandoval, his wife from Santa Fe, he, and a few dozen others then went about building a fort from adobe brick "sixty yards square."[30] It is almost certain that a number of Americans and Mexicans leaving New Mexico the previous year preempted Beckwourth at the Arkansas-Fountain confluence. The fort was finished months before he arrived that October and not at all to the scale he described. But like many other parts of Beckwourth's story, he persisted in the

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array of scholarly and popular books. For two early accounts of his travels see, Delmont R. Oswald, "James P. Beckwourth," in LeRoy Hafen, ed. *The Mountain Men and the Fur Trade of the Far West* (Glendale, CA: Arthur H. Clark Co., 1968), vol. 6, pp. 37-60; LeRoy Hafen, "The Last Years of James P. Beckwourth," *Colorado magazine* 5:4 (August 1928), 134-139.

[29] Older historians of the region such as Lecompte wrote with plain contempt for Beckwourth while scholars of the Black West have confronted his legacy with more nuance, though not abundantly. See Quintard Taylor, *In Search of the Racial Frontier,* 49-52. and Shirley Anne Wilson Moore, *Sweet Freedom's Plains,* 26-29.

[30] T. D. Bonner, *The Life and Adventures James P. Beckwourth, Mountain Man, Scout, and Pioneer, and Chief of the Crow Nation of Indians, as Dictated to T. D. Bonner* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1856), 464.

face of such details to powerfully imprint his own legacy on everything he touched. El Pueblo, to be clear, was not built or founded by Beckwourth. He did, however, frequently trade from the location in its earliest years. As California and New Mexico became his main stomping grounds in the years before the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, the fort on American soil served as a waypoint for the enigmatic figure. More than just a causal claim to have initiated the building of the structure in 1842, Beckwourth reenforced his "ownership" over the site and its memory by always referring to it as "my outpost," or "my plantation."[31] One hundred and eighty years later many Pueblo residents still repeat Beckwourth's spurious counternarrative claim to be the builder and originator of El Pueblo.[32] The longevity of the Beckwourth-as-founder story, as we will see shortly, may have been wrapped up in other plotlines in Pueblo's developing history.

El Pueblo, of course, was significant for reasons other than its mysterious origins. After selling his horses, Beckwourth struck out again for California in 1843. One historian notes that he left his wife Luisa and their daughter Matilda at El Pueblo as "hostages to the truth that he was ever there at all."[33] These women's role in Pueblo's history, though, is more significant than as proof that Beckwourth spent time on the upper Arkansas. In many ways, Louisa, Matilda and the many other women at the post were the cause of its early success and lasting presence. Sandoval herself was often regarded as "white" by her contemporaries as she came from a prominent New Mexican family of Spanish descent. Nearly all other women at El Pueblo were either Mexican or Native. Aside from cultivating a domesticated aesthetic for the newly arrived

[31] Bonner, *The Life and Adventures James P. Beckwourth,* 393.

[32] Beckwourth naming and/or founding El Pueblo appears in various writings pertaining to local history including, "Community leaders dispute minority population census," *Star Journal and Sunday Chieftain,* August 12, 1973, 8; "Pueblo blacks shared role of pioneers," *Star Journal and Sunday Chieftain,* August 13, 1978, 7A; local institutions and organizations also make similar claims. See, https://www.britannica.com/place/Pueblo-Colorado

[33] Quoted in Lecompte, *Pueblo, Hardscrabble, Greenhorn*, 42.

men, the women worked to ensure that the Pueblo settlement looked and operated more like Toas than the ephemeral Bent's Fort some 75 miles downriver. In this they succeeded.[34]

Scholars of the fur trade and gold rush eras like Anne Hyde, Elliott West, and Susan Johnson among many others have long noted the role and labor of women, usually Native or Mexican, played in propping up their husband or partner's career. They were tanners, diplomats, translators, guides, and much more. As a result, they also lived mobile lives and found themselves in many new environments.[35] El Pueblo was a commercial endeavor, but the relative gender parity between men and women in the early 1840s meant that women did much of the work. El Pueblo might not have differed too much from other trading posts of the day in this respect. However, many saw their new outpost more akin to the nucleus of a budding settlement than merely a transient trade stop. Women such as Luz Arguello, the young wife of Levin Mitchell, an Arapaho woman known as Sycamore, who was married to the trapper Charles Autobee, and dozens of other women worked while their partners traveled. Immediately, they planted corn and other vegetables around El Pueblo in 1843. This served two purposes. The women would have food to harvest and cook, of course, but the fields also served as a type of tax for the Ute bands who came to trade at the post. On their way to the Buffalo hunts, men on horseback liberally collected corn and squash from the fields both to freshen supplies and to serve a reminder to the diverse residents of El Pueblo that they were being suffered by the land's real military power.[36]

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[34] Lecompte, *Pueblo, Hardscrabble, Greenhorn*, 63-67.

[35] See Anne Hyde, *Empires, Nations, and Families: A New History of the North American West, 1800-1860* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2011), 73, 120-123, 167, and 327; West, *The Contested Plains,* 80-82: and Susan Lee Johnson, *Roaring Camp: The Social World of the California Gold Rush* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2000), 101-103, 119-120, 123-125, and 132-137.

[36] On women's work in the Upper Arkansas Valley see, Lecompte, *Pueblo, Hardscrabble, Greenhorn,* 63-67; on Ute interactions see pg. 77.

Such were the conditions of what Elliott West calls the "Metis world" of pre-goldrush Colorado. These communities of Anglo traders, Native women, and "mixed" children rested upon networks of kinship and obligation. The material wealth they sought was as much the product of negotiation as it was exploitation – of people or resources. After 1849, and the announcement from Sutter's Mill, many thousands of Anglo-Americans passed through El Pueblo's mixed world. A few new settlers also set up near the Arkansas and Fountain during the years of the California migration, hoping to capitalize on the green goldseekers. Barriers to extensive settlement or prospecting in the Arkansas valley and in the mountains, however deterred most others. West notes that as the rushers moved toward the Pacific, gold was already being found in Colorado in the 1850s. But "the timing was wrong," West writes, "As the Sierra's mother lode poured out its millions, pioneers ignored possibilities closer at hand for the sure thing farther on."[37] Keen eyed travelers may have been alarmed at Ute horsemen collecting their "tax" of corn and squash beyond the walls of the post. Colorado was not California. These travelers arrived ahead of the types of government systems needed to enforce things like mining claims, land patents, and other colonial assurances.[38]

Despite its domesticated reputation—evidenced by women and children—in reality, until the late 1850s, the Upper Arkansas still primarily served as an outpost for trade between New Mexico, St. Louis, and the Indigenous nations of the Rockies and Southern Plains. Following the U.S.-Mexican War, the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, and the arrival of territorial governors in Colorado and New Mexico, relations between the Americans and the Utes became fraught. As Ned Blackhawk argues, the cycles of deprivation and violence that ensnared the inhabitants of the Great Basin and Southwest actually spun out from older imperial contests.

[37] West, *The Contested Plains,* 99.
[38] West, *The Contested Plains,* 99-101.

Throughout the eighteenth century, Utes living in the Spanish borderlands relied on the stability and ambivalence of Spanish officials in Santa Fe to maintain the trade with Pueblos, Navajo, Apache, Comanche, and many other nations in the region. The Ute, like their Comanche relatives and rivals, had horses and sheep in abundance, but needed trade relations to secure other necessities like skins and guns. Much of this stability fractured during the Mexican Revolution. New officials in the north failed to grasp the nuances of reciprocity that held up the trade and resulting shockwaves spread out far from the Southwest.[39]

Blackhawk follows the implications of these political shifts as Mexican officials encouraged new settlers in lands firmly within Ute and other Native territory. As non-Natives used up resources and food, the fragile balance of survival throughout the intermountain west eroded. Slavery, which had always existed in various forms in trading and raiding societies, exploded in the Great Basin, especially among the Paiute in the north.[40] Taking and selling captives escalated well into the 1840s. The fact that Ute leaders allowed the building of El Pueblo in the first place suggests that they viewed a trading post so close to their mountain home as a potential boon for access to guns and powder, as well as a chance to avoid the now unpredictable relations that developed under Mexican statehood.[41] Only a year before they allowed Brown, Kinkead, and the other traders to build the post, the historic peace made between the Comanche/Kiowa alliance and the Cheyenne/Arapaho forces spelled more disaster for the mountain Utes. West notes that the bison range between the South Platte and the Arkansas suddenly was flung open. Previously, the hostilities that engulfed the central plains made hunting

[39] Ned Blackhawk, *Violence over the Land: Indians and Empires in the Early American West* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008), 119-120.
[40] Blackhawk, *Violence over the Land,* 120.
[41] Blackhawk, *Violence over the Land,* 180.

in that fertile land dangerous. Now bison and other game quickly faded from the area.[42] Blackhawk also explains that with this peace on the plains, the Ute suffered more incursions from the Cheyenne, Arapaho, and, more fearfully, from far-riding bands of Lakota who ventured into the mountains on raids. A trading post close at hand was essential, but it hardly provided security in a quickly changing world. Blackhawk notes that "Utes remained on good terms with whites." Still, they "were anxious about the growing presence of foreigners, both Native and non-Native, in their homelands…they were also committed to sustaining relations with the traders who provided them with crucial support."[43]

Important goods from the Arkansas Valley posts and a sympathetic Indian agent in Kit Carson notwithstanding, American settler colonialism quickly proved devastating for the Ute bands. The first treaty made between the Utes and the United States in 1849 set out the terms for protection, agencies, and land assurances. These elements all soon proved to be unreliable. The agency in Taos that had opened for the Utes closed almost immediately for lack of funds and materials. The U.S. failed to stop attacks from the Kiowas and Arapahos in 1851. As hundreds of thousands of settlers poured across the plains to California, grass, timber, and game in Southern Colorado evaporated. Plains Indians increasingly fought with Utes over game in the mountains. At the same moment, Mexican-American settlers who set out from Santa Fe in 1851 settled in the San Luis Valley where their cattle roamed and denuded the grass used by Ute horses and stock. In early 1854, Ute chief Tierra Blanca petitioned the governor of Colorado to make food and annuities available to his starving people. Nothing materialized.[44]

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[42] West, *The Contested Plains,* 192.
[43] Blackhawk, *Violence over the Land,* 184.
[44] Blackhawk, *Violence over the Land,* 184-191; For Lecompte's account of Ute attack, see Lecompte, *Pueblo, Hardscrabble, Greenhorn,* 237-245.

On December 24, 1854, Tierra Blanca and a small force rode down to El Pueblo in the late evening. His men took horses from several of the nearby cabins before turning toward the adobe structure. They attacked quickly, killing all eighteen people in the fort, losing six of their own. They took all goods and food that they found before setting fire to the wooden beams and furniture. This event, which white settlers called the "Fort Pueblo Massacre" or the "Christmas Day Massacre," was the first conflict of the Ute Wars that lasted on and off until 1868. The subsequent treaties made into the 1870s under the leadership of the impressive Ute diplomat, Ouray, set aside land for the Ute west of the mountains, leaving the ruins of El Pueblo and the Arkansas Valley to the designs of the Americans. Dozens of settlers in the valley survived the violence of those years. After all, Tierra Blanca's ire was targeted on the failure of settler governments and traders—represented by the post—to make good on the relationship between the nations. It was not a violent attempt to cleanse the land of invaders. Nevertheless, those who remained kept their distance from the land surrounding the ruins for about a decade. Even after 1859, when the Pike's Peak goldrush brought many thousands of hopeful miners along the Cherokee trail, past the site of old El Pueblo, most continued on their way. Soon, heavy rains and intermittent floods melted the adobe bricks back into the riverbank.[45]

"…as I did not then know its history…"

Legends and stories from the early days of El Pueblo persisted in both the lucrative and incredibly popular mountain man genre and in oral traditions of Colorado's settlers. The facts and fictions of these accounts became the grit that later generations sought to turn into the pearls

[45] In addition to Lecompte, the Historical Society of Colorado, "History Colorado," complies a more recent analysis that aptly considers broader trends in Ute-US relations. Additionally, History Colorado contends that the event should be referred to as the Fort Pueblo Tragedy, as it was avoidable if the territorial governors and officials had upheld their end of agreements. See, Holly Norton and Devin Flores, "Christmas 1854: The Tragedy that Ended El Pueblo," History Colorado, December 13, 2019, (https://www.historycolorado.org/story/2019/12/23/christmas-1854-tragedy-ended-el-pueblo).

of their own sense of community identity. The economic straits of the small town would, eventually, place a heavy burden on the bonds such identities tried to fasten. After decades of scant settler growth in the upper Arkansas, William Jackson Palmer's schemes for the dusty trading town at Pueblo began gathering more people to where the rivers met. Thousands of settlers and immigrants passed their lives working in Southern Colorado's coal industry during the latter decades of the nineteenth century. Most did so in relative obscurity. Richard Corwin did not. An avid taxidermist and naturalist from upstate New York, Corwin graduated from the University of Michigan Medical School in 1878 and soon took over the Colorado Coal and Iron Companies fledging medical department in Pueblo.[46] Arriving in 1881, Corwin first worked to establish hospitals and medical facilities for the plant's workers. Yet his full employment status as both the chief surgeon of the Medical Department and, after 1901, the superintendent of the Sociological Department suggests the ways in which his work in Pueblo was by no means confined to operating tables and hospital board rooms. During his tenure at CF&I, which lasted until 1928, Corwin became Colorado's most infamous and powerful advocate of eugenics.[47] Historians Brian Clason and Jonathan Rees study this enigmatic but prominent figure and argue that "Besides his concern about Americanizing some recent immigrants, Corwin's belief in eugenics strongly demonstrated that he cared little for Americanizing others, especially the ones who were not white."[48] This selective concern for Americanization coupled with racial exclusion is evidenced in numerous programs headed by Corwin and his Sociology department. The curation of Pueblo's past in service to Corwin's, and more broadly, the Company's, ideal

[46] Brian Clason and Jonathan Rees, "Dr. Richard Corwin and Colorado's Changing Racial Divide," in Fawn-Amber Montoya, ed., *Making an American Workforce: The Rockefellers and the Legacy of Ludlow* (Boulder: University of Colorado Press, 2014), 34-35.

[47] Clason and Rees, "Dr. Richard Corwin," 36-38.

[48] Clason and Rees, "Dr. Richard Corwin," 33.

community can be easily detected in his department's widely disseminated magazine, *Camp & Plant*.

Executives tapped Corwin to head the new Sociological department in 1901. Its formation came as a direct response to a worker strike that year in which the Company perceived that racial and ethnic differences had contributed to labor unrest. One can detect a certain irony here as CF&I later became famous for relying upon racial and ethnic dissimilarities to keep the unity and power of labor unions in check. However, racial harmony as Corwin conceived it largely involved certain European immigrants coming to identify as white Americans while simultaneously pushing aside associations with groups that could never attain that status such as Asian, Mexican, and Black employees. The most public face of this effort was the company magazine. While the news and bulletin sections of the journal may have been readily regarded by employees and labor leaders as management dribble, many of the local interest columns contained more subtle messaging.[49]

The writers for the paper, all employees of Corwin's sociological department, wrote frequently on matters of local history. They recast a diverse population of settlers and immigrants from around the world as legitimate members of a community living in the Central Rockies. Its various historical treatments are worth considering at some length for the types of evolving counternarratives it offered readers.[50] Notably, *Camp & Plant* presented an early, but classic, account of Pueblo's fur-trade era, written in 1904, for the benefit of the region's many new arrivals. "History" began with the Spanish, or more precisely, the Spanish failure to secure a

[49] For ethnic difference leading to labor unrest see, Andrews, *Killing for Coal,*209; For Corwin's policies see, Clason and Rees, "Dr. Richard Corwin," 41.

[50] Several important and revealing examples of such writings are "Mexicans and Their Customs: Who These People are and How They Live," *Camp and Plant,* September 19, 1903, (Vol. IV No. 10), 221-225; "Outline History of Pueblo, Colorado," *Camp and Plant,* April 30, 1904, (Vol. V No. 16), 378-391; and "'Mexico' or 'Mexican Town,'" *Camp and Plant,* September 26, 1903, (Vol. IV No. 11), 246-250.

foothold in Upper Arkansas Valley in the early 1600s. Evading the complexities of Anglo-Ute politics that played such a decisive factor leading up the destruction of El Pueblo in 1854, the writer of the *Camp & Plant* piece suggested that the upper valley had for centuries been a sort of "neutral ground" possessed by no tribe or nation.[51] Such myths saturated early western histories wherever either seasonal hunting grounds or specifically contested boundaries between sometimes belligerent nations were settled by whites. Ideas of this sort plainly labored to justify settler colonialism by invoking echoes of *terra nullius* or by vindicating colonial powers when relationships between settlers and Natives turned violent as happened in 1854. It is likewise notable that "neutral ground" myths are often unveiled as fanciful in the very same historical traditions that constructed them.[52] This is clear only a few paragraphs later when the author cites the well-known accounts of Ute horsemen exacting a tax on the fort's residents by claiming portions of their harvest each season; in this instance colored as hapless marauding rather than assertions of territoriality.[53]

An unnamed CF&I sociological department historian wrote another *Camp & Plant* piece, "Outline History of Pueblo, Colorado," likewise relished the opportunity to comment on Pueblo's great founding mystery. "The site of Pueblo," it stated, "does not appear to have been reoccupied in any way that can be called settling for twenty years after Fowler [who built a cabin in 1822] when James P. Beckwourth, at one time the great chief of the Crows, arrived."[54] Only 60 years later, the historicity of Beckwourth's claim to have built the fort faced some stiff questioning. *Camp & Plant* also noted George Simpson's (but not John Brown's) contesting

[51] "Outline History of Pueblo, Colorado," *Camp and Plant,* 378.

[52] On *terra nullius* and "neutral ground" myths see, Stuart Banner, *Possessing the Pacific: Land, Settlers, and Indigenous People from Australia to Alaska* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007).

[53] "Outline History of Pueblo, Colorado," *Camp and Plant,* 386-387.

[54] "Outline History of Pueblo, Colorado," *Camp and Plant,* 378.

claim that the fort actually dated to 1841, the year Beckwourth was notoriously busy "liberating" hundreds of Mexican horses from Californian rancheros.[55] By 1904, two weighty factors already exerted their gravitational pull on how local historians and readers regarded the early history of Pueblo. The fame, and no doubt intrigue, of Beckwourth pressed on the scales of what was, essentially, a contention of one historical source over another. The 1841 construction date emerged from the biography of a mountain man just as Beckwourth's 1842 claim is recorded in his book. As we saw in the previous section, more recent historians who have traced the Anglo traders and their wives back to their chosen exile from Mexico in 1841 seem to have good cause to doubt that this much larger group inexplicitly waited through the winter to build a fort until their erstwhile compatriot returned from California.[56]

A second curious and revealing turn of phrase also emerged from the Beckwourth-as-founder debate as it appeared in 1904. The historian identified him as "the great chief of the Crows" to an audience of largely eastern and many European immigrant workers.[57] At this point, two possibilities present themselves: first is that the author of the article had read or at least been familiar with Beckwourth's biography enough to be aware of both his claim as founder and his title as Crow chief. The latter was a fact anyone might know from even a cursory reading of the book's subtitle but the former would have required reading much of his account. The second possibility is that the author had not consulted Beckwourth biography at all. Instead, it is also possible that in his research for the piece, local memory and tradition already commended Beckwourth as the town founder and chief of the Crow. Regardless of which scenario or combination of the two led to *Camp & Plant*'s claim, nothing in the account would have

[55] "Outline History of Pueblo, Colorado," *Camp and Plant,* 378-379.
[56] See Lecompte, *Pueblo, Hardscrabble, Greenhorn*, 40-42.
[57] "Outline History of Pueblo, Colorado," *Camp and Plant,* 378.

suggested that Beckwourth was Black. Either the author knew Beckwourth's race and omitted it while choosing to highlight his suspect claim to being a chief of the Crow, or he did not know that Beckwourth was Black at all precisely because this particular counternarrative of the town's origins had already obscured that fact.

Consider the account quotes other mountain man biographies, I am inclined to the first position – that the author had consulted Beckwourth's account and chose to present a "deracialized" narrative to his readers. Moreover, a name like James P. Beckwourth may have struck most readers as sufficiently English or Germanic to suggest that this enigmatic figure was not fully Indigenous. Here, a most robust form of settler memory can be detected as Indignity is both affirmed and erased in the "Crow chief" who was presumably not fully an Indian acting as the town founder. The occlusion of settler memory is more robust because Beckwourth's Blackness, according to settler colonial common sense, can be left unsaid and therefore is. Had this writer in 1904 been at all interested in highlighting Beckwourth's race (perhaps for the growing number of Black men who worked at the mill), then he certainly would have done so. This seems to be in line with Clason and Rees' assertion that Corwin and CF&I were not terribly interested in bringing non-white workers into the fold of their emerging counternarrative community.[58]

By also citing the contesting claims of George Simpson, the author needed to provide some hefty caveats and rationalizations such as implying that Simpson and the others mistook the date that they left Mexico by a full year and might actually have arrived in 1842 with Beckwourth. If it was, in fact, that the *Camp & Plant* author, and other early local historians, knew Beckwourth's racial identity (his escape from slavery took up the first several chapters of

[58] Clason and Rees, "Dr. Richard Corwin," 33-34.

Life and Adventures, after all), the very fact that he or his predecessors were disinclined to convey that information, and was "still inclined to believe he is correct," becomes vital. The simultaneous presence and absence of Indigeneity in Beckwourth's caricature along with his subsumed Blackness did important work for settler counternarratives of originality and legitimacy. In other words, it somehow mattered that Pueblo might have been established by an American who carried the mantle and even the political power of an Indian nation but whom himself was not *actually* an Indian. What is more, the "not actually an Indian" category, if carefully worded, necessarily implied whiteness.

In tones consonant with Beckwourth's redeployment in the CF&I counternarrative, actual Native people appear in the most grotesque caricature possible. The 1854 tragedy is presented as a hapless, unplanned, yet malicious, massacre. The author paints the Ute party as a random group of Indians who are welcomed into the fort on a cold winter night, become drunk, quarrel, and then killed everyone inside. Nothing of the political situation preceding the event appears, nor does any mention of the U.S.-Ute War follow. Rather, the Christmas Day Massacre functions more as a plot device to turn the page on one intriguing but distant chapter of the past before looking ahead several decades to Pueblo's modern present. The only line of continuity between the two eras that is offered is speculation regarding the exact location of El Pueblo's charred ruins, which the author posits is beneath the current Santa Fe Railroad depot.[59]

Pueblo's more distant past, whose only notable building had long dissolved back into the mud from which it was made, thus featured a clean break in its early twentieth-century retellings. On the other side of that divide, new settlers could read historical accounts and make certain epistemic claims of the past while being assured that they were in the process of building

[59] On Massacre and location of the original fort, see, "Outline History of Pueblo, Colorado," *Camp and Plant,* 387.

something entirely new. This may have all the more important from the perspective of an employer of workers who came from across the world and who held only tentative—and maybe even hostile—attachments to acceptable narratives that structured American society. While the historians at the CF&I's sociology department retold that earlier history in ways that encouraged diverse communities to imagine futures for themselves along the Rockies, working in their smelters, mills, and coal camps, they also attempted to reify certain narrative expectations.

Camp & Plant could exhibit a defter touch in their recurring quasi-historical columns when the subject delt with issues of the present community and its more immediate racial past.[60] The administrative ties to ideas like eugenics at times made full-throated appeals in the pages of the department's paper, but social racism of that sort likely spread more circumspectly in the magazines various "place-based" historical commentaries. The most glaring (yet subtle in other ways) of such writings appeared in a story on a neighborhood of the city called "Mexico" or "Mexican Town." Appearing in 1903, the story is exemplary of how the narration of history was used for understated, but didactic, purposes. Its opening sentences, set out as dialog, demonstrates this:

> The Eastern man who had traveled the West looked interested when I told him when I told him I lived in Pueblo. "Oh yes," he said, "I've passed through there. That's the place with the smelters, the big steel plant, and the settlement of Pueblo Indians." I acknowledged the smelters and the steel works, but the Pueblo Indians puzzled me. At last I found out he referred to "Mexican Town," or "Mexico," which, perched on the hill across the tracks from the Pueblo Smelter, the shacks rising tier above tier, do not look unlike an Indian pueblo. When he asked whether Mexicans lived there, I was forced to

[60] are "Mexicans and Their Customs: Who These People are and How They Live," *Camp and Plant,* September 19, 1903, (Vol. IV No. 10), 221-225; "Outline History of Pueblo, Colorado," *Camp and Plant,* April 30, 1904, (Vol. V No. 16), 378-391; and "'Mexico' or 'Mexican Town,'" *Camp and Plant,* September 26, 1903, (Vol. IV No. 11), 246-250.

admit—as I did not then know its history—that it was called Mexico probably because nearly all of its inhabitants are Italians.[61]

The story that followed this puzzling introduction laid out a developing counternarrative of Pueblo's community history. It focused on themes of place-making, memory, and racial, national, and domestic deviance in their midst.

No doubt also riffing off of the city's name, the cursory analogy with the Pueblo Indians (that quickly proved a misdirection), set expectations that this was a story about race and place. Like other stories of this variety appearing in the magazine, the odd account of "Mexican Town" grew out of various streams of local conflict. On one level was the question of the land itself. The twelve acre section that made up the district had, in the 1870s, been mistaken by many settlers as part of the "School Lands" that were soon to be made available for homesteading and purchase. As happened frequently with land rushes of all sorts, most people did not wait for official word on the matter and simply moved on as squatters and trusted that their claims would be recognized after the fact. These were not school district lands, but privately owned by a handful of rather disinterested parties. As such, through 1870s and 1880s no efforts to relocate or evict the squatters was attempted. The *Camp & Plant* author noted that the original rushers included people of all backgrounds, including some Mexicans. Over the next few years, as Pueblo grew, most white squatters left that section to the designs of the Mexican community.[62] Evictions began again in the 1890s as new owners of the tracts hoped to develop the land. This proceeded with much local discontent until 1901-1903 when the neighborhood was emptied, and new roads graded.[63]

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[61] "'Mexico' or 'Mexican Town'" *Camp and Plant*, 246.

[62] "'Mexico' or 'Mexican Town'" *Camp and Plant*, 245-247.
[63] "'Mexico' or 'Mexican Town'" *Camp and Plant*, 246.

Not far beneath the surface of this simple account of a quaint neighborhood, the more precise target of the story faced the withering criticism of the author. "Mexican Town" had not, in fact, been home to very many Mexicans since at least the early 1890s. Though the author held common racist views on that community—that they were "clannish" and fostered an anti-socialism that naturally attracted criminals and "rouges"—he also commended Mexican residents as "comparably peaceable and moral."[64] The story, after all, functioned as a sharp rebuke of Italians and their connection to "Mexican Town." This twist in the narration worked at multiple layers. Astute readers knew that the demystification of "how things really are" trope was certain to be one purpose of the article as soon as they encountered the "Eastern man who traveled West" in the opening line. Only a true outsider might have simplistically expected Mexicans to live in Mexican town. The account of how the Italian community came to live in the terraced village, then, was intended by the author to draw readers into an "insider" group who could then identify themselves in opposition to the typologically naive "Eastern man."

Once self-assured of an insider status, readers then learned that Italians came to be the most common laborer at the smelters in the 1880s and quickly bought out Mexicans on the hillside and in the bottoms. The persistence of the community in these living conditions, according to the author, followed from their being "accustomed to the crowded Italian cities and towns."[65] Moreover, the cramped quarters from the original village only worsened under the new tenants who built "in between, above, and below the adobes of the Mexicans and burrowed dugouts and caves in the shale, clay, and gravel of which the hill is formed."[66] The author's subtle, but still forceful, dehumanizing rhetoric describing Italians' rejection of proper domestic

[64] "'Mexico' or 'Mexican Town'" *Camp and Plant*, 247.
[65] "'Mexico' or 'Mexican Town'" *Camp and Plant*, 247.
[66] "'Mexico' or 'Mexican Town'" *Camp and Plant*, 247.

sensibilities built toward more overt comparisons. This included the supposedly frenzied excitement that engulfed the settlement whenever a fight broke out. The author slyly added that he meant either "a dog fight or a man fight."[67]

The shock and outrage manufactured by *Camp & Plant* against such a deviant element of society was a retrospective counternarrative that moved in two directions at once.[68] By 1903, the hillside was graded and new streets with new names connected suitable dwellings. If any Italians had relinquished their shanties to purchase single-family homes, then the new neighborhood would presumably do much to dissuade them from the types of sociability that flourished in the old "Mexico." The author critiqued the evidently "degraded" lifestyle of Italians in part by grounding the whole story in the soils of "Mexico" and putting Italian racial comportment in proximity (and thus in *relation*) to non-white Mexican peoples. This constitutes the first "movement" of the counternarrative; the second is substantially more subtle. The actual Mexicans, though the author seemed not to denigrate them too harshly, are likewise absent in the new neighborhood, living now on the southern outskirts of town. Just as Indigenous people both appear and vanish in settler memory according to Bruyneel, Mexicans in Pueblo's early history exhibit a form of indignity that slips into disappearance as the story progresses. Actual, historical Mexican and Mexican American people were essential to the author the *Camp & Plant* piece, but only insofar as he used them to *relationally* construct Italian less-than-whiteness in that very particular time and *place*. It seems hard to imagine that the editors of *Camp & Plant* envisioned Italian workers or their families reading this piece in 1903 with any emotion other than contempt for the author and the publication. Most likely, the piece targeted an audience of other immigrant or American employees and used this historical retrospective to encourage a certain type of

[67] "'Mexico' or 'Mexican Town'" *Camp and Plant*, 247.
[68] "'Mexico' or 'Mexican Town'" *Camp and Plant*, 247.

domesticity. The quaint, but outmoded, local landmark now existed only in collective memory as a cautionary tale.

Counternarratives of Hearth and Home

For Corwin and the sociologists at CF&I, Italians presented a greater threat to a coherent, idealized community than Mexican and Mexican-American families precisely because they lived on the frontiers of whiteness. "Mexicans" as imagined by the company, could be clannish, antisocial, and prone to attract "rouges and criminals," but, ultimately, they were more fully outside the racial borders of the nation and citizenship. Italians, with communal and "wrongly" domesticated sensibilities, it seemed, were an interior threat. Children—and by extension family life, and mothers in particular—faced the stiffest criticism in such didactic retellings of the past. Masculinity, too, was questioned implicitly, but photographs of dirty children smoking cigars and the visage of wives and mothers eschewing orderly homes to live in literal caves explicitly rebuked immigrant women.[69]

Corwin mused in some later reports on education that, if eugenic ideologies were appropriately applied, deficient and maladapted children could be identified and removed entirely from "normative" classrooms. As Rees and Clason note, the public schools of Pueblo were overwhelmingly filled with the children of immigrants.[70] We could add, as well, that by the 1910s, hundreds of Black children also attended neighborhood schools. Against this backdrop, Corwin held out a terrifying proposition in a 1913 report produced through his involvement with a joint committee on public health in school:

[69] In addition to Clason and Rees, on Italians and Greeks living in Southern Colorado see, Thomas Andrews, *Killing For Coal*; for images of women and children in Pueblo see, "'Mexico' or 'Mexican Town'" *Camp and Plant*, 248.

[70] Clason and Rees, "Dr. Richard Corwin," 38.

> In our schools we find 2 percent of children known to be feeble-minded; in some schools, they average as high as 30 percent—and this does not include the morons, the higher class of defectives . . . it is well known that the feeble-minded constitute the major portion of criminals, prostitutes, epileptics, drunkards, neurotics, paupers… If for the next hundred years our schools would discontinue all higher and aesthetic education and devote their energy to improving the human stock; to feeding and breeding; to teaching that acquired traits die with the body, that inherited traits pass to the next generation, and that the laws of heredity are constant and are the same for bug and man . . . and to educating the people to know that environment is important but heredity more important, and eugenics most important, and that thru eugenics is the only hope of improving our race or saving our nation.[71]

While various types of eugenic policies developed by men like Corwin did, indeed, begin shaping education in the United States to devastating effects, the battle over the images and use of immigrant women and children in the counternarratives of Pueblo and Southern Colorado more broadly was about to reach an inflection point. [72]

Only a year after Corwin despaired of the public schools in Pueblo, and a decade since his *Camp & Plant* had begun printing thinly veiled condemnations of non-white and immigrant women and families, state agents and militiamen hired by the Rockefellers attacked a striking labor camp to the southwest of Pueblo called Ludlow. In the midst of ceaseless gunfire, many of the canvas tents were set ablaze. In one underground cellar, two women and eleven children died in the inferno. Research and scholarship on the Ludlow Massacre, its origins and causes as well as its aftermath have been exhaustive.[73] That the violence ensnared women and children has been

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[71] R. W. Corwin, "Report of the Joint Committee on Health Problems in Education, National Education Association" (1913): 418–20, *quoted* in Clason and Rees, "Dr. Richard Corwin," 38.

[72] See, Alexandria Minna Stern, *Eugenic Nation: Faults and Frontiers of Better Breeding in Modern America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2016).

[73] The most well-known treatments are, Andrews, *Killing for Coal*; Scott Martelle, *Blood Passion: The Ludlow Massacre and Class War in the American West* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2007); Priscilla Long, *Where the Sun Never Shines: A History of America's Bloody Coal Industry* (New York: Paragon House, 1989); George McGovern and Leonard Guttridge, *The Great Coalfield War* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1972); Zeese

a feature not only of recent histories, but of the powerful stories that circulated in the massacre's immediate aftermath. For weeks if not months, the gendered aspect of the massacre far outweighed all other reporting. Indeed, many of the most notable images and memories that persisted in public consciousness focused on the victims in the Ludlow cellar.[74] Just days after the April 20 attack, the vice president of United Mine Workers of America, Frank J. Hayes, published "The Women and Children of Ludlow," a poem condemning John Rockefeller Jr.'s blithe acceptance of innocent deaths at the hands of his men. The poem featured in some other Colorado newspaper in the weeks that followed.[75] Headlines of the massacre similarly used the women and children's deaths to introduce coverage. And finally, the monument that the UMWA erected on the site in 1918 forever enshrined a (marble white) woman and child standing alongside a striking miner.[76]

At this point, however, the clean counternarrative of gender, labor, and belonging as presented the CF&I began to crumble as diverse peoples, for whom such stories sought to exclude or condition, spoke back with a polyphony of counternarratives of their own. The legacy of Ludlow that took shape in the decades after 1914 groaned with the harsh juxtaposition of gendered and racial counternarratives. Prior to the massacre, immigrant women and children faced the withering suspicion of the CF&I and its burgeoning sociology department. By 1918, the labor movement in Southern Colorado and across the nation leaned heavily on the noble

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Papanikolas, *Buried Unsung: Louis Tikas and the Ludlow Massacre* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1982); also notable is Howard Zinn, The Colorado Fuel and Iron Strike, 1913-1914" (M.A. thesis, Columbia University, 1952).

[74] For both scholarship and accounts of remembrances of women and children at Ludlow see, Fawn-Amber Montoya and Karin Larkin, eds., *Communities of Ludlow: Collaborative Stewardship and the Ludlow Centennial Commemoration Commission* (Louisville, CO: University of Colorado Press, 2022).

[75] Frank J. Hayes, "The Women & Children of Ludlow," *The Labor Bulletin,* Denver, Colorado, May 9, 1914, 6. Other issues included *The Layfette Leader,* Boulder, Colorado, May 1, 1914, 1.

[76] Especially Sarah Duetsch, "Learning from Ludlow" in Montoya, ed., *Making an American Workforce,* 21-29.

innocence of the working-class women in public discourse. Historian Maria Montoya observes that "the American public perceived strikes as a contest between men: labor on one side and capitalists on the other." Thus, the foregrounding of their deaths offended greater and burrowed the massacre further into the nation's subconscious. Montoya and other recent historians also note the all-male dynamic of strikes were, of course, "not entirely true."[77]

The constant reference to the women and children of Ludlow as innocent martyrs to the labor movement ultimately played into the same counternarrative that Corwin and the CF&I had pushed before the massacre. The actual women participants in the 1913-1914 strike included hundreds and thousands of protestors who pushed the public awareness of conditions in southern Colorado through boycotts, parades, and speeches. Sarah Duetsch notes that women "were everywhere, and not just under the tents. They were strategists, protesters, warriors, and marchers. They show up […] keeping house in the tent colonies, fighting strikebreakers, and marching on the governor's office and the National Guard. They show up as reporters covering Ludlow for the state and national press, as state legislative representatives, and as commissary managers."[78] The most famous of these events came to be known as the Mother Jones Riot, where women and children marched on the Trinidad Hospital where the famous labor advocate had been arrested and detained in 1913.[79]

The calculated (and in the long-run, effective) agenda of the UMWA to focus on an innocent womanhood that needed to be further protected from the callus violence of the Rockefellers idealized a white identity that spread within union ranks as well. Thus, militant or actively engaged working-class immigrant women in Colorado faced double pressure to conform

[77] Maria Montoya, "The Legacy of Ludlow," in Montoya, ed., *Making an American Workforce,* 191.
[78] Duetsch, "Learning from Ludlow," 28.
[79] Danielle Rebecca Bonnici, "Gendered Activism: Women and Protest During the Colorado Fuel and Iron Strike, 1913-1914," (M.A. Thesis, University of Colorado, Boulder, 2009), 64-72.

to emerging gendered expectations. Similarly, John D. Rockefeller Jr.'s response to Ludlow included massive financial investments in both Corwin's department and with reform associations, namely the YMCA and YWCA.[80] Scholars have noted the degree to which much of the 1915 Colorado Industrial Plan, which prefigured many trends in labor relations leading toward the New Deal and the Wagner Act, also refocused on "making the miner in our own image," as Rockefeller famously put it.[81]

Administrators at the CF&I from Rockefeller Jr. in New York to Corwin in Pueblo aspired to god-like powers of social control (revealed by the explicit quotation of the Biblical creation account of Gensis: "in our own image"). The reality on the ground in Colorado, however, was that workers would have much to say about the fashioning of their own image. But it was an "image," nevertheless. The labor movement in the West already possessed a robust printing and newspaper network. Through their many organs and outlets, various cultural and literary challenges to the Company entered mainstream usage. Already, songs and poetry—printed, distributed, and sung on picket lines and in union halls—had been associated with the movement.[82] After Ludlow, gendered expressions of working peoples' plight featured in extensively in these cultural forms. I suggest we can observe the shaping of a post-1914 counternarrative community around how race and gender worked at that moment in local history.

Grassroots and folk music traditions that have remained central to the memorialization of the Ludlow Massacre in Southern Colorado over the past century. For instance, Frank Haye's

[80] Montoya, "Field Days, YMCA, and Baseball: CF&I's Industrial Representation Plan of 1914 and Gender Relations in Southern Colorado Coal-Mining Camps," in Montoya, ed., *Making an American Workforce,* pp. 103-122.

[81] See, Robin C. Henry, "In Order to Form a More Perfect Worker: John D. Rockefeller Jr. and Reform in Post-Ludlow Southern Colorado," in Montoya, ed., *Making an American Workforce,* pp. 81-98.

[82] Two useful overviews of music, poetry, and song in use in Colorado are Fawn-Amber Montoya, "Melodies and Memories," in *Communities of Ludlow,* 101-112; and Sarah M. Rudd, "Harmonizing Corrido and Union Song at the Ludlow Massacre," *Western Folklore* 61:1 (Spring 2002), 21-42.

poetry and the incredibly popular Woody Guthrie song galvanized many and reached a wide public in Pueblo and across the nation. Other voices from within the labor movement laid claim to Ludlow's memory as well. Elias Baca, a Mexican American musician who lived through the massacre, wrote and performed his pro-union *corrido ¡Que viva la nación!* well into the 1980s. Baca's music, which historian Sarah Rudd studies within the longer trajectory of union songs and musical culture in Colorado's labor history, is both an early and important source on the Mexican presence in the coal camps and steel mill cities of the region. It was also, however, an example of the gendered narratives that pulsed through public memory.[83]

As a form of Mexican balladry, *corridoes* gained substantial popularity for themes of romance and national or ethnic resistance to oppression in the North American borderlands. One needs only to consider the most famous *corrido* of the early twentieth century*, The Ballad of Gregorio Cortez,* to locate stories within an overtly gendered frame. The hero of border ballads, wrote Américo Paderes, was always a man, "with a pistol in his hand."[84] In this way, generational audiences of Mexican locals in Pueblo came to an appreciation of the watershed, identity-forming moment of Ludlow and its aftermath through, among other experiences, a highly gendered form of popular culture and historical storytelling.

Rudd argues that Baca's lyrics largely adhere to both the gendered expectations of the *corrido* tradition as laid out by Paderes and to the subsequent form of political commentary as seen in works such as "The Ballad of Ceasar Chavez."[85] In one stanza, Baca identifies "The women over there in Denver/ in loud voice cried out/ that the companies sign now that coal was

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[83] Rudd, "Harmonizing Corrido and Union Song at the Ludlow Massacre," 33-36; on union songs in the Coal fields of Colorado more generally see, George Korson, *Coal Dust on the Fiddle: Songs and Stories of the Bituminous Industry* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1943).

[84] On the corrido and Mexican balladry see, Américo Paderes, *With His Pistol in His Hand: A Border Ballad and Its Hero* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1958); and Paderes, "The Mexican Corrido: Its Rise and Fall," in *Folklore and Culture on the Texas-Mexican Border* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1993).

[85] Rudd, "Harmonizing Corrido and Union Song at the Ludlow Massacre," 28-30.

lacking." Women participated in the action largely as witnesses to the hard conditions and as consumers while men appeared "In the depot there in Ludlow / we were in line / that we would fight / and in Ludlow, Colorado." Baca's lyrics created separate spheres for women and men in during the strike. His defiant "*we* were in line / that *we* would fight" attested to his and other Hispanic men's presence in Ludlow. Similarly, his accentuated "we" challenges the broader exclusionary, nationalist meaning of the strike in the repeated chorus: "*That the nation may live! / That the nation may live! / We're here fighting in this powerful union.*"[86]

Over a century later, Baca's work continues to be an important source for maintaining the diversity of Pueblo's counternarrative community as it has continuously confronted the memory and meaning of Ludlow. As recently as 2008, the community of Pueblo, specifically the director of the El Pueblo History museum, Deborah Espinosa, turned to this tradition in preparation for the centennial memorial. The famous songwriter and labor collaborator of César Chávez, Daniel Valdez agreed to write and perform *The Song of Pueblo: An Oratorio* that drew on the traditions and writings of Frank Hayes' poem, "Ludlow Field" as well as the broader local tradition of Baca's *corrido.*[87]

Surveying the rather remarkable forms of collective study and curation of public memory that is wedded to the tragic events of 1914, one gets the hopeful sense that counternarrative communities, in Pueblo anyways, can yet be responsive and inclusive to people who may have once been pushed outside the bounds of the initial narrative community. Baca's lyrics resounded with a defiant "we" as he identified the *men* who stood in picket lines and sheltered in tent cities during the strike.[88] Such a claim stood over and against the designs of Corwin's sociology

[86] Rudd, "Harmonizing Corrido and Union Song at the Ludlow Massacre," 31-32.
[87] Montoya, "Melodies and Memories," in *Communities of Ludlow,* 101-112
[88] For Baca's lyrics in Spanish and English see, Rudd, "Harmonizing Corrido and Union Song at the Ludlow Massacre," 31-31; For a perspective on the 1913-1914 strike from Mexican and Mexican Americans see, M.

department which, in that 1901 "Mexican Town" *Camp & Plant* vignette, imagined they could causally remove Mexican and Mexican American people from Pueblo's local history altogether. Following the implementation of the 1915 Colorado Industrial Plan, Mexican and Mexican American Puebloans again experienced a generation of disregard and exclusion as workers not suited for Rockefeller's renewed Americanization project. Over a century later, the persistent counternarrative communities of Pueblo still mediates their labor history through diverse and appropriate cultural forms that hold open space for people to speak into the complex meaning of home and belonging. Even now, the marble white women victims of Ludlow, enshrined all the way back in 1918 by the UMWA, are receiving more thorough-going investigation by scholars of the coal fields and mill towns such as Maria Montoya and Leigh Campbell-Hale. Pueblo's labor history is its gender and racial history; this fact will not remain submerged forever.[89]

"Wisdom sits in Places"

For 380 years, or thereabouts, the Big Tree stretched out its branches and offered shade as it plunged its roots further into the soils of the "Bottoms." When the Pueblo city council announced that it had to come down in 1883, residents vigorously dissented. Old-timers put on the equivalent of sackcloth and ashes to stand beside the giant cottonwood and proclaimed the tree's prodigious and irreplaceable witness of their town's past. Dr. Thomas Worrall condemned the action as "a black, foul and damning crime" in a 30 page jeremiad that he wrote and distributed to the wider community.[90] Petitions circulated, but to no avail. The river bottoms of the Arkansas and Fountain Creek confluence once boasted a noble stand of towering

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Edmund Vallejo, "Recollections of the Colorado Coal Strike, 1913-1914," in Vincent C. De Baca, ed., *La Gente: Hispano History and Life in Colorado* (Denver: Colorado Historical Society Press, 1998), pp. 85-104.

[89] Leigh Campell-Hale, *Remembering Ludlow but Forgetting the Columbine: The 1927-1928 Colorado Coal Strike* (Denver: University of Colorado Press, 2023).

[90] "Outline History of Pueblo, Colorado," *Camp and Plant,* April 30, 1904, (Vol. V No. 16), 379.

cottonwoods. The Big Tree, about 90 feet tall, was all that remained of the grove by 1883. Unfortunately, where it remained was the center of South Union Avenue, possibly the busiest downtown street in Pueblo. Workers sawed and lowered its enormous branches to the street one by one and afterward lumbermen felled the truck piece by piece. Mourners scrambled for cross-sections of the tree, many of which remained preserved in local businesses for years to attest to this sad but necessary crime.[91]

Twenty years later, the Big Tree stubbornly persisted in the memories of Pueblo's residents as something that once promised to root a community to its own, distant past. Between 1883 and 1904, when a retrospective on the arboreal tragedy appeared in *Camp & Plant*, all sorts of plot points in the community's developing historical narrative had managed to find their way to the tree. Famous mountain men and pioneers camped beneath its branches (apparently singling it out from among the grove that still surrounded it in the 1820-1840s). In a classic example of settler "firsting," the first white woman to die in Colorado ostensibly came to rest there, buried within the enteral embrace of its roots. This claim was repeated in the same breath that historians acknowledged she was *actually* buried beneath a different tree in town that had already been cut down, but ultimately that mattered very little. More ominously, the figural forms of men real and not real also hung from the old cottonwood's "convenient branches." Locals narratively re-executed all fourteen criminals hanged in Pueblo's first two decades from the Big Tree despite the fact that all official records indicated the men met their fate in trees and gallows out of town along Fountain Creek.[92]

Only twenty years into Pueblo's municipal life, the tragic uprooting of a powerful local totem of memory and meaning turned residents toward distinct forms of recuperative

[91] "Outline History of Pueblo, Colorado," *Camp and Plant,* April 30, 1904, (Vol. V No. 16), 379.
[92] "Outline History of Pueblo, Colorado," *Camp and Plant,* April 30, 1904, (Vol. V No. 16), 379.



Figure 3 The Big Tree, "Outline History of Pueblo, Colorado," Camp and Plant, April 30, 1904, 379.

storytelling. The previous two chapters have floated in the eddies of similar historical currents, observing how, where, and, hopefully, why local communities engaged in projects of place-making and boundary. As Chapter One pointed to, Pueblo was a city of many upheavals, and with them many opportunities to re-narrate a collective past. The felling of the Big Tree in 1883 was an event charged by the roiling uncertainties stirred up by William Jackson Palmer's heavy and volatile hand which determined Pueblo's industrial future. The giant cottonwood in the middle of the South Union Avenue could have felt like the last gallant holdout against the industrialization that was dragging the Old West into a "modern" one. Driving home this narrative symmetry, the hewn sections of the Big Tree came down the same year that sections of the steel mill went up on the other side of town.

Anxieties about immigration and labor from Mexico, Asia, and Europe, alongside strikes, massacres, and, of course, catastrophic floods punctuated the next 40 years of Pueblo's history. Yet, the battered working people of Pueblo found solace and power within the narrative-defined communities that had emerged during their antediluvian history. These have an important role to play in an ongoing accounting of the Pueblo's past. Like the Big Tree, one theme or trope can begin to subsume other histories and bury them beneath its roots. A robust and representative set of stories—what I have called a counternarrative community—can persistently attest that the bodies are actually buried somewhere else. Just because that history might not be fully associated with one Big Tree or another, however, does not mean that it is not still grounded "in place." The first Black Americans did not arrive in Pueblo on board a train in 1885. They did still arrive at some point, and they left footprints beneath the Big Tree as well. Annie and Gulliford Budd may well have worn the boots in question, but it is impossible to say for sure. If asserting the veracity of a notable Black "first" only results in that being the "last" mention of Black history, then we are better off telling a different kind of story altogether.

Though the two major accounts of Black "lasting through firsting," Beckwourth's founding myth and the 1885 "Tennessee Train," both falter under critical inspection, it is important to remember that these were largely stories told *about* Black history. Black Puebloans formed and nurtured their own counternarrative communities that gained meaning and cultural currency alongside stories told by Italian, Mexican, Indigenous, Greek, Serbian, Japanese, and a host of other racial groups. Shorn of either its locality and/or its relationality, a community's history can quickly come to resemble and evoke the fate of Pueblo's Big Tree – divvied up and passed around as a totem of local lore.

There is another arboreal metaphor that seems much more apt. Indeed, I have been indulging my love of tree-shaped metaphors throughout these chapters and I have but one left. The Rockies are home to some of the most interesting organisms on earth, groves of Quaking Aspens. These white-barked trees thrive in the hills and are remarkable for being not a stand of many individual trees, but rather are "shoots" growing from a single, enormous ball of roots. These groves of "tree" are among both the largest and the oldest organisms on the planet. Observing the modest-sized one that lives behind my childhood home in Southwest Montana for the past 25 years also proves that they can, ever so slowly, *move* as the living mass of the root ball beneath grows one way or another in search of ideal moisture and nutrients. This delights me to no end as the only scrap of Macbeth I ever knew still forms in my mind: "As I did stand my watch upon the hill, I looked toward Birnam, and anon methought the wood began to move." A place-based approach to the Black West, and to history in general, does not yield a simplistic cross-section of a once-great tree, inert and preserved behind glass. It is an aspen grove, alive, multifaceted, and dynamic. A forest fire or a ferocious flood might burn up or wash away the trees above the surface, but it usually returns with new hopeful shoots in spring. To study the past, you have to "live with it" awhile and sit in places long enough to see which way it moves.

Epilogue: The New Black Western History

Thirty-five or 40 scholars, including first year graduate students, assistant professors, established public historians, and distinguished professor emeriti, gathered together in a Los Angeles restaurant in October 2023. Kelly Lytle Hernández, then the president-elect of the Western Historical Association (WHA) and the first Black woman to serve in that role, drew our collective attention to what that moment meant, and could mean, for the future of Black Western history. This was, without question, the largest showing the Black West had seen at the WHA through the number of panels, roundtables, and papers presented as well as the number of attendees focusing on Black history. It was a joyous evening. Between the noise of the conversations and the music, we all strained to hear and be heard by our neighbors. Any reader will no doubt feel great sympathy for Alice Baumgartner as I attempted to convey the thesis of this dissertation to her over the din.

Over the past few years, I have developed slightly different ways of explaining this project to different people. For non-historians, I generally say that I am writing a history of three Black communities in the Rocky Mountain West which situates those communities within a local account of race and racialization. For my friends, colleagues, and mentors in public history circles, I excitedly add my emphasis on the role of place-based analysis to studies of race and local history. When speaking with other types of scholars, specifically of the Black West as I did at the WHA, my justification for the twin emphasizes on relationality and locality often involved an assessment of the unique, and sometimes, odd state of the subfield of Black Western history.

Ever since writing my book on Montana's Black past, I have thought intently on what it means that our field's most foundational text is a synthesis. Quintard Taylor's *In Search of the Racial Frontier* (1998) sits as the bedrock of the Black Western cannon. It was rightly a finalist for a Pulitzer Prize and has continued to have an almost arresting effect on readers who were unaware of the West's prodigious Black experiences before picking it up.

As I have read and reread *In Search of the Racial Frontier,* one fact that remains incredible to me is the amount of original archival research Taylor did to complete his project. When Taylor began writing, there was not a sufficient base of secondary sources to do justice to the history of the Black West. To be sure, he drew from practically every stitch of published material. Many of the stories, maps, and other data, though, he compiled from his own research. So, in one sense, it is unlike most synthetic texts. Yet, it remains a true survey in one important respect. Its scope and contents do not claim or attempt to exhaust the history of any particular theme, person, or *place* in the Black West. For this reason, as I explained to others at the Black West dinner, I could not help but feel that our cannon was upside down. For example, in the field of Reconstruction studies, Eric Foner's *Reconstruction* is not the foundational text of the field. Rather, it is one of its most widely-regarded capstones.[1] *In Search of the Racial Frontier* could not be a capstone because Taylor was in the process of inaugurating a new Black Western history that followed. Pick any chapter or any of the many incredible stories that Taylor tells in his book, and it is likely that the footnotes point to his own research or a single small article and not a monograph, dissertation, or broader scholarly conversation.

Serving as the cornerstone, rather than the capstone of the Black West, Taylor's book has had an interesting effect on the field. One way of putting it would be to suggest that much of

[1] Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877* (New York: Harper Perennial Modern Classics, 1988).

subsequent Black Western scholarship has been filling out the secondary sources that Taylor likely would have enjoyed having in the 1980s and 1990s. Taylor's emphasis on early western urbanity, themes of migration and homesteading, and the mid and late twentieth century social movements, carved important and helpful channels through western archives that countless researchers have taken advantage of over the years. Taylor's work, though, does not tread every path or point out every stone that needs to be overturned. During the 2021 WHA meeting held virtually due to the pandemic, Taylor, Shirly Ann Wilson Moore, and Albert Brussard participated in a roundtable on the future of Black Western history. When asked where the field needed to go from here, Taylor quickly answered and explained that the Black West was still largely without bread-and-butter community studies.

Not only do I agree with Taylor, which is usually the easy and safest thing to do, but I have come to think that this advice should carry a sense of urgency. As I sat in a crowded room of excited, energetic, and mostly young scholars working on the Black West in 2023, it was clear that the field has an abundance of directions in which it can and will move. My hope is that some will seek to tell more *grounded* histories of the Black West. We will miss important, relational insights that the Black West can expose if we allow our studies to be generally detached from place. Moreover, I hope this study has commended the incredible stories that can yet be found in relatively small, out of the way places. We need histories of Black Denver, Salt Lake, Las Vegas, and other cities to join important books already published on places like Seattle, Spokane, Los Angeles, and Oakland.[2] But we also need studies of small cities and big towns, of eclectic

[2] For some of these studies see, Quintard Taylor, *The Forging of a Black Community: Seattle's Central District from 1870 through the Civil Rights Era* (Seattle: University of Washington, 1994); Dwayne A. Mack, *Black Spokane: The Civil Rights Struggle in the Inland Northwest* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2014); and Robert Self, *American Babylon: Race and the Struggle for Postwar Oakland* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003).

neighborhoods, coal camps, and farming hamlets across the West that each contain a distinct Black history.

Such places are part of the hidden racial geography of the Black West. Scholars have avoided taking the archival and discursive paths that lead there, I think, because the perceptions of these places have suffered a profoundly ahistorical deracialization. I have sought to show in these pages that this process occurs through the creation, repetition, and redeployment of subsuming counternarratives of race and place. I have also tried to suggest that once we arrive in the historical streets of Cheyenne, Pocatello, Pueblo, or any other town, we might stay a while. Though migration is a central and important theme, we should also be wary of a methodological inertia that causes us to lose sight of individuals, families, and even whole communities who felt that they had come to the end of that particular journey. This is precisely the paradox of Black migration studies that I sought to draw out in the introductory material on Black Towns. "*Migration and movement* to the West" almost always emphasizes the first part of the phrase at the expense of the second.

Finally, the Black communities of Pueblo, Pocatello, and Chyenne, all continue to make their way in the West as members of truly diverse and engaged communities. Myths and apocryphal tales of white settlers in an untrammeled wilderness or stories of Black "firsts" that quietly become "lasts" are not currents so swift they cannot be overcome. I hope that my framing and methods of research and storytelling will convince readers that a place-based study of the Black West will necessarily be attentive to both the locality and relationality of racial formations. With these two factors in view, I believe the inevitable response will be an unveiling. The reason that many historians have neglected these types of places, their supposed racial or ethnic homogeneity, is shown to be wildly untrue. A view from the Black West opens up onto the wide

horizons of the region's incredible racial heterogeneity. I hope some researchers follow me from the Black West into other racial histories and stories of place-making beyond our initial interests or expertise. I also hope scholars from these other backgrounds and with different questions will include the experiences of African Americans. In this way the manifold insights of the Black West can help ground a greater understanding of our shared counternarrative communities.

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