



# ARCHIVE

An Undergraduate Journal of History

# ARCHIVE

AN UNDERGRADUATE JOURNAL OF HISTORY

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### **Cover Image**

This photo depicts a student sitting on the snow-covered Memorial Union terrace. Image courtesy of University of Wisconsin–Madison Archives, S00951.

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## A Note from the Editor

For twenty-six years, *ARCHIVE* has worked to highlight exceptional undergraduate historical work from the University of Wisconsin and beyond. This year, we received a record number of submissions, making our deliberation process especially difficult. For me, personally, the process of reviewing submissions and collaborating with authors has proven immensely valuable when I turn to my own research and writing. I would like to thank everyone who submitted a piece this year; it was a privilege to read such outstanding work.

From the beginning, this year's board prioritized accessibility. While the pieces we selected do not fit any particular theme, we admired each author's clarity and ability to engage the reader in complex media analysis. Each article utilizes striking visual sources, from architectural plans to social media posts.

This volume begins with Avan Fata's article, "Reimagining Imperium Britannicum: Walter Crane, The Imperial Federation Map, and Late Victorian Discourse on 'Greater Britain.'" Fata analyzes a map that, at first glance, seems to exemplify Victorian high imperialism. Fata expertly identifies small details in the map that reveal nuances in Victorian discourse, providing a fascinating examination of imperial ideologies.

Next, we turn to "Scouting's Human Crop: The Boy Scouts' Ideological and Physical Influence on the Landscape of Public Recreation in the 1930s" by the University of Wisconsin-Madison's own Evan McKenzie. McKenzie explores the origins of a unique category of public landscape developed in the 1930s: Recreational Demonstration Areas. These parks were designed by the National Park Service for the use of underprivileged children living in urban areas. McKenzie demonstrates how the masculine character-building ideals of the Boy Scouts of America shaped these public lands and analyzes the intersection between youth organizations, gender, and recreation.

We then move on to "(Web)Sites of Memory: Notions of Home in AIDS Commemoration, From the Quilt to Instagram" by Mary Mouton. Mouton compares the NAMES Project AIDS Memorial Quilt to a new form of commemoration: the account @theaidsmemorial on Instagram. Considering the Quilt's connection to domesticity and heteronormative family life, and thus its limitations, Mouton

compassionately identifies new possibilities brought about by digital sites of memory.

Finally, we are grateful to be able to highlight another author from UW-Madison, Isabella Cerda. Her article, “Radical Student Press at UW-Madison: An Analysis of *The Black Voice* from 1971-1973,” has special significance as a work of pertinent and necessary local history. Cerda analyzes the content and context of the original run of *The Black Voice*, a Black student-run newsletter at UW-Madison. It is crucial to note that this newsletter is not solely a piece of history—in 2015, the publication was revived at [www.blackvoicesuw.wordpress.com](http://www.blackvoicesuw.wordpress.com). Cerda’s piece builds upon significant public history work happening on our campus right now. In recognition of this, the piece is accompanied by a foreword written by our own editors, Claudia Liverseed and Bella Costanzo, contextualizing Cerda’s work and providing further resources.

As a public university, the University of Wisconsin has a responsibility to extend its impact beyond the walls of the classroom. I hope that you can feel the care that our board put into the selection and preparation of these pieces for you, our community. I would like to thank each of our authors for their patient and dedicated work this semester. We are so excited to present your work to the world. I would also like to thank our faculty advisor, Kathryn Ciancia, whose support has been invaluable to me personally and to the entire board. Thanks also to Scott Burkhardt, Sophie Olson, Christina Matta, and the entire UW-Madison History Department for their unwavering support. Finally, thank you to my incredible editorial board for your tireless efforts this semester. I am so grateful to have worked alongside you. With that, I am honored to welcome you to volume 26 of *ARCHIVE*.

Sincerely,

Madeline McGlone  
*Editor-in-Chief, ARCHIVE 26*

# Reimagining Imperium Britannicum

Walter Crane, The Imperial Federation Map, and Late  
Victorian Discourse on “Greater Britain”

*Avan Fata*



Image: “Imperial Federation Map Showing the Extent of the British Empire in 1886,” *The Graphic*, 24 July 1886.

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Avan Fata is a second-year undergraduate at the London School of Economics and Political Science studying History. His research centers on the interplay between European imperialism and diplomacy during the late-nineteenth and early twentieth century, with a focus on the relationship between official policy, popular media, and intellectual discourse. An earlier version of this article was presented at the 1st LSE Department of International History Student Conference in June 2022.



One might be forgiven for assuming that the late nineteenth century was a period of little geopolitical change, with the world order practically static and under the control of the so-called “Concert of Europe”—the club of imperial Great Powers that included Great Britain, France, Germany, Russia, and Austria-Hungary. Indeed, it would not be too far-fetched to assume that, corollary to this period of European domination, contemporary discourse on progress ran exclusively along imperial—rather than nation-state—lines. Domestic prosperity, it was argued, rested on the ability of “civilized” Western states to expand their territorial and economic presence abroad through the colonization—directly or indirectly—of other areas beyond their immediate national borders. Supposedly in the age of “high imperialism,” empire was viewed as the only valid way in which to organize societies: the mechanism and method by which communities would progress along the civilizational hierarchy.<sup>1</sup>

As the pre-eminent global and imperial power during the last decades of Queen Victoria’s reign, Great Britain was no stranger to such rhetoric.<sup>2</sup> Yet, even as Britain reached the peak of her global dominance and influence, contemporary commentators fretted over perceived storm clouds on the horizon, both at home and abroad. Fears over international competition flared once again as the United States and a newly unified Germany—following the Franco-Prussian War of 1870–71—seemed poised to challenge Britain’s place atop the global order, while domestic concerns over socio-political questions continued to occupy the minds of elites and intellectuals.<sup>3</sup> A key component in both domestic and foreign spheres of concern was the empire itself. Its possible loss was viewed as a consequence of continued indifference to the various issues facing Britain, and its reform was seen as a mechanism through which its decline could be delayed interminably or prevented altogether.

Narratives of late Victorian political thought and international relations often stress that the empire was far from universally endorsed, and no single vision of empire dominated intellectual writings of the period.<sup>4</sup> Instead, historians have highlighted how a multitude of conceptions of “empire” revolved around questions about what it constituted, how it operated, and what goals it worked toward.<sup>5</sup> Late Victorian thinkers contemplated these ideas, crystallizing them in histor-



ical explanations of their country's rise as an imperial power. Some attempted to apply the lessons from these reflections to advise readers on how the British Empire could maintain its dominance for the next century.<sup>6</sup> Two particularly interesting, yet under-studied, products of this discourse were the notions of "Greater Britain" and "Imperial Federation."<sup>7</sup> Proponents of Imperial Federation sought to counter the challenges facing Britain and its empire by making the two inseparable, creating a more united imperial polity while simultaneously retaining the independence over domestic legislation and decision-making that had been given to the settler colonies (i.e., the future dominion states).<sup>8</sup> Federation stood in contrast to then-nascent ideas of self-governance. In the case of the former, the white-settler territories (referred to contemporarily as the "Colonies") would be combined with the United Kingdom into a supra-parliamentary polity similar to the federal system in the United States. The latter constituted a gradual progression toward independence and autonomy for parts of the empire. The advocates of Greater Britain viewed Imperial Federation as the most effective way to safeguard the empire and guarantee its continued prosperity. Their opponents viewed the idea as fanciful utopian thinking at best, and detrimental to relations between the colonies and the mother country at worst.

Despite such counterarguments, the imperial federalists remained the "most vocal, innovative, ambitious, and well-organized" advocates of Greater Britain.<sup>9</sup> Admittedly, this did not ultimately translate into the desired changes to the empire's political organization, as the twentieth century witnessed a move to greater self-governance and then later independence rather than federation. However, although their ideas never succeeded in significantly affecting the political organization of the empire, the sheer wealth of discourse generated in pursuit of these visions is certainly worth further investigation by scholars.<sup>10</sup> The rationales and proposals that made up this discourse were primarily propagated via written texts: books, pamphlets, and journals (chief among them *The Journal of the Imperial Federation League*).<sup>11</sup> However, both proponents and opponents of Greater Britain also utilized visual materials to communicate their stances: graphs, statistical charts, and even political cartoons all featured in the discursive arsenal of imperial federalists and antifederalists alike.

Yet one visual source that was a crucial part of the discourse

over Greater Britain appears to have been transformed into something else entirely: Walter Crane's *Imperial Federation Map of the World Showing the Extent of the British Empire in 1886* [Figure 1]. Published by the Imperial Federation League (IFL) as a supplement to an article in *The Graphic* journal that same year, the map has since come to represent what Felix Driver terms "the imperial map" of the British Empire: a visual celebration of Victorian high imperialism, and a graphic depiction of the empire's socioeconomic achievements.<sup>12</sup> This article seeks to follow previous scholarship on the idea of Imperial Federation by examining the map in greater detail, synthesizing a cartographic analysis with discursive arguments about Imperial Federation and Greater Britain. Through this method, we will find that this map was a nuanced and complex discursive platform on progress in the late Victorian era.

### **The Map At a Glance**

An initial scan of Crane's *Imperial Federation* map reveals several critical elements that would seem to substantiate and validate its popular association with Victorian high imperialism, the cartographic celebration of *Imperium Britannicum*.<sup>13</sup> From a cartographic standpoint, the map appears to encapsulate the spirit of new imperialism, with the centrality of Britain, the "mother country," emphasized with the Mercator projection. This cartographic style places Britain at the center of the map and, through the inflation inherent in the Mercator projection, presents a relatively larger landmass compared to those closer to the equator—including vast swaths of the empire. The use of a binary key, pink for all British territories and uncolored for everything else, suggests a dichotomy between areas under imperial control and those which were not, hinting at the map's construction of a "Britannic community." This idea is strengthened by the inclusion of imperial infrastructure within the map: the maritime highways that connect all the major shipping ports—among them Bombay, Brisbane, Singapore, and Montreal—are illustrated to the exclusion of all other trading routes with territories outside the empire. The overall effect is that the otherwise far-flung parts of the empire seem much closer to one another, as the marvels of modern technology enable the shrinking of time and distance.<sup>14</sup>

However, no reading of the *Imperial Federation* map is complete without addressing the wealth of iconographic elements in its



Figure 1. “Imperial Federation Map Showing the Extent of the British Empire in 1886”, *The Graphic*, 24 July 1886.

margins. The figure of Britannia dominates the graphical landscape here: she sits atop the globe—itsself held aloft by the Titan Atlas—with her trident reaching into the very heart of the map. Around her, various colonial subjects look to this personification of Britain, a symbolic representation of their loyalty to the mother country, in exchange for the protection and prosperity that she provides through the grand imperial enterprise. Yet even among these illustrations, there appears to be a clear social hierarchy, concordant with the contemporary rationales for empire as a civilizing force and the only acceptable *modus operandi* of Western states in the late Victorian global order. On the left, a soldier and sailor stand ready to defend the empire's borders and help expand its reach ever further, while next to them a struggling colonial porter stands beside a game hunter. Pippa Bitcliffe has also commented on the “eroticization of the East” on the right side of the map and the highly gendered language of colonial power represented through the portrayal of men as the colonizing individuals.<sup>15</sup> The aforementioned “eroticization” is particularly visible in the inclusion of a tea-serving lady on the right column of figures, adorned with oriental motifs such as the *kimono* and fan. One also notes the imperial mastery over the forces of nature: the game hunter holds a tiger firmly in his grasp and the fur trapper stands above a lady wearing the skins made from his labors, both accompanied by flora and fauna found throughout the vast environments of the empire.

In light of this initial analysis, it seems appropriate to echo the description of Crane's map from the Norman B. Leventhal Map Center: “everything about the design of this elaborately decorated world map glorified the late nineteenth-century British Empire.”<sup>16</sup> This reading arose without significant consideration of the ideas behind the map's creation, and yet one can already posit substantiated theories about its discursive value. The map conceptualizes the British Empire as a single geographic entity, racially diverse yet economically and politically loyal to the mother country. It also reinforces the concept of a Britannic identity that emphasizes the empire's civilizing mission and recalls a similar discourse on the “White Man's Burden” and colonial theories of economic profit.<sup>17</sup> In accordance with these theories, the colonies would provide the raw materials for the manufacturing industries of the “civilized” mother country to re-export within and beyond the empire. Corollary to this economic model was the civilizing mission of the White Man's Burden, whereby the

“advanced” colonizers would guide the colonized peoples toward an educated and modern state of existence. Yet upon closer examination, there are elements on the map that challenge this conclusion. For example, why is the banner underneath Atlas labeled “human labour”? What meaning can be discerned from the three banners of “freedom,” “fraternity” and “federation” atop the whole map? The issue with solely analyzing a map carto-graphically is that it encourages the viewer to favor the majority opinion: to look for graphics that support a certain interpretation and to ignore the few which oppose it. It is only when the carto-graphic method is combined with contextual information that a clearer picture of the map’s arguments emerges.<sup>18</sup> Thus, to build upon our initial “discursive frame” and to continue questioning the actual value that Crane’s map possesses vis-à-vis the contemporary popular discourse on Greater Britain, we must turn to these contextual details.

### Contextualizing Crane’s Map

The *Imperial Federation map* was made by noted Victorian illustrator Walter Crane as a supplement to an article in *The Graphic* newspaper for July 24, 1886 titled “Imperial Federation.”<sup>19</sup> The map and article were both produced to mark the Colonial and Indian Exhibition, which occurred between May 4 and November 10 that same year in London, and was deemed by one critic of Greater Britain as “a valuable auxiliary in the propaganda of the [Imperial Federation] League.”<sup>20</sup> Indeed, all of the *Imperial Federation* journal issues for 1886 included articles that made reference to the Exhibition as a valuable event during which their ideas could be propagated further to the public and political elites, especially the colonial representatives who were also in attendance.<sup>21</sup> The Royal Colonial Institute also transcribed a discussion of Imperial Federation held in the Conference Hall between the IFL’s representative—F. P. De Labilliere—and various political figures from across the empire.<sup>22</sup> Clearly, Crane’s map was part of a broader effort by the proponents of Imperial Federation to disseminate the principles and motivations behind their proposals, an additional discursive tool alongside the verbal and written methods utilized by the IFL.

Briefly, it is also worth discussing Crane himself, as his affiliations with other political organizations and movements of the late Victorian period further complicate a wholly imperialist reading of the map. Alongside producing illustrations for the



IFL, Crane was a member of socialist bodies like the Social Democratic Federation and the Fabian Society, both of which believed that socialism could be “achieved through education rather than revolt.”<sup>23</sup> One might therefore wonder how a person with such ideological associations could produce a map that—on the face of it—stands in stark contradiction to socialist values. However, we must avoid a modern interpretation of “socialism” in this instance, with its inherent rejection of imperialism. As Bitcliffe has pointed out, the Fabians disagreed with the empire’s organization as an exploitative system of colonial oppression, but believed that it could be an effective medium to organize the colonized groups into cooperative working communities under British leadership—utilizing socialist ideals of a harmonious and equal economic system.<sup>24</sup> With this knowledge, several previously discordant elements make sense: the banner of “human labour” under Atlas appears as a subtle statement recognising the true force that maintains Britannia’s geopolitical ascendancy, and the colonial porter as a reminder of the native oppression inherent in contemporary colonial-imperial economics.

On the whole, contextualizing Crane’s map enhances our understanding of its discursive features. It is no longer the quint-essential celebration of Victorian imperialism that was previously suggested. Rather than a confident assertion of British supremacy, it is an “anxious trumpeting of the impossibility of continued British dominance.”<sup>25</sup> Through iconography—namely the symbols and images of imperial personas—that combined Crane’s socialist ideals and the IFL’s beliefs, the map presents itself as a complex articulation of various discourses on empire, subtly highlighting the woes of economic imperialism while calling for greater political unity between colonizer and colonized. Filling in gaps from the cartographic lens with contextual information allows for a more nuanced re-reading of the map, enabling one to see how the agenda behind it—reformist visions of empire based on Crane’s socialist principles and the IFL’s tenets—shapes its discursive arguments.

### **Imperial Federation and Progress**

Returning to the map’s connection with the IFL, we can now clearly see how it serves as a complex articulation of various beliefs regarding the merits of federation and as a graphic signal that the move toward greater imperial unity had to begin immediately. This section of the article will explicitly identify the

various elements of discourse surrounding Greater Britain and Imperial Federation that the map itself highlights and thereby more accurately situate Crane's work within the contemporary discursive landscape. As we shall discover, this discourse over whether or not to federate the empire was in and of itself a discourse over progress, the grand question being whether federation was a step forward or backward for the British Empire. As one federalist put it:

We are on the eve of momentous changes and before the twentieth century emerges from its swathing-clothes, the world will have seen — so we believe and hope — the birth of an empire which will stand proclaimed the most hopeful augury, the fairest promise of life and joy for all men the world has ever seen. This is indeed something worth striving for; for what is the alternative? England, shrunk, shrivelled, decrepit, and helpless — the saddest sight of all sad sights, unhonoured old age — a fitting subject for the gibes and fleers of every foreign wit, every native traitor.<sup>26</sup>

In the world-historical view of many federalists, the last decades of the nineteenth century were a critical moment in the development of the British Empire, and federation seemed the logical way forward for both the mother country and the colonies, specifically the self-governing white-settler colonies. Federation, at least in its initial stages, would not include the Crown dependencies or India, with those territories administered and represented by the Parliament of the United Kingdom in imperial matters.<sup>27</sup> In the view of the federalists, while the settler territories such as Canada and Australia had attained a state of “civilization” that accorded them individual representation within the federal-imperial system, India and the other colonies mainly populated by non-whites were still in need of direct administration by the British government before they could be granted such representative rights. “Imperial matters” to proponents of Greater Britain included foreign affairs (particularly decisions pertaining to war and peace), trade between parts of the empire, and taxation. The same year Crane's map was published, the IFL would extend this list to include branches of the Federation concerned with “naval, military, law, commercial, criminal, communications (postal and telegraphic), civil service,



learned professions, emigration (statistical bureau, labor bureau), diplomatic, tariffs, and miscellaneous [matters].”<sup>28</sup> There was, in the view of many proponents of Greater Britain, a glaring flaw in the way that the colonies were simultaneously independent and subservient to the central authorities in Parliament. As W. E. Forster—a key leader of the IFL and the person most strongly associated with Imperial Federation—put it:

As regards internal affairs the colonists have self-government. As regards foreign affairs, they are subjects not merely of the Queen, but of our Parliament — that is, of the inhabitants of the United Kingdom, or rather of such of those inhabitants as are voters. These two opposing principles — subordination on the one hand and self-government on the other — we might almost say subjection and freedom — cannot long co-exist. This imperfect, incomplete, one-sided federation must end in either disintegration or in complete and equal and perfect federation.<sup>29</sup>

This rhetoric of an incompatible binary (self-government versus subordination) was also utilized by opponents of Greater Britain, who argued with their pro-federation counterparts over the precise political significance of a “federation” and what it signified for the “imperial” political structure that had hitherto characterized the empire. One critic of federation viewed “equality” as the “distinguishing feature” of a federation and entirely opposed to the principles of “subjection and sovereign rule” that were the features of empire. These principles were simply irreconcilable, regardless of what reforms and proposals were enacted. As this critic elaborated:

[I]f the Queen’s entire dominions may thus be spoken of as an Empire, it is also evident that whatever is “Imperial” in their present condition must cease if Federation is introduced. The introduction of Imperial Federation would therefore necessitate the abdication by England of her present position of supremacy. The policy of the British Empire would no longer be the policy of the Imperial Parliament of Great Britain and Ireland, but of some as yet undefined or undefinable authority, in which the voice of England might be drowned amid the voices of the children whom she had admitted to a share in the Government of her Empire. Empire, in the strict sense of the

word, would cease; there would be no longer “supreme rule” with “subjection” within the Federation. In short, the Federation could not be “Imperial.”<sup>30</sup>

Another common theme in the discourse surrounding Greater Britain was the perceived value of the “Britannic connection:” the supposed loyalty and patriotism that united imperial subjects through a sense of brotherhood with the mother country. While federalists argued that these connections were proof of the feasibility of federation and that their strengthening would be a benefit of the process, antifederalists were more skeptical of the value that this connection truly possessed or feared that it would be reduced once federation had been achieved.<sup>31</sup> Crane’s map, in portraying the diverse yet unified peoples of this Britannic community, must have resonated well with those federalists who believed that “the future of the world is with the English-speaking people.”<sup>32</sup> This theme would continue to be included in the written and spoken discourse on federation as the nineteenth century gave way to the twentieth, with the most prominent advocate of federation during this period being Colonial Secretary Joseph Chamberlain (in office 1895-1903). In one speech, Chamberlain revived the idea of the Britannic connection as a tool to further the progress of Imperial Federation, quoting a popular poem by a Canadian proponent of Greater Britain:

Unite the Empire — make it stand compact.  
Shoulder to shoulder let its members feel  
The touch of British brotherhood; and act  
As one great nation — strong and true as steel.<sup>33</sup>

Crane’s map also touched upon the economic aspects of federation, albeit combined with his socialist values of working-class cooperation and the end of colonial exploitation. The Victorian period witnessed a considerable amount of discourse on whether free trade—which contemporaries viewed as a key value that the British Empire upheld—was truly the most beneficial *modus operandi* for the global economic system, or if colonial protectionism would be a better alternative.<sup>34</sup> By the late Victorian period, Britain’s economic dominance was under fire from both the Old World (Imperial Germany) and the New World (the United States), with some commentators worrying that the colonies would soon outproduce the mother country. If these competitors

were allowed to overtake Britain, then her status as a first-rank power would also come under scrutiny, or as one contemporary put it, “the brilliant afterglow of the British sunset [would] date from that hour.”<sup>35</sup> Federation, it was argued, would simultaneously prevent the decline of Britain’s economy and also provide the means to further boost the economic growth of the empire, halting Britannia’s fall into an economic power of the second-rank. Once again, the binary rhetoric was present in these arguments: it was “the choice of federation on the one hand, or of [economic] retaliation on the other.”<sup>36</sup> The former, according to the federalists, was far more appealing than the latter.

Finally, Crane’s map, in its articulation of various arguments regarding Imperial Federation and Greater Britain, fit neatly into the overarching rhetoric that characterized the discourse: the “now or never” element of the argument. In each aspect of federation discussed thus far—social, political, and economic—there was a clear feeling that the British Empire stood on the eve of a new era in the transformation of the global order. Some of her European rivals—mainly Germany and Russia—appeared to be catching up in their imperial conquests in Africa and Central Asia respectively, while the United States was clearly poised to overtake her in industrial and economic measurements of power. By the turn of the century, Britain’s politicians would have to debate whether progress for the empire meant further devolution of authority to the colonies, thus granting them greater independence on foreign and domestic affairs, or a move toward closer union and federation.<sup>37</sup> As one proponent put it, “either the colonies must become separate nations or they must be more nearly incorporated with the central authority.”<sup>38</sup> In the world-historical argumentation of the federalists, there were plenty of normative points that favored the latter course, and therefore necessitated a push toward the realization of Greater Britain. Crane’s map served as a visual representation of these benefits, awash with cartographic and iconographic symbolism that advertised the benefits of federation, and acting as a graphical clarion call for the movement to push forward with its efforts.

Prior to concluding, it is worth briefly extending the investigation of the discourse surrounding Greater Britain to encapsulate the more ambitious goals and visions of some members of the movement, while also framing their stances within Crane’s map. Duncan Bell has highlighted the aspirations of late Victorian political thinkers to achieve a “federal global state,” and adher-

ents of Greater Britain were no strangers to such ideas.<sup>39</sup> The “global state” strain of the discourse mainly presented itself in evaluations of the merits that Imperial Federation would bring about. According to one prominent proposal, federation signified nothing less than the empire’s “destiny...stamped with the highest *imprimatur*,” and that through its realization:

[T]he British empire will not only be strong enough to defy any combination which may be brought against it, but it will be in a position to act as a friendly and discreet [*sic*] custodian of peace for the whole world. A united British Empire, on account of its pre-eminent advantages in climate, traditions, laws, and liberal institutions, would attract to it all the most law-abiding citizens of other States, whose industry would add to its wealth and whose numbers would swell its muster-roll. Thereby it would become a great crucible in which all the nations of the earth would ultimately blend, with one language, *one central government* for all.<sup>40</sup>

Evidently Crane’s map, in its minimal detailing of non-Britannic areas, left room for such ambitions within the larger discourse on federation. There was no reason why the initial federation of the empire, once accomplished, could not be carried further to absorb other nations into a “world government” that represented the final stage of political organization for imperial federalists. Such discourse was highly agreeable to socialists such as Crane, since a single “super-state” would herald the end of class-based oppression and the attainment of global equality for the working masses.

### Conclusion

This article has recast Walter Crane’s *Imperial Federation* map in a light that, to use the words of Felix Driver, is “both utterly familiar and deeply strange.”<sup>41</sup> When we locate the map in the atmosphere of late Victorian discourse on Greater Britain, it emerges as a nuanced and complex articulation of ideas and opinions on Imperial Federation. With knowledge of its context, Crane’s map appears not as a celebration of Victorian high imperialism, but as the hopeful expression of empire as a mechanism for greater colonial reform and economic freedom. Whether or not Crane fully agreed with the tenets of the IFL will likely

remain an open question, but we can certainly make the observation that his map was a reflection of the larger discourse on progress and reform in late Victorian Britain. It is remarkable that the map has taken on a considerably different meaning from its original intention, but that should serve as a poignant reminder that historians must continue to treat maps like any other source material: we should analyze them through both a cartographic and contextual lens to arrive at a more accurate interpretation of their meaning.

Methodologically, these two lenses combine to provide a holistic, nuanced, and comprehensive reading of how a map conceptualizes the space within it, allowing historians to view maps as transmitters of historical agency. Maps can thus be deconstructed as platforms of discourse that question, reinforce, and ultimately shape how their audiences—contemporary or modern—view the world.<sup>42</sup> In the case of Crane's map, we can see how it articulated the political and socioeconomic arguments around Imperial Federation and crystallized the vision of Greater Britain in cartographic and iconographic form. Although not fully explored in the course of this article, we can also situate the significance of Crane's map within the rhetorical tracks of national versus imperial progress: Did advocates of Imperial Federation see a federated empire as the next evolutionary step in the nation-state? Or was it rather a hybrid offshoot of the pre-existing political structures and hierarchies that were the norm in the era of high imperialism?

By placing Crane's map alongside other discourses on Imperial Federation, it is apparent just how varied the tools for communicating such ideas were during the late nineteenth century. One other unconventional method is worthy of inclusion here: a verse from a poem by Lord Tennyson written specifically for the Colonial and Indian Exhibition:

Britain's myriad voices call,  
'Sons by welded, each and all,  
Into one Imperial whole,  
One with Britain heart and soul!  
One life, one flag, one fleet, one Throne!'"<sup>43</sup>

As historians, we ought to challenge commonly held perceptions of well-known non-textual and even textual source materials, uncovering their value by returning them to their

contemporary discourse and enabling their arguments to become more salient in the discursive environments of their creation and propagation. Future literature on the development and expression of political thought in the Victorian period would do well to include such material alongside conventional textual sources, for they provide an interesting glimpse into how contemporary societies and movements visualized progress.

1. For an in-depth discussion on the “civilizing mission” rhetoric as well as the discourse on “liberal imperialism,” see, e.g., Karuna Mantena, “The crisis of liberal imperialism,” in *Victorian Visions of Global Order: Empire and Relations in Nineteenth-Century Political Thought*, ed. Duncan Bell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 113-135; Duncan Bell, *Reordering the World: Essays on Liberalism and Empire* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2016), 19-61.
2. Although the extent to which there was a *Pax Britannica* in the late Victorian age remains debated among international and diplomatic historians, there is a general consensus that Britain was still a power of the first-rank at the turn of the twentieth century. See, for e.g., C. J. Bartlett, *Defence and Diplomacy: Britain and the Great Powers, 1815-1914* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993), 76-93; John Darwin, *The Empire Project: The Rise and Fall of the British World-System, 1830-1970* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 23-255; Keith Neilson, “‘Greatly Exaggerated’: The Myth of the Decline of Great Britain before 1914,” *The International History Review* 13, no. 4 (1991): 695-725.
3. A good overview of the period from an intellectual standpoint is provided in Duncan Bell, “Victorian visions of global order: an introduction,” in *Victorian Visions of Global Order*, 6-7.
4. The “late Victorian” period here is used to refer to the years 1871—1901, characterized mainly by such international events as the rise of Imperial Germany, the “Scramble for Africa,” and the Second Boer War.
5. For a sample of such writing, see the essays in *Victorian Visions of Global Order*.
6. A discussion of such explanations and the ideologies that formed them can be found in Duncan Bell, *Reordering the World*, 91-118.
7. The most thorough examination of the discourse is in Duncan Bell, *The Idea of Greater Britain: Empire and the Future of World Order, 1860-1900* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007). See also, Ged Martin, “Empire Federalism and Imperial Parliamentary Union, 1820-1870,” *The Historical Journal* 16, no. 1 (1973): 65-92; John Kendle, *Federal Britain: A History* (London: Routledge, 1997), 37-57; J. E. Tyler, *The Struggle for Imperial Unity (1868-1895)* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1938); Seymour Ching-Yuan Cheng, *Schemes for the Federation of the British Empire* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1931).
8. By the time of Queen Victoria’s death in 1901, these self-governing colonies included Canada, Newfoundland, Australia, New Zealand, the Cape Colony, and Natal.
9. Bell, *The Idea of Greater Britain*, 13.
10. Some prominent examples include John Robert Seeley, *The Expansion of England: Two Courses of Lectures* (London: Macmillan, 1883); H. Mortimer-Franklyn, *The Unit of Imperial Federation: A Solution*



of the Problem (London: Swan Sonnenschein, Lowrey, & Co., 1887); Richard Jebb, *The Britannic Question: A Survey of Alternatives* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1913); 84-125; James Anthony Froude, *Oceana, or England and Her Colonies* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1886).

11. The Imperial Federation League, or IFL, was established in 1884 and served as a platform through which discussions on how to achieve federation could be facilitated and through its journal—aptly named *Imperial Federation*—could be disseminated to the public. For histories of the League’s founding, operation, and eventual dissolution, see Tyler, *The Struggle for Imperial Unity*, 107-208; Cheng *Schemes for the Federation of the British Empire*, 37-43.

12. Felix Driver, “In Search of the Imperial Map: Walter Crane and the Image of Empire,” *History Workshop Journal*, no. 69 (2010): 148-151. See also Pippa Bittcliffe, “Walter Crane and the Imperial Federation Map Showing the Extent of the British Empire (1886),” *Imago Mundi* 57, no. 1 (2005): 63-69.

13. As Driver has highlighted in greater detail, the map has been featured in exhibitions, printed as a souvenir from museums, and—perhaps more pertinently with regards to its position among educators—on the covers of multiple books on British imperial history. Driver, “In Search of The Imperial Map,” 148-149.

14. The rhetoric of time and space was prominent in federalist and antifederalist arguments, as further explored in Bell, *The Idea of Greater Britain*, 63-91. See also Duncan Bell, “Dissolving Distance: Technology, Space, and Empire in British Political Thought, 1770-1900,” *The Journal of Modern History* 77, no. 3 (2005): 523-562.

15. Bittcliffe, “Walter Crane and the *Imperial Federation Map*,” 64.

16. “Imperial Federation map of the world showing the extent of the British Empire in 1886,” Norman B. Leventhal Map Center, Boston Public Library, accessed May 30, 2022, <https://collections.leventhalmap.org/search/commonwealth:x633f896s>.

17. Also worth noting is the imagery of Britannia as a “Titan,” a popular term in the late Victorian/Edwardian discourse on Britain as a declining world power. The most famous phrase was Colonial Secretary Joseph Chamberlain’s remark that “the Weary Titan struggles under the too vast orb of its fate.”

18. For an example of how contextual information can illuminate readings of maps, especially imperial ones see, e.g., Michael Heffernan, “The Cartography of the Fourth Estate: Mapping the New Imperialism in British and French Newspapers, 1875-1925,” in *The Imperial Map: Cartography and The Mastery of Empire*, ed. James R. Akerman (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 261-300; Jerry Brotton, *A History of the World in Twelve Maps* (London: Penguin Books, 2013), ch. 10.

19. J. C. R. Colomb, “Imperial Federation,” *The Graphic* 34, no. 869

(July 24, 1886): 90-94.

20. Alexander Gordon, *The Future of the Empire; or, A Brief Statement of the Case Against Imperial Federation* (London: Simpkin, Marshall & Co., 1889), 55.

21. *Imperial Federation* journal issues for 1886

22. F. P. Labilliere, "Imperial Federation," *Proceedings of the Royal Colonial Institute*, vol. 17 (1885-86): 319-342. The Institute also held an internal discussion of Imperial Federation among its leaders that same year. See George Fergusson Bowen, "The Federation of the British Empire," *Proceedings of the Colonial Institute*, vol. 17 (1885-86): 282-316.

23. Biltcliffe, "Walter Crane," 65. It is worth also reading a comparative analysis of Crane's map alongside other cartographic visuals produced for the Colonial and Indian Exhibition. See Biltcliffe, "Walter Crane," 65-68; Driver, "In Search of The Imperial Map," 150-152.

24. Biltcliffe, "Walter Crane," 65. See also Driver, "In Search of The Imperial Map," 152-154.

25. Driver, "In Search of the Imperial Map," 149.

26. James Stanley Little, *The United States of Britain: An Address on England and Her Colonies* (Guildford: Billing and Sons, 1888), 31.

27. On this point, see William Gisborne, *Imperial Federation* (London: P.S. King & Son, 1887), 4-8; Alexander Gordon, *The Future of the Empire*, 77-80; H. Mortimer-Franklyn, *The Unit of Imperial Federation: A Solution of the Problem* (London: Swan Sonnenschein, Lowrey & Co., 1887), 198-239; Samuel Wilson, "A Scheme for Imperial Federation," *The Nineteenth Century*, no. 98 (April 1885): 590-598; James Stanley Little, *A Vision of Empire: A Lecture on Imperial Federation* (Guildford: Billing and Sons, 1887), 40-54.

28. Outlined in Imperial Federation League, *The Record of the Past and The Promise of the Future* (London: Imperial Federation League, 1886), 10-16.

29. W. E. Forster, "Imperial Federation," *The Nineteenth Century*, no. 96 (February 1885): 202. See also W. E. Forster, "A Few More Words on Imperial Federation," *The Nineteenth Century*, no. 97 (March 1885): 552-556.

30. Gordon, *The Future of the Empire*, 77-80. For similar arguments against federation, see Lord Norton, "How Not to Retain the Colonies," *The Nineteenth Century*, no. 91 (September 1884): 505-516; Lord Norton, "Imperial Federation — its Impossibility," *The Nineteenth Century*, no. 91 (September 1884): 505-516; Henry Parkes, "Australia and the Imperial Connection," *The Nineteenth Century*, no. 88 (May 1884): 867-872; Patrick McMahon Glynn, *Great Britain and Its Colonies: The Obstacles to Imperial Federation* (Adelaide: W. J. Thomas & Co., 1892), 1-14.

31. For arguments regarding the Britannic connection from both sides, see Imperial Federation League, *A Record of The Past*, 3-5;

- Colonel C. H. Nugent, "Imperial Defence: First Article," *Imperial Federation*, vol. 1 (1886): 7-8; Samuel Wilson, "A Scheme for Imperial Federation," 598; Gordon, *The Future of the Empire*, 19; Viscount Bury and Marquis of Lorne, "The Unity of the Empire," *The Nineteenth Century*, no. 97 (March 1885): 381-404.
32. Imperial Federation League, *A Record of The Past*, 3.
33. Quoted in Joseph Chamberlain, *On Imperial Federation* (London: Imperial Federation (Defence) Committee, 1896), 5. For a more in-depth argument on federation from the Canadian perspective, see Thomas MacFarlane, *Within the Empire; An Essay on Imperial Federation* (Ottawa: James Hope & Co., 1891), 1-36. See also, Joseph Chamberlain, *Colonies and Crises* (London: Imperial Federation (Defense) Committee, 1896), 7.
34. For a summary of the literature on this, see Anthony Howe, "Free trade and global order: the rise and fall of a Victorian vision," in *Victorian Visions of Global Order*, 26-46.
35. Kenric B. Murray, "The Commercial Value of Imperial Federation: First Article," *Imperial Federation*, vol. 1 (1886): 70.
36. Murray, "The Commercial Value of Imperial Federation," 70.
37. For a selection of this rhetoric, see Little, *The United States of Britain*, 16-25; Nicholas Darnell Davis, *A Short Plan of Imperial Federation* (Georgetown: The Argosy Press, 1887), 3-9; Earl Grey, "How Shall We Retain the Colonies?" *The Nineteenth Century*, no. 28 (June 1879), 935-945; F. P. Labilliere, *British Federalism: Its Rise and Progress* (London: Proceedings of the Royal Colonial Institute, 1893), 1-5; John Douglas, "Imperial Federation from an Australian Point of View," *The Nineteenth Century*, no. 94 (December 1884): 853-868; Wilson, "A Scheme for Imperial Federation," 598; Frederick Young, *On the Political Relations of Mother Countries and Colonies* (London: Edward Stanford, 1883), 14-26.
38. Little, *The United States of Britain*, 16.
39. Duncan Bell, "The Victorian idea of a global state," in *Victorian Visions of Global Order*, 159-185; Bell, *Reordering the World*, 182-210.
40. Little, *The United States of Britain*, 21 (emphasis added).
41. Driver, "In Search of the Imperial Map," 155-156.
42. For other examples of this cartographic source analysis and their usage in conceptualizations of geopolitical bodies, see Michael Wintle, "Emergent Nationalism in European Maps of the Eighteenth Century," in *The Roots of Nationalism: National Identity Formation in Early Modern Europe, 1600-1815*, ed. Lotte Jensen (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2016), 271-288; Brian J. Harley, "Maps, Knowledge, and Power," in *The New Nature of Maps: Essays in the History of Cartography*, eds. Brian J. Harley and Paul Laxton (Baltimore, MD: The John Hopkins University Press, 2001), 51-82.
43. Alfred, Lord Tennyson, *Ode on the Opening of the Colonial and Indian Exhibition*, printed in *Imperial Federation*, vol. 1 (1886), 157.

# Scouting's Human Crop

The Boy Scouts' Ideological and Physical Influence on  
the Landscape of Public Recreation in the 1930s<sup>1</sup>

*Evan McKenzie*



Image: *An Invitation to New Play Areas* c.1930s

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The Camp David retreat is one of the most famous campgrounds in the world, playing host over the decades to dozens of presidential vacations and important conferences of world leaders. While this wooded refuge is internationally renowned, few would recognize the presidential “Shangri-La” from its original depiction. The National Park Service (NPS) brochure entitled “An Invitation to New Play Areas” was one such depiction, advertising a new type of public landscape in the 1930s called Recreational Demonstration Areas (RDAs). These parks were a grand experiment of the New Deal, designed to deliver outdoor experiences to



Every person needs recreation. Shall it be this?...

Figure 1. Collage of children playing in urban squalor contrasted with Figure 2. From “An Invitation to New Play Areas.”



...Or this?

Figure 2. Collage of children participating cheerfully in a variety of summer camp activities. From “An Invitation to New Play Areas.”

“underprivileged” children. Within the brochure, one collage of photographs shows young children loitering in a variety of unsafe and dirty urban environments [Figure 1]. In contrast, a second collage features children joyfully participating in a variety of summer camp activities such as archery and woodcraft [Figure 2].

The organized camping facilities of the RDAs were designed to respond to fears in the early twentieth century about the dangerous influences of urbanization and industrialization on young children. “Every person needs recreation. Shall it be this?... Or this?” the brochure asks, emphasizing the dichotomy



between the children in the streets and in the summer camp.<sup>2</sup> This juxtaposition suggests that these recreation areas were far more than brand-new public parks; instead, they represented a bold strategy to mold the next generation of American citizens. The Park Service campgrounds introduced in the pamphlet were completely distinct from other public recreational areas, featuring tight clusters of cabins tucked deep into the woods, special performance spaces called council rings, and an unusual lack of playing fields. In total, 31 RDAs were built during the New Deal, concentrated near large cities east of the Mississippi. These campgrounds were designed to be transferred from the NPS to state and local governments after a few years of operation. The map below [Figure 3] highlights the locations and current names of the parks that occupy the former RDA sites. One of these sites, Camp Hi-Catoctin in Maryland, was chosen by Franklin D. Roosevelt (FDR) for his now-iconic getaway after touring a couple of potential options within a short distance of the capital.<sup>3</sup> While the presidential retreat at Camp David is among the most noteworthy of the landscapes shaped by the RDA program, the history of these recreational areas has been mostly obscured by their new park names and a lack of funding and attention from their new stewards. This article attempts to shine light on these forgotten leisure spaces as a profound example of the creation of *gendered landscapes* in the United States.

The RDAs originated in a time of crisis. In the 1930s, the Great Depression prompted newly elected President Roosevelt to launch the New Deal—a collection of initiatives intended to address unemployment and uplift the nation’s middle class. Through work relief programs such as the Works Progress Administration (WPA) and the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), thousands of young men were pulled from financial ruin into the government’s greatly expanded welfare system. The New Deal represented a renewed focus on the Progressive themes of urban progress and resource conservation. One major group of New Deal policies promoted both efficient use of resources and increased access to recreational opportunities. Here, the idea was that natural areas were vital counterparts to the industrial filth of American cities.<sup>4</sup> Conrad Wirth, organizer of the CCC, wrote that “The greatest resource of any nation is its human wealth and in the conservation of human wealth recreation plays a major part.”<sup>5</sup> The RDAs acted as a direct



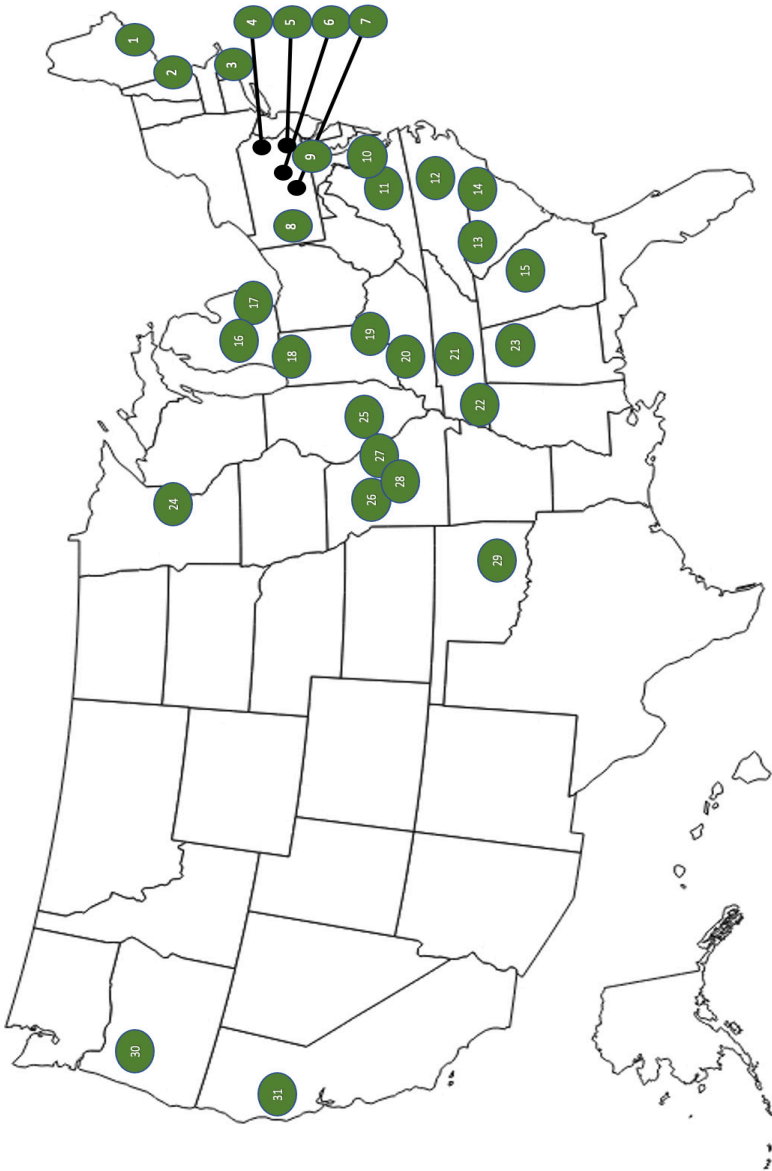


Figure 3. Map of Recreational Demonstration Area locations (numbers correspond with Figure 4).

#	State	Official RDA Name	Current Land Use
1	ME	Camden Hills	Camden Hills State Park
2	NH	Bear Brook	Bear Brook State Park
3	RI	Beach Pond	Beach Pond State Park
4	PA	Hickory Run	Hickory Run State Park
5	PA	French Creek	French Creek State Park
6	PA	Blue Knob	Blue Knob State Park
7	PA	Laurel Hill	Laurel Hill State Park
8	PA	Raccoon Creek	Raccoon Creek State Park
9	MD	Catoctin	Camp David Presidential Retreat; Cunningham Falls State Park; Catoctin Mountain Park (Federal)
10	VA	Chopawamsic	Prince William Forest Park (Federal)
11	VA	Swift Creek	Pocahontas State Park
12	NC	Crabtree Creek	William B. Umstead State Park
13	SC	Kings Mountain	Kings Mountain National Military Park; Kings Mountain State Park
14	SC	Cheraw	Cheraw State Park
15	GA	Hard Labor Creek	Hard Labor Creek State Park
16	MI	Yankee Springs	Yankee Springs Recreation Area

Figure 4. Chart of Recreational Demonstration Areas and current land use (numbers correspond with Figure 3).

## Scouting's Human Crop

#	State	Official RDA Name	Current Land Use
17	MI	Waterloo	Waterloo State Recreation Area
18	IN	Winamac	Winamac Fish and Wildlife Area; Tippecanoe River State Park
19	IN	Versailles	Versailles State Park
20	KY	Otter Creek	Otter Creek Outdoor Recreation Area (Local)
21	TN	Montgomery Bell	Montgomery Bell State Park
22	TN	Shelby Forest	Meeman-Shelby Forest State Park
23	AL	Oak Mountain	Oak Mountain State Park
24	MN	St. Croix	St. Croix State Park
25	IL	Pere Marquette	Pere Marquette State Park
26	MO	Montserrat	Knob Noster State Park
27	MO	Cuivre River	Cuivre River State Park
28	MO	Lake of the Ozarks	Lake of the Ozarks State Park
29	OK	Lake Murray	Lake Murray State Park
30	OR	Silver Creek	Silver Falls State Park
31	CA	Mendocino	Mendocino Woodlands State Park

answer to Wirth's statement, promising to protect and expand the country's natural landscape as a means of bringing rural recreational opportunities to the urban masses.

The RDAs featured carefully planned, state-of-the-art camping facilities in scenic areas outside of major cities. These campgrounds were set aside for use by youth camping agencies such as the Boy Scouts, the Girl Scouts, the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA), and dozens of smaller groups.<sup>6</sup> This endorsement of nonpublic youth organizations was a radical departure from the hands-on government approach of other New Deal initiatives. As other agencies such as the Tennessee Valley Authority centralized control of land and resource use, the RDA program devolved the government's responsibilities to semi-private institutions.<sup>7</sup> In addition, the built landscapes of the RDAs diverged greatly from any facilities previously developed for recreation in the United States. Where did park planners find inspiration for these uniquely constructed places of leisure? The rise of organized camping in the early 1900s reveals deep-rooted connections between the New Deal's RDAs and the masculine character-building philosophies of one specific youth camping organization: the Boy Scouts of America (BSA).<sup>8</sup>

While it may seem inevitable that the largest youth camping group in the United States influenced the government's own attempts at organized camping, the character-building ideas promulgated by the Boy Scouts had a far greater impact than simply informing the administration of the RDAs. Over thirty years before the New Deal, the BSA was formed as a response to white, middle-class concerns about the future of young boys in a post-industrialized and urbanized America. As frontier living and the need for hard labor decreased in the late 1800s, the middle class turned toward youth organizations to instill character, and specifically masculinity, in their children. To achieve this, adult leaders and administrators created summer camps as spaces that would turn boys into men. Youth camps were advertised as experiences in the "primitive outdoors," but these landscapes were anything but "natural." Instead, Scout camps were designed to provide masculine character-building experiences that drew from Native American stereotypes, pioneer history, and corporate leadership skills. Collectively, these influences produced a "manufactured" wilderness.<sup>9</sup> When the US government later turned to the Scouts for inspiration

in designing their new recreational areas, these masculinity-building camping philosophies were transferred onto the national public landscape. In other words, the specific choices made about how to design the landscape and buildings of the parks were directly influenced by the Scouts' ideologies about the outdoors and masculinity, creating a gendered landscape.

Many historians have analyzed the goals of the Boy Scouts as a character-building organization for middle-class boys, but few have examined how Scouting transformed recreation and leisure in the United States. I argue that a profound example of this transformation can be found in the connection between the philosophies of the BSA and the landscapes of the New Deal's RDAs. Many factors contributed to this link, including the issuing of a rare congressional charter, President FDR's experience with the Scouts, and the explosive institutional popularity of the BSA. However, this connection can be traced most directly through the work of former Boy Scout executive and prolific landscape architect Julian Harris Salomon. Salomon was highly influential in the design and layout of the RDAs, and his lifelong experience with the Scouts was the lynchpin that ensured that recreation areas planned by the NPS were inspired by the philosophies of the Boy Scouts. Because of this strong connection, the masculine character-building ideologies of the Boy Scouts deeply informed the planning of the New Deal's Recreational Demonstration Areas, leading to the creation and naturalization of gendered public landscapes across the United States.

This article begins by placing readers into the mid-1930s with the creation of the RDAs. Part One analyzes the historical context of the New Deal and asks how the federal government decided to use vast quantities of resources and funds to acquire "submarginal" land for youth leisure. This portion focuses on the specifics of the RDA program and explores its somewhat-conflicting goals. The second section takes readers back to the early 1900s and investigates the formation of the Boy Scouts. Here, the article discusses the BSA's emphasis on masculinity as a core part of its character-building program and explains how these gendered ideologies were built into the youth programming of summer camps. Also described are the key connections between the Scouts and the United States government that paved the way for future collaboration between the two institutions. Part Three details

the implementation and design of the RDAs, tying the themes of the previous sections together. This section describes how Salomon's experience as a Scout executive informed his design choices in planning a "typical" RDA. The built environment of the RDAs is analyzed through the lens of Scouting's masculine character-building ideology with three major examples: the unit plan, the council ring, and dice-throw planning. The article concludes by discussing the influence of the RDAs today and the significance of the BSA's ideologies in the national landscape.

### **Part One: Recreational Demonstration Areas**

When FDR took office in 1933, his administration was tasked with bringing America out of the trenches of the country's worst-ever depression and restoring its social, economic, and natural resources to their former abundance. Roosevelt found his solution in the "New Deal," which expanded the power of the national government to create what was essentially a centralized welfare state. Through experimental work programs, tax reforms, and labor laws, this package of policies dramatically increased employment and prosperity in the United States. The New Deal emphasized Progressive ideals such as conservation and expanded government while also incorporating post-war desires for urban reform and economic recovery.<sup>10</sup> Among the multitude of problems requiring national intervention during this period, perhaps the most important challenge for the new administration was the acute need to manage the country's devastated farmlands.

In 1934, the federal government allocated \$25 million for the establishment of a Land Utilization Program. The Land Program was designed to fund experimental land use projects that would employ "repeatable demonstrations" of efficient land management on poorly managed properties.<sup>11</sup> This idea was inspired by scientific economists at public agricultural colleges who proposed removing submarginal land, farmlands low in productivity, from yearly crop rotations to restore soil fertility. Proponents argued that the state should purchase poorly managed lands and relocate farmers to areas that were better suited for intensive agriculture. Partially in response to the agricultural calamity of the Dust Bowl, the Public Works Administration in 1933 established the National Resources

Board, which was tasked with solving broad issues of long-range planning and development. This board eventually encouraged the Roosevelt Administration to acquire ten million acres of the nation's submarginal land for experimental demonstrations of effective land use.<sup>12</sup>

While the Resettlement Administration had jurisdiction over the *administration* of newly purchased land, the responsibility for the planning and development of these areas was divided among a variety of agencies.<sup>13</sup> The NPS was tasked with setting aside some of these lands for public recreation. The areas acquired by the NPS were improved with tree plantings, resodding of grasses, and soil rehabilitation projects, and some were turned into expansions of existing national and state parks. Others were made into waysides along some of the nation's newly built highways, precursors to the massively popular interstate rest stops of the 1950s.<sup>14</sup> These projects were mostly minor exercises in land management that were conducted with little fanfare.

The most unique and well-funded experiment of the Land Program was the Recreational Demonstration Area program.<sup>15</sup> Perhaps no single project encapsulated the lofty goals of the New Deal more fully than these large-scale investments in landscaping, planning, and recreation. The initial thesis of these projects was two-fold. First, \$5 million from Land Program funds were provided by the Resettlement Administration in order to buy and develop farmland and adjacent properties that were considered to be poorly managed or misused, or that could serve a greater public good.<sup>16</sup> Then, these lands were developed by NPS planners and architects to serve as recreational spaces for urban children. This made the RDAs microcosms of the New Deal itself—landscapes devoted to a government-funded demonstration of experiments in conservation, efficient land use, *and* urban reform.

The name "Recreational Demonstration Area" is about as institutional and uninspired as government titles get, but it is worth focusing on the importance that the Roosevelt Administration placed on the "demonstration" aspect of the project. The RDAs were advertised as an exhibition of the philosophies of the New Deal. In a promotional short film entitled "The Human Crop," the first scenes portray a rural landscape scarred with poorly irrigated soils, deteriorating buildings, and other examples of the "wreckage of the past."



Then, the film shows children playing in unsanitary and unsupervised streets with the imposing shadows of industrial factories looming in the distance. These two threats, the misuse of the nation's farmlands and dangerous conditions for urban children, formed the New Deal-era pitch for investment in RDAs. With the dire stakes laid out, the film transports viewers to a mid-construction CCC camp, where young men are working to create the Chopawamsic Recreational Demonstration Area in Virginia. The tone shifts from dreadful to uplifting, as images of nature and bountiful forests are presented to the audience. The film reaches a crescendo as it exclaims that the RDAs "won't grow grain or garden crops, but ... a *Human Crop* [emphasis added] of American citizens."<sup>17</sup> Here, the Park Service metaphorically links some of the most important concerns of the 1930s, delivering a promise that in healing the nation's broken farmlands, it would also transform the country's urban youth into healthy and patriotic citizens of the future.

The connection between land management and character-building in urban children was emphasized in nearly every government publication on the RDAs, but planning and developing youth campgrounds was a completely new concept to the Park Service. Inspiration for this unprecedented experiment in shaping both the landscape and the minds of young people would need to come from somewhere else. Some government officials argued that these campgrounds should be administered by park employees, but there was a lack of funds for this kind of oversight. Others argued for minimal facilities, fearing that campgrounds with additional amenities would cause a revolution in lower-class families and "upset everything."<sup>18</sup>

The prevailing strategy was devised by Julian H. Salomon, a former Boy Scout executive and landscape architect hired by the Park Service for his extensive experience in organized camping. Salomon claimed that he suggested to "stick to just providing the facilities" and "make them available to existing organizations in the community that can come in and operate."<sup>19</sup> Campgrounds operated by character-building organizations could "meet recreational deficiencies" for lower-income residents of inner-city industrial areas by offering "a chance to explore the woods, study wild animals, go fishing, or follow a winding mountain trail, away from the demands of city

and job.”<sup>20</sup> Salomon’s plan was approved by the Park Service and progress toward building the first camps got underway. These sites also represented one of the first opportunities to employ professional designers in camp work. As Salomon stated, “there surely was never a time before that when so many well-trained, experienced architects, landscape architects, and engineers had an opportunity to play with anything as small and unimportant as a children’s camp.”<sup>21</sup> Though the government had previous experience building campsites in state and national parks, the influence of organized camping groups under architects like Salomon made the RDAs distinct from any other leisure spaces in the country.

By November 1936, only a few years into the RDA program, the assistant director of the Land Program, Conrad Wirth, and planners at the NPS assumed complete control of the project from the Resettlement Administration.<sup>22</sup> By this point, plans were already underway for some of the early RDA projects, and officials in the Park Service had begun to run into major roadblocks. For the NPS, “submarginal agricultural land with appropriately impoverished inhabitants simply could not be counted on” to meet the aesthetic and natural environmental demands of ideal summer camp environments. For example, while the poorest-quality farmlands were located in higher-altitude areas, these areas contained very few streams or lakes for swimming, fishing, boating, and other essential camp activities.<sup>23</sup> Misused farmlands were far from the ideal summer camp’s uninterrupted wilderness. The New Deal’s signature demonstration project was at an impasse: it had to either retain the original goal of the project by placing the RDA summer camps on truly submarginal lands, or abandon, at least partially, the notion of land management and focus on building character. After the Resettlement Administration, which was more invested in locating the RDA projects in poorly managed farmlands, left the program, the NPS made the decision to acquire lands “based on the desirability of the land for recreation purposes.”<sup>24</sup> This was a predictable choice for the agency, considering the Park Service’s role in the project as a planning entity, the strong support of an organized camping initiative from key project managers such as Salomon, and the novelty of the RDAs.

Conrad Wirth ensured that the plans for the RDAs were produced by a group of designers and architects that was

separate from the NPS's established Branch of Plans and Designs because "the concept of organized camping was so new and different that it warranted a fresh approach."<sup>25</sup> In practice, this meant that most of the planning decisions for the RDAs, from the layout of campsites to choices about building design, were experiments in planning natural areas specifically for the education, recreation, and safety of youth campers. Rather than reaching into the decades of experience from designers who had worked on the national parks, the NPS borrowed from the expertise of the private camping organizations that inspired the novel initiative.

While the RDA program was influenced by a variety of popular youth groups, the Boy Scouts had a uniquely important influence on this grand demonstration of land use and public works. The government was careful to ensure that the RDAs were framed as brand-new experiments in recreation, although Secretary of the Interior Herold Ickes hired an advisory committee of "active camp directors and outstanding leaders in the field of organized camping."<sup>26</sup> Out of the eight members, two were part of the Boy Scouts' national leadership, five worked exclusively in camps for boys, and every member had ties to one of the founders of the BSA, Ernest Thompson Seton. This committee was publicized in the 1937 National Park Yearbook as an "effort by the Federal Government to recognize the values of the camping movement and to make it possible for many more people to receive its benefits now and in the future."<sup>27</sup> From the beginning, the RDA program was tied to the ideas and expertise of the BSA.

A typical day in an RDA camp was mostly similar to those in modern summer camps, with time split between water sports, team-building games, hiking, meals, and other activities. The RDA campgrounds were rented out to a variety of welfare and character-building organizations, so each camp also had its own distinct schedule and programming. How then, were these recreational areas influenced by the gendered philosophies of the Boy Scouts? To answer this question, we must look to the landscape itself. The ideologies of the Scouts were essential to the built environment of the RDAs. Long-standing ties between the government and the Scouts, the New Deal initiatives of urban reform and conservation, and the incredible design influence of Salomon ensured that the RDAs would become a public vehicle for the type of character-building distributed by

the Boy Scouts. The RDA program was designed to integrate the theories of the New Deal with those of the organized camping movement by translating gendered character-building ideologies into the built landscape. As NPS planners considered how to create an idealized version of nature that could transform urban kids into strong American citizens, they chose to implement Scout camp designs that were intended to build masculinity.

## **Part Two: Masculinity and the Boy Scouts of America**

The RDAs were only the most prominent example of the federal government's work in promoting the value of Scouting. The BSA was one of many camping-focused groups that emerged in the early 1900s, but in its first few decades, the growing organization pursued an aggressive publicity campaign, quickly becoming more popular than the much-older YMCA and other more militaristic boys' groups. The Scouts' dominance in the field of boys' work was certified when the organization secured a federal charter in 1916, only the second Title 36 congressional charter ever issued, following that of the Red Cross in 1905.<sup>28</sup> One 1916 issue of the magazine *Scouting* claimed that "the act itself constitutes an endorsement of our work on the part of the highest legislative body in the land." The federal charter was passed unanimously, signaling to Scouting executives "a big incentive to us all to go ahead with greater enthusiasm than ever before in the development of our effective program for putting health, efficiency, and character into the boys of America."<sup>29</sup> While the official purpose of the charter was to provide copyright protections to the Scouting uniforms and symbols, it also acted as a seal of approval by the government. The YMCA was never granted a charter, and the Girl Scouts received their own decades later, in 1950.<sup>30</sup>

The BSA, in its first few years, had already formed an important tie to US politicians and leaders. Decades later, the influence of the Scouts in Washington was even stronger. During the FDR administration, the CCC's *Handbook for Agencies Selecting Men* suggested that when hiring workers, "the selecting agencies may wish to give weight ... to a background of experience as Boy Scouts or Scout leaders, on the basis that such experience is a probable indication of personal qualities and a type of training in woodcraft that would be especially valuable."<sup>31</sup> The success of the Boy Scouts in creating

government connections was a result of the organization's main objective—building character in American boys.

The rising popularity of the Boy Scouts in the early twentieth century directly coincided with a deep concern over American masculinity. This was a relatively new term that itself captured a variety of interconnected anxieties and desires held by white, middle-to-upper-class Americans during this period. As industrialization took hold in American cities, the landscape of city life and work shifted dramatically, creating new opportunities for the working class, eastern European immigrants, and women. These changes were perceived as threats to white middle-class men's privileged place in society. A rapidly growing immigrant population began to compete with long-time residents for work in industrial factories and assembly lines.<sup>32</sup> Labor conflict became a regular disruption to the middle class as working-class men in long-abusive industries began to organize and hold strikes. Women, who had been relegated to the social sidelines during the majority of the 1800s, advanced the fight for equal voting rights, employment, and education.<sup>33</sup> Additionally, the Victorian virtue of manly entrepreneurial achievement became less certain as a series of economic depressions and a changing economy meant that self-employment was no longer a viable option for many Americans.<sup>34</sup> This series of radical changes in the social, political, and economic structure of the country played a part in an emerging national concern that, without intervention, young men in the United States would fall prey to the destructive influences of urban life, domestic femininity, and social decline.<sup>35</sup> While middle-class white men "were clearly still convinced that manhood was powerful," they began to search for alternative ways to demonstrate male power, as previous definitions faltered.<sup>36</sup>

Adding urgency to the idea that traditional manhood was at stake was the early nineteenth-century closing of the frontier. Since the Louisiana Purchase of 1804, Americans had pushed into the west, colonizing its vast landscapes and building a mythology of masculine citizenship along the way. Frederick Jackson Turner's "Frontier Thesis," published in 1893, articulated a crisis that faced the country in the 1890s as it found itself running out of ungoverned land to settle.<sup>37</sup> Turner argued that the frontier culture of self-made success and rugged individualism allowed Americans to develop a

unique grasp on the values of independence and democracy. Believing that constant expansion into land untainted by civil society gave citizens an ever-renewing *tabula rasa*, or blank slate, Turner was fundamental in describing a uniquely American connection between the primitive wilderness and strong character.<sup>38</sup> The loss of frontier life sounded alarms for citizens who believed westward expansion was crucial in providing the nation's men with the values of strength and self-reliance, and the ability to govern the United States. Fearing the new societal position of minority groups, the loss of self-employment as a viable career path, and the imminent loss of the frontier, white men embraced the idea of masculinity. This new description of manhood combined the romantic frontier-life virtues of individualism and leadership with new ideals of physical strength and aggressiveness that allowed men to assert their place in a newly corporate-industrial society.

Character-building groups flourished in this period because, as middle-class men began to worry about masculinity, they projected those fears onto their children. Popular child psychologist G. Stanley Hall stated in 1903 that urban men's "refined sensibilities," brought about by overdeveloped intellectualism and a lack of primitive passion, would cripple their manliness.<sup>39</sup> Character-building organizations extended this idea by using recreation in outdoor environments to provide a rural, untamed environment in which boys could become men. "The logic was environmentalist," writes historian David Macleod. Camping, hiking, and woodcraft played into the idea that "there were no bad boys, only bad surroundings."<sup>40</sup> As early as 1880, Ernest Balch led a group of boys on a camping trip to a remote part of a resort lake in Big Asquam, which he named Camp Chocorua. There, campers lived by the motto "Freedom without License," and the boys were able to participate in activities such as swimming and hiking, rather than vacationing in the typically rigid adult worlds of summer hotels.<sup>41</sup> Balch was one of the first youth leaders to note that organized camping in natural environments can build character, stating that "it is during the 12-16 year old period of a boy's life that the foundations are laid and the shape of the building determined."<sup>42</sup> Balch and dozens of other early summer camp advocates achieved local popularity and academic approval for their experimental vision of masculine character-building. Larger organizations such as the YMCA

borrowed this trend and standardized it for their groups, creating networks of organized summer camps across regions. However, in the 1910s, the BSA forever altered the crowded field of organized camping by implementing camping as the fundamental element of their program.

The typical institutional history of the BSA begins with a camping movement launched by Lord Baden-Powell in Great Britain. In the 1890s, Baden-Powell, famous for his military leadership in the defense of Mafeking in the Second Boer War, had written *Aids to Scouting*, a training manual for British soldiers. The book became unexpectedly popular with the country's young boys, so when the war hero came back from service, he decided to test a new idea of Scouting for young men. He selected twenty-one boys of differing economic statuses to embark on a camping trip to Brownsea Island in 1907. This first-ever Scouting trip included patrols, outdoor skills, patriotic lessons, and campfire stories, many of the elements essential to Boy Scout outings today.<sup>43</sup> The success of the outing encouraged the war hero to publish a nonmilitary children's version of his manual, which would encourage good morals and strong character. *Scouting For Boys* was an international hit, prompting the creation of Scout troops across the country and the world.

To truly understand the ideological niche of the Boy Scouts, one must travel back to 1901 and the creation of the Woodcraft Indians by Ernest Thompson Seton.<sup>44</sup> Seton, grappling with the aforementioned problems of urbanism and the loss of traditional forms of masculinity, found his solution in woodcraft. This program utilized "Indian teachings" in order to instruct boys to value and appreciate nature.<sup>45</sup> Seton stated that "the Red Man is the apostle of outdoor life, his example and precept are what young America needs today above any other ethical teaching of which I have knowledge."<sup>46</sup> Seton created an Indian program that featured crafts, games, costumes, and storytelling in order to center primitivism, a boyish instinct he considered essential to breaking children free from increasingly effeminate and corporate modern life. Many ideas from Seton's groundbreaking youth program and its handbook, *The Birch Bark Roll of the Woodcraft Indians*, directly influenced Lord Baden-Powell's nascent organization across the Atlantic. While the British Boy Scout program was based upon military scouting, Seton's writings encouraged Baden-Powell's adoption of the



study and appreciation of nature, campfire programs, and primitivism.<sup>47</sup> Through the lens of the ideologies of both these groups, we can see how the Scouts' unique blend of primitivism and modern skills slowly came into focus.

Joining Seton's Woodcraft Indians and Lord Baden-Powell's Boy Scouts in the formation of the BSA was The Sons of Daniel Boone, a youth program developed by Daniel Carter Beard in 1905 as "a circulation-building device for Recreation Magazine."<sup>48</sup> Beard's organization leaned into the pioneer imagery of the American frontier to encourage masculinity and patriotism. Historians such as Philip Deloria make a special point of indicating the contrast between the Woodcraft Indians' reliance on Native American role-play and the Sons of Daniel Boone's use of frontier and pioneer imagery in its programming.<sup>49</sup> However, both organizations played heavily into romanticism of the frontier past to respond to ideas about building toughness, individualism, and other masculine qualities in the outdoors. In 1911, Seton and Beard combined their programs into Lord Baden-Powell's already influential framework, forming a powerful new character-building organization: the Boy Scouts of America.

The Scouts were not unique in their dedication to building masculinity, but they were certainly the most successful organization in respect to this goal. Many growing organizations in the early 1900s had a dual purpose in their character-building mission. For example, the YMCA's goal was to provide a religious education in addition to building masculinity. Other boys' organizations emphasized militarism and imperialism more than any particularly masculine character traits.<sup>50</sup> Parallel groups for young women such as the Camp Fire Girls were much less popular than the equivalent boys' groups, and while their programs often appeared very similar to those of the BSA, they were employed to enhance completely different gender roles, emphasizing maternal and home keeping skills.<sup>51</sup> In contrast to other character-building movements, the BSA kept its mission broad and inclusive, promising to employ moral programming for its boys without "overtly military training" or religious instruction.<sup>52</sup> The Scout Oath reads, "On my honor, I will do my best, to do my duty, to God and my country, and to obey the Scout Law, to help other people at all times, to keep myself physically strong, mentally awake, and morally straight."<sup>53</sup> This oath, which all Scouts were

required to memorize, exemplifies an extremely generalized character-building promise. While there were requirements for a religious and nationalistic identity, these elements were vague and could be adapted to each participant. The BSA instead emphasized strength, self-sufficiency, and leadership in order to promote masculinity within Scouts.

Masculine character-building in the BSA consisted of two general tenets: practical skills and frontier romanticism. The first Scout handbook described how the Boy Scouts are descendants of the war scouts and the frontier scouts of the past.<sup>54</sup> Baden-Powell brought to the program the importance of knot-tying, first aid, and other skills, which were core parts of the British veteran's military training. Merit badges were also crucial to the Scouting curriculum, with each badge indicating proficiency in practical skills such as athletics, business, carpentry, chemistry, and lifesaving.<sup>55</sup> These skills emphasized masculinity in the Progressive Era by ensuring that middle class boys would have the tools they needed to be competitive in the corporate workplace. Similar achievement-oriented programming was common in many of the other character-building organizations of the time, but the BSA promoted a symbolic link between earning merit badges and masculine identity. Once a Scout earned dozens of merit badges, he was eligible for the Eagle Scout rank—a testament to self-sufficiency, leadership, and true manhood. Practical skills differentiated the Scouts from other groups, which often focused more heavily on play and sport. Leadership and development acquired through Scouts was seen as a bridge to modern manhood later in life.

The second part of Scouting was an integration of Seton's ideology of the romantic and primitive past summed up as woodcraft. Chapters in the Scout Handbook included instructions on archery, building teepees, and "How to make fire by rubbing sticks."<sup>56</sup> These attempts at "playing Indian" were integral to Scout executives' rejection of modernity. Because civilization was seen as a threat to modern masculinity, boys were sent to the wilderness to gain the strength and wisdom associated with the myths of the ancient Indians and the brave pioneers.<sup>57</sup> While bureaucratic efficiency-focused leaders within the Scouts did much to remove primitive imagery from the organization, its popularity among young people ensured its survival in a more subtle form. The combination of Seton and Baden-Powell's ideas, paired with the BSA's

organizational efficiency, ensured that the Scouts stood out as a unique and popular character-building agency.

The Boy Scouts argued that experiences in the wilderness were necessary to build masculinity. While groups such as the YMCA treated a portion of their boys to a yearly summer camp experience, to the BSA, Scouting *was* camping. BSA executives believed this was so important that they created an organizational standard that ensured that troops provided regular camping excursions to every Scout.<sup>58</sup> Nature was viewed as “an ideal world, a refuge from over-civilization and effeminacy.”<sup>59</sup> The translation of character-building from texts such as the Scout Oath to physical character training occurred in Scout campgrounds. In *Aids to Scoutmastership*, Baden-Powell wrote that “of all the schools the camp is far and away the best for teaching boys the desired character-attributes.”<sup>60</sup> Seton agreed, arguing that “woodcraft, scouting, starcraft, riding, outdoor athletics, camping” and other summer camp activities were employed “as a *means of character-building*.”<sup>61</sup> By teaching boys that camping provided the necessary skills to develop masculinity, the BSA transformed the wilderness into a gendered landscape.

No single Scout camp exemplified the masculine character-building program of Scouts more completely than the Philmont Scout Ranch. This 127,000-acre property in rural New Mexico was donated to the BSA by oil baron Wait Phillips in 1938.<sup>62</sup> Publicized as a true wilderness adventure for experienced Scouts, Philmont quickly became synonymous with masculinity. Out in the western mountains, promotional pamphlets claimed, Scouts could become real frontier men: “the old Western traditions, the romance of the Santa Fe trail, the character of that famous Scout Kit Carson - all these infiltrate into the thinking of those who come this way.”<sup>63</sup> Backcountry programs included historic reenactments of pioneer and Indian life, mountain climbing, panning for gold, horseback riding, and other representations of frontier living.<sup>64</sup> The program followed traditions well-established in scout camps across the country. In *Camp Site Development Plans*, a 1927 guide to planning an ideal outdoor environment for the Boy Scouts, a large drawing entitled “Camp Divisional Plan” showed various activity areas of a camp, including a swimmers’ area, a dining shelter, a handicraft field, and even some rare features, such as a zoo and a sea scouting location.<sup>65</sup> Scout camps usually

lacked funding for expensive infrastructure, but the drawing illustrates the types of activities that scout camps during this period could be expected to contain. Pioneer and Indian crafts and reenactments were central parts of the camp experience. Nature study programs emphasized the importance of the natural world as something to be studied and used. Framed in the background of the image are distant forests and mountains, demonstrating the importance of the wilderness to the setting of the scout camps. Philmont was the model Scout Camp, providing almost all the features of the Camp Divisional Plan with a “true” frontier adventure.

Most scout camps, however, were not located in backcountry wilderness and therefore needed to find substitutions for their masculine character-building. Many camps were located near big cities in the eastern US, where the “wilderness” often consisted of reforested farmlands with easy access to roadways and modern amenities.<sup>66</sup> Rather than backpacking to their campgrounds, Scouts in most cities traveled in automobiles, driving right up to the sites. While Philmont campers could lay witness to an actual Indian reservation, Scouts at home resorted to making their own Indian crafts and makeshift teepees. In general, the masculine ideologies of the BSA were passed to boys through skill-building and storytelling, activities that could be undertaken in nearly any woody area. Rather than hiking through rugged environments to distant campsites, Scouts camped away from the amenity-filled center of their campground in small patrols. Very few camps had the resources to physically transform their environments into a gendered space, so they instead imbued the landscape with rhetorical imagery of the wilderness and the masculine frontier.

With its unique character-building program, the BSA had, by the 1930s, emerged as the most popular youth organization in the United States. The Boy Scouts eased the anxieties of middle-class white men by associating camping in the wilderness with masculinity. In 1939, FDR gave his full support to the movement’s outdoor emphasis, stating, “a generation trained in the art of camping will receive experience which I believe will give them exceptional equipment with which to cope with some of the most difficult problems of life.”<sup>67</sup> With the implementation of the New Deal, the RDAs provided an opportunity to map the Scout’s character-building ideology onto the national landscape. These new public lands promised

to revitalize the nation's submarginal and broken countryside and transform it into a new type of farm, one that would grow patriotic American citizens from the seeds of poor urban children. The explosive popularity and government affiliations of the Boy Scouts ensured that their unique model of masculine character-building would be extremely influential in shaping how NPS designers would design their own summer camps. While FDR was not directly involved with the implementation of the RDAs, his administration's interest was evidenced in the involvement of his wife, Eleanor Roosevelt, who came to site planning meetings to express opinions about the project.<sup>68</sup> With support from the president, a national charter, and widespread organizational success, the Boy Scouts became the perfect vehicle for linking ideologies of masculine character-building with the nation's conceptions of leisure. However, an even more direct link between the BSA and the New Deal was created when it came time for the NPS to plan and develop these new landscapes.

### **Part Three: Salomon**

How does one plan a recreational area onto a landscape that was primarily used for agriculture not even a few decades before? Most National Park infrastructure was planned to be complementary to the natural scenery, blending unobtrusively into the landscape and providing essential services for vacationing families. The land purchased by the NPS for the RDA projects was not protected for its exceptional scenic status, so park structures instead became the most important features of these woody environments. This peculiar design philosophy is exemplified in the RDA "typical plan," a master plan that presented the parks' essential infrastructure on an imaginary, idealized landscape.<sup>69</sup> The typical plan provided a checklist of features that were to be built in a variety of ecosystems, elevations, and land areas across the United States. These features, such as the unit-plan, the council circle, and "dice-throw" planning, were designed to be utilized by a variety of youth groups. Here, one can see that, while nature was important to these summer camps, the physical environment of the camps was mostly standardized—an artificial wilderness.

Landscape architect and lifelong camping enthusiast Julian H. Salomon played a fundamental role in the design of the RDAs. He was responsible for several important jobs within

the program, including drafting the typical RDA plan. His contributions suggest that the implementation of the RDAs was strongly connected to the Boy Scouts. The planning techniques developed by Salomon and other planners were often directly inspired by the specific character-building and camping goals of the Boy Scouts. The NPS framed its summer camps as a novel New Deal initiative, which makes it difficult to establish direct links between the landscapes of Boy Scout camps and the organized campgrounds of the national government. Salomon, however, provides such a link—through him, the recipe for ordered, gendered landscapes promoted by Boy Scout leadership found its way into the RDA project, cementing Scouting’s gendered ideas about the wilderness into the “natural” world.

Salomon had been intimately connected to the very foundations of the Scouting movement since childhood. After a brief stint organizing a chapter in the Sons of Daniel Boone, he became a member of one of the nation’s first-ever Boy Scout Troops and earned his Eagle (the highest youth rank in the BSA) three years later.<sup>70</sup> Salomon then began attending and later working as a staff member in one of the country’s premier summer camps, the Culver Woodcraft Camp. While Culver was not owned by a Boy Scout Council, it operated unofficially as a Scout camp and was founded by Daniel Carter Beard under the influence of Sir Robert Baden-Powell. Additionally, the *other* founder of the BSA, Ernest Thompson Seton, was heavily involved in the camp’s programming and regularly put on council circle events for campers. There was no other camp in the country with stronger ties to the leaders of the Scouting movement, and because Seton made somewhat regular appearances at Culver, Salomon quickly established a friendship with him.<sup>71</sup> Salomon’s early camping experiences directly attached him to the founding ideologies of the BSA.

Salomon eventually became a Boy Scout executive himself, directing summer camps in multiple states.<sup>72</sup> After studying planning and design at Columbia University’s School of Architecture, he was given camp planning responsibilities at Camp Krietenstein in Indiana.<sup>73</sup> Throughout the 1920s, Salomon gained a following in the recreation world by teaching camp leadership courses at various colleges and through his service as president of the Camp Directors Association.<sup>74</sup> Salomon’s connection to the foundations of the Scouting

movement and his impressive early career as a summer camp professional set him up as an ideal candidate for the Federal Government's grand experiment in organized camping. In 1935, Salomon was hired by Conrad Wirth, chief land planner of the National Park Service and chairman of the CCC advisory council, as a recreational engineer. Two years later, he was promoted to the position of a Field Coordinator for the RDAs in the National Park Service's Branch of Recreation, Land Planning and State Cooperation.<sup>75</sup>

Salomon, who was hired in part for his credentials as a Boy Scout executive, began working on a small team of the country's finest recreational planners and landscape architects. However, he quickly became the most influential and outspoken member of the group. While working in Washington, Salomon was charged with drafting the RDA "typical plans," which were distributed to every individual park's planners.<sup>76</sup> Perhaps more importantly, Salomon was selected to write the organized camp portions of *Park and Recreation Structures*, a landmark book that illustrated a new architectural standard for planners and administrators in national, state, and other public parks.<sup>77</sup> Written primarily by Albert H. Good, this manual contained surprisingly in-depth ruminations on the trends that influenced the well-established style that park structures were famous for in the 1930s. Salomon's RDA plans were all but codified with the publication of *Park and Recreation Structures*. In the years following its release, all new NPS projects utilized *Park and Recreation Structures* to plan and design their parks.<sup>78</sup> Salomon, as a result of his enlistment as a NPS Field Organizer, had ensured that the character-building ideologies of the Boy Scouts would be a fundamental part of the recreational planning of the New Deal.

### *The Unit-based Campsite*

The primary innovation of Salomon and the NPS in the field of organized camp planning was the unit-based layout. Though historians often attribute the popular distribution of the RDAs' unique unit-based planning to the NPS, Salomon's connection to the Boy Scouts was essential in inspiring their design. In an article he wrote in 1961, Salomon said that before professional camp planning became popular, organized camp layouts "often followed Army or strictly formal patterns."<sup>79</sup> These camps treated young attendees as a singular large group, which led to a highly criticized loss in personal development



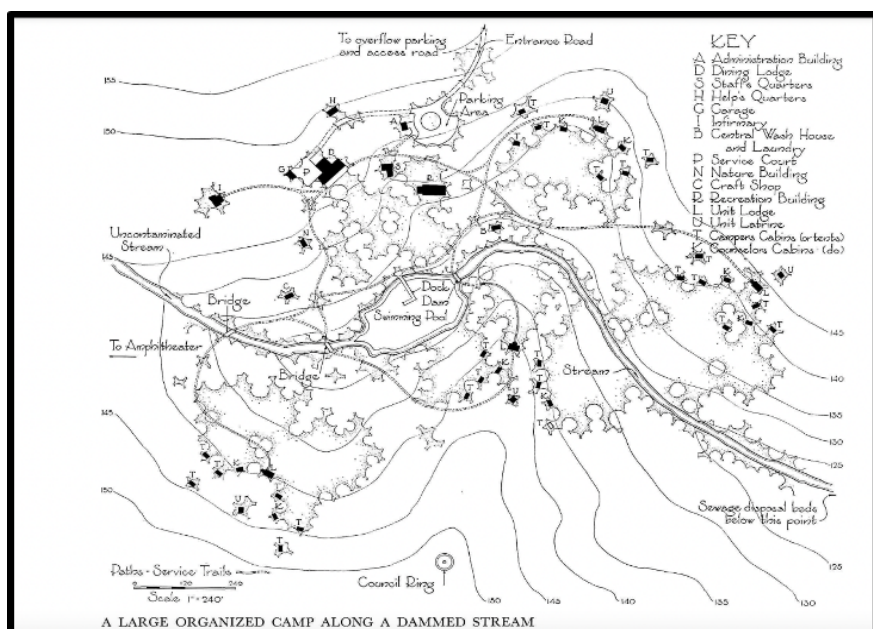


Figure 5. Typical Plan for an organized RDA camp, drafted by Julian H. Salomon and included in *Park and Recreation Structures*. This plan features all three of the planning elements discussed here. The unit-plan can be seen in the horse-shoe-like clusters of cabins located around the perimeter of the camp. The Council Ring is labeled in the center of the bottom portion of the map. “Dice-throw” planning is most easily observed with the absence of organized playfields or grassy spaces.

and leadership opportunities. In *Park and Recreation Structures*, “mass camping” was attributed to the creation of “a hardly avoidable regimentation” and “a sensation of being lost in a crowd.”<sup>80</sup> Dedicated to demonstrating new ways in organized camping, Salomon and his colleagues introduced the unit-based or “village” camp layout, which divided an organization’s campers into small groups of six to eight people, occupying distant sites spread throughout the entire campground. Each unit contained groups of cabins, arranged not in rows, but in clumps, with a unit lodge in the center. This lodge allowed for a unit’s independence from the rest of the camp, creating a space for cooking, a gathering place for small group activities, and a shelter from the elements.<sup>81</sup> This design was a direct

challenge to the strict military camp plans of the past. The NPS described the layout as a system in which “small groups, children and family are given opportunity to find themselves.”<sup>82</sup>

To attach romantic and nostalgic cultural history to this style of organized camping, *Park and Recreation Structures* offered a comparison to the “villages of certain Nomad Indians,” as the “placing of tipis acknowledged groups within a group.”<sup>83</sup> It was implied that this ancient Indian practice was revived for the RDAs to divide youth organizations into smaller collections of campers. As will be explored later, Salomon was extremely interested in Native American culture and aesthetics, and this language of “primitive” living in summer camps can be traced back to the Boy Scouts. However, a more convincing argument for the implementation of unit-based camping can be uncovered in the writings of the Scouting movement’s founding father, Lord Baden-Powell.

Baden-Powell’s *Scouting for Boys* described the use and importance of the Patrol System, or the division of Boy Scout Troops into smaller groups of six to eight boys.<sup>84</sup> In 1920, Lord Baden-Powell described this approach as “the one essential system in which Scout training differs from that of all other organizations.”<sup>85</sup> Indeed, while the Girl Scouts adopted this model when it formed as an alternative to the Boy Scouts, other youth organizations in the early twentieth century still utilized a military or mass-group style of camp arrangement.<sup>86</sup> The patrol system works so that “scouts do not feel themselves to be part of a big herd, but members of independent, responsible units.”<sup>87</sup> In an article he wrote in “The Scouter,” Baden-Powell advised troops to organize “small camps of about half a dozen patrols; each patrol in a separate tent and on separate ground.”<sup>88</sup> The very first Scout camps, such as Baden-Powell’s camp at Brownsea, were structured so that campers could work with their patrol independently from other patrols. The language used to describe the unit-plan system in the RDAs mirrors the language used by the Scouts. Salomon once wrote in an article that camps without unit-based plans had unbalanced programs, where campers were “handled as a mass and have little or no share in program planning.”<sup>89</sup> The Patrol system found a close relative in the RDAs’ new regimented unit-plan system.

Though no government officials explicitly stated that the unit-based camping approach was inspired by Scouting, Salomon offered plenty of clues that connect Scouting’s Patrol

philosophy to this “new” technique. In “Planning Camps,” Salomon stated that RDA plans were based upon the “long experience” of the Boy and Girl Scouts before describing the site-based approach, the major innovation of these park projects.<sup>90</sup> *Park and Recreation Structures* stated that the unit approach allowed for the “grouping of campers of the same age and physical ability, similar interests and experience,” which described the kind of self-selected group formations that were encouraged in the Patrol method. Indeed, this manual prescribed the ideal capacity for each unit site to be around eight, because this was the typical size of “squads or patrols” in organized youth groups.<sup>91</sup> Because Salomon, with his extensive history of work with the Boy Scouts, was credited for this new style of camp design and because he consistently discussed his site-based plans in relation to the Patrol methods of Scouting, it is clear that his work was largely inspired by his experience in the Boy Scouts.

The unit-based approach to Recreational Demonstration campsites injected a very specific Scouting philosophy into the national recreational landscape. The success of the Patrol Method in Boy Scouts was largely inspired by new ideas about masculinity in the United States. Despite the organization’s militaristic origins in the hands of Lord Baden-Powell, when the Boy Scout craze crossed the Atlantic, it distanced itself from these ties. Instead, the BSA focused its efforts on masculine character-building through its outdoor camping programs. In emphasizing leadership and skill-building, Scout Patrols offered the perfect model for a new masculinity that would allow men to remain competitive in the corporate workforce. Patrols allowed for direct and hands-on “companionship with worthy men in structured teaching environments” that could counteract the “feminine” cultural influences of other social spaces such as the home and church.<sup>92</sup> At the same time, patrols created opportunities for many boys within a troop to practice leadership among their peers.

The adoption of the unit-based campsites provides insight into the minds of the RDA planners. NPS officials made an active decision to hire Salomon and adopt design principles that were utilized by the Scouts to build character. The RDAs were created to host children of different races, genders, and ages; however, the planners chose to implement designs inspired by a masculine character-building organization. Even

if planners such as Salomon were only convinced to borrow Scouting ideologies because of the groups' general success as a leader in camping expertise, the BSA's ideas about camping as a tool to teach masculinity to young boys were inserted into the recreational landscape. The organized camping model was primarily created within the BSA as a tool to foster leadership and skill-building in youth campers (rather than as a place of vacation or military ritual) and as a way of developing masculine character within young scouts. The unit-camping approach, introduced to the National Park Service by planners such as Julian H. Salomon, codified this new technique of character-building into the national recreational landscape.

### *The Council Ring*

In a Park Service-issued pamphlet advertising the Yankee Springs RDA in Michigan, a map of the entire property shows each individual organized camping area and the various natural amenities of the area. However, because the map is drawn at such a large scale, only two major details of each camp are visible. First, it is shown that the cabins are laid out in the unique unit-camping style described above. Additionally, instead of including the location of the dining hall, swimming area, or main walking paths, the only other major detail shown in the maps is each camp's fire circle area, labeled as the Council Ring.<sup>93</sup> While campfires may seem like essential additions to any campground, council rings are a very particular feature that convey a set of ideals about camping and building character in the cultural landscape of the outdoors.

The "council ring" was devised by Ernest Thompson Seton in his publications for the Woodcraft Indians, although photographs of his suburban Windygoul campground show that he had been experimenting with the idea since at least 1908.<sup>94</sup> While campfires had been an important part of organized camps since the nineteenth century, there was rarely any reference to Native American symbolism and imagery in their programming or structure.<sup>95</sup> In contrast, Seton used the council ring as a tool to connect boys to America's past through storytelling and playing Indian. These special event spaces were designed to be level circles of low-lying seats, with additional, higher rings of seats around the first ring to accommodate all campers. Seton stated that "only the ancient sacred fire of wood has power to touch and thrill the chords of primitive

remembrance.”<sup>96</sup> For the inventor of the council ring and his followers, the fire circle was a “strictly masculine emblem,” which allowed boys to break free from the domestication of home life and school, and to tap into the “primitive” values and customs of the war dance, Indian pageantry, and a deep connection with nature.<sup>97</sup> In the center of the ring, there was an empty space, devoid of a pit or a ring of stones. While fires were essential to the council ring program, the lack of a permanent fireplace allowed the center to be accessible for dance, storytelling, theater, and song.<sup>98</sup> The activities practiced in Seton’s council rings were inaccurate stereotypes of Native American traditions, but the design and aesthetic of these places evoked a connection to an imagined masculine past, which Seton’s Woodcraft Indians could use to gain valuable skills and lessons for adulthood.

Seton spent much of the 1920s traveling the country and presenting speeches and pageants to promote Native American aesthetics, crafts, and most importantly, the council ring, to a diverse range of summer camps.<sup>99</sup> Soon, Indian symbolism was in widespread use across the United States. No organization borrowed from these ideas more completely than the group Seton helped to found, the Boy Scouts. While the YMCA utilized the council ring primarily for religious conversation and the Campfire Girls adopted a council ring that reinforced ideas of motherhood and service, the BSA kept much of Seton’s original ideas about the ability of the council ring to evoke masculinity.<sup>100</sup> When tensions grew between Seton and Scouting’s other founders in 1915, he left the Boy Scouts. Instead of centering their entire program on Indian playacting, as Seton had done, the Scouts utilized Indianness as one of many techniques to produce a “temporary resolve from capitalist urban America.”<sup>101</sup> The council ring, along with Indian-inspired crafts and tipi-building, helped to “bring white boys back to the land” so as to develop a strong manhood and a connection to the frontier past.<sup>102</sup>

Seton ensured that the council ring’s performative elements and Indian play-acting were crucial to the landscape of Scouting in the 1920s-30s, where these spaces were seen as a portal to a natural, non-industrial world. One can determine the importance of the council ring throughout the twentieth century by the cover of the 1957 *Handbook for Boys*, the official manual of the Boy Scouts, which features an image of boys

sitting around a fire with the smoke formulating into a ghostly image of an Indian chief.<sup>103</sup> These depictions were an allusion to the original Boy Scout handbook, wherein a section about the campfire marks the importance of telling Indian legends around the campfire and includes a multi-page story, “How Men Found the Great Spirit,” as an example.<sup>104</sup> Despite other innovations in BSA camps, council rings endured. For example, in the 1927 publication *Camp Site Development Plans*, one entire area of the Camp Divisional Plan is devoted to Indian craft and study, with the council ring as the centerpiece.<sup>105</sup> The physical construction of the Scouts’ council ring, with its communal orientation and a wide performance area, created a cultural space where the fire was designed not to provide warmth or aid cooking, but to transform the campground into a space of masculine character-building.

When it came time to plan the model RDA camps in the 1930s, council rings were a near-universal tradition in the Boy Scouts and most other organized camping operations. However, with the expertise and funding available to New Deal landscape architects, organized camping experts such as Salomon were able to implement idealized versions of the council ring into the publicly funded landscape. The “typical plan” for RDA council rings is especially interesting given Salomon’s early history as a renowned “Indian Guide,” who traveled the country performing Indian Lore shows for youth groups, which he began to develop as a Boy Scout. Calling himself “Soaring Eagle” and dressed to resemble a Plains Indian, Salomon performed as a stereotypical Native American at council ring ceremonies, with the goal of teaching anti-modernist messages about the romance of Indian life and of living in harmony with nature.<sup>106</sup> This line of work centered much of Salomon’s experience in the camping landscape around the council ring, ensuring that this peculiar artifact of early twentieth-century summer camps received careful consideration in the planner’s work on the RDAs.

In Salomon’s section on the council ring in *Park and Recreation Structures*, he starts by stating that “as used, it is an out-and-out revival of Indian custom,” immediately centering the Indian aesthetic as an important aspect of the fire rings.<sup>107</sup> These council rings are labeled and included in every RDA plan, though usually, they are located off the map in a distant area of the campground.<sup>108</sup> This was to ensure the ring was nestled

in a deeply wooded area, “without distracting vistas, and free of distracting influences.”<sup>109</sup> The NPS-designed council rings were built to ensure that utmost attention was given to the fire ceremonials. In a vacuum, the importance of the council ring in the RDAs appears to conflict with the unit-based campsite approach. While the unit-style campgrounds encourage focusing on the needs of the individual and the values of leadership and skill-building, the council ring places clear significance on the communal benefits of camping and on the power of storytelling, theater, and performance in the camp environment. How could the RDAs promote a small-group system where “children and family are given opportunity to find themselves” while, in the same planning manual, there is a discussion of the beauty of an entire camp “bound together by bonds of interest and appreciation around a fire?”<sup>110</sup>

In the Boy Scouts, both were utilized to transform the natural environment into a masculine character-building space. Council rings had existed alongside the patrol method in Scout Camps for decades by the time the RDAs were being constructed and were considered an essential part of the organized camping experience. Rather than cause friction between different camp organization styles, the council rings served as tools alongside patrols to integrate primitive masculinity into the camp program. NPS planners understood that campfire programs allowed youth campers to connect to the natural environment, one of the ultimate character-building goals of the RDAs. While these professional planners, unlike Boy Scout administrators and other organized camp staff, avoided direct Indian appropriation in their designs, the inclusion of BSA elements such as the council ring assisted in the creation of a gendered recreational landscape for similar kinds of character-building. The Native American connotations of communal storytelling around a fire and the location of the fire circle deep within nature allowed the NPS to provide urban youth with ideas about the connections between the environment, the primitive past, and becoming a productive and healthy member of society. Through these connections, the wilderness and the gendered primitivism of the BSA became naturalized in the landscapes of the RDAs.

#### *Dice-throw Planning*

While the unit plan and council ring were unique elements



of the RDA plans, no design choice was more influential in determining the character of the parks than Salomon's self-labeled "dice-throw" planning. In *Park and Recreation Structures*, Salomon writes that "the formal arrangements on army camp lines have lost favor, and in the most successful and admired campgrounds recently built, the buildings seem to have been plunked down."<sup>111</sup> The name comes from the idea that RDA structures appear to be organized so randomly that their locations may well have been determined by a roll of the dice. This technique had a profound impact on the layout of the RDAs, with patches of forest interspersed with open spaces for the dining hall, cabin areas, and other facilities. In essence, this created a naturalistic environment with curving paths leading between program areas and a complete lack of geometric patterns.<sup>112</sup> Especially noteworthy was the absence of formal open spaces for organized sports in the RDA plans. These planning features came together to create what architecture historian Abigail Van Slyck describes as a "manufactured wilderness." Here, planners carefully crafted a camp landscape that evoked feelings of submersion in the wild outdoors, even as camp staff maintained tight control over the health and play of youth campers.<sup>113</sup> Though the heavily wooded parklands cast shade over the aesthetics of urban life, Salomon's "dice-throw" plans were carefully designed as an antidote to modernity.

As described earlier, Boy Scout executives in the 1920s severely opposed campgrounds that lent themselves to mass camping. In 1927, the director of the BSA Department of Camping gave explicit disapproval to camp "improvements which give the appearance of a town site, summer resort, or military cantonment."<sup>114</sup> This rationale came from a core philosophy of Scouting: building masculinity required interacting with the wilderness. While the YMCA and other boys' groups operated their own summer camps, the Scouts offered a more authentic outdoor experience because their less-developed camps gave children "the full benefit of the natural advantages offered by the site."<sup>115</sup> These informal landscapes were removed from any aesthetic indications of urban America, inviting campers to imagine themselves living in the frontier past. Within this environment, Scouts were encouraged to have direct interactions with nature. The common thread that ran through the diverse amusements of summer camp was a focus on individualistic and primitive connections with the

environment, not for scientific educational purposes, but to build self-sufficiency and ruggedness.

Salomon, when designing the “typical” RDA plan, ensured that his camps followed the nature-oriented tradition set forth by the Scouts. He expressed, later in life, that “altogether too many camps, including many which I have built, are pretty civilized institutions for children placed in the woods. They’re not camps.”<sup>116</sup> To planners at the NPS, camps were to be places divorced from modernity. In a 1961 publication for *Landscape Architecture* magazine, Salomon went into great detail describing the intentional isolation that was part of the naturalistic RDA camps. In order to preserve the artificial wilderness of these sites, “undesirable views, such as adjacent highways or neighboring developments, should be screened by appropriate planting.”<sup>117</sup> Carefully planned vistas of rivers and lakes, dense forests surrounding the camp, and other calculated measures were put in place to create an imagined character-building oasis, far from industrial and urban America. If buildings were necessary in these parklands, then they would at least appear to be part of the forest itself, tossed into the woods like dice.

The decision to design children’s camps with very few open fields also originated in the desire to control the amount of modern activity that occurred in the RDAs. The Park Service diagram entitled “Locating, Developing, and Operating an Organized Camp” describes dozens of examples of ways to spend one’s time in their summer camps. While water sports, handicrafts, and nature lore are detailed at length, there is no reference to popular organized sports such as football and baseball.<sup>118</sup> This was a peculiar choice, given that most urban parks during this period were constructed with large open playfields to accommodate growing demand. The absence of organized sports and activities in the RDAs, however, was part of a larger goal to ensure campers were participating in character-building activities. Children in a well-designed campground would learn how to live like Indians and pioneers, building character through what was considered to be unstructured, natural play. A pamphlet advertising the RDAs boasted that “there are no facilities for adult recreation and children play in their simple, unguided way.”<sup>119</sup> Of course, “woodcraft” required plenty of guidance and coordination, but these activities were positioned as “natural” parts of an imagined, primitive past, one that did not need the artificial

structure of modern play.

Salomon's camps were designed to accommodate and encourage these forms of "natural" play. If there was a grassy open area, such as the playfield listed on the plan for the Pine Mountain RDA in Georgia, it was pushed to the far edge of the camp.<sup>120</sup> Otherwise, there were very few permanent activity areas. Activities such as woodworking, hiking, and canoeing were relatively new forms of leisure for the urban middle class, but they were highlighted as age-old and essential parts of the organized camp experience. Through naturalistic planning, the NPS designs favored woodcraft activities popularized in the Scouts, such as leather craft and wood carving. This promoted an ironically modern form of leisure, which was first promoted by the BSA to develop rugged masculinity. While the boys and girls constructing bow-and-arrows and canoeing around lakes in the RDAs were not enrolled in the Scout program, they *were* engaging with a landscape shaped by the ideologies of the BSA.

One could argue that without former BSA executive Salomon's leadership in the RDA project, the profound influence of the Scouts on these landscapes would never have been realized. The unit plan, council ring, and "dice throw" design techniques can be traced to decisions made by Salomon and the rest of the NPS planning team in Washington, DC. However, Salomon's role in the NPS was part of a complex process decades in the making. Salomon was hired by the Park Service in part because the type of organized camping offered in the BSA was already recognized as the most socially beneficial utilization of the nation's newly acquired public lands. More than thirty years earlier, the Boy Scouts devised a youth character-building program that linked an imagined wilderness with masculinity. By the time of the New Deal, Scouting was synonymous with character-building. Massive amounts of funding and resources were funneled into creating a landscape that would catapult the ideas of the Scouting project from the confines of the quasi-public nonprofit realm into the public landscape itself. Salomon was the final nail in the coffin, planning specific features into his RDA master plans that ensured that the Scouts' gendered conception of the environment was codified into the public landscape.

## Conclusion

Not every RDA became a Shangri-La. NPS Director Conrad Wirth wrote that “it was our intention from the beginning, even though we had no existing authority at the time, to turn these areas over to the states to add to the state park systems.”<sup>121</sup> Between 1942 and 1946, all the organized camp RDAs were transferred to the states or counties, where they were scrubbed of their NPS titles and given new names. Most former camps were quickly transferred into state park systems, such as the Chopawamsic RDA, which became the Prince William Forest Park.<sup>122</sup> Almost all the parks from the original NPS program are still accessible to the public, continuing to provide recreational opportunities to large urban centers across the country. However, time has not been kind to the organizational and physical structures of these areas. When RDA properties were gifted to the states, there was no stipulation requiring that local parks continue operating the organized camps. Many former RDAs developed relationships during the NPS years with nearby nonprofit groups, and in these camps, park facilities remained functional for many summers.

Still, the heyday of state-owned organized campgrounds ended as the onset of World War II brought most government agencies into full-time military support. As the decades passed and new leadership took over in the state parks, some organized campgrounds fell into neglect and disrepair. Today, over eighty years of exposure have taken their toll on park structures, which had not received ongoing maintenance.<sup>123</sup> While many parks continue to allow small groups to rent RDA-era cabins, other sites have been abandoned in favor of new camp facilities. In these sites, new understandings of the usefulness of wilderness were inserted into the landscape, sometimes right on top of the old campgrounds. The legacy of the RDAs reaches far beyond their physical mark on the land. *Park and Recreation Structures* helped to standardize and widely disseminate the signature NPS-Rustic architectural style of the 1920s-30s, which utilized local and natural materials to evoke “sympathy with the natural environment, and with the past.”<sup>124</sup> Many public landscapes developed in the decades after the RDA program’s conclusion utilized the naturalistic elements pioneered in the NPS’s organized camps. The designers behind the RDAs eventually left the NPS to work on notable projects around the United States, such as landscape architect Fey Welch’s famous Tanager

Lodge wilderness camp in New York.<sup>125</sup>

Julian H. Salomon had perhaps the widest influence of any former RDA planner. As the war began, Salomon was hired as the United Service Organization's Regional Executive for the eastern states. In this role, Salomon planned recreational facilities and leisure grounds for stateside servicemen.<sup>126</sup> Years later, as the country began winding down from wartime, Salomon quickly began receiving requests to design camps for a multitude of organizations. Funds were finally available to update facilities and welcome in a new era of campers. Groups such as the YMCA, the Camp Fire Girls, and the Girl Scouts published updated camp planning guides to respond to changes in camping and youth work standards and guidelines.<sup>127</sup> These new manuals were significantly influenced by the planning principles of the RDAs, and included the unit planning and naturalistic design elements popularized by the NPS. The Girl Scouts even hired Salomon to write their updated guide, *Camp Site Development*, in 1959.<sup>128</sup> Salomon went on to design professionally for several nonprofit organizations, and he claimed that he worked on a major camp in every state in the country. Suddenly, the organizations that inspired the RDAs began looking to the NPS as the official source for organized camping expertise.

For the Boy Scouts, nature was not only an escape from cultural forces such as urban vice and corporate dehumanization, but also a proving ground where a new culture of strong, independent, and industrious masculinity could be built. Capitalizing on the insecurities of middle-class families that were worried about the future success of their children, the Scouts quickly surpassed organizations such as the Protestant-focused YMCA and the more militaristic scouting alternatives. The bureaucratic structure, government connections, and unique ideologies of the BSA allowed it to become incredibly influential in public life within a decade of its foundation. While other popular youth organizations used summer camps as part of their program, the Scouts ensured that their program *was* camping. Eventually, through a new type of leisure that emphasized skill-building as well as the romanticization of an imagined frontier past, the BSA created a strong link between uncivilized wilderness and masculinity. Given the popularity of the country's nonprofit camping operations, the government chose to develop organized camps

on the sites. Character-building became an official initiative of the Park Service. Roosevelt's personal connection to the Scouts and the organization's institutional success ensured that RDA plans were predicated upon Scouting ideologies. Salomon provided the most direct connection between the government and the Scouts, planning organized campgrounds in the RDAs that mapped both the principles of the New Deal and the BSA onto dozens of the nation's submarginal (and not-so-submarginal) farmlands and forests.

It is tempting to speculate on how the gendered landscape of the RDAs impacted the way campers interacted with and conceptualized the outdoors in the future. Here, attendees were mostly underprivileged urbanites, and for many of the children, these summer camps may have been one of their first trips into "nature." However, even if these park guests kept journals of their summer camp experience, it is very unlikely these records were preserved for historical analysis. It is important not to prescribe too much importance to the effects of organizational ideologies on the behavior and beliefs of real people without first identifying concrete evidence of changed behavior. Instead, the heart of this article is an attempt to understand how ideas about the environment and its ideological purposes can be physically transferred onto the landscape. Through an investigation of the RDAs, we have seen that when parks are carefully planned and constructed, they can be shaped according to ideas about who is using these outdoor spaces, and how planners believe those spaces *should* be used. Archival research allows historians to uncover some of the complex objectives of park planners and to develop more nuanced understandings of topographies that we may have once believed were natural. In the case of the RDAs, we find that the "masculine" wilderness has a very human history. Perhaps by understanding this artificial wilderness, we can begin to identify others and build a deeper appreciation for nature, the planned environment, and the connections between them.

1. Special thanks to Professors Matthew Villeneuve and Kathryn Ciana for advising on this project, and to the archival staff at the Seton Memorial Library in Philmont Scout Ranch and at the NPS History Collection in the Harpers Ferry Center in helping to locate a variety of essential primary sources.
2. Brochure, Harpers Ferry Center Archives, 12-13.
3. Barbara M. Kirkconnell, *An Administrative History: Catoclin Mountain Park* (National Capital Region: National Park Service, 1988), 69-73.
4. Neil M. Maher, *Nature's New Deal: The Civilian Conservation Corps and the Roots of the American Environmental Movement* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 10.
5. Conrad L. Wirth, "National Aspect of Recreation," in *1937 Yearbook: Park and Recreation Progress* (Washington, DC: National Park Service, 1938), v.
6. Norman T. Newton, *Design on the Land; the Development of Landscape Architecture* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1971), 594.
7. Maher, *Nature's New Deal*, 191.
8. In this article, the Boy Scouts of America will be referred to as the BSA, the Boy Scouts, and the Scouts. These are all shorthand for the same organization.
9. Abigail A. Van Slyck, *A Manufactured Wilderness: Summer Camps and the Shaping of American Youth, 1890-1960* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), 4.
10. Maher, *Nature's New Deal*, 11-12.
11. Bonj Szczygiel and International Linear Parks Conference, "The Public Spirit of the Recreation Demonstration Area Program," in *Marrying Beauty with Utility* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993), 77.
12. H.H. Wooten, *The Land Utilization Program, 1934-1964: Origin, Development, and Present Status*, Agricultural Economic Report no. 85 (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1965), 5-6.
13. Land Utilization Projects were first administered by the Agricultural Adjustment Administration, but due to a lack of funds and a complex separation of responsibilities, the program was transferred to the Resettlement Administration in 1935 by Executive Order (Wooten, 5-6).
14. Conrad L. Wirth, *Parks, Politics, and the People* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1980), chap. 7.
15. Recreational Demonstration Area was a broad term used to denote any lands purchased by the Resettlement Administration and managed by the NPS. Alongside vacation-area RDAs, the Land Program funded highway wayside projects and extensions of existing parks, all of which were called RDAs. However, the vacation-area RDAs were the most significant part of the program, and I will only be referring to this specific type of RDA unless otherwise noted.



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18. Salomon, Julian Harris, interview by S. Herbert Evison, November 1, 1971, HFCA 1817 (NPS Oral History Collection) Series II, Subseries B: Interview Transcript #373. Harpers Ferry Center Archives, Harpers Ferry, WV, 11 (hereafter cited as Transcript, Harpers Ferry Center Archives).
19. Transcript, Harpers Ferry Center Archives, 23.
20. Brochure, Harpers Ferry Center Archives, 1.
21. Transcript, Harpers Ferry Center Archives, 24.
22. Wirth, *Parks, Politics, and the People*, ch. 7.
23. Newton, *Design on the Land*, 589.
24. Newton, *Design on the Land*, 589.
25. Sara A. Leah, "ECW Architecture at Prince William Forest Park, 1933-42," *National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form* (Prince William Forest Park, Virginia, March 25, 1988), 16.
26. *1937 Yearbook: Park and Recreation Progress* (Washington, DC: National Park Service, 1938), 40.
27. *1937 Yearbook: Park and Recreation Progress*, 40.
28. Henry B. Hogue, *Title 36 Charters: The History and Evolution of Congressional Practices*, CRS Report No. R47236 (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2013).
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31. *Handbook for Agencies Selecting Men for Emergency Conservation Work* (Washington, DC: United States Government Printing Office, 1934), 6.
32. Gail Bederman, *Manliness & Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 14.
33. Bederman, *Manliness & Civilization*, 14.
34. Bederman, *Manliness & Civilization*, 12.
35. David Macleod, *Building Character in the American Boy: The Boy Scouts, YMCA, and Their Forerunners, 1870-1920* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2004), 32.

36. Bederman, *Manliness & Civilization*, 15.
37. Frederick J. Turner, *The Significance of the Frontier in American History* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1956).
38. Turner, *The Significance of the Frontier in American History*, 9.
39. Stanley G. Hall and Theodate L. Smith, "Showing Off and Bashfulness As Phases of Self-Consciousness," *Pedagogical Seminary* 10, no. 2 (1903): 197.
40. Macleod, *Building Character in the American Boy*, 17.
41. Julian H. Salomon, "Organized Camping: Past and Present," *The Regional Review* 4, nos. 4-5 (1940).
42. Porter Sargent, *A Handbook of Summer Camps: An Annual Survey* (Boston: Wright & Potter Printing Company, 1924) 31.
43. Tim Jeal, *Baden-Powell: Founder of the Boy Scouts* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2007), 385-386.
44. Macleod, *Building Character in the American Boy*, 146.
45. Philip J. Deloria, *Playing Indian* (Chelsea, Michigan: BookCrafters, Inc., 1998), 96.
46. Ernest T. Seton, *The Gospel of the Red Man; an Indian Bible* (New York: Doubleday, Doran, 1939), 1.
47. Macleod, *Building Character in the American Boy*, 131.
48. Macleod, *Building Character in the American Boy*, 132.
49. Deloria, *Playing Indian*, 96-97.
50. Macleod, *Building Character in the American Boy*, 93.
51. Slyck, *A Manufactured Wilderness*, 188.
52. Macleod, *Building Character in the American Boy*, 93.
53. Boy Scouts of America, *Boy Scouts Handbook* (New York: Doubleday, Page & Company, 1911), 14.
54. Boy Scouts of America, *Boy Scouts Handbook*, 4.
55. Boy Scouts of America, *Boy Scouts Handbook*, 26-36.
56. Boy Scouts of America, *Boy Scouts Handbook*, 70.
57. Deloria, *Playing Indian*, 101.
58. House Committee on Education, *Twenty-Ninth Annual Report of the Boy Scouts of America 1938* (Washington, DC: United States Government Printing Office, 1939), 23.
59. Macleod, *Building Character in the American Boy*, 53.
60. Robert Baden-Powell, *Aids to Scoutmastership: A Handbook for Scoutmasters on the Theory of Scout Training* (London: William Clowes And Sons, Limited, 1919), 35.
61. Ernest T. Seton, "The Boy Scouts," in *Applied Ideal in Work With Boys* (New York: Young Men's Christian Association Press, 1910), 174.
62. Originally, Philmont was called "Philtorn Rockymountain Scoutcamp," but this was changed a few years after its creation.
63. "Philmont Program Handbook," 1950s, Online Archives, Philmont Archives, Raton, NM.
64. "Philmont Program Handbook," 1950s, Online Archives,

Philmont Archives, Raton, NM.

65. Boy Scouts of America, *Camp Site Development Plans* (New York: Boy Scouts of America, 1927), 3.

66. Van Slyck, *A Manufactured Wilderness*, 31.

67. FDR had been heavily involved in Scouting before being elected president, serving as the president of the Boy Scout Foundation of Greater New York from 1922 to 1937. His friendliness toward the movement remained throughout his administration, culminating in his active participation in the 1st National Scout Jamboree near the capitol grounds in Washington DC in 1937. (House Committee on Education, *Twenty-Ninth Annual Report of the Boy Scouts of America 1938*, 80.)

68. Solomon stated that “Mrs. Roosevelt and her representatives were pressing very hard for a female equivalent of the CCC,” but that “when we would raise questions about what the females would do in the parks, we never got more suggestions than planting flowers.” (Transcript, Harpers Ferry Center Archives, 22).

69. Albert H. Good, *Park and Recreation Structures* (Washington, DC: National Park Service, United States Department of the Interior, 1938), 118.

70. Slyck, *A Manufactured Wilderness*, 267.

71. Dick Zimmerman, *Woodcraft Camp 75th Anniversary History Book* (Culver: Woodcraft Camp, 1987), 35.

72. Lorri Ballance, “Obituary - J.H. Salomon, Landscape Planner,” *The Record*, September 11, 1987.

73. Slyck, *A Manufactured Wilderness*, 286.

74. Ballance, “Obituary - J.H. Salomon, Landscape Planner.”

75. Transcript, Harpers Ferry Center Archives, 11.

76. Julian H. Salomon and Sidney N. Shurcliff, “Digging Into the Camp David Story,” *Landscape Architecture* 69, no. 1 (1979), 37.

77. Julian H. Salomon, “Planning Camps,” *Landscape Architecture* 51, no. 4 (1961), 248.

78. Unrau and Williss, *Administrative History: Expansion of the National Park Service in the 1930s*, 126.

79. Salomon, “Planning Camps,” 248.

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82. Good, *Park and Recreation Structures*, 109.

83. Good, *Park and Recreation Structures*, 4.

84. Robert Baden-Powell, *Scouting for Boys: a Handbook for Instruction in Good Citizenship* (London: C.A. Pearson, 1915), 20.

85. Baden-Powell, *Aids to Scoutmastership*, 22.

86. YMCA Camp Mohawk, “It’s #ThrowbackThursday, and today we found this awesome map of camp from back in the day!!” Facebook post, April, 25, 2019, <https://www.facebook.com/ymcacampmohawk/posts/its-throwbackthursday-and->

today-we-found-this-awesome-map-of-camp-from-back-in-t/10156888717486885/.

87. Robert Baden-Powell, *B-P's Outlook* (United Kingdom: C. Arthur Pearson, 1941), 160.
88. Baden-Powell, *B-P's Outlook*, 160.
89. Julian H. Salomon, "Organized Camping: Past and Present," *The Regional Review* 4, nos. 4-5 (1940), 8.
90. Salomon, "Planning Camps," 248.
91. Good, *Park and Recreation Structures*, 110.
92. Jordan, *Modern Manhood*, 7.
93. *Yankee Springs Recreational Demonstration Area* (Michigan: National Park Service, 1939), 4.
94. Van Slyck, *A Manufactured Wilderness*, 184.
95. Van Slyck, *A Manufactured Wilderness*, 174.
96. Ernest T. Seton, *The Book of Woodcraft and Indian Lore* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, Page, 1912), 5.
97. Van Slyck, *A Manufactured Wilderness*, 205.
98. Van Slyck, *A Manufactured Wilderness*, 184.
99. Van Slyck, *A Manufactured Wilderness*, 189.
100. Van Slyck, *A Manufactured Wilderness*, 206.
101. Kenny Cupers, "Governing through Nature: Camps and Youth Movements in Interwar Germany and the United States," *Cultural Geographies* 15, no. 2 (2008): 191.
102. Cupers, "Governing through Nature," 191.
103. Boy Scouts of America, *Handbook for Boys* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1957).
104. Boy Scouts of America, *Boy Scouts Handbook* (New York: Doubleday, Page & Company, 1911), 161.
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106. Brochure, "Indian Story and Song: A Lecture on the Plains Indians Illustrated by Stories, Songs, and Dances," 1924, Redpath Chautauqua Collection, University of Iowa Special Collections, Iowa City, IA.
107. Good, *Park and Recreation Structures*, 4.
108. Good, *Park and Recreation Structures*, 115.
109. Good, *Park and Recreation Structures*, 147.
110. Good, *Park and Recreation Structures*, 109, 147.
111. Good, *Park and Recreation Structures*, 4.
112. Van Slyck, *A Manufactured Wilderness*, 93.
113. Van Slyck, *A Manufactured Wilderness*, 173.
114. Van Slyck, *A Manufactured Wilderness*, 20.
115. Van Slyck, *A Manufactured Wilderness*, 20.
116. Transcript, Harpers Ferry Center Archives, 11.
117. Salomon, "Planning Camps," 250.
118. Good, *Park and Recreation Structures*, 120.
119. *Recreational Demonstration Projects: As Illustrated by Chopawamsic*,

- Virginia* (United States: U.S. Department of the Interior, 1936), 16.
120. State Planning Board, "Report on Organized Camping in Georgia," in *The Park, Parkway, and Recreational Area Study* (Georgia: n.p., 1940), 7.
121. Wirth, *Parks, Politics, and the People*, ch. 7.
122. Leah, "ECW Architecture at Prince William Forest Park, 1933-42," 37-38.
123. Szczygiel, "The Public Spirit of the Recreation Demonstration Area Program," 82-83.
124. Good, *Park and Recreation Structures*, 2.
125. Transcript, Harpers Ferry Center Archives, 11.
126. Transcript, Harpers Ferry Center Archives, 47.
127. Notably, the Boy Scouts did not publish a new planning guide after the war, even as they skyrocketed above the other camping agencies in terms of membership and campgrounds.
128. Van Slyck, *A Manufactured Wilderness*, 33.

# Web(sites) of Memory

Notions of Home in AIDS Commemoration, From the  
Quilt to Instagram<sup>1</sup>

*Mary Mouton*



**Image: the National AIDS Memorial, 1987 AIDS Memorial Quilt  
DC Display Image, uploaded to flickr June 3, 2020**

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*To honor Michael's memory  
We sent this panel.*

*To give meaning to this death  
We gain our strength from you.  
To give hope to those afflicted,  
Together, we shall fight the affliction.  
To give strength to those left behind,  
We look forward to better tomorrows.*

*He was our son.  
He is all our brothers.  
Our Michael is gone.  
Try and save the others.*

*—Michael's Parents, Pat and Mayer Levy  
September 1987  
Quilt block #0052<sup>2</sup>*

Reverend Mark Mosher DeWolfe was born in 1953. On block #1118 of the NAMES Project AIDS Memorial Quilt, in the topmost and rightmost corner, there is a panel dedicated to him. The fabric is a silvery gray, but its pattern is difficult to make out. It is a repeating design, filled with swirls and spirals and something that looks almost like, but not quite like, scales. Stitched horizontally in a thin red yarn, “Rev Mark DeWolfe” is written in cursive. The writing is difficult to read against the panel’s decorative fabric, but it is legible, if you know what you are looking for. The panel is otherwise blank. On March 25, 2022, Mark Belletini posted a tribute to DeWolfe to an Instagram account called @theaidsmemorial. It is a picture of the Reverend—or rather, a picture of a picture, yellowed with age. He has blond hair, and he is wearing a dark beard and a red plastic nose and a smile for the camera. Below this image, the caption explains how DeWolfe and Belletini met—Belletini was showing DeWolfe around school—and how they came to know each other—they were lovers. Belletini tells us about his friend and how he was “charming. Handsome. Alive. Deep.” Belletini tells us about his friend’s death—“I was not right for months.” Last, he addresses



DeWolfe directly: “I am grateful I knew the heart which made you you. I love you.” Mark Mosher DeWolfe was born in 1953. He was a reverend. He was from San Francisco; he moved to Canada later in life. In 1988, DeWolfe lost his life to AIDS-related complications. At some point, someone made him a quilt panel. Later, someone posted a tribute to him to a virtual memorial.

The desire to commemorate often manifests as the desire to lift an intangible past thing from the ethereal realm of “used to be” and give it a solid form in the present. We create cemeteries so we can carve the names of loved ones into unforgetting stones, giving us a place to visit and a memory to physically encounter. We place statues of fallen soldiers in our parks and pretend that there is history congealed in their marble. There is a sense that the best way to remember something—to mark something as worth remembering—is to give it a physical form. In our fear of absence, we make our memories material.<sup>3</sup> The dawn of the internet age, in turn, gave us new forms of commemorating the past online and on social media. Because there is neither a site to go on a pilgrimage to, nor an embodied memory to confront, this new medium disrupts how we traditionally understand commemoration. Latent in this disruption are new and revolutionary ways of communicating the past.

This article examines both physical and digital memorial forms to better understand how material and virtual media shape how we communicate the past. Taking temporality and spatiality as my central analytical terms, I attempt to explore how different media allow us to locate different understandings of home and, through this, queerness, within larger movements to commemorate the HIV/AIDS crisis. The AIDS Memorial Quilt’s spatially created domesticity, which for some represented a bold interjection into a heteronormative America, was often weaponized against gay men and used to defang their politics by absorbing them into an apolitical and static domestic sphere. The Instagram account @theaidsmemorial, on the other hand, has challenged—even dissolved—spatial and temporal boundaries, in this way realizing the inclusive, politically active, and explicitly queer idea of home that the Quilt has struggled to achieve.

## Historical Background and Theoretical Contexts

Human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) is a virus that attacks the body's immune system in a way that reduces its ability to fight off infections and diseases. It is transmitted through bodily fluids such as blood, semen, vaginal fluids, or breast milk. As such, HIV is often spread through sexual contact or needle sharing. If left untreated, HIV can develop into acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS), which consists of a collection of conditions including cancers and infections caused by the diagnosed individual's weakened immune system.<sup>4</sup> There is still no cure for HIV, and for many years, a diagnosis was a death sentence. In the end, as cases rose exponentially during the eighties and nineties, many Americans and government officials chose to ignore the epidemic.<sup>5</sup>

Though many people cite the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) June 1981 report as the first published reference to the yet-unnamed HIV/AIDS virus and the beginning of the known epidemic, the disease's reported history can be traced back further to the gay newspaper the *New York Native*.<sup>6</sup> On May 18, three weeks before the CDC released its report identifying a cluster of *Pneumocystis carinii* pneumonia among five gay men, physician Lawrence D. Mass penned a piece in the *Native* dispelling rumors that "an exotic new disease had hit the gay community."<sup>7</sup> The piece, titled "Disease Rumors Largely Unfounded," qualified that while that strain of pneumonia is extremely common, it rarely poses any risk to healthy individuals. Still, it was unclear how a group of "not obviously compromised hosts" had acquired the disease and, further, why they had fallen so ill.<sup>8</sup>

It was not until the following year that the CDC approached an understanding of the newly-named condition.<sup>9</sup> The agency's September 1982 report noted the prevalence of AIDS among gay and bisexual men living in cities, lending an uneasy weight to the anxieties spoken into Mass's *New York Native* article. Though still early in the medical field's understanding of the virus, this CDC report foreshadowed the potential scale of the crisis-to-come, indicating that "incidence of AIDS [...] ha[d] roughly doubled every half year since the second half of 1979."<sup>10</sup> The epidemic was beginning to take shape.

Misinformation on how the virus is transmitted sparked fear and ultimately catalyzed the spread of HIV/AIDS. All the while, many Americans and government officials chose to ignore the epidemic specifically because it affected already

marginalized groups. In response to this devastation, activists united under the movement ACT UP (AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power) took to the streets to raise awareness of the crisis and protest the lack of governmental intervention in the face of a mounting death toll [Figure 1]. Among its political victories, ACT UP successfully pushed the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to accelerate the approval process for—and thus give people with AIDS (PWA) earlier access to—life-saving experimental drugs. ACT UP pressured CDC medical experts to expand the list of complications associated with AIDS to include issues disproportionately affecting women and economically disadvantaged PWA.<sup>11</sup> Although the 1981 *New York Native* article did not predict the coming epidemic, its existence weeks before the first CDC report foreshadowed the critical role queer activists would play in the coming years in advocating for better treatments, pushing for more research, and keeping the community informed of the newest medical advancements.



Figure 1. ACT UP protest in front of the FDA in Rockville, Md. J. Scott Applewhite, ACT UP AIDS Protest Shuts Down FDA, Rockville, USA, October 11, 1988

On September 17, 1985, President Ronald Reagan spoke the word “AIDS” for the first time to the American public, finally giving presidential acknowledgement to the condition that had been reported six years earlier.<sup>12</sup> By this point, 40,000 Americans, the majority of whom were gay men, were dead. Of this number, many were intravenous drug users; in all cases, a disproportionate number were Black and Hispanic.<sup>13</sup> Reagan was, by all accounts, grossly too late. The HIV/AIDS epidemic was marked by a nation and an administration’s shameful inaction in the face of mass casualties among its marginalized populations. The numbers tell a story; faced with tragedy, too many chose to turn away, to forget. And yet, there is much that numbers alone cannot tell us about the AIDS crisis, just as there is change that statistics alone cannot enact. Loved ones died, loved ones protested, and commemorations of the AIDS crisis worked both to enshrine and catalyze these two parallel motions: mobilization and memorialization. This article works at the intersection of these two impulses.

The NAMES Project AIDS Memorial Quilt is an ever-growing collection of handmade quilt panels that was conceived of by activist Cleve Jones in 1985 [Figure 2].<sup>14</sup> In the NAMES Project’s own words, the Quilt was created for the dual memorial and political purposes of “remember[ing] in perpetuity, the lives we lost” and “inspir[ing] new generations of activists in the fight against stigma, denial and hate.”<sup>15</sup> Each panel is voluntarily hand-sewn by friends, lovers, and family members and dedicated to someone who lost their life to AIDS-related complications.

After creation, panels are sent to the NAMES Project where they are gathered into twelve-by-twelve-foot squares alongside a collection of other panels. In many ways, the memorial is more than a quilt. It is lively and bright and often uses innovative materials that challenge the canon of traditional quilting, such as sweaters and jeans.<sup>16</sup> At the same time, it is injected with a shattering grief and anger, its hand-sewn fabric a tangible reminder that these names were loved deeply<sup>17</sup>. Measuring three-by-six feet, every panel is the size of a grave, and every favorite sweater, now carefully sewn into the Quilt, a reminder of absence. With close to 50,000 panels commemorating 105,000 lives, the Quilt is a dominating symbol of the AIDS crisis and the nation’s (non-)response to it.<sup>18</sup>



Figure 2. The AIDS Memorial Quilt displayed on the Washington Mall in 1987. Image from the National AIDS Memorial June 3, 2020

As HIV/AIDS has persisted into the twenty-first century, so too have its commemorations. On Instagram, a picture sharing platform, the account @theaidsmemorial seeks to remember the crisis virtually [Figure 3]. Between its activation on March 24, 2016 and the writing of this article in March 2023, @theaidsmemorial has amassed over 233,000 followers and is nearing its eleven thousandth post.<sup>19</sup> It typically posts three or four times a day. Each post contains a picture of someone who lost their life to AIDS-related complications, a caption written by the deceased's loved one, and the Instagram username of this loved one. Most captions include a similar array of information, including the PWA's name, birth and death dates, significance to the caption-writer, and, at the very bottom, the hashtag #whatisrememberedlives [what is remembered lives]. @theaidsmemorial's Instagram bio (the brief description at the top of the account that gives information about the account and its purpose) provides a subtitle: Stories of Love, Loss & Remembrance. Though it is not a quilt itself, this memorial is undeniably in conversation with the NAMES Project Memorial Quilt and, in turn, contains its own understanding of home as shaped by its digital medium.

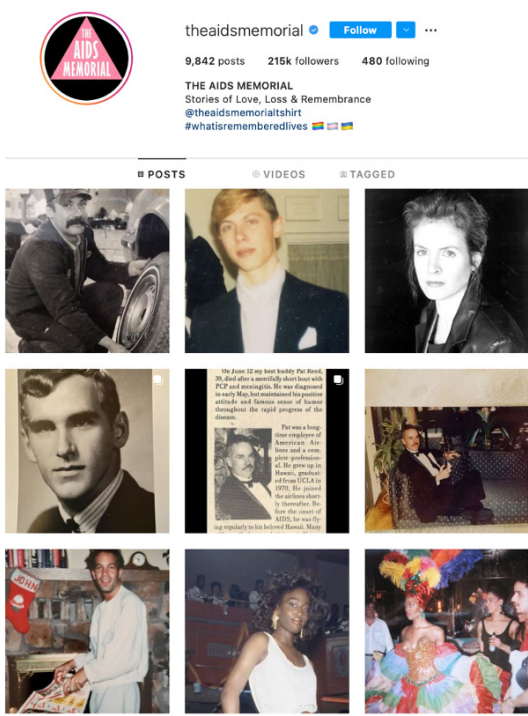


Figure 3. Image of @theaidsmemorial’s account, bio, and nine posts. Screenshot by author, February 25, 2022.

Indeed, the HIV/AIDS epidemic had—and, in many ways, still has—a complex relationship with mourning and activism, which makes this article’s investigation of these concepts in relation to commemorative media especially important. During the height of the epidemic and ACT UP’s response, many activists and scholars expressed skepticism about the act of mourning during a time of profound political crisis. Many wondered how remembrance could exist alongside political protest without distracting from or diluting the militant roar of activists. No matter its intended rhetorical force, the Quilt came to represent the epitome of passive grief in the face of mass death. Scholar of gender and sexuality Erin J. Rand pushed against too strong a commemorative impulse by characterizing it as a harmful and self-abasing response to crisis. In Rand’s view, the Quilt identified gay men as a “group that is dying



of AIDS,” thereby reducing them to a group with the agency solely to die. Rand argued that this reduction squelched the image of gay men as having a potential for activism, rhetorically condemning them “to suffering and death.”<sup>20</sup>

This tension between activism and mourning was particularly tangible during ACT UP protests, which often co-opted traditional mourning rituals. As artist David Wojnarowicz famously emblazoned on the back of his jacket: “If I die of AIDS—forget burial—just drop my body on the steps of the F.D.A.”<sup>21</sup> Private grief became public outrage as ACT UP brought death to the streets in the form of political funerals. Beginning in the early 1990s, activists marched with the ashes or bodies of people who died of AIDS-related complications, reproducing the funeral in an explicitly political context.<sup>22</sup> Instead of masking melancholia with the anger of activism, ACT UP reappropriated grief from the context of mourning and tied it to the activity of protest [Figure 4]. As ACT UP activist Peter Staley argued: “if you stop to spend a lot of time on mourning, you’ll lose the war. We prefer to skip the mourning stage and go straight to anger.”<sup>23</sup>

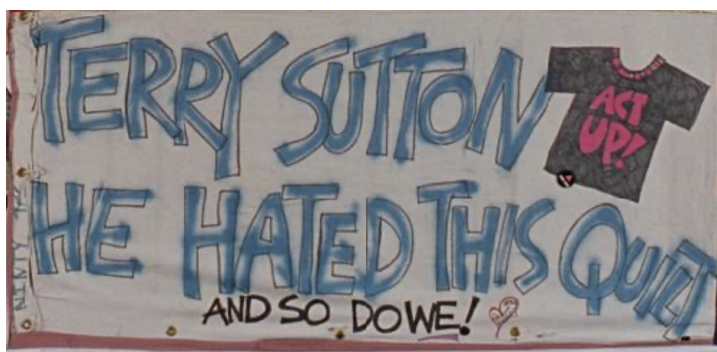


Figure 4. Detail of Quilt block #1268. “Interactive AIDS Quilt,” National AIDS Memorial, <https://www.aidsmemorial.org/interactive-aids-quilt>.

Many other activists criticized this sentiment by noting a shared need for politics and mourning during the AIDS crisis. Art historian and activist Douglas Crimp noted how mourning must necessarily exist alongside militancy, with the former becoming the latter. Recognizing the need to fight the external atrocities perpetrated by the government, Crimp argued that



a purely militant population fails to turn towards itself and reckon with its own grief, effectively performing a violence against oneself.<sup>24</sup> Scholar Eve Sedgwick's remarks on the Quilt further highlighted the fraught and often unsustainable nature of this duality between mourning and political protest. Though she noted that the Quilt "wrings me out, as it does any viewer, in a way I don't always want to be available to be wrung out," her relationship to the memorial was more complex than grief alone. Sedgwick also admitted a secondary anger at the Quilt's "nostalgic ideology and no politics, with its big, ever-growing, and sometimes obstructive niche in the ecology of gay organizing and self-formation."<sup>25</sup> In this way, the tendency to juxtapose mourning with activism was deeply fraught during the HIV/AIDS epidemic, thus highlighting the importance of keeping an eye towards the political when discussing the commemorative.

Though there is much scholarship that examines the AIDS Memorial Quilt itself, we still struggle to understand how AIDS commemoration and its complex themes of memory and activism manifest when translated online. This article seeks to bridge this gap by combining an understanding of the Quilt with new scholarship centered around digital memory. Such an approach elucidates how the meaning and politics of "home" changes as memorials move from the physical realm to the digital one. In the end, this investigation will provide a deeper understanding of both AIDS crisis commemoration and the world of digital memorials, choosing to work at the intersection between the two. As well as analyzing these sites as crucial case studies, a wealth of other primary sources offer insight into how a particular medium can either draw out or mask queer narratives. Sources such as posters, oral accounts, and written responses to the Quilt will be crucial in building an understanding of the memorial; on Instagram, comments, captions, and tagged photos will elucidate the meanings generated by the @theaidsmemorial account.<sup>26</sup>

Importantly, this article understands the term "home" to have myriad meanings that might be evoked by different actors at different times.<sup>27</sup> Much of this article explores how commemorative choices might erect a traditional American home. This home is white, monogamous, heteronormative, suburban, and nuclear. It is these things rigidly. However, this is not the only way we can understand home. Home

might be removed from its sexual, racial, geographic, and genetic prescriptions and (trans)formed in revolutionary ways. New understandings of home, for instance, might be based more on choice than inheritance. They might be queer. By focusing on home, this article recognizes not only the myriad connotations of “home,” but also that the history of the HIV/AIDS epidemic cannot be disentangled from questions of community and belonging. The history of HIV/AIDS includes the virality that spreads between people in a community, but it also contains communities coming together to protest, mourn, and protect one another. It is a history of those on the margins of, and thus unprotected by, the American homeland. To best understand the history of the HIV/AIDS epidemic, we must understand the shifting geography of inclusion and exclusion that permeates every part of how this crisis was confronted by many and ignored by many. We must, this essay believes, begin with home.

By analyzing both the Quilt and @theaidsmemorial through the lens of home, we will identify how different understandings of home are advanced in these sites, suggest how these understandings shape our relationship to the memorial and thus its efficacy as a site of memory, and, finally, explore the role digital and physical materiality plays in historical memory. The purpose of this article is not to weigh the digital against the physical, but rather to evaluate a single aspect of this commemoration as it is transformed by the different opportunities, limitations, and demands presented by the virtual sphere. In the end, this investigation will provide a deeper understanding of both AIDS commemoration and the world of digital memorials, choosing to work at the intersection between the two. Ultimately, this article will highlight how queer memory was shaped by the move online. While Americans utilized the quilting medium to suppress and condemn queer memory through calls to a spatially constructed domestic home(land), @theaidsmemorial invites a non-normative and distinctly queer memory, life, and becoming.

### **The AIDS Memorial Quilt and the Heteronormative Home**

Cleve Jones’ decision to create a quilt evoked a deep history of associations between quilts, domesticity, and female quiltmakers. With this context in mind, we can better

understand how the quilting medium connects itself to a dual sense of domesticity and political protest. In his article “The AIDS Quilt and Its Traditions,” English professor Lawrence Howe tied the AIDS Memorial Quilt to the history of quilting, helping us to understand why the Quilt’s form is so significant in shaping our understanding of it. Conceptualizing the Quilt within a tradition of American novels and their challenges to cultural conventions, he noted the complex voices that can be found in both the history of quilting and the Quilt’s meaning.<sup>28</sup> Howe referenced how both Black and white women used quilts to document “their experiences [...] as an alternative to officially authorized historical discourse,” a discourse that was often marked by the “African-American experience of legal discrimination and with women’s experience of social exclusion from the conventional power roles held by white heterosexual males.”<sup>29</sup>

One particularly potent example of the political quilt is folklorist Gladys-Marie Fry’s contested assertion that enslaved people used quilts to communicate escape plans, maps, safe houses, and other important information about the Underground Railroad.<sup>30</sup> More recently, Andrea Brower’s art installation *Soft Blockade* is a quilted barrier referencing the first Women’s Pentagon Action in 1980, during which two thousand female protesters wove the doors of the Pentagon shut to protest the precarity of life at the intersection of ecological disaster, nuclear proliferation, and entrenched sexism.<sup>31</sup> This complexity is shared by the AIDS Memorial Quilt itself, with its doubled “expression of grief and political outrage.”<sup>32</sup> As such, scholars have closely connected the AIDS Memorial Quilt to broader histories of quilting, giving precedence to its complex, layered meanings, all the while tying it to questions of identity, protest, and domestic femininity. In this way, the Quilt’s medium aligns the memorial with a rich history of political action, challenging the impulse to consider quilts as symbols of passive domesticity. In the quest to create a memorial that radically commemorates the lives of marginalized groups while simultaneously protesting the conditions that made their deaths so numerous, the Quilt was in good company.

However, not all interpretations of the Quilt have made room for a complex understanding that contains both the domestic and the political. Though she does not directly address the Quilt, American studies scholar Meredith

Raimondo explored how identity and domesticity intersect within the imagined geography of HIV/AIDS, ultimately placing mobility in opposition to the domestic home. Raimondo highlighted how a spatial understanding of “home” was used during the height of the crisis to construct “binary spaces—US/Africa, rural/urban—as sites of danger or safety.”<sup>33</sup> In her analysis, race and sexuality were used to create a “geography of danger” that positioned the white, rural, heterosexual, and maternal home as spatially distinct (and thus safe) from Africa and the sexually perverse “gay bathhouse” and “crack house”—the imagined centers of the crisis.<sup>34</sup> In this way, the maternal sphere of domesticity came to represent a way to halt mobile sexualities and protect the rural homeland from foreign threats insidiously moving in from American cities and abroad. This domestic defense from queer sexuality is perhaps best seen in “coming home to die” narratives that took hold during the late 1980s and which will be explored later in this essay. In these anecdotes, gay men living in the city returned to their familial homes at the end of their life, de-sexed and thus reaccepted into the safe and static maternal sphere.<sup>35</sup>

Developing Raimondo’s mobility-focused analysis of the AIDS crisis, communications professor Daniel C. Brouwer brought protest and home back into conversation with the Quilt by highlighting how the static home was presented as the apolitical counterpart to the politically mobile Quilt. Brouwer specifically examined the controversy surrounding the AIDS Memorial Quilt’s move from San Francisco to Atlanta in 2001, which was defined by conflicts between those who demanded that the Quilt stay in its queer homeland of San Francisco and those who believed it functioned best when engaging in “promiscuous mobility” by circulating the nation. While Brouwer did not endeavor to endorse one mode—mobility or inertness—over the other, he noted that the Quilt had always been in motion. Its move to Atlanta, therefore, must be thought of as “a political claim” and thus an affirmation of the Quilt’s continuing political significance among PWA and queer communities more broadly. As AIDS became increasingly prevalent among people, especially women, of color, the move to Atlanta represented a shift towards a center of Black life, culture, and politics; its San Francisco homeland, though still an inextricable part of the Quilt’s culture and legacy, was left behind in pursuit of the greatest need. Mobility, it seemed,

was political, whereas the Quilt's home(land) reflected a more commemorative impulse.

In noting the tension between home and political activism, Brouwer referred to the controversy among queer activists and scholars regarding whether to foreground a memorializing response to the AIDS crisis versus one of political agitation.<sup>36</sup> As Raimondo and many other gay activists, writers, and scholars argued, narratives that connect the Quilt to the home and, in turn, to a sense of safety and domesticity, fail to reckon with "the reason these men had migrated [from the home] in the first place"—home as a place of anti-gay bigotry.<sup>37</sup> This tension raises the question: if the home was so often experienced by gay men (and the queer community as a whole) as a hostile place, what should we make of the Quilt's evocations of traditional domesticity? Cleve Jones, the creator of the Quilt, argued that quilting's connection to femininity pushed back against the image of HIV/AIDS as "the product of aggressive gay male sexuality" and instead put forward "the homey image and familial associations of a warm quilt" to best appeal to a homophobic America.<sup>38</sup> While historian Christopher Capozzola characterized attempts to fit gay men into the national fabric as an inherently radical act that challenged the hegemony of the heteronormative family, many scholars reacted to this appeal to domesticity with more skepticism.<sup>39</sup>

Indeed, this connection to the domestic home was both unavoidable and, ultimately, intentional.<sup>40</sup> However, the question remains: how did quiltmakers understand the Quilt and its memorial work in connection to "home"? Moreover, given the Quilt's immense size and dominance in the landscape of AIDS crisis commemorations, how did this understanding shape how Americans viewed the Quilt and the crisis as a whole? Ultimately, the Quilt's form situated the memorial—or rather, allowed others to situate it—as a bastion of traditional family life defined against the threat of queerness. This choice had deep ramifications for the Quilt's memorial and political efficacy, linking it to traditional domesticity and, ultimately, a de-sexed and depoliticized queer mourning. In the most basic sense, the dehumanization is inherent in how Quilt blocks are identified numerically instead of by the rich lives and memories contained within their fabric. The name "Quilt block #4825" cannot capture the reality of the Quilt with its rich blues, its



Figure 5. Quilt block #4825. “Interactive AIDS Quilt,” National AIDS Memorial, accessed February 25, 2022, <https://www.aidsmemorial.org/interactive-aids-quilt>.

carefully cut lettering, or the power of the names woven into it [Figure 5]. Though this numbering was likely a practical choice to help with the Quilt’s archive and arrangement, it speaks to a fundamental challenge of the quilting medium. By flattening handmade panels into the anonymous “Quilt block #4825,” the Quilt echoes the violence of statistical data. Distinct lives are crushed under the weight of uncaring numbers that transform the individual into yet another death and yet another block in the Quilt.

Further, rhetoric around the Quilt failed to center its memorial subjects. Though predominantly a memorial for and by gay men, discussions of the Quilt often focused on the traditional family instead of PWA. In these instances, an interest in the Quilt was framed as primarily a concern for the family of someone who had died of AIDS-related complications. References to the commemorated individual’s sexuality were avoided entirely or, if mentioned, were fleeting

amidst the overarching focus on the surviving family. In the *New York Times* article “Quilters Labor for Love and Healing,” a woman making a panel for her brother reflected on the guilt she felt for “being part of a family and community that never gave her young brother... the love and acceptance he yearned for.” In response, her quilt panel was presented not as a way to remember her brother or agitate against the conditions that allowed for his death, but rather as a “vehicle” for her to “express [her] grief,” thus centering the comfort and appeasement of the heteronormative home as the Quilt’s primary objective.<sup>41</sup> This characterization reinforced traditional family structures as crucial to the path towards national healing, minimizing any tensions that might have made that same family structure inhospitable during the remembered individual’s life.

The dislocation of the mourned individual is even more overt in journalist Laurie Becklund’s 1988 article, “Quilt Stitches Together Sorrows of Loved Ones Left Behind By AIDS,” in which PWA were almost entirely written out of the Quilt’s purpose. Stephen Kolzak, a seropositive volunteer who helped lay out the Quilt during its Los Angeles visit, suggested that the Quilt is “the only thing that has found its way into the mainstream because it transcends politics. It transcends gay. It touches people’s hearts.”<sup>42</sup> Kolzak’s words reflected the belief that the Quilt had reached a larger American audience specifically because it could be divorced from its queer sexuality and politics. It could, in other words, appeal to the sympathies of a larger homophobic nation.

This focus was furthered by the article’s distinct focus not on the PWA commemorated through the Quilt but instead the mourners who might come to visit. Though Becklund mentioned the first names of two people who died of AIDS-related complications (Jim and Bob), their inclusion was surface level and failed to give any meaningful information about who they were as individuals. Even the title, “Quilt Stitches Together Sorrows of Loved Ones Left Behind by AIDS,” was worded in a way that centered mourners over the mourned. In Becklund’s telling, the Quilt was created (“stitch[e] together”) not from the lives it was made to commemorate but out of the “sorrows of loved ones left behind.” Moreover, this title framed the real tragedy not as the death of the loved one but rather as the very existence of AIDS. Loved ones were “left behind” not by the dead but rather “by AIDS,” the unseen enemy in an undeclared



war.<sup>43</sup>

Indeed, it often seems as if the Quilt's very form drew attention away from those it wished to remember and instead focused on more heteronormative family structures. In the poem "Aunt Ida Pieces a Quilt," poet Melvin Dixon followed a woman, Aunt Ida, as she created a panel for a loved one named Junie. Dixon, a Black gay man diagnosed with AIDS, wrote about life at the intersection of Blackness and queerness in poems such as "One by One" and "Heartbeats." His work was an intimate look at his own experience with illness, the loss of his partner, and the pain and terror felt by so many PWA throughout the crisis. Dixon was a radical poet of the AIDS crisis, not an obvious representative for the heteronormative home. It is interesting to note, however, how the family is centered in "Aunt Ida," pairing the softness of the Quilt with its own maternal poetry. In the poem, Aunt Ida questions why the panel will be sent away, insisting "a quilt ain't no showpiece, / it's to keep you warm," reinforcing the domestic roots of the medium.<sup>44</sup> "We need Junie here with us," Aunt Ida says, "Maxine, / she cousin May's husband's sister's people, / she having a baby and here comes winter already. / The cold cutting like knives."<sup>45</sup> By centering the role of quilts within the domestic sphere, family and, above all, maternal comfort are reinforced in connection to the Quilt through the simple recognition that quilts are traditionally made to keep family members warm through the winter, to comfort them in their mourning, and to help them hold memories. Though Dixon was not intentionally or maliciously de-centering the identities of those remembered by the Quilt, as can be seen in his larger body of work, this poem highlights how the quilting medium almost demanded certain comparisons to the traditional family while drawing attention away from queer memory, life, and politics.

To be clear, this observation is not meant to dismiss the very real and acute pain felt by family members who lost loved ones. Indeed, memorials exist for the mourners more than they do for the mourned. They are built by those who remain. It would be naive, even against the memorial objective of the Quilt, to ignore the deep grief felt by the very people for which it was created, many of whom are family members. Similarly, this critique should not imply that every recollection of a loved one must include the details of their sexuality or how they

contracted HIV, effectively “outing” them to the reader. In pointing out these tendencies within Quilt-focused literature, this article highlights a significant narrative that was formed around the AIDS Memorial Quilt and people’s interactions with it—a narrative that did not exist in a vacuum. In a country devastated by its own homophobia and ignorance, the choice to shift focus away from the gay men who were made victims of this apathy was political. The choice to dismiss the very identity that put them at risk while making them so easy to ignore was political. And the choice to repeat this erasure across countless articles, posters, and texts was absolutely deadly.

Becklund further exemplifies how the Quilt was redefined by minimizing its connection to queerness. In a media landscape quick to dismiss AIDS as a gay disease, the near-complete absence of sexuality in this article is striking. Indeed, sexuality was only directly referenced twice in the entire article: the first reference denied its relevance as a lens through which we might understand the Quilt; the second reference, which appeared in one of the final paragraphs, only acknowledged that the Quilt “was first displayed [...] as part of the National March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights” [Figure 6].<sup>46</sup> The article was equally cryptic in its indirect allusions to gay sexuality, a specter which, though unstated, indubitably informed the reader’s understanding of the article. Becklund began with a string of three vague sentences that refer to “some” people who compare the memorial’s power to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, “others” who see it as a work of folk art, and a mysterious “they” who call it the National AIDS Quilt.<sup>47</sup> By refusing to give a clear antecedent, Becklund allowed the reader to fill in the blanks for her, calling to mind the unstated queer population that was otherwise absent from the text. In turn, this indirect reference invited the reader to bring in their own biases and (mis)conceptions about queerness without having to reproduce them in the article itself. Further, words such as “some” people, “they,” and “others” further estranged the subtly evoked queer group. In this way, gay sexuality was not just absent from this article but expressly removed from it, noticeably missing and othered from the beginning. The article, just one of many, obscured the queer identities of the very people who made up the Quilt. In response to a homophobic America, the Quilt’s mourned subjects were recreated as an ambiguously defined, de-sexed,

and othered group.



Figure 6. The AIDS Memorial Quilt displayed on the Washington Mall in 1987. Image from the National AIDS Memorial, 1987 AIDS Memorial Quilt DC Display Image, uploaded to flickr June 3, 2020; accessed February 24, 2022, <https://www.flickr.com/photos/nationalaidsmemorial/49967703647/in/album-72157714564567748/>.

Building off the decentering of PWA, the Quilt and its related material presented a spatially realized and nationalist concept of home(land) that delineated who was included in normative American society and who was not. Returning to Becklund's article, the Quilt became a site of national battle and faceless American loss, thus detaching it from a specifically queer life, love, and death.

The populace contained within the Quilt's nationalism was not a wholly inclusive one, and in the end, its message exalted familial mourners as part of the proper citizenry while displacing those who protested the government's handling of the AIDS crisis. While Capozzola sees this nationalism as a radical win for gay activists and proof of a positive acceptance of queer people into the national fabric, this view is more reflective of a theoretical reality than a lived one.<sup>48</sup> For instance, we must note that while making this nationalist argument, literature about the Quilt simultaneously centered the traditional family. By minimizing and de-sexing queer life and death in discussions of the Quilt, the nationalism being portrayed takes on a more traditional and heteronormative affect. Thus, in connecting the memorial to a sense of

nationalism, the Quilt reinforced the heteronormative home's proximity to traditional understandings of American citizenry. Citizenship, however, was not extended to those who took more disruptive actions against the government. During the Sixth International Conference on AIDS in 1990, Secretary of Health and Human Services Louis Sullivan was drowned out by a group of ACT UP protesters who chanted "Shame! Shame! Shame!" over his speech. The *Los Angeles Times* decried the demonstrations as "outrageous," and Sullivan condemned them as "un-American" for allegedly infringing upon his First Amendment right to speak.<sup>49</sup>

Rhetoric surrounding PWA marked the boundaries of acceptable Americanness: gay men protesting the mass death of thousands of gay men were un-American. By dislocating protesters as outside the American citizenry, this dynamic echoes Raimondo's argument that AIDS rhetoric marked cities as outside the nation's homeland.<sup>50</sup> This externalization threatened to make gay Americans foreign to their own country, undeserving of the governmental protection they already lacked. As critic Steve Abbott understands America's "read[y] embrac[e] of the Quilt": "'We didn't like you fags and junkies when you were wild, kinky and having fun. We didn't like you when you were angry, marching and demanding rights. But now that you're dying and have joined 'nicely' like 'a family sewing circle,' we'll accept you.'"<sup>51</sup> If America was to accept its gay citizens, they had to play nice.

Calls to patriotism were carefully used to assimilate the Quilt back into the national fabric, or the figurative collection of individuals included in a sense of Americanness. In a particularly overt instance of symbolism, a NAMES Project lithograph depicts an illustration of a group of quiltmakers of all ages and races working around a table [Figure 7]. But instead of stitching a single panel, the group is creating the entire Quilt and the Washington Mall it rests upon, pulling thread through a fabric Capitol building. Even the quilting medium itself echoes this specific call to American lore, with one critical quilter lamenting, "I'm not exactly Betsy Ross."<sup>52</sup> This patriotism is perhaps most clear, however, in Becklund's repeated comparisons to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial (VVM). Echoing Susan Sontag's meditations on "the military metaphor in medicine," HIV/AIDS and, in turn, the Quilt were often entrenched in the language of war and wartime

casualty. In the very first sentence of the article, Becklund noted that “[s]ome compare [the Quilt’s] power to that of the Vietnam War Memorial,” even describing the Quilt as “the Vietnam Wall of AIDS.”<sup>53</sup> Other unnamed mourners noted that “walking among the panels is like moving through a battlefield where thousands have fallen.”<sup>54</sup> In this way, the Quilt was woven into a wartime mortuary tradition, thus positioning its dead to be mourned as a nation would its fallen soldiers.<sup>55</sup>



Figure 7. Illustration of a group of people sewing around a table designed to resemble the National Mall. Created by Steve Abeyta and Art Jagonasi, The Names Project Quilt, Washington, DC. Courtesy of ONE National Gay & Lesbian Archives, University of Southern California, Los Angeles, California.

The Quilt and its mourned subjects were made agreeable to an intolerant America through a call to patriotism and a specific evocation of war. From there, the Quilt was subtly asserted as an acceptable site of American grief through both

its patriotic connotations and its emphasis on mourners in place of the estranged PWA. It is significant to note the extent to which the Quilt's acceptance into the mainstream was predicated on the erasure of the very people it was created to celebrate and mourn. These materials provide insight into how many Americans understood the HIV/AIDS epidemic—a perverse gay disease in life and, in death, an asexual national tragedy with the ability to reach Americans through its emotional force.

While the Quilt is inherently a site of queer memory and activism, this assertion otherwise reflects how narratives about the Quilt minimize its political objectives. Raimondo and Brouwer's analysis of home as apolitical highlighted how the Quilt was perceived as a passive object to which politics can only be done through an act of uprooting or invasion. We see this framing in the phrase "comes home," which was repeatedly used to describe the Quilt's return to California, the state in which it was originally based. In Dan Lund's poster, for instance, we see a black and white image of the Quilt stretched out along the Washington Mall while the text below advertises its upcoming stay in San Diego. Across the top and in red type, the poster declares, "love comes home" [Figure 8]. Similarly, one of the most notable "coming home to die" narratives of the time was titled "When AIDS Comes Home."<sup>56</sup> The article, which follows Tom Fox and his life as a PWA, was nevertheless more focused on Fox's death and his family's grief than Fox's life, opening with a tragic account of his death before working backwards to his childhood.

The use of "home" in these phrases suggested that there was a natural resting place for the Quilt from which its mobility stole it. It followed that its return was framed as a happy and rightful conclusion to its travel. The evocation of "love" coming home goes even further, raising the question: in its absence, was the Quilt's home without love? The effect was to position mobility as something in tension with home, even something that threatens its sense of wholeness. In short, by using the phrase "comes home," the posters echo narratives that position home as contrary to a mobile and political queerness. Elaborating on these demands for a de-sexed, apolitical mourning and mourned gay population, the Quilt was stripped of its political energy and portrayed as an object largely devoid of, even incompatible with, outrage.

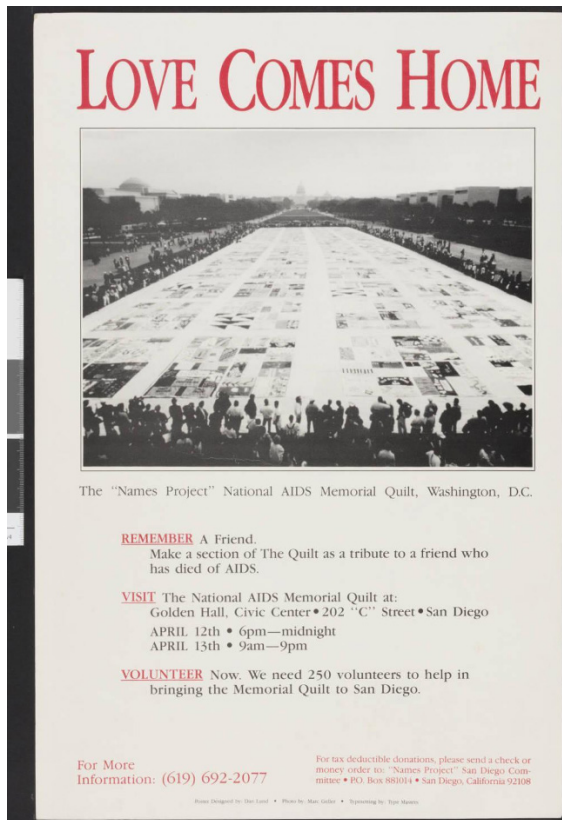


Figure 8. Love Comes Home poster advertising the Quilt. Created by Dan Lund, The “Names Project” National AIDS Memorial Quilt, Washington, DC. Courtesy of ONE National Gay & Lesbian Archives, University of Southern California, Los Angeles, California.

It is important to remember that home is an inherently political space, evoking questions of gendered dynamics, sexual expression, and the legal right to stay in place. Thanks in large part to its quilting medium and spatial organization, the Quilt was readily accepted by a heteronormative America that saw itself as the standard. In turn, this acceptance necessitated the de-sexing and depoliticization of the Quilt’s intended queerness. This article does not want to reify the mythological image of the apolitical home but rather aims to recognize that this image existed in the minds of many



Americans and informed how they interacted with the Quilt. The act of connecting the Quilt to a traditional home and citizenry allowed it to exist within the realm of (hetero) normativity, separate from the perceived politics of queer sexuality. Two things can be true at once: the Quilt was born from a rich genealogy of radical quilting with the intention of confronting America with the horrors of gay death; and its attempts to realize this goal were undermined by its engagement with heteronormative domesticity through the quilting medium. If the Quilt can be understood as the literal queering of the national fabric, that very quilting medium gave refuge to a homophobic America that bore passive witness to the deaths of countless gay men. The same domesticity that made the Quilt a bold interjection into heteronormative America was weaponized against gay men and used to weaken their activism. The Quilt was a radical call for the inclusion of gay men in the national fabric, but somewhere along the way, someone forgot to tell the rest of America.

### **Instagram as a Site for Queer Memory**

As the AIDS Memorial Quilt drew upon the familiar technology of quilting to make its argument, a revolution in technology traced a parallel path in time. The landscape of HIV/AIDS looked very different in 1983 than it did when Instagram launched in 2010.<sup>57</sup> The era of personal computing began in 1977 with the release of what *Byte* magazine called “the 1977 Trinity”: the Apple II, the PET 2001, and the TRS-80 Model I.<sup>58</sup> Although still a few years from its discovery, HIV was already in the United States.<sup>59</sup> By the birth of the smartphone in 1993, AIDS was the number one cause of death for U.S. men between the ages of twenty-five and forty-four.<sup>60</sup> The explosion of technological innovations that shaped the world as we understand it today closely corresponded with the height of the epidemic. In an era of historical precarity, technology promised to revolutionize the same world that disease threatened to topple. Given that virality in all senses did much to transform the twenty-first century, perhaps it is no wonder that this article’s exploration of digital commemoration centers around the HIV/AIDS epidemic.

Importantly, @theaidsmemorial was born in a medical landscape that was distinct from that of the Quilt, as medical advancements prolonged the lives of PWA while giving

individuals the agency to protect themselves and their loved ones from transmission. On March 20, 1987, the FDA approved azidothymidine (AZT), the first antiretroviral (ART) drug for the treatment of HIV/AIDS. Though AZT was considered a controversial drug due to its high price and extreme side effects, it represented an important victory in the history of the disease's treatment.<sup>61</sup> Since then, the treatment landscape has only grown, allowing seropositive individuals to live increasingly long and healthy lives. Although there is still no cure, advancements in medical technology have made it so that after a year of treatment, a 20-year-old patient diagnosed with HIV has a life expectancy of 78 years.<sup>62</sup> Even more, new drugs allowed individuals to limit the transmission of HIV. As a 2018 UNAIDS campaign emphasized, consistent HIV treatment effectively suppresses the virus in the immune system such that the virus can no longer be transmitted (undetectable=untransmittable [U=U]).<sup>63</sup> Further, Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP) and Post-Exposure Prophylaxis (PEP), taken before and after exposure, respectively, act as effective prevention strategies by decreasing the rate of transmission.<sup>64</sup> Despite the unequal accessibility of these revolutionary drugs across the globe and within the United States, PrEP and PEP represented a shift in how Americans interacted with the disease.<sup>65</sup> Once considered a death sentence, the possibility of living with HIV has become a reality in the United States.

More abstractly, it is important to note the social and cultural shifts that occurred between the Quilt's creation in 1987 and @theaidsmemorial's beginning in 2016. Though progress was not always linear, the early twenty-first century saw a radical shift in America's attitudes towards gay rights. In the words of political scientist Don Haider-Markel, "you can't find another issue where attitudes have shifted so rapidly."<sup>66</sup> Though moments such as the legalization of same-sex marriage by *Obergefell v. Hodges* in 2015 (just one year before @theaidsmemorial's creation) stand out as watershed events in the history of the movement, this shift can be seen in more subtle ways as well. It is now safer and more acceptable to be gay than it was during the HIV/AIDS epidemic.<sup>67</sup> This expansion of gay rights shapes @theaidsmemorial's ability to engage more openly with the queerness of its subjects. Thus, though this section will explore the formal elements that allow @theaidsmemorial to create a

more expansive and queer idea of home, the context in which it was created was indubitably distinct from that of the Quilt.

@theaidsmemorial is run by an anonymous man in Scotland known only as Stuart. Stuart describes himself as “the middleman,” simply acting as a facilitator of a “collaborative project” by taking memorials submitted to him through email and posting them to the account. His reasons for starting the account are simple yet profound. In a rare interview with *Vogue*, he remarked that the AIDS epidemic can feel like “ancient history,” so he felt a “sense of duty” to do his part in commemorating it. As he explained it: “history doesn’t record itself.”<sup>68</sup>

Scrolling through @theaidsmemorial’s Instagram feed, it is difficult not to be reminded of the Quilt. The account’s repeated squares of pictures, knitted three across, seem to stretch without end, echoing the acres of colorful panels that make up the Quilt. But though @theaidsmemorial exists within the same commemorative landscape dominated by the Quilt, it does not exist as its digital counterpart, nor is the Quilt its material antecedent. @theaidsmemorial wholly embraces a digital form, with distinct implications for its understanding of home. While the material Quilt struggles to fully embrace its queer politics, Instagram’s spatial and temporal form allows @theaidsmemorial to foster a distinctly queer and political home that actively centers gay stories and engages queer liberation as an ongoing and urgent project.

And yet, our political work is far from over as the same accusations of pedophilia and grooming levied against the gay community creep back into the mainstream. In February 2022, Texas Governor Greg Abbott issued an order defining gender-affirming care as child abuse.<sup>69</sup> One month later, Florida’s Governor Ron DeSantis signed the “Parental Rights in Education” bill, also known as “Don’t Say Gay.” This law bans teachers from discussing gender identity or sexual orientation with children between the ages of kindergarten and third grade.<sup>70</sup> From “bathroom bills” to banning trans athletes from playing sports to threats of violence at Drag Queen Story Times, gay rights—and, in particular, trans rights—are backsliding across the country. In this moment of renewed crisis, we cannot conceive of @theaidsmemorial as a retrospective site keeping memories alive while the need for militancy fades. As long as gay existence is a target of violence,

exclusion, and conservative fear mongering, the creation of queer home will remain political.

The introduction of @theaidsmemorial forces us to confront a new medium of commemoration which, in turn, acts on us in novel ways. When one cannot touch, move towards, or physically confront a site, how does it affect us? Art historian Annie Gérin presented a model for how we might understand memorials without a spatial component.<sup>71</sup> Gérin developed historian Pierre Nora's *lieux de mémoire*, or sites of memory, which argued that memory is held in "concrete sensual experience[s]"—the very experiences the digital world cannot provide.<sup>72</sup> In its place, Gérin put forward "temps de mémoire," or temporalities of memory, to show how memory is communicated temporally more than (though not instead of) spatially within the digital sphere. Temps de mémoire emphasized the internet's interactivity, which allows memorials to communicate memory not through latent proximity to a site but rather through "a virtual community's participation in the memorial activity"—commenting, posting, and otherwise participating in the memorial impulse over time.<sup>73</sup>

Developing this concept, sociologist Shanti Sumartojo illustrated digital temporalities during her investigation into how the Australian Broadcasting Corporation "live-tweeted" the one-hundredth anniversary of the Anzac landing on Gallipoli.<sup>74</sup> Sumartojo argued that the choice to treat the attack as if it was an unfolding event captured on Twitter worked to "complicat[e] the boundaries between the past and the present," even creating a past that persisted into the present.<sup>75</sup> This temporality was further echoed in sociologist Cecilia Sosa's 2014 study of how kinship manifests in Facebook-based commemorations of Argentina's "disappeared" persons. Sosa noted that the act of sharing photos of the missing creates "entangled affective linkages across time" that gave the missing new life through their continued circulation online. This digital campaign, Sosa argued, created a memory that is constantly "in the process of becoming," echoing Gérin's participatory and thus ever-changing commemorative (web)sites of memory.<sup>76</sup> In this way, we can begin to see how spatially contingent concepts express themselves in the digital world by using temporality in place of more material relationships.

With this understanding in mind, we can see how @theaidsmemorial challenges the Quilt's evocation of traditional

domesticity to explicitly include queer relationships. This is accomplished not only by centering queer subjects but, crucially, by capturing them within a matrix of interpersonal relationships. @theaidsmemorial is, at its core, driven by the complex relationships formed between the mourned individual and the mourner, as shown in the pictures' captions. As one caption posted on September 7, 2021 reads:

Raised Baptist, Erroll was a practicing Buddhist when I met him. In the hotel room at night, he'd recite his chants at his portable altar while I, with powerful speakers, sang Sarah Vaughn songs off key — each of us taking turns turning up the volume to block the other out and simultaneously attempting to influence the other. I think he'd be pleased to know that I have, love and cherish his prayer candle holder [Figure 9].<sup>77</sup>

While Erroll, the commemorated individual, is still undeniably the center of this post, the visitor is introduced to him through an anecdote shared by another. In this case, Erroll is given life through the vehicle of an intimate moment within a significant relationship. Though the person writing this caption is left anonymous, the presence of an "I" materializes this second individual, highlighting the role they played in witnessing a loved one's life and carrying on their memory.

Interpersonal relationships are also present in the account's practice of tagging the user who submitted the post in the post itself. Perhaps because those who submit to an Instagram-based memorial are likely to already have an Instagram account, nearly every image included in the memorial tags the user who submitted the tribute. The act of tagging accounts emphasizes the nature of memorials as ultimately made by and for those who remain. Further, because the tagging feature is usually used to identify people within a photograph, @theaidsmemorial explicitly identifies the living with the dead, blurring the lines between the two. This act of obscuring highlights how the dead remain among the living by shaping lives and occupying memories beyond the grave. Ultimately, @theaidsmemorial brings the private into the public sphere, much like the Quilt and its use of the quilting medium.

Unlike the Quilt, however, @theaidsmemorial is not tied to a sense of traditional domesticity. In post after post, the

viewer is confronted with a wide range of relationships that transcend, challenge, and even redefine the primacy of the heteronormative home. Visitors are confronted by posts explicitly written by lovers, childhood friends, siblings, parents, children, and more. One short but striking memorial simply reads:

James Carlin was my first boyfriend who died on Sunday, February 12, 1995. He was 27 years old. James worked for Carondelet, St. Joseph's and St. Mary's for 13 years. He was very thoughtful, caring and supportive of everyone he knew and he is greatly missed."— by Sean Brandt.<sup>78</sup>



Figure 9. Picture of Erroll J. Simpson posted to @theaidsmemorial, September 7, 2021. Screenshot by author, February 25, 2022.

@theaidsmemorial also finds space for sex and sexuality in the images themselves. By posting pictures of gay couples, often men, kissing or folded in each other's arms, the account features gay sexuality in a way that is difficult to ignore or cover up. Similarly, the account is unafraid to include overtly sexual

photographs which, in turn, challenge the de-sexed domestic sphere of the Quilt. Because @theaidsmemorial contains images and captions that are explicitly gay, the account writes queerness into the very fabric of its memorial work and, as such, into its idea of home.

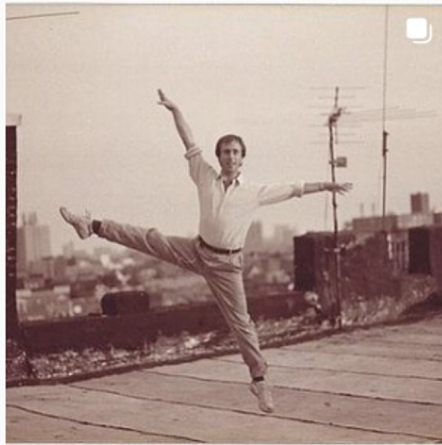


Figure 10. Picture of Timothy Scott posted to @theaidsmemorial, February 24, 2022. Screenshot by author, February 25, 2022.

@theaidsmemorial makes queerness impossible to ignore or mask with the sheen of traditional domesticity. Thus, visitors are confronted with a diversity of relationships that redefined what a site of love and family could be. By allowing gay relationships to explicitly exist alongside traditional familial ones, home is necessarily expanded beyond the restrictive domesticity embodied by the Quilt; instead of allowing gay relationships to be smothered by the blanket of American domesticity, @theaidsmemorial built a home that held more people.

Although digital, the Instagram memorial evokes a sense of physical size through the uncertain act of scrolling through the account. One might worry that @theaidsmemorial's digital nature obscures a sense of physical scale and, in doing so, limits its political force as a site commemorating mass death. Nevertheless, @theaidsmemorial succeeds in emphasizing the crisis's scale by evoking spatial and temporal limitlessness, despite its inability to reproduce the devastating physical



size of the Quilt. As of April 2023, the account had almost eleven thousand posts, a mere fraction of the Quilt's fifty thousand panels.<sup>79</sup> However, the act of scrolling through @theaidsmemorial's posts masks this size difference. If a visitor clicks on a post, they are given no sense of where they were in the stream of images. There is only the recognition that one had seen countless posts and that there were countless left. The Instagram account has an end, but it is lost in the fog of digital space, unknowingly distant and, in this way, made infinitely large. As such, the account invokes an overwhelming loss and its related outrage without the Quilt's physical presence.

This forceful scale is further emphasized by the fact that the entire digital memorial is not accessible through the act of scrolling alone. Instagram has a feature that allows accounts to post multiple images under a single post. Instead of a single image accompanied by a caption, the post becomes a slideshow through which the visitor swipes in order to see all the images. This feature is made visible on the account through an icon showing two overlapping white squares in the top right corner of the post [Figure 10]. @theaidsmemorial does not use this feature in all its posts, allowing users to see the majority of its content simply by scrolling through the account. When it does use this feature, however, the slideshow notation encourages the visitor to click on a specific post and swipe through the images. With a single symbol, the form of the memorial engages the visitor and invites them to interact with individual posts. This function turns surface-level viewing into an active and self-directed confrontation with the account's content. In turn, slideshows give the memorial a sense of depth that might otherwise have been lost if the images were all visible by scrolling through the account alone. There are panels beneath the panels, which gives @theaidsmemorial a layered dimension that increases its size in ways that are not immediately accessible to the visitor.

Beyond the spatial boundaries that limit the Quilt's reach, @theaidsmemorial collapses the imagined geography of the epidemic, as put forward by Raimondo, which positioned HIV/AIDS as distant or foreign. For many years, every post included the banner "Based in: Not shared" nestled under the account's name alongside where a location tag would traditionally go.<sup>80</sup> Clicking on this banner would give the note: "this account and many of its followers are based in different locations" [Figure

11], further reminding the visitor that the account has no geographic focus.



Figure 11. Image of @theaidsmemorial’s header, featuring the banner “Based in: Not shared.” Screenshot by author, February 25, 2022.

This dissolution of spatial boundaries gives the memorial a sense of political urgency that reaches across imagined borders of safety. Although other posts include specific location tags, which pinpoint people in cities across the nation and the world, the ever-present “not shared” refuses to give geographic specificity, and thus the possibility of distance, to the memorial. The ability to reach visitors in their own homes challenges the image of the rural, heteronormative home as safe from the spread of HIV/AIDS. No matter how rural one is or how distant the Quilt seems, a visitor can be confronted with both the scale and continuing relevance of the epidemic.

The account’s far-reaching nature brings it onto the global stage. @theaidsmemorial often tags posts from across the world, thus folding in global populations who might find the Quilt overly American in form and location.<sup>81</sup> By challenging geographic boundaries, @theaidsmemorial reinforces itself as not only a site of mourning for countless PWA, but also a reminder of the ongoing epidemic that continues to affect millions of people across the globe. By entering the home through social media, @theaidsmemorial’s posts are a reminder that HIV/AIDS has never been a distant virus—not that no one is safe, but rather that no one is given the right to forget based on their spatial situation.

Despite the fact that @theaidsmemorial is geographically undefined, it is yet unclear whether this virtuality translates to an increased reach compared to the Quilt. After all, many of the engagements explored in this text are dependent on an individual following or otherwise seeking out the account. As social media algorithms personalize and shrink our digital environments (often called “echo chambers” or “bubbles”), has @theaidsmemorial ever been able to reach a significant

audience and, in this way, integrate a larger swathe of America into its idea of home?<sup>82</sup> Although Instagram does not allow outside parties to see how many people saw an account's posts, we can consider @theaidsmemorial to be an importantly accessible site of mourning. Namely, the digital form dissolves the limitations on mobility faced by the Quilt and, in its place, creates the foundation for a memorial with a theoretically limitless reach.

Returning momentarily to the material world, we can see how the sheer size of the Quilt limits who is able to engage with it. It can be hard to grasp the Quilt's size through a description or an image alone. When it was first displayed on the National Mall in October 1987, the Quilt contained over 1,920 panels and covered an area larger than a football field.<sup>83</sup> One visitor described it as "unimaginably gigantic."<sup>84</sup> In 2020, the Quilt had grown to a 54-ton collection containing close to 50,000 panels dedicated to more than 110,000 individuals.<sup>85</sup> Continuing our all-American comparison, the Quilt's 1.5 million square feet could now cover over 26 football fields. Indeed, size is significant to the Quilt's political purpose. Rhetoricians Carole Blair and Neil Michel argued that the Quilt's "distinctly political mission was to confront people with the enormity of loss, to intensify" the overlooked pain felt by the queer community and other marginalized groups.<sup>86</sup> However, in its devastating size, the Quilt is both immobilizing and rendered immobile. How do you transport and display a textile so large that less than a quarter of it could now fit on the National Mall?<sup>87</sup> Groups can apply to display a portion of it through the National AIDS Memorial's Community Display Program, but it is an expensive and demanding process, costing \$600 (plus shipping and handling fees) per 12-by-12-foot block and requiring that the Quilt be suspended from the ceiling, not laid on the ground. The Quilt's idleness is especially significant as the demographics of HIV/AIDS have become increasingly Black, brown, and female. As the generational gap erodes the Quilt's memory from popular culture, artist and activist Andrea Bowers reveals where the textile can be found today: folded and in storage [Figure 12].

@theaidsmemorial, though imperfectly accessible given its existence on a platform based on "following" accounts, transcends the physical constraints of size faced by the Quilt and, by doing so, reaches a wide audience. In order to see the

Quilt, one had to be in a city to which the Quilt traveled, know about its visit, and then seek it out.



Figure 12. Detail of Still Life of The AIDS Memorial Quilt in Storage (Blocks 4336-4340). Created by Andrea Bowers, 2007, colored pencil on paper, 6 by 3 in. Courtesy of Susanne Vielmetter Los Angeles Projects, “The Weight of Relevance” Exhibition, <https://vielmetter.com/exhibitions/2007-05-andrea-bowers-the-weight-of-relevance>.

On Instagram, the threshold for access is infinitely lower, as there is no physical bulk paralyzing the memorial. Whether in the middle of the night or in a remote village, one can engage with @theaidsmemorial as long as one has access to the internet. Insofar as it is nowhere, the Instagram memorial is also everywhere. Even more, the culture of sharing images posted to the account allows @theaidsmemorial to reach groups outside of its immediate follower list. Because posts are submitted by other Instagram users, images are often cross-posted by one or more other accounts. The account often uses Instagram’s “Collab” feature, which makes posts appear as if they were posted by multiple accounts. This sharing mechanism allows outside users to come across @theaidsmemorial and its content through the posts of people they follow, even if they do not follow the memorial itself. @theaidsmemorial even goes beyond the Quilt in its ability to show that its memorial work is both continuous and incomplete. Daily posts continuously remind the memorial’s visitors that it is an ever-expanding memorial, as the work of commemorating AIDS-related

losses is far from over. Unconstrained by physical size, @theaidsmemorial is a digitally mobile account with a low threshold for access.

Similar to how it transcends physical size and geographic distance through the digital sphere, @theaidsmemorial allows the past and the present to touch, thus emphasizing the continued relevance of HIV/AIDS in a modern world. Unless someone is actively scrolling through @theaidsmemorial's Instagram account, one rarely encounters its posts in an explicitly memorial context. Instagram works by placing posts from followed accounts into a stream of content called a timeline. In effect, one can be scrolling through a person's timeline, looking at recent photos from friends, colleagues, and celebrities only to be met with a post from @theaidsmemorial, transforming that person from a social media user to a visitor at a memorial (or, perhaps, both at once). This digital interjection inserts the memories of PWA into a current timeline where photos taken yesterday exist alongside those taken thirty years ago. Like Sumartojo suggests, putting past content into a supposedly current timeline blurs the line between the past and the present, allowing them to happen at the same time.<sup>88</sup>



Figure 13. Picture of Daniel Paul Thomson posted to @theaidsmemorial, September 3, 2021. Screenshot by author, February 25, 2022.

We can see this temporal collapse within the posts themselves, as @theaidsmemorial purposefully posts its images on the calendar date the commemorated individual either died or was born. For instance, a commemoration to Daniel Paul Thomsen was posted on September 3, 2021, the sixtieth anniversary of the day he was born in 1961 [Figure 13]. With multiple images posted a day, the act of repeatedly conjuring past moments of life and death blurs temporal boundaries by layering significant years on top of the present one. On September 3, 2021, @theaidsmemorial's posts tied the present not only to 1961, but also to 1993, 1990, 1959, and 1942. As such, @theaidsmemorial refuses to allow HIV/AIDS to be minimized as a distant memory from the twentieth century. By presenting PWA not as temporally distant but active occupants of our present digital environment, the account gives their memories new life within a timeline of contemporary posts. Similarly, the past's ability to interject into the present emphasizes HIV/AIDS' continued relevance. Indeed, with both the Quilt and the Instagram facing an epidemic of forgetting, the digital medium's ability to dissolve spatial and temporal distance allows it to bring urgency into its commemorative work.

By disrupting the spatial and temporal boundaries found in material memorials, @theaidsmemorial creates an explicitly political home that centers its queer subjects. Though calls to domesticity were used to de-sex and depoliticize the Quilt, the Instagram memorial's digital form allows it to build an expansive understanding of home that is distinctly queer and political. Solid and singular, the Quilt was made into the rhetorical plaything of a homophobic America that hoped to skate around the devastating reality of the epidemic. The digital world, however, is slippery, resisting attempts to impose narrow or traditional definitions onto its indefinite form. In this way, @theaidsmemorial is both literally and figuratively in our hands—in a phone as well as in the collective engagement of its visitors. Visiting the Quilt, online or in person, it exists as it is—immense, lively, and rich with love, but also momentarily complete, a period at the end of a sentence. Not limited by any material form, @theaidsmemorial is a living site that exists in a state of constant redefinition and expansion, as new posts challenge the rigid structures of time and space. If @theaidsmemorial exists anywhere, it is in its potential

through time. It is a continuous sentence that is better able to capture the past and future destruction of HIV/AIDS. @theaidsmemorial does not take a breath.

### **Conclusion**

The hashtag #whatisrememberedlives appears in the caption of every @theaidsmemorial post. In the account's bio, the hashtag appears again, along with a link to a shop where one can purchase the phrase printed on a t-shirt. It can be read in two ways. In one sense, the hashtag reflects the account's commitment to memorializing people who died of AIDS-related complications, allowing the deceased to remain alive in the digital sphere as well as in the memories of its visitors. When we remember those we have lost, we give them renewed life. Interpreted another way, the phrase echoes how the account has injected a sense of magnitude and political urgency into its commemorative subjects through its limitless and ever-expanding library of posts. By breaking down spatial and temporal boundaries, @theaidsmemorial emphasizes that if we are to eliminate AIDS-related death, we may begin by recognizing the magnitude of loss experienced by the gay community, as well as the political inaction that made it so. By remembering, we create the possibility for continued life.

This article has explored how the medium of a memorial—particularly digital media—shapes how we understand notions of home in AIDS commemorations. It ultimately concludes that the AIDS Memorial Quilt's spatially understood domesticity challenged its ability to foster a politically active and queer sense of home. On the other hand, @theaidsmemorial's digitality allows it to craft an expansive, queer, and explicitly political sense of belonging that is distinct from the traditional forms put forward by the Quilt.

Intangibility, it seems, lends itself to more expansive ideas of belonging and, in this way, to more expansive histories. When the spatial and temporal limits of the physical world are removed, we open ourselves up to more unbounded understandings of the past and our relationship to it, no matter how distant it seems in time or space. Perhaps not every history can be told on Instagram, nor would every Instagram commemoration look the same, but there is still much to learn about how these sites act on us. Could a comment section change how we conceptualize the American Revolution? How



would “live-tweeting” a skirmish challenge popular narratives about the Vietnam War? Of course, history is no stranger to the digital world. As long as these platforms exist, people will use online modes to engage the past. However, as this article argues, historians must be conscious of how and when we use digital and material media. If we do not make active choices about how we want to communicate our historical knowledge, the medium we select might change our stories in unanticipated or undesirable ways. In this way, digital memorials such as @theaidsmemorial might appear to use the familiar forms of written and visual communication, all while injecting spatial and temporal ambiguity into their storytelling.

More optimistically, historians are empowered to choose their medium carefully based on how they seek to communicate historical knowledge. Though the written word appears neutral and expected within the historical discipline, there exist endless possibilities for innovation. Between the written word, podcasts, social media, and the material world, historians have a menu of options, each with their own advantages and disadvantages. As historians, we are careful about how we employ our stories, conscious of the subtle arguments we make when we exclude certain details and include others, and string events together in a particular way. We accept careful narrative construction as a tool for telling effective histories. As this project suggests, medium can be another core tool in the historian’s toolbox.

1. This essay was originally written for the College Summer Institute in the Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences under the mentorship of Professor Josephine McDonagh. It was later expanded into a senior thesis under the guidance of Professor Kathleen Belew. Thank you to the many thoughtful peers who offered their time, insight, and red ink to this project!
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3. For a more indepth exploration of physical commemoration as sites of congealed memory, see: Pierre Nora, "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire," *Representations*, no. 26 (Spring 1989), 7-24.
4. For a general understanding of HIV/AIDS, see: "About HIV/AIDS," Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, accessed June 1, 2021, <https://www.cdc.gov/hiv/basics/whatisshiv.html>.
5. This project explores how media can challenge or reinforce geographic exclusivity, calling into question how historians might understand their decision to focus on a particular country, state, or community in an increasingly digital landscape. With this in mind, it is important to note that though both memorials discussed in this article commemorate people across the globe, they disproportionately include Americans. The Quilt in particular has a connection to gay culture and the history of the HIV/AIDS epidemic within the United States. The centrality of American experiences within these archives informs this essay's focus on the history of the epidemic in the United States. However, given that HIV/AIDS is a global epidemic marked by global death, grief, and memory and, further, given the digital focus of this analysis, this article will not constrain itself to the mourners and mourned located within the United States.
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23. David Handelman, “Act Up in Anger,” *Rolling Stone*, March 8, 1990.
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# Foreword

*Bella Costanzo and Claudia Liverseed*

Since its founding in 1848, the University of Wisconsin has had a long history of exclusion and violence towards many marginalized groups. Unearthing the university's past and critically examining it can teach current generations of students and faculty valuable lessons about how the university came to be the way it is today. That is why, in this edition of *ARCHIVE*, the editorial board has decided to highlight some of the important work being done on campus history, which focuses on histories of exclusion and resistance. We selected the following article, "Radical Student Press at UW–Madison: An Analysis of *The Black Voice*, 1971–1973" in part because it showcases student work specifically on campus history that draws upon ongoing efforts at UW–Madison. Our hope is that, after you have read this piece, you are compelled to seek out further resources. With this in mind, we have compiled several additional resources related to ongoing public history work on UW–Madison's campus.

## Public History Project

In 2017, as a result of the White supremacist rally that took place in Charlottesville, North Carolina, the late Chancellor Emerita Rebecca Blank commissioned a campus-wide study group to research institutional racism at UW–Madison. The project's aim was to look at the two distinct student organizations which, between the years of 1919 and 1926, held the name "Ku Klux Klan." As a result of these findings and the recommendations of the project co-chairs, Stephen Kantrowitz and Floyd Rose, Chancellor Emerita Blank commissioned the University of Wisconsin Public History Project. The Public History Project, according to its website, was a multi-year effort to "uncover and give voice to those who experienced and challenged bigotry and exclusion on campus and who, through their courage, resilience, and actions, have made the university a better place."

In the fall of 2022, the project culminated in a physical exhibit called *Sifting & Reckoning: UW–Madison's History of Exclusion and Resistance*, which was held at the Chazen Museum

of Art. This exhibition, also viewable digitally, showcased the many histories of exclusion, violence, and resistance that had long been hidden. The exhibit focused on six primary areas of analysis: The Early Years, Student Life, In the Classroom, Housing, Athletics, and Student Activism. These focus areas told stories of discrimination and exclusion, but also highlighted the resistance, perseverance, and triumphs of marginalized students on UW–Madison’s campus.

As a result of the overwhelmingly positive reaction to *Sifting & Reckoning* and the other work of the Public History Project, the project will become a permanent fixture of UW–Madison. In early 2023, it was announced that the university will establish the Rebecca M. Blank Center for Campus History to take over the work of the project. There is still much work to be done in uncovering the history of our campus, and the Rebecca M. Blank Center for Campus History is an important step in beginning to reconcile this. For more information on the work and findings of the Public History Project, visit [www.PublicHistoryProject.wisc.edu](http://www.PublicHistoryProject.wisc.edu).

### **Teaching Indigenous Land Dispossession**

In addition to the work of the Public History Project, many faculty and students on campus have dedicated themselves to making histories of marginalized groups visible in Wisconsin, both on and off campus. For instance, Teaching Indigenous Land Dispossession, funded by a National Endowment for the Humanities Grant, is a collective of Indigenous and non-Indigenous faculty across disciplines who are working on an educational curriculum that will be implemented in over twenty-two UW–Madison courses. This project focuses on the Morrill Act of 1862, which established and funded land-grant universities, including UW–Madison, via the seizure and sale of indigenous land. This project aims to expand the knowledge of students, faculty, and community members surrounding this history, and begin conversations surrounding what it historically and presently means for students to attend and benefit from a land-grant university.

### **¡Presente!**

Another important work to highlight is ¡Presente!: Documenting Latinx History in Wisconsin through a Collaborative Digital Edition, a ten-year project that aims to

create a digital repository of primary sources surrounding Latinx communities and histories in Wisconsin. Led by professors Almita Miranda (Geography and Chican@ & Latin@ Studies Program), Diego Román (Curriculum & Instruction), Cheryl Jiménez Frei (History, UW–Eau Claire), and Andrea Arenas (Emerita in Chican@ & Latin@ Studies Program), the project is conducting oral interviews, collecting photographs, and investigating private collections, to help capture the significant contributions of Latinx community members in the state of Wisconsin.

While this information on UW–Madison public history work is by no means comprehensive, it does highlight a few current projects centering campus and Wisconsin history. We encourage you to further explore the projects we have featured, as well as broader public history work that is being done at UW–Madison, other universities, and other places that hold significance to you. Overall, the editorial board would like to commend this work to your attention—it is important not only to this journal, but also for understanding and reckoning with our past more broadly.

# Radical Student Press at UW–Madison

An Analysis of *The Black Voice*, 1971-1973

Isabella Cerda

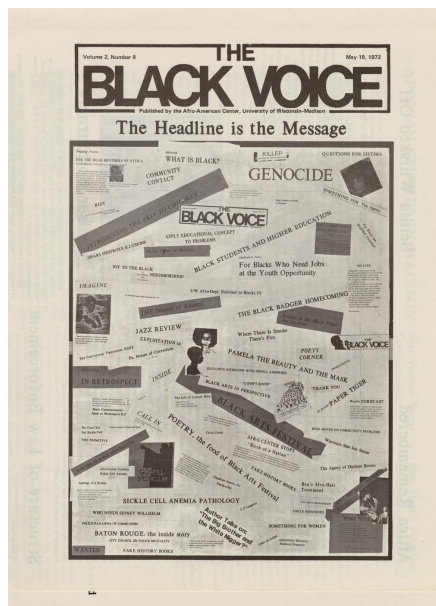


Image: “The Headline is the Message,” *The Black Voice*, Volume 2, No. 8 (19 May 1972), Courtesy of University of Wisconsin-Madison Archives, Madison, Wisconsin.

Isabella Cerda is a recent graduate of the University of Wisconsin-Madison with a BA in Journalism and a specialization in Strategic Communications. While visiting the Chazen Museum of Art’s exhibit, *Sifting and Reckoning*, she found compelling excerpts from *The Black Voice* that helped tell the story of Madison’s history of racial discrimination. Isabella is currently applying to graduate programs in London and hopes to work in the advertising industry. In her free time, she loves sifting through vintage magazines for images to use in collages and cooking with friends and family.

Since its establishment, the University of Wisconsin–Madison (UW–Madison) has continually discriminated against Black students. This history of exclusion was and is present in many aspects of campus life, including housing, student organizations, and athletics. Dating back to the early 1900s, instances of racist entertainment were rampant on campus, from minstrel shows performed in blackface to racially offensive Greek Life parties.<sup>1</sup> For instance, beginning in the 1940s, the Zeta Beta Tau fraternity hosted a Polynesian party, which became a yearly tradition into the 1980s. Public historian Kacie Lucchini Butcher wrote that these parties featured “fraternity brothers in full body blackface wearing grass skirts and sipping drinks from coconuts.”<sup>2</sup> Campus entertainment normalized racist behavior and disregarded its impact on the experiences of Black students.

As racist patterns shaped the history of the university, however, radical Black student publications, such as *The Black Voice*, created a community for Black students. Founded in 1971 and running until 1973, *The Black Voice*, a recurring newsletter, emerged at UW–Madison, as alternative media coverage erupted during the late 1960s and early 1970s due to a cultural push for radicalized politics in student-led press and political unrest that fueled activist media.<sup>3</sup> A key distinction to note is that the audience of *The Black Voice* differed from other independent UW–Madison media outlets, like *The Daily Cardinal*, allowing for the establishment of a resource built for and by the community. Furthermore, the newsletter showed solidarity with the Black Power movement. This reflects the work of media historian Jane Rhodes, who argued that the influence of the Black Power movement during this time period appealed to radicalized students and aided in the creation of Black organizations on college campuses.<sup>4</sup>

Building upon Rhodes’s work, there is space for a new examination of the campus-specific impact of Black student organizations, such as news publications, within collegiate communities. Thus, through an analysis of issues of UW–Madison’s *The Black Voice* from 1971 to 1973, I will argue that the newsletter pushed a globalized radical agenda aimed at uniting the Black community in Madison by tying the struggle for Black liberation on campus to the broader Black radical movements taking place across the country. This is seen in the newsletter’s work sharing resources, providing critiques, and

incorporating the arts, all of which centered around the needs of Black students.

### **Contextualizing the Madison Media Landscape**

The launch of *The Black Voice* was indicative of UW–Madison’s media landscape and campus culture in the early 1970s where there was a lack of Black-centric news sources. Prior to *The Black Voice*, prominent student publications in Madison reflected opposing political views. One such publication was *The Daily Cardinal*, a leading collegiate radical newspaper, and the other was the newly formed *The Badger Herald*, a conservative paper. *The Badger Herald* was founded to counter *The Daily Cardinal*’s widely supportive coverage of the Black Student Strikes of 1969.<sup>5</sup> The strikes were organized by Black students seeking reforms from the university to better serve Black individuals, such as the creation of a Black Studies Department and the admission of more students of color. As a result of the organizing efforts of Black students, the Department of Afro-American Studies (now the Department of African American Studies) was established at the university in 1970.<sup>6</sup>

A comparison between *The Black Voice* and *The Daily Cardinal* is key to demonstrating that, although other radical student publications were prevalent, they did not center the Black community and Black Radicalism, leaving space for a publication focused on Black students. *The Daily Cardinal*’s coverage of the 1969 student strikes featured stories that expressed support for the protesting students and often framed police as aggressors. This solidarity with protestors is made explicit in a statement entitled “In Support of Black Demands,” whereby the paper acknowledges the validity of Black students fighting for reform at UW–Madison. Additionally, the radical politics of the paper are apparent when it critiques the exclusionary practices of higher education and the consequences of institutionalized racism for Black students, stating, “they are forced to be submerged in a white middle class education, to be channeled as token negroes into positions that will serve the dominant American institutions that oppress so brutally the majority of Blacks in this country.”<sup>7</sup> By recognizing the failure of higher education to adequately respond to the needs of Black students and the consequences this leads to, *The Daily Cardinal* provided support for the

Black community's cause. Another issue of *The Daily Cardinal* released during the strikes demonstrates radical action through an advertisement featuring a list of teaching assistants who volunteered to tutor students who fell behind on their studies due to their participation in the strikes.<sup>8</sup> This act of community organizing to help those protesting for institutional reform was reflective of radical values. By publishing this advertisement, *The Daily Cardinal* solidified its radical leaning through a supportive stance on student protest and political reform on campus.

This coverage of the student strikes provides evidence that *The Daily Cardinal* was a radical news outlet. However, the primary audience of the paper was not Black students. Thus, while expressing support, the paper still left out a significant portion of the sentiment of Black students and did not solely serve to uplift the Black community or deeply discuss political discourse about race. Furthermore, after the strike left the sphere of current events, *The Daily Cardinal* did not continue to feature news coverage pertaining to Black causes as extensively as it did during the strikes. This left a need for radical media that centered discussion of the Black experience and created a forum for nuanced critiques and for the exploration of news, activities, and events pertaining specifically to the Black community.

While *The Badger Herald* was hostile to (and *The Daily Cardinal* was supportive of) radical ideas, neither publication was targeted toward Black students. This created an opportunity for Black media on campus to advise students about the reality of life at UW–Madison, highlight Black culture, and explore community efforts to combat institutionalized racism. For example, *The Black Student at the University of Wisconsin–Madison* was a booklet published in 1970 by Black students to provide prospective students with resources to succeed, connect with peers, and understand the university culture from an honest perspective.<sup>9</sup> This booklet differed from *The Black Voice* in that it was not a recurring publication and, while written by undergraduates, it was aimed at high school students. *The Black Voice*, then, took on the role of a continuously published resource for community members.

### **Introducing Black Radicalism and *The Black Voice***

Before introducing the analysis of *The Black Voice*, it is crucial



to define Black Radicalism. While radical ideology is built on the basis of restructuring social and political systems through revolution, Black Radicalism makes this idea specific to Black experiences. By encouraging the creation of alternative systems and resources outside of the governmental, economic, and social systems that have historically perpetuated oppression, Black Radicalism emphasizes community efforts to achieve liberation by dismantling the capitalist framework.<sup>10</sup> An example of how this ideology manifested into actualized social projects is the community survival programs started by the Black Panther Party (BPP). The group served the community in ways the government did not, aiding in the advancement of healthcare, safety, and education. Notably, they organized the Free Breakfast for Children Program, as national branches of the group provided students with a nutritious meal before heading off to school in low-income areas. Garnering national and international attention, the program demonstrated successful community-based mutual-aid outside of government intervention in order to combat the commodification of food in capitalist systems.<sup>11</sup> While this one example provides a brief look at the goals and outcomes of Black radical ideology, it is relevant to the values of *The Black Voice*, which represented the sentiments of many Black students in the collective effort to create resources for their communities to fill the void left by the lack of institutional support.

With Black Radicalism defined, the influence of the ideology can be seen in the goals and political alignment of the publication, which were featured in the first issue of the newsletter. Published on February 5, 1971, the issue opens with a declaration of *The Black Voice's* aim to connect Black students with one another and serve as a forum for constructive discussion of ideas, politics, and reflections pertaining to a deeper analysis of the Black experience, on campus and beyond. The goal of the newsletter was tied to Black Radicalism as students worked together to create a resource that existed solely to serve the Black community, outside of the programs offered by the university. The first column of this newsletter, entitled "A Sense of Direction," introduced the publication's values, stating "The Black Voice was born as a result of the Common Recognition of a gap in the communication nexus among Black students."<sup>12</sup> This line indicates *The Black Voice's* aim to connect members of the Black

community at UW–Madison and implies that, prior to this publication, other forms of campus communication had not yet served this purpose. Furthermore, this column stated that *The Black Voice* would be published bi-monthly due to budget constraints. However, archival records show it was published on a more sporadic basis with some months having two issues and other months being skipped or just having one issue.



Figure 1. The cover of Volume 2, Number 2 of *The Black Voice*. The image contains a quote from Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Social Contract*: "Man is born free and everywhere he is in chains." This is accompanied by photos of prominent Black activists with chains around their necks that connect to an image of the Pentagon and the U.S. Capitol building. The cover also includes a list of community resources, a weather report, and an article on "Black Badger Homecoming." "Man is born free and everywhere he is in chains," *The Black Voice*, Volume 2, No. 2 (19 November, 1971). Courtesy of University of Wisconsin-Madison Archives, Madison, Wisconsin.

## **Campus Critiques and Cultural Celebrations**

Throughout its publication, *The Black Voice* regularly discussed student life at UW–Madison through a highly critical lens that sheds light on the differing experiences of Black students compared to their white peers. For example, an issue from the second volume featured a piece titled “The Black Badger Homecoming,” which details the way that many Black students did not view UW–Madison as a place deserving of celebration. It goes on to explain that the Black community did not see the institution through “rose-colored glasses” and, as the university often overlooked Black students, it was not worthy of uncritical support. Instead, the writer encourages readers to turn the celebratory mood on campus toward the achievements of the Black student community and the strengthening of bonds between Black peers.<sup>13</sup> This demonstrates a call from *The Black Voice* for active engagement within the community to stand against institutionally perpetuated oppression through community-based activities. These activities, the author argues, should create safe spaces for Black students at predominantly white institutions (PWIs), tying back to the goals of Black Radicalism.

This critique of white-centric celebrations pertaining to Homecoming at UW–Madison was manifested in community action, publicized by *The Black Voice*, through plans for the first official celebration of Black Homecoming. The third volume of *The Black Voice* features an article called “Black Homecoming 1972,” which detailed plans for Homecoming events, specifically for the Black community, such as a Black homecoming queen, blues performances, and a parade.<sup>14</sup> This event, which came a year after the aforementioned article explaining why Black students felt excluded from the homecoming spirit, demonstrates a way the community came together to reclaim the meaning of homecoming at UW–Madison as a celebration of Black culture. *The Black Voice* started a conversation about the exclusionary history of homecoming celebrations that surely contributed to this subsequent celebration and marketed the event to students in the issue.

Another way *The Black Voice* celebrated community and Black culture was through a focus on the arts—on campus and in the broader art world. Throughout its run, *The Black Voice*

consistently featured poetry pertaining to the Black experience. Poems were often found on the last page of the publication in addition to upcoming events and coverage of performances, festivals, and fairs. One recurring artistic event that appeared throughout the three years of *The Black Voice*'s publication was the Black Arts Festival, which began in 1971. The first issue of *The Black Voice* dedicated a column to information about artists and events at the upcoming festival.<sup>15</sup> The second volume of *The Black Voice*, published in 1972, dedicated a significant portion of coverage to the festival, music, and Black artists. For example, the fourth issue, published on January 28, 1972, announced the second annual Black Arts Festival, produced a spotlight for local Black musicians, and included a detailed schedule of events for the festival.<sup>16</sup> A large portion of this issue served as publicity for the festival, framing it as a celebration of Black arts, and aimed to get students excited about the festival while exploring the influence of Black culture on music and other artistic mediums. Coverage continues in the next issue, from February 25, 1972, which featured a cover page filled with poems from acclaimed Black writers who presented and discussed their work in front of 500 attendants, demonstrating the popularity of the event.<sup>17</sup> In 1973, another article, titled "The Black Arts Festival Rocks Madison," revisited coverage of the Black Arts Festival.<sup>18</sup> The article detailed the festival's events, theme, and goals to celebrate and educate people about Black culture in order to generate excitement around the festival and call the Black community to attend. Furthermore, mentions of the Black Arts Festival became more detailed each year and schedules became more packed, indicating that the event rose in popularity and successfully created a space for art to be appreciated by the Black community and other student allies. Thus, *The Black Voice* dedicated space to garnering traction for the event, which encouraged the community to attend, learn, and meet with leaders in the art industry.

### **Building Community: *The Black Voice* and Broader Movements**

*The Black Voice*'s efforts to promote community outside of systems and traditions put in place by the university reflect a nationwide pattern among Black students, as many other colleges created similar publications.<sup>19</sup> This trend stemmed from the sociopolitical context of the 1960s and 1970s and the

influence of the Black Power movement. Black Power expanded on the principles of the Civil Rights Movement in radical ways and demonstrated a shift from more moderate political theory to a radical emphasis on identity, politics, and cultural pride.<sup>20</sup> Furthermore, the main values of this sub-movement reflected a desire for community and change outside of the oppressive systems of the U.S., with an emphasis on the establishment of community-based mutual-aid initiatives. These values aided in the rising popularity of the Black Power movement, and subsequently, the radical press among Black youth.<sup>21</sup>

Additionally, the Black Power movement, along with other radical movements, such as Gay Liberation, often reflected the values of a trending youth culture of dissatisfaction with ongoing political turmoil in the U.S. during the 1960s and 1970s.<sup>22</sup> This pattern ties to higher education and the Black student press as more Black students were accepted into Predominantly White Institutions, and radical papers reflecting the values of the Black Power movement emerged on college campuses. This trend was assisted by the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Higher Education Act of 1965, and affirmative action, all of which allowed for a significant increase in the inclusion of Black students at PWIs.<sup>23</sup> In turn, the growing number of Black students could facilitate the creation of a community, mobilizing and expressing themselves through student-run press outlets at PWIs. Furthermore, the invention of photo offset printing made printing more affordable, which meant that the creation of newspapers became easier.<sup>24</sup> This helped the dissemination of the radical press, and college students were able to create their own alternative papers without financial constraints.

In the first issue of *The Black Voice*, the coverage demonstrated the newsletter's political allegiance to the values of the Black Power movement and Black radical politics. For example, a column of the newsletter, entitled "On Huey," featured a glimpse into the background and work of Huey P. Newton, one of the founders of the Black Panther party, as he was set to speak in Madison. A neighboring column praised Newton's speech at the Revolutionary People's Convention the previous year.<sup>25</sup> According to the communication scholar Michael X. Delli Carpini, some of the political foundations of the Black Panther party were "the self-determination espoused by the Black Power movement and the more generalized

cultural and political radicalism of the New Left.”<sup>26</sup> Thus, the fact that *The Black Voice* praised a prominent leader of the Black Panther Party means that there is reason to associate the values of the newsletter with the radical-left politics of the Black Power movement. More concretely, the latter article, entitled “A Report Revolutionary People’s Convention in D.C.,” critiqued liberals and white radicals as obstacles to revolutionary change, further emphasizing the distinction of Black Radicalism and solidifying the newsletter’s political stance.<sup>27</sup>

Ironically, another instance where *The Black Voice*’s allegiance to radical ideology is evident is in an article titled “Liberalism.” Situated in the second issue of the newsletter, it expanded on the precedent laid out by the first, offering ties to radicalism as an extension of the Black Power movement. The author opened by stating that “in building a revolutionary consciousness, it is important to reexamine the prevailing political concepts from a radical perspective.” By making this claim, *The Black Voice* explicitly sided with radical politics while positioning the article as a left-leaning critique of liberalism. This, in turn, continued to demonstrate how *The Black Voice* served as a resource for Black radical debates and political discourse. The text goes on to criticize liberal ideology as a passive outlook that centers the individual in place of a collective group, and it calls out people who claim to be radical, but whose actions only meet liberal standards of revolutionary participation.<sup>28</sup> The distinction made by the newsletter is that when liberalism centers the individual, it stands in contrast to the community-centered action that is central to radical ideology. This allegiance to radicalism is prevalent throughout *The Black Voice*, reflecting the values of leaders of the Black Power movement.

Another example of content that aligned with the broader Black Power movement is found in the last issue of *The Black Voice* in a piece titled “The Multi Cultural-Center Kills Three Birds with One Stone.” The author of this article was Kwame Salter Jr., a doctoral student at the university and the director of the Afro-American Community Service Center (AACSC), which is frequently referenced in the newsletter as a space for social and political organization. In this article, Salter slammed the UW–Madison Board of Regents for settling on the Hale Resolution, which removed university support for individualized spaces in favor of a multicultural approach that

ultimately clumped minority groups at the university together.<sup>29</sup> This resolution was reached as more students of color, particularly Indigenous and Latinx, were being admitted to the university and began pushing the school to establish cultural centers for them, as they had for Black students in the form of the AACSC on campus. In the text, Salter argued that creating a multicultural center, under the liberal guise of desegregation, deprived minority groups of spaces set aside for specific community gathering and erased unique cultural expressions. Furthermore, Salter explained that promoting multiculturalism as desegregation was not accurate because anyone, regardless of race, could enter the AACSC if they chose.<sup>30</sup> This argument ties to Black Power, as the movement highlighted the importance of organizing outside of institutions through creating Black spaces that nurtured solidarity and cultural pride.<sup>31</sup> Thus, Salter's editorial upheld *The Black Voice's* roots in Black Power and community organizing, providing evidence for the prevalence of these values throughout its publication.

In addition to aligning with the politics of the Black Power movement, *The Black Voice* demonstrated its editors' efforts to unite the Black community while simultaneously emphasizing other social movements through a global, intersectional perspective. Throughout the volumes of *The Black Voice*, articles, letters, resources, and calls to action show that the newsletter was interested in understanding how the systems that perpetuated Black oppression, such as colonialism and imperialism, impacted other marginalized groups in the U.S. and abroad. The efforts of *The Black Voice* to unite the Black community while simultaneously standing for the liberation of other groups was demonstrated in its third issue from 1971, in an article entitled "Exposing Oppression Elsewhere." The issue was dedicated to understanding and showing support for global movements for freedom happening elsewhere, such as Palestine and Ethiopia. Additionally, the editorial in this issue explained ways the U.S. was contributing to the exploitation of Vietnamese people during the Vietnam War. The editorial condemned the war, and tied its argument to Black liberation, stating, "the enemy is the same wherever we find oppression: it is International Capitalism and all its defenders."<sup>32</sup> This refers to the perpetuation of oppressive systems, specifically calling out the complacency of American society, which was impacting the liberties and freedom of all people of color. It also returns



to radicalized politics through expressing support for revolution and the underlying principles of Marxist, Anti-Capitalist theory that were typically valued by *The Black Voice* in its pursuit of solidarity.

However, while there was a radical message recurring throughout *The Black Voice*, the newsletter did not exclude other opinions. For example, returning to the “Sense of Direction” column, *The Black Voice* stated that it valued “truth/revolution” above all and intended to unite the community, but that it also invited critical discussion from differing political standpoints.<sup>33</sup> The introduction of these ideologies and values is important for understanding the recurring discourse of the newsletter.

To expand on the previous idea, one important note demonstrated by *The Black Voice* is that no movement is monolithic. By that logic, not every member of the Black community in Madison, or on other college campuses, agreed with the radical politics inspired by the Black Power movement. An example of this distinction is evident in *The Black Voice*’s second issue of the first volume, as the “Letters to Staff” section reflected differing responses to the first issue. The first letter was from Oscar Ronald Dathrone, a professor of African Studies at UW–Madison who praised the newsletter for giving a voice to Black students and residents of Madison. The second letter was from an individual named Yamul whose identity was not elaborated on. Yamul stated support for *The Black Voice* but cautioned that the newsletter’s political ideologies could be met with an unenthusiastic response from many members of the Black community. Yamul suggested focusing on strengthening the radical Black student community, rather than attempting to call in members who do not identify with these political views.<sup>34</sup> Nevertheless, the idea of some controversy surrounding the politics of *The Black Voice* within the community is important to acknowledge so as to avoid generalizing about Black students during this time. While these reviews serve as reminders that there is always division within social and political movements, they do not discredit *The Black Voice* as a valuable contribution to news pertaining to the Black community, its acknowledgment of differing views, and its service as a safe space for debates among peers.

### **Conclusion**

Through a close reading of each issue of *The Black Voice*,

[illegible]

Figure 2. The final page of *The Black Voice* Volume 3, Number 7, which contains an article about the upcoming 3rd annual Black Arts Festival. The page also features images and descriptions of the groups scheduled to perform. “Into Our Own,” *The Black Voice*, Volume 3, No. 7 (27 April 1973), Courtesy of University of Wisconsin-Madison Archives. Madison, Wisconsin.

exemplifies *The Black Voice's* aim for solidarity among all members of oppressed communities. In addition, the critiques of UW–Madison provide insights into the ways that the institution excluded the Black community and the ways that

Black students chose to reclaim their experience. Lastly, *The Black Voice* continuously highlighted the work of Black artists, musicians, and writers as leaders in the Black community and encouraged students to support them at the Black Arts Festival.

The importance of *The Black Voice* is not just in the past. While *The Black Voice* started as a print publication that published its last issue in 1973, it was revived by UW–Madison student Jordan Gaines in 2015 as an online platform.<sup>35</sup> In its current state, *The Black Voice* has evolved into a student group and an interactive tool for community building. As seen on the organization’s Instagram page, recent posts promote events such as Paint and Poetry and an open mic night in partnership with the Beta Omicron Chapter of Kappa Alpha Psi, a Black coed Fraternity. Staying true to the roots of *The Black Voice*, spotlights on Black stylists and designers are also featured on Instagram, mirroring the original newsletter’s commitment to highlighting Black changemakers. The continuation and evolution of the newsletter provide evidence of its lasting legacy on campus. *The Black Voice* has continually emphasized community creation through a radical perspective and presented arguments that remain relevant today. As students continue to hold the university accountable by bringing attention to UW-Madison’s histories of racism and collaborative pushes for change, *The Black Voice*’s lasting impact on campus history demonstrates the importance of students demanding to be heard.

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## Editors' Biographies

**Madeline McGlone** is a graduating senior majoring in History and Environmental Studies. Her primary area of interest is American environmental history. She recently completed her senior thesis examining the founding intentions of the University of Wisconsin Arboretum, an outdoor laboratory and natural area that was important to the development of the field of restoration ecology. Outside of academics, she adores her job as a university tour guide. She also enjoys cooking and spending time outside. After graduation, she plans to take a gap year to travel and work before pursuing further schooling.

**Reilly Coon** is a graduating senior majoring in History, Gender and Women's Studies, and Political Science, with a certificate in African Studies. Their historical interests include colonialism as it relates to Christianity and gender, with specific focuses on the Rwandan genocide and international law. Reilly's senior thesis focuses on the genocide trial of Pauline Nyiramasuhuko and the ways gendered biases underscored narratives at the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda. Outside of academics, Reilly enjoys paddle sports, learning to play guitar and hiking. After graduation, they plan to take a few gap years to travel before applying to graduate school for Educational Policy with a focus on Higher Education Administration.

**Bella Costanzo** is a graduating senior majoring in History and Political Science with a certificate in Public Policy. Her academic interests include analyzing and understanding modern political problems through a historic lens, specifically the United States' impact on modern international politics. Her professional interests include utilizing current policy to preserve historic places, which are important in telling underrepresented histories. Outside of school and work, Bella enjoys cooking, thrifting, and traveling.

**Sophia Halverson** is a graduating senior majoring in History, English, and International Studies, with certificates in European Studies, Art History, and Folklore. Her primary area of study is nineteenth and early-twentieth century European History, particularly that of the United Kingdom, Ireland, France, Germany,

and Russia. She is writing a creative writing thesis this semester. Outside of academics, Sophia enjoys reading, writing, and taking long walks outside. Following graduation, Sophia will pursue a Research Master's in History at the University of Utrecht in the Netherlands.

**Thomas Harb** is a sophomore studying Linguistics and Anthropology, with a certificate in Folklore. Although he is not pursuing a degree in History, it remains one of his primary academic interests, especially the interface between History and other disciplines. His other interests are Northern European languages and folklore, and Middle Eastern religions. He is currently working on a research project on the phonology of different types of Spanish-speakers. When not doing homework, he enjoys watching TV shows and playing in the Russian Folk Orchestra.

**Danielle Lennon** is a graduating senior majoring in History and Psychology, with a certificate in Southeast Asian Studies. Her historical interests include the history of psychology, the Vietnam Wars, and the long-term impacts of Cold War policy. Her senior thesis focuses on the history of PTSD diagnosis and treatment, comparing the US medical model to the use of religion and art to comprehend and treat trauma within Cambodian refugee communities. Outside of academics, Danielle enjoys watching documentaries, hiking on the Ice Age trails, and cooking. Following graduation, Danielle hopes to continue her research in psychology as a research coordinator before returning to school for a graduate degree in Social Work.

**Claudia Liverseed** is a sophomore majoring in English and Gender and Women's Studies with a certificate in History. Claudia currently works on two different research projects that explore UW-Madison's contributions to Native American dispossession. More broadly, Claudia's other historical interests include American social movements and inequities from the mid-nineteenth century onward. Beyond academics, Claudia supports community engaged student organizations through working at the Morgridge Center for Public Service and works for the Business Engagement team for UW's Online Undergraduate Degree program. Claudia enjoys cooking vegetarian food, reading lots of books, and practicing jiu jitsu.



**Zhengzai “Charles” Pei** is a junior majoring in History and Political Science, with a certificate in East Asia Studies. His primary area of interest is the history of crime in contemporary China. Charles is currently working on his senior thesis, which explores the origin and impact of organized crime in China’s neoliberal era. Charles carries out oral history interviews of those who participated in the illicit enterprise and wants to be a historian who knows the streets.

**Kelley Schlise** is a graduating senior majoring in English and French, with a certificate in History. Her primary academic interest is literary modernism, and her recently completed senior honors thesis in English Literature focuses on the aesthetics of walking in James Joyce’s novels *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* and *Ulysses*. When she is not at the library, Kelley can be found going on long walks around Madison or bartending. Next year, she plans to teach English to secondary school students in Reims, France.

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