After Eden:

Religion and Labor in the American West, 1868-1914

by

Brennan L. Keegan

Graduate Program in Religion
Duke University

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Robert Orsi

Dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate Program in Religion in the Graduate School of Duke University

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ABSTRACT

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Abstract

Variously romanticized as the repository of American Protestantism, free market capitalism, and self-sufficient individualism, or defined by material actions of conquest and colonization, the history of the Rocky Mountain West is a complicated constellation of myth and reality. This dissertation evaluates the efforts of three religious communities to negotiate a place within that constellation. Northern Arapaho wage laborers in central Wyoming, Mormon merchants in Salt Lake City, Utah, and Roman Catholic hard-rock miners in Butte, Montana, leveraged their religious and ethnic identities to negotiate places of sovereignty in the western landscape. While each case study presents a distinct relationship between religion and labor, each is grounded in the materiality of exchange and economics in order to show the inseparability of religion from the economic practices that enabled the creation and endurance of nineteenth-century Western communities. Despite the concealing mechanisms of a single, idealized trajectory of American nationhood, the narration of national space was haunted and disrupted by the persistence of alternate, but interconnected, religious geographies, which re-scripted hegemonic narratives of American religious and economic exceptionalism. Using the tools of archival research and the collection of oral histories, this dissertation explores the tension of the familiar and the unfamiliar in the pastoral heartland of the American myth.
Dedication

To my friends and family in and of the West.
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1. Introduction

If you had told me as a child in Oregon and Montana that I was growing up in an unchurched region, I would not have believed you. It seemed as if half of my schoolmates went to seminary before school started at the little house owned by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints next to my high school. Providence Health & Services, founded by the Roman Catholic Sisters of Providence in 1859, not only employed both of my parents, but was also the largest hospital system in the region. With little experience of the pervasiveness of the distinctive Baptist steeples in the South, religion seemed to be all around me. Thus, as an undergraduate at a college in eastern Washington, I was surprised by the syllabus in my Introduction to American Religion course. Tracing the religious history of the Puritans to the Revolutionary and Civil Wars, and ending somewhere near Martin Luther King, Jr., I was struck by the general lack of engagement with the very region we occupied. Where were my neighbors in this history? Everyone I knew was either Catholic or Mormon, yet these stories were treated as secondary to the primary drama of American life. Why did the Sun Dances, Powwows, and other tribal events hosted by the three surrounding Native American Reservations not make an appearance? These questions animated my pursuit of graduate work, where I learned more about the complicated place of the American West in American religious history.

The rich histories and landscapes of the American West have driven my research questions from the start. By attending to the lives and labor of three religious communities in the Rocky Mountain West, this dissertation aims to highlight the constructed nature of American religious and economic exceptionalism in the mythic heartland of American national identity. Variously romanticized as the repository of American values—namely, volunteerism, free market capitalism, and self-sufficient individualism—or defined by material actions of conquest and colonization, the history of the American West is a complicated constellation of myth and
reality. This project evaluates the efforts of three religious communities to negotiate a place within that constellation.

The religious history of the American West has often been neglected by scholars of American religious history for the lack of Protestant success or ecclesial structures,¹ and by historians of the American West in their focus on human and environmental exploitation. The space created between these fields of study leaves fertile ground for inquiry. The study of religion in the American West can challenge standard historiographical narratives, provide new insights for the study of American religious history more broadly, and reshape the cultural history of the region.

In the last quarter of the nineteenth century, American nation building included the creation of a political and economic philosophy that both embraced democracy and excluded Native peoples and non-Protestant religious identities. Federal agents, Christian missionaries, and eastern capitalists, attempted to engulf the West in an imagined and expanding space of American nationalism. Yet, Northern Arapaho wage laborers, Mormon merchants, and Roman Catholic hard-rock miners, actively employed their religious and ethnic identities to negotiate places of survival in the western landscape. As I contend, economic systems, concepts, and practices were overlaid and inexorable from the religious practices and beliefs of my interlocutors and enabled the disruption and subversion of American religious and economic exceptionalism. United by shared commitments to principles of economic cooperation and communal solidarity, the following three case studies highlight the significance of religion, labor, and economics in creating the living western landscape.

¹ While the dearth of religious scholarship on the American West remains, the subfield continues to grow. In 2014, the American Academy of Religion gave permanent status to the Religion in the American West group and in 2016, a religion in the American West book series was announced from Stanford University Press to be edited by Quincy D. Newell and Laurie Maffly-Kipp.
1.1 American Exceptionalism

In 1845 newspaperman John L. O’Sullivan coined the term “Manifest Destiny,” giving voice to an ideology of American exceptionalism rooted in the valorization of individualism, free market capitalism, and Protestantism. Naturalizing expansion under the banner of morality and republican virtue, Manifest Destiny reconciled American imperialism with a highly favorable and united national image. Referring to the annexation of Texas, O’Sullivan wrote it was the nation’s “manifest destiny to overspread the continent allotted by Providence for the free development of our yearly multiplying millions.” In this narrative, American progress was divinely sanctioned and western expansion was preordained. In the nineteenth-century, federal policies, popular literature, travel narratives and western boosterism narrated a single, inevitable trajectory of American nationhood, in which the United States’ expansion West was imagined, and publicized, as the inscription of American values on an empty and uncivilized landscape, ready for the taking.

This form of American exceptionalism was not novel, but an ideology that was woven into the very earliest threads of the national fabric. As Puritan minister John Winthrop argued in his 1630 sermon “A Model of Christian Charity,” the new continent was to be an exemplar to the world, a city upon the hill of Protestant purity and moral order. The New World had been provided by God to create a morally superior community in a pure place, physically and spiritually distant from Europe’s popish ways. More than a century later, and further proof of God’s approval, the success of the Revolutionary War and the ratification of the Constitution

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2 O’Sullivan was a fairly insignificant figure in American history until historians in the early twentieth century traced this phrase to him, giving him a notoriety that escaped him during his lifetime. Thomas Hietala, Manifest Design: American Exceptionalism and Empire, (New York: Cornell University Press, 2003), x.

bolstered American values of freedom, individualism, and self-determination. As historian George Bancroft wrote in his 1861 eight-volume history of the United States:

> The hour of the American Revolution was come. The people of the continent with irresistible energy obeyed one general impulse, as the earth in spring listens to the command of nature, and without the appearance of effort bursts forth in life in perfect harmony. The change which Divine wisdom ordained, and which no human policy or force could hold back, proceeded as uniformly and as majestically as the laws of being, and was as certain as the decrees of eternity.  

Scholars of American religious history have participated in the persistence of this narrative by writing American religious history as exceptional. For example, in his widely-cited *Democratization of American Christianity*, Nathan O. Hatch lauds the participation of the unsophisticated “common man” in the formation of a synthesized American religious ethos defined by volunteerism, liberality, and market-orientation. No less exceptional, Patricia Bonomi argues in *Religion in a Revolutionary Age* that it was a spirit of dissent and commitment to religious freedom that defined American religious history.  

> Yet, as more recent scholarship has argued, the creation of a national identity and “American religion” was not inevitable. As Sam Haselby argues in *The Origins of American Religious Nationalism*, a cohesive American religion did not emerge from the Revolutionary War or the ratification of the Constitution. Rather, it was forged through the concerted effort of figures like Andrew Jackson and organizations like the American Tract Society and American Bible Society, which served to underplay religious differences in favor of a homogenous American Protestantism.  

> Finbarr Curtis continues this line of thinking in *The Production of American Religious Freedom*, by noting that Americans’ obsession with religious freedom gives

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voice to the “imagined collective interests” of a singular people, who in reality are composed of
diverse factions using the banner of Americanism to support and oppose social inequality at
different historical moments. American religion, nation, and empire had to be crafted by
discrete groups in particular places and moments in time, and continue to be malleable
categories employed for a variety of purposes.

In the nineteenth century, Protestantism dominated American political and social
thought as a prerequisite for American citizenship. As George Marsden notes, “it is undeniable
that, historically, religion has been a major component in American political life. . . Civilization
was equivalent in most minds to Christian civilization.” Although denominational camps
divided Protestantism and the debate between fundamentalism and modernism would soon rock
the early twentieth century, political elites in the late nineteenth-century fought for a Protestant
Christian consensus in response to growing non-Protestant immigration. Despite the departure of
the Holiness and Pentecostal movements, American Protestantism was still largely united by
devotion to the Bible, a Christocentric orientation, the anticipation of the Second Coming, and
support for foreign missionary efforts. As Edward J. Blum argues, Protestantism was a central
player in nineteenth-century American society and politics: “Congressmen quoted scripture as
fervently as Sunday school teachers; popular novelists drew upon Protestant narratives with the

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8 Matthew Frye Jacobsen, *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race*,
9 George Marsden, “Religion, Politics, and the Search for an American Consensus,” in *Religion and American
10 Robert T. Handy, “Protestant Theological Tensions and Political Styles in the Progressive Period,” in *Religion and
American Politics: From the Colonial Period to the Present*, eds. Mark A. Noll and Luke E. Harrow, (New York:
gusto of evangelical missionaries; and political cartoonists used scenes from the Bible to comment on current politics as readily as Protestant ministers.”

Although American Protestants may have pulled from the wellsprings of revolutionary rhetoric, the democratization of American religion, society, and politics excluded the religious and ethnic other. From the Continental Congress’s characterization of Catholicism as “dangerous in an extreme degree. . . to the civil rights and liberties of all America,”12 to New York Congressman Caleb Lyon on Mormonism: “Point me to a nation where polygamy is practiced, and I will point you to heathens and barbarians. It seriously affects the prosperity of States, it retards civilization, it uproots Christianity,”13 American lawmakers largely regarded non-Protestants as political threats.

Scientific doctrines of race were another central component of nineteenth-century debates on citizenship, which created a racial ladder of white and nonwhite, with varying rungs composed of Chinese, Irish, Italian, and Eastern European immigrants, as well as Native peoples. The Naturalization Act of 1790 restricted citizenship to “white persons,” a prerequisite that, perhaps surprisingly, endured until 1952.14 In 1848, Senator John C. Calhoun of South Carolina wrote the following concerning the annexation of Mexico after the U.S.-Mexican War:

We have conquered many of the neighboring tribes of Indians, but we have never thought of holding them in subjection, or of incorporating them into our Union. They have been left as independent people in the midst of us, or been driven back into the forests. Nor have we ever incorporated into the Union any but the Caucasian race. To incorporate Mexico would be the first departure of the kind; for more than half of its population are pure Indians, and by far the larger portion of the residue of mixed blood.

14 Act of Mar. 26, 1790, Ch. 3.1, 1 Stat. 103 (repealed 1952).
I protest against the incorporation of such a people. Ours is the government of the white man.\textsuperscript{15}

In 1857, the US Supreme Court expressed a similar sentiment in the Dred Scott decision by declaring that blacks possessed no rights “which the white man was bound to respect.”\textsuperscript{16} In \textit{Literary Culture and US Imperialism}, John Carlos Rowe develops the argument that the US learned colonizing strategies early in order to mark insiders and outsiders: “Virtually from the moment the original colonies defined themselves as a nation, there was an imperial project to restrict the meaning of the American by demonizing foreigners, in part by identifying them with the ‘savagery’ ascribed to Native and African Americans.”\textsuperscript{17} Nineteenth-century political, economic, and religious leaders attempted to lay claim to a unified geographic space and national identity, an American Eden, which excluded non-Protestant, non-white, and non-capitalist peoples.

The Manifest Destiny of this young utopia included the slow and steady progress west of America’s exceptional values and institutions. In 1893, Frederick Jackson Turner addressed a delegation of historians at the Chicago World’s Fair in his speech, “The Significance of the Frontier in American History,” glorifying the American West as the repository of American exceptionalism. Turner claimed it was “Not the constitution, but free land and an abundance of natural resources open to fit a people, [which] made the democratic type of society in America. . . These free lands promoted individualism, economic equality, freedom to rise, democracy.”\textsuperscript{18}

Although according to Turner the frontier was coming to a close, for three centuries the West


was a place of economic, spiritual, and physical renewal for the industrializing East; the safety valve for eastern manufacturing and urban inequity. The perceived emptiness of the West allowed for a moral universe to be mapped onto the landscape under the semblance of internal homogeneity.

Until the writing of *Virgin Land* by Henry Nash Smith in 1950 and the emergence of “New West” studies in the 1980s, this idealized and mythic narrative of western history was largely assumed to be accurate. Historians and artists described the history of the West as a heroic triumph over “wilderness” and “savagery.” At the end of the nineteenth century, Theodore Roosevelt published his multi-volume saga *The Winning the West*, as well as a biography of muralist Thomas Hart Benton, in which he gave special attention to American exceptionalism, claiming it was the United States “manifest destiny to swallow up the land of all adjoining nations who were too weak to withstand us.” Artists such as James Henry Beard, Albert Bierstadt, George Caleb Bingham, and John Gast gave artistic expression to the imagined history of enlightened, technologically advanced, and righteous Americans expanding to redeem the ominous and benighted West.

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Figure 1: *American Progress* by John Gast (1872)

The Old West permeated popular culture. The romanticized dime novels of the nineteenth-century, in which virtuous cowboys and lawmen fought against unruly outlaws and “savage” Indians, continued under the pens of twentieth-century novelists like Zane Grey and Louis L’Amour. 21 “Westerns,” largely set in the second half of the nineteenth century and centered on the life of a lone and heroic gunslinger, ruled Hollywood from the 1920s to 1950s. As recently as 1991, the Smithsonian American Art Museum stirred up controversy with the exhibit “The West as America: Reinterpreting Images of the American Frontier, 1820-1920,” which highlighted the ways in which painters, sculptors, and photographers participated in masking the West’s bloody history of imperialism and conquest. Unwilling to part with the

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mythic narratives of the American West, several congressmen attempted to have the museum defunded and several irate op-eds were published, eventually resulting in the cancellation of the exhibit’s national tour. In 2017, the United States’ film industry continued to prove an abiding interest in the American West. With *Hostiles*, starring Christian Bale as a legendary and Native American-hating Army capital who guides a Cheyenne chief back to his Montana reservation and Netflix’s *Godless*, in which an outlaw terrorizes a small New Mexico mining town, the mythic and rough and tumble history of the West still captivates the American public.

Although popular culture continues to struggle with the mythic representation and lived reality of the American West, scholars have criticized the validity of American exceptionalism and Manifest Destiny at length. The history of the American West, under the banner of “Manifest Destiny,” is now largely regarded as an abstract and divisive concept used to congeal an “untidy history,” and privilege the inevitability of Anglo American dominance as preordained and orderly. As New West historians such as Patricia Limerick, Richard White, and Donald Worster argue, the romantic narrative of Western history glosses over the reality of invasion, conquest, and colonization, by which insiders were named and outsiders excluded in the creation of the United States.25

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Contemporary histories of the American West have therefore turned the focus to natural resource exploitation, material conquest, and the toil of laboring bodies that defined the realities of western life. The field of religious studies, however, has historically privileged a false dichotomy of religion and material exchange, wherein “good” religion is seen as the separation of the material from the spiritual.\textsuperscript{26} Until the early 2000s, the working landscapes of the American West were largely dismissed as irreligious, immoral, and chaotic. The relative lack of Protestant success or ecclesial structure in the West compounded the problem. Afforded a single chapter in comprehensive histories or simply excluded from monographs, religion continues to be regarded as separate from the material actions of conquest, colonization, and material progress that have come to represent the history of the American West.\textsuperscript{27} Yet, it has always been difficult to keep the moneychangers out of the temple.

Building on the work of New West historians and scholars of lived religion, this dissertation highlights the gritty and messy entanglement of material lives and religious experiences in the nineteenth-century Rocky Mountain West. I argue that those who lived along the margins of American expansion were not passive receptors of American nation making, but actively negotiated what it meant to be American, religious, and western by leveraging their


ethnic and religious identities to create communities based on cooperative political economies. In the everyday lives, homes, and streets of Western communities there was not a strict binary between material acts of labor and transcendent acts of belief. Northern Arapaho wage laborers on the Wind River Indian Reservation in Wyoming, Mormon merchants in Salt Lake City, Utah, and Roman Catholic miners in Butte, Montana, provide powerful illustrations of the multiplicities of American experience. Despite the concealing mechanisms of a single, idealized trajectory of American nationhood, the narration of national space was haunted and disrupted by the persistence of alternate, but interconnected, religious geographies of what it meant to be American. Alternative modes of labor, land use and religion unsettled the white Protestant ideal of an American Eden. By moving beyond easy tropes of western history and attending to the material lives and labor of those on the ground, this dissertation participates in the continued complication of American religious exceptionalism and Manifest Destiny by asking, what happens after Eden? The case studies presented here highlight the tension of the familiar and the unfamiliar in the pastoral heartland of the American myth.

1.2 Contextualizing the Rocky Mountain West

The West has been variously defined. Territorially, the West has been regarded as the 26 states west of the 98th meridian and the Mississippi River, where climatically, excluding the Pacific Northwest, the average annual rainfall is below 20 inches and the harsh, unpredictable weather has made settlement patterns both difficult and innovative. Alternatively, using the rubric of cultural identity, Appalachia and the Ohio River Valley were once considered part of the American frontier. For the purposes of this dissertation, I focus on the Rocky Mountain West, a sub-region that contains more than 50 of the nation’s tallest peaks, extreme temperature variations, a historically low population density, and was relatively isolated until the completion of the transcontinental railroad in 1869. Perceived by federal surveyors as nearly vacant land,
open for repurposing by white Protestant pioneers, the nineteenth-century Rocky Mountain West was not only united geographically and climatically, but also held a common place in ideologies of Manifest Destiny.

By looking beyond the single and hegemonic narrative of American exceptionalism and Manifest Destiny, this dissertation unveils the experiences and beliefs of the understudied, yet majority inhabitants, of the Rocky Mountain West. In 1900, 73.1% of Montana’s population was Catholic and 97.1% of Utah’s population was Mormon. Nineteenth-century census records for Native communities were destroyed in a fire in 1921, but during the reservation period, roughly 1850-1880, it is estimated that only 900 Northern Arapahos were in Wyoming, a mere 4% of the total population. By the early 1900s, however, the trend reversed and the population had begun to increase. I have included the Northern Arapaho in this project to highlight the experience of a people who once controlled the region and used the tools of religion and economics to actively adapt to their new fate.

The last quarter of the nineteenth-century was a time of tumultuous change for the region. As Turner claimed, it was the “end of the Frontier era,” the closing of “the first period of American history.” Utah, Wyoming, and Montana were awarded statehood, the transcontinental railroad was completed, plural marriage was outlawed, the Vatican responded to the labor pains of the working class, and western reservations were further divided into agricultural plots. The Rocky Mountain West was in the spotlight as the treasury of the

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28 “In most counties… [in the Intermountain West], always excepting the Utah-southern Idaho Mormon heartland, Catholics were either the largest single denomination with 25 percent to 50 percent of adherents, or, in Mormon areas, in second place.” Walter Nugent, Religion and Public Life in the Mountain West: Sacred Landscapes in Transition, (Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 2004), 33.
29 Turner, 9.
30 Utah received statehood January 4, 1896; Montana on November 8, 1889; Wyoming on July 10, 1890. The First Transcontinental Railroad, or Pacific Railroad was completed in 1869. The Edmunds Act in 1882 made polygamy a felony and in 1887 the Edmunds-Tucker Act further extended the punishments of the Edmunds Act encouraging polygamists to go “underground” or face jail time. In 1890, LDS President Wilfred Woodruff released a manifesto
nation—both in mythological understandings of redemption and renewal and in the discovery of rich natural resources.

1.3 Theoretical Framework

From a theoretical perspective, this project seeks to apply the critical resources of lived religion and cultural geography to the history of religious practice and belief in the Rocky Mountain West. Nineteenth-century Catholics, Mormons, and Northern Arapaho lived in an enchanted world, full of relics, icons, and spirits that held emotional power and authority. But it was not only the obtusely sacred that contributed to the religious lives of my subjects: the boundaries were blurred between worship and work. The laboring body, the objects of material exchange, and the limits and possibilities of the landscape, acted as an interactive network involved in the production of religious meaning and belief. Lived religion, as specifically articulated in the works of Robert Orsi and David Morgan, provides the tools necessary to study these messy religious worlds. As Robert Orsi argues in *Between Heaven and Earth*, religion is not a clearly delineated realm of life. Rather, religion is “a network of relationships between heaven and earth”—a web of relationships between human beings, sacred figures, material objects, places, institutions, and communities together. As David Morgan argues in “The Matter of Belief,” religious belief is rooted in and sustained by material practice. It is learned and experienced through the sensuous body, and cannot be reduced to essentialist categories of

banning plural marriage in the church. As discussed at length in Chapter Two, the Dawes Act of 1887 sub-divided western reservations into 160 acre plots, leased from the Bureau of Indian Affairs to tribal members in order to encourage “civilized” farming practices. As discussed in Chapter Four, Pope Leo XIII’s 1891 encyclical *Rerum Novarum* was the first comprehensive response to the poverty of growing working classes.

immaterial abstractions and transcendent beliefs. This theoretical approach corresponds well to the primary methodological aim of my project: to explore how economic practices and institutions were not only religiously sanctioned, but historically constructed, material performances of my subjects’ beliefs and values.

As this dissertation argues, through participation in alternative economic systems, the people that populate my case studies proclaimed their separateness from American capitalist spaces by creating alternative places of belonging. In Crossing and Dwelling, Thomas Tweed calls this practice the construction of “spatial frames,” in which practitioners claim belonging and exclusion through participation in or aversion towards the rituals, artifacts, and doctrines of a community. The communities studied here did not live in isolation—no matter how they may have tried—but can only be studied relationally, in context, and as contingent and sensitive to multiple and shifting spatial frames.

Taking the concepts of space and place seriously offers a valuable theoretical approach to understanding the construction and disruption of the overlapping and dynamic registers of institutional and state powers, and the confluence of religious and non-religious streams in the production of religious identities. Building on the work of neo-Marxist geographer Henri Lefebvre, I take place to be the local and particular, the concrete and differentiated in relation to abstract spaces produced by state policies and economic transactions. Nineteenth-century American exceptionalism was one form of abstraction. It was a transformative process that engulfed the American landscape, rearranging and transforming diverse societies to uniform

grids of labor and market forces and suppressing differences in time and culture. Capitalist space conquered place through the expansion of forms of transport and communication, of infrastructure and territorial organizations. Political leaders and eastern elites trumpeted capitalism, free markets, and individual progress as defining characteristics of what it meant to be American, thereby concealing the lives and labor of diverse populations under a blanket of abstract space. This ideology of American exceptionalism provided an illusion of homogeneity, in which class and racial hierarchies were normalized under the explicit understanding that one set of rules governed society, commerce, and the religious body.

By looking to the ways in which spaces of abstraction have been historically constructed, scholars are afforded a view of how abstract space is utilized to dominate people, places, and things and create borders of inclusion and exclusion. Yet, inasmuch as abstract space tends toward homogeneity, toward the elimination of existing differences or peculiarities, this project argues that Western communities had their own tactics of resistance; tactics that enabled the survival of communal and cooperative identities. As Michel de Certeau argues in *The Practices of Everyday Life*, it is by everyday practices that people subvert dominant or abstracted spaces. The Northern Arapaho adapted a system of wage-labor in order to endure the transition to reservation life while maintaining consensus; the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints established a comprehensive system of cooperative mercantilism to counteract the corruption of “gentile” free markets; and Irish Roman Catholic immigrants concentrated in western mining towns combined Catholic social teachings with labor politics to establish the first American unions. As de Certeau states, minority populations “often made of the rituals, representations, and laws imposed on them something quite different from what their conquerors had in mind;”

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they subverted them not by rejecting or altering them, but by using them with respect to ends and references foreign to the system they had no choice to accept.” Using the tools common to cultural geography, this project reveals that there is power, creativity, and inventiveness in the small practices of everyday life. Western communities did not completely overturn abstract spaces of American capitalism, but resisted and subverted a singular national identity with the tools of the changing landscape.

Attention to religion through the lens of space and place enables the study of religion as emplaced in the local and particular, as well as connected to national and, especially in the case of Catholicism, transnational movements and forces. Places are not static nodes within a grid of space, but a distinctive coming together of human actors, social, economic, and political spaces, and the material conditions of the physical landscape. As Tweed notes, religions are not self-defined entities, but are a “flowing together of currents” of multiple fields, constantly in a state of flux. Places are changing constellations of human commitments. By attending to the ways in which communities are emplaced within interconnected, but alternative places within the American landscape, this project highlights the multiplicities of religious experience and lived practice in the mythic heartland of American national identity.

1.4 Methodology

Each case study investigates the relationship between the religious beliefs and practices of my interlocutors and the economic systems of exchange that enabled their survival. Indeed, participation in the community’s economic system was a performance of religious practice and belief. Previous scholarship on religion and economics is overwhelmingly slanted toward market theories of religious change. The work of Rodney Stark, William Sims Bainbridge, Roger Finke,

37 Tweed, 60.
Laurence Iannaccone, R. Stephen Warner and others, considers the development and success of various religious traditions through the lens of supply and demand in a religious marketplace. While their scholarship offers interesting theoretical discussions to the field and the emergence of American denominationalism, this project looks to the actual practices of economic exchange performed by religious peoples. A study of the economic practices of western communities is significant because it relies on the concrete practices by which the West was negotiated and constructed. As Patricia Limerick argues, “Westward expansion was the most concrete, down-to-earth demonstration of the economic habit on which the entire nation became dependent.”

Although located in a remote region of the United States, the Rocky Mountain West’s expansive extractive economies, federal oversight, and laissez-faire capitalism, presaged national economic trends.

By studying the complex ties that bind religious and economic activity, this dissertation explores how three religious traditions were articulated in and through systems of exchange. In the following case studies, labor did not represent work done solely for wages, although wages were often paid, but rather, labor was one expression of a larger system of community values. While each case study presents a distinct relationship between religion and economics, each is grounded in the materiality of exchange and labor in order to show the inseparability of religion from the economic practices that enabled the creation and endurance of nineteenth-century Western communities.

1.4.1 Archival and Ethnographic Inquiry

The central evidence for my project comes from a vigorous survey of archival resources, primarily completed from 2014 to 2017. I evaluated primary and secondary sources, as well as

38 Limerick, 28.
general histories of the American West to contextualize and create a robust picture of my research communities. For my first case study, Wind River Wage Laborers, I explored the Bureau of Indian Affairs holdings at the Regional Archives of the Rocky Mountains, a branch of the National Archives, located in Denver, Colorado. I then travelled to the American Heritage Center at the University of Wyoming in Laramie, Wyoming, as well as the Central Wyoming College Library and archives of the Fremont County Museum in Riverton, Wyoming, in order to work with materials specifically on the Northern Arapaho people. In order to supplement my archival findings, written primarily by white observers, I spent the summer of 2016 on the Wind River Indian Reservation, where I met with the Northern Arapaho Tribal Historical Preservation Office, Tribal Elders, and Tribe Liaison. I completed interviews with Northern Arapaho Tribal Officers and community members, and joined in many more informal conversations over lunch and email exchanges in order to listen to and understand the self-narrated histories of the Northern Arapaho people, the contemporary challenges wrought by historical decisions, and to inquire about the cogency of my research findings.

For my second case study, Mormon Merchants, I visited Salt Lake City, Utah to explore the Latter-day Saint Church History Library and meet with scholars of Mormon economic history. I surveyed the archives of the Marriott Library at the University of Utah and the Utah State University Special Collections and Archives in Logan, Utah. For my final case study, Catholic Miners, I spent time in the Montana Historical Society Research Center in Helena and the Butte-Silver Bow Public Archives in Butte, Montana, where I met with archivists and chatted with retired miners. In addition, I spent a number of weeks at the Diocese of Helena’s archives, where I met with a feisty ninety-year-old nun with a treasure trove of anecdotes.

Throughout, I pieced together a critical comparison of reports and journals of government agents, travelers, missionaries, and settlers; transcripts of councils and community
groups; newspaper stories, and the writings of Mormons, Catholics, and literate Arapahos. The narrow borders of the topic—religious economies of the Rocky Mountain West—disable sweeping historical generalizations about American religion. Rather than focus on Protestant engagement with minority traditions, this dissertation turns the focus to the actions and strategies of diverse religious communities in order to highlight the multiplicities of American experiences and the manner in which minority traditions disrupted a homogenous national identity. Largely neglected by both western historians and religious historians, the study of religion in the American West gives voice to the complexity of religious experience in the United States.

1.5 Outline

Chapter two considers the Northern Arapaho and Ghost Dance practices on the Wind River Indian Reservation in central Wyoming. I examine the locally particular manifestation of the Ghost Dance and the manner in which the Northern Arapaho engaged the Dance to authorize wage-labor as a form of communal fortification, in contrast to federal and missionary pressures to conform to Euro-American standards of labor, privatization, and religious belief. The Northern Arapaho interpreted the Ghost Dance through the structural framework of Northern Arapaho society: the age-grade lodges, which I argue functioned as a social technology that facilitated religious innovation and the simultaneous preservation of tribal unity. As this chapter emphasizes, the Northern Arapaho were not hapless victims to Western progress, but crafted deliberate and transformative solutions to the changing landscape.

Chapter three looks to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons) and the creation and practices of Zion’s Cooperative Mercantile Institution (ZCMI) in Salt Lake City, Utah. On arrival to the Rocky Mountain West, Mormon leaders prescribed a systematic development plan, in which property and labor were directed toward the physical establishment of the Kingdom of God. Church President Brigham Young established ZCMI as a response to
the encroaching American ideologies of free market capitalism and individual gain. As this chapter shows, nineteenth-century Mormons regarded ZCMI as a religiously sanctioned vehicle of economic exchange, which ensured a high level of community solidarity and self-sufficiency. ZCMI was more than a symbol of Mormon cooperation and unity, but also the tool of its implementation.

Chapter four considers the urban industrial center of Butte, Montana. Primarily inhabited by Irish-Catholic immigrants, Butte was home to some of the first and largest local unions in the world. At the turn of the twentieth century, Butte was producing a tenth of the world’s supply of copper and one corporate giant controlled its extraction: The Anaconda Copper Mining Company. Butte residents turned to Catholicism for the tools to combat the Company, not as a total overhaul of the system, but as a means to unite against exploitative practices, create safe working conditions, earn a living wage, and to find value in labor. This chapter explores how Catholicism influenced and mediated the relationship between Butte’s miners, unions, and Company. Dirty, sweaty, and bloody, Butte offers a compelling example of religiously sanctioned economic practices, community cooperation, and survival.

The conclusion draws attention to the distinctiveness of each case study, while highlighting the shared struggles of negotiating what it meant to be an outsider living within the borders of the United States through the non-variables of labor and exchange. Laboring bodies, material trade, and monetary exchange defined belonging and exclusion for diverse religious communities at different scales. As I argue, western communities did not fully adapt or reject the spaces of American institution building, but rather, negotiated a place in between.

Stories of encounter and conflict, these three case studies highlight the significance of religion, labor, and the western landscape in creating agentive western communities that subverted narratives of American economic and religious exceptionalism. As I continue to
explore the place of the American West in a broader religious history of the United States, a question that so frustrated my eighteen-year-old undergraduate self, this dissertation moves to unearth the lives and labor of three religious communities often written as secondary to the primary plot of American history. By participating in the continued complication of master narratives, this project provides insight into the diversity of American religious life and the continued and complex relations between mainstream Protestant America and the religious and ethnic other.
2. Wind River Wage Laborers

In the nineteenth century, the westward movement of Euro-Americans transformed and remade the western landscape to fulfill the requirements of American capitalist production. Settlers built fences, excavated mines, and dug irrigation ditches in order to convert the Rocky Mountain West into a productive piece of the expanding American empire. Government officials and eastern elites believed the future security of the United States depended on the unity of an American religion, language, and economy, stretching from coast to coast. But nation building involved far more than the extension of American institutions. It encompassed the creation of a national racial identity and political philosophy that both embraced democracy and excluded Native peoples. 39

At the center of this story were the Plains Indians, erased in a narrative of expansion that required a blank canvas. Only an empty slate, free of prior imperfections could produce a perfect nation. Many American policy makers and western settlers believed the Native Americans would slowly die out. But until then, they had to be converted to Christianity and capitalism. Through industrial education, Christian missionary efforts, and the 1887 Dawes Act, American lawmakers sought to transform reservations and their inhabitants into “productive” American citizens. The implementation of the reservation system by the Office of Indian Affairs was believed to be one step in the control of Native American bodies, limiting movement and undermining traditional modes of production. Only through the acculturation of Native societies could national integrity be secured in the expansion West. Settler colonial practices perpetuated the insidious logic that through the transformation and rearrangement of Native societies,

American religious and economic exceptionalism would prosper in the creation of a unified and providential national power.

Scholars frequently cite Native Americans as powerless in the face of the insurmountable change brought on by white contact, leaving tribes across the United States in a state of despair. Yet, despite the devastating crises of authority precipitated by federal policies and local acculturation initiatives, the Northern Arapaho of central Wyoming retained a cooperative political economy and ancestral religious beliefs by appropriating wage labor into their own understanding of life movement and personhood. This chapter will highlight how the Northern Arapaho strategically adopted new religious traditions, specifically the Ghost Dance, in order to adapt to reservation life without the loss of pre-contact beliefs and practices. This is not to claim that Northern Arapaho religious practices were unchanging before or after white contact, but rather, to point to the innovations of a tribe under pressure.

Contrary to the tragic events of the 1891 Wounded Knee Massacre, the Northern Arapaho’s interpretation of the Ghost Dance was life affirming and called on the Arapaho to make peace with white settlers and the suffering of the time, in order to find salvation in a coming paradise. They were agents of their own resistance to colonization. The Ghost Dance was interpreted through the structural framework of Northern Arapaho society: the age-grade lodges, which I argue functioned as a social technology that facilitated religious innovation and the simultaneous preservation of tribal unity.

Consistently noted for their role as the “mother tribe,” or “nucleus” of sacred tribal articles and ceremonial practices by other Plains tribes and scholars of Native American history, the Northern Arapaho maintained tribal unity and ceremonial practices in a manner that many

other Plains tribes lost in the onrush of American expansion.\textsuperscript{41} Today, the Northern Arapaho Tribal Historic Preservation Office, led by Yufna Soldier Wolf, is working with the Northern Arapaho Tribal Elders to share forgotten religious practices with other High Plains communities.\textsuperscript{42} The Northern Arapaho were one of the last tribes in the United States to be forcibly removed to a reservation, one that they now share with the Eastern Shoshone. They rejected the 1934 Indian Reorganization Act and were therefore able to retain a system of self-organization separate from the Eastern Shoshone and without the oversight of the Office of Indian Affairs.\textsuperscript{43} And yet, in comparison to the Eastern Shoshone and other Plains communities, relatively little scholarship has looked to the rich history and innovative adaptive practices of the Northern Arapaho people.

Scholarship that does survey the history and culture of the Northern Arapaho regularly portrayed the tribe as at once too religious, and yet, not religious enough. HL Wilson broadly speculated, the “Arapahos are a deeply religious people in comparison with many other tribes.”\textsuperscript{44} Virginia Cole Trenholm echoed this on the first page of her 1970 monograph, noting, “they were contemplative and devout, with a depth of feeling uncommon even among Indians who are inherently religious.”\textsuperscript{45} These comments give voice to the contradictory stereotypes of Native Americans often perpetuated by anthropologists. While scholars commented on the religiosity of Native peoples, this religiosity was couched in terms of excess and lacked the rationalism of more “modern” traditions such as Protestant Christianity. As Willie Jennings notes, this created


\textsuperscript{42} Yufna Solider Wolf, interview with Author, July 2016.


\textsuperscript{44}HL Wilson, \textit{The Trail of the Arapaho Nation}, Zednek Salzmann Papers, Box 14, American Heritage Center (AHC).

an understanding of colonialized peoples as “bodies-in-between,” possessed by spirits, yet not properly contained in a new, more lasting way. Scholars of Native American history often participated in the colonial project of determining who counted as human, citizen and civilized. For the Northern Arapaho this was intensified by their location in the American West, a constructed landscape steeped in folklore and myth. The Northern Arapaho were at once too religious and yet not religious enough.

First, I will present a detailed account of Northern Arapaho religious traditions, arguing for the primacy of the age-grade lodges in maintaining tribal unity and traditional ceremonial practices. I will show how the structure, and inherent flexibility, of the lodges facilitated a perpetual inventiveness and simultaneous preservation of Indigenous knowledge and practice. Next, I will detail how the Northern Arapaho interpretation of the Ghost Dance sanctioned the replacement of traditional regimes of labor with digging irrigation ditches, cutting wood and hay. Rather than being seen as a Euro-American system of material survival, wage labor was strategically adopted as an accepted Indian practice. The Northern Arapaho were not hapless victims to Western progress, but crafted deliberate and transformative solutions with the changing landscape. Here, I want to emphasize my commitment to participating in the decolonization of Indigenous knowledge by moving beyond master narratives that label Indigenous people as reactive, emotive, and unreasoned. Instead, I will argue the Arapaho’s agentive and systematic interpretation of the Ghost Dance enabled the transition to reservation life and creation of a world of their own making.

2.1 The People

The Arapaho are of Algonquian linguistic stock, a large language group that can be traced to a sizable swath of northeastern North America, which includes the Massachusett, Kickapoo, Ojibwe, Blackfoot, Gros Ventre, and Cheyenne Indians. Despite Algonquian linguistic roots, however, the Arapaho language remains distinct and is recognized as being much more complex than proximate Algonquian languages such as Cheyenne or Gros Ventre. Many sources note the Arapaho language was so difficult that the tribe had to rely on sign language to communicate with their close allies.48

Historians and commentators are unable to agree on the origin of the term “Arapaho.” Father John Roberts, an Episcopal missionary on the Wind River Reservation for more than forty years, claimed in 1923 that it was a Crow Indian word meaning “the tattooed.”49 In a 1982 book of Arapaho history, however, tribal member Bill Shakespeare noted it is the corrupted sounding term of the Pawnee, “laripihu” or “taripihu,” which means “he who buys or sells.”50 Shakespeare claimed that on their famous Corps-of-Discovery Expedition, Meriwether Lewis and William Clark asked their Pawnee guides with whom they had traded. In response the Pawnee named the “lariphiu,” which Lewis and Clark mispronounced as Arapaho. The term “Arapaho” does not exist in the Arapaho language and was quite difficult to pronounce for those who grew up speaking the language. An elderly Arapaho man, in an interview in August 2016, recalled his own difficulty in learning to say the “r” sound in the early 1940s.51 The term used by

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48“Arapahoe was one of the most difficult of all the Indian languages.” Althea Bass, “The Arapahoe Way,” New York: Potter, Inc., p. 3; “Arapaho is one of the most divergent Algonkin languages, suggesting that its speakers have been long separated from the body of the stock, presumably on or at the edge of the plains.” Encyclopedia Britannica: A New Survey of Universal Knowledge. Volume 2. The University of Chicago. 1949.
50The Wind River Reservation Yesterday and Today: The Legends-The Land-The People. Workshop directed by Larry Murray, with tribal consultants in (LMF Box 12, pages 71-), 7.
51Interview with author. August 5, 2016.
both the Southern and Northern Arapaho to refer to the tribe is hinono’ei’no or inunina, translated as “The People.”

Like most Native American cultures, Arapaho myths, rituals, and history were passed down orally until the intervention of American literacy programs in the late nineteenth century. Rich in detail and imagery, stories of Creation, the Sacred Flat Pipe, and the relationship of the Arapaho to the natural world were passed down for generations. Storytellers were honored and respected. As tribal member Virginia Sutter wrote, “The heart of Arapaho stories, legends, and myths reflects the view that we as people are created equal to all things, alive or without life, and we share the earth as partners under the watchful eye of the Creator.”52 Storytelling was a mode of reinforcing tribal unity and religiosity, of placing the Arapaho in a world infused with supernatural powers.

Only select tribal members are privileged to tell the official version of the Creation Story, and those permitted to listen are required to undergo a three-day fast prior to hearing it in its entirety, which is said to last multiple days.53 In the fragments of the origin myth collected by early twentieth-century anthropologists Alfred L. Kroeber and George A. Dorsey, the story of creation begins with water. At first there was nothing but water and the peak of a tall mountain, on which sat an Arapaho, crying in his loneliness. Looking up, he saw the Creator, or Je-van-e-au-thau, walking on the water towards him. The Creator called the waterfowl by name, variously interpreted as doves or ducks, and commanded the birds to dive under the water and find a country for the Arapaho, but they failed. Next, a turtle was sent beneath the water and succeeded in finding clay, from which the Creator made the world and every living creature.54

54 George A. Dorsey and Alfred L. Kroeber, Traditions of the Arapaho, (Smithsonian, 1903), 1-7.
Tribal member William C’Hair noted the turtle of the creation story was significant because the Arapahos were given a turtle’s shell long ago and told it was the map to their homeland.\(^5^5\) Tribal history places the Arapaho in the Great Lakes region, occupying northern Minnesota sometime prior to 1700, where they were semi-sedentary horticulturists.\(^5^6\) After traveling throughout the Plains they eventually arrived in the Rocky Mountains, where looking at the turtle shell they “realized that the bulge on top was the mountains, the line along the ridge of the back was the continental divide, and the other lines on the back were the rivers flowing down from the mountains. They knew that they had found their home.”\(^5^7\) For the next century, the Arapaho lived as nomadic hunter-gatherers in the High Plains bordering the Rocky Mountains.\(^5^8\)

The Creator first made the Arapaho, then the other Native Americans, followed by the white man, “beyond the waters.”\(^5^9\) The Creator then dropped pebbles into a deep lake, and the Arapaho cried out seeing that his people would die, but the Creator told him that their dead bodies would rise again, and that he would come again as a chief over his people. Some versions of the story note that the Creator made land from the clay, while others claim the Creator told the water to recede to rivers and seas, so that the land beneath might appear.\(^6^0\) Other variations claim the Creator appeared as the Sacred Flat Pipe, that the first Arapaho was floating on the Flat Pipe, or that the Creator gave the Flat Pipe to the first Arapaho as a token of “everlasting promise to


\(^{56}\) An Arapaho woman born in 1786 recalled stories from her grandmother about planting and harvesting corn, which would help to explain the presence of a stone or petrified ear of corn among the tribe’s sacred articles. “A Comparison of the Differential Rates of Change of the Religious and Family Structures of the Northern and Southern Arapaho.” Judith A. Hollinger for Dr. Bruner. Loretta Fowler Papers, Box 12. AHC.

\(^{57}\) C’Hair, Cowell, and Moss, 41-42.

\(^{58}\) *The Wind River Reservation Yesterday and Today: The Legends-The Land-The People.* Workshop directed by Larry Murray, with tribal consultants in (LMF Box 12), 7.

\(^{59}\) Trenholm, 4.

\(^{60}\) As told by Michael Whitehawk, storyteller of the Northern Arapaho, to Elinor Markley, “Sixty Six Years on the Wind River Indian Reservation: A Ministry,” 9. John Roberts Papers, Box 2, AHC.
care for and protect the Arapahoes from generation to generation.”\footnote{Elinor R. Markley, “Sixty Six Years on the Wind River Indian Reservation: A Ministry,” 9. John Roberts Papers, Box 2, AHC. See George A. Dorsey and Alfred L. Kroeber, Traditions of the Arapaho, (Smithsonian, 1903), 1-7.} Regardless, ceremonies and beliefs surrounding the Flat Pipe or säeitcan are regarded as foundational and remain venerated as the most sacred.\footnote{The specifics of Flat Pipe ceremonies have not been shared with non-tribal historians or anthropologists. Weasel Bear, the primary interlocutor for Kroeber and Dorsey, noted the sacred things, “belong to the religion of the Indians, and a white man has no business to ask about them.” Quoted in Trenholm, 55. For this reason, I will not elaborate on Flat Pipe ceremonies or beliefs out of respect for the community.}

The object itself has a twenty-inch wooden stem, inserted without angle into a cylindrical bowl of black steatite inlaid with a whitish stone. The pipe is concealed in a mass of skin wrappings and kept on a stand of three sticks driven into the ground.\footnote{Edward Curtis, The North American Indian, (Cologne, Germany: Taschen, 2015), 140.} The Flat Pipe is entrusted to a single keeper, a highly respected elder who has achieved a spot in the highest age-grade lodge. It is never smoked and rarely uncovered. It was believed to be an enchanted object that would bring dead Arapaho Indians to their final resting place in ha-ya-in or Our Home. For this reason it was called the Chariot of God.\footnote{Elinor R. Markley, “Sixty Six Years on the Wind River Indian Reservation: A Ministry,” 9. John Roberts Papers, Box 2, AHC. When trying to find a word that easily described the Sacred Flat Pipe’s role as chariot, the closest word I could think of was “portkey,” from the Harry Potter series.}
In nomadic times, the keeper of the Flat Pipe would walk in front of the tribe, and guided by the pipe, would determine the tribe’s route and encampments. When the tribe assembled for ceremonial purposes, the camp circle was structured into highly organized segments, dividing camp responsibilities and bands by physical location in the circle. At the center of this circle was the tipi erected to house the keeper and the Flat Pipe, the physical and religious center of the tribe. In this way, the Flat Pipe was a symbol of Creation, a guide in everyday life and ceremonies, and the vehicle by which the Arapaho were carried to Our Home.

2.1.1 Tribal Unity and Flexibility

Communalism and cooperation were central to Northern Arapaho life. The Northern Arapaho age-grade lodges or bāyaā 'wu structured the tribe and directed all individual actions to

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the overall welfare of the community. Named for the enclosures in which they were held, the age-grade lodges delegated responsibility for the tribe’s religious, economic, and social welfare to distinct ceremonial lodges, divided by gender and stage of life. These lodges “represented the entire community, and through it, the function of government acquired a simple democratic form.”

As historian Henry Elkin notes, “The Arapaho lived a well-ordered life.” And like the Arapaho language, Elkin claims that the tribal organization was unusually intricate in relation to other Plains Indians.

The term “age-grade” implies that progress through the lodges was relative to the person’s age; however, this is a misleading description. Divided into eight male lodges and a single female lodge, entry and progress through the lodges was not based on the precise age of a tribal member, but rather the accomplishments and temperament of each individual. The eldest lodge oversaw progress through the lodges and tribe members moved through the lodges based on acts of bravery and sacrifice, or “give-away” for the tribe. The lodges covered the entire lifespan of tribal members and one could only progress to a lodge by passing through all that preceded it. The age-grade lodges oriented and conditioned Northern Arapaho life. Behavior patterns, choice of partner, sacred and secular leadership, and gender divisions, were all determined and managed by the age-grade lodges.

Each lodge maintained separate ceremonies and dances, with fixed and elaborate regalia. As male members of the tribe progressed from the base male lodge, nouhinena or Blackbird, to the final lodge, tciinetcei bâhâeha or Water Pouring Old Men, ceremonial responsibilities and sacred knowledge increased, while duties such as packing the tipis and hunting, were the

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68 Elkin, 220.
primary responsibility of the lower lodges. The lower lodges were responsible for the contact zone activities, those actions that interacted with the world beyond the tribe. As one progressed through the lodges, responsibilities turned increasingly inward, to the protection and maintenance of tribal governance, stories, ceremonies, and sacred objects. For the Northern Arapaho, it was through the combination of secular and religious actors and responsibilities that the world was ordered and made meaningful. The Northern Arapaho’s age-grade lodges set the religious and secular together, as interdependent cogs, in a bundled network of tribal unity and religiosity.

The age-grade lodges heavily regulated interactions between Arapaho men and women. Even familial relations were delimited within the tribal complex, limiting one-on-one contact between siblings and cousins of the opposite sex. As children moved from infancy into the early years of childhood, girls formed peer groups close to the center of the camp. The boys began their journey through the lodges and were pushed beyond the camp circle as a means of avoiding contact with sisters and cousins, where they engaged in play hunting and war games.

Women both participated in their own lodge and were identified with and materially supported the lodges of their partners. Within the women’s lodge, bänuxta 'wu, or the Buffalo Lodge, age did not play a role, although young women primarily populated the dance associated with the lodge. As members of the lodge, women progressed through four stages of life and like the male lodges, gained increased sacred knowledge as they did so. Women moved through rank in the lodge as they were married and gave birth and as they sacrificed their time and labor to aid others doing the same.

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70 Anderson, *The Four Hills of Life*, 144.
71 Ibid, 175.
The women’s lodge was responsible for supporting the life movement of others through the transformation of raw materials, such as skins and flesh, into forms utilized by the body and tipi. While men were responsible for hunting and protective pursuits, women gathered and prepared wild foods and cared for the children.\textsuperscript{72} The male lodges functioned through the mediating role of the women’s lodge. Men were reliant on the material support of women’s labor to complete their own tasks. In a variation of the nineteenth-century Euro-American “Cult of True Womanhood,” the realm of the domestic was not perceived as weak in comparison to the strong, public sphere, but complementary and structurally necessary.\textsuperscript{73} As anthropologist Jeffrey Anderson notes, “Relations among sisters and between generations of women maintained the continuity of the family and the camp and the solidarity of the tribe.”\textsuperscript{74} Arapaho women supported and were supported by the male age-grade lodges, in a highly ordered relationship of give-and-take, thus ensuring tribal unity and cooperation across gender and age divides.

According to Tall Bull, a Southern Arapaho, the origin of the age-grade lodges came from a vision of an Arapaho man hunting. The man was about to shoot a buffalo cow when the buffalo spoke, telling the Arapaho that she had a message for the benefit of his people: “I have taken pity on you, although you tried to kill me… there shall be lodges for different societies among your people; in these my whole body can be used for various purposes.”\textsuperscript{75} The man then went to the people and passed on what the buffalo had said, thereafter passing the message from generation to generation by secret rites contained within each lodge. In this way, the age-grade


\textsuperscript{73} Although a woman leads the office responsible for preserving the tribal history of the Northern Arapaho and two new female recruits are enrolled in a repatriation-archeology certificate program at the University of Wyoming on behalf of the tribe, the Northern Arapaho Business Council and the council of the Tribal Elders remain entirely populated by men. Gender divisions remain strong, with women responsible for the maintenance of internal affairs and men responsible for extra-tribal affairs.

\textsuperscript{74} Anderson, \textit{The Four Hills of Life}, 173.

\textsuperscript{75} Trenholm, 70.
lodges represented the entire community as pieces of the whole, to be used for the benefit of the entire tribe.

As the Arapahos progressed through the age-grade lodges, “they became the hunters, warriors, the police, the councilors, conductors of ceremonies and chiefs of the tribe. Each society had several primary functions, and its own ceremonies.”76 Only men, however, could become leaders of the community because they alone could progress to the final lodge and become Watering Pouring Old Men. While it was the responsibility of the eldest tribal members to maintain religious history and rituals, the lower lodges had the flexibility to learn new skills and experiment with new religious traditions, such as the Ghost Dance. The eldest members of the tribe then vetted new traditions to ensure they did not distort core values and beliefs, thus enabling cross-generational consensus. As anthropologist Loretta Fowler notes, the “complementary nature of age categories actually facilitated innovation while reassuring the Arapahoes of cultural continuity because by tradition each age group had definite areas of responsibility and each was morally obligated to support the other.”77

The governing of the tribe and institution of chieftainship was a function of the age-grade lodges. The eldest age-grade, and the apex of the Northern Arapaho hierarchy, was composed of the seven “Water Pouring Old Men,” the priests of Northern Arapaho traditions and keepers of the sacred tribal articles: seven medicine bags, the Sacred Flat Pipe, a stone turtle statue, and a petrified ear of corn. These men acted as the mediators between the people and the Creator, and directed the conduct of all the other lodges.

Unlike many Plains Indian tribes, the Northern Arapaho did not have a hereditary understanding of chieftainship. Rather, the English word “chief” came to stand for this highest age-grade lodge of tribal leaders. While the responsibilities of daily life were shared by the entirety of the tribe, those with the most experience and knowledge provided centralized control. The Water Pouring Old Men usually consulted together before presenting matters to the entire tribe, with one member speaking on behalf of the others. If disagreement between the lodges occurred, the issue was delegated to the lodge the decision would most severely impact—ceremonial problems to the two older lodges and war or social control problems to the middle lodges. Chiefs did not execute their own decisions, but rather, left enforcement to the age-grade lodge responsible for policing, a responsibility that rotated to prevent any one group from becoming too dominate in the tribe.\footnote{78}

The bounded nature of Northern Arapaho life ensured that supernatural power entered into the economic and social spheres of peoples’ lives. As Fowler notes, “The intense religiosity of the Northern Arapahoes figured importantly in political behavior.”\footnote{79} Major decisions for both public and personal goals were only undertaken after petition to supernatural authority, which was guided and mediated by the tribal elders. In a form of hierarchical communalism, it was the role of the tribal elders to maintain harmonious relationships with the people, nature, and the Creator. With their aid, the supernatural entered tribal politics, and therefore controlled and furthered the society.\footnote{80}

\footnote{79}{Fowler, 107.}
The age-grade lodges were responsible for a mix of secular and religious duties. Indeed, no distinction between what was considered religious or secular existed in Northern Arapaho cosmology. When Catholic missionaries worked with the tribe to create an Arapaho grammar at the end of the nineteenth century, a word for sacred had to be invented, as it had no equivalent in the Arapaho language. Yet, missionaries and anthropologists continuously noted the tribe’s religiosity and devotion to ceremony and ritual.

Participation in the ceremonies associated with each lodge was a central component of Northern Arapaho life. And in order to participate in these rituals, a tribal member had to rely on the authority of an elder to guide and instruct him in the intricacies of the ceremony. Because the Water Pouring Old Men had already undergone the religious ceremonies of every lodge and thereby achieved the highest religious knowledge of the tribe, the authority of the chiefs was pragmatically and supernaturally sanctioned. By means of the age-grade lodge rituals and the interpersonal bonds that arose from these lodges, the elders guided the Arapahos toward tribal solidarity.

At once representative of the entirety of the community, as well as centrally controlled, the age-grade lodges ordered Northern Arapaho life into a tightly bound network of tribal life. Michel Foucault’s term, dispositif or social technology, offers a useful theoretical framework to understand the agentive and strategic function of Northern Arapaho organization. Foucault used this term to “indicate the various institutional, physical, and administrative mechanisms and knowledge structures, which enhance and maintain the exercise of power within the social

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81 Fowler, 154.
82 Michel Foucault, “The Confession of the Flesh,” in Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writing (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980), 194. I will rely on the term “social technology” to refer to Foucault’s dispositif. As translator Graham Burchell notes there “does not seem to be a satisfactory English equivalent for the particular way in which Foucault uses this term to designate a configuration or arrangement of elements and forces, practices and discourses, power and knowledge, that is both strategic and technical.” Graham Burchell, 'Translator’s Note,' in: Michel Foucault, Psychiatric Power: Lectures at the Collège de France 1973-1974, Jacques Lagrange, edt., Graham Burchell, trans., (New York: Picador, 2008), xxiii.
As new factors, whether positive or negative, interact with the social body, the gears, or actors within the social technology, adjust and re-work the already present elements in order to strategically maintain the values or goals of the entire system.

The technology itself was the system of relations established between the various material and organizational mechanisms and knowledge structures of the tribe. The age-grade lodges arranged the Northern Arapaho tribal members in relation to each other and the tribe’s environmental and societal contexts. In the context of reservation life, this did not simply mean ignoring or resisting Euro-American institutions and ideologies, but actively surviving within them. And in this configuration, the lodges brought forth a particular tendency, a tendency to privilege community over individual gain. As I will argue below, this technology was not static, but deliberately dynamic in order to face the changing circumstances of the Northern Arapaho, a constantly shifting entanglement of many heterogeneous elements.

Northern Arapaho participation in the age-grade lodges created and maintained tribal unity by diffusing responsibilities across the entire community. Regarded as communist structures by reservation agents, the age-grade lodges were derided as barriers to achieving American citizenship: “I am firmly of the opinion that the policy of recognizing and perpetuating any tribal tribal [sic] organization of these Indians is a mistake, and that the development of the individual is hindered and handicapped continually by such policy.”

During the reservation era, the tribe eschewed public reward for individual achievement, as privileged by government officials, and instead celebrated activity dedicated to the benefit of the

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85 “Election of Tribal Council,” Superintendent to Commissioner of Indian Affairs, (Feb. 2 1910), 2. Records of the Wind River Agency of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Box 6, Entry 8, Record Group 75. National Archives, Denver.
entire tribe. This extended to decision-making and the distribution of goods, and was key to the function of religious ceremonies.

2.1.2 Pre-Reservation Life

By the mid-eighteenth century, the Arapaho had moved into the center of the Great Plains near the headwaters of the North Platte and Arkansas Rivers in the Colorado Territory. The Arapaho’s location enabled them to trade with Blackfeet, Taos Pueblo, Sioux, Gros Ventre, Kiowa, and Jicarilla Apache, as well as assisted in their successful defense of territory against their traditional enemies: the Utes, Bannocks, Pawnee, Shoshone, and Yakima. In 1851, the Fort Laramie treaty delineated specific boundaries for the Great Plains tribes in an attempt to regulate Indian Country by giving the United States the right to establish posts across the northern and central plains. The Department of the Interior allotted the Arapaho and their close allies, the Cheyenne, more than 122,000 square miles of an area from the North Platte to the Arkansas River, east from the Rocky Mountains through Colorado into Western Kansas and including parts of Nebraska and Wyoming, “to make an effective and lasting peace.” Because the treaty established boundaries for the territory of each tribe, the United States claimed the right to hold every tribe responsible for any attacks on whites that took place within its territory. In return, the tribes would receive annuities for ten years in compensation for the loss of game and other damages that resulted from white travel.

Prior to the official division of the Arapaho into the larger Southern and Northern bands in 1867, five distinct divisions existed between the Arapaho. As a single unit, the Arapaho were too large to feed from a single hunting ground, but the bands would meet twice a year to hunt buffalo and once a year to celebrate the Sun Dance. A shared tradition of Plains Indians, the Sun Dance was developed “in its most elaborate form by the Arapaho,” and was the most sacred and principal ceremony of the year. As tribal member Sherman Sage noted in 1940:

This is the old religion of the Arapaho. It has been handed down from one generation to another. It was the only religion the Arapaho had before the White man came. They have brought us the Catholic religion, the Protestant religions, the Ghost Dance religion, and the Peyote religion. But the Sun Dance has been handed down to us as the only Arapaho religion. We knew that there was a God before the Whites came.

Called “sacrifice” (ha’sayāt) or the Ceremony of the Offerings Lodge, the Sun Dance required dancers to fast for four days to prove their worthiness to have their prayers answered by the Creator. Only men were allowed to take the “vow” of participation in the dance, but the entire tribe was responsible for the successful completion of the ceremonies. The age-grade lodges dictated Sun Dance responsibilities and practices. Women tanned and sewed ritual clothing, prepared vast quantities of food for the post-dance feast, and cared for the children. Lower male

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89The Northern Arapaho consisted of the Nā’kasině’na (Sage Brush Men) and the Ba’achiněna (Red Willow Men, Blood-Pudding Men, or Mother People); the Southern Arapaho or Na’wuněna; the Ā’níněna (White Clay People) or Gros Ventre of the Prairie, whom later settled in Montana; the Ba’awuně’na (Wood Lodge Men) and the Ha’nahawnee, eventually absorbed by the Northern Arapaho. See Sutter, 70. American Indian scholar Edward Curtis noted that it was probable the Arapaho had split into Northern and Southern bands by as early as 1818. Primary sources provide various explanations: the tribe divided after a flood separated the two branches, as a result of a dispute between two tribal elders, as two bands followed separate buffalo herds, or even as a response to the devastation of the Platt Bridge attack in 1865. Regardless of the initial division, the Medicine Lodge Treaty of 1867 officially divided the bands by placing the Southern Arapaho on the Cheyenne reservation in Oklahoma.


lodges carried center poles down from the mountains and took the vow, while higher lodges directed the ceremony itself.92

Functionally, the Sun Dance offered a time of tribal unification by physically bringing the bands, largely composed of kin, together in a single tribal unit. The Sun Dance offered a time for the Arapaho Council to meet and discuss tribal affairs and for families and friends to reunite. At the same time, mutual preparation for the Sun Dance bound the community together in religious unity. As Emile Durkheim argues in *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, religion is the collective mode of thinking and acting of a society. A society is ritually constructed through shared representations, rites, and beliefs. During the Sun Dance, the individual was consumed by a collective effervescence, in which Arapaho society came to stand for the divine itself.93

The Sun Dance and other Arapaho ceremonies were intended to bring supernatural power to the participants and blessings of good health and good fortune to the tribe. While individual requests, such as success in a hunt or the healing of a sick relative would have been sought, participation in ceremonies was regarded as an act on behalf of the entire community. Indeed, an individual only gained power or respect by his contribution and sacrifice to the tribe.94 In the nineteenth-century the Sun Dancers not only sacrificed by way of a fast, but also

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92Yufna Soldier Wolf, in an interview with author in July 2016 noted, You couldn’t participate in the Sun Dance if you didn’t have help setting up shade for your children while you fasted; Edward Curtis, 144: “Less impressive but actually more important in their effect on the tribe, inasmuch as practically every person was a participant, were the ceremonial performance of the age societies.” Estelle SunRhodes, *Valley of Three Cultures Oral History Project*, File 57, CWC, recorded by Susan Crazy Thunder (April 30, 1987): it took three years and a lot of money to get ready for the Sun Dance.

93“It seems to him that he has become a new being: the decorations he puts on and the masks that cover his face figure materially in this interior transformation, and to a still greater extent, they aid in determining its nature. And as at the same time all his companions feel themselves transformed in the same way and express this sentiment by their cries, their gestures and their general attitude, everything is just as though he really were transported into a special world, entirely different from the one where he ordinarily lives, and into an environment filled with exceptionally intense forces that take hold of him and metamorphose him.” Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, (1912) 218, 259.

through the offering of flesh and blood. As recorded in a 1973 interview with an elderly Northern Arapaho tribesman, there used to be a lot of blood: “Well, you know, they’d cut on the skin, real thin. Then run buckskin in there, on their skin. Just so the buckskin get on and they tie a knot there and this buckskin rope, tie it to the post, center post. And they started swinging; they sit down hard.” These practices led to a federally implemented ban of the Sun Dance in 1904, as a disgusting act of savagery, and therefore a punishable offense.

In an ultimatum designed to put a stop to all ceremonial practices, and a direct subversion of Durkheim’s account of the social function of ritual, the Commissioner of Indian Affairs stated: “In many cases these dances and feasts are simply subterfuge to cover degrading acts and to disguise immoral purposes. You [agents] are directed to use your best efforts in the suppression of these evils.” The Sun Dance was eventually reinstated in 1923 after an Arapaho man, Yellow Calf, went to Washington, D.C. and promised the Commissioner they would cease the practice of mutilation. Although the Northern Arapaho would face considerable failure in maintaining traditional modes of production, the acculturation programs of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century never succeeded in suppressing Arapaho religious practices. As a magazine produced by St. Stephen’s Indian Mission, the *Wind River Rendezvous*, noted eighty years later, “Although the Arapahos’ way of life has changed, they have succeeded in keeping their tribal traditions an active part of their lives today.”

### 2.1.3 A Changing World

The tentative freedom of the Arapahos on the Great Plains came to a shocking halt on November 29, 1864. Under the command of Methodist minister, Colonel John Chivington, 675

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95 Name withheld for privacy. Loretta Fowler Papers, Box 7, AHC.
troops from the Colorado U.S. Volunteer Cavalry killed more than a hundred Arapaho and Cheyenne people, with unarmed women and children making up more than two-thirds of the dead. Hours after the massacre, Chivington bragged in a letter to his superior General Samuel Curtis, commander of the U.S. Army’s Department of Kansas, that his men had killed several chiefs, as well as “between 400 and 500 other Indians.” Months later, Chivington was called to account for his actions by the U.S. Congress under accusations of violating the rules of combat. In his testimony, he falsely recalled hostile and heavily armed Indians, brutally rallying against the Army’s surprise attack. Although the Arapaho and Cheyenne were camped on Big Sandy Creek for treaty negotiations, Chivington claimed that one could not tell one savage from another and, “like their respect for the chastity of women who may become prisoners in their hands,” there is little to “inspire confidence in what they may say.” The Sand Creek Massacre was a shocking reverberation of American expansion and still draws ire and sadness from the Arapaho. As a tribal elder said in August 2016, “We carry the scars of our ancestors.” Another Arapaho elder echoed this by noting the tribe has a long way to go toward healing from this event, 150 years ago. The years directly following the massacre saw an increase in hostilities on all sides, leaving the Arapaho vulnerable and without recourse in their continually shrinking hunting grounds.

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98 Ari Kelman, A Misplaced Massacre: Struggling over the Memory of Sand Creek, (Cumberland, US: Harvard University Press, 2013), 3-17. On April 28, 2007 the National Park Service opened the Sand Creek Massacre National Historic Site. Opened with the beat of a Northern Arapaho drum group, the opening ceremony called on American historians to write American Indians back into the narrative and to recognize the memorial not as a benchmark in national progress and imperial expansion, but as massacre that the Government and U.S. Army was responsible for.


Trailing the diminishing buffalo herds across the Great Plains and attempting to skirt white settlements, the Northern Arapaho continued to resist the reservation system and government sanctions well into the nineteenth-century. From 1865 to 1878, Euro-American plains settlers rarely mentioned the Arapaho. When they were mentioned, they were regularly cited as “hostile” for their refusal to bend to American conceptions of civilization, and thus rarely entered into western history beyond accounts of their transgressions. In some ways, their lack of detailed analysis enabled the Northern Arapaho to fulfill an archetype of plains culture. As Frank Walters, a gold rush settler in Colorado Springs recalled:

I remember their smoke-gray lodges, the smell of their cooking fires, the sound of their drums. The Blue Cloud Arapahoe, as we called them, and the fighting Cheyenne, were the preeminent buffalo hunters, the warrior horsemen of the Great Plains—the fast-riding war-bonneted Indians who will forever embody the proud myth and sullied history of America.¹⁰²

The Northern Arapaho simultaneously stood as a caricature of the American myth, and the savage that resisted its fulfillment. Their limited contact with whites and relative absence in government records in the mid-nineteenth century has carried forward to Great Plains Indian history, with relatively little scholarship focused on the history and culture of the Northern Arapaho.¹⁰³

2.2 A Reservation of Two Cultures

The Eastern Shoshone occupied the Wind River country well before the establishment of the Wind River Indian Reservation, hunting and gathering throughout an 80-million acre territory that today comprises the States of Colorado, Idaho, Nevada, Utah, and Wyoming. The California gold rush and the migration of Mormons west in the 1840s, followed by the 1862

¹⁰²Wind River Reservation Yesterday and Today, 8
¹⁰³“Although typical of the equestrian Indian tribes of the Great Plains, whose subsistence was based on the buffalo, the Arapaho are relatively little known.” “Arapaho Ethnic Heritage Reinforcement Project,” Zednek Salzmann Papers, Box 15, Research 1, AHC.
Homestead Act, greatly increased white settlement in the western territories. To encourage peaceful migration of Euro-American travelers and the United States’ mail service, a series of treaties were adopted with the Shoshone, including the 1863 Treaty of Fort Bridger with the Eastern Shoshone. This treaty established the boundaries of a 45-million acre “Shoshone country,” until a second treaty in 1868 promised exclusive occupancy rights to a three million acre reservation in central Wyoming.

Meanwhile, the Northern Arapaho wished to stay independent of the more powerful Lakota nations by resisting placement at the Red Cloud Agency in South Dakota, as well as refusing to join their kinsmen, the Southern Arapaho in Oklahoma. After successfully avoiding the reservation system for decades, freezing and on the edge of starvation, however, the tribe eventually ceded to the United States Government in the winter of 1878. Led by Major G.A. Gordon of the Fifth Cavalry, the tribe was to be escorted to the Cheyenne-Arapaho Reservation, but when they reached the Wind River the Northern Arapaho were in a “desperate condition. They could travel no farther.” When asked if the Arapaho could winter on the reservation, Shoshone Chief Washakie went with Gordon to inspect the state of the tribe:

It was a raw, cold day. When they rode through the forlorn camp Washakie refused to speak to the Araaphoe [sic] chiefs, all of whom he knew; but he took note of the emaciated women and children and the starving, lifeless horses. Turning to the officials he said: ‘I don’t like these people; they eat their dogs. They have been the enemies of the Shoshones since before the birth of the oldest old men. If you leave them here there will be trouble. But it is plain they can go no farther now. Take them down to where the Popo Agie walks into the Wind River and let them stay until the grass comes again. But when the grass comes again take them off my reservation.”

104Jeffrey Anderson, The Four Hills of Life, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2001), 10. Anderson cites the presence of the remaining buffalo herds in Wyoming as one explanation for the tribes unwillingness to leave Wyoming.

Although Washakie formally demanded the removal of the Arapaho every year, the Office of Indian Affairs eventually invited the Northern Arapaho into reservation business. Nearly a century and a half since their temporary placement, the Northern Arapaho remain on the Wind River Indian Reservation.

The presence of two distinct cultural groups on the reservation provides scholars with a useful comparative project of how variant tribal structures regulated relations to white settlers and enabled various modes of acculturation to nineteenth-century Euro-American standards. Prior to contact, both tribes maintained a degree of tribal unity, favoring communal decision-making and collectivist rewards. As was common in the nineteenth-century discussion of Native American acculturation, however, the two tribes came to represent tropes of Good and Bad Indians. Euro-American settlers to the region, government officials, and early ethnologists noted that the Shoshone worked quickly to acculturate to white norms with participation in the cash economy, farm work, reservation school systems, and the Episcopal Mission, as well as developing a heightened sense of individualism. In contrast, the Arapaho were continually noted for their commitment to communal decision-making, tribal unity, and superstitions. Although early histories often overstated these divisions, the two tribes were independent. From the beginning, they occupied geographically distinct portions of the reservation: the Shoshone in the northwest and the Arapaho in the southeast. They retained separate tribal and business councils, education programs, ceremonies, and enrollment statuses. Intermarriage was rare.\textsuperscript{107}

\textsuperscript{106}The Northern Arapaho claim they are the only American Indian tribe to pay for their reservation. Congress passed the Shoshone Judgment Fund Act in 1927 enabling the Shoshone to successfully sue the United States government for breaking the Second Fort Bridger Treaty of 1868, which promised them sole occupancy of the Wind River Indian Reservation. In 1937, the Shoshone were awarded $4,408,444 for the Northern Arapaho’s use of reservation land and resources.

\textsuperscript{107}\textsuperscript{107}The Arapaho have maintained themselves as a separate tribal and ethnic group. This has been intensified by their lack of interests with either Shoshone or whites. This fact has led to Arapahoe marrying among themselves.” Missouri River Basin Investigations, Report no. 106, “History and Economy of the Indians of the Wind River Reservation, Wyoming,” (Billings, MT: Department of the Interior, Bureau of Indian Affairs, 1950), 9.
Euro-American settlers regarded the Northern Arapaho and Eastern Shoshone not only as distinct from civilized American culture, but also from each other. From the early reservation period Euro-American settlers conflated the physical differences between the tribes as evidence for their perceived mental or social differences: “Though they are all classed under the general head of Indians, it is supposed that they really belong to two different races. Physically and mentally they are still quite different people, almost as much so as the whites and mongolians [sic].” This comment harkens back to Dr. Charles Caldwell, an early nineteenth-century American phrenologist, who argued there were four distinct races of mankind—Caucasian, Mongolian, African, and Native American—each created as a unique species by God and not the product of evolutionary environmental processes. Caldwell believed each race had innate intellectual differences, with Caucasians gifted by God as the most physically and therefore, mentally, developed race. President John Quincy Adams noted in 1825, Native Americans were “essentially inferior to the Anglo-Saxon race” and were not “an improvable breed.”

One prominent example of this type of racial analysis came from Dr. Samuel George Morton, who in his 1839 *Crania Americana* summarized the measurements of hundreds of human skulls, concluding that Caucasians had larger brains and therefore superior intellectual capability. When describing Native Americans, Morton noted: “In their mental character the Americans are averse to cultivation, and slow in acquiring knowledge; restless, revengeful, and fond of war.” This form of scientific racism was imbedded in a national understanding of

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Native Americans, not as sovereign and distinct tribal nations, but as a single minority subordinate to U.S. law.

Manifest Destiny was not simply a question of land hunger or the quest to secure ports on the Pacific; it involved a belief in the destiny of a superior Anglo-Saxon race. Senator Thomas Benton trumpeted, “the arrival of the van of the Caucasian race” on the Pacific as one of the greatest human events in history: “Civilization, or extinction, has been the fate of all people who have found themselves in the track of the advancing Whites.” This conflation of race and mental capability by government officials was central in justifying American expansion West.

Comparative religion grew from this entanglement of imperialism and science, in which growing western empires increased the available data for western scholars to think about, and ultimately classify, diverse religious traditions. Historian Robert A. Safford argues that scientific racism, or as he coins it, imperial science, gave Euro-Americans “intellectual as well as actual authority over colonial environments by classifying and ultimately containing their awesome dimensions.” The perceived uncontrollable excess of Native American traditions, highlighted by gruesome rituals such as the Sun Dance and idolatrous worship of items such as the Flat Pipe, was evidence of their childlike inferiority and thus warranted their containment on reservations. Indian Country was excessive, chaotic, and irrational—it was the role of the lawmaker, missionary, and white settler to claim and transform these spaces for a civilized Christian future.

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112 Congressional Globe, 29 Cong., 1 Sess., pp. 917-918.
Comparative religionists intimately tied race and religion together in a colonial project of western expansion. As theorist Andrew Lange noted in 1887, “the savage and senseless element in mythology is, for the most part, a legacy from ancestors of the civilized races who were once in an intellectual state not higher, but probably lower, than that of Australians, Bushmen, Red Indians, the lower races of South America, and other worse than barbaric peoples.”¹¹⁵ That is, the religions of “primitive” peoples such as Native Americans were merely the survival of a savage original state. The racial and mental superiority of whites enabled Euro-Americans to understand and participate in Protestant Christianity, a religion that allegedly eschewed idols to focus on the inward category of belief. Christianity, as perfected by Anglo-Saxons, was an ethical tradition, while the idolatrous traditions of “primitive” peoples were “fleshy religions,” too focused on this-worldly practices.¹¹⁶

By the last quarter of the nineteenth century, government officials realized extermination of the Native Americans was untenable. Instead, scientific racism had evolved to regard the lowest form of savagery not as permanent, but as a racial defect that could be improved upon through acculturation policies: “With help and time they could hope to progress to the advanced American state of society.”¹¹⁷ This shift was in part due to the efforts of a group of white church leaders, social reformers, and government officials, who met at Mohonk Lake, New York in 1883, to determine a new course of action for civilizing Native Americans. Calling themselves Friends of the Indians, they “could not envision an American who practiced an indigenous religion or held communal values. For these influential citizens, evangelical

¹¹⁶ Jonathan Z. Smith, 277. In 1915, W.E.B. Du Bois developed a counterpoint to the comparative religionists by critiquing the western notion of the African fetish as an “ideological cover for relegating Africans to a subhuman status and justifying slavery.” Chidester, 11.
Christianity and individualistic, competitive capitalism were the hallmarks of American identity.\textsuperscript{118} Citing the evolutionary theories of comparative religionists, The Friends of the Indians proposed that it was possible to remold Native Americans into American citizens through educational programs that sought to “kill the Indian, save the man.”\textsuperscript{119} Through educational reform and national conferences, the so called, Friends of the Indians, shifted the conversation away from the inevitability of racial inferiority, to what “friends” could do to aid in their transition.

Although Native Americans were now believed to be capable of civilizing, a racial barrier remained. In a 1919 history of St. Stephen’s Mission, the school’s curriculum was described as improvement, not transformation, for one could not strive “to make white men out of the Indians, but [only] to make them Indians ‘plus.’”\textsuperscript{120} This offers a prime example of Homi Bhabha’s theory of colonial mimicry, or “the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, as a subject of a reference that is almost the same, but not quite.” American acculturation policies wanted to civilize the Northern Arapaho to Euro-American standards, but in a way that still maintained a clear sense of difference. In this gap, however, this “slippage” between colonizer and colonized, there is power not only for the colonizer, but also as a subversive tool of the colonized. Mimicry undermines the power of American acculturation policies, in “its double vision which in disclosing the ambivalence of colonial discourse also disrupts its authority” (emphasis in the original).\textsuperscript{121} As I will argue below, the power of everyday practices, re-conceptualized by the Northern Arapaho, enabled the tribe to disrupt American economic and

\textsuperscript{119} Yufna Soldier Wolf, interview with author, July 7, 2016.
religious exceptionalism, while simultaneously participating in the structures of American capitalist production.

Education was the primary tool of acculturation. By educating the native youth as proper Americans, government officials hoped to lessen federal oversight. Shortly after the creation of the Wind River Indian Reservation, a school was erected to educate Shoshone children in practical skills, such as farming and homemaking, as well as conversion to English, Euro-American dress and hygiene, and Christianity:

English is the only language allowed in school. Half the day is spent by all the pupils in the school room, and while some are learning out of books, others are taking practical courses in farming, horse-shoeing, carpentering; and the girls are being taught work about the house,—cooking, laundering, and sewing... Every effort is made to inculcate independence of effort and to develop ideas of true citizenship.122 (emphasis added)

Through the twentieth century, students were disallowed from speaking in their native languages.123 As an elderly Northern Arapaho noted, he was often sent to stare at the corner, hands clasped in prayer, if he was caught speaking Arapaho at the St. Stephen’s Mission School in the 1940s.124

By 1884 two schools had been erected to serve the separate needs of the Arapaho and Shoshone: the Episcopal run Shoshone Government School in Fort Washakie and the Arapaho School at the Catholic St. Stephen’s Mission. Arapaho and Shoshone children were kept at the schools six days a week, for fear their presence among their uncivilized relatives would result in dangerous backsliding.125 Tribal members were promised or denied rations based on their

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123 When we went to school, we were denied the right to speak our language. If we spoke our language in school, we were punished. We had to speak English all the time. That's how the Arapahoe language began to be forgotten." Deborah Thunder, “Women of the Blue Sky,” in Wind River Cache: A cultural journal of West Central Wyoming V. 1. No. 1 January, 1982.
124 Interview with author, August 2016.
125 The condition and disposition of these Arapahoes rather suggests that they are not yet advanced enough for day schools and make it rather imperative to take the children out of their tepees and withdraw them from the noxious
children’s presence in the schools. In a 1900 controversy, Agent Herman G. Nickerson, a leader of Lander’s American Protective Agency, ruled that a native child had to attend the Government School for his or her family to receive rations. This forced people to remove their children from the Catholic St. Stephen’s Mission School until the Commissioner of Indian Affairs rebuked the agent for his misstep.

Under President Ulysses S. Grant, the Department of Interior assigned religious denominations to oversee the moral and educational needs of new reservations. In this way, religious institutions were literally charged with the task of turning reservation inhabitants into productive American citizens at the local level. What would be called “Grant’s Peace Policy,” the Episcopal Church was assigned to the Wind River Indian Reservation in the 1870s. In 1885, with the gift of 160 acres from Chief Washakie, the Shoshone Episcopal Mission built a permanent church and schoolroom under the leadership of Reverend John Roberts. By 1878, with the arrival of the Northern Arapaho, most Shoshone had been baptized into the Episcopal Church and regularly participated in mission ceremonies and events. With the arrival of the Northern Arapaho, who settled in the Southeast corner of the reservation, the Catholic Church saw an opportunity to expand into the large reservation. Bishop James O’Connor, the Catholic Bishop of Omaha, Nebraska contacted the government and offered to pay for a new school and mission headed by Father Jutz. In 1884, construction began on St. Stephen’s Indian Mission.

influence and surroundings of the old Indians as much as possible.” B. Feusi to Very Rev. Monsignore, JA Stephan, Director Catholic Bureau, November 20, 1898. Loretta Fowler Papers, Box 6, AHC.


A national Anti-Catholic league.


St. Stephen’s was operated by secular priests.
The largely Protestant communities of Lander and Riverton, the two largest towns near the reservation, participated in a national distrust of Catholicism. The growing relationship between St. Stephen’s Indian Mission and the Northern Arapahos added another layer of prejudice against the tribe: “By the 1890’s, the Arapahoes of Wyoming were perceived as being under Catholic influence and, therefore, a distinctly undesirable group. In a country that extolled the merits of the Anglo-Saxon, Catholicism represented a threat and an alien influence in the late nineteenth century. The autocratic power of the Catholic Church and the threat of its vast tentacles were feared most.”\(^{130}\) The elaborate ritual of the liturgy and the theological dedication to community solidarity of the Catholic Church appealed to the Arapaho, who had the choice to send their children to the Episcopal or Catholic missions for education.\(^{131}\) Already considered hostile for their unwillingness to adhere to the reservation system until 1878, the Northern Arapaho’s involvement at St. Stephen’s Mission furthered Euro-American settler distrust. Noted for their rigid devotion to collective decision-making and community solidarity, the Northern Arapaho were at odds with government officials and settlers, who saw individualism and private property as hallmarks of American civilization.

With the establishment of reservations across the United States, each tribe initially held the land within reservation borders as a collective trust. Yet, collective ownership was seen as antagonistic to an American ideal of private property. Religious and industrial education was not doing enough to undermine tribal culture. Thus, in 1887, the Office of Indian Affairs adopted the Dawes Act in a full-scale attempt to, “to replace the traditional communal economic base with a

\(^{131}\) Director of Catholic Missions To Rev. Wm. McMillan, SJ at St. Stephen’s Mission. March 21, 1908. Loretta Fowler Papers, Box 6, AHC.
system of private property.” Named for its author, Massachusetts Senator Henry Dawes, the Dawes Act or the General Allotment Act was a piece of legislation that marked a departure from previous policies of reservations held in common to a new system of allotting 160 acre plots to Native American heads of household. The Dawes Act sought to fundamentally alter native relationships to the landscape by territorially breaking down the remaining communal lands of tribal nations. Lands once understood as usury, would now be held in severalty in order to “hasten the arrival of civilization and Christianity at the tribal doorstep.”

Allotment was perceived as a step toward removing federal oversight to Native American populations, who through the “civilizing” influence of property rights and agricultural responsibility would soon be able to provide for themselves. The act also allowed for “surplus” land, or those tracts of reservation land left over after allotment, to be sold to white migrants, diminishing national tribal holdings by two-thirds, and opening more western land to Euro-American settlers. Sherman Coolidge, a Northern Arapaho tribal member spoke at a “Friends of the Indians” conference in 1913 calling for the disbandment of the Office of Indian Affairs. For Coolidge, the Office of Indian Affairs was merely creating more red tape, choking the Northern Arapaho on their own soil: “The Indian himself feels dissatisfied with the present scheme in vogue at Washington for his uplift. Every fiber of his manhood protests against being treated as a federal or civic freak.” Federal assimilation programs had merely tangled and confused Native Americans:

The white man has a way of putting his European morals, religion and mental machinery inside of the Indian body and then mapping out the probable process of

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133 United States v. Kagama, 118 U.S. 375 (1886).
development accordingly. The inevitable result is that the Indian must spend much of his
time and ingenuity in disentangling himself from mistaken policies and abuses.¹³⁴

Allotment and individual ownership were antagonistic to a Northern Arapaho
worldview. An Arapaho’s status was measured by her contribution to the tribe as a
whole and the ownership or maintenance of private property clashed with the tribe’s
understanding of community.

The impact of the Dawes Act can still be felt on reservations today. Although allotted in
severalty to individual tribe members, the land remained held in trust for at least 25 years,
requiring the owner to prove competency before officially acquiring the deed. With changes in
legislation in the early twentieth century, however, land predominantly remained in trust. As
allottees died, their land was given in equal ownership to all their children. This process
continued for generations, creating a system by which certain plots of land now have more than
a hundred owners. Because changes to the land required owner consensus, these original
allotments overwhelmingly remain in disuse. Intended to civilize Native Americans through
private property, the Dawes Act’s legacy is one of fragmented land ownership and agricultural
neglect.¹³⁵

The Northern Arapaho and Eastern Shoshone experienced and reacted to the exertion of
American hegemony in different ways. Compared to the Arapaho, the Shoshone showed a
willingness to adapt to American value systems by quickly acclimating to an individual reward
structure. A study of the value orientations of the Shoshone and Northern Arapaho Indians notes
the Shoshone, “hold values closer to the whites living on or near the reservation, than the

¹³⁴ Sherman Coolidge, “Indian American - His Duty to His Race and to His Country, the United States of America,”
Arapaho who stress collectivistic and nonachievement orientations.136 From first interaction with Chief Washakie, the Shoshone’s primary contact for government officials, the Shoshone were noted for their cooperation with the government.137 As noted by early twentieth century historian A.F.C. Greene: “The Shoshones… were always friendly and have been intermarrying with the whites since the early part of the century.”138 The Shoshone’s prolonged contact with white settlers and traders, and even their penchant for Protestantism, made the tribe appear more trustworthy and therefore more likely to be hired by white settlers. As trader James K. Moore noted, “The shoshones as a rule are better [at] pay[ing] than the arapahoes, and are better buyers. Arapahoes are with few exceptions apt to abuse their credit.”139 Government officials and community leaders regarded their interactions with the Shoshone as largely positive for their willingness and attempts to join white, Protestant American society.

In 1891, the U.S. Government attempted to secure signatures from both the Northern Arapaho and Shoshone to authorize the sale of a portion of the reservation to Euro-American settlers. Chief Washakie was present at the council meeting and was quick to sign on behalf of the Shoshone. For his cooperation, he received quarterly payments of $100.140 In contrast, Black Coal, a leader of the Northern Arapaho refused to sign:

137 He was noted for being a “progressive Indian,” looking to civilize his people through American acculturation programs. “In his gracious but firm acceptance, Washakie carefully outlined the conditions under which he would move his people to the Wind River Valley. He asked for schools, church, and a hospital. They would need instructors to teach them agriculture and livestock rating of the day when the buffalo would be gone. An Army post would be necessary to help the Shoshone protect themselves against the powerful enemies who would come raiding there. He said, ‘We prefer to live in skin or canvas lodges, but skin and canvas will not turn bullets; we will have to build log houses until it is safe to move back into our old lodges.’ His last and strongest stipulation was that this reservation must be for none other than Shoshones, or people of their choosing.” “Chief Washakie: The Redskin Who Saved the White Man’s Hide,” in Wyoming State Journal, (Lander, WY: June 30, 1960), 5.
139 James K. Moore Telegram, August 5, 1913. James K. Moore Papers, Box 12, AHC.
140 Chief Washakie was eager to sell portions of the reservation, claiming: “My hair is getting gray, and I want the Government to hurry up and make me rich. Everyone likes money alike and I want to have some in my pocket-book.”
I am only one Indian; there are but a few Arapahoes here. I want all the Indians to talk it over first. It is not with our tribe as it is with some others. If I should sign a treaty without the consent of the other Indians, some of them would kill me… I want the Arapahoes to all pull together, and all agree on one thing. I do not want them to go in every direction.  

The Northern Arapaho rewarded collectivistic solutions and tribal solidarity and even placed “limits on individual aspirations to attain long-range goals since these mobility aspirations if actualized might endanger tribal solidarity.” While the Shoshone adopted white value standards, notably individualism and capitalism, Black Coal deferred individual reward in favor of tribal consensus.

The shared responsibility for the prosperity and health of the tribe was demonstrated by the “give-away,” or the Northern Arapaho gift exchange. Bodily sacrifice, such as in the Sun Dance, and the sharing of goods were respected acts of the give-away, which distributed physical and spiritual surplus wealth among others. For example, only through give-aways could a tribal member hope to pass to the next age-grade lodge. Sherman Coolidge was regularly criticized by white members of the Episcopal community for his give-aways of food and hay to his hungry relatives.  

Tribal elder Ernst SunRhodes noted, “Our Indian people, they shared...”

George Washakie, “Official reports of the transactions of the Commission appointed by the Hon. Secretary of the Interior to associate with the Shoshone and Arapahoe Indians for a part of their reservation,” (US Printing Office, 1891), 22. Loretta Fowler Papers, Box 9, AHC.

Black Coal, “Official reports of the transactions of the Commission appointed by the Hon. Secretary of the Interior to associate with the Shoshone and Arapahoe Indians for a part of their reservation,” (US Printing Office, 1891), 26-27. Loretta Fowler Papers, Box 9, AHC.


Although noted for his Christian virtue, it was noted that Sherman Coolidge’s traditional acts of “giving away” made it difficult for him to progress financially: “For his services the Church pays him a scanty pittance, but with this and the little he makes in working his ranch, he manages not only to live but to feed and help a horde of hungry relatives. His hay stack is gone long before the next mowing time comes around, and his larder, I am sure, is empty, but he only says: ‘I am glad to help them, my poor relatives.’ And so he goes on, giving with both hands to all who ask.” “An Episcopal Visit Among the Arapahoes,” Quarterly Message, 1899, 26. John Roberts Papers, AHC. Box 2 Folder 18. The give-away was criticized even in the early twentieth century: “You do yourselves and your families great injustice when at dances you give away money or other property, perhaps clothing, a cow, a horse or a team and...”
with their neighbors, friends, families...regardless of what little we had our old people used to tell us to share...its always been the traditional saying of the Indian people—share and love one another.⁴¹⁴ In the present day, the Northern Arapaho continue to wrestle with American categories of individual goods and money. As noted by Tribal Preservation Officer Yufna Soldier Wolf, the tribe struggles with how to allocate grant money, often choosing to distribute funds outside of the parameters of the grant, but within tribal conceptions of the give-away to members in need.¹⁴⁵

Although publicly observed as an act of magnanimous, although expected, sharing, the give-away of the late-nineteenth century came with a reciprocal benefit of respect. It is important to look beyond social pretext, in order to see the underlying “obligation and economic self-interest” of gift exchange.¹⁴⁶ In the case of the Northern Arapaho, the give-away does not represent an economic advantage, but rather, an honorific one: “Behind the give-away was the highly esteemed virtue of liberality which brought the individual honor among his people.”¹⁴⁷ By proving one’s commitment to the tribe, one proved worthiness to share in a greater degree of ceremonial knowledge and progressed through the age-grade lodges.

American expansion west was propagated and justified by a culturally constructed territoruality, which privileged individualism, free market capitalism, and Protestantism as
inherent values of the American people. This understanding of American exceptionalism was built on a “worldview that sees human development in terms of a master narrative requiring the congruence of other cultures.” Fitness for American citizenship was based on the authority of Western knowledge to decide the criteria for what is and is not reasonable. Yet, the Northern Arapaho were not passively victimized in the onslaught of American acculturation policies and ideologies, but actively and intellectually resisted settler colonial practices by leveraging their own social technology to survive.

Prior to the reservation era, American power was exerted through brute force in the killing and rounding up of Native American peoples. At the end of the nineteenth century, however, power largely was not exerted by means of violence, but by disciplining the body into specific roles as pieces or cogs of the machine of American society. It was only through the control of the landscape and the diminishment of difference that American ideological hegemony could be maintained. For the Northern Arapaho, this meant participating in the cash-economy of central Wyoming, with an emphasis on individual rewards and property rights. As Foucault argues in *Discipline and Punish*, participation in particular body-schemas demarcates insiders and outsiders. The reservation system was a form of control, a network of forces crafted to regulate and discipline individuals through industrial training and religious education. On the Wind River Indian Reservation, various layers of body-schemas existed to unite and contradict one another. While reservation agents, lawmakers, missionaries, early ethno-historians, and white settlers regarded Native behavior and knowledge as inferior and incompatible with American conceptions of civilization, Northern Arapaho’s themselves

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148 Doxtater, 629.
regarded participation in the age-grade lodges, ceremonies, and giveaways, as markers of tribal members.

As the following section will show, the preservation of the age-grade lodges through the end of the nineteenth century enabled the tribe to strategically adopt new religious traditions, which enabled the tribe to transition to reservation life. While being instructed by the ceremonial elders to always hold the Northern Arapaho traditions “above” others, lower lodges began to experiment with new religious traditions, which opened the door for the inclusion of seemingly Euro-American sanctioned modes of life into the tribal complex. Although the traditions of the Sun Dance and Sacred Flat Pipe were privileged, the acceptance of the Ghost Dance, for example, sanctioned the adoption of wage labor among the Northern Arapaho.

First encountered and accepted by younger tribe members, the Ghost Dance was interpreted and incorporated by the tribal elders into the already established ritual order. Although the traditional standards for movement through the lodges, such as acts of bravery in war and giveaways from hunting, were no longer possible, a new form of community support and achievement emerged to take its place: the sharing of wages. As life on the reservation increasingly became proscribed, the age-grade lodges, as an open and responsive social technology, enabled the Northern Arapaho to experiment, vet, and recode the doctrines of the Ghost Dance to ensure the tribe’s survival within new socio-economic circumstances. In this

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150 Fowler, 122.
151 Relatively little focused attention has been given to Native American responses to capitalist development in the United States. Early ethnographies of Native American communities largely focused on pre-contact cultural systems that regarded any changes as a loss or corruption of Indian ways, and therefore went largely undocumented. As economic historian Linda Barrington noted in 1999, “Research on the interwoven economic histories of the United States and Native Americans is sparse. Opportunities for further study are unlimited.” “Preface,” in The Other Side of the Frontier: Economic Explorations into Native American History, ed. Linda Barrington (Boulder, CO: University of Colorado Press, 1999), ix-x. This scarcity continues. See Alexandra Harmon, Colleen O’Neill, and Paul C. Rosier, “Interwoven Economic Histories: American Indians in a Capitalist America,” The Journal of American History 98.3 (Dec 2011): 698-722; Vera Parham, “‘These Indians are Apparently Well to Do’: The Myth of Capitalism and American Labor,” International Review of Social History 57.3 (Dec 2012): 447-470.
way, the Ghost Dance offers one example of how the age-grade lodges enabled the Northern Arapaho to adapt to reservation life while simultaneously maintaining tribal unity and religious devotion.

2.3 The Ghost Dance and Wage Labor

The Ghost Dance originated among the Paiute in the 1870s, but gained national notoriety in its second iteration when a Northern Paiute ranch hand, Wovoka, had a vision in 1889 of a catastrophic earthquake that would destroy the Euro-Americans and restore the land to the Native Americans. As this section will show, the Northern Arapaho adopted the doctrines and practices of the Ghost Dance as a means to strategically sanction a complex cosmology of survival and cooperation built on a political economy of wage labor. The product of tumultuous cultural and political exchange between Euro-American settlers and Native Americans, the doctrines of the Ghost Dance offered mechanisms of accommodation to Euro-American systems of power in order to find relief from the shifting demands of the reservation era. In this section I will first highlight the history of the Ghost Dance and its role in establishing a pan-Indian identity. Next, I will consider how the Northern Arapaho strategically incorporated the dance into their tribal structure in order to adapt to life within the reservation system.

2.3.1 The Ghost Dance in Context

On the day of a sun eclipse in January 1889, a Northern Paiute, Wovoka, received a special vision from God detailing a new dance and heralding a utopian world in which all disease and misery would be left behind. Wovoka’s new doctrine prescribed ritual dancing in order to ensure the survival of Native Americans in the coming millenarian earthquake. First-hand chronicler James Mooney cites Wovoka as saying, “When the sun died, I went up to heaven and saw God and all the people who had died a long time ago. God told me to come back
and tell my people they must be good and love one another, and not fight, or steal, or lie. He
gave me this dance to give to my people.”¹⁵² Raised with Presbyterian teachings, Wovoka’s
prophesies combined traditional Paiute imagery and ideology with a Christian message of
messianic and eschatological hopefulness.

Wovoka was born in Mason Valley, Nevada and spent a large part of his childhood on
the ranch of David Wilson, a staunch Missouri Presbyterian who often spoke to Wovoka, known
as Jack Wilson, about Christianity. As chronicled by his contemporary Genevieve Chapman,
Wovoka would often come for breakfast at the Wilson house: “Mr. Wilson was a devout
Christian and every morning after breakfast he would read a few chapters from the Bible aloud
before they started to work… He told Jack about Jesus—resurrection, etc. Not to steal or lie—
[and also] the doctrine of peace.”¹⁵³ Wovoka attended a frontier Presbyterian school, was a
member of a Baptist Temperance Society, and after his vision in 1889, claimed to be able to
perform miraculous events akin to those practiced by the biblical Jesus. For example, on their
return from visiting Wovoka, delegates described many miracles, such as weather control and
communication with the dead. Visitors claimed Wovoka had the stigmata, which “was
considered a true sign and evidence that they were indeed dealing with the one who was called
the Son of God by the Christians.”¹⁵⁴ Building on the prophetic message of Christianity, Wovoka
spoke of resurrection and an American Eden, achievable through right practice of the Ghost
Dance rituals.

Scholars who only highlight the prophetic and messianic message of Wovoka often
privilege the influence of Christianity on the Ghost Dance, missing the coinciding indigenous

¹⁵² Mooney, 764.
¹⁵³ Grace Dangberg, “Letters to Jack Wilson, The Paiute Prophet,” Anthropological Papers, No. 55, (Bureau of
¹⁵⁴ Rani-Henrik Andersson, The Lakota Ghost Dance of 1890, (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2008), 34.
character of the tradition and its distinct manifestations on individual reservations. The Ghost Dance, however, was built on indigenous practices of the round dance and beliefs in ritual sacrifice for the achievement of a better world. Although an indigenous response to Christian teachings and the suffering propagated by reservation policies, I do not interpret it as a new form of Christianity. Rather, the Ghost Dance was a new, distinctly Native American religious tradition and the product of many intersecting influences.

The dance itself was an elaboration of a traditional plains round dance—a dance completed by a circle of interlocked dancers, side shuffling to the beat of a hand drum or singer, bending their knees to emphasize the beat. Ghost Dance leaders would sing an opening song, first quietly, then in full voice, always without instrumental accompaniment. With the second singing, the dancers would begin the side-shuffle step, moving clockwise with clasped hands. The Ghost Dance was to be practiced for four nights at regular intervals of six weeks, followed by ceremonial bathing on the morning of the fifth day. Not only a devotion that would herald the coming Edenic paradise, participation in the dance was believed to ward off disease and restore the sick to health, much like beliefs surrounding the Sun Dance. Uniting tribes together behind a message of renewal and hope, the Ghost Dance promised a cure for the suffering world.

As the Ghost Dance spread across the American landscape, it took on new meaning. Interpreted variously by each community, the dance was significant not for its origin from a single prophetic figure, but as a testament to a lasting Native American identity. As Gregory Smoak argues in Ghost Dances and Identity, the Ghost Dance became a “bridge to other American Indian peoples, the basis of…[a] pan-Indian religious movement, and a powerful

156 Trenholm, 292.
statement of a shared American racial identity.”157 Euro-American policies and treaties negatively constructed a pan-Indian identity by establishing the boundaries of an American identity that excluded the communal practices and “superstitions” of Native Americans. In contrast, the Ghost Dance forged a pan-Indian identity of participants’ own making, created from the shared experiences, hopes, and movement of bodies across the western landscape.158

By the fall of 1890, the Ghost Dance was practiced in an area stretching from Canada to Texas and from California to the Missouri River.159 Variations in dress, songs, and ritual objects were common, as each tribe interpreted the Ghost Dance through the lens of their own traditions. This created a multi-scaled identity of individual tribes, connected to a larger pan-Indian movement. For example, although Wovoka had originally performed the dance around a blazing fire at night, the Northern Arapaho performed the ceremony in broad daylight. They supplanted the fire with a cedar tree, an important Arapaho ceremonial object symbolizing strength and life.160

As the dancers circled, a leader, or Older, shook a black and white eagle feather in front of the participants’ faces, muttering “Hu! Hu! Hu!” and ushered the dancers into a hypnotic state until they fell to the ground, laying as if dead: “The Experience of the Older has brought the Youth from his state of physical hopelessness to a state of Spiritual Ecstasy whose moments of delight and happiness are worth the hours of daily toil…Everyone is careful not to disturb those who are having Visions—carefully dancing around them where they lay on the Earth. These

157 Smoak, 3.
158 “Those in turn sent others to different bands of Sioux, who in turn went away down into the Indian Territory, so that the Messiah craze now exists among those wild tribes in the western part of Indian Territory, and in all the different Sioux camps in Dakota and a portion of Montana, upon the north part of the Missouri, at Poplar Creek agency, and they have even sent messengers up north of the British lines to the Indian camps…” “Indians Not Ready to Fight,” in The Indianapolis Journal, Saturday Morning, Nov. 22, 1890.
159 Andersson, 28-29.
Dreamers often stay gone for several hours.”161 On the completion of the dance, those who had experienced trances would often claim they had visited the spirit world, where they interacted with deceased loved ones, who whispered of the world to come. The Ghost Dance enabled the continued performance of the Arapaho community, enacted through the shared circle of dance and extended through current and past generations.

Through the movement of information and bodies across the western landscape, the Ghost Dance united distant reservations and tribes in the hopeful pursuit of an American Eden. Delegates from more than 30 tribes traveled to Nevada to learn from Wovoka. Sherman Sage, a Northern Arapaho delegate, returned to the Wind River with instructions to not fight with the white settlers, but “live in peace, be good, never lie, believe in the Ghost Dance and everything would soon be fine.”162 Tribal elder Spoonhunter, and his literate nephew, Two Crows, wrote a letter to their Sioux relatives in the Dakota Territory, urging delegates to come to the Wind River Indian Reservation to learn of the new dance.163 Hearing news of the Wind River’s Ghost Dance by letter and word of mouth, delegates from tribes from across the country visited the Wind River Indian Reservation, either on route to Wovoka, or as a final location to learn the dance: “Visiting Indians who were here from many other tribes caught the excitement and returned home, made with craze that spread among the Sioux, Cheyennes [sic] and even down to the tribes in Indian Territory.”164 Native Americans carried Wovoka’s message through and across reservations, uniting Native peoples in an era of tumultuous change.

164 Markley, 48.
Although the nineteenth-century Office of Indian Affairs planned and implemented policies and programs on the basis of a singular Native American identity, based in crude understandings of race as discussed above, the reality was a diverse multitude of once-sovereign nations, each with unique tribal structures, religious practices and beliefs, interpersonal relationships, and modes of production. The Northern Arapaho and Eastern Shoshone offer a strong example of possible differences between two tribes so geographically intertwined. Not an innate essence as presumed by nineteenth-century American acculturation policies, ethnic identity is a historical process of interaction and negotiation. The Ghost Dance aided in the formation of a pan-Indian identity, which provided a common language of hope for the marginalized tribes and positioned them against Euro-American settlers and U.S. government officials. Although interpreted within their own frameworks of experience, the Ghost Dance enabled Native American peoples to make sense of the challenges they faced in the reservation era and shape a collective ethnic identity in relation to them.

Quickly garnering national media attention, the Ghost Dance was ridiculed by journalists and government agents as a “Messiah craze” and an illusory attempt by Native Americans to return to a pre-contact era Paradise.165 Famously, Ghost Dance practices were perceived as a military threat on the Lakota Sioux Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in South Dakota, where 300 Lakota men, women, and children were killed in an event that came to be known as the Massacre of Wounded Knee. The tragic events on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation were captured in Dee Brown’s 1970 bestseller Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee, which subsequently colored the history of the Ghost Dance as a story of disappointment and

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165 “The Indians are actually crazed with religious fanaticism, and the excitement at the ghost dances is of the most intense character. Add to their excitement and utter recklessness of consequences, induced by blind fanaticism, and you may gain some idea of the situation.” “Excited Indians,” in The Fremont Clipper, (Lander, Wyoming, Friday Nov. 28 1890. Vol IV. No 12.), 1.
death. Wounded Knee has had a profound influence on the historical interpretations of the Ghost Dance and the majority of literature written about the tradition focuses on the experiences of the Lakota Sioux.

Contrary to the experience of the Lakota Sioux, however, the Northern Arapaho interpreted the Ghost Dance as life affirming in an era of regulation and suffering. Even Euro-American settlers recognized the distinct differences between the events of Wounded Knee and Arapaho practice. For example, after news of Wounded Knee reached the reservation, a local newspaper recorded that, “after several days it was declared that the Arapahoes were at peace with the whites and every one else, and that they would have nothing to do with the war. They sent word to all the agencies that they would harbor no malcontents.”¹⁶⁶ The Northern Arapaho offer a particularly compelling case study of the Ghost Dance because of their location in the middle of Ghost Dance country, acting as a link both geographically and socially between Wovoka and other Native American tribes. Although it ultimately did not bring about the fruition of a new millennial order, the Ghost Dance united Native Americans, and for the Northern Arapaho by way of the age-grade lodges, religiously sanctioned a transition into reservation life, a place that existed after Eden.

2.3.2 The Northern Arapaho Transition to Wage Labor

Despite the efforts of missionaries and government policies and practices, the individual capitalist did not emerge from the nineteenth-century Wind River Indian Reservation. Rather, as this section will show, the Ghost Dance offered tools that enabled the strategic adoption and reinterpretation of American regimes of labor, namely wage labor, into the service of the community. The Ghost Dance mitigated the suffering of reservation life by promising a

¹⁶⁶ “Wind River Reservation” Fremont Clipper, c. 1891, James K. Moore Papers, Box 13, AHC.
redemptive future paradise and reaffirmed communal values through participation in the ceremony itself.

The tiered structure of the age-grade lodges encouraged flexibility and innovation among the lower lodges, which extended to learning new skills and traditions. Participants in the lower lodges were encouraged to be open to the external world in order to combat threats and adapt to seasonal changes in hunting. As Foucault notes, a dispositif or social technology’s major function is that of “responding to an urgent need,” and “has a dominant strategic function” (emphasis in original). As new hardships emerged in reservation life, creating empty spaces previously occupied by then banned rituals or movement beyond reservation borders, the tribe strategically reworked the relations between the elements of the social technology. By way of the age-grade lodges, the structure of the Northern Arapaho tribal system itself, new elements were adopted in order to close the gaps and enable the survival of the tribe. 

Thus, while the elder lodges maintained the Sun Dance and Flat Pipe ceremonies, as well as the overall structure of the lodges and tribe, the lower lodges began to experiment with the Ghost Dance, a new religious tradition that privileged both tribal unity and thoughtful assimilation to Euro-American labor systems. And, unlike their neighbors, the Eastern Shoshone, the Northern Arapahos quickly and fervently became practitioners of the Ghost Dance. As the 1905 Report to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs claimed, the Northern

168 Foucault describes the double process of a social technology: “On the one hand, there is a process of functional overdetermination, because each effect—positive or negative, intentional or unintentional—enters into resonance or contradiction with the others and thereby calls for a re-adjustment or a re-working of the heterogeneous elements that surface at various points. On the other hand, there is a perpetual process of strategic elaboration… a re-utilisation of this unintended, negative effect within a new strategy which came in sense to occupy this empty space, or transform the negative into positive… strategic completion of the apparatus.” Ibid, 195-6.
169 “The Shoshone have never been affected by the ‘ghost-dance craze,’ while a part of the Arapahoes have.” John Fosher, Annual Report to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, (Washington DC: GPO, 1891), 476. Zednek Salzmann Papers, Box 3, AHC.
Arapaho “were the ‘great apostles’ of the Ghost Dance among the prairie tribes.” And the Wind River Indian Reservation “was really the Mecca of the Craze.”

The Ghost Dance had to receive spiritual authorization from the top tier of the age-grade lodges in order to be fully accepted by the entirety of the tribe. What the elders said was what the tribe said: “They represented the tribe. They did not represent certain groups or certain individuals.” Just like the mythic buffalo cow, the age grade lodges represented the entirety of the community, pieces of the whole, represented by the elders. Thus, as the lower lodges zealously experimented with the Ghost Dance, the older lodges offered guidance and caution. The acceptance of the Ghost Dance was encouraged by the prophesies of two tribal members:

They said Sage had that vision that this Ghost Dance was coming... And so did Yellow Calf. And they told their people that... they could take part in it if they wanted to. But not to misuse it or to put it above the Pipe ceremonies. They were told that the Pipe was here long before those others were. And they said that the Pipe was going to be here long after those others were gone. That’s what they predicted.

The dance was presaged, but came with warnings not to place new traditions above those of the past. Thus, the Ghost Dance would be incorporated into the tribal complex, as Sherman Sage and Yellow Calf prophesied, but within a structured hierarchy of ceremonial rites and beliefs. Supernaturally sanctioned by the prophecies of Sage and Yellow Calf and placed beneath the Flat Pipe ceremonies, the Ghost Dance was eventually accepted by the tribal elders into the existing tribal complex. In this way, the age-grade lodges served as a bridge between young and old, the future and past.

Although millennial excitement defined the Ghost Dance, Wovoka’s message included a call to work for white settlers whenever asked. In a letter shared across the plains, Wovoka

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170 Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1905, 56. Zednek Salzmann Papers, Box 3, AHC.
171 Markley, 48.
173 Elaine Wanstall, Interview conducted by Loretta Fowler, 1978, 3. Loretta Fowler Papers, Box 8, AHC.
reportedly commanded: “Do not refuse to work for the whites and do not make any trouble with them until you leave them.” Narratives of Native American history have largely focused on the study of “traditional” or “primitive” Native American practices, reproducing nineteenth-century visions of the “noble savage,” and largely ignoring the complex history of Native American participation in capitalist markets. Although agrarian ideals shaped American expansion West and the Dawes Act was a central component of late nineteenth-century acculturation efforts, central Wyoming was not well suited for farming. And in the late 1880s, a severe drought took a serious toll on settlers and Northern Arapaho alike. Arid and dusty in the valley, rocky and barren in the mountains, the Wind River Indian Reservation was in need of redemption.

The economy of the Northern Arapaho, based on the carefully delineated responsibilities of the age-grade lodges, was slowly being destroyed by the reservation system and Euro-American settlement. While the lower age-grade lodges had customarily been responsible for hunting and maintenance of the camp circle, reservation life precluded these practices and individual allotments remained unproductive. As Northern Arapaho Eaglehead noted in 1890, “We never got what was then promised to us, and we were driven out by the Whites: that is why we are so poor now.” In light of unfulfilled promises and the poor conditions of the Wind River Indian Reservation, those lodges responsible for the material maintenance of the tribe could no longer complete their prescribed tasks.

Since the arrival of the Arapaho on the reservation, the Shoshone were comparatively praised for their quick acceptance of Euro-American ways. But in the late summer of 1890, Reservation Agent Peter Moran criticized the Shoshone for not helping fulfill a government

174 Mooney, 781.
175 Terry Anderson, XX.
176 Eaglehead, Sept 29 1890, A meeting at St. Stephen’s Mission, Loretta Fowler Papers, Box 9, AHC.
contract and instead applauded the Arapaho for their work ethic: “Those who have employed them say they are good workers; they have done all the manual labor in the construction of a large irrigating ditch, about 4 miles in length.”¹⁷⁷ Later that year, another report claimed, “The Arapahoes show quite a disposition to work, whenever it is offered to them, they have furnished the extra supply of wood needed for the school, besides furnishing myself and many of the employes [sic] with the larger part of our firewood.”¹⁷⁸ The same forms of labor that disrupted their traditional modes of life, namely agriculture and ranching, also increased demand for their labor. They cut wood and hay, drove cattle, hauled coal, and dug irrigation ditches for government offices and settlers.

Hard work was not absent from the tribal complex prior to the emergence of the Ghost Dance. Northern Arapaho tribe members found and harvested chokecherries and other wild foods, hunted game, skinned and tanned hides, and continuously packed and unpacked their possessions between seasonal campsites. Individual wages earned for work done, however, was new. Wage labor was tedious, often repetitive, and alienated the worker from the product of their labor. Yet in 1890, government reports began to praise the Arapaho for their acceptance and commitment to wage work.

The doctrines of the Ghost Dance claimed Native Americans could advance the world to come through right behavior, which included working for whites. Wovoka’s doctrine called on Native Americans to, “work all the time and not lie down in idleness.”¹⁷⁹ Ghost Dance commandments to not lie or steal agreed with older ideals of the Northern Arapaho, but the emphasis on work was a considerable innovation. By way of the Ghost Dance, work became a

¹⁷⁷ Report of Special Agent Peter Moran, July and August 1890, 633.
¹⁷⁸ 1890 Commissioner Report on all of Indian Affairs for the country from JT Gregory, 260. Zednek Salzmann papers, box 15, AHC.
commandment from God and legitimized the transition from prior regimes of labor, such as hunting and gathering, to the accrual of wages. In contrast to the Shoshone, who largely abandoned their traditional social structures in favor of Euro-American standards of individual gain, the Northern Arapaho sought to incorporate new regimes of labor into the existing tribal structure through supernatural affirmation, which enabled the maintenance and continuity of tribal traditions. The Northern Arapaho reinterpreted what was being imposed on them from American acculturation programs through the lens of a Native American identity.

Rather than simply replacing traditional ways of life with those propagated by Euro-American settlers and government officials, wage labor was interpreted by Arapaho commitments to tribal solidarity and cooperation. While each lodge had traditionally been responsible for discrete practices and contributions to the community, wage labor restructured the means of sharing goods. No longer able to give-away the fruits of hunts or war bounties, the Northern Arapaho turned to the Ghost Dance to approve new forms of labor. Yet, wage labor did not simply replace previous regimes of labor, but was translated into the Northern Arapaho system of community solidarity. Instead of the goods themselves, tribe members shared cash to purchase the needed goods, which in turn helped to maintain communal values. As tribal member Cleone Thunder noted, “You don’t find many [rich Indians] there because he don’t save his money to horde or bank to get rich, but he spends it on his friends and his people. That’s why we’re poor today, because we share with one another.”  

 Despite the enormous disruption in community structure predicated by the reservation system, wage labor was actually “instrumental in maintaining ethnic identity rather than eradicating it.”  The Northern Arapaho transitioned to reservation life not through the rejection of traditional beliefs and practices, but

180 Cleone Thunder interview, File 99, recorded 1/19/1987 by Deborah Thunder. Valley of Three Cultures Oral History Project.
181 Knack, 27.
through the acceptance of Euro-American ways and standards, molded to tribal ways and standards.\textsuperscript{182}

Wovoka’s call to work for whites in anticipation of the coming Eden did not stand alone in the Arapaho’s adoption of wage labor, but rather, was placed within a network of actants. Industrial education, the efforts of Catholic missionaires, the poor farming prospects of central Wyoming, and Arapaho prophecies and ancestral beliefs, all influenced the acceptance of the Ghost Dance and the command to work. For example, by the 1890s, education at the reservation schools had taught a generation of Northern Arapaho students industrial training in farming, stock raising, and mechanics, as well as housework and cooking.\textsuperscript{183} Yet, because the tribal structure restricted changes in behavior and modes of production as defined by the age-grade lodges, industrial education often did not extend beyond the school grounds, much to the chagrin of reservation agents and educators. As Father Feusi wrote to the Director of the Catholic Bureau of Indian Missions in 1888, “Even the two month vacation, when the children are again with the old folks at home undo a great deal of the good work, which was achieved in this time at the schools during the school year.”\textsuperscript{184}

Furthermore, a central tenet of Catholic teaching on the Wind River Indian Reservation was an ideology of redemptive suffering. Catholic missionaires at St. Stephen’s Mission taught the Arapaho that the suffering of this world would be blessed in the next; that the odious conditions of the reservation would be redeemed in the coming Paradise. Analogously,

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\textsuperscript{183} “The industrial training of both boys and girls is such as to fit them for practical results upon leaving schools. Irrigation farming in all its phases is taught the boys, including care and handling of horses and cattle. Carpentry and blacksmithing, as is necessary upon a farm, is also taught. The girls are taught cooking, sewing, general housework, etc.” Wadsworth, \textit{Agency Report}, (1909) 6, Box 1, Entry 8, Record Group 75, National Archives, Denver.
\textsuperscript{184} B. Feusi to Very Rev. Monsignore, JA Stephan, Director of Catholic Bureau of Indian Missions, November 20, 1888. Loretta Fowler Papers, Box 6, AHC.
\end{flushright}
Wovoka’s call to make peace with white settlers and to work whenever asked, commanded the acceptance of the hardships of reservation life in order to herald the coming of a millennial future. In addition, the Northern Arapaho creation story already contained a belief in a messianic figure, who promised to return to watch over his people at the end of time. As Yufna Soldier Wolf noted, the Ghost Dance made “Catholic and Native religion make more sense to each other.”

The Ghost Dance linked a Catholic ideology of redemptive suffering to Arapaho beliefs of a messianic figure, and made sense of the poor conditions on the Wind River Indian Reservation.

The Ghost Dance did not promise immediate transformation by supernatural means, but rather, a means of coping with the immediate present through eschatological hopefulness. Visions experienced by the dancers showed a world of green hills and roaming buffalo, of joyous reunions with lost tribe members. If participants practiced the dance, did not steal or lie, and made peace with settlers, the suffering of this world would be redeemed in the future world, a return to a pre-contact paradise. As Louis Warren argues, “Ghost Dance teachings reached backward and forward in time, hearkening back to an all-Indian world with abundant land and autonomy and urging followers to take up modern means of survival while awaiting the millennium.”

The Northern Arapaho renewed communal dependency and power through participation in the Ghost Dance. In an ethnographic account, Adolf Hungry Wolf describes the dance as beginning with a slow, lamenting song, then “the People of the camp join in with the handholding, shuffling, and singing until All become a part of a sacred, revolving Circle of men,

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185 Yufna Soldier Wolf, interview with author, July 2016.
186 Name withheld for privacy, Loretta Fowler Papers, Box 7, AHC.
women, children, and Old People. The Mass becomes a gigantic Vibration.” As in the Sun Dance, the ritual transformed the individual into a subservient member of the communal whole. And participation in the dance would benefit the health of the entire community: "Blankets were used to cover the round dancers, and at the end of each dance the participants shook the blankets in order to bring good health and to get rid of any lingering ghosts.”

As ceremonies that required travel beyond the borders of the reservation and practices of the Sun Dance became increasingly regulated, the Ghost Dance was a ceremony that could be practiced under the new circumstances. Even officials on the Wind River Indian Reservation chose to allow the practice of the dance. For example, during the events leading up to Wounded Knee, government officials banned the practice of the Ghost Dance. Yet, in 1892 Mooney heard the distant chants of a Ghost Dance on the Wind River Indian Reservation. When Mooney pressed his interpreter to the Northern Arapaho, Henry Reed, he responded: “Yes: they are dancing the Ghost Dance. That’s something I have never reported, and I never will. It is their religion and they have a right to it.” The Ghost Dance re-affirmed communal values in practice and doctrine, and re-inscribed a space of Indian unity and identity in defiance of acculturation programs and pressures to privilege individualism.

The Ghost Dance was a product and response to the complicated religious environment of the western landscape and offered a means of combining two worldviews—a transitional link between the past and future, American and Arapaho. As Jeffrey Anderson notes, “While Euro-Americans were imposing knowledge in literate, religious, or bureaucratic forms and practices,

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189 Jorgensen, 10.
190 Quoted in Loretta Fowler, Arapahoe Politics, 1851-1978, 124.
the Northern Arapaho people were adopting a set of strategies for redressing those forces."\(^{191}\) Rather than becoming disempowered, the Northern Arapaho leveraged their traditional tribal system to adopt new strategies to bridge the rift between Euro-American and Arapaho modes of production. Through the Ghost Dance commandment to take up modern work, the Ghost dance offered both accommodation to Euro-Americans and the strengthening of the Arapaho community. The Ghost Dance helped resolve contradictions of the reservation era by sanctioning modern means of survival within the traditional tribal structure.

By bringing wage labor into the tribal structure, sanctioned by supernatural authority and vetted by the tribal elders, the Northern Arapaho came to terms with their Euro-American oppressors by both looking backward to an idealized past and forward to new forms of economic opportunity. In the late nineteenth-century Rocky Mountain West, a time of conflict and social upheaval, of defining insiders and outsiders, Wovoka’s Ghost Dance offered a revitalizing message of hope. For the Northern Arapaho, the Ghost Dance mediated the persecution and oppression imposed by a late nineteenth-century vision of Americanism by supernaturally sanctioning an economy of wage labor that enabled the immanent and transcendent survival of the tribal structure.

Although the Ghost Dance did not materialize in a new American Eden, Alfred Kroeber noted in 1907 that, “the beliefs of the movement have left a considerable influence on the minds of the people.”\(^{192}\) Although scholars often consider the events of Wounded Knee as the end of the Ghost Dance, the Northern Arapaho practiced the dance into the 1920s. Accepted by the lower lodges in the 1890s, the dance continued to be practiced by those that originally adopted

\(^{192}\) Kroeber, 321.
the dance. As time went on and new challenges and hardships developed for native peoples, the lower lodges, designed to be open to the external world, adopted new traditions such as Peyote and the Native American Church in order to meet the needs of the changing landscape. Like the Ghost Dance, Peyote was a pan-Indian tradition that invited devotees to join a ceremonial circle and reclaim what it meant, “to be Indian,” in the words of Ghost Dance leader Little Wound. Throughout all of the changes of the twentieth century, however, the ritual hierarchy remained; the traditions of the Sun Dance and Flat Pipe continued to be revered as the most sacred. The age-grade lodges continued to enable tribal flexibility and innovation, while maintaining ancestral traditions and communal values.

The Northern Arapaho cannot be easily reduced or categorized by a problematic binary of progressive or backwards Indians. The tribe neither fully acculturated to American conceptions of civilization, nor did they refuse outright to adapt to the changing world. Rather, the Northern Arapaho interpreted new regimes of labor through their ancestral lodge system in order to create innovative strategies of survival—old and new were brought together to create novel formulations. Translated through the age-grade lodges into the tribal complex, the Ghost Dance doctrines authorized the Northern Arapaho’s transition to wage labor without the loss of community solidarity and cooperation.

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193 “I remember my grandfather putting yellow paint on his face. He was all decked out. The round dance is what it was called. It was jumpy… a lot of words in there… what I understood in this Ghost Dance is that they were preparing for the last judgment. They were singing about the Almighty… to be on the lookout, the earth might be on fire.” Ernest Whiteman, Jr. File 35, recorded 4/20/1987 by Susan Crazy Thunder, Valley of Three Worlds Oral History Project.

194 Peyote meetings, for example, could be held anytime enough tribal members could be gathered, similar to a minyan. In this way, work schedules were not interrupted for ceremonial practice, but were met by the flexibility of a new tradition. John Oldman, File 24, 3/31/1987, interviewed by Susan Crazy Thunder, Valley of Three Worlds Oral History Project.

2.4 Mapping the Native Landscape

Although scholars often read the acculturation of Native Americans to capitalist systems as the loss of traditional regimes of labor, it is important to look beyond and through the practices of wage-labor in order to see tactics of subversion. Christian missionary institutions and government officials stood in a place of power, both as theoretical places and physical locations from which forces were distributed. Indeed, the divide between secular and religious power was often unclear. As the Episcopal Bishop of Wyoming and Idaho noted, the western landscape was not a field on which to save souls, but an economic opportunity for American progress: “What have we in Wyoming and Idaho to support a population and make a country and attract business and capital? This becomes an important question from the standpoint of a wise and sagacious policy. For unless these States have a well assured future we had better place our money elsewhere.”

Although the Northern Arapaho imagined a utopian future, an American Eden, the dominant powers of American nationalism divided and controlled the western landscape. Ultimately, the Northern Arapaho could only use, manipulate, and divert the spaces created by American expansion and exceptionalism. Yet, rather than succumb to the top-down imposition of Euro-American values at the loss of traditional practices, beliefs, and social structures, the Northern Arapaho translated Euro-American modes of production into their existing tribal structure. As Michel de Certeau argues in *The Practices of Everyday Life*, it is by everyday practices and tactics that people subvert dominant or abstracted spaces. It was a matter of survival through adaptation and subversion, not outright rejection or revolution.

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197 Bishop Talbot, “Missionary District of Wyoming and Idaho,” 5. John Roberts Collection, Box 2, Folder 18, AHC.
198 De Certeau, xiii.
While the reservation system and American policies imposed a national system of acculturation, the Northern Arapaho subverted Euro-American standards by adapting and molding the limitations of reservation life to their own system of belief and practices. The flexibility of the age grade lodges enabled religious innovation, and through the adoption of the Ghost Dance, the Northern Arapaho strategically transitioned to wage labor, while retaining traditional modes of community solidarity. The Ghost Dance guided participants’ bodies not only through the round dance, but also to wage labor. The Ghost Dance sanctioned the replacement of hunting with digging irrigation ditches, cutting wood and hay. To continue the mechanical analogy, the age-grade lodges and Ghost Dance came together like two meshing gears. Each was powered by complex heterogeneous elements, but through contact, worked together in a gear train or transmission, that is, a social machine or technology, which altered the direction of the power source. In the experience of the Northern Arapaho, this social technology recoded and reconditioned wage labor. Rather than being seen as a Euro-American system of material survival, wage labor became an accepted Indian practice with important implications for tribal giveaways—a fact that did not go unnoticed by those attempting to civilize the Northern Arapaho.

Early scholars, reservation agents, and government officials scoffed at the Northern Arapaho’s maintenance of traditional religious ceremonies and beliefs. As recorded in the University of Wyoming Publications, “The Arapahoes are certainly more advanced than the neighboring Shoshones. Nevertheless, they could better themselves still more if the conflict between their system of values on one hand, and their economic practices on the other, did not retard or even prevent their economic advancement.” A 1950 report from the Office of Indian

199 Feliks Gross, “Nomadism of the Arapaho Indians of Wyoming” University of Wyoming Publications, (Vol XV. No. 3.), 50. Dimitri Shimkin Papers, Box 8, AHC.
Affairs noted the continued communal nature of the Arapaho, engendered by the surviving age grade lodges: “Arapahoe society, even allowing for the observable amount of assimilation with white life and behavior in the white pattern, remains isolated and centered on a traditional aboriginal core.” 200 As these ethnologists noted, despite reservation life, the Northern Arapaho retained traditional tribal unity and religious beliefs by appropriating wage-labor into their own understanding of life movement and personhood.

The western landscape was transformed and remade by government policies and Euro-American settlement in order to fulfill the requirements of American capitalist production. And yet, the Northern Arapaho were not passive receptors of abstract space, but builders of a lasting world of their own making. This world did not stand alone and was not isolated, but was the product of an ever-shifting constellation of forces: the Eastern Shoshone, the Office of Indian Affairs, industrial education, white settlers, Catholic and Episcopal missionaries, poor farming, and Wovoka, to name a few.

In the late nineteenth-century, a time of conflict and religious upheaval, the Ghost Dance offered a revitalizing message of hope in which the Arapaho could come to peace with their Euro-American oppressors and maintain their traditional modes of life. The age-grade lodges encouraged and maintained tribal unity, protected traditional ceremonies and beliefs, and allowed for the younger generations to experiment with new religious traditions. Supported by the age grade lodges, the Ghost Dance doctrines supernaturally sanctioned the Northern Arapaho’s transition to wage labor. Despite the enormous hardships of the reservation era, the

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Northern Arapaho subverted and disrupted American acculturation programs and retained their status as the “mother tribe” of Plains Indian religion and culture.
3. Mormon Merchants: Buying and Selling the Kingdom

During the 1820s, Joseph Smith, a Vermont-born farm boy, participated in the revivals that came to define the “burned-over district” of western New York. Yet, the young Smith was visited by heavenly beings that admonished him to “join none of them.” Instead, Smith was guided to uncover a set of buried golden plates, which contained a new scripture detailing the ancient inhabitants of the Americas. Smith translated the plates into a six hundred-page document, which he called the Book of Mormon. Over the next ten years, he converted a small group of friends and relatives and on April 6, 1830, in Fayette, New York, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was officially established. In the ensuing two decades, Smith and his followers developed a systematic theology and Mormon communities were built in Ohio, Missouri, Illinois, and ultimately, Utah’s Great Basin.

Claimed by Smith to be the restoration of Primitive Christianity, Mormonism included beliefs in a personal God, the Old and New Testaments and the Book of Mormon, the conviction that Smith had received divine authority, and an emphasis on cooperative and communal values. Central to Mormon theology was a providential interpretation of American history. The United States was the physical map on which the sacred history of the Book of Mormon unfolded and was the literal stage for the divine drama of Jesus’ Second Coming.

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202 From April 1830 to 1834, the title of the Church was “The Church of Christ,” when it was changed to “The Church of the Latter-day Saints.” In April 1838, it was changed to “The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.” Its popular name, the Mormon Church, is derived from its use in the Book of Mormon. Doyle L. Green, “April 6, 1830. The Day the Church Was Organized,” The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. January 1971. https://www.lds.org/ensign/1971/01/april-6-1830-the-day-the-church-was-organized?lang=eng
In Smith’s mind and early church practice, there was no room for a metaphorical interpretation of the faith’s holy texts. The Book of Mormon called on the Saints to ready the land for the Lord as active participants in the construction of Zion. To achieve this feat, Mormons sacrificed economic self-interest, family ties, and self-determination as part of a cooperative political economy that physically brought together the righteous in order to bring forth the Kingdom of God. As William Mulder notes, “while other millennialists set a time, the Mormons appointed a place.”

By the 1860s, Mormon settlers had staked a claim on the life and landscape of the Great Basin. With the completion of the Transcontinental Railroad in 1869, however, the United States extended their territorial reach into the Rocky Mountain West and threatened the isolation and sovereignty of the Great Basin Kingdom. Following the rail lines, non-Mormon laborers flocked to the region seeking to profit from Utah’s mineral wealth, cheap rangeland, and to supply soldier and wagon trains passing through to the Pacific Coast. In this chapter, I will highlight a piece of the Kingdom: Zion’s Cooperative Mercantile Institution (ZCMI). Brought to life by Smith’s successor Brigham Young in 1868, cooperative mercantilism was enacted as a protective policy to unite the saints and ensure independence from encroaching national markets. Mormonism’s commitment to hierarchical communalism and an open cannon, as well as the unity of Church and temporal affairs, enabled the Church to strategically adopt mercantilism in response to the changing needs of the Kingdom.

ZCMI was both symbolically and materially the center of cooperation and self-sufficiency for the church. Not only a successful marketplace, ZCMI was also a material marker

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of Mormon difference.\textsuperscript{206} In sermons, both church and local government leaders warned against materially supporting gentile settlers. The lines were stark between Zion and Babylon. If you shopped at ZCMI you were building Zion. If you shopped at another place, you were supporting Babylon and your money would be used to satisfy gentile tastes for liquor, prostitutes, and the erection of non-Mormon churches. Church leaders advocated boycotts so that gentile merchants would go bankrupt and need to leave town.\textsuperscript{207}

This chapter analyzes the complex ties that bind Mormon religious and economic activity and how cooperative mercantilism defined Mormon belonging and exclusion in the nineteenth-century American West. First, I will detail how the Mormon economy was inextricably tied to Mormon theology and ethics. For the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, the spiritual was material and immanently real.\textsuperscript{208} I will look to Joseph Smith’s economic writings and the Book of Mormon, as well as to the efforts of Brigham Young and other ZCMI leaders, in order to understand the theology and reasoning behind the creation of a system of cooperative mercantilism. Next, I will show the manner in which the Mormon Church strived to maintain a unique identity as the “one true church” in relation to the expanding Euro-American identity of Protestantism and capitalist markets. Finally, I will demonstrate how ZCMI disrupted the expansion of national markets as a physical manifestation of Mormon values. I will attend to the history and design of ZCMI in order to provide a rich contextual picture of its location in Mormon and American history. I will highlight how the producers and consumers interacted with each other and the institution; how Mormon practices and beliefs were encapsulated in this religious economy of exchange; the failures and successes of the enterprise; and how ZCMI

\textsuperscript{206} Martha Sonntag Bradley, \textit{ZCMI, America’s First Department Store}, (Salt Lake City: ZCMI, 1991), 32.
\textsuperscript{207} Alan Morrell, PhD, Church History Museum Archivist, interview with author July 2016.
became more than a symbol of Mormon cooperation and unity, but also the tool of its implementation. Despite the expansion of American markets and ideologies, Mormonism survived and ZCMI helped.

3.1 Early Mormon Settlement

Early Mormon converts were met with continual scorn from mainline Protestant leaders and townsfolk. Seeking religious refuge, between three and four hundred Mormon converts moved with Smith in 1831 to Jackson County, Missouri. Over the next two years, more than 1,200 people gathered in the first Mormon village. In Missouri, Smith established an economic system variously called the “United Order,” “Order of Enoch,” or the “Law of Consecration and Stewardship,” which envisioned a system of economic equality and self-sufficiency. Because everything belonged to God and was intended for the creation of the Kingdom, everyone consecrated, or deeded their property and surplus income to the church, which was then shared according to the wants and needs of each family under the authority of the bishop.²⁰⁹

Smith intended to build the Mormon community according to a revelation from God, which he called the “Plat of the City of Zion.” A grid system that arranged residential housing, public buildings, storehouses, and places of worship into square mile configurations, further divided into ten-acre plots, the Plat of Zion strategically organized Mormon Saints into efficient units that required and encouraged unity and cooperation.²¹⁰ In 1833, however, the “Missouri Mob,” a group of citizens that threatened to eradicate the Mormons if they did not leave Jackson County, drove the Saints out of their half-built city.

²⁰⁹ Arrington, Great Basin Kingdom, 7.
Meanwhile, Smith had moved to Kirtland, Ohio. Prior to the arrival of more than two thousand Mormon settlers, Kirtland was a rural trading post with fewer than a thousand people. It was here that Smith first developed the doctrine of the “gathering,” which involved the physical and bodily bringing together of the covenanted Saints to designated places where they could enjoy the blessings of the temple. Kirtland was to only be a gathering place “for a little season,” but it was also the location of the Church’s first temple, consecrated in 1836. It was there that Smith established the internal organization of the Church and the hierarchy of the priesthood, and claimed the title “Seer, Translator, Revelator, High Priest, and Church President.”

Unlike in Missouri, where Saints deeded their property and surplus goods, but still performed within a realm of free enterprise, the Kirtland United Order felt charging a fellow-Saint for goods or services was counter to the communal project. Storekeepers, however, eventually ran out of credit and the community quickly failed.

Thus, the Kirtland Saints and the expelled Mormons from Jackson County moved to Far West, Missouri, where between eight and ten thousand Mormon converts converged between 1837 and 1838. It was in Far West that a regulated system of tithing replaced the donation of the vaguely defined surplus income. The ten percent tithe was used to buy land, pay church debts, and support the developing priesthood. The Far West community, too, however, was expelled, and in 1839, nearly fifteen thousand Saints moved across the river to what became known as Nauvoo, Illinois.

211 “And ye are called to bring to pass the gathering of mine elect; for mine elect here my voice and harden not their hearts; Wherefore the decree hath gone forth from the Father that they shall be gathered in unto one place upon the face of this land, to prepare their hearts and be prepared in all things against the day when tribulation and desolation are sent forth upon the wicked.” D&C 29:8.
214 Arrington, Great Basin Kingdom, 15-18.
By 1844, there were more than twenty-five thousand Mormons living in Nauvoo, which had been constructed following a modified Plat of Zion. In Illinois, Smith directed the creation of home manufacturing, which enabled the Saints to live relatively self-sufficiently and separate from the greater American economy. As Smith had commanded, Mormons should “contract no debts with the world,” but only support the creation of Zion. The United Order was replaced with a joint-stock system of ownership, in which Mormons bought shares in the community and its various businesses, while continuously contributing through an official Tithing Office. A foundry, two sawmills, a tool factory, and even a factory for chinaware enabled the bulk of items exchanged in Nauvoo to be Mormon made. In 1844, however, disaster struck the Mormon Church when a mob assassinated Joseph Smith and his brother Hyrum. Akin to the priesthood of Catholicism, Smith claimed that Christ had dispensed authority to preach the gospel and administer the ordinances of salvation to particular individuals. Through the physical laying on of hands, power could be transmitted along a chain of authority reaching back to Adam. In the wake of Smith’s death, leadership passed to the Quorum of the Twelve, a group of twelve men Smith had nominated to act as the modern-day apostles and a governing body of the Church.

A year later, the Mormons were once again forcibly removed from their community and in 1846, sixteen thousand people left Nauvoo with three thousand wagons and thirty thousand head of cattle. The journey West recapitulated the Old Testament exodus to the Promised Land, the Saints casting themselves as the ancient Israelites, fulfilling Isaiah’s prophecy of the

215 “Extract From the Laws... of the Church of Christ,” The Morning and The Evening Star, 1 (July 1832), 1.
216 Arrington, Great Basin Kingdom, 18.
217 Givens, 9.
218 Arrington, Great Basin Kingdom, 18.
Mountain of the Lord and entering into sacred time and space. In 1847, Brigham Young, the President of the Quorum, became the second President of the Church.

Like the organization of the early Mormon towns, migration West was a tightly controlled affair. Families were organized into traveling groups of a hundred, further divided into two sets of fifty, and finally into groups of ten. Each group had a captain who reported to a central authority. Known as Camps of Israel, each traveling party had strict rules on when to pray, commence travel, eat, and how to arrange the wagons. Their destination was not completely clear, but Young had had a vision of a place where the Saints would find freedom, beyond the borders of the United States, to build the Kingdom of God. In July 1847, an advanced company reached the Salt Lake Valley, where Young proclaimed, “This is the right place. Drive on.”

The early nineteenth-century was a time of learning and experimentation for the young Church. Mormon theology developed alongside the movement and tribulations of the converted Saints as they searched for a physical place on which to build the Kingdom of God. With an open cannon, Mormonism was responsive to the changing circumstances of the Saints. Mormons learned to adapt in order to survive. A commitment to unity was intensified through repeated hardship. Cooperation and unity in practice and belief were regarded as paramount to righteous living. The Book of Mormon recapitulated the teachings of the Old and New Testaments, commanding obedience to the laws of God through shared faith. For example, Mosiah 18:21: “Saints should have their hearts knit together in unity,” and 2 Nephi 1:21: “Be determined in one

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219 “The mountain of the Lord’s temple will be established as the highest of the mountains; it will be exalted above the hills, and all nations will stream to it.” Isaiah 2:2.
220 Arrington, Great Basin Kingdom, 20.
222 See for example 1 Cor. 1:10: “I beseech you that there be no divisions among you, but that ye be perfectly joined together.”
mind and in one heart, united in all things.” Economic or social distinctions undermined preparations for the Second Coming. Only through oneness in aspiration, belief, and purpose, could the Kingdom of God be built. And on arrival to the Great Salt Lake Basin, Mormons were faced with new challenges that would test their commitments to the Kingdom.

3.2 The Sword of the Spirit: The Ute Indians and Mormon Settlement in Utah

Although Brigham Young guided the Mormon Pioneers to the Great Basin, a region beyond the political and ideological borders of the United States, the landscape was not empty. Mormon settlement not only required overcoming the environmental challenges of the Rocky Mountain West, but also the negotiation of a borderland with native peoples. For centuries, the Ute Indians had sustained large semi-permanent villages and larger seasonal gatherings on Utah Lake, just south of the new Mormon settlement. Ute hunting grounds, fishing spots, and gathering places defined the landscape of the Utah Valley. Southern Ute Billy Mike recalled his people’s usury understanding of the land before the arrival of Euro-Americans: “No one really owned the land. It was like it owned us.”

The Utah Valley was not simply geopolitical and economic space the Utes constructed, but lived in space, a landscape imbued with power and meaning. Ute history began with Sinauf, a god who was half-wolf and half-man. Before he began a long journey, Sinauf put a variety of sticks in a bag and as he walked the sticks transformed into people. Sinauf’s devious brother Coyote was walking behind him and cut a hole in the bag to laugh at all of the strange new creations with their many different songs and languages. As Sinauf traveled north, the people fell from the hole and formed different bands and family groups. When he reached the high

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mountains of the Great Basin, Sinauf realized there was only one person still in the bag. He lifted him out and put him in a special place.\textsuperscript{224} In this way, the Utes were set apart, but also connected to the history of the larger Numic language group, which includes the Paiute, Comanche, and Shoshone Indians. Euro-American movement into Ute lands was not only devastating in its destruction of hunting, fishing, and gathering grounds, but as an intrusion into the land on which the Utes were thought to be divinely placed.

Since its inception, Mormon theology had a complicated relationship with Native Americans. The Book of Mormon describes the history of North America’s ancient inhabitants as the descendants of an Israelite family that had traveled by boat to America in 600 BCE. These first inhabitants of America splintered into the Nephites and the Lamanites. The Lamanites lived as nomads and were cursed with dark skin for their return to wickedness and idolatry, whereas the Nephites built great cities and followed the precepts of the primitive church. The Lamanites eventually wiped out the fair-skinned Nephites, but not before the Angel Moroni buried the scriptural record in the Hill Cumorah. And two millennia later, Moroni guided Joseph Smith to these plates, which he would later translate into the Book of Mormon.

Smith considered the nineteenth-century Native Americans descendants of the Lamanites.\textsuperscript{225} According to the Book of Mormon, this “seed of Israel” would take the lead in building the New Jerusalem, the site of the Second Coming of Christ. And it was the role of converted Mormons to guide this “remnant of Jacob” back to righteousness; the converted


\textsuperscript{225} The idea that Native Americans were descendants of a lost Israelite tribe did not originate with Smith, but found expression in Puritan thought and publications in the seventeenth century onward.
Mormons were only to act as assistants to the original inhabitants of the second Promised Land.\textsuperscript{226}

In many ways, however, early Mormons regarded Native Americans with the same distrust and disdain as other Euro-Americans. National conversations conjured an identity of Native Americans filled with connotations of savagery and rebellion. Indeed, two months after the publication of the Book of Mormon, President Andrew Jackson signed the Indian Removal Act, which sought to forcibly remove Native Americans from lands within existing state borders to west of the Mississippi River in what came to be known as the “Trail of Tears.”\textsuperscript{227} Mormon theology differed from federal policies, however, as Mormons believed the Native Americans would be redeemed from their current state of savagery and eventually take the lead in creating a Kingdom of God.

The doctrine of the gathering called on the Mormons to build up the Kingdom of God “on the borders by the Lamanites.”\textsuperscript{228} In 1831, Oliver Cowdry, Smith’s scribe, was sent on a mission to the newly created Indian Territory on the border of Missouri. Cowdry and three other Mormon missionaries, however, struggled to “redeem” the Shawnee and Delaware Indians. This was in part due to the Shawnee reservation agent, who evicted the Mormon missionaries from the reservation for not having a permit to preach.\textsuperscript{229} Over the ensuing decade, interest in converting Native Americans waned as the Mormons struggled to find stability. In 1844, however, as anti-Mormon sentiment grew in Illinois, Smith revived interest in the Mormon-Lamanite connection. He was eager to find shelter in the Rocky Mountains, where he believed

\textsuperscript{226} A revelation given through Joseph Smith at Kirtland, Ohio, June 6, 1831: “I, the Lord, will make known unto you what I will that ye shall do from this time until the next conference, which shall be held in Missouri, upon the land which I will consecrate unto my people, which are a remnant of Jacob, and those who are heirs according to the covenant.” D&C 52:2.


\textsuperscript{228} D&C 28:9.

\textsuperscript{229} Reeves, \textit{Religion of a Different Color}, 58.
the Lamanites would shield the Mormon converts as they continued to build the Kingdom of God. After the Prophet’s death, the Quorum of the Twelve sent missionaries into the Rocky Mountains to “fill Joseph’s original measures” by “proceeding from tribe to tribe, to unite the Lamanites and find a home for the Saints.”

The Book of Mormon described the morality of the Lamanites and Nephites in ways that Mormons read and understood racially. A Book of Mormon narrator, Nephi, noted: “Wherefore as they were white and exceeding fair and delightsome, that they might not be enticing unto my people, therefore the Lord God did cause a skin of blackness to come upon them.” After these people were restored to the “knowledge of Jesus Christ,” however, the “scales of darkness shall begin to fall from their eyes,” and they would eventually become “a white and a delightsome people.”

Nineteenth-century Mormons interpreted these racial categories as literal. The Book of Mormon described the Lamanites as being a shade darker than white, not black. Like other Euro-Americans in the nineteenth-century, Mormons turned to the Bible to interpret the skin color of African Americans, believing them to be cursed by the Mark of Cain. Therefore, while the curse of the Lamanites called on Mormons to take action and lift the Native Americans back to redemption, the curse on African Americans had no corresponding directive: “Their view of blacks made them American, while their view of Indians marked them as Mormon.”

Mormon theology regarding the Lamanites, and thus Native Americans, garnered anxiety from non-Mormons who believed Mormons were in collusion with Native Americans to wipe out non-believers. The Mormon expulsions from Missouri and Illinois, as well as the

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230 William Clayton Diary, 1 Mar. 1845, as reproduced in Andrew F. Ehat, “‘It Seems Like Heaven Began on Earth’: Joseph Smith and the Constitution of the Kingdom of God,” BYU Studies, 20 (Spring 1980): 253–80; and Thomas Burdick to Joseph Smith, 28 Aug. 1840, Joseph Smith Collection, Church Archives.
231 2 Nephi 5:20, 30:4-6.
232 Reeves, Religion of a Different Color, 57.
233 Reeves, 54.
later justification for the Utah War, were accompanied by these claims. Mormon opponents
blurred the racial distinction between Native American and Mormon. Methodist minister Ezra
Booth, for example, publically denounced Mormon converts and their decision to choose red
over white, savage over civilized. White Protestants regarded both Mormons and Native
Americans as threats to nineteenth-century white Protestant society.

In 1849, the Saints boldly built a fort next to the largest Ute Indian settlement on Utah
Lake (today’s Provo). Although relations were initially peaceful, a group of Mormons killed a
Fish Eater Ute and did not make amends. A group of Fish Eaters retaliated by killing Mormon
cattle and threatening worse. Brigham Young responded by sending a military force to
exterminate the hostile Indians in a bloody execution that came to be known as one of the
Mormon “Indian Wars.”

U.S. Army Lieutenant John Gunnison commented:

It is a curious matter of reflection, that those whose mission it is to convert these
aborigines by the sword of the spirit, should thus be obliged to destroy them—but they
stoutly affirm that these people will yet, under their instruction, fulfill the prophecy that
‘a nation shall be born in a day’; and when they have completed the destined time, will
listen to the truth and become ‘a fair and delightsome people.’

Shortly after arrival to the Great Basin, Brigham Young appealed to the federal
government for admission to the Union as the State of Deseret. Statehood granted local
autonomy and would avoid the placement of federal politicians. Citing the lack of 60,000
eligible voters, however, the 1849 appeal was denied. Under the Compromise of 1850, a
geographically reduced Deseret was renamed Utah and made a territory, with Brigham Young as

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234 Reeves, 60-1, 64.
University Press, 2010), 54.
236 Quoted in Jared Farmer, “Displaced from Zion: Mormons and Indians in the 19th Century,” in Historically
Speaking, (January 2009), 42. The place of Native Americans in the divine plan continues to be a question in Mormon
theology and history. For a more detailed analysis see Simon G. Southerton’s Losing a Lost Tribe: Native Americans,
DNA, and The Mormon Church, (Signature Books: 2004), and “Red, White, and Mormon,” in Paul Reeve’s Religion
the first governor. As a territory, the Great Basin Kingdom held an ambiguous place in American law. Congressional leaders, such as Missouri Senator Thomas Hart Benton, considered the territories wards of the federal government, unready to self-govern and thus subject to federal legislation.

Spurred by eastern clergy members and the popular press, many Americans regarded plural marriage, Church control of political life, and a theocratic economy, unthinkable in the emerging modern democracy. Thus, the goal of a Mormon-controlled state was out of reach until the region could be “civilized.” Yet, it was also under the American Constitution that Mormons insisted their right to religious freedom. Joseph Smith and other early Mormon leaders had great faith in the American Constitution, which they believed was divinely inspired and offered legal protection to practice their religion. And in the early Republic, the separation of church and state was a federal regulation that did not necessarily delimit individual states from privileging a specific religious tradition. For example, Massachusetts held a Congregationalist “standing order” well into the nineteenth century. Under this provision, Mormon leaders repeatedly sought statehood as a means to self-govern their own religious sovereignty.

Mormon settlers slowly displaced the Ute Indians in the Utah Valley. Due to overfishing and pollution, Utah Lake could no longer support the Ute people. During the “Utah Wars” of the 1850s, President James Buchanan turned federal resources away from the Office of Indian Affairs in Utah to focus on suppressing a growing Mormon “shadow government,” ostensibly undermining his non-Mormon appointees. Without the resources of the lake, compounded by the

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absence of federal support and protection, the Ute Indians suffered from starvation and sickness. In 1865, the remnants of the Fish Eater Utes signed a reservation treaty and were relocated 150 miles away from the Utah Valley.²⁴⁰

As new generations of white Euro-American Mormons converted and the time between Joseph Smith and these new Saints widened, attention to the conversion of the Lamanites waned. Mormons ascribed their own sense of place to the valley, displacing the significance of Utah Lake and overwriting the indigenous geography of the region. As Jared Farmer notes, Mormons exerted “geographic power” and “the natural landmarks they claimed and mapped and named (or renamed) manifested that power.”²⁴¹ Aligning with a national practice of dispossession and appropriation of native lands, Mormon settlers physically displaced the Ute Indians while simultaneously disrupting the symbolic significance of the lake. In a narrative that privileged efforts to make the desert bloom, Mormon histories came to focus on the desert and mountains of the Great Basin, not the basin itself.

In the mid- and late-nineteenth-century, the Great Basin became a site of increased non-Mormon migration. Although public interest turned away from aligning Mormons and Native Americans, Mormons continued to be derided as uncivilized. Euro-American immigrants and federal leaders regarded plural marriage, cooperative economics, and a centralized theocratic power as irreconcilable with American values. Yet, as isolation waned, the Mormon Church did not soften religious distinctions, but rather, strategically shored up the walls of their own communal identity.

²⁴¹ Farmer, On Zion’s Mount, VI.
3.3 Building the Great Basin Kingdom

The Latter-day Saints’ early forays into community planning and implementation were foundational for the success of Mormon settlement in Utah and cemented an economic theology based in cooperation and unity. Mormons believed they had been uniquely and immediately charged by God to ready the earth for the Second Coming of Christ. This commandment required action—extensive social organization and effective group dynamics. The Church was not only responsible for the salvation of souls, but was responsible for gathering God’s people, settling them, organizing them, and guiding them in building the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom was the basic organizing principle of Mormon society. As Brigham Young directed in an 1859 sermon, “We must be one. Our faith must be concentrated in one great work—the building up of the Kingdom of God on the earth, and our works must aim to the accomplishment of that great purpose.” In fulfillment of this revelation, the Church prescribed a systematic development plan, in which all property and labor were directed toward the establishment of the Kingdom of God.

On arrival to the Great Basin, Salt Lake City was laid out and construction began immediately. In anticipation of the arriving wagon trains, committees were formed from the advance company to begin construction of the settlement. One group plowed, harrowed, and irrigated land; another laid out a city grid and defined property lines; another harvested timber; while another built log cabins. Difficulties with the Ute Indians and the federal government kept Mormons on the defensive. Isolated both geographically and legally from the United States, Mormons relied on cooperative living, home manufacturing and an ethic of frugality to ensure their own survival. As Young claimed, “I want hard times, so that every person that does not

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242 Brigham Young, Sermon of October 7, 1859, JD VII, 280.
243 Arrington, Great Basin Kingdom, 45-6.
wish to stay, for the sake of his religion, will leave.”

Mormon dedication to collectivist patterns of behavior was invaluable in overcoming the problems of settlement in the Great Basin. Severe winters and the repeated assaults by grasshoppers and crickets made large-scale agricultural production difficult. As a journalist recorded in *Harpers Weekly* in 1903: the “dangers from the Indians, as well as the dangers from the elements, and their pressing needs, brought them into close economic relationship,” the success of the settlement was “dependent upon a compact society, well knit together.”

Isolation prevented extensive commerce, even if Mormon theology had encouraged it.

As Young proclaimed:

> We do not intend to have any trade or commerce with the gentile world, for so long as we buy of them we are in a degree dependent upon them. The Kingdom of God cannot rise independent of the gentile nations until we produce, manufacture, and make every article of use, convenience, or necessity among our own people… I am determined to cut every thread of this kind and live free and independent, untrammeled by any of their detestable customs and practices.

The scriptural injunction to build Zion was a heavenly mandate to construct a Garden of Eden out of the physical resources available to the Mormon community. Self-sufficiency, removed from gentile markets, and a cooperative economy were the pragmatic responses. Isolation and economic independence became theological imperatives separating Saints from Gentiles and directing labor toward the creation of the Kingdom.

The Kingdom was the medium and locus of Mormon belief. For Mormons, participation in bringing forth the material conditions of heaven on earth was seen as a religious maxim. The Saints looked to the Church to establish the conditions that would assure the completion of this Kingdom. Mormon settlement in Utah continued to follow modified versions of Smith’s original

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1834 Plat of Zion—a grid system with wide streets, uniform blocks and reserved spaces for public religious buildings. As geographer Samuel Smith notes, “Mormon town plans were a key component of the communitarian Mormon settlement strategy, helping to convert early Mormon influence into lasting regional dominance.”

In contrast to the individualistic frontier migration, roughshod and haphazard housing of exploitative industries, Mormon settlement was the product of centralized church leadership. The Council of Fifty, composed of leading Mormon citizens, along with the High Council—the bishops and other church leaders—planned and regulated policies around the distribution of land, the control of natural resources, the construction of public works and irrigation ditches, and the prevention of starvation. The settlement was divided into plots, allocated to families based on number of wives, and bundled into nineteen ecclesiastical wards with a bishop in charge of each.

Emphasis was initially placed on the production of food and the home manufacture of necessities, such as textiles and brick. Just as elsewhere in the nation, church and business, and government and business, were becoming more distinct and separate, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was diminishing the separation of the secular and religious, enterprise and the Church: “Among the pioneers, all enterprises were church enterprises and all enterprises were public enterprises, for the chief economic objective of the Mormon community was building Zion (or the Kingdom of God) and all enterprises were expected to contribute to that end.”

247 Samuel A. Smith, “The Cities of Zion? Mormon and non-Mormon town plans in the U.S. Mountain West, 1847-1930” in Journal of Historical Geography 50 (2015), 4. Mormon settlements did not merely duplicate Smith’s original plat, but by 1860 had developed into two distinct prototypes for Mormon town planning, better suited to the valleys and deserts of Utah.

248 Arrington, Great Basin Kingdom, (1958), 51.

249 Leonard Arrington, “The Concept of Enterprise Among the Mormons in Early Utah,” 1951, 2. CHL.
In contrast to the scattered individualism and laissez-faire capitalism of other mid-nineteenth-century Euro-American settlers to the Rocky Mountain West, Mormon unity, joint action, and group planning defined and set apart the Great Basin Kingdom. Mormon theology did not separate the immanent material world from a transcendent spiritual world. As Smith revealed in the Doctrine and Covenants: “there is no such thing as immaterial matter; All spirit is matter, but it is more fine or pure, and can only be discerned by purer eyes; We cannot see it; but when our bodies are purified we shall see that it is all matter.” For Mormons, the sacred and the mundane were different degrees on a spectrum of empirically achieved knowledge. And participation in physically constructing the Kingdom through cooperative labor was a means of materializing their faith.

Mormons believed their faithful labor would bring forth a concrete Promised Land. The Great Basin, as the Kingdom of God, was deeply tied to a Mormon understanding of spiritual superiority. Mormon leaders accused the federal government of deluding the will of the Founding Fathers by putting too much emphasis on free markets and the pursuit of individual gain. A de facto theocratic community with a tightly controlled political economy, the Great Basin Kingdom offered Mormon pioneers a geopolitical alternative to the nineteenth-century interpretation of the nation-state. Like other Abrahamic traditions, Mormonism authorized a political interpretation of a promised/non-promised land, center/margins, and a covenanted people/Other. Yet, no other Euro-American religion acted as geopolitically as Mormonism did in

252 Mormon leaders and adherents continuously expressed the Americanism of their tradition, often citing the corruption and misinterpretation of the founding principles by nineteenth-century government officials. Ethan Yorgason and Chiung Hwang Chen, “‘Kingdom Come’: Representing Mormonism through a geopolitical frame,” in Political Geography 27, no. 4 (May 2008): 481.
its early history. As detailed above, believers gathered in physical locations and moved across the United States as a centralized core.

Mormons learned “to know” the religious truth of Mormonism not only through discourse—sermons and revelations—but also through prohibitions and restrictions placed on the body and the regulation of labor directed toward the building of the Kingdom.253 In addition to the tenets of the Word of Wisdom, in which nutritious foods, fasting, physical exercise, and the wearing of temple garments were prescribed and harmful substances banned, Mormon settlers were assigned duties within a structured system of communal responsibility. Salvation was processual and was to be learned step by step.254 Home manufacturing, agriculture, construction, and clerical responsibilities, became modes of religious participation in the Mormon beehive.255 As journalist James Gordon Bennett glibly remarked in 1842, “They are busy all the time establishing factories to make saints and crockery ware, also prophets and white paint.”256 Those who did not direct their efforts toward the creation of the Kingdom were spatially and religiously outside of the Mormon pale and would gradually wither. As discussed below in greater detail, this came to include the support and patronage of a Mormon mercantile system, in which all funds spent at non-Mormon stores were considered direct offensives to the creation of the Kingdom.

253 Mitchel and Hildi, 88.
254 Givens, 27.
255 The Deseret News (Oct. 11, 1881) described the symbol of the Mormon beehive in this way: “The hive and honey bees form our communal coat of arms…. It is a significant representation of the industry, harmony, order and frugality of the people, and of the sweet results of their toil, union and intelligent cooperation.”
256 Quoted in Givens, 42.
3.3.1 Mapping Zion

Places are constituted through socially constructed rules of inclusion and exclusion and are powerful entities through which people assert communal ideals. Nineteenth-century territorial imaginations exemplified by Joseph Smith’s revelations of the Kingdom, as well as the territorially organized social processes of Mormon settlement, laid claim to the Great Basin by (re)assigning rules and meaning to what happened within the space. Widespread ideological discourse claimed the Great Basin as a religiously sanctioned Mormon homeland. In 1880, future Church President Wilford Woodruff told the Saints:

> When I look at this assembly and contemplate the work of this people in these valleys and in the surrounding Territories; when I perceive how this desert is occupied, how the Latter-day Saints are progressing, how they are cultivating the earth, building temples, halls, tabernacles, schoolhouses, towns and villages, I marvel at the work of the Lord.

Carefully implemented social programs and aggressive, well-organized settlement patterns, regularly celebrated and reenacted in public commemoration, enabled Mormon settlers to rewrite the Great Basin as a mountainous Zion, not as a lake valley populated by native peoples. As Jared Farmer claims in *On Zion’s Mount*: “ethnic and religious groups sustain landmarks even as the landmarks help sustain those groups.”

During the first twenty years of Mormon Great Basin settlement, gentile migration remained sparse and American Indian settlement scattered. Mormon outposts were planted around the nucleus of Salt Lake City, expanding to include more than three hundred satellite villages. President Young vigorously pushed expansion south—away from heavier frosts and the Oregon and California trails. Mormon settlement reached beyond the Wasatch Valley, stretching

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258 Wilson Woodruff, *General conference reports* (April 1880), 10. CHL.
259 The Wasatch Mountains, and Mount Timpanogos specifically, became celebrated landmarks of Mormon history and community making—for example, community hikes, Pioneer Day parades, the Mount Timpanogos Wilderness Area, Timpanogos Cave National Monument, and Robert Redford’s Sundance Resort.
260 Farmer, *On Zion’s Mount*, ?.
all the way into Nevada along the Muddy and Virgin Rivers, avoiding gentile rangelands and mining outposts. By the 1870s, through systematic exploration and colonization, the region was transformed into what geographers now call a distinctive and enduring “Mormon Culture Region.”261 This same geographic self-awareness, however, also served to fuel anti-Mormon sentiment.

In the nineteenth century, the popular press frequently referred to the Mormon Great Basin settlement as a geopolitical threat to American values and political security. An important creator and sustainer of the cultural frames and narratives the public use to make sense of events, popular news outlets imagined the Great Basin as a spatialized Other, a terrifying contaminant from within.262 Depictions of Mormonism focused on exaggerated images of plural marriage, prophetic leadership, and self-isolation from “civilization.” The press presented Mormon leaders as autocratically controlling the politics and the economy of Utah, coercing followers into bondage, and undermining American values of individualism:

The Republic must overthrow the modern Mormon Kingdom: or that Kingdom will sap the honor and power of the Republic. Both can not survive as temporal sovereignties… The Prophet of Utah is not a local despot only; he is a national enemy; and the nation must deal with him.263

Non-Mormons feared Mormonism’s spatial manifestation in Utah was a fundamental threat to the American nation, and without vigilance, would expand beyond its borders and corrupt the nation.264 Physically removed from American centers, the Great Basin was shrouded in darkness,

261 In this framework, the Wasatch Valley is regarded as the core, displaying the greatest density of occupancy, intensity of organization, and homogeneity of culture (although also the location of the greatest gentile settlement); surrounded by a domain and Mormon cultural dominance from the upper Snake River to the lower Virgin River. D.W. Meinig, “The Mormon Culture Region: Strategies and Patterns in the Geography of the American West, 1874-1964,” *ANNALS (Association of American Geographers)* 55, no. 2 (1965).

262 From the late nineteenth to early twentieth century, 258 articles in *Newsweek, Time, US News & World Report,* and *The Nation* used geopolitical language to refer to the threat of the Mormon Great Basin settlement. Yorgason and Chen, 479.


264 Yorgason, 487.
a mysterious and uncivilized place that concealed Mormon secrets and collusion with Native
Americans. As Judge John Tidwell noted in 1867, Mormon self-isolation revealed their ambition
to create a separate nation: “No one can be in Utah long without a feeling that they are among a
foreign people. It is true they speak our language, but their religion is utterly different from
ours... They only acknowledge allegiance to us through protest, and then secondary to their own
government, and they hate us with an unconcealed bitterness, and constantly pray in their
churches of our downfall” (emphasis added).265 Believed to be culturally monolithic, religiously
suspect, and politically corrupted, the Great Basin Kingdom was viewed as a geopolitical threat.

With this in mind, President James Buchanan sent 1,500 armed forces to the Utah
Territory in May 1857, to wrestle control of the territory from Mormon leaders and establish a
federal presence. Although historians now refer to it as the Utah or Mormon War, no formal
battles were fought between the United States Army and the Nauvoo Legion, a Mormon militia.
The most striking event of the year long standoff was the death of 120 innocent non-Mormon
pioneers traveling overland to California, murdered by 50 or 60 local Mormon militiamen on
September 11, 1857 in the Mountain Meadows Massacre.266 Mormon leaders secured full
pardons for the Nauvoo Legion, excluding those responsible for the Mountain Meadows
Massacre, by agreeing to cede the territory’s formal governance to a non-Mormon. The
territory’s governorship was transferred from Young to non-Mormon Alfred Cumming, and the
U.S. Army was granted peaceful entrance to the Salt Lake Valley.267 Despite the change in
official leadership and the new markets offered by the federal army and its suppliers, Mormon
leaders held to their goals of self-sufficiency and religious sovereignty.

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267 Arrington, 1958, 192.
Although early Mormon pioneers never realized complete independence from the markets and resources of the United States, and the presence of native peoples, gentile miners and pioneers always precluded complete isolation, the Mormon Church held political and economic dominance in the region for more than twenty years. With the construction and completion of the Union Pacific railroad in 1869, however, the relative authority afforded Mormons in the Great Basin was coming to an end. Railroads connected Utah to national political and economic structures. Salt Lake City emerged as the principal way station to the Pacific Coast; an appealing location for those looking to serve the material needs of transcontinental traffic. Increasing numbers of non-Mormons migrated to and through the Great Basin and American capitalist markets and gentile values were quickly becoming a threat to Mormon economic and religious hegemony. While non-Mormons hailed the expansion of the American republic into Utah as a martial victory for the United States, the Church was left with the question of how to maintain a unique identity and protect the Kingdom in light of these growing outside pressures.

3.4 Zion’s Cooperative Mercantile Institution

At the end of the 1860s, gentile groceries and traders selling imported goods were beginning to pull economic control away from the Church and the building of the Kingdom. Salt Lake City had become a trading post for miners, soldiers, and immigrant trains. Irish, German, and Chinese laborers crowded the Salt Lake Valley, and manufactured and dry goods were at a premium. Merchandise that could not be made at home had to be transported by oxen train from the Missouri River, a slow and hazardous journey of many months. Sugar was sold for

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268 Mening, 209.
$100 a sack, flour for $75, and calico fabric was 75 cents a yard, 51 cents higher than in eastern markets.  

It was the beginning of the Gilded Age and the nation’s economy was expanding at an extraordinary pace. The development of national agricultural markets and extractive resources, combined with an accelerated post-Civil War transition to industrialism, fundamentally altered the American economy. Railroad track mileage increased fivefold, steel production multiplied fourteen times, and “real” economic growth doubled within the last thirty years of the nineteenth century. With the expansion of railroads across the American landscape, family and local economies were suddenly pulled into a national commercial organization.  

Nowhere was the threat of gentile influence and corruption more apparent than with the coming of the railroad, screaming into the Great Basin with the power of national markets and ideologies aboard. In 1869, as the Union Pacific railroad neared the Great Basin, with the promise of a station near Ogden, Eastern and Midwestern enterprises threatened Mormon economic autonomy and theocratic control. Mormon leaders feared “worldly” trade and exchange would both break up and secularize the Kingdom.  

Non-Mormons, too, anticipated the railroad’s role in infiltrating the mysterious Utah Territory. As Apostle George Q. Cannon commented in 1868, “We are told openly and without disguise that when the railroad is completed there will be such a flood of so called ‘civilization’ brought in here that every vestige of us, our church and institutions, shall be completely obliterated.” At the same conference, Cannon read an editorial by Samuel S. Saul from the non-Mormon publication, The Salt Lake Reporter:

270 “100 Years, America’s First Department Store!” in The Salt Lake Tribune, Sunday, May 19, 1968, Section Z, 1. CHL, Box 162.
Hitherto this Territory has only been of interest to the people of the United States because of the infamous establishment sought to be set up in it in the sacred name of religion, and the motor of the warfare against the gross outrage has been alone the moral sense of the country, but now, for the reason just named [the construction of the railroad], a commercial interest is added, and the two together will as surely as truth is truth, and right is right, crush out the vile thing and rid the country of the foul blot, peaceably if possible, but with a besom of destruction if that is inevitable.  

Further, travel guides and tourism pamphlets created by the railroad companies and intrepid travelers participated in the creation of an image of the Mormon Other, highlighting the geography of the Salt Lake Valley and the peculiar people that inhabited it.

According to railroad literature, “Mormonism occurred within a geography, it imagined a geography, and it could be understood in terms of that geography.” Travelogues written by famous adventurers such as Sir Richard Francis Burton and William Henry Jackson popularized rail travel and western destinations. As a Nelson Pictorial Guidebook in 1870 described, entering Salt Lake Valley felt as if you crossed a “portal to some enchanted region,” “everywhere there is something to arrest the eye, to strike the imagination, and to remind one of the wisdom and infinite power of the Architect who built up the mountain-crests and rent their sides with profoundest chasms.” Stories recounting the sublimity of the mountain vistas were augmented by the promotion of “Mormon” landmarks along the line, such as Pulpit Rock, where one railroad company claimed Brigham Young had given an important sermon along the Mormon Trail. The Rio Grande Western Railway even sold souvenir maps of the Great Basin drawing topographical parallels to the Promised Land and Mormon settlement.

Guidebooks described the Mormon people as contained and distinct, deeply tied to the geography of the Great Basin. For nineteenth-century tourists, visiting the Utah Territory offered

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273 Cannon, 293.
275 Nelson’s Pictorial Guidebooks, Salt Lake City, with a Sketch of the Route of the Union and Central Pacific Railroad (New York: T. Nelson and Sons, 1870), 23, 7.
276 Walker, 586, 592.
modern people an experiential trip into an ancient and exotic past. The grand church buildings such as the Tabernacle and Temple, as well as the efficient and orderly urban planning of Mormon communities, gave the built environment an added distinction from eastern cities and non-Mormon western outposts. As William Wilson Ross wrote in his 1876 guidebook, “The Trans-Continental Railroad has brought within easy reach a land as full of fascination as ever the scenes of Arabian Nights were to our youthful ears.”

American onlookers imagined and defined the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints as both a menacing presence and a fascinating other, a view intensified by the extension of the transcontinental railroad into the Great Basin.

Mormons living in the Great Basin were not mere bystanders to the construction and intrusion of the railroad. Although Mormon leaders recognized the consequences of a streamlined link to the gentile world, they were not against the construction and completion of the railroad itself, which promised ease of transport for travelers and goods alike. As Brigham Young noted in an 1867 address, “Speaking of the completion of this railroad, I am anxious to see it, and I say to the Congress of the United States, through our Delegate, to the Company, and to others, hurry up, hasten the work! We want to hear the iron horse puffing through the valley. What for! To bring our brethren and sisters here.”

Rather than succumb to a unilateral imposition of American “civilization” and values, Young proposed the strategic subversion of the encroaching American industries by reformulating their meaning and use for Mormon ends.

In many ways, the development of the railroad into the Great Basin hardened the boundaries between Babylon and the Kingdom. Just as non-Mormon tourists to the region delineated an exotic and cohesive Mormon Other, Young relied on the expanding gentile world

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277 William Wilson Ross, *10,000 Miles by Land and Sea* (Toronto: James Campbell and Son, 1876), v-vi.
278 Brigham Young, “The Union Pacific Railroad,” in *Journal of Discourses*, Vol. 12, (Salt Lake City, May 26, 1867), 54.
to construct a form of Mormon orthodoxy. With the increased presence of non-Mormons, the lines between Mormon and gentile enterprises hardened. In the 1870s, three Mormon rail lines were constructed in order to control the movement within the Great Basin, unite centers of home manufacturing and settlement, and to tie Mormon villages together into a more centralized Mormon territory. And in response to the inevitable influx of “worldly” goods on the transcontinental railroad, the purchase of which would only serve to build Babylon and undermine the Kingdom, Brigham Young proposed a program of protective measures, with cooperative mercantilism at its center.

3.4.1 Founding Cooperative Mercantilism

As the last quarter of the nineteenth century approached, the Church of Latter-day Saints had transformed the Great Basin into a well-organized Kingdom, with a relatively self-sufficient, egalitarian, and homogenous economy. Mormons regarded the laissez-faire capitalism and class disparity of the United States as heterodox. Mercantilism, or profitable trading, was regarded as apostasy. Yet, as the railroad brought worldly goods sold by gentile merchants into the Great Basin, Brigham Young recognized the need for a response. Through the lens of Zion’s Cooperative Mercantile Institution (ZCMI), the following section will explore how Mormons living in the Great Basin retained a separatist economic program by using the tools offered by national markets. A religiously sanctioned vehicle of economic exchange, ZCMI both relied on American capitalist markets and disrupted their success in order to ensure continued Mormon solidarity and self-sufficiency. Established in a time of national expansion and commercial conquest, ZCMI epitomized the interdependence of the religious and economic in late nineteenth-century Mormonism.

279 Walker, 595.
As part of a series of protective measures against the encroaching gentile world, ZCMI’s mission was manifold. The construction of ZCMI served to isolate Mormon economic exchange, temper Mormon members’ temptation to purchase worldly goods and thus participate in the building of Babylon, and guide the righteous Saints towards a religious ideal of cooperation and self-sufficient unity. A cooperative economy was a central tenet of nineteenth-century Mormonism and ZCMI stood as a material and symbolic representation of a Mormon response to American “civilization” and eastern competitive capitalism.

On October 24, 1868, Young founded ZCMI with an authorized capitalization of three million dollars, consisting of 30,000 shares valued at $100 each. Memberships in the cooperative were sold at low prices and share limits were set in order to ensure a level of egalitarian access and control. Dividends were divided proportionately and were intended to benefit the entire community. A constitution was composed, proclaiming “Holiness to the Lord! ...The inhabitants of Utah convinced of the impolicy [sic] of leaving the trade and commerce of their Territory to be conducted by strangers, have resolved, in public meeting assembled, to unite in a system of co-operation for the transaction of their own business.” Stockholders purchased one vote per share and had to be of “good moral character and have paid their tithing according to the rules of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.”

Brigham Young was elected president of ZCMI. Church and business leaders assumed positions as the Board of Directors. The completion of the Union Pacific railroad both spurred fears of eastern influence and provided the necessary means of transport for the new cooperative’s stock. The Board of Directors designated emissaries to travel to markets in New York and secure the purchase of

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280 “Constitution and By-Laws of Z.C.M.I.,” Box 62, CHL.
281 Besides Brigham Young, the directors of ZCMI included John M. Bernhisel (Council of Fifty), George A. Smith (Quorum of the Twelve), George Q. Cannon (Quorum of the Twelve), Horace S. Eldredge (Presidents of the Seventy), Henry W. Lawrence (later advocated against church monopolies of the press and commerce), and William Jennings (Mayor of Salt Lake City). Deseret News, October 16, 1868.
wholesale goods at reasonable rates. The Saints would only benefit from the completion of the railroad if they could control the distribution of eastern imports and keep their goods priced “as low as they can possibly be sold.” The Committee on Prices strategically worked to allocate the prices of goods sold and to keep the prices low enough so that gentiles would not undersell. By lowering and standardizing the price of staples, the Board of Directors believed money and time shopping or selling could be better spent in the pursuit of an independent and self-sufficient Zion. 282 Young encouraged the Saints to dress modestly and not waste time shopping for gentile frivolities, “for our time is all the capital God has given us, and if we waste that we are bankrupt indeed.” 283 Not only would ZCMI offer a Mormon-controlled and sanctioned economic system, but it would also empower and direct the Saints towards the continued creation of Zion. Three weeks after ZCMI opened its doors, the railroad reached Ogden. The Church was officially in business, and the business was the Church.

282 “Nov. 11, 1868,” ZCMI Board Meeting Minutes, Box 217, Reel 6, V. 1 Book A, (1868 Oct.–Oct. 1870), 29. CHL.
The first department store west of the Mississippi River, ZCMI pooled merchant resources, and centrally controlled credit, record keeping, and store maintenance, but maintained separate departments of management. Groceries, clothing, drugs, shoes, dry goods, wagons and machinery, trunks, and sewing machines were sold from the beginning. A central location was established in Salt Lake City, but other Mormon trading posts quickly came under the umbrella of ZCMI and were marked with a logo proclaiming membership and allegiance to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. By 1870, 146 local cooperatives had been established or incorporated, including locations in Wyoming, Idaho, Nevada, and even South Dakota, all
selling goods at a uniform rate. In 1875, the ZCMI parent store moved from a rented space to a veritable “mercantile palace,” a four-story brick building with an ornate iron façade, only a block away from Temple Square. On opening day Young offered up a prayer dedicating to the Lord every “particle of the building from the foundation to the roof with all its contents.”

Although ZCMI sold eastern manufactured goods, the Board of Directors controlled what goods could be sold and limited the stock to what they considered necessities. Profits from the institution were reinvested into the encouragement of home manufacturing and the board gave preference to selling locally produced goods. From first settlement in the Great Basin, Mormon leaders had encouraged the Saints to be self-sufficient. Located in an isolated region, and supposedly surrounded by hostile Americans, home manufacturing was both a necessity and a religiously sanctioned principal. As an 1856 epistle from Brigham Young and Heber C. Kimball noted: “Mothers in Israel, you… are called upon to bring up our daughters to pursue some useful vocation for a sustenance, that when they shall become the wives of the elders of Israel, the Kingdom, they may be able to sustain themselves and their offspring.” It was the religious duty of Mormon mothers to teach their daughters to sew, spin, and weave; to cultivate

284 Bradley, 20.
285 As Brigham Young wrote to Alma L. Smith on March 28, 1875: “The edifice is peculiar in its construction all the light being received from the front and top, there are no windows in all the vast extent of its side walls which are 318 feet long. Its frontage is 53 feet and it is four stories, including the cellar, in height. Its front, which is on East Temple Street, is massive and chaste, being composed o iron and plate glass. The light is abundant, and the ventilation excellent, the cellar of the building will be used for the storage of heavy goods, the first or ground floor will be devoted to the retail trade, the next floor above will be occupied by the wholesale department and the top floor will be used as a warehouse of the lighter classes of goods. The interior is tastefully though plainly fitted up and from the general staircase presents a ground ‘coup d’œil’ which impresses the mind with the vastness of the building and its extraordinary adaptability to the doing of a heavy business with as little expense and unnecessary handling of goods as possible.” Church History Library, Box 62.
287 Noel R. Barton, Christopher Layton and Zion’s Co-operative Mercantile Institution, (Salt Lake City, 1972), 1.
vegetable gardens; and to make soap and cheese. Through the act of home manufacture, everyday Saints could materially participate in the creation of the Kingdom.

In October 1878, Young’s successor John Taylor appointed a Committee on Cooperation, Home Manufactures, and Industries and in short order the Church had established a ZCMI tannery, boot and shoe factory, and textile factory. By 1887, the “Big Boot” shoe factory was producing more than 500 boots daily and more than 160,000 annually. By continually increasing the production of home manufactured goods, the Church hoped to continue toward the ideals of freedom and self-sufficiency, separating themselves from the oppression and sins of the federal government, and embodying an ethic of mutual aid. As King Benjamin taught to the Nephites in the Book of Mormon: “When ye are in the service of your fellow beings ye are only in the service of your God.”

One of the key objectives of ZCMI was to create an alternative economic system to free market capitalism. Mormon leaders noted the disparity within the American class system and the prosperity of a few at the expense of the many. At the first board meeting Young remarked ZCMI should “build up the Kingdom of God… Selfishness ought not to be the ruling motive, but the Glory of God and the welfare of the Saints.” Indeed, Joseph Smith had warned the Saints against mercantilism for fear that individual profit would drive a man to forsake his God and his religion and therefore “apostatize from the truth.” Yet, Young conceived of ZCMI as a tool to strategically subvert national markets in order to reinforce communal dependency and

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289 Arrington, Great Basin Kingdom, 308.
290 Mosiah 2:17.
isolation from federal interests. The institution was intended to serve all of the Saints and to act as an equalizer of Mormon prosperity.

Young claimed ZCMI was the material manifestation of Smith’s revelation obliging the Saints to sustain each other before being permitted to participate in the redemption of Zion. As Mormon scriptures commanded, it was only through the oneness of spirit and action that the Kingdom of God could be built. One of the four books published in Mormonism’s Pearl of Great Price and dictated by Smith in 1830, the Book of Moses described how the prophet Enoch guided the ancient Israelites to a state of unity while the rest of the world was at war. Those who fought against God and his teachings were cursed to violence and bloodshed, but the chosen Saints were spared, “Because they were of one heart and one mind, and dwelt in righteousness; and there was no poor among them.”<sup>293</sup> Citing the Nephites’ contempt for the poor and their eventual downfall in the Book of Mormon, ZCMI Director George Q. Cannon added that to build the individual up, and to form class distinctions, “was an abomination in the sight of God.”<sup>294</sup> He believed ZCMI would prepare the minds of the Saints to further the Kingdom of God through cooperation and unity of action, and secure freedom from the “arbitrary and tyrannical rules” of those standing against them.<sup>295</sup> Director William Jennings noted that although Mormon merchants would not individually make as large of a profit as individual merchants, by uniting together, Mormonism’s enemies “will not dare to attack us.”<sup>296</sup>

Mormons regarded contention and divisions of mind and body as the basis of gentile strife, and in the 1860s, the bloodshed of the Civil War served to confirm this conviction.

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<sup>293</sup> Moses 7:15-18. Like the Book of Mormon, the Book of Moses was regarded as a clarification and restoration of Old and New Testament principles.

<sup>294</sup> Charles Smith, “October 11, 1868 Ward Meeting,” in <i>Diary of Charles Smith</i>, BYU Transcripts, Utah State University Archives, page 175.

<sup>295</sup> “A Dissertation,” <i>ZCMI Advocate</i>, no. 9 (July 15, 1885), 8, CHL.

Mormon leaders regarded cooperation as a spiritually superior organization of resources. By restoring the unity experienced under Enoch, the Mormons could usher in the Second Coming of Christ and be protected when “the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew.” As the Doctrine & Covenants commanded, “Be one; and if ye are not one ye are not mine.” Thus, ZCMI joined a legacy of Mormon practices and institutions geared toward the construction of the Kingdom of God, ushering in the Second Coming of Christ, over and against the way of outsiders.

Almost from the beginning ZCMI and its many branches were known as the People’s Store. ZCMI was erected to serve and guide the people toward religious unity, cooperation, and economic justice, but also commanded their participation. As Church and ZCMI President John Taylor noted in 1885, it was the religious duty of the people to “protect it, and sustain it” so that “we may be one; for our revelations tell us, if we are not one, we are not the Lord’s. And if we are not the Lord’s, whose are we?” The cooperative venture protected Mormon interests by retaining economic control of the Great Basin, but also delivered disciplinary action for those who failed to live up to the standards of the Church. In 1871, a group of Mormon families was discovered to have purchased stoves from Corinne, a gentile outpost north of Salt Lake City. As punishment for not purchasing the stoves from ZCMI—where the stoves cost $50 more—their bishop threatened to have them excommunicated from the Church. As an act of repentance, the families were required to stand before their ward and publically ask for forgiveness. In response, however, a member stood up and said she “would not eat the food that was cooked on a Gentile

297 Arrington, 1958, 315.
298 Matthew 7:25.
299 D&C 38:27.
300 Bradley, 19.
stove.”

The line between insiders and outsiders was stark and the goods of ZCMI acted as its material markers.

Although other communities throughout history relied on cooperative enterprises, the Saints regarded their cooperative efforts as distinctly Mormon. Individual capitalist success and the profiteering speculations of other western outposts were sacrificed in favor of submission to the Church. Sermons, both from general church leaders and community leaders, emphasized the need for home manufacturing and defined the right and wrong places to shop. Ultimately, however, ZCMI never actualized the Mormon ideal of a completely self-sufficient Zion, void of gentile influence, and everyday Mormons continued to intermittently purchase goods from non-Mormons, despite admonitions from Mormon leaders. But in the 1870s and 1880s, ZCMI captured one-third of all of Utah’s expenditures and acted as a tool of continued resistance to pressures of American capitalist expansion. As the future of the Church became increasingly uncertain, ZCMI stood as a beacon of Mormon distinction.

### 3.4.2 Trouble in the Kingdom

In the 1870s and 1880s, the Mormon economy was highly diversified, relatively stable, self-sufficient and equalitarian. The Church continued to directly control ZCMI and Mormon participation in building the Kingdom was consistent with efforts in the 1850s and 1860s. Although gentile migration increased with the completion of the railroad, a non-Mormon presence remained minor in comparison to Mormon dominance. By 1880 there were an estimated 150,000 Mormons in the Great Basin. Plural marriage, a thriving theocratic

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302 “Excerpts from a history of Weston by one of its earliest settlers: Lars Fredrickson,” CHL, Box 62, Annual historical files, 1868-1990.
303 Arrington, Great Basin Kingdom, 314-15.
304 Bradley, 32.
305 Arrington, Great Basin Kingdom, 353.
economy—and its disruption of capitalist markets—and the supposed Church control of political life, however, increasingly drew the ire from eastern elites and federal powers. And with the death of Brigham Young in 1877, the future of the Kingdom became increasingly uncertain.

Brigham Young’s role in the creation of the Great Basin Kingdom cannot be overstated. He led the exodus of the Church to the Salt Lake Valley, was the first governor of Utah, laid the cornerstone of the Salt Lake Temple, and in addition to being the second president of the Church, was the president of numerous Mormon institutions, including railroad companies and ZCMI. Eastern storehouses feared the death of Young “would be closely followed by a dissolution of the Mormon Church & the ruin of [ZCMI].”

On August 29, 1877, Young died of peritonitis. Yet, despite fears regarding the future of the Church and its enterprises, ZCMI’s Board of Directors noted, Young’s death “had no perceptible effect on this institution.” Indeed, a year later, a now anonymous member of the Board commented that his death might have operated in favor of ZCMI, “as it has relieved [the Board] from a sort of one man power rule… and has given them a much needed opportunity to run the institution on sound business principles.” Further, the death of Young, like that of Joseph Smith thirty years prior, established the fact that Mormonism did not rest on the tenure of one man’s life only, but was supported by a lasting network of intuitions and practitioners.

More pressing to the future of ZCMI and the Church was the increased political pressure of the federal government. Since the Church of Latter-day Saints’ second attempt at statehood in 1856, eastern politicians had cited polygamy as a point of no compromise. Although the Church argued plural marriage was protected under the First Amendment, anti-polygamists claimed that shielding polygamy under the Constitution would fatally compromise American morality and

democracy. As Brigham Young lamented in 1866: “But who is there that cares! We are only ‘Mormons.’ We have no rights that in the estimation of a certain class, should be in the least respected. The Constitution and the laws, and every principle of justice can be violated and trampled upon with impunity whenever we are concerned.” As in New York, Illinois, Ohio, and Missouri, Great Basin Mormons continued to feel the pressure of American hegemony. First Republican Presidential candidate John C. Fremont ran on a platform that rolled polygamy and slavery into a single offense. As the 1856 Republican National Convention resolved, it was “both the right and the imperative duty of Congress to prohibit in the territories those twin relics of barbarism—polygamy and slavery.” And in 1862 the Morrill Act marked the US government’s first congressional response to the Church and the beginning of an extended legal battle to end plural marriage among the Mormons.

Church President John Taylor noted in the ZCMI Advocate in 1885, to quit “is just what the devil would like, just what many of our merchants want, and it would be the very thing that would suit the world, and the devil would laugh at us.” Eastern wholesalers, however, were not deterred by the anti-polygamy legislation and continued to sell to ZCMI representatives. As a note from one Mormon trader in New York claimed, “Regarding the polygamy question, trade here tells us they do not take that into account at all, they call it a political question & do not deal in politics but sell goods to good parties.” By the early 1880s, ZCMI had established strong financial ties to eastern wholesalers and was known for a commitment to timely payment. Even during the Panic of 1873, wherein post-Civil War inflation and the demonetization of

310 Young to Hooper, June 16, 1866, Letterbook 8:489 Utah State University Archives.
311 “Republican Party Platform of 1856,” (June 18, 1856), on The American Presidency Project.
silver contributed to a national financial crisis, ZCMI strategically acted to suspend departments and expansion projects, and was able to continue to pay off its creditors.314

Despite ZCMI’s continued economic dominance of the Great Basin, overall, it was a time of despair and misgiving for the Saints. During the federal raids on polygamists and cohabiters almost all Mormon leaders were either in hiding or in prison. Church President John Taylor died while in hiding in 1887, future Church President Joseph F. Smith escaped to Hawaii and did not return until 1889, and First Counselor George Q. Cannon escaped capture, was recaptured, forfeited $45,000 in bail, and eventually surrendered to federal officials and served nine months in prison.315 As Jan Shipps notes, Mormon identity was maintained “corporately, not individually, which explains why all the citizens of the kingdom—those who were involved in plural marriage and those who were not—were willing to defend to the last possible moment the practice of polygamy that kept them set apart.”316

Although polygamy publically remained center in anti-Mormon sentiment, Mormon collectivism in economics and politics were also under attack. In 1887, the Edmunds-Tucker Act went a step further in a legislated attempt to destroy the “temporal power” of the Church by disincorporating the Church and seizing all Church real estate used for purposes other than devotion.317 “The Edmunds-Tucker Act was intended as a death-blow to the LDS Church’s domination of the Territory,” but Mormon leaders had prepared.318 Twenty-five years prior, shortly after the Morrill Act was enacted, many church properties, including majority stake in ZCMI, were transferred to a private trust controlled by Brigham Young. After his death, the

314 The 100th year, 1868-1968, ZCMI, America's first department store. The centennial series: great moments in Utah and ZCMI history. CHL.
315 Arrington, Great Basin Kingdom, 360.
316 Shipps, 125.
317 Lyman, Political Deliverance, 29.
properties were eventually turned over to his successor, John Taylor. With the effective date of the Edmunds-Tucker Act looming, Taylor “sold” his 3,500 shares of ZCMI to a syndicate of young Mormon businessmen. Due to the foresight of Brigham Young and John Taylor following the Morrill Act, ZCMI remained relatively immune to federal intrusion under the Edmunds-Tucker Act. 319

Amid judicial battles regarding the constitutionally of the Edmunds-Tucker Act, US Marshal Frank H. Dyer was appointed receiver of all Church properties assumed to be used for purposes other than devotion, including the tithing offices, the offices of Church leaders, Church livestock, and numerous joint-stock companies. In 1890, after the US Supreme Court upheld the constitutionality of the Act, it became clear polygamy would lead to the economic and political downfall of the Church. Shortly thereafter, Church President Wilford Woodruff received a revelation withdrawing the requirement for worthy males to take plural wives. In his journal, Woodruff recalled his struggle with God on the matter, but that the “temporal salvation of the church” was ultimately more important. 320 On September 24, 1890 Woodruff’s Manifesto was published proclaiming: “I now publicly declare that my advice to the Latter-day Saints is to refrain from contracting any marriage forbidden by the law of the land.” 321 By removing the ideological thorn from Mormon practice, federal pressure and public interest gradually lessened. And with the inclusion of an anti-bigamy provision in the state’s constitution, Utah was finally granted admission to the Union in 1896.

319 ZCMI board members noted that the transfer of stock to a local syndicate recused the institution from legal entanglement: “The late government action upon the incorporated Mormon Church will in no manner whatever affect the Z.C.M.I.” 0, 8680 Nov. 15, 87,” Comments on the State of the Company, 1877-1895, 17. CHL, Box 167.
320 Cited in Brigham H. Roberts, Comprehensive History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, vol. VI, (Salt Lake City, 1930), 220.
In the 1890s, as part of the Church’s relinquishment of formal control of ZCMI, the Church no longer threatened Mormons with ex-communication for not shopping at ZCMI. Many of ZCMI’s smaller branches were closed and often reopened by non-ZCMI affiliated Mormons. Thus, as competition increased for Mormon trade, stock ownership in ZCMI was opened to non-Mormons. As ZCMI Director Cannon noted, he knew that:

…the time would come when English and other foreign capitalists would invest their means with the Latter-day Saints for safety, and this would be fulfillment of predictions made from the earliest days of the Church… [For] in our present position we [are] prey to outsiders for lack of capital, and unless we fortify ourselves and provide for the future, we are likely to be overcome by them financially, on the commercial principle that money rules the world.  

Outside financial support helped secure the temporal future of ZCMI. By 1893, after the first twenty-five years of business, ZCMI’s sales totaled more than seventy million dollars and stockholders had received dividends in the excess of two million.

At the turn of the twentieth century, the Church had made outwardly substantive changes—the abandonment of plural marriage and the removal of direct Church involvement in temporal affairs. As scholar Leonard Arrington claimed, “The temporal Kingdom, for all practical purposes, was dead—slain by the dragon of Edmunds-Tucker.” Yet, despite the Edmunds-Tucker Act, the Woodruff Manifesto, and the formal admission to the Union, the Mormon Kingdom did not acquiesce and adhere to the dominant cultural patterns of the nation. Legislative actions served to further unite Mormons in resistance to federal oversight. “Cohabs” sent to prison during the raids of the 1880s stood as martyrs for a Mormon commitment to hold the Church above all else. Mormon sermons denouncing consumerism, competition, and lavish spending, and praising home manufacture and cooperation, continued for years following

323 George E. Blair and R.W Sloan, “The Mountain Empire of Utah,” (1893) 42. CHL, Box 123.5.  
324 Arrington, Great Basin Kingdom, 379.  
325 Lyman, 291.
the Edmunds-Tucker Act. Board meetings were always opened with prayer and Church presidents held director positions on ZCMI’s Board until the official sale of ZCMI in 1999 to the Meier & Frank Co. In 1905, Church President Joseph F. Smith still considered Church council paramount to temporal affairs, under which “the resources of various localities have been developed, community industries diversified, and the people, especially the poor, given increased opportunity for employment and a better chance to become self-sustaining.”

Nineteenth-century legislation forced the Church to alter structural ties to the Great Basin economy, but the Church did so strategically and in a manner that allowed Mormon economic ideologies to continue to flourish into the twentieth century.

3.5 Conclusion

The Great Basin Kingdom was the perfect confluence of geography, ideology, and economics. Large-scale settlement and material progress in the arid and mountainous Great Basin would not have been possible without the centralized control of the nineteenth-century Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and the compact Mormon social body, closely united by beliefs and practice toward a common goal. Remote and isolated, cooperative economics provided the resources for material and spiritual survival. In the late nineteenth-century, ZCMI became more than a symbol of Mormon cooperation and unity, but the tool of its implementation. The company’s interests and those of the Church were inextricably linked.

From the beginning, the Saints had a complicated relationship with Americanism. Mormon doctrine privileged the sacredness of the American landscape as the new Israel and the

326 In the 1990s, the store’s stock began to decline as newer and larger box stores were opened in Salt Lake City. As Church President Gordon B. Hinckley noted, the pioneer institution was no longer “central to its mission.” Max Knaudson, “ZCMI stores to be renamed,” in Deseret News, (March 1, 2001). See also Lee Davidson “Whatever happened to… ZCMI?” in The Salt Lake Tribune, (Nov. 25, 2016).

327 Thomas Kearns, Congressional Record, 58th Cong., vol. 39, part iv, 3608.

Great Basin as the new Eden. Mormon leaders lauded the Constitution as a paragon of religious freedom. As scholar Matthew Bowman notes, Joseph Smith’s revelations had “a particularly American flavor—a confident amateurism, an affinity for re-creation, renewal, and resurrection, excitement at the possibilities that religious liberty, nearly unlimited land, and economic prosperity might bring.”\textsuperscript{329} Yet, even with the complex process of more closely aligning with the Union in the 1890s, the Mormons did not disappear into the fabric of American pluralism, but continued to actively set themselves apart.

Throughout the nineteenth-century, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints strategically adapted to the changing pressures of the gentile world to ensure the survival of their Kingdom. For example, in 1864, only four years before the establishment of ZCMI, Brigham Young vehemently preached against trade and mercantilism:

> Where is there a merchant among us who has, year after year, continued in the love of the world, that cares anything about the Kingdom of God? ... We ought to care no more for the silver and the gold, and the property that is so much sought for by the wicked world, than for the soil or the gravel upon which we tread... our "Mormon merchants"...most of them will be damned, there is no doubt of it, unless they repent.\textsuperscript{330}

Yet, as gentile merchants entered the Great Basin and walked away with Mormon wealth, Church leaders recognized the need for a change in policy. First Counselor George A. Smith noted in 1871:

> I would like every one to inquire for himself—What would have been the result if, instead of sustaining Livingston and Kinkead and other merchants, our people had sustained Latter-day Saints? The result would have been, that large sums of money would have remained here and been used for building up the country... while, as it was, the influence of the men we had enriched was turned against us.\textsuperscript{331}

\textsuperscript{330} Brigham Young, “Exhortations to Merchants, Speculators, &c.,” in \textit{Journal of Discourses}, (Salt Lake City: Dec. 11, 1864).
\textsuperscript{331} George A. Smith, \textit{Journal of Discourses}, vol. 13, (1871).
Only seven years apart, these two sermons highlight the shift in the Mormon perception of trade. As Church leaders recognized the threat of gentile merchants, they devised a mercantile ideologically sanctioned by Mormon beliefs. Under ZCMI, commerce was no longer profane, but as regulated within a cooperative institute, sacredly sanctioned. Smith’s revelations and stories from the Book of Mormon were called on to legitimize the Mormon movement into mercantilism. In turn, the construction of ZCMI served to disrupt capitalist flows and shore up the walls of Mormonism against an encroaching gentile world.

Both dependent on the completion of the railroad and a safeguard against the gentile contaminate onboard, ZCMI was a marker of Mormon difference. Mormon theology promoted the spiritual as materially real and was not shy about Church participation in temporal affairs. Participation in ZCMI defined insiders and outsiders in the Mormon Church. As an example of Durkheim’s “mechanical solidarity,” shopping at the cooperative maintained social cohesion and a commitment to the collectively upheld tenets of Mormonism. As Terryl Givens’ argues in a *People of Paradox*, the Mormon dual commitment to individual spiritual achievement and a collective consciousness, set nineteenth-century Mormons apart from the individualism celebrated more broadly by nineteenth-century American society.

Certain aspects, however, precluded complete isolation of the Mormon Kingdom. As Euro-Americans continued to expand west, the opportunity to profit from Mormon controlled resources and the fear of Mormon theocratic institutions to the expanding national markets, brought the region to a national focus. The federal government implemented legislation to “civilize” and assimilate the Mormon Saints and the Great Basin. Like the earlier adoption of mercantilism, Mormon leaders responded to increased gentile pressure by strategically adapting

333 Givens, 4.
economic policies and doctrine to the top-down policies intended to incorporate the region into the American economy. The Saints anticipated the disincorporation of the Church and transferred control of ZCMI to private hands. Working within the American context of a right to private property, ZCMI recoded American culture patterns to serve the Mormon people and the continued survival of the Kingdom. ZCMI experienced ups and downs and administrative blunders, but stood to monitor and balance the Great Basin economy. The first building in Salt Lake City to be lit with electric lights, to install elevators and eventually, escalators, and even the first to build a parking garage, ZCMI was a site of Mormon creativity and innovation. Rather than ensuring its demise, the Church’s adjustments following federal legislative efforts in the nineteenth century, assured the vitality of the Church into the twentieth century.

Nineteenth-century Mormonism proclaimed a new dispensation in which the mysteries of God were knowable and materially present. God still spoke to contemporary prophets and offered guiding revelations for the changing times. The Saints embraced hierarchical communalism and following statehood, continually voted against federal intervention in regional affairs. In 1903, Utah elected Reed Smoot to the Senate, but for three years he was denied his seat due to his ties to the Mormon Church. An investigating senator claimed, “The charge here, in its widest scope… is that the Mormon Church controls the politics and industries of Utah.” Thirty-five years later, Church President Heber Grant was on the cover of Time magazine for his business acumen. From New York to Utah, Mormon commitment to hierarchical communalism and an open canon enabled the strategic response of Mormon doctrine and practice to the changing circumstances of the American landscape. Neither wholesale

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334 Lyman, 291.
assimilation nor opposition, Mormons subverted the spaces of American markets and ideologies in order to build a world of their own making.
4. Catholic Miners: Industrial Catholicism in Butte, Montana

Nestled in the Rocky Mountains, astride the Continental Divide, stands Butte, Montana. Extractive industries shaped and defined this “black heart” of Montana, a gritty industrial center gouged out of the state’s pastoral ranchlands. Butte emerged as a gold camp in 1864—a loose gathering of individual miners and temporary housing. With the discovery of a major copper lode in 1878, however, Butte began a transformation of colossal proportions. It was the beginning of the electrical age and Thomas Edison’s new electric lighting transmitted currents through copper cable, increasing the national demand for the metal. As the copper market grew, so too did demand for laborers in Butte, and immigrants streamed into the city to find work. At the end of the nineteenth century, Butte was producing twenty-five percent of the world’s supply of copper and one corporate giant controlled its extraction: The Anaconda Copper Mining Company.337

Mining operations drove thousands of immigrants from all over the world to the burgeoning industrial city, with more than 7,000 miles of underground tunnels and a reputation for prostitution, gambling, and drink. The Company, however, provided little beyond employment for the residents of Butte. As one trade unionist noted, “the average wage slave’s home is a miserable, dingy, dirty board shack… there are no sewers anywhere and everyone throws their slops, garbage, or waste of any kind out of the front of, or behind the house.”338 Framed by the stunning Rocky Mountains and rich in red metal, Butte gained the epithet “The Richest Hill on Earth”—although it was rarely the miners who benefited.

337 Pat Kearny, Butte Voices: Mining, neighborhoods, people (Butte, MT: Skyhigh Communications, 1998), 37.
From 1890 to 1900 the city’s population increased by 184 percent and almost all new arrivals were foreign-born. By 1917, the population had risen to nearly 100,000 people. Butte immigrants brought their own traditions and religious practices with them. Inside the ten-block radius of Butte’s Central Business District existed places of worship for Methodists, Christian Scientists, Baptists, Lutherans, Presbyterians, Jews, Catholics, and Serbian Orthodox. The Roman Catholic Church, however, stood out among the crowd, with two-thirds of Butte’s population claiming membership.\textsuperscript{339}

Butte was an “overwhelmingly Catholic” town and the Irish-Catholic immigrants comprised a majority of the underground labor.\textsuperscript{340} In a parish history of St. Mary’s Catholic Church, Father Michael Hannan noted, “every family with the exception of two, depends on the mines for a living.”\textsuperscript{341} The Catholic laborers even denoted waste in the mines “Protestant ore,” signaling Protestants did not have a place in Butte’s underground tunnels.\textsuperscript{342} Economic displacement and migration to an environment far removed from the temperate western shores of Ireland put increased emphasis on religious identities in order to foster community belonging, keep families intact, and reinforce an ethic of mutual aid.\textsuperscript{343} To support the growing working-class population, Butte residents built ten parishes, nine parochial schools, two Catholic high schools and eight convents.\textsuperscript{344} At the end of the nineteenth century, Catholic steeples were as much a part of the Butte landscape as the iron gallus frames, which lowered miners to their stations below the surface.

\textsuperscript{339} David M. Emmons, \textit{The Butte Irish: Class and Ethnicity in an American Mining Town, 1875-1925}, (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1989), 13
\textsuperscript{340} Ibid, 95.
\textsuperscript{341} Michael J. Hannan, \textit{Father English and St. Mary’s Parish, Butte, Montana: The Miners Catholic Church and Parish} (Butte, 1917), 18. BSB.
\textsuperscript{343} Patrick Kearney, \textit{Butte’s Catholic Family}, (Butte, MT: Skyhigh Communications, 2010), 103-104.
Concurrently, broadsides, dime novels, and the brushes of artists such as Charles Russell and GeorgeCatlin constructed a western landscape steeped in folklore and myth, celebrating stories of individual advancement in the frontier wilderness. The West was perceived as aplace of economic and spiritual renewal for the industrializing east; the safety valve for easternmanufacturing and urban inequity. Yet, just as eastern elites and federal agents revered theAmerican West as the stronghold of American values, a site integral to the expansion of freemarket capitalism and political democratization, Butte stood as the anti-myth. Butte was anindustrial center populated by those whom nativists and the anti-Catholic Know-Nothingslabeled as anti-modern, clannish, and parochial. The influence of the American ProtectiveAssociation, a national anti-Catholic organization, was at its height in the mid 1890s and theMontana branch fought fiercely to exclude Roman Catholics from holding public office. Atthesame time, the American Catholic hierarchy was divided over the degree to which AmericanCatholics should acculturate to American standards of religious volunteerism and individualism.Butte’s burgeoning Irish Catholic community held a tenuous place in the heartland of Americanmythmaking.

From a placer mining camp in which individual claims produced moderate returns ondeposits of gold dust found in streams, to an urban industrial center subject to an internationalcommercial metal market, corporate consolidation, and intense labor struggles, Butte serves as a microcosm of the rise of industrial capitalism in the nineteenth-century United States. Althoughregarded by American lawmakers and eastern elites as the foot soldiers of western conquest, and

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345 In an 1895 election, the Montana APA sent a circular to all members of the Montana House of Representatives threatening political death if they cast their vote for any “avowed representative of a foreign power that has the miserable audacity to dictate to free American citizens what they shall do and what they shall not do.” JD Caldwell, “The A.P.A. Protest,” (Butte, MT) 18 Jan. 1895. Scrapbook II, Helena Diocesan Archives.
never the conquistadors themselves, Butte’s Irish Catholic miners were not merely objects of change, but the agents.

In this chapter, I will first detail the history of Butte as a local manifestation of a growing transnational paradigm. The popular image of the western pastoral settler fails to take into account the great significance of industrial workers in the development of the American West. Butte’s growth reveals the realities and hardships facing workers entrenched in industrial capitalism. Next, I will show how the local Catholic Church structured daily life and offered resources integral to survival in Butte’s changing landscape. For Butte’s miners and their families, Catholicism was a living tradition, which on one hand dictated principles of right and wrong behavior, but on the other hand was operationalized to respond to the locally particular social and economic realities. That is, the miners were not only formed by Catholicism, but also continued to negotiate what it meant to be Catholic in their everyday lives.

Finally, I will argue Butte was not only an important site supporting the rise of copper-conducted electricity, but also a local stage on which the politics and morality of organized labor played out. The unsanitary living conditions, constant struggle to earn a living wage to support often large families, and the perilous duty of working deep underground in poorly ventilated shafts, were the realities of living and working in a bustling industrial city controlled by one all-encompassing Company. Yet, despite these hardships, Butte miners employed the beliefs and practices of Catholicism to create a lasting community in the Rocky Mountains. For Butte miners, religion was not composed of abstract beliefs, but of tools that enabled the laborers to challenge the structural forces of industrial capitalism. As this chapter will reveal, Butte miners filled the growing void between labor and capital with the practices and beliefs of the Roman Catholic Church.
4.1 Showered with Gold, Ribbed with Copper: The History of Butte

Until the discovery of gold in 1862, the majority of Euro-American travelers merely passed through the rugged Territory of Montana en route to the Pacific Coast. Catholic priests were among the first Euro-American settlers to the territory. Jesuit Rev. Pierre-Jean DeSmet traveled to evangelize the Flathead Indians in western Montana in 1840 and established St. Mary’s mission in 1841. St. Ignatius’ Mission was established in 1844 for the Kalispell and Pend Oreille tribes and St. Peter’s for the Blackfeet and Piegan in 1858.\(^{346}\)

The first rush of white immigrants to Montana came after gold was discovered in 1862 at Gold and Grasshopper Creeks, followed closely by discoveries at Alder Gulch, Virginia City, and Last Chance Gulch.\(^ {347}\) The early gold miners lived almost exclusively in “tents or brush shanties adjoining their labors,” and worked six days a week, the seventh spent in camp gambling, visiting brothels, and doing business.\(^ {348}\) Jesuit Fathers stationed at Indian mission sites undertook the first missionary work to whites.\(^ {349}\) Father Urban Grassi, serving at St. Ignatius, responded to sick calls across the state, traveling as far as 500 miles round trip. In 1863, he built the first chapel for whites in the territory near Hell’s Gate, Montana.\(^ {350}\) Mining outposts only sporadically received visits from traveling priests. Yet, the first acting Governor of the Territory of Montana, Thomas Francis Meagher, saw the territory as an opportunity for Irish Catholics.

Appointed in August 1865, Meagher’s rowdy biography made him a perfect fit for the undeveloped and unrefined territory. An Irish nationalist, Meagher was tried for high treason.

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\(^{347}\) Lawerence B. Palladino, SJ, *Indian and White in the Northwest; or, A History of Catholicity in Montana*, (Baltimore: John Murphy & Company; 1894), 265.


\(^{349}\) Pauwelyn, 4.

\(^{350}\) Palladino, 268.
after an aborted Irish revolution in 1848, sentenced to transportation to Tasmania, and escaped four years later to the United States where he fought in the Civil War as a Union general for the Irish Brigade. 351 On his journey to Montana he met with the Archbishop of St. Paul John Ireland, and claimed he wished to “colonize Montana with Catholics, drawing settlers, principally from Irishmen in Ireland and Irishmen in America,” secure Irish priests, and establish a Bishop in Montana. Although Meagher would not live to see a Montana Diocese, he is credited with providing leadership in the constitutional development of Montana and setting the stage for future Irish immigration. 352 Annual events held by The Thomas Francis Meagher Association still celebrate his life and legacy in Montana with public lectures on Irish history, music, and dance. 353

In 1866, in response to the pleas from Meagher and the overly taxed Jesuit missionaries to the Native Americans, Belgian Rev. Remigius De Ryckere was assigned to a new mission field in Deer Lodge. De Ryckere was born in Emelghen, in West Flanders, Belgium in 1837. Like so many early priests to the Rocky Mountain West, he studied at the American College in Louvain, a seminary founded in 1857 by Bishop Martin J. Spalding of Louisville and Bishop Peter Paul Lefevre of Detroit to train young Belgian, Dutch, and German seculars to serve the spiritual needs of new waves of European immigrants to the United States. 354 On arrival to Deer Lodge, De Ryckere struggled to find a room in the hotel of the crowded placer mining camp and was passed from cabin to cabin, until he smashed his hand while chopping wood and was laid up

353 Meagherfest is held annually in Helena, Montana. See meagherfest.org.
for a number of weeks. In his recovery, he essentially assumed the duties of “mining camp priest” and traveled between Gold Creek, Pioneer, Pike’s Peak, Blackfoot, Bear Gulch, Bear Mouth, German Gulch, Cable, Anderson, Philipsburg, Silver Bow, and Butte:

Horse-back rides of 40, 60, 80 and more miles over impassable trails, in the dead of winter and through deep snows, or under the scorching sun of the summer, were weekly occurrences in the discharge of his missionary duties. Accidents to life in the mining camps were frequent, equally frequent being broils and shooting scrapes, and the good Samaritan had to be on the saddle whole days, and even nights, to reach the sick in time for the last comforts of religion.

In a particularly harrowing example of priestly duty, De Ryckere was summoned to attend to a dying miner who had gotten into a brawl with another man over the gambling table. In the middle of a winter night, the young priest had to swim his horse across the icy Missouri River to reach the man in time to administer last rites. For more than ten years De Ryckere was the sole contact for Euro-American Catholics in the territory, and was met “with all kinds of inconveniences and fought his way through as best he could.” This all changed, however, with the discovery of copper.

In the winter of 1864, only 27 men and one woman staked placer gold claims along Silver Bow Creek, a few miles west of what would later become Butte. Three years later, at the height of Butte’s gold rush, as many as 2,500 people crowded the camp. Copper and silver were both known to exist below ground, but without a railroad to bring in heavy machinery, trips overland were expensive and burdensome. By 1875, however, the hills surrounding Butte were producing more silver than the earlier gold findings. As an 1897 historian wrote, “When the Almighty planted the eternal hills upon which Butte rests, He ribbed each with bands of silver

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356 Palladino, 299.
358 De Ryckere, 1.
and copper and showered all with gold.”  

William A. Clark, a banker and merchant who had made his fortune in Bannack gold, opened the first silver mill in 1876. That same year, Marcus Daly, an Irish Catholic immigrant and Clark’s soon-to-be greatest rival, arrived in Butte.

Daly was born in 1841, in Ballyjamesduff, County Cavan. In 1856, he immigrated to New York City and five years later made his way to San Francisco, and eventually Nevada, to work the Comstock Lode mine. By 1871, Daly was working as a mine foreman for the Walker Brothers, a business syndicate out of Salt Lake City, Utah. Five years later, Daly was sent to Butte City to investigate the prospects of the Alice Sliver Mine. Recommending purchase, Daly invested $5,000 of his own money into the enterprise, but sold out and bought the Anaconda Silver mine a few years later. Although geologists believed the mine to be near exhaustion, at 100-feet deep Daly struck lucky with the discovery of copper. At 300-feet, the copper vein was five feet wide; at 400 feet, it was fifty: “As a silver mine the Anaconda had been a rank failure but it fooled even its owners by becoming the richest copper mine in the world.” Less than five years later, the Anaconda’s payroll was $100,000 more than any other mine in the region.

Word of a poor Irish immigrant’s success travelled and quickly attracted more Irish to the growing industrial center. One such Irishman was Patrick Daly, who read about the copper boon and “having knowledge of a distant relationship between the [County] Caven [sic] Dalys and [his] own clan decided to go direct to Anaconda where he landed in February 1888;” from where he quickly sent his brother a prepaid passage ticket from Ireland to Butte. As Father Patrick Brosnan, parish priest of St. Mary’s Rectory noted in a letter to his father: “Marcus Daly

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362 Everett, 126.
363 Taylor, “Two Southerners Discovered the Richest Hill on Earth,” MHS.
365 Hugh Daly, “Life History of Hugh Daly,” 7. David Emmons Collection, BSB.
was the man that made Butte an Irish town. He was a poor Irish man that became a millionaire here. He did not care for any man but an Irishman and consequently did not give a job to anyone else.”

Regardless of his true commitments, Daly commanded loyalty from his employees and was regarded as a protector of Irish jobs and culture. He paid high wages for the era, donated to Irish fraternal organizations and the Catholic Church, gave his employees St. Patrick’s Day off from work, and even gave each family a Christmas turkey. In 1901, a year after his death, The Marcus Daly Memorial Association solicited funds from the laborers that had worked under Daly to build a statue in his honor. In 1906, a bronze statue, paid for by his once employees, was unveiled on Butte’s Main Street.

4.1.1 A Catholic City

To accommodate the growing population of Butte, a wood-framed Catholic Church was erected in 1877 and was formally blessed as St. Patrick’s on August 1, 1879. Over the course of the next decade, St. Patrick’s Parish grew to be the largest congregation in Butte, with various estimates of seven to twelve thousand members. Mountain View Methodist Church had the second largest membership, at 145.

Anticipating the increased settlement of Catholics in the territory, the Right Rev. Bishop James O’Connor of Omaha wrote in 1879 that “the day is not distant when Montana will be one of the most fruitful and flourishing, as well as the most beautiful portions of God’s vineyard, and

366 Patrick Brosnan to his father, (Feb. 18, 1917), 2. Father Patrick Brosnan Papers, BSB.
368 CP Connolly, The Marcus Daly Memorial Association, Butte, Nov. 18, 1901. Montana Governor’s Papers, Box 5, Folder 4, MHS.
369 The statue was moved in the 1930s to the campus of Montana Tech due to the high volume of car collisions with the statue on Main Street.
370 “Are Proud of St. Patrick’s. Butte Catholics Gather 12,000 Strong at the Various Services in Their Handsome Church Every Sunday,” Montana Catholic, Vol. 2, No. 12, January 6, 1900: 1. Print. MHS.
371 Emmons, Butte Irish, 95.
this will be owing in great measure to the labors and virtues of those who have already borne there the burden of the day.” As Bishop O’Connor’s forewarned, Montana’s population steadily increased and in 1883 Bishop John Baptist Brondel of Vancouver was appointed Administrator of Montana and in 1884 the Bishop of the newly formed Diocese of Helena.

Montana has an area of 145,040 square miles, but until 1903 a single diocese served the entire territory. Bishop Brondel was zealous in the discharge of his pastoral duties and is thought to have visited nearly every settlement of the diocese every year, traveling eight to nine thousand miles by horseback annually. He appealed to his alma mater, the American College of Louvain, for more priests and in 1884, Cyril Pauwelyn became a student for the Apostolic Vicariate of Montana. Bishop Brondel participated in a trend of American bishops to emphasize the manliness required of American priests, warning Pauwelyn, “the missions for which you are preparing are real missions, where there are but few priests, where life is not spent on a feather bed.”

In the late nineteenth century, the Territory of Montana had few public services or comforts. Erected in the foothills of the Continental Divide, Butte was isolated from other population centers and in its early years lacked a strong social or political system. In lieu of municipal oversight, Catholic parishes, clergy, and social teachings, offered a systematic framework for the social order of Butte, one in which gender relations, education, social justice, and economic welfare were strictly regulated, with the institutional church standing at the

372 Palladino, 348.
373 Palladino, 362.
374 Palladino, 391. For example, “Fort Benton, July 13; Chinook Mission, July 16; Townsend July 20; Deer Lodge July 27, St. Ignatius Mission, July 31; Helena Aug. 3, Livingston Aug. 10,” etc. noted in “Bishop Brondel’s Work,” Bishop Brondel Papers, Folder 23, Box 2, Helena Diocesan Archives.
376 Calvert, 19.
The Church provided a place of social gathering and protected and reinforced ethnic identities. The Catholic clergy became responsible not only for the spiritual welfare of the Montana population, but also the social and physical survival of the Euro-American immigrants.

Ten years before the copper boom in Butte, Father DeSmet asked Mother Xavier Ross to send five Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth, Kansas to Helena, Montana to open the first school for white children in the Territory. Sister Mary Buckner described the physical challenge of the journey overland: “We had a trip of four days and four nights in the coach.” Three men, five Sisters, and one young girl, were so overloaded with luggage and buffalo robes that it was impossible to be jostled about, thus becoming numb from the inactivity.

On arrival to the Territory, the Sisters experienced the same feelings of displacement and hardship as the Catholics they served. Without strong institutional networks, women religious had to abandon medieval monastic models of religious life and take ownership for not only their own financial and physical wellbeing, but of the other migrants as well. As Anne Butler notes, “Catholic sisters inexorably facilitated the process of community building in the West.” The Sisters of Charity started hospitals, schools, and orphanages long before local and

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377 Butte residents’ commitment to Catholicism was regularly noted: “Visiting clergymen and others have often remarked the splendid liberality of the Catholics of Butte toward their church and all things pertaining to the church. No parochial school in the country is better patronized than St. Patrick’s and none better deserve liberal patronage. Love for his church and affectionate regard for his native land and the land of his adoption go hand in hand with the Irish-American and early 90 per cent of St. Patrick’s can be so termed. The Irishman has stood by his church through centuries of persecution, poverty and suffering and in the bright dawn of the twentieth century the church has no more faithful children than the descendants of this who lived and died on the Emerald Isle ever faithful to church and country.” *Montana Catholic*, Vol 1.23 September 23, 1899: 2. Print. Eleven years later, the residents of Butte’s Irish-Catholic neighborhoods, Dublin Gulch and Cork Town, were praised for their participation in the Sodality of Our Lady and continued commitment to “the purity of their womanhood and the unrivalled [sic] glow of the domestic virtues of their mindset.” “Dublin Gulch and Cork Town: the residents of clean, strong and moral men and women,” *The Butte Independent*, (Aug. 13, 1910): 1. Print. MHS.


380 Ibid, 308.
federal government offices could do so. The sudden influx of people to Butte’s copper mines resulted in acute conditions: “In their greed for the earth’s treasure and for the assurance of a livelihood, the thousands forgot the needs of their bodies as too many of them ignored the hunger of their immortal souls.”381 Disease and accidents were rampant. Need for a hospital grew urgent, and at the request of Butte’s first permanent priest, Father John Dols, the Sisters provided.382

In 1881, Sisters M. Ignatia Nealon and M. Xavier McLaughlin obtained property, negotiated building contracts, and solicited funds from surrounding mining camps for the construction of a hospital in Butte. On November 15, the Sisters opened the two-story St. James’ Hospital. As local newspaper The Weekly Miner wrote, “There is not anywhere in the world a more striking memorial of the value of kind words, and kind actions… [and] universal respect and affection entertained everywhere, among the most harrowing of wretches as among the greatest of men for the Sisters of Charity.”383 The vast Montana landscape, with little government oversight and a vibrant developing culture, contained spaces for women religious to assume roles of leadership in the building of western communities. And in Butte, women religious immersed themselves in the public worlds of the people for whom they worked.

With the parish standing at the center, Catholicism supplied the cultural base on which Butte was constructed.384 Parish schedules conformed to the life of the miners. Of the five masses held daily at St. Mary’s, for example, two were solely scheduled to accommodate shift changes. The sounds of the church bells calling practitioners to mass mirrored those of the mines

382 Kearney, Butte’s Catholic Family, 19. Palladino, 308.
383 “Sisters of St. Vincent de Paul Open their Hospital in Butte at Once,” The Weekly Miner, Nov. 8, 1881. Print.
384 Emmons, Beyond the American Pale, 279.
calling miners to work.\footnote{Lunch and dinner pails crowded the vestibule during masses at five am and five pm while copper miners gave up prayers to St. Michael for protection underground. Father Michael Hannan, \textit{History of St. Mary’s Parish}, (Butte, MT: Butte Independent Print, 1917), 13. BSB.}

The liturgical calendar, communion, confession, baptisms, confirmations, marriages, and last rites, as well as auxiliary groups and church socials, structured the daily lives of Butte miners and acted as the keys to building a lasting community on the vestiges of a temporary boom camp. Public education opportunities were minimal in the territory and Catholics at the end of the nineteenth century preferred to send their children to parish parochial schools, of which Butte had nine.\footnote{“Religious Education. Why Catholic’s Maintain Private Schools,” \textit{Montana Catholic} 1, no. 18, (August 19, 1899): 1. Print. MHS.} Catholic embodiment of time and space were central to the creation of Butte and the ways its residents moved through the cityscape—attending mass, school, and church sponsored dances, festivals, and celebrations. The Church mediated the relationship between heaven and earth, but also reinforced the social unity of the community.

Catholic fraternal organizations held a particularly important place in the social worlds of Butte’s residents. Women participated in the Young Ladies’ Sodality of Our Lady, Ladies Aid, and organized church socials and dances.\footnote{Hannan, \textit{History of St. Mary’s Parish}, 35.} Men joined one of three divisions of the Ancient Order of Hibernians (AOH), the Knights of Columbus, and other Irish-Catholic fraternal organizations.\footnote{For example, the Ancient Order of Hibernians “is in Butte as in every other city in the Union where Ireland’s sons have a home, a strong, manly organization, the mainstay of the Church and the refuge of the exile.” “The Ancient Order of Hibernians,” \textit{Montana Catholic}, Vol. 1. No. 8, June 10, 1899: 5. Print. MHS. Other Irish organizations in nineteenth-century Butte include the Gaelic League, Gaelic Athletic Association, Robert Emmet Literary Association, Irish Volunteers, and the second largest Clan-na-Gael chapter in the U.S.}

As the 1886 Constitution for the Montana Territory’s Ancient Order of Hibernians noted:

\begin{quote}
In this world of action and of selfish interest... particularly in this broad land of Freedom, where all nationalists are represented, and where class interests, protected by organized and exclusive institutions, prevail, it behooves the Catholic children of the
\end{quote}

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Irish race to enroll themselves beneath a common standard in the cause of Church, Country, and Mutual Aid.\footnote{Constitution and By-Laws, Montana Territory. (Butte, MT: Mining Journal Office, 1886), 3. AOH Box 7, BSB.}

Butte’s AOH claimed to have a mission grander than other fraternal societies by noting membership requirements, namely to be a practicing Catholic and of Irish descent, which “stamps it as different in its scope.” The AOH divisions claimed responsibility to “combat and nullify those influences that denied [the Irish] people the rights accorded to others.”\footnote{“The Ancient Order of Hibernians in America,” Bulletin No. 1, (1920), 2. Bulletin No. 2, (1920), 1. AOH Box 17, BSB.} To achieve this end, Butte’s AOH hosted lectures on Irish history and culture, as well as music, games, and dances in order to celebrate and keep alive Irish Catholic identities. And as discussed below, the AOH served an important function for Butte’s miners and families. From birth to death, Catholic belief, practice, and social organization structured the lives of Butte’s residents. Although isolated in the Rocky Mountains, far from their homeland and subject to new forms of hardship, Butte’s Irish found continuity, a sense of ethnic solidarity, in the face of change.

The first push of Irish immigrants to the United States followed the Potato Famine years of 1845-49, when more than a million Irish died of starvation. Movement beyond East Coast enclaves, however, did not occur until the second wave of Irish immigration in the early 1880s. In 1883 alone, 81,000 people left Ireland for the United States.\footnote{Emmons, Butte Irish, 2.} In 1884, twenty-six percent of Butte’s population was Irish-born or the children of Irish immigrants, an even higher percentage than in Boston. Ninety percent of the Irish who came to Butte worked for the mines, with two-thirds working in the toughest and most dangerous jobs in the deep mines.\footnote{Emmons, Butte Irish, 13.} Underground hardrock mines required heavy machinery and skilled technicians, as more efficient production replaced the individual gold miners of the mid-nineteenth century.
The Irish of Butte predominately hailed from western Cork, a Catholic county rich with copper and skilled underground laborers. Mining in Cork, however, was on the decline as copper prices fell and mine ownership fluctuated. By 1882, only 200 workers were left at the once enormously productive Berehaven Mines. Concurrently, copper in Butte was on the rise. Letters home promising work and a growing Irish community established a migration chain from the mines of western Cork to those of Butte. Members of 77 different families left Castletownbere for Butte and of 1,700 people who left the parish of Eyeries on the Beara Peninsula between 1870 and 1915, more than 1,100 of them ended up in the city. Nearly seventy percent of the Irish-born Butte miners arrived between 1880 and 1895. By 1900, “Irish migration had become self-sustaining, Irish following Irish.” Two and a half thousand miles from the nearest eastern port, the Irish of Butte did not move west to escape society, but to stay connected to it.

4.2 The Development of Butte’s Working Class

With the discovery of silver and then copper, larger companies replaced individual placer miners, consolidated mining claims, and eventually controlled the entire Butte workforce and the services that supported it. As companies and their investors became richer, the working class of Butte grew poorer. And yet, as one laborer noted, “the class that grows poorer each year produces the very wealth upon which the other class grows richer every year.” In response, Butte’s first union was formed on June 13, 1878 as the Butte Working Men’s Union (BMU) with 261 charter members. The Butte miners did not seek to entirely overturn the American system

393 Kearney, Butte’s Catholic Family, 3.
395 Emmons, Butte Irish, 25.
396 “Asking Too Much,” Butte Bystander, Dec. 17, 1892: 1. Print, BSB.
397 “Chronology of Events and Dates,” in WPA, Copper Camp, (1943), 287.
of industrial capitalism—they participated in the economic system by seeking economic security through wages. But the miners also realized there was power in unity to end exploitative practices, create safe working conditions, and earn a living wage.\footnote{Butte Miners’ Union No. 1, “Constitution and By-Laws, Wage Scale and Agreement,” 4. Vertical File, Labor History/Miners’ Union, BSB.} Industrial capitalism and the Catholic Church converged in the Rocky Mountains to drastically aggravate the situation between Butte’s miners and the Company.

4.2.2 Industrial Capitalism in the Rockies

The transformation of Butte from a temporary and sparsely populated mining camp in the 1870s to an industrial center with nearly 100,000 people in the early twentieth century was indicative of the major shifts occurring in the global economy. Gains in industrial productivity due to the increase of heavy machinery, a complex division of labor, repetitive work tasks, and the consolidation of growing corporate monopolies, fostered the creation of international markets with goods and workers moving in every direction. Large companies bought and consumed smaller companies and the average number of workers increased at each firm.\footnote{Charles Hirschman and Elizabeth Mogford, “Immigration and the American Industrial Revolution From 1880 to 1920,” Social Science Review, 2009 Dec 1, 38(4): 899.} Political economists Adam Smith and David Ricardo’s theories of free trade rose to popularity under a growing capital class, whom embraced economic liberalism, unfettered competition, and economies of scale.\footnote{Classic liberalism was founded in part on the belief that free markets, democracy, and laissez-faire economics would free nation-states from the ever-looming prospect of war at the turn of the eighteenth to nineteenth centuries; that open exchange between the commercial classes would abolish protectionist policies of mercantilism. See EK Hunt, Property and Prophets: the Evolution of Economic Institutions and Ideologies, (New York: M. E. Sharpe, Inc.: 2003).} The flow of capital and commodities connected Butte to industrial centers around the world.
With the unveiling of copper in the late 1870s, Butte had forever been transformed:

“From the hopeless, abandoned camp of a year before, it was now the Mecca of all who could possibly reach it and its growth was magic-like.”

Figure 4: "Butte City in 1875"

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401 Freeman, 16.  
402 Richard Sawyer Collection. SM072. BSB.
The problem of transporting the copper from remote Montana was solved in 1881 when a spur line connecting Butte to Ogden, Utah along the Utah & Northern Railway was completed in December. In addition to shipping copper ore out, miners came from East and West and Butte’s population grew rapidly to the tens of thousands. From the 1880s to the early 1900s, copper consumption rose by 5.8 percent annually in the United States alone. Prior to 1882, 80 percent of copper mined in the United States came from the shores of Lake Superior. By 1887, however, Butte’s production surpassed that of any other district in the country and by 1898, Butte was responsible for 24.6 percent of all copper mined globally.

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403 Freeman, 60.
404 Palladino, 306.
406 Freeman, 62.
Copper ore is a mixture of hard sulfate minerals—less than one percent copper at time of extraction. In order to produce sheets of pure copper, or cathodes, the ore has to be smelted and refined. In the early years of Butte’s copper mining, this processing technology did not exist in the territory. Ore had to be sent overseas to smelters in Swansea, Wales—shipping was both expensive and time consuming. As a solution, Daly sought external capital to build and expand his copper empire. With funds from San Francisco investors George Hearst, James Ben Ali Haggin, and Lloyd Tavis, Daly built a smelter 26 miles west of Butte in a town he hopped to name “Copperopolis.” He contracted with the Union Pacific Railroad to build a line connecting the mines to the smelter and the purified copper to market. The copper ore was crushed, roasted in pits, and then concentrated using roller mills until they were replaced with steam stamps in 1886, enabling 1000 tons of ore to be smelted every day.

At the end of the century, the Company consolidated smaller mining claims and diversified across industries. Underground hard rock mining relied on the investment of outside capital to pay for the quantity and diversity of specialized labor, heavy machinery, and transportation. Individual miners and small mining companies sold out to those with the capital and machinery to dig to greater depths. The Copper Kings—William Clark, Marcus Daly, and Augustus Heinze—controlled Butte. As the Copper Kings consolidated the mining claims into ever-larger companies, the divide between Butte miners and the owners of the mines increased, resulting in a growing and impoverished working class.

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407 Although Daly filed a town plat with the name “Copperopolis,” the postmaster preferred the company’s namesake. Thus, “Anaconda” endured as the smelting city’s name. Laurie Mercier, Anaconda: Labor, Community, and Culture in Montana’s Smelter City, (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2001), 10.
409 William Clark, a Pennsylvania born Scots-Irish and Augustus Heinze, born in New York to a German father and Irish mother, never could claim the same level of respect as Irish Catholic immigrant Daly. Joe Holland, Modern Catholic Social Teaching: The Popes Confront the Industrial Age, 1740-1958, (New York: Paulist Press, 2003), 14.
In 1891, the Anaconda Mining Company was incorporated. The largest shareholders lived in New York and New Jersey, leaving the daily management and control of the company in Daly’s hands. With the construction of the smelter, the Anaconda Mining Company consumed Butte’s workforce. Gone were the days of individual placer miners, replaced by compartmentalized expertise and one all-powerful Company.\textsuperscript{410} By 1914, the Company owned the railroad, timber company, smelter works, the majority of the land inside Butte, and even the newspapers, standing as the fourth largest corporation in America at the time.\textsuperscript{411}

A look at the pay scale of the various employees of the Company provides insight into the number of positions required to complete the task of copper mining: firemen to fire the boilers for the steam hoist; hoistmen to lower and raise the miners belowground; ropemen to build and operate the cables and metal superstructure of the gallus frames; carpenters to build outbuildings, fences, and cut timbers; timekeepers; clerks who stocked and dispensed tools; foremen; swamper who loaded the mine cars; blacksmiths to sharpen tools; pipemen to take care of the water pumps; drymen to take care of the changing house; samplers to advise on tunneling direction; powder monkeys to blast things; repair men; and of course raise, stope, and driftmen miners.\textsuperscript{412}

Industrial elites at the end of the nineteenth century were overwhelming Protestant and participated in a religious tradition that supported and sustained the values, beliefs and

\textsuperscript{410} Variously called The Anaconda Gold and Silver Mining Company (1880), The Anaconda Mining Company (1891), The Anaconda Copper Mining Company (1895), and eventually The Amalgamated Copper Company (1897), it was always just The Company to those who labored in her mines. Jess Monk, “Chronological History of the Old Reduction Works,” (June 1958), 4. Anaconda Company Papers, Folder 7, Box 132, MHS.

\textsuperscript{411} Although ACM controlled much of Butte’s economic, political, and social world, it was not a “company town” in a traditional sense of isolation from non-company businesses and housing. Yet, the prosperity or decline of the city did rely on the success and failures of the primary employer. Mary Murphy, Mining Cultures: Men, Women, and Leisure in Butte, 1914-41, (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1997), xv.

\textsuperscript{412} Miscellaneous pay scale, Anaconda Copper Company. Vertical File, Churches: Catholic/St. Mary’s, BSB.
worldview of capitalism.\textsuperscript{413} As I will argue below, however, Catholicism offered Butte miners the tools to negotiate their place in the context of an emergent industrial capitalism. The Butte working class resisted and survived in a condition of subordination by redefining labor as a site of meaning along religious terms. By using the tools of religion and ethnicity to form bonds of mutual support and cooperation, they were not merely reactionary, but deliberate and reasoned in the creation of a lasting community.

Butte had grown and expanded around the mines—residents came for jobs underground and services catering to miners and their families soon followed. Yet, the Company provided little beyond employment for the residents of Butte. Industrial capitalism “depends in part on brute force, \textit{e.g.}, the colonial system,” but also, “the power of the State, the concentrated and organised force of society, to hasten, hot-house fashion, the process of transformation of the feudal mode of production into the capitalist mode, and to shorten the transition.”\textsuperscript{414} Anaconda Company officials bought off city officials and territorial representatives as they sought the bottom line over all else, leaving Butte residents without basic services or even funds to support public schools.\textsuperscript{415} Company officials even gerrymandered city boundaries so the mines were technically not within city limits—despite their locations blocks from city buildings and residential homes—therefore avoiding paying city property taxes or contributing to the welfare of the community. In Montana, capital controlled the Territory.

\begin{footnotesize}


\textsuperscript{415} Calvert, 4-5.
\end{footnotesize}
The wealth of Butte’s copper was accumulated in the hands of a few. The control of labor and production was no longer in the hands of individual households, but converted into units of time. Human labor was commodified and wage laborers became cogs in an organism of production, a human machine extracting ore from deep beneath the city’s surface. As Bishop John Carroll, the second Bishop of Helena, recalled in a 1914 address to Butte’s laboring men: “Defenseless and alone, the laborer was left to the mercy of a new school of economics which saw in him only physical energy he was capable of entering. Labor became a mere commodity and it was bought on the market at the lowest price.” With poor working conditions, no insurance or accident benefits, long hours, and low wages, it fell to the miners to support each other and their collective interests. And in 1878, with the threat of wages dropping from $3.50 to $3 a day at the Alice and Lexington mines, miners organized one of the first local unions in the United States.

4.2.3 Catholicism on Labor

Laborers around the world were responding to the shared plight of the growing international working classes. Especially in Western Europe, laborers were banding together behind socialist ideologies promoting the equitable distribution of income and the right of laborers to be fairly remunerated for their contribution to production. Although differing interpretations of socialism divided individual trade organizations, the majority of unions in nineteenth-century Europe were built on socialist foundations. By the end of the nineteenth

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417 Calvert, 5.
419 Socialism refers to a range of economic and political systems devoted to decentralizing ownership to the state, employees, or citizens. It has transformed from its origins in the eighteenth century as a utopian social experiment of Henri de Saint-Simon and Robert Owen to the materialist and scientific socialism of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels.
century, socialism had come to signify a commitment to the ideology of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, which clerical leaders believed was synonymous with an anticlerical and antireligious stance. As Bishop Brondel of Montana warned in a sermon on socialism, one must look to the origins of a tradition to see its true commitments: “[Marx] was an avowed materialist,” promoting “a system of social or political action based on the denial of God.” Since the 1870s, intense class conflict in Europe weakened parishioner loyalty to the established churches, successive emancipation movements often had an anticlerical dimension, and intellectual movements undermined conservative religious beliefs. Yet, as Hugh McLeod argues, a decline in practice did not necessarily translate to non-belief.

In Germany, Catholics organized one-seventh of the unions, while in Belgium and the Netherlands, Catholic trade organizations accounted for one-third of all unions before World War I. These labor unions had their roots in paternalistic organizations that were predominately anti-liberal and antisocialist. Concurrent to the rise of Catholic labor in Europe in the 1880s, the Noble and Holy Order of the Knights of Labor was gaining members and increased public notoriety as the United States’ largest and most preeminent labor organization. Although predominately Catholic in membership and led by devout Irish-American Catholic Terrence

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Powderly, American priests and bishops were uncertain of the ecclesiastical lawfulness of the Knights of Labor.\textsuperscript{424} 

The American Catholic hierarchy had a conflicted attitude regarding organized labor. American bishops feared that the Knights would undermine political order and lead American Catholics to socialism, and eventually, atheism.\textsuperscript{425} The tenuous place of Catholics in American society further enhanced clerical fears of appearing un-American. The Bishops worried that supporting trade organizations would confirm suspicions that Catholics were undemocratic and foreign in an era of growing anti-Catholicism.\textsuperscript{426} 

Prior to the rise of the Knights, American Catholic bishops devoted only passing attention to the economic or industrial causes of poverty, instead focusing their attention on temperance and crime.\textsuperscript{427} Catholic and Protestant charitable organizations “championed moral discipline as the linchpin of social reform.”\textsuperscript{428} Poverty and hardship sprang from moral failings, not systemic defects. Hard work, thrift, and Christian virtue would remedy any social ills.\textsuperscript{429} In 1878, Pope Leo XIII published his encyclical \textit{Quod Apostolici Muneris}, condemning the “plague of socialism” and promoting the Church as the “healing force for the benefit of all society.” Pope Leo XIII sought to heal the symptoms, not the underlying source.\textsuperscript{430} 

In the 1880s, however, increasing numbers of North American Catholics were joining the Knights of Labor. Pope Leo XIII’s 1878 encyclical, which denounced secret societies and

\textsuperscript{427} Abell, 67.
\textsuperscript{428} Carter, 23.
\textsuperscript{429} Both Pope Gregory XVI and Pius IX had been aware of the changing social conditions connected to the Industrial Revolution, but their encyclicals were more concerned with the relationship between Church and State, not the social organization of the people. Holland, 131.
\textsuperscript{430} Pope Leo XII, ” Quod Apostolici Muneris, - Encyclical Letter, Leo XIII,” (Vatican: the Holy See), Vatican Website. Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1878.
socialism, led the Bishops of Quebec to a quick condemnation of the Knights. American Priests Edward McGlynn and Edward McSweeny, however, argued that self-interest blinded the rich to the plight of the poor and that they needed to be reminded of Christ’s law of charity. Benevolent charities catering to the poor were not enough. Archbishop James Gibbons of Baltimore agreed and made a case to the American bishops to support the Knights.

Significantly, all three priests were Irish American. Traveling from a country where the Roman Catholic Church historically unified an impoverished peasantry, Irish immigrants had centuries of experience resisting the economic oppression of English imperialism. As E.P. Thompson writes of Irish workers in early nineteenth-century England, they were a people of “rebellious dispositions,” and were more likely to take part in “trade unions, combinations, and secret societies,” and to bring to those associations “their revolutionary inheritance.” Raised with myth-like stories of his hardworking parents’ escape from economic hardship, Gibbons was open to seeing the complex effects of industrial capitalism.

Convinced the Knights of Labor’s secrecy and pledge of membership complied with Catholic law, Gibbons, alongside Vicar-General of the Archdiocese of Chicago Patrick J. Conway, Bishops John Lancaster Spalding of Peoria and John Ireland of Saint Paul, became advocates for the growing trade organization. Gibbons cited the growing monopolies of industrialism as the cause of increased and undue oppression for the working classes. He argued

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433 Although the history of Irish-English relations is more complex and beyond the scope of this project, Irish immigrants often narrated their experiences in terms of forced exile from a system of “Protestant masters and Catholic slaves.” Eoin MacNeill, “Historical Causes of Religious Intolerance in Ireland,” (1922), 1. Ancient Order of Hibernians, Box 16, BSB.
it was the natural right of the laboring classes to protect themselves, and indeed, “the duty of the whole people to aid them in finding a remedy against the dangers with which both civilization and social order are menaced by: avarice, oppression and corruption.” The American working class was predominately Catholic and Gibbons’ warned the Church could lose hundreds of thousands of American Catholic adherents if it was seen to align with capital. The Church should respond on the side of humanity, with “justice towards the multitudes who compose the body of the human family.”

Bishop John Spalding took a more direct route, openly arguing against unfettered American industrial capitalism. The difference between capital and labor is not inherently bad, but when unregulated:

becomes a desire to crush and dominate, becomes a warfare, which if less bloody is not less horrible or cruel than that which is carried on with shot and shell...it is this that makes the organization of workmen into labor- and trades- unions inevitable and indispensable. The consciousness that if they do not protect and defend themselves they will be ground by the wheels of a vast machine or reduced to a condition little better than slaves, compels them to unite lest they be deprived of the common rights of man.

Conservative trade organizations that condemned socialism, like the Knights of Labor, could pressure powerful capitalists to uphold doctrines of truth and justice and respect the dignity of the laborer.

Gibbons conferred with U.S. President Grover Cleveland, labor activist Cardinal Manning of England, and summoned Powderly to Baltimore to discuss the ecclesiastical concerns of the Knights of Labor. Powderly argued that a preoccupation with materialist objectives generated greed and social discontent, but industrial peace could be achieved if employers and employees dealt fairly and justly with each other, “and this willingness in turn

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sprang from the subsoil of a vital religion.”  

After holding internal councils with the American bishops, Gibbons went to Rome where he met with the Commissary of the Holy Office and made appeals to church authorities, urging the Vatican to respond to organized labor. On February 20, 1887, when Gibbons was in Rome to become a Cardinal, he submitted a formal memorandum to the Holy See on the state of the working classes in the United States.

With the growing global struggles of wage-laborers, including an increasing number of violent clashes between laborers and hired militias, the Vatican agreed a response was needed at the risk of losing the popular support of working-class Catholics. On May 15, 1891, Pope Leo XIII published the encyclical *Rerum Novarum*, or “Of New Things.” Composed of seven sections, *Rerum Novarum* was the culmination of five decades of Catholic reflection on the Industrial Revolution and one of the few encyclicals responding primarily to English-speaking Catholics—namely working-class Irish, English and Americans. The encyclical argued that social justice must mediate between the clashing systems of the day: free market liberalism and socialism. Employers must respect the Christian dignity of the workers and the rich should act with charity, giving their surplus wealth to those in need.

In the last pages of the encyclical, the Pope made a last minute addition: support for workers’ efforts to organize trade unions and collective bargaining in resistance to unrestricted capitalism. Even without the final section, *Rerum Novarum* has been cited as one of the most significant pieces of Catholic Social Teaching. But it was the final words lauding Christian workers to “form associations among themselves and unite their forces so as to shake off

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438 Quoted in Abell, 55.
440 Abell, 74.
441 Holland, 144.
courageously the yoke of so unrighteous and intolerable an oppression,“ that came to represent a Catholic seal of approval for the organization of labor. The Pope’s support for trade organizations was mobilized across the world, moving quickly from the Vatican to local parishes. For example, Cardinal Tascherau of Quebec was sent home with directions from the Holy Office to lift the ban against the Knights of Labor in Canada—an illustration of the movement of ecclesiastical judgment from Canada, to the United States, to the Vatican and back again.

Rerum Novarum redirected Catholicism toward creating an economic system of community-wide equity, based on the moral precepts put forth by the Church. Pope Leo XIII criticized the ideals of liberalism and socialism and instead offered a middle ground guided by Christian charity:

Each needs the other: capital cannot do without labor, nor labor without capital. Mutual agreement results in the beauty of good order, while perpetual conflict necessarily produces confusion and savage barbarity. Now, in preventing such strife as this, and in uprooting it, the efficacy of Christian institutions is marvelous and manifold. First of all, there is no intermediary more powerful than religion (whereof the Church is the interpreter and guardian) in drawing the rich and the working class together, by reminding each of its duties to the other, and especially of the obligations of justice.

The Church claimed responsibility for teaching correct social principles and ensuring harmony of the collective good. A committed Thomist, Pope Leo XIII believed a true understanding of liberty precluded license. By accepting the divine origin of all authority and laws, obedience to higher powers, and mutual charity for all, human society would find peace: “In the Thomist

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443 Holland, 190.
444 Sinclair Will, 358.
445 Max Weber would argue in the early twentieth century that the rise of capitalism was directly related to the ascension of Protestantism, as Protestants espoused a theology of individual salvation through a direct relationship with the divine, unmediated by the Catholic sacraments. Catholicism, however, taught that whoever accepted and participated in the Church body would find salvation in the afterlife, as well as this-worldly support from the community of believers. The Church was God’s means of saving souls. Max Weber, The Protestant Ethic and The Spirit of Capitalism, Peter Baehr and Gordon C. Wells, trans., (New York: Penguin Books, 2002), 28. A.A.M., “Body and Soul of the Church,” Montana Catholic, March 31, 1900: 3. Print. MHS.
paradigm the individual emerges only within the fabric of rooted community under legitimate authority.”

Self-identity, or the qualities and characteristics that give a person a sense of status, value, and ability, exists only in so far as one is connected to the Church body. The person never exists in isolation, but rather, finds self-worth only in his dependence on God as the source of his being and in communion with other persons.

The Catholic response to the growing labor crisis was not a disbandment of the Church hierarchy or the dismissal of social stratification, but an acceptance of the interdependence of economic difference within the body of the Catholic Church. Pope Leo XIII claimed that rich and poor had the same rights to social justice as “different parts of the same body.”

The head of the Church was the Roman pontiff, given divine appointment to carry out the teachings of the Apostles, but as Gibbons noted, the laity composed the body of the human family. And all were equal in the sight of God, regardless of station within the body or within society. As Montana’s diocesan newspaper claimed, at every mass held at St. Patrick’s Church, “1,200 to 1,400 people kneel and praise God for the spiritual and temporal blessing so bountifully bestowed… side by side the millionaire and the pauper, equals absolutely in the sight of God and the church.”

Christian equality extended to the shared dignity of the poor and rich, which increasingly came to stand for labor and capital. As Spalding claimed, all men have inalienable

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448 Pope John Paul II described the alternatives to Thomistic personalism, as “On the one hand, persons may easily place their own individual good above the common good of the collectivity, attempting to subordinate the collectivity to themselves and use it for their individual good. This is the error of individualism, which gave rise to liberalism in modern history and to capitalism in economics. On the other hand, society, in aiming at the alleged good of the whole, may attempt to subordinate persons to itself in such a way that the true good of persons is excluded and they themselves fall prey to the collectivity. This is the error of totalitarianism, which in modern times has borne the worst possible fruit.” Karol Wojtyla, “Thomistic Personalism,” in Person and Community: Selected Essays, trans. Theresa Sandok (New York: Peter Lang, 1993), 174.
449 “Just as the symmetry of the human frame is the result of the suitable arrangement of the different parts of the same body, so in a State it is ordained by nature that these two classes should dwell in harmony and agreement, so as to maintain the balance of the body politic.” Rerum Novarum, #19.
450 “Notes,” Montana Catholic 1, no. 13, (July 15, 1899): 2. Print. MHS.
rights as children of God: “work should enable the worker to lead a life not unworthy of a rational being; that riches which are procured at the cost of human misery and degradation are accursed; that what constitutes the proper value of individuals and of nations is spiritual and not material.” The Christian employer had the right to workers who “fully and faithfully” performed their labor, just as the employer must “respect in every man his dignity as a person ennobled by Christian character.” Just as the laity composed one piece of the Church body, nineteenth-century Catholic leaders regarded labor and capital as necessary pieces of the whole within a Christian socioeconomic framework. In contrast, nineteenth-century industrial capitalism sacrificed men to money, morality to capital. Only under the authority of the Church could labor be rightly organized to pressure capital toward virtue. Of course, this excluded non-Catholics, as seen in the religious and ethnic exclusivism expressed by many Butte miners as noted below.

The Church condemned unrestricted capitalism, instead prescribing the creation of trade unions and collective bargaining, in order to ensure the dignity of the worker within a system of social justice. It fell to the local parishes, however, to bring this reality to life. As Pope Leo XIII noted in a 1901 interview: “The various nations must do their work, and I must do mine. Their work is local and particular, such as the maintenance of order and the enforcement of ameliorative laws. But my work as the head of Christendom must be universal and on a different plane.” The local parish was the representative of the universal Church, but it was also where the local community manifested their beliefs and practices. Butte miners were subject to the

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452 Pope Leo XIII, _Rerum Novarum_, #20.
pressures of industrial capitalism and the rules and regulations of the Roman Catholic Church, but they adapted both forces to their own use at the local level.

4.3 A Labor of Faith

By the 1880s, Butte had grown into a western industrial hub: “It is excessively mild to say that no city in the whole West can boast of such scenes of bustling, crowding humanity as congest the main channels of trade from early morning until far into the night as may be seen in Butte on any day of the week.”455 A rapidly constructed urban center, there was no clear separation between spaces of business and leisure, worship and work. Butte was and is, a messy conglomerate of iron gallus frames, Catholic steeples, and marquees advertising saloons, gambling halls, and “hurdy-gurdy” houses, perched on a steep hillside in the Rocky Mountains. The shrill of the mine whistles marking shift changes and lunch breaks, the rattle of the ore cars banging against the sides of the shaft as they were lowered underground, and the constant noise of thousands of people traversing up and down the steep hillsides of Butte to and from business, school, church, and saloon, marked Butte as an urban industrial center.456

Butte was not merely an eastern enclave of Catholics in a western space, but a community of people that shaped and responded to the environmental and social conditions of their world using the tools provided them by ethnic and religious identities. The intermingling of physical spaces had theological implications for Butte’s Catholic community. As Robert Orsi notes, urban religions are shaped by “engagement with the conditions of specific urban environments at particular moments in the environmental, political, and social histories of

455 Freeman, 20.
Butte’s natural resources—the existence of copper deep underground in a region isolated in the Rocky Mountains, controlled by one authoritarian company—stimulated class stratification and confrontations and were a far cry from the wide-open spaces of the imagined American West. At the turn of the twentieth century, Catholic practice and organization responded and adapted to the social conditions of Butte’s urban landscape.

### 4.3.1 The Company

By the end of the century, the Anaconda Copper Company had consumed its competitors and employed 75 to 80 percent of the city’s workingmen. The economic power of the Company gave it enormous political influence in Butte and the newly minted State of Montana. The ruthlessness of the Company was well known and the cost of living in Butte was on the rise. The Company itself owned many of the public works and was unmoved by the plea of Butte citizens for a living wage and an affordable living. As profits soared, laborers continued to flock to the growing city, but steady rewards for risks underground were never guaranteed. As noted above, the Company paid city officials to gerrymander city boundaries in order to shelter Company properties from paying property taxes that would improve living conditions. As the primary investors lived outside of Butte, the copper profits did little to support the community: “If the Anaconda Company had been forced to pay property taxes like everyone else, they could’ve paved the streets with gold...all the real money left town for some big, fat cat’s wallet back East.”

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459 Montana was granted statehood in 1889.
Miners gambled their health and life everyday they went underground. If they were not injured or killed on the job, they often succumbed to silicosis or “miners’ con,” with an average lifespan of 45 years. At the state constitutional convention in 1889, Irish Catholics Aaron Witter and Peter Breen of the BMU tried unsuccessfully to put an eight-hour limit on all labor in Montana. Counter to eight-hour movements in early nineteenth-century England, which argued for greater equity between classes, Breen argued that shorter days would offer greater stability in future work: “we believe that the miners of this district if subjected to the inhalation of poisonous powder fumes for a shorter period than at present will be able to perform proportionately more work.” Healthy workers ensured more years of work and the continuity of the community. But as one union advocate accused the Company in 1896, the Company’s “business sagacity” rested on the misery of “half developed human flesh and bones.” The Company’s continued growth relied on a continued violence towards its laborers. It may have been the “richest hill on earth,” but Butte residents lived in desperate and unhealthy conditions. It fell to the miners to subvert the machine of capital in order to support each other and bring value to their work.

The disruption of a strike or an accident could have devastating consequences for a large family reliant on a miner’s minimal wage. If an accident occurred in the mines, the responsibility for medical bills and the absence of wages fell to the individual miners—the Company provided no accident insurance or benefits, despite the unsafe working conditions. Miners and their families often turned to the charity of the Catholic churches and organizations during hardship. Father Hannan, the parish priest of Butte’s largest Catholic Church and the official “miners’

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461 Devitt, 18.
church,” St. Mary’s Parish, was often sighted carrying a 100-pound sack of flour across town, a sign that someone had died or could not work.⁴⁶⁴ Father English of St. Patrick’s Parish was nicknamed the “Apostle of the Poor,” as he regularly brought food to those in need, especially during strikes.⁴⁶⁵ Father Callaghan, the assistant pastor at St. Patrick’s in 1898 and the parish priest of Sacred Heart Church from 1903, distributed groceries to families and helped people find work outside of the mines during strikes.⁴⁶⁶ In 1906, he was eulogized as having the largest gathering of miners in Montana’s history: “There was not a clergyman in Butte who received as much money in alms as he did, and he disposed of it as fast as he received it.”⁴⁶⁷ St. James hospital, staffed by the Sisters of Charity, offered free services for injured and ill miners. In addition, Butte’s parochial schools would not charge tuition during strikes, acquiring debt that the laity would collectively pay back through tithes in better times.⁴⁶⁸

In turn, the miners learned to support each other through monthly contributions to unions, societies, and church funds. If somebody was injured or killed, the association would provide a stipend to the family. Recognizing the ties between the mining community and the Catholic Churches of Butte, Bishop Brondel voiced support of this practice in a sermon on associations. He encouraged Butte residents to put a little aside every month, through a Catholic-supported organization such as the Knights of Columbus or the Ancient Order of the Hibernians (AOH), in order to provide for their “brother knights” in times of hardship:

the great, the powerful, the preserving, and lasting action in this world is not that of the individual but of the society. The association services the individual, for the man disappears but the society remains; the individual is me the society is

⁴⁶⁴ Kearney, Butte’s Catholic Family, 135.
⁴⁶⁵ Dan Kelly, “Corktown,” in Butte’s Irish Hearth, 198.
⁴⁶⁶ “Father Callaghan,” Butte Miner, (September 26, 1906). BSB.
⁴⁶⁷ “Life and Work of Father Callaghan,” Intermountain, (October 1, 1906), 7. BSB.
⁴⁶⁸ “Parish Notes,” The Catholic Monthly Magazine, Vol. 1, no. 5 (May 1923), iii. The Catholic Monthly Magazine, who’s motto was “Co-operation” To Do Good for This Parish and Community,” regularly reflected on the early Catholic community of Butte.
many; the individual is weak but a united society is strong, and hence association has ever been invented by great men for highest purposes. As the Company continued to value individual gain over community welfare, Bishop Brondel extended institutional support to the organization of Butte’s laboring men. During the AOH initiation ceremony in 1886, the chairman declared: “When cruel fate shatters what we hold most dear of the all too flimsy web of dreams, it is the cementing bond of friendship that makes out of the broken pieces a mosaic more perfect.” While the AOH sponsored cultural and social events, including picnics, parades, dances, athletic competitions, and festivals, their most important service was worker related: death and sick benefits.

4.3.2 Irish Need Only Apply

The Irish word for family is *muintir*, but is not limited to blood relatives or even a household, but rather, stands for “a community or group of persons connected by some common bond.” In Butte, the *muintir* was the collective identity of miners, Catholics, and Irish—each individual responsible to and for the community. As Father Hannan noted, St. Mary’s was “an extended family to all who attended its school, worshipped in its church and shared the camaraderie of Irishness.” The Catholic churches, clergy, and fraternal organizations of Butte facilitated the survival of the community during strikes and injury. Catholic services supported the miners when the Company would not.

To be Irish was not only a mode of community inclusion, but also worked to exclude non-Irish from work in the mines and status in the community. As historian R. Laurence Moore argues, Irish American Catholics wanted “something more than a merger with the status quo of

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469 Bishop Brondel, “Association,” lecture, 1. Bishop Brondel Papers, Box 4, Diocese.
470 “Initiation Ceremony,” (1886), AOH Box 7, BSB.
471 “Sick Benefits. Article XXVI, Sections 1 and 2” AOH Box 17, BSB.
473 Father Michael Hannan quoted in *Butte’s Irish Hearth*, 11.
American life." Rather, they molded an “outgroup mentality,” as a form of social identification.\(^{474}\) As one disgruntled territorial legislator noted in 1889, “Clannish was characteristic of the human race,” but it was unfair that “. . .of two men equally competent to fill a position, the Irishman invariably got it.”\(^{475}\) In a 1892 issue of the Butte Bystander, printed beneath an article calling for “Equal rights to all, special privilege to none,” was a short note that appears to have missed the irony: “The effects of the work done by the labor organizations of Butte against the Chinese is beginning to bear fruit. A few more years and not a pigtail will remain in the city.”\(^{476}\) Tabey Daley, a Cornish miner, accused the Butte Irish of buying votes and jobs: “Thee robbing Hrish, they not honly ‘ave two votes heach on Helection day, but thee buggers vote seven years hafter they ‘ave been dead hand buried.”\(^{477}\) As if in agreement, Jim Brennan, an Irish mine foreman, noted he was “ever willing to give any ‘lad from home,’ a job—if he had big shoulders and could push a car of ore up the steep grades of the drifts.”\(^{478}\) The emphasis on Catholic interdependence, mutual support, and protection, came with an ethnic exclusiveness non-Catholics were quick to note.

The Butte Miners’ Union (BMU) came to prominence in this climate—ethnic and religious bonds united the miners together in a shared desire for steady and safe work, as well as disavowed participation in more radical labor organizations founded in socialism. As the constitution of the Butte division of the AOH noted: “In order to counteract the vile influence of secret, communistic, socialistic, and other irreligious societies of the age whose tendencies are to social chaos, blasphemous atheism, and the overthrow of constituted authority, the ecclesiastical

\(^{475}\) Helena Independent, (Feb. 20, 1889).  
\(^{476}\) Butte Bystander, (Nov. 26, 1892), page 2.  
\(^{478}\) Jim Brennan, quoted in “Skibereen’s One Mile Limit ranch; Mountain Oasis,” Copper Camp, 173.
hierarchy has at all times recommended Catholic societies as auxiliaries to the Catholic religion.”479 The BMU and AOH had nearly identical role sheets. Indeed, as the Irish Catholic population of Butte increased in the 1880s, the AOH acted as an auxiliary organization to the BMU. Before the construction of Hibernian Hall, the Butte division met in the Union Hall and AOH materials were printed at the Mining Journal Office. As Butte’s AOH initiation rite claimed, “We are Hibernians because the precious treasure of Irish History must not remain in the dark mines of oblivion, but must be brought forth to delight the eyes and enrich the intellect of our children” (emphasis added).480 Four of the five officers of BMU’s first year were Irish-born—Pat Shovlin, Ed Rooney, John Sullivan, and William Larkin. Between 1883 and 1896, union members voted 23 Irishmen to the 26 highest union positions; in 1897, all 14 positions up for election went to Irishmen.481 Irish, miner, Catholic, and union man, were often synonyms in Butte.

By the end of the 1880s, Butte boasted more than 18,000 union members, with 34 different unions representing local trades: one for every form of construction, brewers, beer wagon drivers, blacksmiths, musicians and even theatrical ushers.482 As the *Anaconda Standard* reported:

> From a barren treasury, the [Butte’s Miners’ Union] has prospered until it is without a doubt the strongest union from a financial standpoint in the country. It owns stock in the Amalgamated Copper Company, it has a comfortable balance in the bank for use in case of emergency, and it is estimated that it has loaned in years past in the neighborhood of a quarter of a million dollars to unions of miners in other parts of the West.483

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479 *Constitution and By-Laws, Montana Territory,* (Butte: Mining Journal Office, 1886), 3-4. Ancient Order of Hibernians, Box 7, BSB.
480 Ibid, 8.
482 Hill, Calvert, 4.
In 1886 miners from across the West converged on Butte to consolidate regional union interests. With the growing adversities of hard-rock miners across the Intermountain West, the BMU initiated “a sort of missionary campaign throughout the mining regions of the west” to “spread the gospel of unionism” (emphasis added).484 There, the Knights of Labor joined with the Butte Working Men’s Union to create the Silver Bow Trades and Labor Assembly. The Knights had more than 500,000 nationally registered members, with tens of thousands more claiming allegiance from within local unions.485

A post-bellum depression, failing Reconstruction reforms and increased Catholic immigration catalyzed a new and virulent wave of anti-Catholicism at the end of the nineteenth century. As one critic of Irish Catholic influence in Montana noted, “even if 75 percent of Butte people are Irish, that does not accord them the privilege of establishing Irish standards in any American city.”486 Catholic devotional practices, ties to a foreign religious leader, and ethnic identities were alien and out of place in American culture.487 As one Butte newspaper noted two days after St. Patrick’s Day, Butte’s Irish Catholics held a special bond to St. Patrick, as he too was “in a strange land and among a strange people.”488 In addition to Catholic fears of appearing more un-American if they supported socialist run labor organizations, the Church rejected any possible non-religious basis for morality.489 Catholic leaders prescribed the Christian restoration of society as an alternative to the social models derived from socialism and capitalistic

485 Sinclair Will, 322.
488 “Tribute to St. Patrick,” Butte Independent, Vol. 1, no. 9 (March 19, 1910), cover. BSB.
liberalism; and it fell to the Catholic laity to construct this Christian society.\textsuperscript{490} Therefore, the Knights of Labor performed an important role for Catholics as a Church supported strategy for dealing with the victimization of labor.

\textbf{4.3.3 Catholic Workers}

In the wake of \textit{Rerum Novarum}, Butte’s labor organizers cited Christianity, and specifically Catholicism, as a source of union power and legitimacy. On Labor Day in 1892, a leader of the Knights of Labor gave a speech in front of the largest crowd ever gathered together in Montana:

\begin{quote}
This organization sprang from an insignificant source, like the rivulet on the mountain side, but it grew in strength as it rolled on until it now presents an ocean of strength and might, and for the first time a solid and unbroken front to its enemies…the Knights of Labor are new crusaders with a noble work to perform, but the weapons are the pick and above and the trowel and saw, the emblems of religion a deliverance, and of the Christianity taught by Christ, the first Knight of Labor.\textsuperscript{491}
\end{quote}

The Knights of Labor cited Jesus as their martyr and Christianity as their motivation. The BMU’s affiliation with the Knights connected Butte’s miners to a national movement of Catholic workers. In a later sermon, Bishop Brondel noted that the guilds of the Middle Ages, the models of modern labor unions, “owe their origin and wonderful development to the tutelage of the church, their decay and final suppression being simultaneous with the reformation and the French revolution.” It was only with the division of the Church did labor organizations decay, but Catholicism “means the gathering together of all people in the name of the true God.”\textsuperscript{492}

\textsuperscript{491} “The Largest Crowd Ever Gathered Together in Montana,” \textit{Butte Bystander}, 28 Sept. 10, 1892: 1. Print. BSB.
\textsuperscript{492} “In Temporary Quarters. Formal Opening of Sacred Heart Church by Bishop Brondel.” Nov 11, 1901. Anaconda, MT. Scrapbook IV, Page 42, Diocese.
When company guards in Coeur d’Alene, Idaho shot five strikers to death in 1892, the Butte Miners’ Union mortgaged buildings to send aid.\footnote{Michael P. Malone, \textit{The Battle for Butte: Mining and Politics on the Northern Frontier, 1864-1906}, (Helena, MT: Montana Historical Society Press, 2006), 77.} And in 1893, the Butte Miners’ Union became Local Number 1 for the Western Federation of Miners (WFM), a united front of hard rock miners from Idaho, Colorado, South Dakota, and Utah.\footnote{Devitt, 37.} At the center of this story was Edward Boyce. Born in Deenystown, Donegal, in 1862, Boyce immigrated to Boston in 1882 and worked his way west; finding work in the hard-rock mines of Leadville, Colorado, Gold Hill, Nevada, Coeur d’Alene, Idaho, and eventually, Butte. He first joined a union in Leadville, where the mine owners’ fervent anti-union position largely served to radicalize union leaders.\footnote{Robert William Henry, “Ed Boyce: The curious evolution of an American radical,” \textit{Theses, Dissertations, Professional Papers}, Paper 4692, (Missoula, MT: University of Montana, 1993), 4.} Among those radicalized was Boyce.

In the western mining towns, Boyce encountered a world wherein the American myth of reward for hard work done rarely translated into financial or social success for the working class Irish. Nowhere was this more apparent than in Butte. In 1895, Boyce became the president of the WFM. In a speech on Miners Day, he urged Butte’s workers to participate in the “glorious fight for the emancipation of the wage slave. . .the dawn of a new era of co-operation.” He took a stance against the Company, claiming “all the natural resources of the nation are controlled by a few corporations that dictate to their white slaves how much they shall receive for their labor and where they shall spend what they do receive.”\footnote{Boyce Speech on Miners’ Union Day, June 15, 1899, in \textit{Miners Magazine} (Butte) 1, no. 1 (Mar. 1900). BSB.} Alongside entries recalling union meetings, his diary was filled with quotations of Irish poems and songs, including lines from James Orr’s “Song of an Exile:” “Accurst be the dastards, the slaves that have sold thee,/ And doomed thee,
lost Eire, to bondage and shame.\textsuperscript{497} Boyce equated the struggle of the Irish laborer in America to that of the Irish nationalist in Ireland. The Gaelic League, Gaelic Athletic Association, Robert Emmet Literary Association, Irish Volunteers, and the second largest Clan-na-Gael chapter in the U.S., kept the fight for Irish nationalism an ever-present force in Butte’s Irish ethnic identity. The plight of the Irish and working classes were not separate evils, but deeply entangled. In Butte, the Irish strain in labor was unmistakable.

The Knights of Labor, WFM, union publications, and itinerant union leaders such as “Big Bill” Haywood and Frank Little connected Butte’s labor efforts to those in major American cities such as New York and Chicago. Butte had become the western hub for labor organization: “Butte is the head center of the labor organizations of the west, and exercises a vast and telling influence upon the interests of the workingmen of the state.”\textsuperscript{498} Known as the “Gibraltar of Unionism” to labor historians, Butte contained the largest local unions in the world and stood as a local manifestation of an international movement.\textsuperscript{499}

Mining cities are among the least stable of urban places.\textsuperscript{500} The rise and fall of the copper industry and the undetermined quantity of copper ore underground determined wages and profit. Butte’s isolation in the Rocky Mountains and dedication to this single and uncertain industry exaggerated class stratification and conflict. Yet, within the constraints of industrial capitalism, Butte’s miners created autonomous spaces of kinship and survival through multiple overlapping communities and relationships. Butte’s dynamic ecology—the limits and possibilities of the landscape, the changing configurations of power, and the pervasiveness of the Catholic Church and Irish ethnic bonds—offered fertile ground for the emergence of unions.

\textsuperscript{497} Boyce Notebooks, July 20, 1886, quoted in Emmons, Beyond the American Pale, 301.
\textsuperscript{498} Piatt, 77-8.
\textsuperscript{499} Piatt, 77-8.
While the Company had agreed to a closed shop and to set wages, working conditions were poor and Butte residents bemoaned the Company’s control of local and state politics: “The Anaconda Company not only controlled Butte, but Montana as well. Hell, they could do anything they wanted here and get away with it because they owned everyone.”501 Because the Company owned the local newspapers, stories of labor unrest, mining accidents, or legislative matters relating to miners went largely unwritten. Butte miner Jim Dickey noted, “we have freedom of the press because our newspaper has the freedom to put anything in the paper that is not controversial to The Company position.”502

In response, Butte produced an unprecedented number of labor publications, including newspapers such as Butte Daily Miner, Butte Miner, Butte Weekly Miner, Labor World, Labor Weekly, and New Age. Significantly, an anonymous column in Montana Catholic, implored Catholics in the Rocky Mountain West to heed the call of impoverished workers and to support organized labor.503 As the President of BMU, M.M. Donoghue noted in a one such newspaper, the greed of men consumed by capital had corrupted man’s God-given purpose:

When God made men, women and children they were being created with the sole object of being useful citizens in a great and mighty world; they were not born to be clothed in rags, to be housed in hovels and to die of hunger; they were born to be upright and intelligent persons in this world, and yet man has changed God’s ideals that today machinery, dollars, stocks and bonds more concern the nation than do human beings.504

Butte miners regularly made connections between labor and religion, citing unions as the natural antidote to moral corruption.

501 Jack Harris quoted in Devitt, 185.
502 Jim Dickey quoted in Devitt, 235.
As Butte rose to prominence as the richest copper hill in the world, Catholic leaders also recognized its importance as “the greatest Catholic center in the west.” ⁵⁰⁵ In stark contrast to the days of frontier Catholicism under Father De Ryckere in the 1870s, by 1891 Montana had 32 priests, 34 churches, religious institutes for the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth, Kansas, the Ursuline Sisters, and the Sisters of Providence, as well as 30,000 Catholics—a fourth of the total territorial population. Butte alone was responsible for more than half of Montana’s Catholics. ⁵⁰⁶

The rhythm of life in Butte’s Catholic parishes ebbed and flowed with the demands of the copper industry. The growth of the Company brought new parishioners, which in turn supported the construction of new parishes, parochial schools, and convents. Mine closures, resulting from strikes or mining disasters, saw the Catholic community shoring up their borders and providing food and financial support to families in need.

Beyond the structural relationships between Butte miners and Catholic parishes, Butte’s Catholic practitioners and clergy also looked to Catholic teachings to find value in labor, despite its subordination to capital. On first glance, Butte appears to be a prime example of Marx’s understanding of an industrial capitalist society: the worker is alienated from the product of his labor as a merely mechanized piece of the entire operation. He no longer owns the value of his work and therefore loses his own humanity in the production of surplus value for the Company. Yet, Butte’s parishioners and clergy looked to Catholicism to find value in labor—as an act in itself and as a mode of supporting Catholic ideals of family and community.

In 1892, Marcus Daly negotiated with the global financier Rothschild family for the sale of a quarter of the Company’s stock. The Rothschild investment came with increased pressure to

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⁵⁰⁵ “Are Proud of St. Patrick’s, Butte Catholics Gather 12,000 Strong at the Various Services in Their Handsome Church Every Sunday.” Montana Catholic 2. No 12, (January 6, 1900): 1. Print. BSB.
⁵⁰⁶ Palladino, 393.
produce, as well as new hardships for the Butte miners.\footnote{The Rothschild investment was part of a larger effort of the European-based syndicate to corner the copper market with the aim of buying up world supplies and then withholding copper from sale to drive up prices. The economic gains of Butte, however, prevented such actions. Kent Curtis, Gambling on Ore: The Nature of Metal Mining in the United States, 1860-1910, (Boulder, CO: University Press of Colorado, 2013), 143-4.} That same year, however, a union advocate cited the blessing of physical labor to enlighten man: “The curse put upon man by the Creator was that he should eat his bread by the sweat of his face. No; this was not a curse. It was a great blessing. It lifted man from an automaton and made him aspire to be something more than a brute.”\footnote{“Labor Day,” Butte Bystander, 3 Sept. 1892: 1. Print. BSB.}

Through the payment of wages, the Company directed all labor toward the creation of profit for the capitalist investors. But the laborers subverted the strategies of the Company by finding personal value in their work—the labor was not only directed toward the creation of financial gain, but also to the production of self.\footnote{Michel de Certeau calls these everyday acts of resistance the wearing of the wig, or la perruque, in which the worker subverts authoritarian spaces by redirecting work done on the owner’s time for personal use. Michel de Certeau, The Practices of Everyday Life, (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2011), 24-26.} In an analogy connecting labor to the technological advances provided by copper, Montana Catholic printed an article about the value of work in igniting the soul to truth:

> Work is an incarnation of the unseen. In this loom man’s soul is made. There is a subtle machinery behind it all, working while he is working, making or unmaking the unseen in him...As the conductor leads into our nerves the invisible electric force, so work conducts into our spirit all high forces of character, all essential qualities of life, truth, in the inward parts... The spiritual fluids and the electric fluids are under the same law, and messages of grace come to the soul along the lines of honest work, like the invisible message along the telegraph lines.\footnote{“Work,” Montana Catholic 1, No. 9, (June 17, 1892): 2. Print. MHS.}

Under the rubric of moral fecundity, Butte miners had a consciousness of self-value in taking risks that would reap rewards for their families and community. It was not the work itself, deep underground and for wages, that devalued the miners’ worth, but rather Company politics that valued gain over community wellbeing. Although labor underground was deeply divided and the...
raw ore dredged from the bowels of the earth was manufactured into commodities far from Butte, the Church reassured miners that their work had value.

Although the Church had previously been wary of the growth of labor unions founded in socialism or secret societies, by the turn of the century American Catholic Church leaders were re-writing the history of the labor movement. As the second Bishop of Helena, John Carroll, noted in an address to Butte’s workingmen, labor movements were founded on the Church’s “principles applied to the social conditions of the times. The dignity of the individual, of woman, of the child, the sanctity of the home—doctrines on which the church has insisted for centuries—these are the ideas which are at the basis of the whole labor movement.” While the validity of long-standing institutional support was less certain, on the local level Butte miners and local priests were applying the Catholic principles of mutual aid and Christian charity to their plight, over and against individual advancement.

Recorded in a Butte newspaper in the early 1880s, Father Dols, Butte’s first permanent priest, gave two sermons at St. Patrick’s, “denouncing in powerful and withering language the Judases of Christianity, the men who sell their religion and their God in this world; who sell their consciences and everything that should be held most sacred, for temporal profit and self.” Looking back to Butte in 1889, smelter worker Albert Clark noted, “The real characters that Butte brags about when she sits on her bones and meditates deeply are the few who built that they might be charitable; to have things to give away. They never got much ahead because they were ashamed of too much money.” As unionist William Sylvis noted, he found no conflict in his support for trade unions and his belief that the worker’s “task” was “to found the

universal family—to build up the City of God” through trade unions which Sylvis called an “association of souls” formed by “the Sons of God.”

Butte residents turned to Catholicism for the tools to combat the Company, not as a total overhaul of the system, but as a means to unite against exploitative practices, create safe working conditions, earn a living wage, and to find value in labor.

Labor unions were one form of community stabilization, a buffer to the uncertain industry. Unions served as social institutions tied to the Catholic Church, organized holiday and social events, provided social services, health care, and recreation, and exerted considerable influence in Butte’s political life.

Catholicism and Irish ethnic bonds played a key role in the growth and pervasiveness of Butte’s unions. Narrating their experiences in terms of forced exile from a system of “Protestant masters and Catholic slaves,” Irish Catholic immigrants transported working class unity and a self-conception of victimization with them from Ireland.

And yet, they were not victims to capital, but a dominant presence and power in Butte. Theological precepts and shared religious practices privileging community welfare over individual gain, and involvement in ethnic fraternal organizations, supported the growth of local unions. At the turn of the twentieth century, Butte miners strategically engaged Catholic practice and organization to create a vibrant urban landscape. A theological emphasis on community and the gathering of the faithful in religious experience intertwined Butte’s urban spaces and Catholic practice.

The city was rapidly carved into the hillside in pursuit of spidery copper veins, with little attention to demarcating residential from commercial or industrial spaces. The steep incline of the city from north to south resulted in wildly divergent street levels and creative housing

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516 Eoin MacNeill, “Historical Causes of Religious Intolerance in Ireland,” (1922), 1. AOH, Box 16, BSB.
solutions. The parish was the center of social life and often abutted the mine. Seemingly endless stairways served as crowded public thoroughfares and connected miners and their families to gallus frames, parishes, and saloons (see Figure 5 above). Movement within the neighborhood ordered personal interactions and cultivated cooperation and communalism. Butte’s citizens worked together underground, raised their children together, prayed together, and celebrated ethnic holidays together in a series of interconnected networks.

As Bishop Brondel sermonized: “The true religion must be like God—one, whole, universal. It must have unity. All its members should be united under one head, believe the same truths, receive the same sacraments and offer the same sacrifices.” The Irish Catholic miners of Butte had been told they had no legitimate claim on the West—a mythic stronghold of American values. Yet, the Irish miners leveraged their values and religious identities in order to band together and unionize, creating a complex urban subculture in the heartland of the American pastoral myth. Although Butte miners did not attempt to overturn the law of wages, they could keep capitalist exploitation within bounds through collective bargaining and organization. As an early history of Butte noted, “in spite of the long shut-downs which periodically occurred in Butte’s only industry, the resultant hardships were somehow endured. For the hardy people of Ireland were inured to Life’s vicissitudes; they had, for many generations, experienced it in a homeland, for long, not permitted to be their own.” Through their commitment to collective wellbeing and community unity, participation in trade unions and

517 As I can attest from personal experience, walking from the shops and restaurants of the Central Business District to the Dublin Gulch neighborhood, while less than half a mile in distance, is a harrowing experience.
520 “Old Butte’s Little Ireland,” (date unknown). Dan Driscoll Collection, BSB.
ethnic associations, as well as church affiliation, Butte miners expressed their separateness from American industrial capitalism.

### 4.3.4 A Union Divided

Throughout the tumultuous first four decades of Butte’s unions, Catholicism encouraged, but ultimately divided the efforts of an organized front against the Company. Catholic leaders supported the ideals of trade unions, as theology dictated communal support over individual gain, and Butte’s Catholic miners’ early forays into unionizing reflect this encouragement. The rigid institutional structure of Catholicism, in which life was heavily prearranged by church duties and practices, however, included a call for the balance of labor and capital in a Catholic structure of social harmony. As Pope Leo’s encyclical claimed, “the members of the working classes are citizens by nature and by the same right as the rich; they are real parts, living the life which makes up, through the family, the body of the commonwealth.”

As Butte’s mining newspaper, *Butte Bystander* stated, “Capital and labor should go hand in hand... ‘Equal rights to all, special privilege to none.’”

Within the prescribed social structure, the rich and poor must stand together as pieces of a balanced whole.

In 1905, the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) made a stand in Butte, arguing for a single, all-encompassing union force. The Irish-Catholics, however, refused to cede to the socialist run union for fear of appearing anti-American and disobeying the Church hierarchy.

In *Montana Catholic*, one parish priest indicted the Socialists as “immoral, irreligious, un-

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521 Rerum Novarum, #33.
522 *Butte Bystander*, (November 26, 1892), 2. BSB.
523 In his 1879 encyclical *Aeterni patris*, Pope Leo XIII asserted the primacy of the philosophy of Thomas Aquinas and reinforced the thesis that all creation was regulated by natural laws imposed by God, with the Church as the guardian and interpreter of these rules. By claiming the right to adjust the interpretation of natural laws in light of changing circumstances, such as the growth of industrial capitalism, the Church adapted to conditions of modernity while simultaneously retaining authority. Socialism’s claim that authority came from the people directly contradicted Catholic authority. Pope Leo XIII, encyclical letter, *Aeterni patris*, (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1879).
Christian and specifically anti-Catholic… No man who professes socialism as it is preached and written by its exponents can still honestly profess the Catholic faith.”524 Workers may have had a common enemy in the ruthless capitalism of the Company, but for many, the ties of neighborhood, ethnicity, and religion were more powerful.

For thirty-six years the BMU had a closed shop with the Company, which as historian David Emmons argues, “essentially joined the union and corporation at their Irish hip.”525 But at a 1907 meeting of the Western Federation of Miners, the BMU was criticized for kowtowing to the Company. The leaders of the WFM argued that Butte’s agreements with the Company “divide the workers in the struggle with their exploiters, chain one body of workers in subjection while war is being waged by another body; often compels one union to scab upon another union, destroys the class instinct of the worker; leads the works by a false sense of temporary security to cease taking an active interest in the affairs of their organization.”526 A frequent assertion by national mining organizations claimed capital was buying Montana’s Bishop “to chloroform the mentality of the auditors” under the drug of “blessed are the poor.”527 But as Montana Catholic argued, strikes were not a good example of a successful union, but rather steady work borne from the dual recognition of the dignity of the worker and employer.528

Labor historians often assume successful labor organizations were those with radical intentions, that is, the ultimate collapse of the capitalist system. Those who were not working towards those ends only failed to do so because of outside forces, as victims to company

524 Father W.J. Madden quoted in (Butte) Monthly Catholic, September 1903. Quoted in Calvert, 64.
525 Emmons, Beyond the American Pale, 303.
526 “Resolution No. 82,” WFM Proceedings, 15th Annual Convention, (Denver: June 10, 1907), 261.
527 “The Ox Knoweth His Owner and the Ass His Master’s Crib,” The Miners Magazine, January 11, 1912.
528 Montana Catholic, 1, no. 17 (August 12, 1899): 3.
tyranny, bribery, or the authoritarian pressures of the Catholic Church. But for Butte’s Irish-Catholic miners, radical social mobility and the collapse of the social order were not the goals. Rather, Butte miners hoped by banding together they could maintain community stability in an occupation tied to an uncertain industry. As Father Adalbert wrote in the Butte Miner in 1912:

If we are asked what are the remedies to the wrongs under which the working classes groan, we should reply: a virtuous Christian life, education, frugality, temperance, the organization of the forces of the working classes, and attainment of their lawful and just demands by those just and peaceful methods which bring to their aid the sympathy of the community.

The same year Marcus Daly’s statue was placed on Main Street, Edward Boyce and the Western Federation of Miners Executive Committee moved WFM headquarters from Butte to Denver. In a letter to the President of the conservative American Federation of Labor, Boyce wrote, “If you will show me what good results can accrue from trades [sic] unions without action we might understand each other.” Although a fervent Irish nationalist and unwavering Catholic, Boyce’s penchant for radicalism ultimately excluded him from the ranks of Butte’s labor movement. As Thomas Brown noted, “The authentic rebel note sounded when they demanded equal rights for all and attacked the citadels of privilege in business and politics. But mostly the Irish wanted to be middle-class and respectable.”

529 John Bodnar, Workers’ World, 4-9, 165-185; and Aileen Kraditor, The Radical Persuasion, 1890-1917: Aspects of the Intellectual History and the Historiography of Three American Radical Organizations (Baton Rouge, LA: 1981), 2. Calvert falls into this trap by claiming the union leaders of BMU must have been bribed because they refused to attend WFM meetings after the organization endorsed the Socialist Party. Meanwhile, the Catholic commitments of BMU’s members go completely unmentioned for the entirety of his book. See Calvert, 71.
531 If not by injury or illness, the rise and fall of the copper market, as well as accessible copper lodes, determined number employed and wage paid.
532 Father Adalbert, November 5, 1912, Butte Miner, quoted in Calvert, 64.
The history of Butte’s miners is not a story of acculturation to free market capitalism, nor an outright resistance, but rather the subversion of spaces of domination in the struggle to maintain a separate sense of self. Labor was a piece that gave meaning to their world and steady work was required. Cooperating with the Company was not necessarily a sign of victimization or giving up, but an effort to control a part of one’s own work in the interest of the larger community.

4.5 Industrial Heritage

On March 19, 1912, the Company summarily fired 500 “socialist” workers, most of whom were Finnish and supporters of IWW. A vote to strike was taken up by Butte’s miners, but it was rejected 4,460 to 1,121: “The sharp divisions in the ranks of miners, fostered by ethnic and political antagonisms, were apparent to everyone.” And in 1914, with a decrease in copper prices which led to layoffs and eventually strikes, the internal divisions of the BMU weakened union efforts. The common commitment to industrial unionism fell to factionalism and resulted in the eventual disbandment of Butte’s original union. Conversely, IWW and the Socialist Party also failed to substitute the politics of class for miners’ loyalties to Church and never gained enough votes to control the city.

Catholicism and Catholics’ commitment to papal decrees on socialism ultimately undid the success of Butte’s labor. Through the beginning of the twentieth century, Catholicism still operated as a controlling force in the lives of many of Butte’s miners and what once provided the basis for organization became the catalyst of division.

On June 8, 1917, the Granite Mountain Mine collapsed after a miner’s lamp lit an electrical cable on fire. One hundred and sixty-eight miners died, most from asphyxia, in what

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535 Calvert, 77.
536 Mary Murphy, Mining Cultures: Men, Women, and Leisure in Butte, 1914-41, (Urbana, Ill: University of Illinois Press, 1997), xviii.
remains the most deadly hard rock mining accident in American history. As the fire blazed in the cavernous shafts, the Company made the decision to send water down the mines in order to save the investment, “regardless of the lives of the over four hundred men below” (emphasis in the original). As one Butte resident recalled, “it traumatized the entire community.” The Granite Mountain Disaster was followed by a seven-month miner strike, which effectively shut down the mines. Organized by the newly minted Metal Mine Workers’ Union (MMWU), which had attempted to bring together the former BMU and WFM members, the union demanded an improvement in safety and health conditions, increase in minimum wage, and recognition.

Commending the ten thousand strikers, Father Patrick Brosnan of St. Patrick’s Parish noted, “I hope they will win out, as the companies are hopeless tyrants in this country.”

Again, however, internal disagreements regarding affiliations with the IWW or the American Federation of Laborers overwhelmed union efforts as internal violence and violence against the Company ensued. In March 1918, Montana legislators ruled that public processions or meetings could not occur without governor approval. Nationally, Congress amended the Espionage Act to prohibit “political” strikes or strikes that interfered with the war effort. Striking Butte unions were accused of treason and federal troops arrived in August, where they remained until 1921. Ultimately, scabs and military pressure forced the strikers to concede and the unions once again disbanded. A sharp depression in the copper industry and the emigration of miners elsewhere, changed the Butte landscape once again.

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537 Mrs. HN Kennedy to Jeanette Rankin, June 26, 1917. Jeanette Rankin Papers, Box 1, MHS.
538 John Shea, as quoted in Butte, America.
539 Calvert, 105.
540 Patrick Brosnan to his Mother, 19 June 1917, page 1. Father Patrick Brosnan Papers, BSB.
541 Calvert, 112-3.
542 Calvert, 145.
Dozens of gallus frames, Company buildings, and piles of discarded “Protestant ore,” marked Butte’s landscape, a city created for and oriented toward industrial production. Since 1921, however, Butte’s population and productivity have withered, leaving behind a postindustrial wasteland. In 1955, the Company expanded into open-pit mining, tearing into the fabric of the city’s landscape and destroying entire neighborhoods built over rich ore streams: “The Pit gave Butte an unique position in the history of American cities: the only town both created and then, in good part, actually physically destroyed by the industry that created it.”

![Image of Holy Savior Church being bulldozed](image_url)

**Figure 6: Holy Savior Church as it is bulldozed to make way for expansion of the Berkeley Pit (1960)**

The Butte mining operations and smelter works composed some of the Company’s largest assets, but they also owned the two largest mines in Chile. When the Chilean mines were nationalized in 1969, the Company struggled to keep the corporation afloat. After a drawn out

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543 Devitt, 55-6.
series of mine closures and layoffs, all mining operations ceased in Butte in 1983. The Company left behind the 1,800 feet deep Berkeley Pit, which eventually filled with water and the toxic remnants of more than a century of mining. Following the mine closures, Butte was officially designated an Environmental Protection Agency Superfund site.

Butte’s rise to industrial glory, and residents attempts to cope with the environmental scars left behind, reflects the urban-industrial paradigm many western towns are now dealing with as resources run out or new technologies replace human capital. Butte is haunted in by its industrial heritage: “The piles of slag dumped indiscriminately around the city added an eerie, surreal element to the rocky terrain…making it something of a lost city waiting to be rediscovered in its former glories, especially its robust Catholic culture.”

Millions of tons of mine waste are scattered about the remaining Butte neighborhoods, children play near abandoned mine shafts and gallus frames, and the toxic water in the Berkeley Pit continues to kill thousands of birds that mistakenly land there.

Jim Jensen, the director of the Montana Environmental Center notes, “The third world has been trashed, and Montana has been part of the third world because of the copper barons.”

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Butte’s landscape was marred and scared by the rise and fall of industrial capitalism. Yet, the geography of capitalism did not simply evolve around the miners and their families. Rather, they were active participants in its very creation. Not as passive cogs in a human machine, but as active agents in the disruption of American capitalist structures. Despite the pressures of Company authority, for four decades Butte’s union efforts fought and secured community welfare over individual gain. Throughout this history, Butte’s Irish Catholic miners employed the teachings and practices of Catholicism to negotiate the relationship between the Company and community security.

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In a world in which practitioners had to rely on environmental determinism and company politics for material survival, and in which they were constantly threatened by death or injury in the workplace, the Church, both institutionally and theologically, offered the promise of structure and meaning for the suffering of this world. Participation in the Church body structured communal life. Catholic leaders lent institutional support to the organization of unions and material provisions during strikes. And Butte miners lived out Catholic teachings in their struggle for the right to dignified work. As Pope John Paul II argued in his 1981 reiteration of Pope Leo’s 1891 encyclical: “the world of work will be transfigured only when labor is given priority over capital and material is harnessed to serve humanity.” The religious and ethnic bonds of Butte’s Irish Catholic miners were instrumental in disrupting spaces of Company power to create a world of their own making.

549 Gregory, supra note 290, at 121. Gregory believes this viewpoint to be consistent with the 1981 Papal Encyclical Letter, which “expressly declared the priority of labor over capital and asserts the inherent dignity of work.” Id. at 127.
5. Conclusion

At the end of the nineteenth century, Native Americans, Mormons, and Catholics stood just beyond the American pale. As Wallace Stegner noted of Mormons, “Their record is a record of group living, completely at variance with the normal history of the West.”

John Duffy Ibsen claimed Irish Catholics were, “fundamentally at odds with the commercially inspired progress faith of the United States.” And Thomas Reeves, in his textbook Twentieth-Century America, asserted, “By 1900 Native Americans were a defeated, impoverished, and largely dependent people.”

Obscured by the “normal history” of the United States, the lives and labor of the majority inhabitants of the Rocky Mountain West are often narrated as secondary to the primary plot of American life.

The case studies presented here, however, challenge a singular history of American life by illuminating often-overlooked factors that shaped its trajectory. Although confronted with economic, religious, and racial discrimination, communities in the nineteenth-century Rocky Mountain West redrew the lines of belonging and exclusion using the tools of the changing landscape. They constructed alternative, but interconnected religious geographies of what it meant to be American, religious, and Western, which re-scripted hegemonic narratives of American religious and economic exceptionalism. This project refutes the characterization of Native American, Mormon, and Catholic beliefs and practices as outliers or anomalies on the American historical and cultural landscape. Although each community achieved varying degrees of success in their efforts to maintain group solidarity and distinction from majority American

550 Walla Stegner, Mormon Country, (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1942), 62.
culture, this project highlights the complicated role diverse religious economies have played in developing an American identity, nation, and empire.

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The Northern Arapaho strategically adopted wage labor into the social technology of the tribe as a means of developing the economy and as a tool for the preservation of Arapaho distinction—from Euro-American settlers and the Eastern Shoshone. The age-grade lodges enabled flexibility and innovation among the lower lodges, as well as ensured the maintenance of Arapaho, pre-contact traditions through the upper lodges. Together, the lodges functioned to preserve communal solidarity and cooperation, not as a rigid structure, but as a fluid network open to the changing limitations set by reservation life. Through the adoption of the Ghost Dance by the lower lodges and a religiously sanctioned call to “work for whites,” the tribe adapted to wage labor and the sharing of wages. Members of the tribe did not become less native as they participated in forms of “white labor,” but rather, recoded wage labor and the American monetary system as accepted native modes of production in order to preserve a separate sense of self. The Northern Arapaho were not a static pre-capitalist people sidelined by the primary drama of economic change and cannot be described by the simple trope of the communal Indian, suspended in animation. Rather, they actively leveraged their tribal structure in order to adapt to the changing circumstances.

With the arrival of the railroad in the Great Basin, Mormon leaders anticipated the threat of gentile markets and responded with a parallel system of exchange; one in which the Saints could direct profits to building the Kingdom of God on their own terms. Although early Mormon economic writings encouraged complete separation from American capitalism and mercantilism, Mormonism’s open canon enabled a strategic response to the anticipated onrush of outsiders: Zion’s Cooperative Mercantile Institute (ZCMI). Reliant on the Union Pacific Railroad and
eastern markets, ZCMI was designed to use the tools offered by the expanding American economy to serve the Mormon people and the continued survival of the Kingdom, despite its location in the heartland of Babylon. Centrally controlled by the Church and divided into well-regulated departments, ZCMI mirrored the Kingdom. Each department, like each individual Saint, was assigned a specific role in the holistic construction of the Kingdom of God. The lines between the material and spiritual, economic and religious, did not exist. Participation in the cooperative economic system prescribed by the Church, namely living modestly, contributing to home industries, and buying goods at ZCMI, stood as material practices of religious belief, a commitment to the Church, and would ultimately usher in the Second Coming of Christ. Privileging the welfare of the community over individual profit, ZCMI stood as a material and symbolic representation of a Mormon response to American nationalism and eastern competitive capitalism.

The Irish Catholics of Butte’s copper mines created some of the first local unions in the world. In response to the Anaconda Copper Company’s pervasive control of Butte and lack of regard for miner safety and economic stability, miners found strength in trade unions and collective bargaining as extensions of their ethnic and religious values. Catholic social teachings, events, ceremonies, schools, and fraternal organizations, as well as an overlapping Irish working class identity, united Butte’s underground laborers both physically and theologically. Committed to an ethic of mutual aid and community welfare, Butte’s laborers worked together to achieve stability within an uncertain industry. Miners directly participated in industrial capitalism by working for wages under the “Copper Kings” of Butte. Yet, their commitment to the collective interests of the community, as expressed most acutely by their participation in trade unions, subverted the American capitalist emphasis on individual gain. Given Pope Leo XIII’s blessing in *Rerum Novarum*, Butte miners engaged their Irish and Catholic identities on the local stage to
negotiate between Company politics and community economic stability. They rejected more radical forms of trade organization and instead chose a middle ground of compromise and steady work in order to support the growing ethnically and religiously bound community. At the end of the nineteenth century, Butte stood as the western hub for organized labor, connected to the nationally recognized Knights of Labor and a growing international working class. Through a commitment to communal economic stability and unity, membership in trade unions and ethnic associations, as well as participation in Catholic life, Butte miners stood adjacent to American industrial capitalism.

In the nineteenth-century Rocky Mountain West, the religious and ethnic bonds of Northern Arapaho, Mormon, and Catholic peoples encouraged and mandated contribution to the collective good, which served to subvert American religious and economic exceptionalism. Despite the intrusion of American markets, the placement on federal reservations, and the plight of working deep underground for absentee owners, westerners renegotiated the tools of the expanding nation-state to their advantage. The changing circumstances inspired cultural innovation and response: new networks of commerce and exchange, forms of labor, and means of banding together. The westerners studied here did not outright reject an ideology of American exceptionalism—indeed many saw themselves as participating in and upholding the virtues of Americanism—but they also did not wholly assimilate to free market capitalism and ideals of self-sufficient individualism. Instead, they chose a middle ground using the communal commitments of their religious identities to renegotiate what it meant to be American and Western. Although my subjects repeatedly noted their poverty due to an emphasis on sharing what little they had, as Brigham Young boldly claimed, he wanted it to be hard in order to scare
away the uncommitted. Labor, as deeply tied to religious practice and belief, dictated belonging and exclusion in the western landscape. And alternative modes of belonging persistently contaminated the grand narrative of the American West.

To varying degrees, communalism, cooperation, and self-sufficiency continue to be valued ideals by the Northern Arapaho, members of the Mormon Church, and Irish-American Catholics. The Northern Arapaho continue to struggle with federal bureaucratic systems, which privilege private property rights and narrowly allocated funds and resources. For example, when the tribe applies for federal funding for specific projects, they are often chastised for misallocating the funds. As the tribal liaison reasoned, how can you legitimize paying for infrastructure updates when members of the community are in need? The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints’ Welfare System, Deseret Industries, Women’s Relief Societies, Home Storage Centers and promotional campaigns for “Provident Living,” stand as further testaments to the continued Church promotion of self-reliance and involvement in temporal affairs.

Despite the onrush of liberal democratic governance and free market economics, Mormon beliefs and cooperative practices persist in the Great Basin Kingdom and what is now a global religious body.

Butte remains a city with a strong connection to Ireland and Catholicism—boasting the largest St. Patrick’s Day celebration west of the Mississippi—but like other American Catholic communities, the religious and ethnic distinctions of the nineteenth century have largely been muted. After the shared plight of the depression, service in both World Wars, the Second Vatican Council, and the election of John F. Kennedy, contemporary Irish-American Catholics

553 “I want hard times, so that every person that does not wish to stay, for the sake of his religion, will leave,” Brigham Young, “Holy Ghost Necessary in Preaching,” Journal of Discourses 4 (1856), 32.
could probably more accurately be described as simply, American. Entrance into white collar jobs, detachment from the institutional church, the decline of Irish neighborhoods and parishes, have raised a question beyond the scope of this project: Has American Catholicism lost its mark of distinctiveness in relation to Protestant, individualistic American values?

The Mormon Church is actively involved in a process of minimizing distinction from American majority culture. In a 1982 book and film, The God Makers, the evangelical Christian production company Jeremiah Films heavily criticized esoteric teachings of the Mormon Church. In response, Mormon leaders shifted strategies from debating evangelical Christianity to an attempt to minimize the differences between Mormonism and Protestant Christianity. A public relations campaign drawing parallels to Protestant beliefs, including a series of “Introduction to Mormons” videos and ad space in the Broadway musical “Book of Mormon,” continues this process. From the 1856 Republican campaign, in which Mormon polygamy was regarded as a “relic of barbarism,” to Mitt Romney’s near win of the Republican nomination in the 2008 presidential campaign, Mormonism has a complicated relationship with the United States and American majority culture.

In a further step away from acceptance or assimilation, the Northern Arapaho, like so many Native communities in the United States, struggle with poverty, discrimination, and

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555 As Robert Orsi argues, Catholic route to Americanization was circuitous, focused on Catholic ideas of suffering and sacrifice, and a powerful ability to forget and rewrite history. See Orsi, "U.S. Catholics Between Memory and Modernity: How Catholics are American," in Catholics in the American Century: Recasting Narratives of U.S. History, eds. R. Scott Appleby and Kathleen Sprows Cummings, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2012). The irony of writing this on Ash Wednesday, shortly after my mother requested photographic proof that I had received ashes, is not lost on me.


alcohol and drug addiction, which is compounded by ongoing debates of who counts as an insider and outsider within the tribe. Do you have to live on the reservation? To what degree does blood quantum define belonging? Few opportunities for employment challenge the pressure to stay within the community. Walking into the tribal offices, I would regularly find twenty or so young Arapahos filling out employment paperwork, struggling to get minimum wage jobs in construction or other federally funded positions on the reservation. And yet, as noted within the chapter, the Northern Arapaho are leaders within Plains Indian communities. Under the guidance of the Tribal Historical Preservation Office, a group of tribal members have spearheaded innovative efforts to revise traditional dances and religious practices, and are leading repatriation efforts at the Carlisle Boarding School in Pennsylvania. Despite continued hardship, the Northern Arapaho, like their Mormon and Catholic counterparts, are not merely the objects of change, but the agents.

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Since the 1990s, New West historians have championed a form of revisionist history, turning their focus to the mistreatment of minority cultures, misuse of the environment, and the pursuit of profit. As Elliot West suggested, New West history was “A Longer, Grimmer, But More Interesting Story.”558 Yet, New West historians overcorrected. Within the new orthodoxy of social history, the grimmer history of colonization, race and ethnicity, gender, and the environment came to the forefront—but what about religion? In both a 1993 and 2004 stock taking of the field, religion is never mentioned.559 In the 2017, Yale University Press textbook,

The American West, the terms “religion” and “religious” are completely absent. Western history is in need of a material and lived religion intervention, in which religion is regarded as more than just private belief, abstract principles, and what’s performed within the confines of a church building, but as an important component in community structure and exchange.

Religious studies scholars are increasingly drawing their attention to this oversight, but there is still much ground to be covered. As the case studies presented here reveal, religion was not separate from the messy stories of work and exploitation of the American West, but an important factor in the social structure and economic systems implemented by diverse western communities. Economic systems are products of the values and beliefs of the community that creates and implements them. The Northern Arapaho justified a transition to wage labor in response to a commandment from the Ghost Dance messiah Wovoka. Mormon merchants pooled resources and constructed an alternative marketplace in order to remain isolated from gentile corruption and direct profits toward the physical creation of the Kingdom of God. In Butte, underground miners leveraged their Irish Catholic identities to create labor unions that served to protect and unite the community against exploitative practices and ensure a system of mutual aid.

Work remains to be done in terms of excavating the relationship between the environmental history of the American West and diverse political economies. For example, while I have focused on how communities interacted with the landscape as a construction of physical and social features and movements, the environmental or ecological pressures

undergirding these experiences warrant more thorough investigation. Specifically, how did the carrying capacities of the harsh western landscapes dictate the success and failure of diverse political economies? How did a major drought in the 1870s, in which bison, settlers, and Natives alike were forced to congregate in river valleys, influence the relocation of the Northern Arapaho to the Wind River Indian Reservation? Twenty years later, how did another drought disrupt the agrarian dreams of the Dawes Act, thereby forcing Native peoples to creatively find new means of survival within the borders of the reservation? Did Mormon cooperative living enable the mass settlement of the desert-like Great Basin in ways that other Euro-American communities were unable to replicate?

In addition, a closer reading of the gendered landscapes of the American West would further enrich the historical narrative I have presented. Although this project touches upon the role of Catholic women religious, the Northern Arapaho women’s lodge, and the role of Mormon women in home manufacturing, a thicker analysis and comparison of gender roles and the perception of gender in the Rocky Mountain West would provide a more comprehensive picture of the lived experiences of western communities. A vastly complex and multicultural topic, the role of women in settling the American West and building religious communities, as idealized figures left behind, gendered spaces—both sites of labor and the home—as well as the feminization of non-Euro-American peoples, remain fertile ground for future study.

Lastly, a future direction for this project might extend the line of inquiry into the twentieth and twenty-first centuries in order to reveal the manner in which colonial relations have been a continuing condition of American economic development. These lines of research would do much to reinforce the lesson aimed at throughout this project—that economic systems

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and practices are inexorable from the values and practices of a community, and often dictate political decision making. For example, the contemporary political moment provides continued evidence that capitalist elites are better able to have their interests served legislatively than the poor and working classes. By regarding both religion and economics not as isolated and innate realms of human life, but as historically constructed, materially emplaced, and deeply entangled, scholars may better see behind and through idealized narratives of American nationalism.

As illustrated in the election of Donald Trump in the 2016 presidential race under the war cry, “Make America Great Again,” a desire to “reclaim” American exceptionalism is alive and well in the twenty-first century. With a presidency focused on shoring up the leaky borders of the United States—including reinforcing conservative values and a literal wall along the U.S.-Mexico border—paired with flexing American muscle abroad, Trump’s administration endeavors to highlight the distinct nature and power of the United States. Yet, as this dissertation has shown, an American Eden never existed. There is not a golden age of American exceptionalism to return to, but rather, a conflicted history of discrete groups struggling to create a cohesive American identity in different moments and places in time, constantly undercut by the persistence of alternative religious, economic, and political identities. Narratives, like those favored by the Trump administration, which continue to foreground a narrow and insidious form of American exceptionalism, are an intellectual menace to the rich diversity of American history.

This project has investigated how diverse communities fared within a region noted as a repository of American idealism in order to provide insight into the complex connections between religion and economic systems, as well as between mainstream Protestant America and the religious and ethnic other. The history of the American West has been one of many authors, erasures, and overwriting. This history should not be idealized and wielded as a story of American triumphalism, but as a sobering account of marginalization and exclusion, interrupted
by innovative efforts to survive. By looking beyond the boldest text, to what is concealed beneath, perhaps scholars may see and then see again. Just as the Irish Catholic immigrants of Butte were responsible for brutally hard work in sweltering mine shafts and toxic smelters, immigrants from Mexico, El Salvador, and Guatemala populate the modern industrial West and can be found in garment factories and packing plants, highlighting a continued reliance on nonwhite labor in propelling forward American life. Yet, the simple narrative of conquest and assimilation that too often defines histories of the American West, and of the United States more broadly, is disrupted by the more complex stories of adaptation and resistance. By continuing to ask new questions of old stories and looking beyond abstract spaces of American nationalism, scholars may better evaluate the legacy of ethnic and economic diversity in the United States and the push and pull of religious life in diverse contexts. The things people did, the ways in which they came together, the objects they exchanged, and the manner in which they survived the Rocky Mountain West—were all influenced by and connected to the ways in which religion was expressed and experienced. To study these communities without religion would be to miss an important piece of community identity.
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