

Summer 2019

## Restoring America: Historic Preservation and the New Deal

Stephanie E. Gray

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarcommons.sc.edu/etd>



Part of the [History Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Gray, S. E. (2019). *Restoring America: Historic Preservation and the New Deal*. (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from <https://scholarcommons.sc.edu/etd/5433>

This Open Access Dissertation is brought to you by Scholar Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Scholar Commons. For more information, please contact [digres@mailbox.sc.edu](mailto:digres@mailbox.sc.edu).

RESTORING AMERICA:  
HISTORIC PRESERVATION AND THE NEW DEAL

by

Stephanie E. Gray

Bachelor of Arts  
Mount Holyoke College, 2013

Master of Arts  
University of South Carolina, 2016

---

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in

History

College of Arts and Sciences

University of South Carolina

2019

Accepted by:

Lauren Rebecca Sklaroff, Major Professor

Robert Weyeneth, Committee Member

Patricia Sullivan, Committee Member

Lydia Mattice Brandt, Committee Member

Cheryl L. Addy, Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School

© Copyright by Stephanie E. Gray, 2019  
All Rights Reserved.

## DEDICATION

For my mother, Lucy Gray.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It is said that writing a dissertation is a solitary venture. While that is true to some extent, no dissertation is completed without the support of many people in many places. First, I extend my deepest gratitude to my wonderful committee. To my advisor, Lauren Sklaroff, tremendous thanks for accepting me as a student and teaching me to think and write like a cultural historian. She is a model scholar and I very much hope to emulate her as I continue to build my career. I have been lucky to have had the support of Robert Weyeneth since the first day of graduate school and have benefitted in countless ways because of his guidance and advice. He introduced me to the field of historic preservation and showed me what it means to be a professor and practitioner. Lydia Mattice Brandt has been the best scholar, friend, and mentor I could have hoped to find in graduate school. I am here at the end because of her positivity, encouragement, and generosity in involving me in Columbia preservation projects. I am very appreciative of and humbled by Patricia Sullivan's willingness to jump on board and lend her expertise in New Deal history to this work. I extend my thanks, also, to Marjorie Spruill, Andrew Berns, and Yulian Wu, in whose classes I developed the ideas and questions that guided this dissertation. I will forever be grateful to the incredible group of scholars at the University of South Carolina.

I would be remiss if I did not thank my former teachers who nurtured my love for the study of history: Ric Doringo, who first encouraged me to engage in public history work my senior year of high school; Jeremy King, who challenged me to speak up in

classes because he believed my intellectual thoughts were valuable; and Desmond Fitz-Gibbon, who taught me how to ask questions of places and spaces and so very graciously took me on as a senior thesis student when he arrived at Mount Holyoke College. I hope, in some small way, this dissertation can demonstrate how grateful I am to them for guiding me along the path to the Ph.D. For giving me in-the-field experience, I am indebted to the wonderful staff at James A. Garfield National Historic Site and the South Carolina State Historic Preservation Office, especially Todd Arrington, Mary Lintern, Elizabeth Johnson, and Ehren Foley.

This work would not have been possible without the financial support from my home institution. Many thanks to the History Department and Graduate School of the University of South Carolina for providing funding through travel grants, the SPARC grant, and the Bilinski Fellowship. The funding allowed me to take necessary research trips and afforded me the time to devote to writing in my final year. I am also grateful for the patient and liberal aid of archivists, librarians, researchers, and other staff at the many repositories I visited during this project, including the National Archives at College Park, South Caroliniana Library, South Carolina Historical Society, Charleston County Public Library, Minnesota Historical Society, Charles Lindbergh House and Museum, Charles A. Weyerhaeuser Memorial Museum, Henry Whitfield State Museum, Connecticut State Library, Connecticut Historical Society, Yale University, New Haven Public Library, and Hartford Public Library.

A long and arduous journey is always made infinitely easier and more enjoyable because of dear friends, and I have not been wanting for those these past six years. Thank you to my brilliant friends and colleagues at the University of South Carolina, some of

whom have doubled as roommates: Janie Campbell, Alyssa Constad, Kristie DaFoe, Diana Garnett, Kayla Boyer Halberg, Patrick O'Brien, Robert Olguin, Meredith Transou, and Andrew Walgren. To the original "gang," my Ph.D. cohort – Carter Bruns, Oscar Doward, Antony Keane-Dawes, Samuel King, Gary Sellick, and Caleb Wittum – I am glad we were in this together. Cheers to Virginia Harness for spending many an evening in a joint writing session and letting me smother (with love) Juniper, the cat. Your patience, lending of an ear, and reminders that I could do this never went unappreciated. My history friends of Book Club have provided much entertainment and many laughs; I was always happy to turn from my "work" books to reading for fun. Endless and empathic thanks to my public historian pal from the beginning, Abby Curtin Teare; Jordan Williams, whose packages and check-ins always brightened my day; and Soo Jin Lee, for understanding that school kept me from visiting her across the ocean.

I also have been extremely fortunate to have had the full support of my family. Thank you, especially, to my sister, Victoria Gray, my grandma, Emma Simoncic, my aunt, Kathy Livingston, and my uncle, Allen Grim. Finally, I wish to thank my parents, Lucy and Jim Gray. They remind me of everything good and important in this world. That they never questioned my intent to become a professional historian or my ability to finish this degree has been a gift. A million times, thank you.

## ABSTRACT

In the 1930s, when the United States was in the throes of the greatest economic depression it had ever experienced, politicians, architects, and preservationists – both professionals and amateurs – engaged in the process of defining what it meant to be American by restoring historic landmarks across the nation. The Works Progress Administration (WPA)’s historic shrine restoration program is a significant, yet overlooked, part of the New Deal’s cultural agenda. A “restored” nation – as evinced through its preserved historic architecture – celebrated past American achievements, ingenuity, and diverse local histories that gave the nation its distinctive multicultural character.

During the Depression years, historic preservation became a materialized method of cultural production and national recovery. This work examines *why* the federal government and local political and art leaders engaged in preservation activity as a method of rebuilding America, positioning architecture and material culture as cultural agents. This dissertation focuses on three WPA historic shrine restorations completed between the years 1935 and 1937: the Henry Whitfield State Museum in Guilford, Connecticut; the Dock Street Theatre in Charleston, South Carolina; and the Charles A. Lindbergh Boyhood Home and State Park in Little Falls, Minnesota. Each of these projects arose from local claims to distinct histories and myths which Americans employed to reconstruct the cultural underpinnings of the nation. The three projects revived the Puritan legacy in small-town Connecticut, resurrected a theatre that was the



cultural heart of colonial Charleston, and cultivated the pioneers' landscape of the central Minnesota frontier. From a seventeenth-century stone house in New England, to an eighteenth-century theatre in the Deep South, to a modest farmhouse and surrounding lands in the Upper Midwest, these particular historic shrines reflected the multifaceted nature of the nation's historic built environment through which Americans chose to mediate modern changes.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Dedication .....	iii
Acknowledgements .....	iv
Abstract .....	vii
List of Figures .....	x
List of Abbreviations .....	xii
Introduction: New Deal Culture and Historic Preservation .....	1
Chapter 1: The Henry Whitfield Museum, Guilford, CT: Safeguarding the Puritan Legacy .....	35
Chapter 2: The Dock Street Theatre, Charleston, SC: Reviving the Old South .....	95
Chapter 3: The Charles A. Lindbergh Boyhood Home and State Park, Little Falls, MN: Preserving the Minnesota Frontier .....	155
Conclusion .....	211
References .....	219

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 0.1. WPA Historic Shrines (I) .....	33
Figure 0.2. WPA Historic Shrines (II) .....	34
Figure 1.1. The restored Henry Whitfield State Historical Museum, 1937 .....	84
Figure 1.2. Illustrations depicting the Reverend Whitfield's house, c. 1640.....	85
Figure 1.3. <i>Ladies' Repository</i> illustration, 1863 .....	86
Figure 1.4. Early photograph of the Henry Whitfield House, taken before 1868.....	86
Figure 1.5. Henry Whitfield House during the 250 <sup>th</sup> anniversary of the settlement of Guilford.....	87
Figure 1.6. Henry Whitfield House, c. 1890.....	87
Figure 1.7. Architect Norman M. Isham's drawing of the "Great Hall" .....	88
Figure 1.8. Isham's "Great Hall," c. 1904 .....	88
Figure 1.9. Whitfield House before Isham's restoration, c. 1902.....	89
Figure 1.10. Whitfield House after Isham's restoration, 1904 .....	89
Figure 1.11. Henry Whitfield State Museum, 1924.....	90
Figure 1.12. Members of the Board of Trustees, May 1937.....	90
Figure 1.13. J. Frederick Kelly's plans for the restoration of the Whitfield House, 1936-7 .....	91
Figure 1.14. WPA workers rebuilding the roof of the Whitfield House.....	92
Figure 1.15. Cannon embrasure in corner of west and south walls .....	93
Figure 1.16. The restored "Great Hall," looking south.....	93
Figure 1.17. WPA workers at the project site.....	94

Figure 2.1. Planters' Hotel/Dock Street Theatre façade, facing Church Street .....	144
Figure 2.2 The Planters' Hotel, newspaper article from February 21, 1947 .....	145
Figure 2.3. Entrance of the Planters' Hotel before the FERA restoration project .....	146
Figure 2.4. View of Church Street facing north.....	147
Figure 2.5. Architectural renderings of the green room and Church Street elevation of the Dock Street Theatre .....	148
Figure 2.6. Simons & Lapham's floor plans of first floor (top) and second floor (bottom) of the Dock Street Theatre, 1937 .....	149
Figure 2.7. Interior views of the Dock Street Theatre's auditorium .....	150
Figure 2.8. Salvaged architectural elements from the Radcliffe-King House .....	151
Figure 2.9. Dock Street Theatre millwork advertisement.....	152
Figure 2.10. Charleston artist William Melton Halsey's fresco in the courtyard .....	153
Figure 2.11. Invitation to the second opening night on November 27, 1937 .....	154
Figure 3.1. Charles A. Lindbergh's boyhood home.....	200
Figure 3.2. Views of west and south elevations looking northeast (top) and east elevation looking northwest (bottom).....	201
Figure 3.3. Construction of the Lindbergh house, 1907 .....	202
Figure 3.4. Charles Lindbergh's hometown visit, August 25, 1927 .....	203
Figure 3.5. Tenant House/Manager's House .....	204
Figure 3.6. The Moo Pond .....	205
Figure 3.7. WPA workers restoring the Lindbergh home, June 1936 .....	206
Figure 3.8. Interior views of living room looking west (top) and southeast (bottom).....	207
Figure 3.9. Hand-drawn sketches of the Lindbergh homestead.....	208
Figure 3.10. Rustic style park shelter at Lindbergh State Park, 1938.....	209
Figure 3.11. Rustic style water tower at Lindbergh State Park, 1939 .....	210

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AIA .....	American Institute of Architects
CAA .....	Carolina Art Association
CCC.....	Civilian Conservation Corps
CWA .....	Civil Works Administration
DAR .....	Daughters of the American Revolution
ERC.....	Emergency Relief Commission
FAP .....	Federal Art Project
FERA .....	Federal Emergency Relief Administration
FHA.....	Federal Housing Administration
FMP.....	Federal Music Project
FSA .....	Farm Security Administration
FTP.....	Federal Theatre Project
FWP .....	Federal Writers' Project
HABS.....	Historic American Buildings Survey
LOC.....	Library of Congress
NPS .....	National Park Service
MHS.....	Minnesota Historical Society
PWA.....	Public Works Administration
RA .....	Resettlement Administration
SCERA.....	South Carolina Emergency Relief Administration
SPNEA.....	Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities

SPOD ..... Society for the Preservation of Old Dwellings  
TVA ..... Tennessee Valley Authority  
WPA..... Works Progress Administration

## INTRODUCTION

### NEW DEAL CULTURE AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

*Scattered across the broad face of our land are hundreds of historic places or structures – milestones in the development of a nation. Many an American community, busy with the problems of today and tomorrow, had put off the maintenance, repair or improvement of a cherished historic shrine until it became virtually a ruin. But when local officials found their own jobless workers available, at WPA pay, they hastened to provide materials and start the rehabilitation of old forts, old homes and other sites at which significant bits of history once were enacted.<sup>1</sup>*

Historic Shrine Summary, April 18, 1939  
Works Progress Administration



In the 1930s, when the United States was in the throes of the greatest economic depression it had ever experienced, politicians, architects, and preservationists – both professionals and amateurs – engaged in the process of defining what it meant to be American by restoring historic landmarks across the nation. While the Great Depression was undoubtedly a time of immense hardship, the New Deal initiated a period of cultural reinvention by creating the bureaucratic infrastructure for new artistic expressions to develop. One significant, yet overlooked, part of the New Deal’s cultural agenda is the restoration of historic shrines.<sup>2</sup> People from all corners of the United States went to work

---

<sup>1</sup> “Historic Shrine Summary,” April 18, 1939, RG 69, Entry 678, Box 15, Folder: 290-B Historical Shrine Reconstruction and Preservation, National Archives and Records Administration [hereafter NARA].

<sup>2</sup> Throughout this work, I use the term “restoration” to refer to all types of historic preservation activity because that is the term most commonly used by WPA administrators when referring to the historic shrine projects. For descriptions and explanations of the four contemporary preservation techniques employed by

preserving and restoring the historic places that mattered to them as a method of rebuilding the cultural landscape of America. A “restored” nation – as evinced through its preserved historic architecture – celebrated past American achievements, ingenuity, and diverse local histories that gave the nation its distinctive multicultural character during the Depression years. Restoring the places that told the nation’s history in physical form sent a message of prosperity that combated current hardships the country faced.

In February of 1937, all state administrators of the Works Progress Administration (WPA), a New Deal work relief agency, received a letter from the Information Service division in Washington, D.C. Information Service Letter No. 34 reported that the WPA’s central office was preparing a catalogue of “outstanding projects through which historic shrines such as historical parks, forts, residences, missions and other shrines have been restored or preserved.” The letter asked state administrators to send a narrative account, photographs, and a brief statement of historical significance of projects “of some national interest” currently in operation or recently completed that could be included in the WPA’s restoration program. Specific examples of the type of work to be featured in the catalogue included the Dock Street Theatre in Charleston, South Carolina; Lincoln Pioneer Village in Rockport, Indiana; and Fort Jefferson in the Dry Tortugas in the Florida Keys.<sup>3</sup> David K. Niles, assistant administrator of the

---

practitioners in the field – preservation, restoration, rehabilitation/adaptive use, and reconstruction – see the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties, <https://www.nps.gov/tps/standards.htm>. For examples of preservation projects of varying types, see William Murtagh, *Keeping Time: The History and Theory of Preservation in America*, 8<sup>th</sup> ed. (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley, 2010), and Robert Stipe, ed., *A Richer Heritage: Historic Preservation and the Twenty-First Century* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003).

<sup>3</sup> The letter asked state administrators to report projects previously undertaken by other Emergency Work Programs as well, including the Civil Works Administration and the Federal Emergency Relief Administration. Some restorations began as projects of one of these earlier programs before becoming WPA projects. Other specific examples named in the letter include the Ephraim McDowell House in Danville, KY; the Benjamin Hanby House in Westerville, OH; Fort Niagara in Youngstown, NY; and the



Information Service division, sent a follow-up letter in October of 1937 requesting supplementary information on the restoration projects. He ended the letter with an expression of the WPA's "wish to make this report a real contribution to the historical records of America."<sup>4</sup>

The result of these inquiries appeared in the 1938 inventory documenting the work performed by WPA workers from the beginning of the relief program in the late summer of 1935 to October 1, 1937. The report included a two-page picture spread featuring select historic shrines and a narrative overview of the historic preservation activity the WPA sponsored across the nation (Figure 0.1 and 0.2). Because of the involvement of the New Deal agency, the publication boasted, "every period in America's history is represented, from the days of Indian supremacy to yesterday."<sup>5</sup> The projects highlighted in the inventory presented a diverse portrait of America's historic built environment, ranging in architectural style, historic period of construction, and preservation technique. From Spanish missions in the South and West, to significant sites of the American Revolution on the East Coast, to military forts, monuments, and stately homes of presidents and other famous men spanning the country, these restoration projects materialized in physical form the foundational narratives of American history. Renowned and revered landmarks that achieved mythic status in national or local imagination – and sometimes both – were resurrected by WPA workers in the mid-to-late-1930s.

---

Dinosaur Park in Rapid City, SD. David K. Niles to State Works Progress Administrators, "Information Service Letter No. 34," RG 69, Entry 764, Box 1, Folder: "Historic Shrines – Overview," NARA.

<sup>4</sup> David K. Niles to State Works Progress Administrators, "Information Service Letter No. 42," October 22, 1937. RG 69, Entry 764, Box 1, Folder: "Historic Shrines – Overview," NARA.

<sup>5</sup> Works Progress Administration, *Inventory: An Appraisal of the Results of the Works Progress Administration* (Washington, D.C., 1938), 33-34.

The Works Progress Administration, created by the Emergency Relief Appropriations Act of 1935, assigned men and women to work that President Franklin D. Roosevelt desired to be “useful – not just for a day, or a year, but useful in the sense that it affords permanent improvement in living conditions or that it creates future wealth for the nation.”<sup>6</sup> The historic shrine restorations were categorized as construction projects of the WPA, alongside the relief program’s impressive portfolio of airports, roads, bridges, parks, libraries, and other public buildings and facilities. However, the intent of the restorations was not just to put Americans to work building useful structures, but also to repair the cultural fissures caused by the Depression. While the restorations categorically were construction projects, they were not utilitarian buildings. Unlike waterworks and city halls, the historic shrines were imbued with a more meaningful sense of historical identity. In this regard, they aligned conceptually with the white-collar work produced by the WPA’s cultural programs, collectively called Federal Project Number One, which were designed to put unemployed professionals in artistic fields to work. Federal One, as it was generally known, was comprised of five programs: the Federal Art Project (FAP), Federal Theatre Project (FTP), Federal Music Project (FMP), Federal Writers’ Project (FWP), and the Historic Records Survey.

The cultural programs of Federal One were top-down, led by national directors with big personalities, and were highly structured with the central office in Washington, D.C., determining the parameters of the projects. As a result, they were constantly under a federal microscope and the cultural work they produced was often politicized. In comparison, the construction projects, including the historic shrine restorations, were

---

<sup>6</sup> Franklin D. Roosevelt, “State of the Union,” January 4, 1935.

more loosely structured with a softer federal presence. The New Deal government funded the projects, but local and state sponsors conceived of and executed them. Because of the bottom-up nature afforded by the decentralized structure of the construction projects, the historic shrine restorations were largely guided by local political and cultural ambitions rather than federal bureaucratic intentions.

While WPA officials held roles of varying importance and involvement from project to project, the sponsors of the historic shrine restorations and other invested figures – be they local or state politicians, Boards of Trustees, state conservation departments, professional architects and other cultural elites, or townsfolk with a deep interest in local history – were highly influential in determining the aesthetic contours of the projects. As a result of the considerable degree of autonomy granted to the sponsors, the historic shrines chosen for restoration reflected the powerful, enduring historical myths that were intricately tied to a locality's sense of place. From this perspective, the restoration projects can be viewed as opportunities for communities to strengthen and articulate local cultural identities within the context of a federally funded, politically driven, cultural agenda. The impetus to restore particular shrines often initiated with actors unrelated to the New Deal enterprise, but the WPA played an essential role in their execution.

Through the WPA's historic shrine restoration program, historic sites became agents in the national narrative of cultural recovery during the Depression years. Just as the economic and political infrastructure of the United States needed to be reconstructed after the stock market crash, so, too, did the arts and culture of the country. The WPA's historic shrine restorations helped rebuild America's cultural economy from the bricks,

stone, and wood that bore witness to some of the nation's most important historical events. By highlighting the restorations in official publications, the WPA's Division of Information took advantage of the popularity of these locally conceived restoration projects and put them into service to aid the agency's broader message of recovery through employment in vital nation-building work.



The built environment – a collective term to describe the combined landscape of architecture, material culture, and the environment – affords an analytical window into motivations, cultural trends, aesthetic choices, and human desires that do not always appear in written forms. People live and work and play in the built environment, and it shapes, and is consequently shaped by, behaviors and beliefs. Spatial surroundings become canvases upon which to encode interpretations of the world. French philosopher and sociologist Maurice Halbwachs developed the concept of collective memories, which he argued frame one's perception of the world and manifest within spatial frameworks. The materiality of the built environment ensures the survival of ideas, people, and events in historical memory by giving them physical presence and tangible form.<sup>7</sup> Similarly, material culture scholar Kenneth L. Ames has argued that objects, including buildings, play a “double role” in that “they are expressions of the culture, and they are the medium that reinforces the culture or that creates some new culture.”<sup>8</sup> The built environment,

---

<sup>7</sup> Maurice Halbwachs, *The Collective Memory*. Translated by Francis J. Ditter, Jr. and Vida Yazdi Ditter (New York: Harper & Row, 1980), originally published as *La Mémoire Collective* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1950).

<sup>8</sup> Kenneth L. Ames, “Introduction,” in Alan Axelrod, ed. *The Colonial Revival in America* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1985), 9.

therefore, becomes historical evidence as it preserves and perpetuates cultural values and previous manners of living.

Increasingly scholars have focused on the places people inhabit and the things they produce and use to analyze American society, often with the goal to shed light on broader political, class, gender, and race issues.<sup>9</sup> While this framework places architecture at times within functional, institutional, and pragmatic lines, it also suggests that the built environment is an art form inscribed with cultural agency. Cultural and architectural historians, such as Dolores Hayden, Kristina Wilson, Kirk Savage, and Daniel Bluestone, have elevated the built environment to a leading role in their works by analyzing how buildings, landscapes, and their material components – both real and imagined – have been dynamic forces in shaping American culture. They demonstrate the inextricable link between the cultural and the political and economic realms of American society.<sup>10</sup>

---

<sup>9</sup> For example, see Charles T. Goodsell, *The Social Meaning of Civic Space: Studying Political Authority through Architecture* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1988); Lizabeth Cohen, *Making a New Deal: Industrial Workers in Chicago, 1919-1939* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); George Chauncey, *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Making of the Gay Male World, 1890-1940* (New York: Basic Books, 1994); Deborah L. Rotman and Ellen-Rose Savulis, eds., *Shared Spaces and Divided Places: Material Dimensions of Gender Relations and the American Historical Landscape* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2003).

<sup>10</sup> For some examples in a growing literature, see Dolores Hayden, *The Power of Place: Urban Landscapes as Public History* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1995); Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, *The Age of Homespun: Objects and Stories in the Creation of an American Myth* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2001); Kristina Wilson, *Livable Modernism: Interior Decorating and Design During the Great Depression* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2004); Joseph Heathcott, "Reading the Accidental Archive: Architecture, Ephemera, and Landscape as Evidence of an Urban Public Culture," *Winterthur Portfolio* 41, no. 4 (Winter 2007): 239-268; Gabrielle M. Esperdy, *Modernizing Main Street: Architecture and Consumer Culture in the New Deal* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008); Kirk Savage, *Monument Wars: Washington, D.C., the National Mall, and the Transformation of the Memorial Landscape* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009); Elizabeth C. Cromley, *The Food Axis: Cooking, Eating, and the Architecture of American Houses* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2010); Daniel Bluestone, *Buildings, Landscapes, and Memory: Case Studies in Historic Preservation* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2011); Dianne Suzette Harris, *Little White Houses: How the Postwar Home Constructed Race in America* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013).

In the volatile, introspective decade of Depression America, the historic material world became ever more significant as it both produced and reflected the changing tides of what constituted American culture. Historian Warren Susman has characterized the Depression era as a period permeated by the ideas of culture and commitment. Americans, he argued, engaged in a “self-conscious search for a culture which will enable them to deal with the world of experience, and a commitment to forms, patterns, symbols that will make their life meaningful.”<sup>11</sup> One way in which people sought to deal with the world around them was by demonstrating commitment to the forms of the past, including the architectural forms of the historic built environment. Phoebe Cutler has argued that in the 1930s Americans viewed the landscape as a “force in character formation,” and “like the plays, the literature, and the painting, Depression-era landscape reveals the nation to itself.”<sup>12</sup> The material fabric of the 1930s offers valuable insights into the mindsets of Americans dealing with the catastrophic fallout of economic disaster and the strategies they employed to cope in a period of immeasurable change.

One method of response to the despair and destitution of the Great Depression was to reinvent the United States as a nation by resurrecting different versions of old America. By employing architecture and material culture to reconstruct, recreate, or safeguard history, politicians, architects, craftsmen, and WPA workers used historic shrine restorations to make tangible, physical statements about the cultural identity of a particular place or region. Prevailing myths about local or regional identities were evinced and perpetuated through the cultural landscape. The acclaim and largely positive

---

<sup>11</sup> Warren Susman, ed., *Culture and Commitment, 1929-1945* (New York: George Braziller, 1973), 2.

<sup>12</sup> Phoebe Cutler, *The Public Landscape of the New Deal* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1985), 4, 63.

response to the historic shrine restorations illustrated that local communities valued the built environment and recognized that people imprinted their history, feelings, and values in their spatial surroundings.

This work addresses the role historic preservation played in the reconstruction of American culture in the 1930s and examines what narratives of the past, as encoded in the built environment, were prioritized in the WPA's historic shrine restoration program. It examines *why* the federal government and local political and art leaders engaged in historic preservation as a method of refashioning America during the Depression. Additionally, this work equates the restoration of meaningful historic spaces as a tangible manifestation of the restoration of American history, legacy, and spirit, positioning architecture and material culture as cultural agents. The historic built environment played a key role in the federal government's New Deal initiative to engender a cultural rebirth of the nation. Historic preservation became a materialized method of cultural production and national recovery.



Scholars long have been fascinated with the cultural wealth of the Depression period and have probed modes of production and consumption to uncover the multifarious ways in which the nation rebuilt throughout the 1930s and early 1940s. Over the past few decades, historians vigorously have looked to the cultural work of the New Deal programs to understand the broader political, economic, and social implications of the Roosevelt administration's policies. Collectively these scholars demonstrate that the government's role in designing a federal cultural apparatus significantly influenced broader developments defining the era. While the New Deal's sponsorship of cultural

production continues to attract historians' attention, the built environment as a cultural force in shaping Depression era culture remains largely unexamined.

Overviews of the role of the federal government in the arts range from William McDonald's pioneering work on the New Deal work relief programs to Sharon Ann Musher's more recent holistic study of how the New Deal arts projects were instruments in both democratizing and Americanizing the nation's art.<sup>13</sup> Some historians have focused their examination of federally sponsored cultural production on one cultural form or program. Barbara Savage, for example, has argued that mass-broadcast radio programs were political forces that aided in the construction of race within the context of New Deal racial ideology, thereby elevating the cultural form to a powerful political tool.<sup>14</sup> Influenced by Savage's work, Lauren Rebecca Sklaroff has broadened her study of the federal production of black culture by analyzing the movies, radio shows, and magazines produced by New Deal cultural programs, illustrating the ways in which the Roosevelt administration demonstrated commitment to the development of black culture.<sup>15</sup> Other scholars, including Nicholas Natanson, Cara Finnegan, Colleen McDannell, and Linda Gordon, have centered their studies on how Farm Security Administration (FSA) photography conveyed modern messages of race, poverty, and religion, while Barbara

---

<sup>13</sup> William F. McDonald, *Federal Relief Administration and the Arts: The Origins and Administrative History of the Works Progress Administration* (Columbus: Ohio State University, 1969); Sharon Ann Musher, *Democratic Art: The New Deal's Influence on American Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015).

<sup>14</sup> Barbara Dianne Savage, *Broadcasting Freedom: Radio, War, and the Politics of Race, 1938-1948* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999).

<sup>15</sup> Lauren Rebecca Sklaroff, *Black Culture and the New Deal: The Quest for Civil Rights in the Roosevelt Era* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009).



Melosh and David M. Lugowski have uncovered the gendered nature of New Deal cultural production by examining art, theater, and films.<sup>16</sup>

The environmental legacy of New Deal programs has also received scholarly attention, especially in the past fifteen years. In *Nature's New Deal*, Neil Maher provides an environmental history of the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) and charts the transition from Progressive Era conservation activity to post-World War II environmentalism, intersecting the history of the environmental movement and New Deal politics. Though not a traditional cultural history in its methodology, Maher views landscapes as cultural sources that can be “‘read’ as one would read court records, census tracts, and government documents for clues to the society that created them” and for “associated political transformation occurring within culture.”<sup>17</sup>

Maher’s work introduces a significant recent trend in New Deal historiography: the prioritization of the built environment and architecture of the period. Scholars, such as Robert D. Leighninger, Tim Culvahouse, and Phoebe Cutler have equated the physical building construction of New Deal programs with the ideological and economic construction of liberalism and the modern economy.<sup>18</sup> Architectural historian Gabrielle

---

<sup>16</sup> Nicholas Natanson, *The Black Image in the New Deal: The Politics of FSA Photography* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1992); Cara A. Finnegan, *Picturing Poverty: Print Culture and FSA Photographs* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2003); Colleen McDannell, *Picturing Faith: Photography and the Great Depression* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2004); Linda Gordon, “Dorothea Lange: The Photographer as Agricultural Sociologist,” *Journal of American History* 93, no. 3 (Dec. 2006): 698-727; Barbara Melosh, *Engendering Culture: Manhood and Womanhood in New Deal Public Art and Theater* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991); David M. Lugowski, “Queering the (New) Deal: Lesbian and Gay Representation and the Depression-Era Cultural Politics of Hollywood’s Production Code,” *Cinema Journal* 38, no. 2 (Winter, 1999): 3-35.

<sup>17</sup> Neil M. Maher, *Nature’s New Deal: The Civilian Conservation Corps and the Roots of the American Environmental Movement* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 7. See also: Sarah Phillips, *This Land, This Nation: Conservation, Rural America, and the New Deal* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

<sup>18</sup> Robert D. Leighninger, *Building Louisiana: The Legacy of the Public Works Administration* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2007); Tim Culvahouse, *The Tennessee Valley Authority: Design and Persuasion* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2007); Cutler, *The Public Landscape of the New*

Esperdy turns to both the cultural and economic significance of New Deal architecture in her examination of how the Federal Housing Administration (FHA)'s Modernization Credit Plan redesigned the retail landscape through facelifts to storefronts on main streets. Her cultural history approach allows her to place a New Deal program in conversation with important cultural movements of the twentieth century, such as consumerism and fashion.<sup>19</sup>

While many historians have investigated the cultural, environmental, and architectural transformations engendered by federally sponsored programs throughout the 1930s, what is mostly absent in New Deal literature is an analysis of the built environment as a *cultural agent*. Architecture, particularly the historic built environment, is at the center of a New Deal narrative of cultural production. The historic shrine restorations of the Works Progress Administration, heretofore unanalyzed, explicitly link historical identity with cultural identity, like other New Deal cultural forms. Exploring the intersection between federal involvement in the arts and the local drive behind the preservation of significant historic sites enhances our understanding of how the built environment is a crucial actor in the making of an American culture that is both nationally and locally determined. Thus, this project offers an analysis of the cultural work of the New Deal through an alternative lens: one that places the built environment at the center of a story of cultural identity construction.



---

*Deal*. For an analysis of the housing programs undertaken by the federal government through the Reconstruction Finance Corporation and the Housing Division of the Public Works Administration, see Richard Pommer, "The Architecture of Urban Housing in the United States during the Early 1930s," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 34, no. 4 (December 1978): 235-264;

<sup>19</sup> Esperdy, *Modernizing Main Street*.

Cultural historians have long debated how to characterize the cultural climate of Depression America and the New Deal's place in revitalizing American culture. David Stowe has posited that one way to approach the study of the New Deal is to view it "not as a collection of legislative initiatives and alphabet agencies but as a broad-based cultural movement."<sup>20</sup> The study of the culture of the period must, of course, move beyond the federally sponsored programs and attend to the broader dimensions of cultural activity operating in conjunction or in competition with New Deal programs. Two prevailing analytical frameworks that assess the cultural temperature of the period are Warren Susman's "age of Mickey Mouse" and Michael Denning's characterization of the 1930s and 1940s as a period defined by "the laboring of American culture."<sup>21</sup> Susman's view of the period as fundamentally conservative derives from his understanding of Disney's intractable hold on the middle-class public during the Depression years. Disney films, he argues, transformed "American fears and humiliations" into acceptable narratives at a time when people could not make sense of the world around them.<sup>22</sup> On the opposing end of this conservative outlook is Denning's depiction of the "cultural front," the alliance between the Popular Front and the Communist Party which produced creative, left-wing culture and elevated the figure of the proletarian.<sup>23</sup>

---

<sup>20</sup> David W. Stowe, *Swing Changes: Big-Band Jazz in New Deal America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994), 13.

<sup>21</sup> Warren Susman, *Culture as History: The Transformation of American Society in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), 197; Michael Denning, *The Cultural Front: The Laboring of American Culture in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Verso, 1997). For essays on "radical" culture in the Depression, see Bill Mullen and Sherry Lee Linkon, eds., *Radical Revisions: Rereading 1930s Culture* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1996).

<sup>22</sup> Susman, *Culture and Commitment*, 12-13; See also Richard H. Pells, *Radical Visions & American Dreams: Culture and Social Thought in the Depression Years* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1973), 276-7.

<sup>23</sup> Works that discuss leftist culture and the Popular Front include, but are not limited to, Pells, *Radical Visions and American Dreams*; Lizabeth Cohen, *Making a New Deal*; Denning, *The Cultural Front*; Robert Cohen, *When the Old Left Was Young: Student Radicals and America's First Mass Student Movement, 1929-1941* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993); Benjamin Filene, *Romancing the Folk: Public*

More historians, however, should follow the encouragement of Lawrence Levine to “comprehend the Great Depression as a complex, ambivalent, disorderly period which gave witness to the force of cultural continuity even as it manifested signs of deep cultural change.”<sup>24</sup> Conservative and leftist culture flourished alongside one another, as both Susman and Denning do suggest despite their seemingly contrasting outlooks. Caught in between social conservatism and political radicalism at times and sometimes engaged in both was the American middle-class, which Susman has called “the group of Americans who most felt themselves suspended between two eras.”<sup>25</sup> Historian Victoria Grieve uses the term “middlebrow culture” to describe New Deal enterprises designed to reach all Americans, especially the large middle class. This perspective decenters a focus on the culture produced by or for the most conservative anti-New Dealers, the poorest or most marginalized Americans, or the most radical elements of the Communist Left, to attend to the cultural activity that middle-class Americans performed and consumed.<sup>26</sup> The term “middlebrow culture” applies to the WPA historic shrine restorations and their intended audiences. They were projects conceptualized by local and state governments and organizations, researched by professional and amateur historians, designed by architects, and executed by workers on relief registers. They were for the everyman, the local townsfolk, the casual tourist, the wealthy, and the less fortunate alike.

---

*Memory & American Roots Music* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000); Glenda Elizabeth Gilmore, *Defying Dixie: The Radical Roots of Civil Rights, 1919-1950* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2008); Ronald D. Cohen, *Depression Folk: Grassroots Music and Left-Wing Politics in 1930s America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2016).

<sup>24</sup> Lawrence W. Levine, *The Unpredictable Past: Exploration in American Cultural History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 222.

<sup>25</sup> Susman, *Culture and Commitment*, 8.

<sup>26</sup> Victoria Grieve, *The Federal Art Project and the Creation of Middlebrow Culture* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2009), 6.

Similarly, the ideological imperative of the New Deal cultural programs was to achieve a form of “cultural democracy.” While the primary goal of Federal One was to employ out-of-work artists, the underlying objective as devised by the programs’ administrators – themselves leading experts in America’s artistic and literary fields – was to produce cultural products that dismantled the hierarchical superiority of high culture and brought art to everyday, ordinary Americans.<sup>27</sup> From 1935 to 1943, with the exception of the politically controversial Federal Theatre Project which Congress ended in 1939, Federal One produced a tremendous outpouring of American art in various forms, including plays, folk songs, travel guides, films, novels, slave narratives, and more. These diverse products democratized art by increasing accessibility. The buildings and landscapes preserved through the historic shrine restorations added to this growing portfolio of national art that emphasized regionalist and folk traditions rooted in local history and culture.<sup>28</sup>

A common thread uniting the work of the various programs of Federal One and the WPA’s historic shrines was the tendency to explore, document, reinterpret, and, at times, glorify American history; in other words, Americans eagerly searched for usable pasts during the Depression years.<sup>29</sup> Collectively, the New Deal cultural products offered an astounding rebuttal to literary critic Van Wyck Brooks’s early twentieth-century

---

<sup>27</sup> Jane De Hart Mathews, “Arts and the People: The New Deal Quest for a Cultural Democracy,” *Journal of American History* 62, no. 2 (Sept. 1975): 320.

<sup>28</sup> Francis V. O’Connor, ed., *Art for the Millions: Essays from the 1930s by Artists and Administrators of the WPA Federal Art Project* (Greenwich, CT: New York Graphic Society, 1973); Mathews, “Arts and the People,” 320. For more on regionalism and the New Deal, see: Robert L. Dorman, *Revolt of the Provinces: The Regionalist Movement in America, 1920-1945* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993); Michael Steiner, “Regionalism in the Great Depression,” *Geographical Review* 73, no. 4 (Oct. 1983): 430-46.

<sup>29</sup> For the documentary impulse of the 1930s, see Pells, *Radical Visions & American Dreams*; Denning, *The Cultural Front*; William Stott, *Documentary Expression and Thirties America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976).

contention that the United States had no myths.<sup>30</sup> In the 1920s, Americans did not seem bothered by their lack of national culture; they eagerly looked forward to a prosperous future rather than backward to a stifling past. They were catapulted into modernity and enchanted by jazz, automobiles, radio, airplane travel, and motion pictures, which all left indelible cultural impressions. By the 1930s, however, facing the incredible shifts in society wrought by the Depression, Americans sought usable pasts with renewed gusto. They pursued both comfort and familiarity in historical myths that had shaped the cultural values of the nation.

The art administrators of New Deal programs embraced the search for usable pasts in exploring the repertoire of American folklore and art, including art museum curator, writer, and national director of the FAP, Holger Cahill; musicologist and administrator of the FMP, Charles Seeger; and national folklore editor of the FWP, Benjamin Botkin, amongst others.<sup>31</sup> This theme of exploring the past to make sense of the present was especially prevalent in the more than eleven hundred post office murals commissioned by the Treasury Department's Section of Fine Arts. While not sponsored by a Federal One program, the American Scene murals painted in post offices across the country similarly prioritized "the people," emphasized local and regional environments, and highlighted uplifting local historical events or narratives of progress. American Scene paintings often hearkened to the Euro-American pioneer past and foregrounded inspirational figures like Daniel Boone, Meriwether Lewis, and William Clark, much like

---

<sup>30</sup> Van Wyck Brooks, *The Wine of the Puritans: A Study of Present-Day America* (New York: Mitchell Kennerley, 1908), 91; See also Brooks, "On Creating a Usable Past," *The Dial* (April 11, 1918): 337-341.

<sup>31</sup> Musher, *Democratic Art*, 27-8; Roy Rosenzweig and Barbara Melosh, "Government and the Arts: Voices from the New Deal Era," *Journal of American History* 77, no. 2 (Sept. 1990): 596-608; Alfred Haworth Jones, "The Search for a Usable American Past in the New Deal Era," *American Quarterly* 23, no. 5 (Dec. 1971): 710-11, 719-22. See also O'Connor, *Art for the Millions*; Peter Gough, *Sounds of the New Deal: The Federal Music Project in the West* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2018).

the popular historical writing of the period. Collectively, the murals sent messages of correlation and continuity between past and present, suggesting that there was abiding meaning and values to be found in the examination of history.<sup>32</sup>

Fervently rejecting the idea that America had no indigenous art or native culture, Constance Rourke, director of the FAP's Index of American Design, probed the myths and fantasies Americans constructed to narrate their history. She argued that the nation's heritage manifested in the vernacular art, architecture, and folklore of ordinary citizens.<sup>33</sup> Even President Franklin D. Roosevelt partook in this veneration of the past and glorification of mythical figures; he watched his second inaugural parade from a scale replica of Andrew Jackson's home, the Hermitage, constructed on the White House lawn.<sup>34</sup> The president and New Deal cultural enthusiasts alike recognized the built environment as a vehicle through which important myths could be honored or revived.

---

<sup>32</sup> Bruce Bustard, *A New Deal for the Arts* (Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration in association with the University of Washington Press, 1997), 24; Virginia M. Mecklenburg, *The Public as Patron: A History of the Treasury Department Mural Program* (College Park: University of Maryland, 1979); Karal Ann Marling, *Wall-to-Wall America: A Cultural History of Post-Office Murals in the Great Depression* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982); O'Connor, *Art for the Millions*, 20-22; Marlene Park and Gerald E. Markowitz, *Democratic Vistas: Post Offices and Public Art in the New Deal* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1984); Musher, *Democratic Art*, 95-6. According to Sharon Ann Musher, more than one-third of the murals (415 of 1,116) had historical content and more than sixty dealt exclusively with history. For further discussion on the Treasury Department's art programs, see Belisario R. Contreras, *Tradition and Innovation in New Deal Art* (Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 1983), 40-139. For the use of history in literature to promote a sense of cultural nationalism, see Charles C. Alexander, *Here the Country Lies: Nationalism and the Arts in Twentieth Century America* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1980).

<sup>33</sup> Constance Rourke, "American Art: A Possible Future," *American Magazine of Art* 28, no. 7 (July 1935): 390-405. See also, Rourke, *American Humor: A Study of the National Character* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1931). For analyses of Rourke's conception of the American past and its folklore, see Joan Shelley Rubin, "Constance Rourke in Context: The Uses of Myth," *American Quarterly* 28, no. 5 (Winter 1976): 576-588; Rubin, "A Convergence of Vision: Constance Rourke, Charles Sheeler, and American Art," *American Quarterly* 42, no. 2 (Jun 1990): 191-222. For a discussion of Rourke's activities as director of the FAP's Index of American Design, see Grieve, "Marketing the American Folk," in *The Federal Art Project and the Creation of Middlebrow Culture*, 110-134.

<sup>34</sup> Karal Ann Marling, *George Washington Slept Here: Colonial Revivals and American Culture, 1876-1986* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988), 366.

A popular New Deal initiative that prioritized local history and moved the built environment to a starring role in celebrations of American culture was the American Guide Series produced by the Federal Writers' Project (FWP), also known as the WPA guidebooks. FWP workers, some professional writers but most amateurs, contributed to the production of volumes covering each of the forty-eight states, various towns and cities, and four major highway routes between 1937 and 1941. The state guidebooks, the most popular publications, had three sections: the front third featured essays on local history, geography, architecture, economics, and culture; the middle third presented itemized descriptions of towns and cities; and the final third offered detailed tours of prominent historic and nature destinations throughout the state meant for people to visit by automobile.<sup>35</sup>

Despite their apparent uniformity and widespread positive reception, Christine Bold argues that the guidebooks were not “unproblematical celebrations of American democracy and cultural diversity... [they] expose the complex cultural processes set in train by federal intervention into local image-making.”<sup>36</sup> The intense focus on the history, politics, and cultural forces that together shaped the American landscape of the 1930s revealed an understanding that the built environment is both producer and product of American culture. Through the guidebooks, Americans rediscovered the diverse, storied, and manipulated landscapes that constituted their historical geography.

---

<sup>35</sup> Christine Bold, *The WPA Guides: Mapping America* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1999), 27.

<sup>36</sup> Bold, *The WPA Guides*, xvi. For a book that “aims to put you in the skins of people” who wrote the guides, along with other FWP literature, see David Taylor, *A Soul of a People: The WPA Writers' Project Uncovers Depression America* (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2009).



In his analysis of the cultural work of the FWP, Jerome Hirsch contends that the guidebook essays on art and architecture were “markedly superior in style and content” to other essays on the arts under the supervision of Roderick Seidenberg, national FWP architectural and art editor.<sup>37</sup> Seidenberg viewed the guides as instructive literature that would reacquaint Americans with the historic built environment by illustrating “a broader conception of architecture as an expression of historic (and social) forces – as a resolution, in visible form, of the trends and tendencies of our civilization.”<sup>38</sup> FWP national director Henry Alsberg hoped this new appreciation for history writ into spatial surroundings would help “prevent relics of the past from crumbling into dust” by cultivating “a sense of local pride of possession.”<sup>39</sup> Through these guides, Americans were taught to view historic architecture – the vernacular and the exceptional – as local shrines for which they had proprietary rights and responsibilities. The maintenance of the shrines reflected a maintenance of local historical memory.

Though in written form, the American Guide Series attached stories to buildings, linking historical narratives of the past to extant buildings of the present. In 1941, novelist John Dos Passos wrote, “in times of danger we are driven to the written record by a pressing need to find answers to the riddles of today. We need to know what kind of firm ground other men, belonging to generations before us, have found to stand on.”<sup>40</sup> While Dos Passos referred specifically to literature, this searching for “a sense of continuity” with the “firm ground” of the past occurred spatially through manipulation of

---

<sup>37</sup> Jerrold Hirsch, *Portrait of America: A Cultural History of the Federal Writers' Project* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 71.

<sup>38</sup> Roderick Seidenberg to Joseph Gaer, 28 September 1938, and to James G. Dunton, state director, Ohio FWP, 7 July 1937, cited in Hirsch, *Portrait of a Nation*, 73.

<sup>39</sup> Henry G. Alsberg, “The American Guide,” n.d., cited in Hirsch, *Portrait of America*, 48.

<sup>40</sup> John Dos Passos, *The Ground We Stand On: Some Examples from the History of a Political Creed* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1941), 3.

the built environment, not just figuratively through murals, literature, plays, or other intangible forms. The effort to ground contemporary times in the past materialized in increased historic preservation activity during the Depression.



Before the 1930s, historic preservation projects operated almost exclusively in the private sector.<sup>41</sup> The historical enterprises of two men – Henry Ford and John D. Rockefeller, Jr. – propelled the preservation movement forward and elevated it to the national stage. Henry Ford, a modern man, innovator of the machine age, and infamous for calling history “bunk,” encouraged Americans to discover their past at Greenfield Village, an outdoor living history museum in Dearborn, Michigan, which opened to the public in 1933. At Greenfield Village, Ford created an artificial historic American community, a village of hodgepodge structures removed from their historic context and relocated to the Upper Midwest. Ford’s collection of buildings included the Noah Webster House, the Wright Brother’s Cycle Shop, and Thomas Edison’s Menlo Park Laboratory. Karal Ann Marling has described Ford’s project as “wildly and gloriously wrong, a potpourri of gripping moments and patently quaint sights wrenched from any page of history ripe for the pillaging.”<sup>42</sup> Marling’s criticism, however, underscores the admirable motivations guiding Ford’s odd accessioning of buildings. He intended the museum to be an “animated textbook” for the broad American public; Greenfield Village

---

<sup>41</sup> For an overview of the early historic preservation movement, see Charles B. Hosmer, Jr. *Presence of the Past: A History of the Preservation Movement in the United States Before Williamsburg* (New York: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1965).

<sup>42</sup> Marling, *George Washington Slept Here*, 286.

would serve as a teaching laboratory where people could see, touch, and hear history. History-learning became experiential, not rote memorization.<sup>43</sup>

The other leading private historic preservation endeavor of the time was the restoration of Williamsburg, the capital of Virginia for most of the eighteenth century. Begun in the late 1920s as a labor of love for Reverend William A. R. Goodwin and benefactor John D. Rockefeller, Jr., the Williamsburg restoration intently focused on historical accuracy, which distinguished the project from Ford's curated village. Initially, the Williamsburg restorationists were little concerned with how visitors would engage in the historic built environment when Colonial Williamsburg opened to the public in 1934. Architects and archaeologists prioritized the architecture's historic integrity over public historical interpretation.<sup>44</sup> Kenneth Chorley, president and director of Williamsburg Restoration, Inc., summarized the team's preservation approach in 1941: "authenticity has been virtually the religion of our institution, and sacrifices have been offered before its altar. Personal preferences, architectural design, time, expense, and, at times, even the demands of beauty have given way to the exacting requirements of authenticity."<sup>45</sup>

The "living communities" of both Greenfield Village and Colonial Williamsburg underscored the essential theme "that the future may learn from the past," a directive

---

<sup>43</sup> For "animated textbook" quote, see Norman Tyler, Ted J. Ligibel, and Ilene R. Tyler, *Historic Preservation: An Introduction to Its History, Principles, and Practice* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2009), 35. For further discussion of Ford's creation of Greenfield Village, see Michael Kammen, *Mystic Chords of Memory: The Transformation of Tradition in American Culture* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1991), 351-8.; Marling, *George Washington Slept Here*, 283-290; Charles B. Hosmer, *Preservation Comes of Age: From Williamsburg to the National Trust, 1926-1949* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1981), 75-97.

<sup>44</sup> Hosmer, *Preservation Comes of Age*, 38.

<sup>45</sup> Kenneth Chorley, 1941, quoted in Kammen, *Mystic Chords of Memory*, 373n. For examination of "historical truth" as presented at Colonial Williamsburg and how interpretation has changed over time, see Richard Handler and Eric Gable, *The New History in an Old Museum: Creating the Past at Colonial Williamsburg* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997).

Rockefeller gave his Virginia project.<sup>46</sup> The recreated environments transported visitors to particular moments in American history, and reproductions of shops, homes, and colonial activities instructed visitors on the way things used to be. The idea that lessons from history were inscribed in historic structures was not a novel concept; Americans had been taking “pilgrimages” to historic sites since the late nineteenth century. Places like Independence Hall, George Washington’s ancestral home at Sulgrave Manor, Valley Forge, and Williamsburg, even before the massive Rockefeller-funded restoration project of the twentieth century, had long attracted tourists hoping to glean guidance or inspiration from these important sites of American history.<sup>47</sup> But the scale, publicity, and popularity of these two preservation projects in the 1930s, along with other privately-run historic sites of the Depression era including Mystic Seaport in Connecticut and Historic Deerfield in Massachusetts, connected pilgrimages to shrines with the burgeoning tourist industry. They created a historical landscape which could be traversed by automobile and accessible by an ever-increasing American audience.

The WPA historic shrine restorations embodied parts of both popular private preservation endeavors. Like Williamsburg, they were well-researched, professional, and technical preservation projects concerned with the integrity of the historic architecture. But like Ford’s Greenfield Village, the sites were viewed as teaching laboratories where residents and tourists could learn from the past. The tenet that people understood history when they experienced it – that perhaps objects and buildings conveyed history more powerfully and effectively than the written word – was a fundamental concept guiding the agendas of the WPA historic shrine restorations.

---

<sup>46</sup> Susman, *Culture and Commitment*, 6.

<sup>47</sup> Kammen, *Mystic Chords of Memory*, 200-4, 259, 486-8.



While living history museums beckoned visitors to experience history, thereby expanding the historical interests of the nation, the federal government began to assume a larger and more direct role in the American historic preservation movement under the Roosevelt administration. The creation of the Civil Works Administration (CWA) in early November of 1933 presented the first opportunity for federally sponsored preservation activity. A New Deal program designed to generate jobs for out-of-work Americans, the CWA encouraged federal agencies to submit proposals for programs that could aid the issue of unemployment.<sup>48</sup> One proposal came from Charles E. Peterson, chief of the Eastern Division of the Branch of Plans and Designs of the National Park Service (NPS). During the summer of 1933, under President Roosevelt's Executive Order 6166, the NPS had assumed the administration of all parks and monuments previously under the War Department and the Forest Service, which quadrupled the number of historic areas under NPS supervision. Peterson, responding to the NPS's enlarged role, envisioned a six-month nationwide program employing one thousand architects, photographers, and draftsmen to complete a survey of American architecture through measured drawings and photographs. NPS officials quickly approved the proposed program, called the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS), which also found fast approval from the Secretary of the Interior, Harold L. Ickes.<sup>49</sup>

When the CWA ended in July of 1934, the NPS, the American Institute of Architects (AIA), and the Library of Congress (LOC) signed a memorandum of

---

<sup>48</sup> Harlan D. Unrau and G. Frank Williss, "To Preserve the Nation's Past: The Growth of Historic Preservation in the National Park Service during the 1930s," *The Public Historian* 9, no. 2 (Spring 1987), 77-9.

<sup>49</sup> Unrau and Williss, "To Preserve the Nation's Past," 25, 28.

agreement to ensure HABS's continuation. Under this tripartite agreement, architects of the AIA identified and catalogued the structures; the NPS executed the actual work of photographing the building and preparing measured drawings; and the LOC served as the repository for the inventory forms, drawings, and photographs.<sup>50</sup> With its formal and permanent establishment, HABS provided the historic preservation movement what the private sector could not: "the constituency, the publicity, and the money to create a national archive of measured drawings of American architecture."<sup>51</sup> HABS later became Federal Project Number Two of the WPA and was sponsored by the Park Division of the Department of the Interior.<sup>52</sup>

According to Annie Robinson, HABS's "preservation-through-drawing methodology complemented the bricks-and-mortar approach to rescuing buildings" of private sector preservation projects, like Williamsburg and Greenfield Village.<sup>53</sup> Moreover, HABS's emphasis on cataloguing buildings rather than physically restoring them mirrored the New Deal cultural programs' efforts to document an inclusive portrait of the American nation, directly embodying the democratizing ethos of the New Deal. Rather than focusing on buildings of singular or exquisite quality, NPS official Peterson

---

<sup>50</sup> Harlan D. Unrau and G. Frank Williss, *Administrative History: Expansion of the National Park Service in the 1930s* (Denver, CO: Denver Service Center, National Park Service, 1983), <http://npshistory.com/publications/unrau-williss/contents.htm>; Annie Robinson, "A 'Portrait of a Nation': The Role of the Historic American Buildings Survey in the Colonial Revival," in Richard Guy Wilson, Shaun Eyring, and Kenny Marotta, eds., *Re-creating the American Past: Essays on the Colonial Revival* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2006), 104-5.

<sup>51</sup> Robinson, "A 'Portrait of a Nation,'" 99.

<sup>52</sup> Wilton Claude Corkern, Jr., "Architects, Preservationists, and the New Deal: The Historic American Buildings Survey, 1933-1942" (Ph.D. Dissertation, The George Washington University, 1984), 126-7. According to Corkern, a work relief program for architects had been discussed when creating Federal One, but there was no "Federal Architects Project" for three reasons: the American Institute of Architects did not pressure the WPA to set up a program; by mid-1935 when the WPA was established the number of unemployed architects had declined significantly; and HABS was already in place and demonstrated a successful record of employing professionals in the field,

<sup>53</sup> Robinson, "A 'Portrait of a Nation,'" 105, 114.

argued for recording “structures which would not engage the especial interest of an architectural connoisseur,” for it was, he recognized, “the great number of plain structures which by fate or accident are identified with historic events.”<sup>54</sup> Under this mandate, HABS was a remarkably diverse program, recording not only elite or exceptional buildings, but endangered vernacular structures like bridges, barns, forts, and mills. As historian Michael Wallace has described, HABS workers documented buildings whose “historical importance was rooted in local memories and traditions.”<sup>55</sup> The emphasis on the vernacular, the folk, and the locally significant all aligned with the democratic impulse of the Federal One programs. Overall, in the eight years before World War II, HABS employed approximately 1,600 architects and draftsmen, and built an impressive archive of 23,765 drawings and 25,357 photographs of more than 6,000 buildings in forty-two states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico.<sup>56</sup>

In addition to HABS, the federal government increased its role in the preservation movement through the passage of the Historic Sites Act of 1935, the nation’s first comprehensive historic preservation bill which broadened the scope and responsibilities of the Antiquities Act of 1906.<sup>57</sup> Less than one week after the hearings approving the

---

<sup>54</sup> Charles E. Peterson to the Director, United States Department of the Interior, Office of National Parks, Buildings, and Reservations, Washington, D.C., 13 November 1933, reprinted in the *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 16, no. 3 (October 1957): 29-31.

<sup>55</sup> Mike Wallace, “Visiting the Past: History Museums in the United States,” in Susan Porter Benson, Stephen Brier, and Roy Rosenzweig, eds., *Presenting the Past: Essays on History and the Public* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986), 149.

<sup>56</sup> Corkern, “Architects, Preservationists, and the New Deal,” 161-2. Most HABS records are available digitally through the library of Congress, <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/collection/hh/>. Various New Deal programs also strengthened federal involvement in archaeological projects across the nation. For further discussion, see Edwin Austin Lyon, “New Deal Archaeology in the Southeast: WPA, TVA, NPS, 1934-1942” (Ph.D. diss., Louisiana State University and Agricultural & Mechanical College, 1982).

<sup>57</sup> Historic Sites Act of 1935: *U.S. Statutes at Large*, 74<sup>th</sup> Congress (1935-36), Vol. 49, *Public Laws*, 665-68; For a detailed description on how the Historic Sites Act of 1935 became law, see Unrau and Williss, *Administrative History*.

legislation were completed in the spring of 1935, President Roosevelt indicated his wholehearted support for the Historic Sites Act:

The preservation of historic sites for the public benefit, together with their proper interpretation, tends to enhance the respect and love of the citizen for the institutions of his country, as well as strengthen his resolution to defend unselfishly the hallowed traditions and high ideals of America. At the present time when so many priceless historical buildings, sites and remains are in grave danger of destruction through the natural progress of modern industrial conditions, the necessity for this legislation becomes apparent.<sup>58</sup>

With the passage of this act, the National Park Service truly became the vanguard of the historic preservation movement at the federal level.

Historian Michael Kammen identified as one of the “most striking developments of the 1930s” the joining of “patriotism and populism,” and one expression of this was the expansion of the NPS. He contends that this event reflected “a tough-minded recognition that the restoration of historic sites could assist the process of economic recovery while policies designed to foster recovery could also bestow great benefits upon the nation’s built heritage.”<sup>59</sup> Roosevelt expressed the same philosophy when he voiced his support for the passage of the Historic Sites Act. The WPA historic shrine restorations even more strongly embodied the fusion of patriotism and populism as they were federal in character, but conceptualized by non-federal actors, susceptible to the particular needs and wants of the locality or region where the shrine restorations occurred.

While HABS focused on documenting significant American architecture and the Historic Sites Act of 1935 formalized and structured federal involvement in historic preservation, the WPA restorations were more closely connected to local myths, political

---

<sup>58</sup> Franklin D. Roosevelt to Rene L. DeRouen (Chairman of the House Committee on Public Lands) and Robert F. Wagner (Chairman of the Senate Committee on Public Lands), 10 April 1935. The letter was drafted by Verne Chatelain, quoted in Unrau and Williss, *Administrative History*.

<sup>59</sup> Kammen, *Mystic Chords of Memory*, 464, 469-70.



agendas, and cultural anxieties. The localized nature of the projects resulted from the decentralized bureaucratic structure of the WPA construction projects as a whole. Most projects were sponsored at the non-federal level, meaning local or state government entities more familiar with local conditions and better positioned to determine local needs proposed the projects and submitted applications to the central office. While the WPA was organized at four administrative levels – the central administration in Washington, D.C.; the regional offices; the state administrations; and the district offices – it was the district offices that were most directly involved in the projects. For example, WPA officials at the district level allocated personnel from the local relief registers, named superintendents, set timelines, and observed the progress of the project, checking for engineering soundness and legality.<sup>60</sup>

Once the projects were completed, however, it was the sponsor's responsibility to maintain and operate the projects at their own expense, thereby shifting the financial obligation back to the local or state actors who first conceived of the projects. While the work relief agency was part of the large, federal New Deal bureaucracy, the WPA granted grassroots control and responsibility to the sponsors of the construction projects.<sup>61</sup> The historic shrine restorations, therefore, were transient projects of a work relief program with short timeframes rather than permanent historic sites under the perpetual responsibility of the federal government. As a result, they responded directly to the immediate concerns of the communities and states sponsoring the projects.

Consequently, the historic shrine projects were not homogenous, but heterogenous in

---

<sup>60</sup> Jeff Hill, *The WPA: Putting America to Work* (Detroit, MI: Omnigraphics, 2014), 50-2.

<sup>61</sup> D. Jerome Tweton, *The New Deal at the Grass Roots: Programs for the People in Otter Tail County, Minnesota* (Saint Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1988), 71, 166.

character, and reflected a breadth of actors, preservation techniques, and, most importantly, justifications for preserving particular historic places.



This work focuses on three WPA historic shrine restorations completed between the years 1935 and 1937: the Henry Whitfield State Museum in Guilford, Connecticut; the Dock Street Theatre in Charleston, South Carolina; and the Charles A. Lindbergh Boyhood Home and State Park in Little Falls, Minnesota. Each of these projects arose from local claims to distinct histories and myths which Americans employed to reconstruct the cultural underpinnings of the nation. The three projects revived the Puritan legacy in small-town Connecticut, resurrected a theater that was the cultural heart of colonial Charleston, and cultivated the pioneers' landscape of the central Minnesota frontier. From a seventeenth-century stone house in New England, to an eighteenth-century theater in the Deep South, to a modest farmhouse and surrounding lands in the Upper Midwest, these particular historic shrines reflected the multifaceted nature of the nation's historic built environment through which Americans chose to mediate modern changes.

As a collection, the three case studies represent regional diversity, different periods of American history, and a variety of architectural spaces. Moreover, the projects introduce a wide cast of characters, including renowned restoration architects, patriotic societies, National Park Service personnel, leading regional preservation organizations, modern celebrities, and professional artists. They also demonstrate that the history of the WPA is not simply a narrative of controversy and contention; for the most part, these restorations illustrate work relief projects of compliance and understanding. While minor

problems do surface in each project, the historic shrine restorations generally benefitted from widespread local and federal support.

Undoubtedly, a factor in the overall positive reception of the three restorations was the fact that all were mostly completed within the first two years of the work relief agency's establishment. This timeframe places the projects in the period before the WPA, and especially Federal One programs, became the target of intense congressional scrutiny. Rather than diminish the significance of these projects, the enthusiasm expressed for the restorations reveal the capacity for the built environment to be an important agent in the cultural healing of Depression America. Moreover, historic structures were meaningful, but not perceived as politically threatening like the plays of the Federal Theatre Project. Their non-traditional cultural form and the way in which Americans interacted with the shrines – not by reading or viewing, but by engaging physically – exempted them from the general examination of New Deal culture as political tools.

The following work is divided into three chapters. Chapter 1 centers on the restoration of the Henry Whitfield House, the home of Guilford's first Puritan reverend, the oldest stone house in Connecticut, and from the turn of the twentieth century, the State Historical Museum. By the mid-1930s, as a result of many alterations during the previous three hundred years, the house barely resembled the Reverend Whitfield's home. Sponsored by the State of Connecticut but directed by the museum's Board of Trustees and architect J. Frederick Kelly, the WPA executed an extensive restoration to return the house to its 1640 appearance so that it could properly educate visitors about seventeenth-century architecture and the town's Puritan forefathers. Despite

complications when professional standards of historical accuracy conflicted with WPA regulations and town residents' memories of the historic property, the Whitfield House restoration represented a revival of the Puritan legacy, which had been tarnished in the roaring 1920s but suited the climate of the Depression.

Chapter 2 moves in both historical period and region to the eighteenth-century Dock Street Theatre in Charleston, South Carolina. Located in the city's historic French Quarter, the theater had been the entertainment hub of colonial Charleston. At a special meeting called by the city's politically ambitious Democratic mayor, Burnet Maybank, a committee comprised of Charleston's cultural elite chose to restore the theater as part of their larger imperative to fashion through music, literature, fine arts, and historic preservation a tangible image of Charleston's prosperous colonial and antebellum past. While the desire to construct a romanticized version of Charleston reflected a conservative attachment to the idea of the Old South, the strong support of Maybank and WPA director Harry Hopkins for the project also pushed forward a progressive Southern agenda and democratized the regional theater scene.

The focus of Chapter 3 takes another step forward in history to the twentieth-century boyhood homestead of famous aviator Charles A. Lindbergh, located on the Mississippi River in central Minnesota. The 1906 home, a shrine of the not-so-distant past, was vandalized by souvenir hunters following the flier's famous nonstop solo flight from New York to Paris in 1927. Protected in 1931 when it and the surrounding lands became the Lindbergh State Park, the state conservation department applied for funding from the WPA in 1935 to continue the restoration of the house and further develop the recreational park. The twofold project aimed to restore the pioneer landscape of the

mythicized Minnesota frontier, with Lindbergh serving as the ideal figure of frontier mythology. When the WPA became involved, the project moved beyond telling a narrative of the famous aviator to emphasize the state's agricultural past and connect the state park system to the New Deal's conservation agenda.

The Henry Whitfield House, the Dock Street Theatre, and the Lindbergh State Park collectively demonstrate the various kinds of shrine restoration work the WPA sponsored and the different historical myths Americans chose to revive through the Depression-era built environment. Perhaps what best describes the impulse to restore historic shrines is what Michael Kammen has coined “nostalgic modernism” – a relationship between modernism and nostalgia that was “perversely symbiotic” – which illustrated Americans' simultaneous pursuit for both the traditional and the modern in the interwar period.<sup>62</sup> The tendency to look backward, to find relevance in history, did not necessarily demonstrate conservatism or antimodern sentiments. Drawing inspiration from the past was a method of instilling confidence or courage to prepare for the future. Moreover, the ways in which people interacted with the historic shrine restorations required engagement in modern America. Visitors rediscovered these sites by reading the American Guide Series publications, traveled to see them by automobile, and witnessed WPA men and women, blue collar and white collar, employed by a work relief program of the liberal modern state.

In 1939, writer and professor Charles I. Glicksberg lauded the impressive construction projects of New Deal programs as “useful contributions to the material welfare of the nation.” But it was the federal arts projects, he contended, that brought

---

<sup>62</sup> Kammen, *Mystic Chords of Memory*, 300. See also “Part Three: Circ 1915 to 1945,” 299-527.

“cultural renewal” to the country as “the things of the spirit generally have a more lasting memorial.”<sup>63</sup> The WPA’s historic shrine restorations of the mid-to-late 1930s contributed to enhancing both the material wellbeing and the cultural rejuvenation of the United States. The WPA restoration projects allowed local communities to dictate what historic places mattered to them, while positioning the federal government as the benefactor making it possible. The message embedded in the projects, enshrined in the walls of America’s revered historic buildings, was that the nation could move forward when it repaired and honored the past.

---

<sup>63</sup> Charles I. Glicksberg, “The Federal Writers’ Project,” *South Atlantic Quarterly* 37 (April 1939): 158.

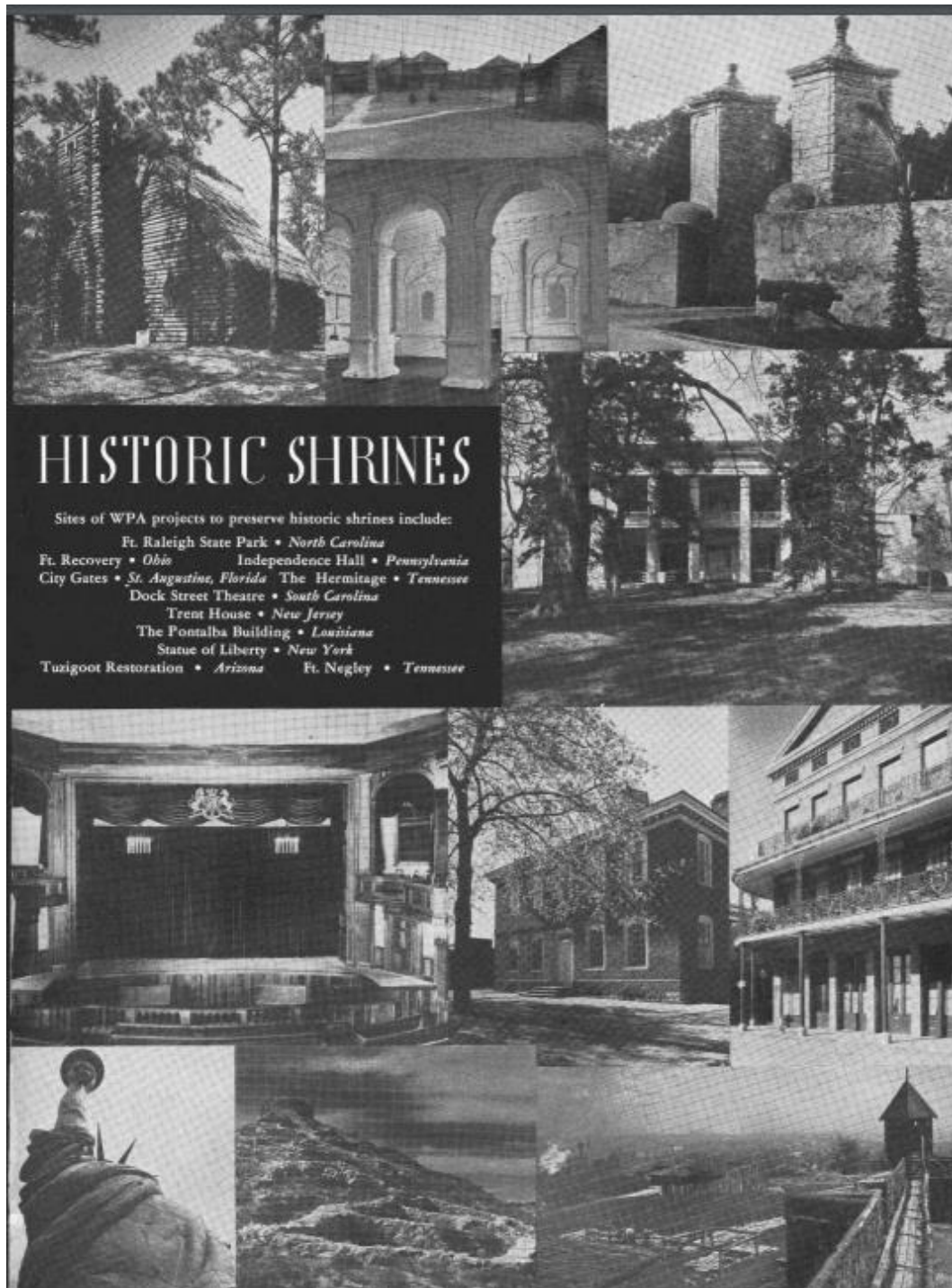


Figure 0.1. WPA Historic Shrines (I). Those pictured include Ft. Raleigh State Park, NC; Ft. Recovery, OH; Independence Hall, PA; City Gates, St. Augustine, FL; The Hermitage, TN; Dock Street Theatre, SC; Trent House, NJ; The Pontalba Building, LA; Statue of Liberty, NY; Tuzigoot Restoration, AZ; Ft. Negley, TN. Works Progress Administration, *Inventory: An Appraisal of the Results of the Works Progress Administration* (Washington, D.C., 1938), 33.

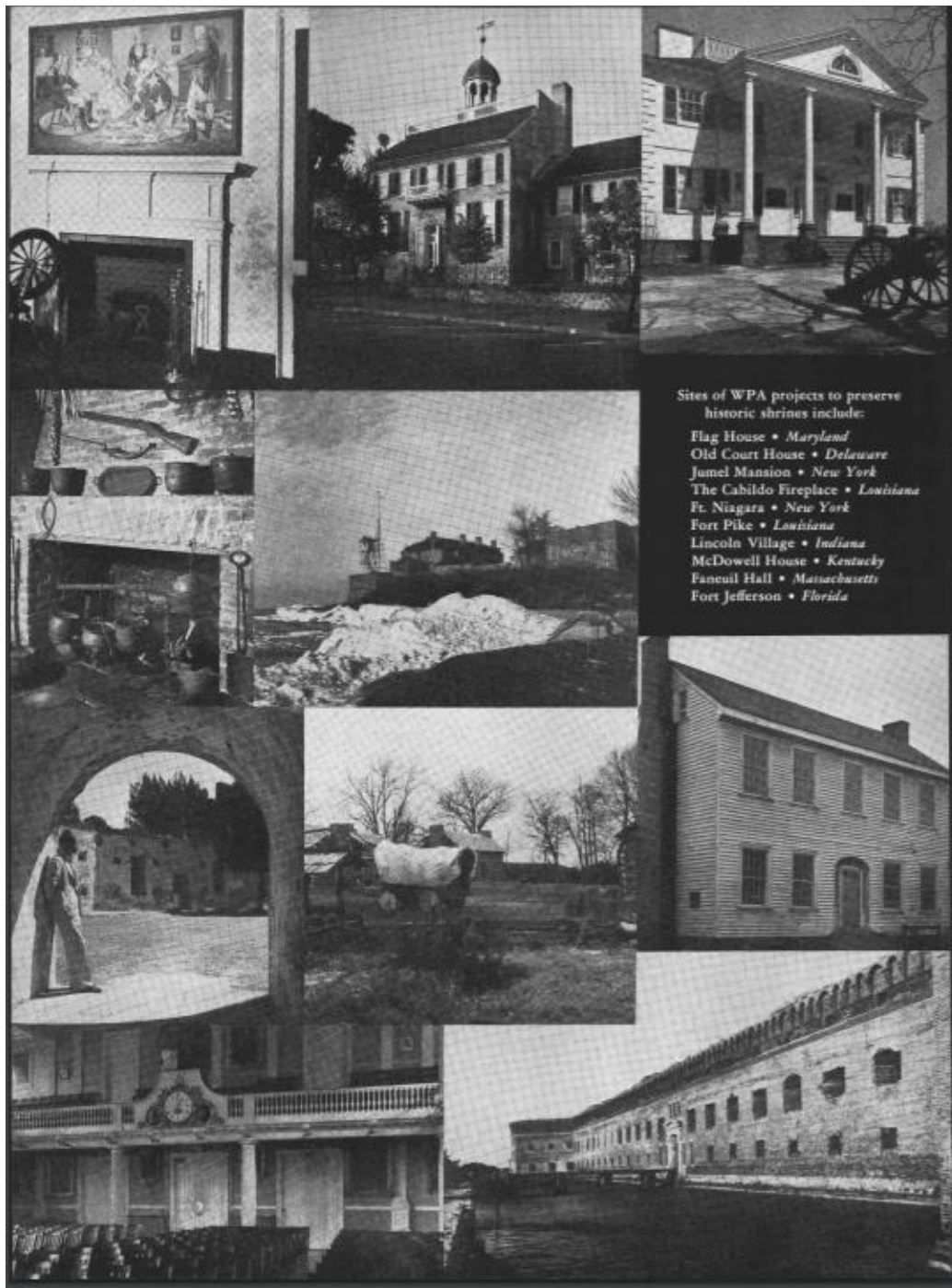


Figure 0.2. WPA Historic Shrines (II). Those pictures include Flag House, MD; Old Court House, DE; Jumel Mansion, NY; The Cabildo Fireplace, LA; Ft. Niagara, NY; Fort Pike, LA; Lincoln Village, IN; McDowell House, KY; Faneuil Hall, MA; Fort Jefferson, FL. Works Progress Administration, *Inventory: An Appraisal of the Results of the Works Progress Administration* (Washington, D.C., 1938), 34.



## CHAPTER 1

### THE HENRY WHITFIELD STATE MUSEUM, GUILFORD, CT: SAFEGUARDING THE PURITAN LEGACY

*[W]hen one looks today at the fine old house, restored as nearly as possible to its original condition, firmly planted in the earth where it first took root, we are grateful to have emerged with even some measure of success. We are happy to have been one of that long line of lovers of this old house, interested to save it from destruction or decay, and our hope is that those who may come to study and enjoy it and its surroundings will find that it measures up to the best scientific standards – archaeological, historical, architectural – known and used by architects and scholars of today.<sup>1</sup>*

Evangeline Walker Andrews, Chair of the  
Restoration Committee of the Henry  
Whitfield State Museum, October 21, 1937



In the fall of 1937, the Henry Whitfield State Historical Museum in Guilford, Connecticut, opened its doors to an eager public after an extensive sixteenth-month reconstruction period. Leading restoration architect J. (John) Frederick Kelly had gutted and then rebuilt the “Old Stone House” of 1640. The goal of the 1930s restoration, funded by the Works Progress Administration (WPA) and directed by the state museum’s Board of Trustees, was to authentically recreate the home of Guilford’s most famous

---

<sup>1</sup> Evangeline Walker Andrews, “For the Reconstruction Committee,” in Evangeline Walker Andrews, ed., *The Henry Whitfield House: 1639: The Commemorative Exercises Held at Guilford, Connecticut, October 20, 1937, Upon the Restoration of ‘The Old Stone House’* (Hartford, CT: Prospect Press, 1937), 13, Henry Whitfield State Museum [hereafter HWSM].

historical figure, the Puritan Reverend Henry Whitfield. The beautiful, old stone manse resurrected the inherited legacy of the New England town's earliest forefathers (Figure 1.1).

In the spring of 1639, Reverend Henry Whitfield, rector in the village of Ockley in Surrey County, embarked on a voyage from England to the Connecticut colony with twenty-four other men. Fleeing King Charles I's persecution of the Episcopal clergy, the party first landed at New Haven. The English settlers, however, chose to establish their own town halfway between New Haven and Saybrook, and purchased land from the Menunkatuck Indians which they renamed Guilford. After their arrival in late fall, the Puritan settlers began building the first permanent structure in the new town – the Reverend Whitfield's home – a few blocks south of what would become Guilford Town Green and about one mile north of Guilford Harbor on Long Island Sound. It is possible that its formation, which probably included a stone wall surrounding the home, was modeled on the “bawn,” an enclosed defensive structure built by the English in their Irish colonies during the early seventeenth century.<sup>2</sup> Most likely completed in the spring of 1640, the Reverend Whitfield's house also functioned as the town meeting hall, a place of shelter when the company was attacked by Native Americans, and the town's church until the First Congregational Church was built in 1643.

The Reverend Whitfield's abode was a sturdy stone house, similar to the kind of home the settlers had known in their native English counties of Kent and Surrey. Perhaps not realizing that plenty of wood was available a mere quarter of a mile away or choosing stone over wood because it is stronger material, the builders transported heavy stones

---

<sup>2</sup> Robert Blair St. George, *Conversing by Signs: Poetics of Implications in Colonial New England Culture* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 27.

from a nearby quarry in handbarrows with the help of the Menunkatuck Indians. This legend gave Guilford's first permanent dwelling its common nickname, the "Old Stone House." The builders used pulverized oyster shells and yellow clay for mortar, hand-hewn oak timbers for the beams, and wide planks of native pine for the floors (Figure 1.2).<sup>3</sup> The finished home's first occupants included the Reverend Whitfield, his wife Dorothy, and some combination of their nine children and a few servants. The Whitfields' house on its nine-acre plot was one of only four stone houses built by the early settlers in Guilford and the only one remaining in the twentieth century.<sup>4</sup> In 1651, the Whitfields returned to England, and for the next 240 years the Old Stone House remained a historic private residence lived in mostly by tenants rather than owners. Near the turn of the twentieth century the Connecticut Chapter of the Colonial Dames of America successfully campaigned for the state legislature to acquire the property and convert it into the state's public historical museum.<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>3</sup> "The Henry Whitfield House in Guilford, Connecticut," (Guilford, CT: Board of Trustees, 1957), Connecticut Historical Society [CHS].

<sup>4</sup> Ralph D. Smith, *The History of Guilford, Connecticut, from Its First Settlement in 1639*, (Albany, NY.: J. Munsell, 1877), 17; St. George, *Conversing by Signs*, 27-28. Figure 4 shows a map of Guilford, Connecticut, ca. 1672, with locations of the other stone houses of prominent townsmen Jasper Stillwell, Reverend John Higginson, and Samuel Desborough.

<sup>5</sup> When the Reverend died in 1657, he left the Old Stone House to his wife, Dorothy (née Sheaffe). In 1659 she sold the property to Major Robert Thompson, a prominent London merchant. Upon his death in 1694, Thompson left the income of his property to his wife Dame Frances, but the title to the Old Stone House remained with his male descendants, sons Joseph, William, and Robert. The house remained in the Thompson family for more than a century until Wyllys Elliot purchased it in 1772. Just over two weeks later, he sold it to Joseph Pynchon, who may have been the first owner to reside in the house since the Whitfields. Shortly before the Declaration of Independence was signed in 1776, loyalist Pynchon sold the house to Jasper Griffing. Jasper's son Nathaniel purchased the home from his father in 1800. Nathaniel was a magistrate, ship owner, merchant, and Guilford's delegate in 1818 to the constitutional convention in Hartford. After he died on September 17, 1845, the Guilford property passed to his son Frederick H. Griffing. When the unmarried Frederick died seven years later in 1852, the Old Stone House became the property of his mother, Sarah Brown Griffing, who then bequeathed it to her only surviving child, daughter Mary, in 1865. The property then descended to Mary and Henry Ward Chittenden's daughter, Sarah Brown, who married Henry D. Cone. Thus, since 1776 the Old Stone House had descended through the Griffing, Chittenden, and Cone families, all related through marriage, and was usually occupied by tenants. "Owners" and "Residents," text panels at HWSM; "Old Stone House Opened Today," *Hartford Courant*, September 21, 1904.

By the time the federal government became involved in the restoration of the Henry Whitfield State Museum in the 1930s, the Puritan reverend's home had long stood as a beloved local shrine, but its form had undergone many changes as subsequent owners enlarged and renovated the property. Physical alterations were accompanied by a downturn in the reputation of the Puritan forefathers. The Puritan inheritance suffered especially in the decade preceding the Great Depression. Michael Kammen has asserted that in the 1920s "Puritan-bashing" became a popular past time, while Karal Ann Marling has contended that criticizing the Puritans "amounted to a mark of cultural maturity."<sup>6</sup> Throughout the first few decades of the twentieth century intellectuals in the South and the middle states, especially, resented New England's enduring cultural dominance of the nation and its prominence in narratives of national history. New Englanders themselves struggled to commend the stifling standards and humdrum of Puritan society amidst the gaiety and seeming prosperity of the roaring 1920s.<sup>7</sup>

The crash of the stock market in 1929 engendered a reevaluation of the decadence and debauchery of the previous decade. Literary critic Van Wyck Brooks, once responsible for the "retrospective debunking" of the Puritans, reconsidered the utility of their stern, moral ways and wrote the bestselling five-volume "Makers and Finders"

---

<sup>6</sup> Michael Kammen, *Mystic Chords of Memory: The Transformation of Tradition in American Culture* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1991), 387-406 (quote on 378); Karal Ann Marling, "Of Cherry Trees and Ladies' Teas: Grant Wood Looks at Colonial America," in Alan Axelrod, ed., *The Colonial Revival in America* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1985), 295. Veneration of the Puritans was not completely dead in the 1920s; many held President Calvin Coolidge as a living symbol of New England Puritanism. See Karal Ann Marling, *George Washington Slept Here: Colonial Revivals and American Culture, 1876-1986* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988), 267-272. See also, Frederick J. Hoffman, "Philistine and Puritan in the 1920s: An Example of the Misuse of the American Past," *American Quarterly* 1, no. 3 (Autumn 1949), 247-63; Jan C. Dawson, *The Unusable Past: America's Puritan Tradition, 1830-1930* (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1984).

<sup>7</sup> Kammen, *Mystic Chords of Memory*, 206-214.

series, beginning with *The Flowering of New England, 1815-1865* in 1936.<sup>8</sup> The title of “Puritan” and the historical imagery it called to mind came back into fashion during the more reserved years of the Depression. According to Warren Susman, the Puritan past centered around four issues that made it so useable, or relevant, in the 1930s: God-centered self-restraint and control; community and a dedication to law and order in a rigid social system; a strong sense of morality and strict code of ethics; and material success begotten through thrifty and industrial efforts.<sup>9</sup> The austerity of Puritan society seemed appropriately fitting for the soberness that characterized the Depression era.

Changes in Connecticut state politics reflected the variable culture climate of the period. In the 1920s, the state witnessed the rise of an urban-industrial society where the values of the Protestant Yankee were threatened by increased diversity as large numbers of immigrants from eastern and southern Europe, Jews, and Catholics fundamentally altered Connecticut demographics. Meanwhile, “Yankee Republicans” ran state government like an efficient machine, encouraging the growth of businesses and consumerism.<sup>10</sup> The beginning of the Depression and rise of the Democratic Party represented a break from the old political ways of the state’s Republican bosses. Governor Wilbur L. Cross, the former dean of the Graduate School of Yale University, was elected in 1930 on a reform platform and as a challenge to the long-held Republican rule of the state government.

---

<sup>8</sup> Marling, “Of Cherry Trees and Ladies’ Teas,” 295; Van Wyck Brooks, *The Flowering of New England* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1936).

<sup>9</sup> Warren Susman, *Culture as History: The Transformation of American Society in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), 41-2.

<sup>10</sup> John W. Jeffries, *Testing the Roosevelt Coalition: Connecticut Society and Politics in the Era of World War II* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1979), 3-4, 14.

Governor from 1931 to 1939, Cross remained a “circumspectly liberal Democrat.” He was naturally wary of federal spending, a proponent of states’ rights, and prudently suspicious of the New Deal. While for most of his time in office he faced a Republican state legislature, he successfully led Connecticut away from “the indolence off the Republican machine” by enacting popular reforms. Major projects included a road-building program, flood relief measures, and reform legislation to abolish child labor, institute a minimum wage, and increase public utilities.<sup>11</sup> With Cross at the helm, Connecticut’s Democratic Party transitioned from the “Old Guard” urban bosses to the “New Guard,” and secured control of the state legislature in 1936, the same year the state voted to reelect President Roosevelt to his second term.<sup>12</sup>

Robert Woodbury has described Cross’s savvy steering of the Democratic Party in the 1930s as a push to bring “a ‘little’ New Deal to a state with a deeply rooted Yankee heritage.”<sup>13</sup> Indeed, part of Cross’s appeal was his respectable Yankee background, which softened the Democrats’ image, and his conservative commitment to a balanced budget, which mollified some Republicans.<sup>14</sup> The quintessential “Connecticut Yankee,” a title he willingly embraced and gave his published autobiography, Cross belonged to a family that could trace its lineage back three centuries. He grew up in the small rural town of Gurleyville and was educated at Yale University, where he nurtured his belief in Yankee ideals of anti-imperialism, anti-Catholicism, and laissez-faire economics.<sup>15</sup>

---

<sup>11</sup> James T. Patterson, *The New Deal and the States: Federalism in Transition* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1969), 158.

<sup>12</sup> Jeffries, *Testing the Roosevelt Coalition*, 25, 35.

<sup>13</sup> Robert L. Woodbury, “Wilbur Cross: New Deal Ambassador to a Yankee Culture,” *New England Quarterly* 41, no. 3 (Sept. 1968): 323.

<sup>14</sup> Cecelia Bucki, *Bridgeport’s Socialist New Deal, 1915-36* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2001), 138, 181-2; Jeffries, *Testing the Roosevelt Coalition*, 23-4.

<sup>15</sup> Wilbur L. Cross, *Connecticut Yankee: An Autobiography* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1943); Woodbury, “Wilbur Cross,” 324.

In addition to his ambiguous commitment to New Deal liberalism, Governor Cross embodied the conservative values and work ethic of the Puritan Yankee character. He espoused individual responsibility, free will, and a strong moral fiber. A friendly and skilled politician, he “conceived of his own role not primarily as that of a political leader, but as that of a nonpartisan moral and spiritual mentor of Connecticut.”<sup>16</sup> Woodbury has argued that Cross’s public speeches revealed “a self-conscious debate between the historical conservative and the uncomfortable liberal, an interior dialogue between the values of his heritage and the casualties of a depressed urban and industrial society.”<sup>17</sup> A modern liberal in some regards, Cross was also the exemplar of deep-rooted, historically-conditioned Connecticut Yankee.

The WPA’s restoration of the Old Stone House in the 1930s was a product of popular nostalgia for this much-mythicized Puritan past, and it manifested in the built environment the same dichotomy between conservative values and a modern agenda that Governor Cross embodied in the political landscape. The historic shrine restoration project represented a desire to reinstate to Depression-era America the qualities long associated with the Puritans: self-restraint, morality, and success. Lovers of historic homes regarded the architecture of the early period of American national history as a critical educative force. Due in part to the historical activity of groups like the Colonial Dames and the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities (SPNEA), the leading preservation organization in the region, the New England village became a “national symbol” during the colonial revival architectural movement.<sup>18</sup>

---

<sup>16</sup> Woodbury, “Wilbur Cross,” 327, 334.

<sup>17</sup> Woodbury, “Wilbur Cross,” 331.

<sup>18</sup> William Butler, “Another City Upon a Hill: Litchfield, Connecticut, and the Colonial Revival,” in Axelrod, *The Colonial Revival in America*, 15-51. For an analysis of the popularity of the colonial style and

At the same time, the restoration of the Henry Whitfield House reflected the struggle to employ the past while looking to the future. The professional architects and historians in charge of the restoration were used to spearheading preservation projects in the private sector and faced difficulties adapting to the WPA's regulations. Moreover, their standards of historical accuracy and pursuit of authenticity conflicted with town residents' memories of the Old Stone House. The challenges the professionals encountered while navigating the WPA's rules thus was confounded by the fact that Guilford residents feared the government's intrusion would result in federal control over the use and public interpretation of locally revered sites.<sup>19</sup> When the WPA began restoring the Old Stone House, the town's most sacred structure, townsfolk were initially apprehensive, and some became openly hostile to the project. Although the leading architect J. Frederick Kelly was a reputable colonial architecture expert and executed a well-researched, technically-sound restoration, residents were suspicious of the changes he made that contrasted significantly with the house's appearance during much of the nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries. Guilfordites conflated Kelly's professional decisions with his association with the WPA, thereby finding reason to be wary of government involvement.

Despite conflict, townsfolk and the project leaders of the restoration, chiefly architect Kelly and the trustees of the museum, wholeheartedly agreed on the intent of the restoration to reinforce the Puritan spirit through architecture. What they squabbled over

---

description of different types across the nation, see David Gebhard, "The American Colonial Revival in the 1930s," *Winterthur Portfolio* 22, no. 2/3 (Summer/Autumn 1987), 109-148.

<sup>19</sup> Kammen, *Mystic Chords of Memory*, 254; Charles B. Hosmer, Jr., *Presence of the Past: A History of the Preservation Movement in the United States Before Williamsburg* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1965), 120-22, 166, 169, 301-2.



was the aesthetics of the project, illustrating the conflict between historical memory and historical accuracy for primacy in decisions regarding the built environment. The residents of Guilford cared deeply about the Old Stone House and the message it sent to visitors as the state museum. Their outcry of woe that the house was being desecrated reveals a deep and abiding love for their local built environment that etched the town's history in physical presence. In other words, they viewed the Henry Whitfield House as a site of living history where the past of their Puritan forefathers breathed life in the twentieth century. It was their proprietary right and responsibility as town residents to maintain the legacy inscribed in the walls of the Old Stone House and properly educate visitors about Guilford's Puritan heritage.

### **THE OLD STONE HOUSE BECOMES THE STATE HISTORICAL MUSEUM**

By the time the Henry Whitfield House was called a "historic shrine" by the Works Progress Administration in the 1930s, it long had been celebrated as the oldest stone house in Connecticut associated with a remarkable Puritan forefather. Throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, evocations of the Old Stone House sheltering colonists during Indian raids, bringing settlers together in prayer, and bearing witness to Guilford's early formal celebrations as the town meeting hall endured. The Old Stone House became a revered symbol of time immemorial and, accordingly, a popular tourist attraction. In 1839 the *North American Tourist*, the nation's first comprehensive guidebook, encouraged visitors to view the house, and the popular women's periodical, the *Ladies' Repository*, published in 1863 a steel engraving of the home (Figure 1.3). An article titled "Memorials of Our Country's Young Life" appeared in *Potter's American Monthly* in 1875 and featured an illustration of the house and the tale of stone being

carted in handbarrows to build the two-feet thick walls. Remarkably, the author reflected, the nearly two-and-a-half centuries that had passed since its construction had “had no ill effects upon the quaint, massive structure.”<sup>20</sup>

In the last quarter of the nineteenth century the romanticization of the Whitfield House escalated. This phenomenon coincided with the mounting popularity of the colonial revival movement and the intensification of national interest in colonial landmarks and objects. The period preceding World War I was defined by increasing immigration, especially from eastern and southern Europe, which bolstered nationalism and isolationism. The colonial revival movement, in part, was a reaction to the growing diversity of the United States. Rather than being explicitly xenophobic, proponents of the colonial revival employed architecture and material culture to teach and mold immigrants into good American citizens, with the colonial home and hearth at the forefront of Americanizing efforts.<sup>21</sup> In 1897, Thomas Morgan Prentice venerated the landmarks in which colonial history had transpired. He declared that the “ancient walls” of New England’s historic structures “appeal more strongly than the pages of history, mute though they may be. They are a link which binds unbroken a people – whose patriotism was unshaken, and who endure hardship unflinchingly – to the present generation.”<sup>22</sup>

---

<sup>20</sup> “Memorials of Our Country’s Young Life,” *Potter’s American Monthly* (April 1875): 4, 40. Sources cited in Jan Cunningham, “Whitfield, Henry, House,” National Historic Landmark Nomination Form, Cunningham Associates, Ltd., November 30, 1995, 11-12.

<sup>21</sup> William B. Rhoads, “The Colonial Revival and the Americanization of Immigrants,” in Axelrod, *The Colonial Revival in America*, 341-61; Rhoads, “The Colonial Revival and American Nationalism,” *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 35, no. 4 (Dec. 1976): 239-54; Hosmer, *Presence of the Past*, 301; Lydia Mattice Brandt, *First in the Homes of His Countrymen: George Washington’s Mount Vernon in the American Imagination* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2016), 113.

<sup>22</sup> Thomas Morgan Prentice, “Colonial Land-Marks of New England,” *Peterson Magazine* VII, no. 3 (March 1897): 269.

Colonial styles recalled the respectable manner of living of the nation's period of European settlement, the morals and manners of which became a compass for newcomers to follow. For its prescribed role of acculturating newcomers, material culture scholar Kenneth L. Ames has likened the colonial revival movement to a "civil religion."<sup>23</sup> As the oldest stone house in Connecticut and the home of a respected Puritan reverend, the Henry Whitfield House became a site of civil pilgrimage. German-made plates with views of the Old Stone House, wooden crosses made from old beams, and postcards were sold to visitors as souvenirs.<sup>24</sup> The veneration of the Reverend Whitfield's house through these materials illustrates both the popularity of the historic site as a tourist attraction and the religious connotations evoked by the home of Guilford's first spiritual leader.

Prominent patriotic and hereditary organizations whose members could trace their ancestry to the colonial period, like the National Society of the Colonial Dames of America, largely sustained the colonial revival movement as a civil religion by popularizing colonial images in historic homes, town celebrations, printed literature and memorabilia, objects, and world's fairs. Founded in 1890, the Colonial Dames of America also preserved and restored old buildings to foster popular interest in colonial history as part of its agenda to bolster nationalism. It was a widely held belief that historic house museums were part of the curriculum of patriotic education.<sup>25</sup> In undertaking this preservation work, the Colonial Dames often cooperated with leading preservation organizations, like the SPNEA. According to Karal Ann Marling, these

---

<sup>23</sup> Kenneth L. Ames, "Introduction," in Axelrod, *The Colonial Revival in America*, 10.

<sup>24</sup> Cunningham, "Whitfield, Henry, House," 12.

<sup>25</sup> Hosmer, *Presence of the Past*, 120, 264.

societies operated with a sense of “defensive nostalgia” for a narrative of the past over which they were fiercely protective.<sup>26</sup>

The Connecticut Chapter of the Colonial Dames of America’s involvement at the turn of the twentieth century in transferring the Henry Whitfield House from private to public ownership and establishing it as the State Historical Museum is a prime example of the kind of work these groups performed regarding the management and care of historic properties in the name of patriotism. While widespread affection for the Old Stone House in Guilford was apparent, love of the building did little to protect it from the expected wear and tear and financial burden that comes with time and the upkeep of a historic house. By the 1890s, there were several mortgages on the Whitfield property. In 1897, purportedly encouraged by the lawyers representing the mortgages, the Connecticut Chapter of the Colonial Dames, founded four years earlier in 1893, led a campaign to facilitate the State of Connecticut’s purchase of the home and land from the owner, Sarah Brown Cone, thereby ending over 250 years of its use as a private residence. The Colonial Dames believed the Reverend Whitfield’s house, the oldest stone structure in the state and representative of its founding Puritan ideals, was the most appropriate venue for displays commemorating the state’s history.

Two years later, on June 22, 1899, the Connecticut Legislature passed an appropriations bill approving the purchase of the Old Stone House, and on September 28, 1900, the widowed Sarah Cone sold the Henry Whitfield House and eight acres of land to the State of Connecticut for \$8,500. Upon receiving the title to the house and lands, the state agreed to appropriate \$2,000 biennially for support and maintenance of the first state

---

<sup>26</sup> Marling, *George Washington Slept Here*, 131.

historical museum of Connecticut.<sup>27</sup> The state legislature also authorized the Governor of Connecticut to appoint a Board of Trustees consisting of eight members to oversee the museum. The legislation allowed the Board to accept funds to be used for the care and maintenance of the house. According to this governing body, the state legislature had decided to purchase the Old Stone House for use as a museum because it realized “its importance as a historical relic, unique in the fact that it stands alone as the original home of the leader of a colony and as the only stone house of its period in our country north of Florida.”<sup>28</sup>

When the State of Connecticut purchased the Reverend Whitfield’s house at the turn of the twentieth century, however, its appearance was a far cry from its original 1640 condition. At some point in the eighteenth century, the south chimney had been removed and the windows enlarged and converted from casement windows to double-hung (Figure 1.4). Then, a fire in the first few decades of the nineteenth century left the house roofless and unlivable for a time. The unprotected walls had weakened to such an extent that when owners Mary and Henry Ward Chittenden began repairs in 1868, the south wall had to be entirely rebuilt and nearly half of the front (west) wall as well. At the same time, the masonry walls were heightened, which flattened the new slate-covered roof and

---

<sup>27</sup> “Old Stone House Opened Today,” *Hartford Courant*, September 21, 1904; Appropriations Act, Approved June 22, 1899, “Making an Appropriation for a State Historical Museum,” *Special Acts and Resolution of the General Assembly of the State of Connecticut* Vol. XIII (Hartford, CT: Hartford Press: Case, Lockwood & Brainard Company, 1901), 515. 345.2 C761s, Connecticut State Library, State Archives [hereafter CSL]. The property is described in a deed recorded in the Guilford Land Records, Book 56, Page 419, August 20, 1900. The state appropriated \$3,500 for the sale, the town of Guilford gave \$3,000, residents donated between \$500 and \$1000, and the Connecticut Society of Colonial Dames provided the remainder.

<sup>28</sup> “Old Stone House Opened Today,” *Hartford Courant*, September 21, 1904; “Report of the Committee appointed by the Board of Trustees of the Henry Whitfield House, to meet the Committee on Appropriations of the Legislature of the State of Connecticut for the years 1905-1906,” RG 024:001 Henry Whitfield House Records, 1768-1957 [hereafter cited as HWH Records], Box 1, Folder 1, CSL.

decreased its pitch. The Chittendens also installed new floors, built a large ell at the rear of the house in the northeast corner, and renewed the exterior covering of stucco, which first had been applied to the exterior in 1820 to help preserve the original masonry underneath.<sup>29</sup> In short, the Henry Whitfield State Historical Museum hardly looked like the stone house in which the Reverend Whitfield had lived (Figures 1.5 and 1.6).

To restore the Whitfield House to its colonial era appearance and make it suitable for museum purposes, the Colonial Dames' newly formed Historical Sites and Henry Whitfield Committee hired architect and colonial architecture expert Norman M. Isham to draw plans. Following this mandate, Isham converted the front rooms into a single, two-story exhibition hall to display museum objects, installed a new floor of handsome oak, and adorned the ceiling with chamfered oak beams. The "great hall," as it was called, was fourteen-feet wide by thirty-three-feet long with a height of sixteen feet, and featured folding partitions that could divide the room into multiple sections. With the creation of the new exhibit space, the once-enclosed stair tower was opened and an elaborate Jacobean staircase constructed in its place (Figures 1.7 and 1.8).<sup>30</sup> New double-hung windows with diamond-shaped leaded glass panes that "add[ed] much to the look of antiquity" were installed in the deep windows openings, which were additionally

---

<sup>29</sup> "The Henry Whitfield House in Guilford Connecticut," (Guilford: Board of Trustees, 1946), 5, Folder: Whitfield State Hist. Site, CHS; J. Frederick Kelly, "Restoration of the Henry Whitfield House, Guilford, Connecticut," *Old-Time New England*, Vol. XXIX, no. 3 (January 1939), 77, 79.

<sup>30</sup> Sarah B. Cone to Norman M. Isham, 8 May 1899, 18 May 1899, George Dudley Seymour Papers, Group 442, Series V [hereafter cited as Seymour Papers], Box 106, Folder 1511, Yale University Sterling Library [hereafter Yale]; Kelly, "Restoration of the Henry Whitfield House, Guilford, Connecticut," 79. Isham learned of the folding partitions through correspondence with the last owner of the house, Sarah Brown Cone, who had recounted her grandmother's description of the property and changes her family made to the house.

decorated with carved, oaken architraves.<sup>31</sup> Isham also restored the large original fireplace in the northern wall and designed a mirror fireplace at the southern end of the room, although it was purely ornamental for there was no stack or flue.

After Isham completed the work in June of 1904, the State Historical Museum of Connecticut held a formal opening on September 21 to welcome the public. At the opening ceremony, Professor Samuel Hart, president of the Connecticut Historical Society, described the Whitfield House as “a place of historic witness” where visitors could learn about the original settlers “who laid in these colonies such abiding foundations.”<sup>32</sup> The foundations were in a sense both literal, in the durable, permanent stone walls, and figurative in the Puritan template for moral living.

Despite the seemingly cheerful climate of the museum’s opening, criticism of Norman Isham’s restoration began as early as the work was completed. In transforming the Old Stone House into an appropriate museum space, Isham prioritized producing “a comfortable and dignified character as well as the flavor of the seventeenth century,” rather than a historically accurate reconstruction of the reverend’s abode (Figures 1.9 and 1.10).<sup>33</sup> The needs of the museum surpassed architectural accuracy, and the result was a creative reproduction of an imagined colonial space. George Dudley Seymour, a New Haven lawyer, hobby restorationist, and proponent of the colonial revival, took issue with

---

<sup>31</sup> “Report of the Committee appointed by the Board of Trustees of the Henry Whitfield House, to meet the Committee on Appropriations of the Legislature of the State of Connecticut for the years 1905-1906,” HWH Records, Box 1, Folder 1, CSL.

<sup>32</sup> Colonial Dames of America, *Connecticut Colonial Houses: Henry Whitfield House, Guilford, 1640*, paper read on September 21, 1904, pg. 31, RG 143 Colonial Dames of America, Connecticut Society, 1900-1942, CSL.

<sup>33</sup> Norman M. Isham, “The Work Done at the Henry Whitfield House,” September 7, 1906. Norman M. Isham Papers, Group 1156 [hereafter cited as Isham Papers], Box 2, Folder 55, Yale. Isham looked to mid-seventeenth English homes as examples while restoring the Whitfield House.

Isham's so-called restoration.<sup>34</sup> Shortly after his appointment to the Board of Trustees in October of 1907, he presented a formal paper in which he expressed his disapproval of Isham's work. Seymour believed the architect's gravest mistake was that he had not followed the mid-nineteenth century plans of the house produced by Guilford genealogist and historian Ralph D. Smith and published in John Gorham Palfrey's *History of New England* in 1859.<sup>35</sup> In addition to ignoring these plans, Seymour criticized Isham's two-story great hall, which he described as "sufficiently absurd" since it invalidated the need for a staircase to the second floor. He charged that as a result, the museum was "not a credit to the State nor to the Trustees."<sup>36</sup>

Seymour then began in earnest a campaign for the "re-restoration" of the Henry Whitfield House according to Smith's plans. After more than decade of campaigning, in 1921 he approached his friend and fellow preservationist, architect J. Frederick Kelly, about making preliminary drawings for "doing over" the great hall.<sup>37</sup> The next month, trying to garner support to commence Kelly's plans for the re-restoration, Seymour wrote directly to the other trustees. He called Isham's work "far from supported by reliable

---

<sup>34</sup> Charles B. Hosmer, *Preservation Comes of Age: From Williamsburg to the National Trust, 1926-1949* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1981), 170-1. In 1914 Seymour purchased the Nathan Hale Homestead in Coventry, Connecticut, which he restored and then later gifted to the Connecticut Antiquarian and Landmarks Society. The Connecticut Antiquarian and Landmarks Society was an amicable "secession movement" that grew out of SPNEA in June of 1936. Connecticut Governor Wilbur Cross served as the Society's first Advisory Chairman.

<sup>35</sup> John Gorham Palfrey, *History of New England* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1859), measured drawings follow page 16. Smith's plans also appeared in his *History of Guilford*, published in 1877 after his death, and in Edward E. Atwater's *History of New Haven to the Present Time* (New York: W. W. Munsell, 1887).

<sup>36</sup> George Dudley Seymour to Alfred Hammer, 16 May 1921; Seymour to the President and Trustees, Henry Whitfield House, 20 June 1921, Seymour Papers, Box 106, Folder 1513, Yale. Seymour threatened to retire from the Board of Trustees multiple times from 1921 to 1932 on account of the faulty restoration, but the Governors of Connecticut, both Rollin Woodruff and John H. Trumball, refused to accept his resignation. See letters in Seymour Papers, Box 106, Folder 1513, and Isham Papers, Box 1, Folder 12, Yale.

<sup>37</sup> George Dudley Seymour to Ruth Lee Baldwin, 29 March 1921, Seymour Papers, Box 106, Folder 1513, Yale; "Visitors This Year at Whitfield House More Than 6,000," *Shore Line Times* (Guilford, CT), November 7, 1935.



traditional and evidential authority.” Moreover, and injurious to the State Historical Museum’s educative goal, he repeated that “the house as restored is unconvincing to students of early work and grievously disappointing to visitors” as it did not paint an accurate picture of colonial life (Figure 1.11).<sup>38</sup>

## **PLANS UNFOLD FOR THE RE-RESTORATION OF THE OLD STONE HOUSE**

George Dudley Seymour’s persistence to start in motion a second major restoration of the Whitfield House finally paid off. In August of 1930, the Board of Trustees decided to move forward with a project that followed Kelly’s ideas for restoring the house to a more authentic 1640 appearance. The Board first proposed to reconstruct the original ell in the northeast corner – which Sarah Cone’s family had replaced with a larger ell – in accordance with the measurements of Ralph D. Smith’s plans. At the time, Smith’s grandson Dr. Walter R. Steiner had recently become a trustee, and J. Frederick Kelly had signed on officially as the museum’s architect.<sup>39</sup>

A graduate of the Yale School of Architecture, Kelly was a natural selection for the project. In addition to having consulted on the Whitfield House since as early as 1921, Kelly had connections to leading preservation organizations in New England and ran a successful architecture firm, Kelly & Kelly, in New Haven with his brother Henry Schraub Kelly. In 1926, he began a long professional relationship with the New Haven Colony Historical Society, performing the duties of architect and restorationist for the organization until his death in 1947. The work put him in professional correspondence with leading colonial revivalists. Kelly also published several pieces on the architecture

---

<sup>38</sup> George Dudley Seymour to President of and the Trustees of the Board of the Henry Whitfield House [Frederick Norton], 11 April 1921, Seymour Papers, Box 106, Folder 1513, Yale.

<sup>39</sup> George Dudley Seymour to Norman Isham, 11 August 1930, Seymour Papers, Box 106, Folder 1513, Yale.

of early Connecticut, particularly domestic dwellings, establishing himself as an expert in colonial architecture.<sup>40</sup> In an essay written for the celebration of Connecticut's tercentenary in 1933, the architect urged the preservation of the state's "ancient houses" and referred to them as "*human documents* of the greatest value and the utmost significance. They must not be destroyed, for they form a vital and irreplaceable link with a vanished past and a people whose part in the upbuilding of our nation merits our humble and reverent admiration."<sup>41</sup>

Kelly's professional stature was bolstered by his association with the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities (SPNEA) and the Walpole Society. The SPNEA formed in 1910 to preserve "for future generations the rapidly disappearing architectural monuments of New England and the smaller antiquities connected with its people." The organization purchased and maintained historic properties, some of which it rented out to tenants and others it operated as museums. The SPNEA also published *Old Time New England*, a magazine devoted to the architecture, material culture, and general lifestyle of the colonial period.<sup>42</sup> Founding member and corresponding secretary, William Sumner Appleton, began a professional relationship with J. Frederick Kelly sometime before 1918, and the two remained in communication throughout Kelly's tenure with the New Haven Colony Historical Society.

---

<sup>40</sup> Kelly's early publications included *The Early Domestic Architecture of Connecticut* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1924) and *Early Connecticut Architecture* (New York: W. Helburn, 1924). He would later publish pamphlets on Connecticut's early domestic architecture and the Henry Whitfield House for the Tercentenary Commission of the State of Connecticut, as well as pamphlets for the Walpole Society and many articles for SPNEA's *Old-Time New England* bulletin.

<sup>41</sup> J. Frederick Kelly, "Early Domestic Architecture of Connecticut," published for the Tercentenary Commission (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1933): 29-30.  
<https://cdm15019.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p128501coll2/id/227780>.

<sup>42</sup> The Aims of the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities," *Old Time New England* 33 (Oct. 1942): VIII; Deborah G. Burness, "J. Frederick Kelly and the Colonial Revival in Connecticut," (B.A. thesis, Southern Connecticut State University, 1994), 34-5.

Formed in 1910 like the SPNEA, the Walpole Society promoted the study of American history, architecture, and decorative arts. It was an exclusive group composed of leading male architects and historians; membership was limited by both professional and familial credentials.<sup>43</sup> In the 1930s, membership in the society was limited to twenty-five members, and each candidate had to be officially endorsed by two current members and unanimously voted in by secret ballot at a Society meeting. Being of an old Episcopalian family from New York, Fred Kelly possessed the desired professional and social qualifications. Importantly, he also had developed a productive working relationship with George Dudley Seymour, founding member of the Walpole Society. In addition to their work on the Henry Whitfield House, Seymour and Kelly had collaborated on projects for SPNEA, the Gallery of Fine Arts at Yale University, and the New Haven Colony Historical Society.<sup>44</sup> Kelly's reputation as an outstanding architect, restorationist, and scholar was validated by his invitation, recommended by Seymour, to join the prestigious and exclusive group in 1935.

When Seymour first approached Kelly about undertaking a serious re-restoration of the Henry Whitfield House, the architect expressed minimal interest. In January of 1927, Kelly explained to museum trustee Alfred Hammer that he "did not feel like attempting the work in a professional capacity." He reasoned that the house was unique as the only surviving mid-seventeenth-century stone house in Connecticut, and therefore

---

<sup>43</sup> Members were required to have "the social qualifications essential to the well-being of a group of like-minded persons." Early members included George Francis Dow, Henry du Pont, R. T. H. Halsey, and Norman Isham. Walpole Society Constitution, 1942, amended version, 8, cited in Burness, "J. Frederick Kelly and the Colonial Revival in Connecticut," 29-30; Kammen, *Mystic Chords of Memory*, 323-4.

<sup>44</sup> Burness, "J. Frederick Kelly and the Colonial Revival in Connecticut," 29-32. Seymour and Kelly began working together as early as 1926 when they successfully fought to save the Curtis-Rose House for the Gallery of Fine Arts at Yale University.

he had no precedent to draw upon for guidance. The initial resources he gathered on the house were “contradictory” and he knew it would be difficult to “sift out what is sound from the chaff.” Moreover, Kelly predicted that “whoever does the work will be bound to be subjected to a great deal of criticism,” probably referring to the treatment of his esteemed fellow architect, Norman M. Isham. A year-and-a-half later, in August of 1928, he again cited the lack of historical and architectural details of the house as the reason he had not committed to the project.<sup>45</sup>

Moreover, Kelly was disinclined to involve himself with a property under the tutelage of the Colonial Dames of America, whose Connecticut Chapter had been involved in the management of the house for three decades and had expressed interest in funding part of the re-restoration. Kelly had worked with the Chapter in the past, having been commissioned by its Committee on Old Houses to make architectural drawings for many of its publications. He used some of the drawings in his own book, *Early Domestic Architecture of Connecticut* (1924).<sup>46</sup> Kelly articulated his position regarding the Colonial Dames’ potential involvement with the project in a 1930 letter to trustee Hammer:

Personally, I feel that it will be nigh impossible to carry on work of this nature under the supervision of a committee of women, and do it as it should be done....[B]y bringing into the picture a committee of no doubt well-intentioned women who know nothing about the problem in hand, seems out of the question, and I should not care to undertake it.<sup>47</sup>

---

<sup>45</sup> J. Frederick Kelly to Alfred A. Hammer, 18 January 1927, 30 August 1928, HWH Records, Box 1, Folder 5, CSL. Theodore Sizer, a professor of art history and associate director of the Yale University Art Gallery in the 1930s, described Kelly as an “exact and authoritative” scholar, who “le[ft] no stone unturned in his search for basic information. Sizer, “J. Frederick Kelly, A.I.A.”

<sup>46</sup> Rhoads, *The Colonial Revival*, 517-518; “Historical Activities,” The National Society of the Colonial Dames of American in Connecticut, <https://nscda-ct.org/>.

<sup>47</sup> J. Frederick Kelly to Alfred Hammer, 10 May 1930, HWH Records, Box 1, Folder 5, CSL.

Kelly's derisive attitude toward the Dames' involvement reflected the increasing professionalization of the field of architectural preservation in the twentieth century which saw men assume more leadership roles. Women, historically at the forefront of preservation endeavors, shifted efforts to other educational campaigns to further Americanism.<sup>48</sup> Kelly's reluctance also may have stemmed from the fact that the Colonial Dames oversaw Isham's inaccurate restoration, and he feared they would influence his own plans if he were to take on the project. Regardless, he made no acknowledgment of the fact that it was the Colonial Dames who first protected the site by orchestrating the state's purchase of the property in 1899, thereby minimizing the influential role women played in initializing preservation projects.

Despite misgivings about the project, Kelly finally agreed to accept the commission to restore the Henry Whitfield House in 1930, probably as a result of the influence and urging of Appleton and Seymour. That year, the Board of Trustees successfully petitioned the state legislature for a \$10,000 grant, which allowed Kelly to begin implementing his design. First, he tore down the ell built in 1868 by Sarah Cone's family and constructed a larger ell in its place. Adhering to Smith's plan, he reintroduced two secret closets into the garret of the ell. Kelly wrote that existing seventeenth-century work in and around Guilford guided his choices of the materials and "the general character of the work," which distinguished his approach from Isham's, who used English structures as models. The state grant also financed the second step in the restoration work, which took place in the summer of 1933 and involved removing the

---

<sup>48</sup> Hosmer, *Presence of the Past*, 300.

mid-nineteenth-century coat of stucco covering the masonry of the main part of the house.<sup>49</sup>

With the completion of this second stage, funds ran out and the Board of Trustees put together a proposal to ask the state legislature for an additional appropriation of \$20,000 to complete the restoration of the house in preparation for Guilford's tercentenary celebration to take place in 1939. In late January of 1935, Congressman Ray C. Loper of Guilford, Republican member of the Connecticut State House of Representatives, introduced a bill requesting the appropriation in the General Assembly.<sup>50</sup>

### **THE WPA & J. FREDERICK KELLY AT THE HENRY WHITFIELD HOUSE**

While the state legislature sat on the proposal, the Board of Trustees continued to develop plans for the third stage of the restoration. On May 9, 1935, the Board appointed a Restoration Committee, selected from the trustees, tasked with fundraising for the final and costliest stage of work. Members of the Restoration Committee included chairman Evangeline Andrews of New Haven, who was secretary of the Board of Trustees and the wife of Charles McLean Andrews, esteemed scholar of Connecticut history at Yale University; Annie B. Jennings of Fairfield, who served for many years as the Vice Regent for Connecticut of the Mount Vernon Ladies Association; Dr. Frederic T. Murlless, Jr. of Hartford; Dr. Walter R. Steiner of Hartford; and Frederick Calvin Norton, who lived in

---

<sup>49</sup> Kelly, "Restoration of the Henry Whitfield House, Guilford, Connecticut," 79-80. According to Kelly, the removal indicated the size and position of some of the original window openings and revealed a lime whitewash that was probably mixed with skim milk to form a powerful adhesive agent. He also discovered traces of red paint, which indicated that the exterior walls were first whitewashed with lime and then painted at a later date, perhaps to prevent more moisture from entering the masonry.

<sup>50</sup> "Whitfield House Vacancy Filled," *Shore Line Times*, February 7, 1935.

Bristol but was a native of Guilford and served as president of the Board of Trustees (Figure 1.12).<sup>51</sup>

Meanwhile, the Board of Trustees directed architect Kelly to prepare a booklet with his plans for the project to be published and sold at the museum in an attempt to garner attention and potential sources of funding for the forthcoming restoration (Figure 1.13).<sup>52</sup> In the foreword to the booklet, Evangeline Andrews, Chairman of the Restoration Committee, expressed her hope that once restored, citizens of the state will again “point with pride to this beautiful, stately house, unique in the annals of American colonial architecture, the oldest house in Connecticut, and the oldest stone house in the United States.”<sup>53</sup>

Despite Andrews’s proclamation of the significance of the Henry Whitfield House, the state legislature denied the requested \$20,000. Dealt another blow, the Board of Trustees received only \$2,500 for the restoration from the State Tercentenary Committee a year later in June of 1936.<sup>54</sup> However, when the state failed to provide the necessary funds, the federal government answered the call. As head of the Restoration Committee, Andrews prudently had sought alternative funding sources before the state legislature even had made its final decision. Around the same time Kelly’s pamphlet was published, Andrews entered communications with Eleanor Little, longtime resident of Guilford and relief administrator of the Connecticut Emergency Relief Commission

---

<sup>51</sup> “Whitfield House, Federal Grant,” *Shore Line Times*, November 7, 1935. The committee was sometimes referred to as the Reconstruction Committee.

<sup>52</sup> J. Frederick Kelly, “The Henry Whitfield House in Guilford Connecticut with Plans for its Restoration,” published by the Board of Trustees (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1935). Folder: LIBRARY – Pamphlet House Booklet, 1935, HWSM.

<sup>53</sup> Kelly, “The Henry Whitfield House in Guilford Connecticut with Plans for its Restoration,” 6.

<sup>54</sup> Accountant of the State of Connecticut Tercentenary Commission to Evangeline Andrews, 5 June 1936. HWH Records, Box 1, Folder 7, CSL.

(ERC), the state arm of the Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA). Trustees Alfred Hammer and Frederick Norton had already brought the Board's idea to restore the Henry Whitfield House to Little's attention when they hoped it would be funded as part of the Tercentenary Celebration, but Andrews began to actively push the restoration as an ERC project in April of 1935, while waiting to hear whether the state legislature would appropriate funds. Little quickly approved of the Whitfield House restoration the following month and wrote Andrews that she was "hopeful that it [the project] can be approved without delay" by the D.C. office.<sup>55</sup>

The project faced a hurdle, however, when the work relief program was transferred from the ERC to the newly established Works Progress Administration (WPA) in the summer of 1935. Relief administrator Little told the Board in July that this change made it impossible for the ERC "to assume any responsibility regarding this project." She suggested that the Board take the matter up with Matthew A. Daly, a Democratic state senator who had been elected in 1935 and appointed the state WPA administrator on June 8 of that year.<sup>56</sup> Undoubtedly disappointed by the Board's failure to secure state funding and worried about what the dissolution of the ERC meant for the Whitfield House project, Evangeline Andrews wrote directly to the "gentlemen" of the WPA imploring them to fund the necessary restoration of the Old Stone House.

In her letter, Andrews explained that "because of the general depression, the trustees are unable to procure, as in the old days, sums from individuals who are interested in the preservation of this fine old house." Andrews referred to traditional,

---

<sup>55</sup> Evangeline Andrews to Eleanor Little, 20 April 1935; Eleanor Little to Evangeline Andrews, 15 May 1935. HWH Records, Box 1, Folder 6, CSL.

<sup>56</sup> Eleanor Little to Roland Hooker, 23 July 1935, HWH Records, Box 1, Folder 6, CSL.



private sector, sponsors of preservation projects, like members of organizations such as the Colonial Dames, SPNEA, and the Walpole Society. Throughout the summer, Andrews sent letters asking for contributions to the Restoration Fund to members of the Colonial Dames of Connecticut, long associated with the Whitfield House, but the response was disappointing; only \$853.50 was pledged through this letter campaign.<sup>57</sup>

The proposed transfer of the project from the ERC to the WPA, which Andrews described as “a blow at first,” turned out to be extremely advantageous for the Board of Trustees. Under the ERC, the Board of Trustees, as project sponsor, would have had to cover the cost of the architect and materials, amounting to \$12,365, to match what the ERC would have provided for labor. If the WPA was to approve the project, the Board would be responsible for providing only \$2,365.19 of the total cost – specifically to cover the architect’s fee. The Board required Kelly be named superintending architect of the restoration, which was not standard operating procedure for WPA projects since those employed by the work relief program generally were selected from relief registers. Since the Board demanded its own architect, it was responsible for funding his services. Typically, J. Frederick Kelly charged fifteen percent of the total cost of projects, but he set the architectural commission at ten percent for the Whitfield House restoration.<sup>58</sup>

To preemptively raise money to cover Kelly’s fee, the Board sent a letter requesting contributions to SPNEA’s corresponding secretary, William Sumner

---

<sup>57</sup> Evangeline Andrews to the Works Progress Administration, 9 September 1935, HWH Records, Box 1, Folder 6, CSL. It is unclear exactly what the relationship was between the Board of Trustees and the Connecticut Chapter of the Colonial Dames regarding the management of the Henry Whitfield State Museum. Although the trustees had legal authority and responsibility over the museum, it was “under the auspices” of the Connecticut Chapter. Jan Cunningham speculates that the Chapter was not in accord with Kelly’s plans for the restoration in the 1930s, in which they did not actively participate. See Cunningham, “Whitfield, Henry, House,” 12.

<sup>58</sup> J. Frederick Kelly, Trustees Minutes, May 9, 1935, HWH Records, Box 1, Folder 3, CSL.

Appleton. Appleton replied to Andrews with a guarantee of \$1,000, adding that should the WPA funding materialize, it would “be the making of the Whitfield house and a fine opportunity for Mr. Kelly. He is one of my best friends and nothing would give me greater pleasure than to see him finally rewarded with a richly earned commission for the work done at this house.”<sup>59</sup> Appleton’s words demonstrate the high opinion the architectural community held of Kelly as a restoration architect, but also illustrate the small and elite circle of the New England historic preservation movement in the early decades of the twentieth century. Appleton was friends with Kelly and trustees George Dudley Seymour and Annie Jennings, and had helped the Dorothy Whitfield Historical Society of Guilford save the historic Hyland House in 1916, so his support was probably expected.<sup>60</sup> Writing from his position on SPNEA’s organizing board, Appleton considered the restoration of the Henry Whitfield House, which he estimated to be one of Connecticut’s forty remaining seventeenth-century houses, “a highly creditable performance for our Society.”<sup>61</sup> Appleton probably wanted SPNEA to claim some credit for the preservation of the house if the project as a WPA venture came to fruition.<sup>62</sup>

Hopeful to secure funding for the final stage of restoration at last, the Board of Trustees filed the Whitfield House WPA project application on November 4, 1935, and relief administrator Little forwarded it to the central office in Washington, D.C. on

---

<sup>59</sup> Evangeline Andrews to William Sumner Appleton, 9 November 1935; Appleton to Andrews, 3 December 1935; Appleton to Andrews, 5 November 1935, HWH Records, Box 1, Folder 6, CSL.

<sup>60</sup> Hosmer, *Presence of the Past*, 290.

<sup>61</sup> William Sumner Appleton to Evangeline Andrews, 11 November 1935, HWH Records, Box 1, Folder 6, CSL. SPNEA had been instrumental in the Colonial Dames’ acquisition of the 1752 Joseph Webb House in Guilford for the Dorothy Whitfield Society, the Guilford historical organization founded as an auxiliary of the Henry Whitfield House after its dedication as a State Museum in 1897, and the Thomas Lee House, constructed around 1660, in nearby East Lyme for the East Lyme Historical Society.

<sup>62</sup> William Sumner Appleton to Annie Jennings, 13 November 1935, HWH Records, Box 1, Folder 6, CSL. George Dudley Seymour, Annie Burr Jennings, J. Frederick Kelly, and William B. Goodwin – all with connections to the Henry Whitfield House – were members of the Connecticut Committee of SPNEA.

November 13.<sup>63</sup> State administrator Daly sent word to Governor Wilbur Cross that President Roosevelt had approved the project on November 26, 1935, and ten days later, U.S. Comptroller General John R. McCarl sanctioned the project for the full amount of \$23,650. The Board of Trustees shortly afterward received the good news.<sup>64</sup>

Once the Whitfield House restoration became an official project of the WPA, the Board promptly commenced preparations for the on-site work. The Henry Whitfield State Museum quickly closed on December 14, 1935, and contents of the museum began to be relocated to the curator's house on the premises the following morning. The next day, pieces of rare colonial furniture were transferred to the New Haven Colony Historical Society in New Haven, which agreed to store and exhibit some items while the museum was closed. The silver pieces in the house were placed in the vault of the bank in Guilford, and some books were stored in the Guilford Free Library.<sup>65</sup>

The WPA work project began at the house on December 28, 1935, under the direction of superintendent Frank Spencer. The WPA assigned an initial force of ten men, including Spencer, to the project.<sup>66</sup> With this WPA labor force, Kelly began to enact his long-prepared restoration plan, overhauling both the exterior and interior of the Old Stone House to first undo Isham's work and then recreate the 1640 structure. He lowered the

---

<sup>63</sup> Trustees Minutes, November 7, 1935, HWH Records, Box 1, Folder 3, CSL; Evangeline Andrews to William Sumner Appleton, 4 November 1935, HWH Records, Box 1, Folder 6, CSL; Senator Matthew A. Daly to Governor Wilbur Cross, 5 December 1935, RG 005:026, Governor Wilbur L. Cross 1931-1939, Subject file, 1933-35, Veterans Home Commission – Youth Hostel Movement [hereafter cited as Governor Cross Records], Box 401, Folder: Whitfield House Project, CSL.

<sup>64</sup> The Henry Whitfield State Museum restoration received state #G-1831-1867 and was approved in President Roosevelt's letter #1161, page 13, receiving #O.P.65-15-1736, letter dated 26 November 1935. The Official Project number was 1736 and the Work Project number 963. Senator Matthew A. Daly to Governor Wilbur Cross, 5 December 1935; J. R. McCarl to Governor Wilbur Cross, 16 December 1935, Governor Cross Records, Box 401, Folder: Whitfield House Project, CSL.

<sup>65</sup> Evangeline Andrews to the Trustees and Members of the Special Restoration Committee of the Henry Whitfield State Museum, 17 December 1935, HWH Records, Box 1, Folder 6, CSL; Trustees Minutes, November 10, 1936, HWH Records, Box 1, Folder 3, CSL.

<sup>66</sup> J. Frederick Kelly to Evangeline Andrews, 29 April 1936, Isham Papers, Box 1, Folder 14, Yale.

walls two-and-a-half feet to their original fifteen-feet height and increased to its original sixty-degree pitch the new gabled roof, which he then covered with split, hand-shaved, cypress shingles (Figure 1.14). Kelly also introduced dormers to the roof because excavations he conducted of the fireplaces at either end of the house led him to determine that windows could not have been placed on the gable ends (north and south walls of the house) owing to the large size and location of the original chimneys.

At Kelly's direction, WPA workers installed new casement windows with diamond-shaped quarrels of glass set in lead bars, which were reproductions of seventeenth-century style windows. The frames were recessed at an angle of about thirty degrees, determined by the discovery of an impression in the clay mortar on one of the jambs made by an original window frame. Joe Lynch, a local painter and "restorer of old buildings" who was assigned to the WPA project, salvaged the double-hung sash windows with diamond panes installed in 1903 by Isham for use in another Guilford house.<sup>67</sup>

Inside the house, WPA workers removed the interior finish from Isham's imaginative two-story great hall, including the paneled oak chimney breasts at each end of the room, oak wainscot and ceiling beams, and the oak staircase in the eastern side of the room.<sup>68</sup> When restoring the north wall and its large chimney flue, Kelly made what he called "the great discovery of the restoration." He found vestiges of original masonry of a second-floor fireplace, definitively answering the long-debated question of whether the

---

<sup>67</sup> Kelly, "Restoration of the Henry Whitfield House, Guilford, Connecticut," 84-6; Index card; "Henry Whitfield House Workers – 1930s Restorations." Folder: Architecture – HWH 1930-31 + 1935-37 Restoration (Kelly), HWSM. In the mid-nineteenth century the house had eight-over-twelve sash windows and by the late-nineteenth century, the house featured six-over-six sash windows.

<sup>68</sup> Kelly, "Restoration of the Henry Whitfield House, Guilford, Connecticut," 79.

main part of the house originally had a second story or was open from floor to garret. Further meticulous work revealed a blackened, plastered lining of clay containing hay or straw, and the seat of the original fireplace lintel, measuring fourteen inches high by ten inches deep. Kelly determined the lintel to be originally of timber because an impression in the old clay mortar showed the grain of wood. He used Smith's 1859 measurements to recreate a first story with a height of seven-and-two-thirds feet and a second story of six-and-three-quarters feet.<sup>69</sup> In the angle of the west and south walls in the second floor Kelly reintroduced an embrasure for a cannon – a corner window about a foot-wide – that he thought an “unlikely place for one,” but appeared in Smith's plans of the house (Figure 1.15).<sup>70</sup>

Kelly also incorporated moveable partitions in the first floor, like Isham had done, partly because they had “long been a tradition connected with the house,” but also because he thought it seemed likely to have a divider since the building originally also functioned as the town meeting hall and first church of Guilford. The partitions, or baffles, were hinged walls made from vertical feather-edged boards and hung side-by-side from the ceiling. By turning small wooden cleats, the baffles would be released and swing down into a vertical position. This effectively partitioned the room and prevented cross drafts between the north and south fireplaces, more effectively heating the space (Figure 1.16).<sup>71</sup>

---

<sup>69</sup> Kelly, “Restoration of the Henry Whitfield House, Guilford, Connecticut,” 82; Smith, *The History of Guilford, Connecticut*, 16-17fn.

<sup>70</sup> Kelly, “Restoration of the Henry Whitfield House, Guilford, Connecticut,” 80; Thomas Morgan Prentice also mentioned “a curious embrasure in the southwest corner of the second floor” in “Colonial Land-Marks of New England,” *Peterson Magazine* VII, no. 3 (March 1897): 259.

<sup>71</sup> Kelly, “Restoration of the Henry Whitfield House, Guilford, Connecticut,” 87-8; Conversation with Michael McBride, HWSM Curator and Site Administrator. Current research indicates that it was unlikely the Whitfields had a baffle.

All of the oak framing timbers for the roof and window lintels were of native white oak cut from local forests by the Bartlett sawmill in North Guilford and given an adzed finish. Many of the materials used in the restoration were salvaged from other historic Connecticut houses. The oak flooring of the first floor was taken from an old house in Scotland, Connecticut, and the white pine and whitewood feather-edged boards of the moveable partitions were from historic structures in East Windsor and Bolton.<sup>72</sup> Door hinges and latches were also salvaged from old Connecticut houses, but Kelly hired the McDermott Company of West Haven to hand-forged from Swedish wrought iron hinges, stays, and fasteners for the casement windows copied from seventeenth-century English designs.<sup>73</sup> In undoing Isham's work and employing local building traditions and historic materials, Kelly created a more authentic representation of seventeenth-century colonial architecture. After decades of presenting a false image of the Puritan past to visitors, the Henry Whitfield State Museum finally stood as a credible reconstruction rather than a glorified idealization of the reverend's home.

While the focus of the WPA project was on the structure of the house itself, the Board of Trustees approached the historic site as a cultural landscape and retained the services of professional landscape architect, Beatrix Farrand, supervisor of landscape gardening at Princeton University since 1915 and consulting landscape architect at Yale University since 1923. While the fields of historic preservation and landscape

---

<sup>72</sup> J. Frederick Kelly, *The Henry Whitfield House, 1639: The Journal of the Restoration of The Old Stone House, Guilford* (Hartford, CT: Prospect Press, 1939), journal entries 10 March 1936, 5 November 1936, 17 November 1936, 26 January 1937; Kelly, Frederick J. "Restoration of the Henry Whitfield House," 1939, HWH Records, CSL; <https://cslib.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p15019coll12/id/359>.

<sup>73</sup> Kelly, "Restoration of the Henry Whitfield House, Guilford, Connecticut," 87-88; "Recycling in 1930," text panel at HWSM; Kelly, *The Henry Whitfield House, 1639*, journal entries for 31 July 1936, 18 August 1936, 11 September 1936, 2 October 1936, 5 November 1936, 17 November 1936.

architecture were becoming increasingly male as they professionalized, Farrand defied social norms in pursuing work as a landscape architect. She successfully transitioned from private commissions to institutional work during the Depression years, building a reputation as a pioneering female expert in the field. Like other professionals in the fields of art, literature, and architecture, including novelist Zora Neale Hurston and painter Diego Rivera, Farrand astutely utilized the New Deal programs to build a diverse portfolio and advance her career, which blossomed in the decades following the Depression.<sup>74</sup>

Farrand first met with Evangeline Andrews at the Whitfield House in November of 1934, when she offered suggestions regarding the landscaping of the property.<sup>75</sup> The following November, as plans for the restoration as a WPA project were unfolding, Farrand revisited the house and made new and revised suggestions. They included building a low stone wall surrounding the house, creating a garden enclosure to the northwest of the house, and planting flora native to both Guilford and southeast England.<sup>76</sup> The WPA funding covered the materials and labor to create Farrand's imagined seventeenth-century landscape, but the Board of Trustees itself paid for

---

<sup>74</sup> Diana Balmori, Diane Kostial McGuire, and Eleanor M. McPeck, *Beatrix Farrand's American Landscapes: Her Gardens and Campuses* (Sagaponack, NY: Sagapress, 1985), 8-9, 24; Judith B. Tankard, *Beatrix Farrand: Private Gardens, Public Landscapes* (New York: Monacelli Press, 2009), 163-8; Robin Karson, *A Genius For Place: American Landscapes of the Country Place Era* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2007), 133-148. Amongst Farrand's most impressive works are Dumbarton Oaks in Washington D.C. (1921-1947), Santa Barbara Botanic Garden (1938-1959), New York Botanical Garden (1915-1916), and Pierpont Morgan Library (1913-1943). At Yale, she landscaped the Divinity School, Sterling Medical School, Marsh Botanic Garden, and the president's private garden.

<sup>75</sup> Beatrix Farrand to Evangeline Andrews, 16 November 1934; Andrews to Farrand, 4 December 1934, HWH Records, Box 1, Folder 10, CSL. Andrews and Farrand spoke of ways to improve the property, which included creating a stone or wood enclosure around the house; bordering the walk leading to the street with lilacs; planting a hedge or trees to separate the street and the grounds; making a tree border around the property; and creating a "'homely' plantation of old-fashioned shrubs" around the house.

<sup>76</sup> Beatrix Farrand notes from November 29, 1935, included in letter from Grafton M. Peberdy to Evangeline Andrews, 3 December 1935, HWH Records, Box 1, Folder 10, CSL.

Farrand's professional services, as well as those of Grafton Peberdy, landscape architect at Yale University.<sup>77</sup>

## **PROBLEMS AT THE WPA SITE**

Much to J. Frederick Kelly and the Board of Trustees' chagrin, the work at the Whitfield House progressed slowly and haltingly, despite years of planning. The most consistent and serious problem Kelly and superintendent Frank Spencer faced throughout the project was the shortage of building materials. The site often lacked the necessary cement, lime, and timber, which prevented the masons and carpenters from doing their work. Since the masons could not work on the walls, carpenters could not begin to build the roof, so the house was roofless for most of the spring of 1936.<sup>78</sup>

In mid-June of 1936, Kelly wrote of the problem to WPA state administrator Matthew A. Daly. After this exchange Kelly received some materials, but by the end of July the workers were once again out of lime and cement. Frederick Norton, as president of the Board of Trustees, wrote to Senator Daly "to beg of you to help," and explained to Governor Wilbur Cross that the Board was "in despair about the impasse at the Whitfield House."<sup>79</sup> Kelly and Norton's efforts were temporarily effective; immediately upon receiving Norton's letter, Governor Cross called Senator Daly, who assured him that delivery of the materials would be hastened.<sup>80</sup> But despite his assurances, materials continued to be delivered late. Kelly wrote again to Daly that the constant delays not only

---

<sup>77</sup> Evangeline Andrews to William Sumner Appleton, 1 January 1936, HWH Records, Box 1, Folder 7, CSL; "Whitfield House, Federal Grant," *Shore Line Times*, November 7, 1935.

<sup>78</sup> Kelly wrote about the lack of building supplies in his journal on January 4, 1936; March 3, 1936; and June 11, 1936, *The Henry Whitfield House, 1639*; J. Frederick Kelly to Evangeline Andrews, 29 April 1936, Box 1, Folder 14, Yale.

<sup>79</sup> J. Frederick Kelly to Senator Matthew P. Daly, 11 June 1936; Frederick Calvin Norton to Senator Daly, 13 June 1936; Norton to Governor Wilbur Cross, 13 June 1936; HWH Records, Box 1, Folder 7, CSL.

<sup>80</sup> Executive Secretary to Frederick Calvin Norton, 16 June 1936, Governor Cross Records, Box 401, Folder: Whitfield House Project, CSL.



hindered the progress of the project but brought “the whole organization of the WPA into bad repute as well.” If conditions did not improve, Kelly threatened to refer the situation to the WPA’s central office in D.C.<sup>81</sup>

Kelly’s frustration with the WPA office was exacerbated by his poor estimation of project superintendent Frank Spencer. The architect complained that Spencer failed to put in requests for materials when asked, concluding that the “wretchedly slow rate of progress” was “due as much to Spencer’s lack of efficiency in this respect” as to the WPA’s inability to provide materials in a timely manner.<sup>82</sup> Other frustrations included Spencer’s unexplained absences from the job site; his improper installation of the stair handrail in the house, which Kelly called “an inexcusable blunder”; and his failure to give directions to the workers, which resulted in having to redo a steamfitter’s work.<sup>83</sup>

Kelly’s problem acquiring materials and his judgment of Spencer as a subpar superintendent manifested in irritation with the bureaucratic mechanizations of the WPA. Kelly and the Board of Trustees often expressed frustrations with the nature of the federal work relief program. Workers for WPA projects were required to be taken from the local relief register of unemployed men and throughout the project, carpenters, stone masons, painters, and other workers from Guilford and nearby towns worked at the Old Stone House (Figure 1.17).<sup>84</sup> This protocol created problems, however, when the extensive

---

<sup>81</sup> J. Frederick Kelly to Senator Matthew P. Daly, 7 July 1936, Governor Cross Records, Box 401, Folder: Whitfield House Project, CSL.

<sup>82</sup> Kelly, *The Henry Whitfield House, 1639*, journal entry for 27 July 1936. This criticism was amended and Spencer’s name removed in the published journal, however, to read: “This is properly the superintendent’s duty, and it begins to look as though our wretchedly slow rate of progress were due to certain inefficiency here, as well as to the inability of the W.P.A. to furnish materials more promptly.”

<sup>83</sup> Kelly, *The Henry Whitfield House, 1639*, journal entries for 15 October 1936, 12 December 1936, 3 March 1937.

<sup>84</sup> The Henry Whitfield State Museum keeps a file on WPA workers; most names have been provided by relatives visiting the site throughout the twentieth century. Yugoslav immigrants Michael Kurle and Steve Taraich were carpenters and masons; Duncan MacArthur and his son J. Russell MacArthur installed

restoration project required expert skill. When the work started in December of 1935, WPA regulations permitted ten percent of non-relief labor, which allowed for the hiring of superintendent Spencer and some other skilled, non-relief workers. A later ruling at the federal level, however, cut down the amount of non-relief labor to five percent so that when a steamfitter was needed in November of 1936, the Whitfield House project had already employed the maximum non-relief labor force.<sup>85</sup> Matthew Daly resigned as WPA state administrator at the end of July of 1936 to serve as senator in the Connecticut Legislature, so the Board of Trustees had to petition the new WPA state administrator, Robert A. Hurley, to allow an exception for the hiring of a steamfitter. Hurley, an engineer and former contractor, perhaps was sympathetic to the Board, and granted permission to hire a non-relief man.<sup>86</sup> The next month, however, the project's stonecutter was pulled off the job because a government Social Service investigator discovered that he had a small amount of life insurance, making him ineligible for tax relief. Another stonecutter was not found until the end of the month, prolonging the completion of this specialized work at the project site.<sup>87</sup>

The relief workers themselves caused tension on the job site. In a progress report to Evangeline Andrews, Kelly wrote, "we have much been hampered by labor

---

heating; Peter Pelizzari was a stone mason; Joseph Moriarty was a mason; Harry Putney was a contractor. Index cards; "Henry Whitfield House Workers – 1930s Restorations." Folder: Architecture – HWH 1930-31 + 1935-37 Restoration (Kelly), HWSM.

<sup>85</sup> J. Frederick Kelly to Evangeline Andrews, 25 November 1936, HWH Records, Box 1, Folder 7, CSL.

<sup>86</sup> Executive Secretary to Evangeline Andrews, 3 December 1936, Governor Cross Records, Box 401, Folder: Whitfield House Project, CSL. Matthew A. Daly resigned on July 29, 1936, and Hurley assumed the post on July 30. Hurley had previously held the position of Commissioner of Public Works. His appointment as WPA state administrator was uncontested in the state senate. Hurley later served as Democratic governor of Connecticut from 1941-1943. Works Progress Administration for Connecticut, "Connecticut Work in Progress," Vol. I, no. 8 (August 1936), 14.

<https://archive.org/details/connecticutworki3637unit/page/n137>; Wilbur L. Cross, *Connecticut Yankee*, 369-70; Jeffries, *Testing the Roosevelt Coalition*, 54-6, 67-8.

<sup>87</sup> Kelly, *The Henry Whitfield House, 1639*, journal entry for 2 December 1936.

conditions” and “it is to be deeply regretted that we have been denied the services of better qualified men.” He was more candid in his journal: “The two Italian masons appear to be the only ones who work, whether they are watched or not. The Yankee carpenters are the men most inclined to loaf.” One of the hardworking Italian masons was probably Aldo Balestracci, a skilled worker Spencer picked up daily for six months from the coastal village of Stony Creek in Bradford because he “wanted a real old-fashioned stone mason” for the job.<sup>88</sup>

Despite relying on what he considered an inferior labor force and illustrating the nativist views of the W.A.S.P. colonial revivalists, Kelly remained confident that the project could be successfully completed.<sup>89</sup> He confided in Andrews that “the spirit and willingness to work of all men on the job has been all that might be desired. The trouble has been, therefore, not in the men themselves but in the system of appointment.” Again, Kelly expressed that he felt confined by WPA regulations and frequently disappointed in the materials he received and the men with whom he worked. At one point, he admitted to Evangeline Andrews that he was “so fed up with this noble organization [the WPA].”<sup>90</sup>

External forces, chiefly unexpected local criticism of the project, fueled Kelly and Andrews’s vexation with the WPA. When exasperated by the repeated material delivery delays, Kelly conjectured to Andrews, “While I have no definite proof, I believe that the long delay in the matter is due to some hidden opposition to the project.” Board of

---

<sup>88</sup> Linda Trowbridge Baxter, *The Newcomers: A Study of Immigrants to Guilford, Connecticut, 1850-1930* (Dexter, MI: Thomson-Shore, 1985), 67.

<sup>89</sup> Jeffries, *Testing the Roosevelt Coalition*, 34. Kelly’s opinion also represented the typical discriminatory Yankee view of immigrants during the fraught period of industrialization which drastically shifted the demographics of Connecticut.

<sup>90</sup> J. Frederick Kelly to Evangeline Andrews, 29 April 1936, Isham Papers, Box 1, Folder 14, Yale; Kelly, *The Henry Whitfield House, 1639*, journal entry for 12 December 1936; Kelly to Andrews, 31 July 1936, HWH Records, Box 1, Folder 10, CSL.

Trustees President Frederick Calvin Norton attributed the difficulties with the WPA to “some political disaffection here in Guilford itself.”<sup>91</sup> Much of the local antagonistic feeling toward the project seems to have been kindled by Dr. Walter Steiner, grandson of Guilford historian Ralph Smith, whose plans of the house guided the restoration, and a member of both the Board of Trustees and the Restoration Committee. Andrews, Norton, and Kelly undoubtedly would have felt his criticism as an assault from within their ranks. Steiner wrote to Frederick Norton on July 5, 1936, in the midst of the difficulties Kelly and his team faced acquiring materials, to say that while visiting the Whitfield House the previous day he “learned from an old friend that the men had done three days’ work in two months.” Moreover, this unnamed friend told Steiner that the many tourists who travel to Guilford to see the house were disappointed to find it in the process of being restored with a sign of “Not Open Yet” on the door. To Steiner, this sign left “a bad impression” on the visitors.<sup>92</sup>

When Norton telephoned Kelly to describe Steiner’s attitude, Kelly placed the blame on the WPA, excusing the Restoration Committee and himself as architect from any responsibility for the slow progress, and calling this friend of Steiner “guilty of an absolute misstatement of fact.”<sup>93</sup> Although Kelly was frustrated, the friend’s statement was not false. At the time of the visit in question, the government had recently reduced the number of labor hours per month WPA workers could work in order to meet the demands of labor unions and pay higher wages. The debacle, then, likely derived from the community’s ignorance of the WPA regulations which employed workers for ten-day

---

<sup>91</sup> J. Frederick Kelly to Evangeline Andrews, 12 June 1936; Frederick Calvin to Samuel L. Fisher, 13 June 1936, HWH Records, Box 1, Folder 7, CSL.

<sup>92</sup> Walter R. Steiner to Frederick C. Norton, 5 July 1936, HWH Records, Box 1, Folder 7, CSL.

<sup>93</sup> J. Frederick Kelly to Frederick C. Norton, 7 July 1936, HWH Records, Box 1, Folder 7, CSL.

periods followed by ten days off. Guilford residents held Kelly and the Board of Trustees responsible for the delays, but they were simply following WPA procedure.

Evangeline Andrews responded to Steiner's "uncalled for and unfair" letter. In her reply, Andrews referred to the dissatisfaction of unemployed workers in Guilford.

Andrews would not have had an intimate understanding of local labor politics, nor would Kelly or other trustees. They were all well-to-do professionals, and most did not call Guilford home, but lived in other Connecticut towns. Nonetheless, Andrews attempted to explain the situation to Steiner. Guilford, she enlightened him, "has politicians who pull wires, and an uncontrolled and unpunished group of gangsters who are allowed to go to Mr. Norton's house at night, break his windows, and throw eggs through his windows, all because he will not employ these ruffians to do the work on the house." To Andrews's lament, the residents of Guilford did not demand law and order after this episode. Rather than illustrating dissatisfaction with the restoration project or Norton in particular, as Andrews concluded, this imprudent behavior perhaps demonstrated local discontent with the availability of employment opportunities offered through the work relief program.<sup>94</sup>

Properly admonished, Steiner replied to Andrews, sympathizing with the Board for its trouble with the WPA and expressing his "disgust and resentment" at the poor treatment directed at Frederick Norton from Guilford residents. He did not admit that he contributed to instigating local opposition. Despite his acknowledgement of the limitations the WPA placed on the work, Steiner still admitted that "I think it well if possible to have the kindly feelings of Guilford residents in this matter."<sup>95</sup> Steiner referred to others in town who expressed disapproval of the Whitfield restoration, one of

---

<sup>94</sup> Evangeline Andrews to Walter Steiner, 27 July 1936, HWH Records, Box 1, Folder 7, CSL.

<sup>95</sup> Walter Steiner to Evangeline Andrews, 27 August 1936, HWH Records, Box 1, Folder 7, CSL.

whom was Eva Bishop Leete. Leete was a founder of the Dorothy Whitfield Historical Society in Guilford, a member of the Connecticut Chapter of Colonial Dames, and longtime president of the E. B. Leete Company, through which she achieved reputable fame and authority as an expert dealer in colonial antiques after fifty years in the trade.<sup>96</sup>

When Kelly and Norton visited the house on July 21, 1936, museum curator Ruth Lee Baldwin informed them that Leete recently led a group of women to the house who were “outspoken in their criticisms.” The women were especially affronted by the appearance of dormer windows in the steep roof and its new covering of handmade cypress shingles. In general, as Leete told Baldwin, Kelly and the WPA “had absolutely no authority” for making changes to the house. Leete and her friends intended to implore the Colonial Dames in Hartford to have the work stopped immediately, and she conveyed to Norton that the town “looks with profound regret upon the faulty work which is now being done.” She even threatened to call a town meeting “to bring the desecration to a halt, and save the house if possible, before it is torn to pieces and ruined.”<sup>97</sup> Leete’s group worried that the WPA, under Kelly’s guiding hand, destroyed the integrity of the historic home, already preserved by architect Isham earlier in the twentieth century.

Kelly, however, believed the attitude of Leete and other Guilfordites revealed “perhaps not so much a definite disapproval of our work on technical grounds, as it is a crystallization of sentiment against the W.P.A., the Frisco control of Guilford politics, and the New Deal in general.” As proof, Kelly argued, Guilford residents had not shown any interest in seeing the house properly restored for years, and no one objected to the

---

<sup>96</sup> Everett Gleason Hill, *A Modern History of New Haven and Eastern New Haven County*, Vol. II (New York: S. J. Clarke, 1918), 366.

<sup>97</sup> J. Frederick Kelly to Evangeline Andrews, 31 July 1936, HWH Records, Box 1, Folder 10, CSL; Kelly to Andrews, 18 August 1936, HWH Records, Box 1, Folder 7, CSL.

scale model of the house when it was displayed in the local Guilford Free Library in the summer of 1935 before restoration work began. The criticism, he followed, was born out of recent dissatisfaction rather than longstanding resistance to restoration work.<sup>98</sup>

Some residents did express opposition to the involvement of big government in local affairs as illustrated later in a “Post Card Forum” on the question of unemployment relief published in the *Shore Lines Times* in November of 1937. One writer called for taking relief “out of the hands of an expensive Federal Bureaucracy” and putting it back in the hands of local administrators “who intimately know the town and its residents...[and] will put an end to the useless waste of tax-payers’ money.” Relief administrator Eleanor Little agreed that local agencies could manage relief better and cheaper than the federal government. However, another resident, signing “M.R.,” argued that when relief agencies “completely broke down,” it was the federal government that made it possible to “preserve human values.”<sup>99</sup> Like most small towns in Connecticut, a state just recently having transitioned to Democratic control, Guilford residents expressed varying positions on the efficacy of relief work in the hands of the federal government.

Steiner and Andrews’s correspondence about the local opposition to the project suggests, rather, that the criticism of the restoration was born from a reactionary attitude toward any physical alterations to the house rather than overt or well-founded disapproval of the WPA in particular. Despite the incident of local men egging Frederick Norton’s house, objections to the restoration work were leveled by wealthy white elite, like

---

<sup>98</sup> J. Frederick Kelly to Evangeline Andrews, 18 August 1936, HWH Records, Box 1, Folder 7, CSL. The model was built in 1934 by Henry S. Kelly, J. Frederick’s brother and partner, to display the proposed changes to the house.

<sup>99</sup> “Post Card Forum,” *Shore Line Times*, November 4, 1937; “The Way Out of Relief,” *Shore Line Times*, November 11, 1937; “Reader Expresses an Opinion,” *Shore Line Times*, November 18, 1937.

members of the Colonial Dames and Dorothy Whitfield Historical Society, who historically controlled local folklore through management of the town's historic properties. The cases of Guilford residents expressing displeasure with changes to the Old Stone House demonstrate the power of visuals in shaping historical memory and the narratives people construct about their past. According to Andrews, visitors made comments like "it was never there before," referring to the stone wall surrounding the property constructed by the WPA; "it has always been there," in response to the removal of a cement walk leading to the house; and "the roof was all right as it was," regarding the decision to replace the roof with one with a historically accurate pitch.<sup>100</sup> Guilfordites engaged in their town's local history feared that the house was being inaccurately restored by the WPA under Kelly's guidance in the 1930s because they were accustomed to the appearance of the house over the previous thirty years; they believed Isham's restoration to be accurate because it was the dominant visual representation of the house in living memory. Changing the house, they supposed, changed the narrative of the Puritan heritage told to visitors through the built environment.

Whatever the cause of the local criticism, Norton and Kelly had to bear the brunt of it. The architect described the townspeople's attitude as "most disheartening" on account of the fact that his attention to the use of appropriate materials and building techniques to make the house as authentic as possible seemed to have been wasted.<sup>101</sup> In the fall of 1936 curator Ruth Baldwin and WPA superintendent Frank Spencer began passing out pamphlets to visitors explaining the WPA work to assuage ill will toward the

---

<sup>100</sup> Evangeline Andrews to Walter Steiner, 27 July 1936, HWH Records, Box 1, Folder 7, CSL.

<sup>101</sup> J. Frederick Kelly to Evangeline Andrews, 18 August 1936; 27 August 1936, HWH Records, Box 1, Folder 7, CSL.



project, and as a result, Baldwin thought there was “a much better understanding of the reasons for the restoration.”<sup>102</sup>

To respond publicly to the criticism of the WPA work, Evangeline Andrews published a lengthy letter in the *Shore Line Times* on December 3, 1936. She urged folks interested in the restoration to read about the history and reconstruction of the site in the new pamphlet. To those who continued to find fault with the work, Andrews challenged them to “bring forward specific criticisms and specific proof, historical and architectural, of the same quality and scholarly value as that we offer.” Recognizing that some disapproval may have derived from the involvement of the WPA at the property, Andrews explained that only the federal government could have provided sufficient funding during the Depression. However, she mentioned the outside grants from the Connecticut Tercentenary Commission, SPNEA, and private individuals across the state that also helped fund the project. In each case, “they signify an approval of the restoration work now in progress.” Meanwhile, the services offered by the Art School of Yale University and landscape architect Beatrix Farrand were “generous gifts in themselves” and indicated the endorsement of leading professionals.<sup>103</sup> The letter assured Guilford residents that rather than destroying the historic fabric of the town’s most believed shrine, the WPA project honored the Henry Whitfield House’s original owner by reconstructing, finally, an authentic image of his 1640 home.

---

<sup>102</sup> Ruth Lee Baldwin to Evangeline Andrews, 24 November 1936, HWH Records, Box 1, Folder 7, CSL.

<sup>103</sup> Evangeline Andrews, “Board of Trustees of Whitfield House About Restoration,” *Shore Line Times*, December 3, 1936. For a list of contributions from private individuals, see “List of Contributions to the Whitfield House Restoration Fund,” HWH Records, Box 1, Folder 1, CSL.

## HISTORIC SHRINE OF THE PURITAN FOREFATHERS RESTORED

While the Board of Trustees and Kelly faced difficulties in Guilford, the WPA did not recognize any problems with the work being completed at the Henry Whitfield House. Julius F. Stone, Jr., Associate Director of the Information Service Division of the WPA, wrote to Connecticut state administrator Robert A. Hurley in the spring of 1937 in a follow-up to WPA Information Service Letter No. 34 asking for potential projects that could be considered “historic shrines.” Stone had read an article by Hurley in the *Hartford Courant* of November 29, 1936, which described the restoration of the Henry Whitfield House in Guilford and the Old Town Hall in Fairfield, both of which “quite evidently...come under the description of restoration of historic shrines.”<sup>104</sup> The state WPA office considered the restoration of Guilford’s Old Stone House one of its most successful projects and featured it on the cover of the January 1937 edition of the “Connecticut Work in Progress” magazine, a monthly publication to broadcast news of WPA projects in operation throughout the state.<sup>105</sup>

Moreover, a WPA progress report on the Henry Whitfield House described the federal agency as having “stepped forward in the role of savior” to protect “the oldest house in Connecticut, and one of the oldest buildings in the country.” Under the WPA’s care, the house returned to its appearance when the Reverend Henry Whitfield “prayed

---

<sup>104</sup> Robert A. Hurley, “Natural Beauty Spots in State Opened Up to Motorists by WPA,” *Hartford Courant*, November 29, 1936; Julius F. Stone, Jr. to Robert Hurley, 10 March 1937, RG 69, Box 3, Entry 764, Folder: HS – Connecticut – Gen. Correspondence, National Archives and Records Administration [NARA]; Works Progress Administration for Connecticut, “Fairfield Meets Town Needs,” in “Connecticut Work in Progress,” Vol. I, no. 7 (July 1936), 7, <https://archive.org/details/connecticutworki3637unit/page/n5>. The Old Town Hall was built in 1720 as the town courthouse; the \$24,081 WPA project constructed a new wing on either side of the building to provide office spaces and storage vaults for the town’s records and “renovated” features throughout the building in “conforming colonial style.”

<sup>105</sup> “Connecticut Work in Progress,” Vol. I, no. 11 (January 1937), <https://archive.org/details/connecticutworki3637unit/page/n5>.

for the souls of the faithful and tried to convert the heathen savages.” Once restored, the three hundred-year-old Whitfield House would serve for another few centuries as “a vivid reminder of the early days in New England.”<sup>106</sup>

In the midst of architect Kelly’s struggles with WPA labor and materials, the Board of Trustees’ campaign to win the public’s approval, and the WPA touting the project as a success, the Henry Whitfield State Museum faced an unexpected challenge leveled by the state government. In 1935 as part of his reform platform, Democratic Governor Wilbur Cross had appointed a Commission on the Reorganization of State Departments to make recommendations for legislation to streamline the state government, which at the time consisted of 160 agencies. By 1937, and after three reelections, Cross had the support of a Democratic General Assembly to enact the reorganization scheme, which proposed to abolish the Board of Trustees and place the Henry Whitfield State Museum under the Department of Parks and Forests.<sup>107</sup>

The Board of Trustees vehemently protested the plan, as Evangeline Andrews feared that the Old Stone House would “lose its identity and become a unit of a chain of state institutions...in a manner closely resembling the modern chain store.”<sup>108</sup> Andrews expressed her dismay that the state legislature would consider removing the property from the responsibility of those with the expert knowledge necessary to make the house “the distinguished living museum that we have been working for all these years.”<sup>109</sup>

---

<sup>106</sup> “Whitfield House,” [n.d.], RG 69, Entry 764, Box 3, Folder: HS – CT – Henry Whitfield Memorial Museum, Guilford, NARA.

<sup>107</sup> The Reorganization Commission also proposed to abolish the governing bodies of Fort Griswold and Groton Monument in Groton and the Israel Putnam Memorial Campground in Redding. For more on the reorganization plan, see Cross, *Connecticut Yankee*, 357-377.

<sup>108</sup> Evangeline Andrews to N. D. Canterbury, 26 April 1936, HWH Records, Box 1, Folder 7, CSL; Trustees Minutes, November 10, 1936, HWH Records, Box 1, Folder 3, CSL.

<sup>109</sup> “Proposal to Abolish Board of Trustees of Henry Whitfield House Meets with Opposition,” *Shore Line Times*, February 18, 1937.

Backing the Board's position, hereditary and social organizations whose patronage in the past supported previous restorations of the Old Stone House rallied to protest the reorganization plan. Representatives from the Daughters of the American Revolution, Colonial Dames of Connecticut, the Sons of the American Revolution, and the Dorothy Whitfield Historical Society of Guilford sent letters to Governor Wilbur Cross expressing their opposition.<sup>110</sup> Finally, Dr. Walter Steiner, who had stirred the pot of local criticism just six months prior, had called the plan to transfer the Henry Whitfield State Museum to the Department of Parks and Forests "really most suicidal" and "criminal."<sup>111</sup> This qualified as a ringing endorsement from the restoration project's one-time adversary.

In a letter to Governor Cross asking him to exempt the Whitfield House from the reorganization plan, one museum trustee argued that "the sense of personal possession that rightly exists in Guilford toward this property, which is associated with the earliest history of the town and which is a valuable socializing influence, will be lost to those who feel it most."<sup>112</sup> This statement illustrated the proprietorial attitude of Guilford residents toward their most historic structure; they had the privilege to criticize the restoration work at the Henry Whitfield House, but outsiders, including the state government, which owned the house, did not have the right to remove the property from the people responsible for maintaining its legacy.

---

<sup>110</sup> Letters from organizations sent in the spring of 1937 in Governor Cross Records, Box 401, Folder: Whitfield House Project, CSL.

<sup>111</sup> Walter Steiner to Governor Wilbur Cross, 16 February 1937, Governor Cross Records, Box 401, Folder: Whitfield House Project, CSL.

<sup>112</sup> Roland M. Hooker to Governor Wilbur Cross, 17 March 1937; Frederic T. Murlless, Jr. to Governor Wilbur Cross, 18 February 1937, Governor Cross Records, Box 401, Folder: Whitfield House Project, CSL.

Partly as a result of the Board of Trustees' campaign to change public opinion and partly in response to the proposed state reorganization plan to remove the governance of the Henry Whitfield museum from local hands, the town of Guilford reversed their poor estimation of the WPA restoration and showed support for Kelly's work by the museum's reopening in the late spring of 1937. In a well-earned victory after many trials and tribulations, the local *Shore Line Times* newspaper announced that Connecticut's General Assembly voted against the reorganization plan on April 8, 1937. The same week, Kelly and his team of WPA workers completed the restoration work at the Whitfield House.<sup>113</sup>

Weathering the storms of labor and material challenges, the negative views of some townsfolk, and the threat of the state reorganization scheme, the Henry Whitfield House restoration did eventually come to a successful end. After almost sixteen months of being closed to the public and with a total federal expenditure for labor and materials of \$20,046.44, the Henry Whitfield State Museum reopened on April 26, 1937.<sup>114</sup> Exhibited in the newly restored museum were seventeen pieces of rare seventeenth-century furniture on loan from the impressive Mabel Brady Garvan collection at Yale University.<sup>115</sup> In late June of 1937 a photographer from the National Geographic Society visited Guilford to visually document the restored Henry Whitfield House. The same week, curator and historic home restorationist Joseph Downs from the Metropolitan

---

<sup>113</sup> Frederick Calvin Norton, "Whitfield House to Remain in Care of Board of Trustees," *Shore Line Times*, April 8, 1937.

<sup>114</sup> Trustees Minutes, November 10, 1938, HWH Records, Box 1, Folder 6, CSL. There was a remaining balance of \$3,605.14 in unexpended federal funds. Per WPA stipulations, the Restoration Committee covered the \$2,365.19 fee for the services of architect J. Frederick Kelly.

<sup>115</sup> "The Whitfield House," *Shore Line Times*, May 6, 1937; "Whitfield House Open to Public," *Shore Line Times*, June 3, 1936; "Formal Opening of the Henry Whitfield House," *Shore Line Times*, July 1, 1937; "Visitors from Afar at State Museum," *Shore Line Times*, July 8, 1937; "Many Visitors at Whitfield House," *Shore Line Times*, July 29, 1937; "Henry Whitfield State Museum," *Shore Line Times*, August 5, 1937.

Museum of Art in New York City visited the museum and commended architect J. Frederick Kelly for his excellent work.<sup>116</sup>

Throughout the summer of 1937 the Board of Trustees prepared for the official commemoration exercises to celebrate the museum's reopening to be held October 20, exactly forty years after the Henry Whitfield House first opened its doors as the State Museum in 1897. Speakers included Frederick Calvin Norton, president of the Board of Trustees; Evangeline Andrews, chairman of the Restoration Committee; Governor Wilbur L. Cross; Samuel H. Fisher, chairman of the Tercentenary Commission; Charles M. Andrews, Pulitzer Prize-winning historian of colonial history at Yale and husband of trustee Evangeline; and William Sumner Appleton, secretary of SPNEA.<sup>117</sup> After twenty-seven years as corresponding secretary of the leading preservation society in the region, Appleton remarked that "in all of New England there has been no more notable example of the preservation of an historical antiquity" than that of the Henry Whitfield House.<sup>118</sup>

In dedicating the site, Evangeline Andrews thanked the many players involved in the re-restoration of the Old Stone House: the Connecticut Society of Colonial Dames, architects Norman Isham and J. Frederick Kelly, current and former trustees of the Board, the Tercentenary Commission of Connecticut, Yale University, Beatrix Farrand, and SPNEA. She also acknowledged that the restoration of the historic shrine would not have been financially feasible "without the co-operation of the Federal government," although

---

<sup>116</sup> "Whitfield House Photographed," *Shore Line Times*, June 24, 1937.

<sup>117</sup> "Henry Whitfield House Reconstruction To Be Commemorated Oct. 20," *Shore Line Times*, October 14, 1937; "Interesting Henry Whitfield House Program Held on Wednesday in the First Congregational Church," *Shore Line Times*, October 21, 1937. The celebration was planned to be held on the grounds of the museum, but a storm caused the event to be moved to the First Congregational Church on the Town Green.

<sup>118</sup> "Excerpts from letter from Mr. William Sumner Appleton, October 19, 1937," in Andrews, *The Henry Whitfield House: 1639*, 23.

she admitted that the trustees and Kelly struggled to navigate the bureaucracy of the WPA.<sup>119</sup> Andrews overstated the supposed political crises caused by the WPA, which continued to view the Whitfield House restoration as an unqualified success. In 1940, Arthur N. Johnson, Director of the Division of Information in the Connecticut WPA office, selected the Henry Whitfield House restoration as one of the top ten most interesting projects in the state, writing that “as restored this famed old house stands as a credit to the WPA and as an historic shrine is appreciated far and wide.”<sup>120</sup>

Board of Trustees president Frederick Norton proudly boasted on the reopening of the Old Stone House that “this solid gabled structure is to us Guilford folks on a par with the State House at Philadelphia, or Mount Vernon near Washington.”<sup>121</sup> The town’s shrine to its Puritan ancestors, equal in significance to the nation’s most beloved sites, held a legacy that extended into the future. Evangeline Andrews eloquently voiced the optimistic lessons for subsequent generations embedded in the restored structure:

Perhaps, if in the future, life in our country becomes increasingly materialistic; if in our towns the ubiquitous chain-store and other standardized and ugly units of modern buildings shoulder out the simple old houses which with their gardens make for pleasant and friendly living; if cities and towns lose their old trees and open spaces; then perhaps this old Whitfield house, standing foursquare to the winds and surrounded by a generous acreage and the kind of trees that might have been its companions three hundred years ago – perhaps then it may perform for Guilford and the State a service not dreamed of today.<sup>122</sup>

The Old Stone House, rooted in the earth, transfused a sense of the past into its visitors; history gave the seventeenth-century structure immeasurable magnitude. Chairman of the

---

<sup>119</sup> Evangeline Walker Andrews, “For the Reconstruction Committee,” in Andrews, *The Henry Whitfield House: 1639*, 13-15.

<sup>120</sup> Arthur N. Johnson, “Restoration of the Old Stone House,” in letter to Earl Minderman, Director, Division of Information, WPA, D.C. Office, 21 August 1940, RG 69, Entry 755, Box 1, Folder Connecticut, NARA.

<sup>121</sup> Frederick C. Norton, “For the Trustees,” in Andrews, *The Henry Whitfield House: 1639*, 11.

<sup>122</sup> Andrews, “For the Reconstruction Committee,” 16.

Tercentenary Commission Samuel H. Fisher added that while schools teach children about the state's history, it is through the preservation of landmarks like the Henry Whitfield House that they may "absorb something of the early life of our people."<sup>123</sup> Within seven months of opening, over five thousand visitors representing forty-two states and many territories and foreign countries had crossed the threshold of the Henry Whitfield House to absorb the lessons of the Puritan past.<sup>124</sup>

The built environment of early Connecticut expressed the rigidity, hardness, and fearlessness of Puritan society. The Connecticut state guidebook of the American Guide Series, *Connecticut: A Guide to Its Roads, Lore, and People* (1938), described the state's architecture as "the most permanent expression of its social life – the translation of habits of life and modes of thought into wood and stone." The state, "handicapped by its stony, unproductive fields," presented to its earliest settlers a "struggle for existence...[which] produced a simple and sturdy indigenous mode of building less influenced by foreign precedent than any other Colonial architecture."<sup>125</sup> The solid, immutable stone of the Henry Whitfield House, in particular, encapsulated the very qualities readily associated with the Puritans in New England lore, reiterating their reputation as an inflexible and unyielding breed of people. The state guide, moreover, described the quarried stone of Guilford used to build the Whitfield House as the same

---

<sup>123</sup> Samuel H. Fisher, "What Connecticut has Retained from Her Tercentenary," in Andrews, *The Henry Whitfield House: 1639*, 22.

<sup>124</sup> "The Whitfield House," *Shore Line Times*, May 6, 1937; "Whitfield House Open to Public," *Shore Line Times*, June 3, 1936; "Formal Opening of the Henry Whitfield House," *Shore Line Times*, July 1, 1937; "Visitors from Afar at State Museum," *Shore Line Times*, July 8, 1937; "Many Visitors at Whitfield House," *Shore Line Times*, July 29, 1937; "Henry Whitfield State Museum," *Shore Line Times*, August 5, 1937; "Visitors at Henry Whitfield House," *Shore Line Times*, November 18, 1937; Minutes of the Semi-Annual Meeting of the Board of Trustees, November 11, 1937. HWH Records, Box 1, Folder 3, CSL.

<sup>125</sup> Federal Writers' Project of the Works Progress Administration for the State of Connecticut, *Connecticut: A Guide to Its Roads, Lore, and People* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1938), 81. A photograph of the Henry Whitfield House appears between pages 88 and 89.



source from which emanated sites of national historical significance, including the Statue of Liberty, the Brooklyn Bridge, and Lighthouse Point in New Haven.<sup>126</sup> The association between the local stone and places representative of freedom, improvements in transportation and urbanization, and security linked Guilford with broader developments in the American experience and gave credence to the portrayal of Guilford, and by extension its Puritan settlers, as the foundation of the American nation.

Back in November of 1935, Andrews excitedly wrote to Frederick Norton about the prospect of the WPA taking on the restoration work, describing the potential project as “something that will really put the house on the map and make it a very valuable contribution to Connecticut’s history and cultural welfare.”<sup>127</sup> The Whitfield House contributed to the state’s cultural welfare by providing the space in which the Puritan spirit could live on. The exasperations of Kelly and the Board while working with the WPA, the fear of townsfolk that the house would offer a false depiction of their forefather’s abode, and the strong opposition to the possibility of removing the care of the house from the Board of Trustees through state reorganization all reveal a defensiveness of the small Connecticut’s town Puritan heritage. In safeguarding the historic shrine of the Henry Whitfield House, the WPA and invested residents and professionals ensured the perpetuity of the lessons inscribed in its revered walls.

---

<sup>126</sup> Federal Writers’ Project of the Works Progress Administration, *Connecticut: A Guide to Its Roads, Lore, and People*, 161.

<sup>127</sup> Evangeline Andrews to Frederick Calvin Norton, 29 November 1935, HWH Records, Box 1, Folder 6, CSL.



Figure 1.1. The restored Henry Whitfield State Historical Museum, 1937. RG 024:001 #120, Henry Whitfield House Records, 1768-1957, Photographs, Acc#1958-002, Box 4, Connecticut State Library.



Figure 1.2. Illustrations depicting Reverend Henry Whitfield's House, c. 1640. "The Henry Whitfield House, Guilford, CT." (Guilford, CT: Shore Line Times Press, October 1902), Group No. 1156, Box 1, Folder 25, Norman M. Isham Papers, Yale University Library.



Figure 1.3. *Ladies' Repository* illustration, 1863. The Whitfield House is depicted from the northeast. Box: HWH Images Exterior through 1930s Restor., Henry Whitfield State Museum.



Figure 1.4. Early photograph of the Henry Whitfield House, taken before 1868. "The Henry Whitfield House in Guilford Connecticut," (Guilford, CT: Henry Whitfield State Museum, published by the Board of Trustees, 1946), 974.62 G956hw 1946, Connecticut Historical Society.





Figure 1.5. Henry Whitfield House during the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the settlement of Guilford. Box: HWH Images Exterior through 1930s Restor., Henry Whitfield State Museum.



Figure 1.6. Henry Whitfield House, c. 1890. Box: HWH Images Exterior through 1930s Restor., Henry Whitfield State Museum.



Figure 1.7. Architect Norman M. Isham's drawing of the "Great Hall." Group No. 1156, Box 2, Folder 55, Norman M. Isham Papers, Yale University Library.



Figure 1.8. Isham's "Great Hall," c. 1904. Wisconsin Historical Society, Image ID 71499, Albertype Company photographs, c.1880s-1950, <https://www.wisconsinhistory.org/Records/Image/IM71499>.



Figure 1.9. Whitfield House before Isham's restoration, c. 1902. RG 024:001 #140, Henry Whitfield House Records, 1768-1957, Photographs, Acc#1958-002, Box 4, Connecticut State Library.



Figure 1.10. Whitfield House after Norman M. Isham's restoration, 1904. Group No. 1156, Box 2, Folder 55, Norman M. Isham Papers, Yale University Library.





Figure 1.11. Henry Whitfield State Museum, 1924. RG 024:001 #136, Henry Whitfield House Records, 1768-1957, Photographs, Acc#1958-002, Box 4, Connecticut State Library.



Figure 1.12. Members of the Board of Trustees, May 1937. Pictured left to right: Walter Steiner, Frederick C. Norton, Evangeline Walker Andrews, Frederic T. Murlless, Judge Leete. Group No. 38, Series No. V, Box 91, Folder 989, Charles M. Andrews Papers, Evangeline Andrews, Yale University Library.



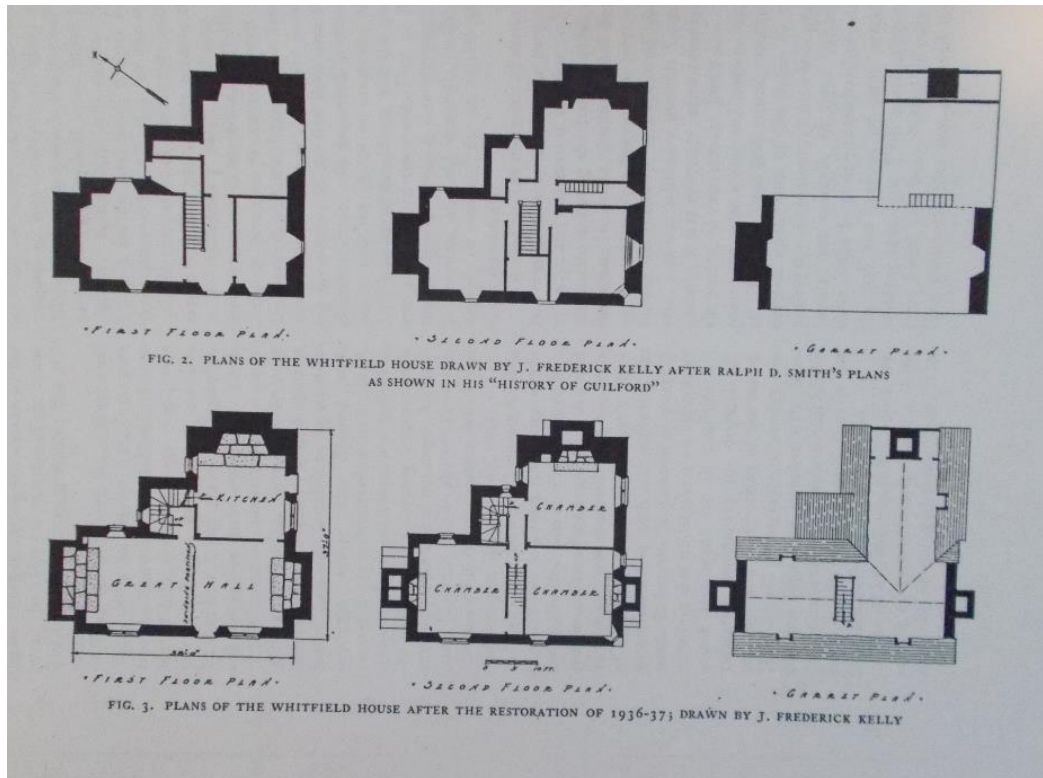


Figure 1.13. J. Frederick Kelly's plans for the restoration of the Whitfield House, 1936-7. J. Frederick Kelly, "Restoration of the Henry Whitfield House, Guilford, Connecticut," *Old-Time New England*, Vol. XXIX, no. 3 (January 1939), 78.



Figure 1.14. WPA workers rebuilding the roof of the Whitfield House. RG 024:001 #3 (top), #52 (bottom), Henry Whitfield House Records, 1768-1957, Photographs, Acc#1958-002, Box 4, Connecticut State Library.



Figure 1.15. Cannon embrasure in corner of west and south walls. RG 024:001 #71, Henry Whitfield House Records, 1768-1957, Photographs, Acc#1958-002, Box 4, Connecticut State Library.



Figure 1.16. The restored “Great Hall,” looking south. The front door is at the right and the opening on the left leads to the stair-tower. The swinging partition is raised against the ceiling. RG 024:001 #125, Henry Whitfield House Records, 1768-1957, Photographs, Acc#1958-002, Box 4, Connecticut State Library.





Figure 1.17. WPA workers on project site. RG 024:001 #25 (top), #77 (bottom left), #84 (bottom right), Henry Whitfield House Records, 1768-1957, Photographs, Acc#1958-002, Box 4, Connecticut State Library

## CHAPTER 2

### THE DOCK STREET THEATRE, CHARLESTON, SC: REVIVING THE OLD SOUTH

*Charleston, S.C., is mindful of her inheritance. Among her historic buildings, impregnated with the spirit of the old south that has gone with the wind, are the Planters Hotel and the Dock Street Theatre.... [T]hey rise again, reconstructed faithfully by skillful hands. Charleston's inheritance is preserved – not only for Charleston, but for an America thoughtful of her traditions.<sup>1</sup>*

Robert Armstrong Andrews, State Director of the South  
Carolina Federal Art Project, February 1937



On November 26, 1937, five hundred audience members enjoyed a performance of the eighteenth-century Restoration comedy *The Recruiting Officer* in the newly restored Dock Street Theatre at 135 Church Street in Charleston, South Carolina's historic French Quarter.<sup>2</sup> Performed by the city's Little Theatre acting troupe, the Footlight Players, the production was a reenactment of the same play that opened the original Dock Street Theatre over two hundred years earlier on February 12, 1736. The treasured colonial establishment had succumbed to fire before the start of the eighteenth century, and a roaring antebellum hostelry, the Planters' Hotel, had stood in its place for much of the nineteenth century. After the Civil War the resort fell into disrepair, a state in

---

<sup>1</sup> Robert Armstrong Andrews, "Dock Street Theatre," in "Work News – South Carolina," February 1937, RG 69, Entry 734, Box 51, National Archives and Records Administration [NARA].

<sup>2</sup> Restoration comedy refers to comedies written during the Restoration period in England from 1660 to 1710.

which it remained until the Dock Street Theatre returned to life in the twentieth century with support from the City of Charleston and funding from the Works Progress Administration (WPA).

Opening night in the late 1930s signified the successful transformation of the dilapidated Planters' Hotel into an architectural gem for Charlestonians to enjoy during the bleak years of the Depression. The restored building recreated an eighteenth-century theater lost to fire three times over, rehabilitated a popular antebellum resort, and featured modern sound and theater equipment of the twentieth century, combining in one setting the cultural wealth of three centuries. On that late November evening in 1937, the Dock Street Theatre, through a federally-funded and locally-orchestrated effort, reclaimed its role as a regional center of art and recreated the appearance of Old Charleston – a city of distinctive and cherished colonial and antebellum history (Figure 2.1).

Douglas D. Ellington, the federal architectural consultant in charge of overseeing the historic shrine restoration, expounded on the significance of the Dock Street Theatre's reestablishment as the theatrical center of Charleston during the Depression:

[The theatre is] ready to become an active instrument in the public life.... Operated in a full sense of idealistic obligation, it could become an instrument of more than local satisfaction, could also be of national value and importance. It is not too extravagant to imagine that an actual cultural renaissance might have founding from within its walls. The building is not merely a theatre, but the planning and arrangement is such that it stands ready to function broadly as a cultural and artistic heart of the city.<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>3</sup> "1736-1937: In Commemoration and Rededication of the Dock Street Theatre, Charleston, S.C." (Charleston, SC: City of Charleston, 1937), South Caroliniana Library [hereafter SCL].

Ellington's depiction of the theater as an "active instrument" in forming the nation's cultural landscape mirrors Federal Theatre Project (FTP) director Hallie Flanagan's ideas about theater as a tool of social change.<sup>4</sup>

In its attempt to reclaim the past, the theater's restoration represented the political and social conservatism that pervaded the South in the 1930s, but a modern agenda was also at play in the New Deal project. Pushed forward by Charleston's Democratic mayor, Burnet Maybank, who enjoyed the political and personal support of both President Roosevelt's close advisor, South Carolina senator James Byrnes, and WPA director Harry Hopkins, the Dock Street Theatre restoration is part of the larger story of southern progressivism in the New Deal era. As Roosevelt allocated large sums of time and money to improving the Southern states, Maybank strategically capitalized on his federal support. Throughout his tenure as mayor, he proposed projects that would improve Charleston's economic and cultural scenes as well as garner himself political power as he prepared for higher positions within the Democratic Party.

The Dock Street Theatre, then, encapsulated the contradictory but restorative trend of the Depression era to embrace the past while looking forward, reflecting simultaneously the Old South and the New South. While the historic shrine project advanced Southern Democrats' maneuverings to harness New Deal resources, it also presented an opportunity for Charleston's white elite to reproduce what they considered a more palatable version of their city. The political and art leaders responsible for the theater's restoration at the local level utilized the particular built environment of the

---

<sup>4</sup> Jane De Hart Mathews, "Arts and the People: The New Deal Quest for a Cultural Democracy," *Journal of American History* 62, no. 2 (Sept. 1975), 321-2; Lauren Rebecca Sklaroff, *Black Culture and the New Deal: The Quest for Civil Rights in the Roosevelt Era* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 37-41.

historic French Quarter to visually advance a cultural identity of Charleston to suit the twentieth century: a romanticized view of their city as a bastion of the Old South. The Dock Street Theatre's rebirth would reinstate the glamor and prestige Charleston enjoyed in the years preceding the Civil War.<sup>5</sup>

Following the war, Charleston, because of its reliance on the cotton market, faced the challenges of a sluggish economy and a demoralized white society uninterested or unable to foster a thriving business class to compete with other growing southern cities, like Atlanta and Nashville. Moreover, by the 1890s, the growth of railroads in the South had undermined Charleston's historic role as the premier port on the southern Atlantic coast. Consequently, in 1900, Charleston was the sixth largest southern city by population, but by 1940, it was the twenty-fifth.<sup>6</sup> While sliding down the list, in the early 1930s Charleston remained the largest city in South Carolina with a population of approximately 62,000. It had a thriving port and navy yard, productive factories, and it continued to project rigid and classist social standards that made it the "social arbiter" of the state.<sup>7</sup>

In resistance to unwelcome modern changes and difficult economic times following the war, the city's wealthy white families were fueled by an elite conservatism. The founding of cultural organizations in the early twentieth century institutionalized this

---

<sup>5</sup> Writers' Program of the Works Projects Administration in the State of South Carolina, *South Carolina: A Guide to the Palmetto State* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1941), 5.

<sup>6</sup> Blaine A. Brownell and David R. Goldfield, eds., *The City in Southern History: The Growth of Urban Civilization in the South* (Port Washington, NY: Kennikat Press, 1977), 128.

<sup>7</sup> Jack Irby Hayes, Jr., *South Carolina and the New Deal* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2001), 3-5; Don Harrison Doyle, *New Men, New Cities, New South: Atlanta, Nashville, Charleston, Mobile, 1860-1910* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 55-61, 162, 232. The development of modern waterfront facilities began in 1912 father up the Charleston Neck, thereby avoiding altering the historic built environment of the peninsula. In the early twentieth century, Charleston's factories produced fertilizer, paint, asbestos, cigars, and cotton bagging.



conservatism and dictated the city's cultural scene for decades to follow. The Charleston Art Commission (CAA) formed in 1910 as a challenge to the nationwide urban planning movement "City Beautiful," focusing instead on maintaining the "city historic"; the Society for the Preservation of Old Dwellings (SPOD) and the Poetry Society of South Carolina both were established in 1920; and the highly-exclusive Society for the Preservation of Negro Spirituals emerged in 1922.<sup>8</sup>

The conservative economic and cultural attitude of Charleston's white elite shaped the social and physical geography of the city and vice versa. The 1941 state guidebook of the WPA's American Guide Series, *South Carolina: A Guide to the Palmetto State*, described the Low Countryman's "social life, his habits of speech and dress," as "outgrowths" of the history and geography of the area, making Charlestonians distinct from the Up Countrymen and the "unamalgamated combination of both" characterizing the Midlands. Lowcountry folk "were to the manner born," with an "attitude keyed to leisure" and "a philosophical contempt" toward the idea of working to earn a living.<sup>9</sup> Old families refused to leave their decaying mansions, producing a "museumlike quality" to the city, where, as historian Don Doyle has argued, the signs of genteel poverty became "proud badges of a déclassé aristocracy who refused to answer the siren call of the New South."<sup>10</sup>

---

<sup>8</sup> The Charleston Art Commission was made up of the mayor and representatives of the Carolina Art Association, Charleston Library Society, Charleston Museum, South Carolina Historical Society, and three citizens, whose duty was to review "matters affecting the aesthetic and historic interests of the city" brought before the city council. Doyle, *New Men, New Cities, New South*, 226–228; Robin Elisabeth Dattel, "Southern Regionalism and Historic Preservation in Charleston, South Carolina, 1920-1940," *Journal of Historical Geography* 16, no. 2 (1990): 197–215; Stephanie E. Yuhl, "High Culture in the Low Country: Arts, Identity and Tourism in Charleston, South Carolina, 1920-1940" (Ph.D. diss., Duke University, 1998), 2–3, 5, 24.

<sup>9</sup> Writers' Program of the Works Projects Administration in the State of South Carolina, *South Carolina: A Guide to the Palmetto State*, 4.

<sup>10</sup> Doyle, *New Men, New Cities, New South*, 234, 237-8.

Charleston's cultural arbiters wanted to preserve the buildings and streetscapes of more prosperous eras as a way to cope with a difficult present and reassert their cultural and political power. Throughout the 1920s and 1930s, the preservation community's underlying agenda was to safeguard pre-Civil War structures as a celebration of Charleston's colonial and antebellum past, clearly the wealthiest and most romanticized periods of the city's history. Consequently, efforts in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries to preserve Charleston's earlier architectural identity focused on the most historic section of the city where colonial and antebellum structures were concentrated: the southernmost area of the peninsula, framed by the Ashley River to the west and the Cooper River to the east, which included the French Quarter.<sup>11</sup>

Stephanie Yuhl has described elite whites' increased cultural and artistic production, and especially their preservation activity, in the 1930s as a search for a "usable past" that enabled them to assert their cultural significance in the present...and to reinforce their claims to social authority."<sup>12</sup> By focusing on Charleston's architectural legacy, preservationists "fashioned an official public culture for their city that transmitted a particular version of a regional and national past that neither residents nor visitors could ignore."<sup>13</sup> Thus, in reconstructing the Dock Street Theatre, which symbolized Charleston's cultural prominence in the colonial period, white society could maintain its cultural supremacy and celebrate Charleston's historic character.

---

<sup>11</sup> W. Fitzhugh Brundage, *The Southern Past: A Clash of Race and Memory* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2005), 208.

<sup>12</sup> Stephanie E. Yuhl, *A Golden Haze of Memory: The Making of Historic Charleston* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 6.

<sup>13</sup> Yuhl, "High Culture in the Low Country," 24–5.

Architecture was only one medium through which elites sought to resurrect colonial Charleston. Historic preservation activity was part of a larger effort to create a “tangible historic identity for the city.”<sup>14</sup> This goal was one of the underlying themes of the Charleston Renaissance, a term used to describe the outpouring of artistic and literary work in the 1920s and 1930s that celebrated local cultural achievements. The collective work of writers, painters, musicians, and historians active in Charleston reflected an appreciation of the city’s distinctive history. To them, according to Yuhl, the word ‘Charlestonian’ meant “something fixed and worthy of preservation, an accumulation of history, family, land and racial prerogative – little was problematic, alienating or painful.”<sup>15</sup> In general, these cultural producers viewed their city through rose-colored glass.

Many of the leading figures of the Charleston Renaissance regarded the city’s architecture as its most unique characteristic and made Charleston’s built environment the focus of their work. For example, artist Elizabeth O’Neill Verner depicted vernacular buildings in a dilapidated state in her artwork, while Alfred Hutty found inspiration in the city’s architectural monuments and rural vistas.<sup>16</sup> Josephine Pinckney, a novelist and poet, used the Dock Street Theatre restoration itself to symbolize the New Deal era in a play written for the Carolina Art Association (CAA) and intended to be performed at Middleton Place, an eighteenth-century rice plantation and major tourist attraction in

---

<sup>14</sup> Yuhl, “High Culture in the Low Country,” 5.

<sup>15</sup> Yuhl, *A Golden Haze of Memory*, 16; For further discussion of the Charleston Renaissance, see: James M. Hutchisson and Harlan Greene, eds., *Renaissance in Charleston: Art and Life in the Carolina Low Country, 1900-1940* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2003).

<sup>16</sup> Robert R. Weyeneth, *Historic Preservation for a Living City: Historic Charleston Foundation, 1947-1997* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2000), 20.

Charleston.<sup>17</sup> The restoration of the Dock Street Theatre, thusly, fit into the portfolio of Charleston Renaissance artists: the Old Charleston recreated through the theater was a romanticized and sanitized version of the past where racial and class tensions were either downplayed or nonexistent.

DuBose Heyward, one of Charleston's most notable literary figures of the early twentieth century, became the "national ambassador" of the Charleston Renaissance and put the city "on the cultural map" after he published the novel *Porgy* in 1925.<sup>18</sup> *Porgy* painted in words the romantic, dilapidated Charleston of genteel poverty, immortalizing Catfish Row, also known as Cabbage Row. The row was a pair of three-story buildings connected by a central arcade at 89-91 Church Street, just three blocks south of the Dock Street Theatre. By the late 1920s, Cabbage Row, like the Planters' Hotel – formerly the theater – had fallen into a state of disrepair and vacancy. This condition was most likely a result of a petition brought to Charleston City Council by white residents to evict the row's African American tenants.<sup>19</sup> From his position as a preeminent figure of the Charleston Renaissance, Heyward summarized the perspective of many of the city's artists, writers, and preservationists in the period: "when a liberated spirit began to express itself in the arts, it became evident that the South was prepared to take its place in the national revival."<sup>20</sup> While struggling economically, the South, with Charleston leading the way, could reassume its preeminent role in dictating national culture.

---

<sup>17</sup> Barbara L. Bellows, *A Talent for Living: Josephine Pinckney and the Charleston Literary Tradition* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2006), 206. The 1946 project was never completed.

<sup>18</sup> Ellen Noonan, *The Strange Career of Porgy and Bess: Race, Culture, and America's Most Famous Opera* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012), 125.

<sup>19</sup> Noonan, *The Strange Career of Porgy and Bess*, 129.

<sup>20</sup> DuBose Heyward, "Dock Street Theatre: Carolina Art Association, Management.," January 1938, 792 H49 1938 Oversize, SCL.

This approach revealed a longing to reinstate the racial and social hierarchies of days past, but it also linked the resurrection of the Dock Street Theatre with the New Deal's modern cultural agenda and the political mechanizations of Southern progressives. In this context, the restoration of the Dock Street Theatre fulfilled multiple agendas. The revival of the cultural heart of eighteenth-century Charleston strengthened the city's art identity on a national stage as a regional theater, thereby satisfying the goal of the WPA's cultural program. The restoration also contributed to increasing Charleston's stock of historic architecture through which elite Charlestonians sought to preserve their way of life. At the same time, Democratic politicians, especially Mayor Burnet R. Maybank, successfully maximized the political and cultural capital of the WPA project in a way that has led historian Kieran W. Taylor to call the Dock Street Theatre "the Charleston elite's favorite cut of public work" of the New Deal era.<sup>21</sup>

## **RESURRECTING OLD CHARLESTON**

The first Dock Street Theatre, constructed in 1736, sat on the southwest corner of Church and Queen streets.<sup>22</sup> Queen Street was originally called Dock Street for the busy colonial wharf at its eastern end, but around 1738 Governor Robert Johnson renamed it in honor of the queen consort of George II. The popular playhouse, however, continued to be called the Dock Street Theatre.<sup>23</sup> This theater burned down sometime between 1740 and 1749, and another theater was constructed in its place between 1754 and 1763. It,

---

<sup>21</sup> Kieran W. Taylor, ed. *Charleston and the Great Depression: A Documentary History, 1929-1941* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2018), xxix.

<sup>22</sup> The lot of land on which the Dock Street Theatre was built was listed as No. 113 and registered to Nicholas Barlicorn on the 1693 map of Charleston. The theater was built on a parcel of this lot, 49 feet west of Church Street and 70 feet in front on Queen Street. Emmett Robinson, "A Guide to the Dock Street Theatre and Brief Resume of the Theatres in Charleston, S.C. from 1730," (Charleston: The Footlight Players, Inc., 1963), 4. College of Charleston Libraries accessed via Lowcountry Digital Library. <http://lcdl.library.cofc.edu/lcdl/catalog/lcdl:22092?page=lcdl:22077>.

<sup>23</sup> "Restoration Footlights," RG 69, Entry 764, Box 11, NARA.

too, however, was destroyed by fire. A third theater was erected in 1773, but fire once again was responsible for the building's destruction around 1782.<sup>24</sup>

Rather than build a fourth theater, surely to be doomed, the site remained absent of entertainment for many years. Toward the end of the first decade of the nineteenth century, a Mrs. Calder bought the "large and commodious" house built by Mayor John Ward on the corner of Queen and Church streets, which had replaced the Dock Street Theatre sometime in the late eighteenth century.<sup>25</sup> Mrs. Calder operated an establishment called the Planters' Hotel on the corner of Queen and Meeting streets with her husband, Alexander, but relocated the hostelry less than a block to the east to the site of the old theater. She later remodeled the establishment around 1835 (Figure 2.2).<sup>26</sup>

From year to year, wealthy planter families from the Carolina Upcountry lodged at the Planters' Hotel for several weeks in the spring to attend the horse races during the social season. Stagecoaches from Savannah, Augusta, and the West started from the hotel, contributing to what Eola Willis, theater historian of Charleston in the earlier twentieth century, called "the Jolly Corner," an intersection "where gentlemen of the old

---

<sup>24</sup> Different sources report different years of the fires and construction dates of theaters, but 1763, 1773, and 1782 are the most common. Writers' Program of the Work Projects Administration, *South Carolina: A Guide to the Palmetto State*, 127-8; Earl M. Collison, "Project Reaches Fruition 3 Years After Inception," *Charleston Evening Post*, November 26, 1937; "Oldest Theater in U.S. to Reopen," *Atlanta Constitution*, November 21, 1937; "Theatre and Hotel of 1736 Restored," *New York Times*, November 21, 1937; "Hopkins to Dedicate Historic Theater Restored by WPA Workers," WPA Announcement No. 4-1615, November 21, 1937, RG 69, Entry 764, Box 11, NARA.

<sup>25</sup> Sources have listed the construction date of the Planters' Hotel as both 1806 and 1809, and the owner as either Mrs. Caulder or Calder. Writers' Program of the Work Projects Administration, *South Carolina: A Guide to the Palmetto State*, 203; "Theatre and Hotel of 1736 Restored," *New York Times*, November 21, 1937; "1736-1937: In Commemoration and Rededication of the Dock Street Theatre," SCL; Rowena Wilson Tobias, "Charleston Preparing To Reopen Oldest Theater With Historic Play," *State* (Columbia, SC), November 14, 1937; "Three Theaters Preceded Hotel," *Charleston News & Courier*, February 10, 1935.

<sup>26</sup> "30. Dock Street Theater, 1736," Alfred O. Halsey Map 1949, Preservation Society of Charleston, <http://www.halseymap.com/flash/window.asp?HMID=14>; Colleen K. Reilly, "Staging Charleston: The Spoleto Festival U.S.A." (Ph.D. diss., University of Pittsburgh, 2009), 153.

regime met to discuss horses, politics, and the events of the times.”<sup>27</sup> The Planters’ Hotel also served as a gathering hub and informal communications center during the Civil War. A special correspondent to the *New York Times* in 1861 met with volunteers and officers in the hostelry to learn of the affairs of the war in Charleston.<sup>28</sup>

After the war, the Planters’ Hotel never recovered its antebellum fame and “stood as a gaunt and sometimes dangerous relic,” as Thomas R. Waring, editor of the *Charleston Evening Post* and chairman of Charleston’s Board of Architectural Review, described the establishment in the 1930s.<sup>29</sup> By the 1880s, the handsome building with rusticated brownstone columns, decorative wooden brackets, and iron balcony effectively became tenement housing for African Americans. The housing complex fell into deplorable condition in the early decades of the twentieth century, and the site of first the renowned colonial theater and later a gay antebellum hostelry became an eyesore (Figure 2.3).<sup>30</sup>

The deterioration of the once beloved Planters’ Hotel was not altogether surprising, as the city increasingly witnessed the loss of historic fabric in the decades following the Civil War. Giving credence to the local saying, “too poor to paint, too proud to whitewash,” aristocratic Charleston families held on to their decaying mansions of crumbling stone and brick in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. They lamented the destruction of the beautiful, historic architecture of their city, while at the

---

<sup>27</sup> Eola Willis, *The Charleston Stage in the XVIII Century: With Social Settings of the Time* (Columbia, SC: State Company, 1924), 22.

<sup>28</sup> “From Charleston: A Slight Difference of Opinion About that Firing,” *New York Times*, March 14, 1861; “Affairs at Fort Sumpter [sic] – Messengers Going To and Fro,” *New York Times*, March 26, 1861.

<sup>29</sup> T. R. Waring, Jr., “A Cradle of America’s Theater Will Harbor the Drama Again,” *Herald Tribune* (New York, NY), December 12, 1937; Charles B. Hosmer, *Preservation Comes of Age: From Williamsburg to the National Trust, 1926-1941* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1981), 240.

<sup>30</sup> Reilly, “Staging Charleston,” 154.

same time selling old furniture, silver, fireplaces, ironwork, and other family heirlooms to antique dealers from the North. Unlike Atlanta and Nashville where wealthy families left their mansions in the city for growing suburbs, Charlestonians held on to their historic homes as the last vestiges and symbols of their former power.<sup>31</sup> Protecting Charleston's architectural heritage, especially from the greedy hands of outsiders, was a catalyst for the formation of the Society for the Preservation of Old Dwellings (SPOD) in 1920.

Because of its location on a busy intersection in the much-visited historic French Quarter, the Planters' Hotel attracted the attention of the city's early preservationists. Under the leadership of Susan Pringle Frost, the SPOD attempted to save the Planters' Hotel when the city scheduled its demolition in 1918. Frost persuaded Mayor Thomas P. Stoney and city council to seal the four conjoined buildings comprising the hotel until a time when they could be restored to their former antebellum splendor. The "sealing" of the buildings protected the exterior walls, maintained the condition of the interior, and prevented their demolition. Additionally, it barred wealthy Northerners from acquiring the Planters' Hotel's ironwork, woodwork, and plaster.<sup>32</sup> Rather than committing time and money to a preservation campaign to restore the Planters' Hotel, however, the SPOD chose to focus its efforts on rescuing the threatened Joseph Manigault House and preserving the Heyward-Washington House, the homes of wealthy white men next door to Heyward's Catfish Row.<sup>33</sup> The SPOD's choice illustrated the tendency of early-

---

<sup>31</sup> Doyle, *New Men, New Cities, New South*, 228-230.

<sup>32</sup> Hayes, *South Carolina and the New Deal*, 41-43; Sidney R. Bland, *Preserving Charleston's Past, Shaping Its Future: The Life and Times of Susan Pringle Frost*, 2nd ed. (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1999), 71.

<sup>33</sup> Albert Simons, "Dock St. Theater, Planters Hotel Add to City's Architectural Wealth," *Charleston News & Courier*, November 20, 1937. While Frost and the SPOD were not actively involved in the Dock Street Theatre's restoration in the 1930s, architect Albert Simons acknowledged that Frost and the SPOD deserved "much credit for safeguarding the old Planters' Hotel buildings" when they were under threat of demolition in 1918.



twentieth century preservationists to focus on elite structures over ordinary, and buildings associated with the history of white society over buildings associated with African American heritage.

Coinciding with this tenet of the preservation movement was an actual change in urban geography. In 1931, Charleston created a planning and zoning commission, which enacted the country's first planning and zoning ordinance. A twenty-three-block area in the tip of the Charleston peninsula was designated as the "Old and Historic District," sending a clear message that within its perimeter racial hierarchies and conservative values would be preserved in the built environment. While protecting domestic architecture, the zoning ordinance allowed for the commercialization of Church Street as attractions like Cabbage Row, the Heyward-Washington House, Porgy Book Shop, and antique stores and coffeehouses drew increasing numbers of tourists to Charleston to admire its historic charm.<sup>34</sup>

New Deal programs also effected a change in the racial urban landscape of the city. In the fall of 1935, Charleston received a \$1.1 million federal grant for the clearance of African American neighborhoods. Throughout the late 1930s, New Deal projects continued to displace black residents living near the historic district and relocate them to public housing projects farther from the downtown area up the Charleston Neck.<sup>35</sup> Measures like this helped put an end to the "casual mixing" between the white and black races that was both a legacy of urban slavery – where African Americans occupied the former slave or servants' quarters at the back of white-owned townhouses – and a result

---

<sup>34</sup> Yuhl, *A Golden Haze of Memory*, 166-7.

<sup>35</sup> Taylor, *Charleston and the Great Depression*, xv; Yuhl, *A Golden Hazy of Memory*, 45, 48-9. For the controversy over housing projects, resulting in the construction of Cooper River Court for blacks and Meeting Street Manor for whites, see Hayes, *South Carolina and the New Deal*, 74.

of an almost equally-divided population of white and African American residents well into the twentieth century.<sup>36</sup>

The preservation impulse, therefore, engendered a significant shift in long-standing living arrangements. According to the 1941 WPA state guide to South Carolina, white residents “with a love of the unusual” reclaimed city spaces historically occupied by African Americans to renovate and shape the new urban landscape.<sup>37</sup> Upon witnessing the restoration work occurring on historic Tradd Street, lower East Bay Street, Stolls Alley, and Church Street, Charleston Renaissance artist Elizabeth O’Neill Verner praised “what can be done if cleaning up infested neighborhoods and turning our liabilities into assets.”<sup>38</sup>

### **THE DOCK STREET THEATRE BECOMES A WORK RELIEF PROJECT**

The run-down Planters’ Hotel, then, in its prime location in the French Quarter, presented both a problem and an opportunity for Charleston elites. The proposal to restore the Dock Street Theatre as a federally sponsored project originated in early 1934 with Elizabeth Maybank, the wife of Charleston’s mayor and a member of the Junior League of Charleston.<sup>39</sup> Mayor Burnet Maybank most likely then suggested the restoration of the Dock Street Theatre as a potential federal project to the Charleston Art Commission (CAA) in the spring or summer of 1934. Afterwards, he called a special meeting of key figures to discuss the proposal on October 18 of that year. In addition to members of the CAA, attendees at the meeting included Edmund P. Grice, the Charleston

---

<sup>36</sup> Doyle, *New Men, New Cities, New South*, 301-2.

<sup>37</sup> Writers’ Program of the Work Projects Administration, *South Carolina: A Guide to the Palmetto State*, 187.

<sup>38</sup> Elizabeth O’Neill Verner, “Preserving Our Own,” *Charleston News & Courier*, January 26, 1938.

<sup>39</sup> Brittany V. Lavelle Tulla, “Huger, Cleland Kinlock and Burnet R. Maybank House,” National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form, BVL Historic Preservation Research, October 5, 2015.

County administrator of the Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA), and Douglas D. Ellington, architectural consultant for the FERA. Upon the suggestion of Judge Theodore D. Jervy, president of the South Carolina Historical Society, the committee agreed that the area surrounding St. Philip's Church on Church Street near its intersection with Queen Street was the most suitable for architectural restoration because it included many historic landmarks that had fallen into disrepair, including the Powder Magazine and the Planters' Hotel (Figure 2.4).<sup>40</sup>

After the committee selected the Dock Street Theatre, Mayor Maybank corresponded with Harry L. Hopkins, the federal director of FERA and a close personal friend. According to Albert Simons, the Charleston architect whose local firm would spearhead the restoration project, Hopkins "was immediately attracted by the plan, since it eminently fulfilled the government's desire to underwrite projects which would provide work for the unemployed as well as be in themselves constructive and worthwhile."<sup>41</sup> Moreover, the New Deal administration was eager to allocate funds to revitalizing the South.<sup>42</sup> Maybank's friendship with Hopkins, his political affiliation with South Carolina senator and leading New Deal Democrat James Byrnes, and his support of President Roosevelt most likely helped produce a favorable attitude toward the project at all political levels and played a role later in ensuring that the project was funded throughout its entirety.<sup>43</sup>

---

<sup>40</sup> Collison, "Project Reaches Fruition 3 Years After Inception"; Simons, "Dock St. Theater, Planters Hotel Add to City's Architectural Wealth."

<sup>41</sup> Simons, "Dock St. Theater, Planters Hotel Add to City's Architectural Wealth."

<sup>42</sup> Anthony J. Badger, *New Deal / New South: An Anthony J. Badger Reader* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2007), 36.

<sup>43</sup> Marvin L. Cann, "Burnet Maybank and Charleston Politics in the New Deal Era," *Proceedings of the South Carolina Historical Association* (1979): 39–48.

When Maybank was elected mayor of Charleston in 1931, he was thirty-two years old with little political experience, as he then was serving only his first term as alderman. He was descended from some of the state's most powerful families, a College of Charleston graduate, a cotton broker, and a committed Democrat. Maybank remained popular during his seven years as mayor from December of 1931 to December of 1938. He brought over thirty-six million dollars of federal aid to the Lowcountry between 1933 and 1936, successfully overseeing large New Deal projects including improvements to the airport and Navy Yard and commencement of the Santee-Cooper hydroelectric dam construction. His strategic backing of popular New Deal projects earned him political support, leading to his victory in the South Carolina gubernatorial election of 1938 when he became the first Charlestonian to hold the office since Wade Hampton in 1876.<sup>44</sup>

Maybank's cunning control over the New Deal political machine in Charleston was noticed in Washington, D.C. Following complaints sent to congressmen about the poorly run South Carolina Emergency Relief Administration (SCERA) and the Civil Works Administration (CWA), Harry Hopkins sent his chief investigator, journalist Lorena Hickok, to report on conditions in the state in early February of 1934. In her confidential report from Charleston, Hickok described Mayor Maybank as "an interesting chap," a man proud of his aristocratic Southern roots and "fiercely loyal to the President and the Administration generally."<sup>45</sup> The following spring, Gertrude S. Gates, a field relief supervisor employed by the FERA, visited Charleston because of similar complaints from the state office that Charleston officials were "administering relief as

---

<sup>44</sup> Maybank later was elected to the U.S. Senate in 1941, a position he held until his death in 1954.

<sup>45</sup> Lorena A. Hickok to Harry L. Hopkins, 10 February 1934, cited in Richard Lowitt and Maurine Beasley, eds., *One Third of a Nation: Lorena Hickok Reports on the Great Depression* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1981), 185; Hayes, *South Carolina and the New Deal*, xxviii-xxix, 46.

political tool to further the ends of the group now in control of the City of Charleston, namely Mayor Maybank and his political adherents.” In a private memorandum to Hopkins she described the haphazard organization of the FERA setup in Charleston: the agency was housed in six separate buildings and kept no case records to justify the expenditure of relief funds. This led to highly uncooperative and ineffective management.

According to Gates, Mayor Maybank exercised tight control over relief administering and threatened to withdraw material and equipment used in the work relief program if an “outsider’ or a member of the opposition” were to be placed in charge. His attitude demonstrated the power Southern Democrats had gained in the first few years of Roosevelt’s presidency. Architect Simons would later describe Mayank’s persuasiveness while mayor in the 1930s: “Burnet seemed to be able to get his word listened to in Washington. He had met with Franklin Roosevelt and he and Franklin Roosevelt seemed to hit it off! Whatever Burnet seemed to ask, he usually ended up getting.”<sup>46</sup> Maybank had shrewdly formed close ties to influential New Dealers, including Senator James Byrnes and Harry Hopkins, which he used to his advantage to secure resources for grassroots initiatives in Charleston.<sup>47</sup> While mayor, he sat on the board of three New Deal agencies: the Public Works Administration Advisory, the State Board of Bank Control, and the South Carolina Public Service Authority, which oversaw the popular Santee-Cooper hydroelectric project.<sup>48</sup>

---

<sup>46</sup> Interview with Albert Simons, June 22, 1972, quoted in Hosmer, *Preservation Comes of Age*, 253.

<sup>47</sup> Taylor, *Charleston and the Great Depression*, xxviii-xxix. See also Alan Brinkley, “The New Deal and Southern Politics,” in James C. Cobb and Michael V. Namorato, eds., *The New Deal and the South* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1984): 97-115.

<sup>48</sup> For further discussion of Maybank’s control over New Deal measures in Charleston, see Hayes, *South Carolina and the New Deal*, 202; Cann, “Burnet Maybank and Charleston Politics in the New Deal Era.”

Despite Maybank's wily use of New Deal support to build his own political base, field relief supervisor Gates gave a favorable estimation of Maybank, calling him "entirely honest and sincere in his effort to maintain good government in Charleston."<sup>49</sup> The same month as Gates's visit, Maybank's ally Harry Hopkins gave an address at the mayor's luncheon in Charleston. Contrary to the generally dismal contents of Gates's report, Hopkins praised the relief administration in Charleston County as "one of the best in the United States, thanks to Mayor Maybank and Mr. [Edmund] Grice."<sup>50</sup> Throughout the tenure of Maybank's time in office and Hopkins's leadership of both the FERA and later the WPA, the two developed a mutually beneficial partnership which strengthened Democratic politics and the reception of New Deal initiatives in Charleston. As evidence of their close relationship, Hopkins and his wife spent Thanksgiving with the Maybanks in 1936, and the mayor was a pallbearer at Hopkins's wife's funeral the following year.<sup>51</sup>

In early February of 1935, Maybank announced that with approval from city council, which first had had to agree to purchase the property, the Dock Street Theatre officially became a FERA project. Relating the news, the *Charleston News & Courier* wrote "two birds are being killed with one stone by the FERA project." Firstly, after years of talk about its restoration, the Planters' Hotel would be "transformed from an eyesore to a place of beauty." Secondly, the city had found a site for a new theater, which it had been hoping to construct for some time. Once on the FERA docket, the Ways and

---

<sup>49</sup> Confidential Memoranda to Harry Hopkins, dated March 1935, enclosed in letter from Gertrude S. Gates to Josephine Brown, 25 April 1935, RG 69, Entry 10, Box 68, NARA. While complimentary of Maybank, Gates painted a fairly dismal picture of relief administration in South Carolina overall: "The State office is overrun with rather second rate people, and the County offices have as their Administrators rather poor individuals from the standpoint of administrative ability. About one-half of them are fairly honest."

<sup>50</sup> "Hopkins Praises Grice's Job Here," *Charleston News & Courier*, March 23, 1935.

<sup>51</sup> "Mr. Hopkins Off After Visit Here," *Charleston News & Courier*, November 27, 1936; "Hopkins Visiting Here," *Charleston News & Courier*, October 13, 1937.

Means Committee of city council, headed by Charleston County FERA administrator Edward P. Grice, appropriated \$10,000 for a sixty-day period of initial survey work. Under the supervision of FERA architect Douglas D. Ellington, excavations began on February 12, 1935. While speaking at the mayor's luncheon the following month, Hopkins remarked that "we will pay any reasonable amount for labor and materials" when asked about the expected cost of the restoration project.<sup>52</sup> This attitude was unsurprising considering Hopkins's relationship with Maybank and the New Deal administration's general push to fund projects in the South; ninety percent of FERA relief funds in the region was provided by federal money compared to only sixty-two percent throughout the rest of the U.S.<sup>53</sup>

By early May of 1935, Washington officials had approved plans Ellington drew for the theater's restoration and the architect met with relief administrator Grice and Mayor Maybank several times to discuss the project. They were later joined by Colonel J.D. Fulp, the state FERA administrator, to review the plans. By June, FERA had assigned ten men and six carpenters to the project and already had expended \$159,000 on the restoration.<sup>54</sup> Early work during the summer included clearing away rubbish, mostly rotted wood and plaster, from the project site. While excavating, workers discovered marks in the roof of the Planters' Hotel from a cannon shell, perhaps fired during the bombardment of Charleston in 1863, as well as fragments of broken china with the inscription "Planters hotel" and old coins. They also unearthed the location of two

---

<sup>52</sup> "Planters' Hotel to be Restored," *Charleston News & Courier*, February 5, 1935; "Hopkins to Dedicate Historic Theater Restored by WPA Workers," WPA Announcement No. 4-1615, November 21, 1937, RG 69, Entry 764, Box 11, NARA; "Planters' Hotel Work is Started," *Charleston News & Courier*, February 13, 1935; "Hopkins Praises Grice's Job Here," *Charleston News & Courier*, March 23, 1935.

<sup>53</sup> Badger, *New Deal / New South*, 36.

<sup>54</sup> "Planters' Hotel is Being Stripped," *Charleston News & Courier*, June 19, 1935.

cisterns, one in the central portion of the old hotel and another behind the building, which proved the existence of a residence at some point in time at the back of the hotel.<sup>55</sup>

In early summer of 1935, Douglas Ellington decided to make Charleston his headquarters for the next year to oversee the project. In mid-July, however, he resigned from the FERA to begin work with the Resettlement Administration (RA). In his new position with the RA, he became the principal architect of Greenbelt, Maryland, the first planned community constructed by the federal government.<sup>56</sup> Jacob Baker, assistant administrator of the FERA, wrote to Mayor Maybank to assure him that while no longer with his agency, Ellington “shall give as much time as necessary for general attention to the Charleston project.”<sup>57</sup> True to Baker’s word, Ellington was present at the ceremony on August 14, 1935, marking the official start of the federal government’s restoration of the theater, and remained involved in the project throughout its entirety.<sup>58</sup>

Working in consultation with Ellington were Charleston-based architects Albert Simons and Samuel Lapham. While Ellington devised the provisional plan for the restoration, the firm of Simons & Lapham drew detailed architectural plans of the building and oversaw the day-to-day work of the project (Figure 2.5). Both men independently were active members of Charleston’s cultural elite. Charleston native Simons received his training as an architect at the University of Pennsylvania from 1907

---

<sup>55</sup> “Planters’ Hotel Work Will Start,” *Charleston News & Courier*, May 4, 1935; “Planters’ Hotel Project to Begin,” *Charleston News & Courier*, May 7, 1935; “FERA Head Visits City,” *Charleston News & Courier*, May 9, 1935; “Work on Theater To Start in Week,” *Charleston News & Courier*, May 25, 1935; “Planters’ Hotel is Being Stripped,” *Charleston News & Courier*, June 19, 1935; “Planters’ Hotel Debris is Sifted,” *Charleston News & Courier*, July 5, 1935; “Relics Excavated in Hotel Project,” *Charleston News & Courier*, August 8, 1935. The rotten timber from the site was carted to the wood yard on East Bay Street, where it was sawed into firewood for the poor.

<sup>56</sup> Carla Breeze, *American Art Deco: Architecture and Regionalism* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2003), 87.

<sup>57</sup> “Ellington Resign Government Post,” *Charleston News & Courier*, July 18, 1935.

<sup>58</sup> “Start of Theatre Project Marked,” *Charleston News & Courier*, August 15, 1935.



to 1912 and returned to Charleston in 1914. He taught architecture classes for one year at Clemson University, and in 1916 became a partner in the firm of Todd, Simons & Todd. Upon returning to Charleston in 1920 after a year-and-a-half in the U.S. army, he formed a partnership with Samuel Lapham. Simons also served as a member of the Charleston city planning and zoning commission which created the first historic district, president of the Carolina Art Association, and teacher at the College of Charleston beginning in 1924.

Samuel Lapham, too, was a native of Charleston, and the son of a prominent city councilman. Lapham received his B.S. in architecture in 1916 from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and returned to Charleston to work with Simons and teach at the College of Charleston. Both architects also became involved in the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) when it was established in 1933 by the Civil Works Administration. Secretary of the Interior Harold L. Ickes appointed Lapham the district administrator of HABS for South Carolina, and Simons sat on the National Advisory Board overseeing the federal project.<sup>59</sup> In addition to their work as architects, Simons and Lapham studied architectural history and coedited *The Octagon Library of Early American Architecture, Volume I: Charleston, South Carolina* (1927), *Plantations of the Carolina Low Country* (1939), and *This Is Charleston* (1944).<sup>60</sup>

Simons and Lapham were dedicated to Charleston's preservation ethos and devoted much of their careers to safeguarding the city's architectural heritage. Once

---

<sup>59</sup> "Charlestonian Helps Revive Interest in American Architecture," *Charleston News & Courier*, December 25, 1938; "American Institute Gives Lapham Honor," *Charleston News & Courier*, May 30, 1937; Hosmer, *Preservation Comes of Age*, 241. Simons had traveled to Washington to discuss the preservation of Charleston with the Federal Housing Administration, which Hosmer writes may have led to the Robert Mills housing development in the city, 251.

<sup>60</sup> Ralph Muldrow, "Simons & Lapham," *South Carolina Encyclopedia*, <http://www.scencyclopedia.org/sce/entries/simons-lapham/>.

onboard the FERA project, Simons and Lapham immediately embraced the agenda of the Dock Street Theatre restoration to recreate the appearance and feel of Old Charleston. They aimed to produce architectural spaces and interior decorations similar to those of the original Dock Street Theatre of the mid-eighteenth century and of the Planters' Hotel of the nineteenth century. In a letter to Emmett Robinson, director of the local Footlight Players theater group, Simons expressed his belief that it was imperative the Dock Street Theatre become "a living part of the community" and not "a museum piece, exquisite, but useless."<sup>61</sup> While the theater restoration needed to establish a visual and experiential connection to the past, the new space also needed to be functional and not merely an architectural showpiece for Charlestonians to exhibit to tourists.

Simons and Lapham had their work as restoration architects cut out for them with the Dock Street Theatre project, which provided both creative and technical challenges. At the outset, FERA architect Ellington had described the project as the largest restoration ever undertaken by the federal government.<sup>62</sup> The "restoration" was really a rehabilitation of the extant Planters' Hotel and new construction of the long-vanished Dock Street Theatre. Sometimes the project was referred to as the Planters' Hotel project, but more often was called the Dock Street Theatre restoration since the goal was to recreate the eighteenth-century playhouse. The project area included the four conjoined brick buildings that comprised the Planters' Hotel, extending 155 feet south from Queen Street and 120 feet west of Church Street. Three of the four buildings faced Church Street and were three stories: the first sat on the corner of the intersection; the middle building

---

<sup>61</sup> Albert Simons to Emmett Robinson, 20 March 1936, Dock Street Theatre Collection, 1933-1958, Container 21/195, Carolina Art Association Correspondence, 1933-1954, Folder 25-195-2 (1937), South Carolina Historical Society [hereafter SCHS].

<sup>62</sup> "Work on Theater To Start in Week," *Charleston News & Courier*, May 25, 1935.

was a brownstone structure which served as the hotel's entrance; and the third was just south of the hotel building. The fourth building faced Queen Street and was four stories. According to Albert Simons, by 1935 the four buildings "were all but shelled. As though gutted by fire, virtually all the interiors were completely gone or rotted beyond repair."<sup>63</sup>

A new, two-story theater would be built in the space formed by the "L" of the four conjoined buildings, placing it to the west of the three buildings facing Church Street and invisible from the street. The audience would sit facing Queen Street and the stage built to abut the four-story building to the north. The total project area created a rectangular space. The theater and secondary rooms would occupy much of the first floor of the site, but plans for the building in the southeast corner of the project included space for a restaurant and dining room on the ground floor. The southwest portion of the rectangle would become an open courtyard with a fountain and space for outdoor dining. Offices, a balcony, and foyer would occupy the second floor of the rehabilitated buildings, while the third floor was to be divided into eight apartments (Figure 2.6).<sup>64</sup>

Before construction work began, the architects conducted preliminary research on the original theater to determine the extent of known concrete information about its history and architecture. Douglas Ellington did much of the initial research, relying heavily on the writings of local theater historian Eola Willis. Willis was as a member of the Colonial Dames, the Daughters of the American Revolution, the United Daughters of the Confederacy, and one of the founders of both the Society for the Preservation of Old

---

<sup>63</sup> Simons, "Dock St. Theater, Planters Hotel Add to City's Architectural Wealth."

<sup>64</sup> "Planters' Hotel Project to Begin," *Charleston News & Courier*, May 7, 1935; "Planters' Hotel Details Mapped," *Charleston News & Courier*, May 31, 1935; "Fine Restaurant for Dock Street Theatre," *Charleston News & Courier*, June 27, 1937.

Dwellings (SPOD) and the Carolina Art Commission (CAA).<sup>65</sup> In 1924, Willis had published *The Charleston Stage in the XVIII Century* in which she described Charleston's early theater scene using articles from the *South Carolina Gazette* from 1734 to January of 1801.<sup>66</sup> She outlined the Dock Street Theatre's tragic past, recounting the multiple fires within its first forty years that ultimately led to its extinction. Willis's eight years of labor to unearth the facts about theatrical productions in colonial Charleston illustrated the dearth of specific information about the city's first theater.

Despite Hopkins's assurance that Ellington had "succeeded in obtaining a very good idea as to what the original theater looked like," the architects were unable to find architectural plans of the original 1736 venue, although a 1739 map of Charleston indicated the location and size of the first Dock Street Theatre.<sup>67</sup> In spite of the lack of specific information, according to the project's leaders Charleston was the logical place to reinstate an important cultural center because it could boast the first purpose-built theater in the country. Based on Willis's and Ellington's historical research, and later supported by Simons, Harry Hopkins announced to the city that "our tentative research points very convincingly to the probability that the old theater, which has been supposed to have been the third building of its kind in the United States, was actually the first. This adds to the historical importance of the reconstruction project that has been launched."<sup>68</sup>

---

<sup>65</sup> Agatha A. Simmons, "Eola Willis: Writer of International Dispute" n.d., Eola Willis Papers, 1857-1941, Container 21/72, Biographical Papers, 1893-1950, Folder 21/72/3, SCHS. Eola Willis was also a member of the Huguenot Society, the Poetry Society of South Carolina, the Charleston Garden Club, the Century Club, the Musical Art Club, the Footlight Players, and the Epiphany Guild of St. Michael's Church.

<sup>66</sup> Willis, *The Charleston Stage in the XVIII Century*, v.

<sup>67</sup> "Byrnes and Hopkins Speak at Luncheon," *Charleston Evening Post*, March 22, 1935; "Hopkins to Dedicate Historic Theater Restored by WPA Workers," WPA Announcement No. 4-1615, November 21, 1937, RG 69, Entry 764, Box 11, NARA.

<sup>68</sup> "Byrnes and Hopkins Speak at Luncheon," *Charleston Evening Post*, March 22, 1935.

The claim of Charleston having the first purpose-built theater, however, was not uncontested. Charleston was in competition with Williamsburg, Virginia, the colonial state capital. Harold H. Shurtleff, director of research and records at Colonial Williamsburg, disputed the notion that Charleston's theater was built first and asserted that Williamsburg's theater dated to 1716.<sup>69</sup> Regardless of the particular historical details, however, Charleston could still claim to have an earlier theatre history than most American cities, a fact remarked upon in the *New York Times*' piece describing the Dock Street Theatre as fifteen years older than the Nassau Street Theatre in New York City and thirty years older than the Southwark Theatre in Philadelphia.<sup>70</sup> Charleston led the way in entertainment for burgeoning cities in the Northeast, earning its title as "the grandfather of America's great theatre industry."<sup>71</sup>

Charleston's assertion of being the first, or possibly second, city to offer theater as entertainment for its residents became an important promotional feature of the restoration project because it reinforced an image of Charleston's role as the premier cultural center of the South in the eighteenth century. In an article written for the Associated Press, managing editor of the *Charleston News & Courier* Thomas P. Lesesne boasted of the city's illustrious colonial past, expressing pride in Charleston's association with refined entertainment when other southern cities were in their cultural infancy: at the time the Dock Street Theatre opened its doors, for example, "Savannah was in its swaddling

---

<sup>69</sup> Michael Kammen, *Mystic Chords of Memory: The Transformation of Tradition in American Culture* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1991), 476.

<sup>70</sup> "Theatre and Hotel of 1736 Restored," *New York Times*, November 21, 1937.

<sup>71</sup> "First U.S. Theatre Restored with Help of American Seating Co.," *Motion Picture Herald* 130, February 5, 1938.

clothes.”<sup>72</sup> The *Atlanta Constitution* similarly described that when *The Recruiting Officer* first premiered in Charleston in 1736, “Indians and roughly clad backwoodsmen” and “the things of a wilderness primeval” were common to the outposts of the British empire.<sup>73</sup> While other southern cities were largely unsettled and provincial, Charleston had emerged as the leading colonial city in sophisticated cultural affairs.

While the ideological claim of being the originator of colonial theater was persuasive, the architects believed that the credibility of the Dock Street Theatre project rested largely on the perceived authenticity of their reconstructed building and its embodiment of three centuries of Charleston’s architecture. The task to materialize in the space the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth centuries required incredible imagination and skill. Native author DuBose Heyward astutely explained in the *Magazine of Art* that the problem of restoring the theater “was one requiring an unfailing sense of values past and present, and a daring originality in approach and execution.”<sup>74</sup>

Without original plans of the theater or even a description of its interior, the architects decided to base the design of the new Dock Street Theatre on the style of contemporary English playhouses, particularly in London, because that is where the colonists would have drawn inspiration for the construction of theater architecture.<sup>75</sup> With help from the staff of the Library of Congress, the architects found a reproduction of the design of London’s Drury Lane Theatre in Sheldon Chaney’s *The Theatre*, published in

---

<sup>72</sup> Thomas P. Lesesne, “Theatre Serves Past and Present,” *Charleston News & Courier*, November 27, 1937.

<sup>73</sup> “Historic Theater, 200 Years Old, Reopened by U.S.,” *Atlanta Constitution*, November 27, 1937.

<sup>74</sup> “Dock St. Theater Flourishes Again,” *Charleston News & Courier*, January 17, 1939.

<sup>75</sup> Douglas Ellington, Samuel Lapham, and Albert Simons, “Charleston Opens Historic Playhouse with Historic Play,” *Architectural Record* 83, no. 1 (January 1938).

1929.<sup>76</sup> The theater was built in 1674 by Christopher Wren, one of England's most famous architects of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries known especially for his church architecture.

The Drury Lane Theatre was an English Restoration-style theater, which refers to the architecture produced in England during the period beginning with the restoration of the Stuart monarchy in 1660 to the end of Charles II's reign in the 1680s. Restoration theaters usually featured a proscenium arch that framed the stage and bench seating, which Simons respected in the design of the new theater by incorporating five hundred tilted seats attached to a bench-style back. Thirteen viewing boxes seating eight persons each flanked three sides of the theater, and the back of the theater featured a gallery.<sup>77</sup>

Additional details and decorative elements created an environment in which the audience would "have the illusion of sitting in an 18<sup>th</sup> century playhouse."<sup>78</sup> Georgian-inspired woodwork of black cypress gleamed from an applied mixture of vinegar and iron filings; drapery decorated the viewing boxes and served in place of doors over the entryways leading from the lobby to the theater; chandeliers hung from the ceiling; brackets along the paneled walls encased electric candles; and a black metal ring suspended by black chains held candle lights that hung in front of the stage.<sup>79</sup> In addition to drawing on London playhouses for inspiration, Simons honored Charleston's own built heritage in the Dock Street Theatre's rebirth. He mimicked nearby St. Michael's Church

---

<sup>76</sup> Erin Shaw, "Preservation Prologue: Albert Simon's Adaptive Reuse of the Planters' Hotel as the Dock Street Theatre," (Seminar Paper, University of South Carolina, Columbia, 1998), pg. 7, Manuscripts, Schulz, C.B., SCL.

<sup>77</sup> Tobias, "Charleston Preparing To Reopen Oldest Theater With Historic Play."

<sup>78</sup> "Restored Ancient Theater," *State* (Columbia, SC), January 24, 1937.

<sup>79</sup> Shaw, "Preservation Prologue," 9.

in the coved ceiling of the theater and copied the British coat-of-arms above the stage from St. James Church in Goose Creek (Figure 2.7).<sup>80</sup>

While the new theater in spirit represented the eighteenth century, the extant buildings utilized for the project were physical legacies of the nineteenth century. The Planters' Hotel's façade on Church Street was the image most associated with the Dock Street Theatre project. Simons and Lapham made sure to preserve the most distinguishing features of the old structure: the original cast iron balcony in a morning-glory pattern and sandstone entrance columns with rare carved mahogany cornices from Barbados (Figure 2.1). Ellington, Simons, and Lapham described the preservation philosophy guiding the restoration in the January 1938 issue of *Architectural Record*: "The technique of restoration in Charleston differs substantially from that in vogue elsewhere in that it is 'freer' and tends to preserve, externally at least, the cumulative effects of age and use." They aimed to restore the historic material of the Planters' Hotel without compromising its integrity. The architects repaired the brickwork and the balcony, installed new window sashes and frames, and applied a thin color wash to the repaired walls to duplicate "the soft rose of the old stucco." In addition, they reinforced the exterior walls and foundations, and rebuilt the roof, floors, and partitions with mostly steel and concrete, which they hid from sight.<sup>81</sup>

The interiors of the four buildings, as planned, were divided into different functional spaces to serve the theater. In addition to the auditorium, the architects designed an entrance lobby in the space of the old hotel lobby, dining room and dining cloister, an open courtyard, a smoking room, a bar, dressing rooms, offices and

---

<sup>80</sup> Simons, "Dock St. Theater, Planters Hotel Add to City's Architectural Wealth."

<sup>81</sup> Ellington, et al., "Charleston Opens Historic Playhouse with Historic Play."



committee rooms, and a green room, traditionally a retiring place for actors but also to be used for lectures, rehearsals, and small concerts. The eight third-floor apartments ranged from a single room and bath at twenty-five dollars a month to two rooms, a kitchen, and bath at fifty dollars a month.<sup>82</sup>

Finally, the twentieth century materialized in the modern lighting, sound, and stage equipment outfitted for the new performance space. The fifty-six feet by thirty-six feet stage with a three-story fly-loft and projectors for motion pictures was of “the most modern design and far more complete than in any other theatre in the south,” the Carolina Art Association boasted.<sup>83</sup> The theater also featured a revolving stage to enable quick scene changes. A WPA relief worker assigned to the restoration project described the switchboard as “of the most modern kind” with trap doors in the stage floor. Moreover, the fireproof stage had an asbestos curtain with fusible lengths, “which act like solder and melt with when the air around them reaches a certain temperature to release the curtain.”<sup>84</sup> According to DuBose Heyward, the effect of the architects’ sensible and inspired design combined “to an extraordinary degree the atmosphere of the past with the elaborate equipment of the modern theatre.” Wrapped in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century decorative garb, the twentieth-century theater of reinforced concrete was built to “withstand the assaults of centuries.”<sup>85</sup>

---

<sup>82</sup> “Hopkins to Give Theater To City,” *Charleston News & Courier*, November 11, 1937.

<sup>83</sup> Carolina Art Association, “Untitled,” n.d., pg. 3-4., Dock Street Theatre Collection, 1933-1958, Container 195, Folder 21-195-2 (1937), SCHS.

<sup>84</sup> “Stage Work Done in WPA Theater,” *Charleston News & Courier*, April 8, 1937.

<sup>85</sup> Heyward, “Dock Street Theatre: Carolina Art Association, Management.”

## SALVAGED GOODS: BETTER WITH AGE

To help reproduce the environment of Old Charleston, Simons and Lapham relocated architectural elements salvaged from a nearby nineteenth-century mansion, the Radcliffe-King House, to the new Dock Street Theatre.<sup>86</sup> The use of plaster, wainscot, mantelpieces, cornices, and mahogany doors from this early nineteenth-century residence – material culture clearly imbued with social meaning – aided in the effort to fabricate a visual and physical connection to the past for theatergoers in the 1930s. Historic architecture, historian W. Fitzhugh Brundage has argued, “made tangible the mythic colonial and antebellum South, allowing visitors to experience firsthand remnants of what was purportedly one of the nation’s most elegant and refined societies.”<sup>87</sup> The publication of Margaret Mitchell’s bestselling novel *Gone with the Wind* in 1936, which later was adapted into an immensely successful film in 1939, helped to popularize a nostalgic image of the Old South. The theme of romanticizing the historic South was a main tenant of 1930s popular culture as it reinforced traditional values and offered a creative escape from modern troubles. In historic southern architecture visitors could envision Tara, the plantation home of Scarlett O’Hara, and what it symbolized: leisure, a rigid racial and class social structure, and southern hospitality.<sup>88</sup>

Horror writer H. P. Lovecraft illustrated the effectiveness of the trend in letters he penned to his friend Herman Charles Koenig, a collector of fantasy literature, during a

---

<sup>86</sup> In historic sources, the Radcliffe-King House is also referred to as the Mitchell-King House or Mansion. The name derived from its second owner, prominent Charleston judge Mitchell King.

<sup>87</sup> Brundage, *The Southern Past*, 208.

<sup>88</sup> Lawrence W. Levine, *The Unpredictable Past: Exploration in American Cultural History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 218; Lydia Mattice Brandt, *First in the Homes of His Countrymen: George Washington’s Mount Vernon in the American Imagination* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2016), 61.

visit to Charleston in January of 1936. In his long letters, Lovecraft provided a thorough “systematic itinerary” of a walking tour through historic downtown Charleston. He wrote nothing of the economic troubles the city faced, instead admiring the “unique colonial features” of the grand homes and buildings elite Charlestonians had maintained. Because of the “encouraging reclamation” of historic landmarks funded by New Deal programs, which Lovecraft hoped “may not be interrupted by any reactionary political move,” Charleston remained “refreshingly free from ‘modernistic’ architecture.” The writer admired famous Charleston sites and marveled at the ongoing restoration of the Planters’ Hotel and the Georgian buildings of Vanderhorst Row on East Bay Street. New historical plaques designated many of the city’s landmarks, the work of the Historical Commission of Charleston which had received a WPA grant of approximately \$2,500 in November of 1935 to place several hundred markers on historic buildings.<sup>89</sup> After taking in Charleston’s charm and history, Lovecraft remarked that the city “is alive in every sense despite the omnipresent aura of the past.”<sup>90</sup>

The same time Lovecraft traversed the quaint alleys of Charleston, prolific writer Nina Wilcox Putnam published a piece in the *Saturday Evening Post* in which she narrated “The Coastal Route to Florida.” Of Charleston, Putnam wrote, “All its beauty remains untouched, except where the wave of thoughtful restoration which seems to be sweeping the South has healed some of its gaping wounds.” Echoing Lovecraft’s declaration, “There’s no place quite like Charleston,” Putnam eloquently penned, “the

---

<sup>89</sup> “WPA Gives \$2500 to Mark Historic Houses and Spots,” *Charleston News & Courier*, November 20, 1935.

<sup>90</sup> H. P. Lovecraft to Herman Charles Koenig, 12 January 1936, cited in Taylor, *Charleston and the Great Depression*, 69-71. Lovecraft wrote that Charleston “divides the honours with Quebec as the most distinctive and fascinating city in North America (north of Mexico, at least), and of the two I tend to prefer it in the long run.”

grandeur of the Old South is more persistently evident [in Charleston] than in any other place of which I know.”<sup>91</sup> The city’s cultural elite, evidently, was successful in instilling a reverence for the past in visitors by manipulating the city’s built environment.

The relocation of architectural pieces from the Radcliffe-King House to the Dock Street Theatre in the late 1930s was part of this cultural process of protecting the historic fabric of Charleston treasured by residents and visitors alike. The Federal-Style Radcliffe-King House was built in the first decade of the nineteenth century by Thomas Radcliffe, one of the wealthiest merchants in Charleston, and sat on the corner of Meeting and George streets nearby the homes of prominent nineteenth-century Charlestonians Gabriel Manigault and Middleton Pinckney. In 1824, leading South Carolina jurist Mitchell King bought the estate from the Radcliffe family and turned his home into a center of literary and artistic life in Charleston, entertaining prestigious guests including the famous English novelist William Makepeace Thackeray and American novelist and historian William Gilmore Simms.<sup>92</sup> When King died in 1862, his son assumed ownership of the home and sold the property to the City of Charleston in 1880 for \$11,700. Charleston’s city council invested an additional \$4,000 to rehabilitate the building so it was suitable for use as the new male public high school. When enrollment increased to over five hundred pupils, the city decided that the building no longer served the school’s needs and abandoned the property in 1922.

Albert Simons had known that the fate of the former Radcliffe-King House was in “desperate straits” as early as 1932. When he learned that the City Board of Public

---

<sup>91</sup> Lovecraft to Herman Charles Koenig, 12 January 1936, cited in Taylor, *Charleston and the Great Depression*, 85; “Helping to Spread Our Fame,” *Charleston News & Courier*, January 17, 1936.

<sup>92</sup> Calgar Aydin, “The Potential of Virtual Heritage Reconstruction in Lost Ansonborough,” (M.Sc. thesis, Clemson University, 2012), 17-23.

School Commissioners planned to destroy the old mansion, he urged his partner Lapham to ask his father, a city councilman who was friends with the chairman of the school board, to allow their firm to use architectural elements from the house's interior in the theater's restoration. For many years before beginning the Dock Street Theatre project, Simons and Lapham recorded and recycled architectural pieces from threatened buildings in Charleston, earning themselves the reputation of a preservation-minded architectural firm. According to Robert Weyeneth, historian of Charleston's historic preservation movement, Simons' "salvage effort was a partial solution to what seemed to him an assault on the civic heritage."<sup>93</sup> Simons viewed the salvaging of Charleston's architectural history as a way to combat the loss of civic and cultural identity.

The school board granted Simons' request to salvage the mansion's pieces and when it listed the building for sale for \$25,000 in 1935, it did so with the condition that the interior woodwork be retained by the Board for use in the Dock Street Theatre. Until Simons and Lapham were ready to install the pieces in the theater, the Charleston Museum became their repository.<sup>94</sup> The Radcliffe-King pieces the architects refitted for the Dock Street Theatre were Adam style, a neoclassical decorative style popularized in pre-revolutionary America and often featured in Federal-Style buildings. They included Palladian windows, mantelpieces, scrolled plasterwork, and intricate carvings of flora and figures. The Radcliffe-King mantelpieces, relocated to the theater's Green Room, were some of the most decorative and impressive salvaged elements. They featured Ionic and

---

<sup>93</sup> Weyeneth, *Historic Preservation for a Living City*, 6.

<sup>94</sup> "Old High School is Put on Block," *Charleston News & Courier*, August 15, 1935; Aydin, "The Potential of Virtual Heritage Reconstruction in Lost Ansonborough," 18-20. When the city approved the demolition of the building to make way for the College of Charleston's new gymnasium in 1938, Albert Simons designed the new gym and utilized the old mansion's masonry walls and the iron fence delineating the property's perimeter in its construction.

Corinthian columns, biblical scenes, angelic figures, and draped floral embellishments (Figure 2.8).<sup>95</sup>

Albert Simons described the installation of these elements as difficult and necessitating special consideration. The pieces' removal, transportation, and placement in the spaces of the new theater "represented a special problem calling for the utmost care and skill."<sup>96</sup> The careful restoration work gained the attention of Earl M. Collison, who reverentially described the installed pieces as "Relics Preserved" in the *Charleston Evening Post*. In order to meld the salvaged pieces into the new theater space, the "usual construction procedure had to be reversed." Rather than the interior woodwork being designed to fit openings, the openings had to be fitted for the Radcliffe-King pieces "in order that the symmetry, proportion and design of these valuable features of the building might not be marred."<sup>97</sup> Safeguarding the authentic artifacts was of primary importance so as to not diminish their cultural worth.

Simons and Lapham hired A. H. Fischer Company, a Charleston lumber company, to restore the millwork in the new theater. In its printed advertisement showcasing the millwork, the company declared that "All Charleston is proud of the restoration of this ancient landmark that retains the quiet dignity of the past yet with the sturdiness of modern construction" (Figure 2.9).<sup>98</sup> DuBose Heyward similarly described the Adam style woodwork as bringing to the new theater "not only its beauty of plaster and woodwork but its wealth of tradition extending far back into Charleston's past." He

---

<sup>95</sup> Heyward, "Dock Street Theatre: Carolina Art Association Management."

<sup>96</sup> Simons, "Dock St. Theater, Planters Hotel Add to City's Architectural Wealth."

<sup>97</sup> Collison, "Project Reaches Fruition 3 Years After Inception."

<sup>98</sup> "Dock Street Theater Millwork Restored by A. H. Fischer Co.," *Charleston News & Courier*, November 28, 1937. Editor Earl M. Collison used nearly identical language in his article "Project Reaches Fruition 3 Years After Inception," *Charleston Evening Post*, November 26, 1937.

continued with an account of the complementary combination of architectural styles within the one restoration project:

For here was no slavish reproduction of a single period, but a bringing together under a single roof of an early eighteenth-century theatre, a group of simple early Charleston dwelling houses, an unmistakable example of the Classic Revival, and the harmonious incorporation therein of interior decoration removed bodily from a Georgian mansion. The harmonizing of these various factors, the ingenuity and taste with which they were merged one into another, and the delightful element of the unexpected which one now encounters in passing from room to room, give this building a character unique in American restorations.<sup>99</sup>

While the rebuilt theater captured the spirit of the 1736 theater, the architectural pieces moved from the Radcliffe-King House into the rooms of the rehabilitated Planters' Hotel manifested in physical form Charleston's prosperous antebellum history of the early 1800s. Edmund P. Grice, speaking to members of the Exchange Club of Charleston, said that the interior pieces from the Radcliffe-King mansion were required "to reproduce the theater as a piece of artistic construction and not just a mere theater building."<sup>100</sup>

The incorporation of salvaged architectural elements into the theater lent credibility to the restoration effort because the pieces were considered genuine artifacts of history that provided visitors with an authentic experience of partaking in Charleston's past. The Adam style woodwork presented the solution to the lack of existing written documentation regarding the architectural design of the original eighteenth-century theater. Moreover, the pieces served as visual reminders of Charleston's heyday. As material culture scholar Leora Auslander has argued, three-dimensional objects can serve as "memory cues, as souvenirs in a quite literal sense."<sup>101</sup> While theatergoers could not

---

<sup>99</sup> Heyward, "Dock Street Theatre: Carolina Art Association Management."

<sup>100</sup> "E. P. Grice Hails New Deal Works," *Charleston News & Courier*, July 9, 1936.

<sup>101</sup> Leora Auslander, "Beyond Words," *American Historical Review* 110, no. 4 (October 2005): 1020.

walk away after an evening of entertainment with a piece of architecture, the theater itself became a memory cue recalling the image of the prosperous antebellum Charleston.

## **HISTORIC SHRINE RESTORED**

Early plans called for the Dock Street Theatre to open on February 12, 1936, to mark the institution's two-hundredth anniversary. The timeframe was soon extended, however, probably as a result of construction challenges posed by the meticulous and careful adaptive use of the Planters' Hotel as well as the labor turnover common to WPA relief projects. In mid-May of 1936, already past the initial opening date, approximately eighty men still were employed on the project and FERA appropriated another \$60,000 to continue the work. The *Charleston News & Courier* began reporting that project would cost \$250,000 by its end, with a new expected completion date of November of that year.<sup>102</sup>

Changes in work relief administration as the FERA was phased out and the WPA established also accounted for delays in the theater's progress. Work on the project ceased while Charleston County transitioned from the old to the new relief agency in October of 1936. Hopkins appointed as state director of the WPA in South Carolina Lawrence M. Pinkney, former chairman of the Charleston County Democratic Executive Committee, four-term city councilman, and ally of Senator James Byrnes. While the transition was not seamless, the WPA's organization meant that Pinkney now answered

---

<sup>102</sup> "Outlook for U.S. Projects in City Good, Maybank Says," *Charleston News & Courier*, May 13, 1936; "13 Big U.S. Jobs Cost \$10,000,000," *Charleston News & Courier*, May 17, 1936; "Theater Funds Granted," *Charleston News & Courier*, May 19, 1936; "Allows \$60,000 to Finish Work," *State* (Columbia, SC), May 19, 1936. In May of 1936, with eighty men on the job and an estimated cost of \$250,000, the Dock Street Theatre restoration accounted for approximately three percent of workers employed on federal aid projects and two-and-a-half percent of the approximately \$10,000,000 in New Deal projects in Charleston County.



to Hopkins as the federal director rather than politicians, in all likelihood guaranteeing continued support for the restoration project.<sup>103</sup>

Meanwhile, the work force at the time of forty men at the theater site was reduced to a “skeleton crew” of a carpenter and a few laborers who boarded up the property to protect it until more funds were released. Malcolm C. Miller, named regional WPA director, assured Mayor Maybank that the project would receive his approval and that of Marvin Porter, regional WPA engineer. As promised, by the end of October President Roosevelt had signed an order renewing the theater restoration as a WPA project and allotting more funds so that work could restart.<sup>104</sup>

Late in November of 1936 a full work force was back on the job site and the *Charleston News & Courier* reported that the project was about seventy percent finished. Toward the end of January of 1937, project costs exceeded the expected \$250,000, and at the project’s completion in November the federal government had allocated \$350,000 to the restoration of the Dock Street Theatre.<sup>105</sup> At the end, Simons reported that engineering preparations necessitated over twenty-five sheets of architectural drawings, more than one hundred sheets of architectural detail, and around twenty-five sheets of structural, electrical, mechanical, and heating plans. In addition, the building required sixty-four tons of structural steel, an acre of flooring, eight miles of wood strips for plaster, 530 tons of concrete, and “uncounted bricks, kegs of nails and gallons of paint.”

---

<sup>103</sup> Hayes, *South Carolina and the New Deal*, 52-59.

<sup>104</sup> “Dock Street Theatre Funds Awaited,” *Charleston News & Courier*, October 10, 1936; “Dock Street Theatre Restoration Halted; WPA Coin Used Up,” *Variety*, October 21, 1936; “President Allots Dock Street Fund,” *Charleston News & Courier*, October 25, 1936; “Theater Project Gets Some Funds,” *Charleston News & Courier*, November 12, 1936.

<sup>105</sup> “Dock St. Theater Done by Spring,” *Charleston News & Courier*, November 21, 1936; “Restored Ancient Theater,” *State* (Columbia, SC), January 24, 1937.

Overall, 1,500 truckloads of rubbish were removed from the restoration site and one hundred truckloads of flooring and framing were donated to the poor to use as firewood.<sup>106</sup>

In a publicity release sent to hundreds of daily newspapers announcing the project's completion, the WPA highlighted the technical problems that arose during the construction phase of the project. For example, in order to reinforce the building without removing the existing walls, workers developed a "special technique" that required digging six-to-eight-feet-deep pockets beside the solid standing walls which allowed them to remain intact.<sup>107</sup> In emphasizing the construction challenges posed by the project, the architects and the WPA positioned the Dock Street Theatre as a national example of skillful and masterfully-executed architectural restoration. While Charlestonians may have heralded the Dock Street Theatre as a success mostly for its architectural continuity with a cherished past, the WPA capitalized on the technical challenges faced and overcome by the architects so that it could propagandize the project to which it contributed an astounding \$350,000 in federal funds.

It makes sense, then, that the central office of the WPA in Washington, D.C., included the Dock Street Theatre in its historic shrine restoration program. South Carolina WPA state director Pinckney corresponded with Julius F. Stone of the WPA

---

<sup>106</sup> Albert Simons, "Dock St. Theater, Planters Hotel Add to City's Architectural Wealth." Simons and Lapham identified the following people as important in the engineering and construction of the theater: John E. Macdonald and J.C. Cranwell, who prepared all estimates of costs and gave general engineering assistance; R. B. Bennett, who received bids and awarded contracts for materials needed; W. H. James, who was superintendent of construction on the job; A. McL. Martin, who checked in deliveries of materials; J.A. Elsey and A. W. Fisher, carpenter foremen; T. Ritchie Simmons, who supervised the reinforced concrete work; and Cambridge Trott, resident engineer during the early stages of the construction.

<sup>107</sup> "Hopkins to Dedicate Historic Theater Restored by WPA Workers," WPA Announcement No. 4-1615, November 21, 1937, RG 69, Entry 764, Box 11, NARA.

Information Service in D.C. about the theater restoration and sent pictures of the work-in-progress in February and March of 1937.<sup>108</sup> Both Pinckney and Mabel Montgomery, state director of the South Carolina Writers' Project, noted that the only other restoration activity in the state was the Winthrop College Chapel in Rock Hill, but the Dock Street Theatre was clearly of more cultural acclaim.<sup>109</sup> With Pinckney's connections to Charleston's elite, Hopkins's and Maybank's personal support of the project, and the high price the federal government paid for its completion, it is unsurprising that the WPA selected the Dock Street Theatre as the state's best example of restoration activity.

Not everyone, however, was enamored by the reconstruction of the Dock Street Theatre. There were people in Charleston suspicious of Maybank and his New Deal allies, particularly farmers who had suffered the most from the devastation of the cotton economy following the Civil War, but also conservative critics like former Charleston mayors John Grace and Thomas Stoney, business elite, and some members of old aristocratic families. Especially opposed to the New Deal was W.W. Ball, the editor of the *Charleston News & Courier*, who was a staunch defender of white supremacy and the ruling power of Charleston's white elite. Ball steadfastly criticized President Roosevelt and the New Deal, repeatedly publishing exclamations of "cannot endorse" in response to the Roosevelt administration's policies, including its social security plans, efforts to increase exports, and measures that would help the "negro population."<sup>110</sup> Ball's political views, however, remained peripheral in a city where support for Democratic mayor

---

<sup>108</sup> Lawrence M. Pinckney to Julius F. Stone, Jr., 26 February 1937; 1 March 1937; 10 March 1937, RG 69, Entry 764, Box 11, NARA.

<sup>109</sup> Mabel Montgomery to Henry G. Alsberg, 17 March 1937, RG 69, Entry 764, Box 11, NARA; Lawrence M. Pinckney to Ruth B. Evans, 18 September 1940, RG 69, Entry 678, Box 15, Folder: 290-A Historical Shrine Reconstruction and Preservation, NARA.

<sup>110</sup> "Cannot Endorse," *Charleston News & Courier*, May 17, 1936.

Maybank and New Deal projects remained high. The *Charleston News & Courier* reported extensively, and mostly positively, on the restoration of the Dock Street Theatre, while at the same time disparaging overspending as federal dollars continued to flow into Charleston through New Deal programs.<sup>111</sup>

Criticism of the Dock Street Theatre project came from outsiders as well, although it was rare. One critic was journalist R. P. Harris, a preeminent editorial writer based in Baltimore. In an article for the *Baltimore Evening Sun*, Harris wrote, “Surely, the architects had a delightful time with this project. They ransacked decayed mansions for lovely doors and panels, they experimented with plaster and paint and ornamentation, to achieve what seems beyond question the right effect.” Harris’s language makes the salvage efforts praised by Charlestonians sound like a plundering of the city’s treasures. He also predicted that in a city of less than 65,000 people and with most out-of-towners preferring to visit plantations and beaches in Charleston, there would not be enough interest in theatergoing to justify the cost of construction or sustain an audience once open.<sup>112</sup>

Some Charleston residents shared Harris’s concerns about the worth of the theater restoration. After a voluntary inspection of the Charleston County jail, one resident criticized money being spent on “unnecessary project[s]” like the Azalea Festival or the Dock Street Theatre, the former created for the “commercial advantage” of the city and the latter for the “cultural,” when funds could be used to improve the conditions of the

---

<sup>111</sup> “\$50,000 Deeper in Debt,” *Charleston News & Courier*, May 25, 1937; Taylor, *Charleston and the Great Depression*, xxxi.

<sup>112</sup> R. P. Harris, “Charleston Ponders What to Do with Its New WPA Playhouse,” n.d. [early January 1938], RG 69, Entry 764, Box 11, NARA.

jail.<sup>113</sup> Moreover, support for federal funding of the arts was not universal. A Charleston resident writing to the *News & Courier* called it “no business of government in any circumstance to hire unemployed musicians, artists, actors, writers. They produce nothing necessary even to the more abundant life.”<sup>114</sup> This Charlestonian’s comment speaks to the larger wave of criticism increasingly leveled in the mid-to-late 1930s against Federal One programs, particular the politically controversial Federal Theatre Project which led to congressional scrutiny and the program’s early end in 1939.<sup>115</sup> Despite these voices of discontent, the Dock Street Theatre project received remarkable admiration and praise from Charlestonians, government officials, and the press alike.

#### **“CHARLESTON BLUE BLOODS” ENJOY OPENING NIGHT**

Two months before the Dock Street Theatre was set to open its curtains, Douglas D. Ellington told the city’s Exchange Club that “Charleston probably is creating the germ which will serve as the nucleus for the national theater movement in America.”<sup>116</sup> When Simons and Lapham finished the architectural work, the Footlight Players, under the supervision of director Emmett Robinson, began readying the theater for the first performance of George Farquhar’s *The Recruiting Officer*. As the project neared completion, the City of Charleston considered the options for permanent management of the theater. The Ways and Means Committee of city council recommended that the Carolina Art Association (CAA) take over operations of the Dock Street Theatre

---

<sup>113</sup> “Ever Been to Jail,” *Charleston News & Courier*, March 29, 1937.

<sup>114</sup> “\$870,000 a Month,” *Charleston News & Courier*, December 10, 1937.

<sup>115</sup> For example, see Jane De Hart Mathews, *The Federal Theatre 1935-1939: Plays, Relief, and Politics* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1967).

<sup>116</sup> “National Theater Germ Seen Here,” *Charleston News & Courier*, September 23, 1937.

following its opening on the condition that it raise \$12,000 from private individuals for operation and maintenance costs.<sup>117</sup>

The CAA was a fitting choice; incorporated by an act of the state legislature in 1858 for the purpose of promoting the arts, the CAA had managed the Gibbes Art Gallery in Charleston since 1905 and was the city's leading cultural organization. Just over two weeks before opening night, the CAA entered a two-year contract with the City of Charleston to manage the Dock Street Theatre for one dollar a year.<sup>118</sup> Upon assuming operation of the theater, CAA president Robert N. S. Whitelaw said that it was his desire to make it "a vital part of the life of the community and in no sense a stagnant 'museum piece.'"<sup>119</sup> The CAA imagined that the theater would be used by local art organizations such as the Footlight Players, the Poetry Society of South Carolina, the Musical Art Club, the Society for the Preservation of Spirituals, and the dramatic societies of the Junior League, Ashley Hall, and College of Charleston.

When Holger Cahill, national director of the WPA's Federal Art Project (FAP), visited Columbia and Charleston in early April of 1936, he listed the Greenville textile museum, the Columbia art gallery, and the Dock Street Theatre restoration as the most important projects in the state.<sup>120</sup> Accordingly, resources of other New Deal programs went toward readying the theater. The South Carolina FAP, under the direction of state director Robert Armstrong Andrews, oversaw the set production for the opening

---

<sup>117</sup> "Art Association May Run Theater," *Charleston News & Courier*, June 19, 1937.

<sup>118</sup> Harold A. Mouzon and Robert N. S. Whitelaw, "Carolina Art Association to Ways and Means Committee, City Council, City of Charleston, SC," February 4, 1948, Folder 26-35-11, Albert Simons Papers, SCHS; "Playhouse Contract Signed by Maybank," *Charleston News & Courier*, November 11, 1937.

<sup>119</sup> Robert N. S. Whitelaw, "Whitelaw Tells of Future Plans," *Charleston News & Courier*, December 5, 1937.

<sup>120</sup> "WPA Hopes to Keep Artists at Home, National Head Says," *Charleston News & Courier*, April 9, 1936.

performances of *The Recruiting Officer*. Although many FAP workers helped created the sets, artist and actress Alicia Rhett directed the painting of scenery, aided by her assistant Bertie Limbaker. The stage's main backdrop was based on prominent eighteenth-century artist and playwright John Black White's 1838 painting of Charleston, which depicted Broad Street's St. Michael's Church, the old custom house, and other landmarks.<sup>121</sup> Rhett also painted the English coat of arms over the proscenium arch surrounding the stage (Figure 2.7). While working on the Dock Street Theatre project, Rhett auditioned for a role in the film adaption *Gone with the Wind*, drawing further attention to the theater's restoration.<sup>122</sup>

Meanwhile, women in the local WPA sewing room on Queen Street spent many weeks making the stage and balcony curtains. According to Richard B. Bennett, superintendent of construction, the rust-colored velour curtains with dull gold edging "blend beautifully with the Cypress paneling of the houses [balcony boxes] and add greatly to the old fashioned appearance."<sup>123</sup> Two skilled artisans not from the local work relief registers were hired to lend their expertise to the restoration. The first was seventy-two-year-old John Smith, "a negro artisan not on relief rolls," and, according to Bennett,

---

<sup>121</sup> "Charleston of 1838 Shown in Dock Street Scenery," *Charleston News & Courier*, November 25, 1937; Rowena Wilson Tobias, "New Dock Street Theater To Repeat Comedy Given More Than 200 Years Ago," *State* (Columbia, SC), November 25, 1937. Six additional backdrops were created for the comedy: the first represented a paneled room based on an English manor house of the early eighteenth century; the second was modeled after the famous Double Cube room at Wilton Hall in England, designed by the English architect Inigo; the third depicted two paintings in the style of the old masters titled Spring and Autumn; the fourth was a library scene based on Hogarth prints; the fifth depicted a court of justice in prison that was adapted from a seventeenth-century Italian theatrical backdrop inspired by the drawings of Piranesi; and the sixth featured a woodland scene based on the local landscape of Charleston.

<sup>122</sup> Alicia Rhett played India Wilkes in *Gone with the Wind* (1939). "Alicia Rhett Off for Film Test in North," *Charleston News & Courier*, March 14, 1937; Waring, "A Cradle of America's Theater Will Harbor the Drama Again."

<sup>123</sup> "Curtains Are Being Hung," RG 69, Entry 764, Box 11, Folder: H.S. – SC – Dock Street Theatre & Planters' Hotel - Textual," NARA.

“the only man in Charleston who knows how to do such work.”<sup>124</sup> Smith had previously restored the plasterwork on St. Philip’s Church in 1920, and was hired to decorate the elaborate plaster cornices and ceiling of the theater.<sup>125</sup>

The second skilled artisan was William Melton Halsey, a young native Charlestonian who had studied fresco painting under Lewis Rubenstein while attending the prestigious School of the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston. Albert Simons gave Halsey his first commission as a professional artist when he hired him to work on the Dock Street Theatre. According to Halsey, Simons “was very concerned that everything should be in period so that none of what I did was original.”<sup>126</sup> Accordingly, Halsey decorated the courtyard fresco with the traditional theatrical masks of comedy and tragedy copied from the old Academy of Music in Charleston, and adapted paintings by eighteenth-century English artist William Hogarth to complete the four oil murals in the barroom (Figure 2.10).<sup>127</sup>

After thirty months of construction, from May of 1935 to November of 1937, the Dock Street Theatre restoration finally came to an end. The exterior preserved, the interior gutted and rebuilt, the construction challenges overcome, and the decorations set, all was prepared for opening week. Leading up to the theater’s opening, the WPA’s

---

<sup>124</sup> Waring, “A Cradle of America’s Theater Will Harbor the Drama Again.”

<sup>125</sup> Simons, “Dock St. Theater, Planters Hotel Add to City’s Architectural Wealth”; Writers’ Program of the Works Projects Administration in the State of South Carolina, *South Carolina: A Guide to the Palmetto State*, 117; The state guidebook described this work, but did not name Smith, instead referring to him as “an ex-slave” who was “the only artisan considered competent to take charge of the plasterwork in the enlarged clerestory.”

<sup>126</sup> Halsey, William, and Corrie McCallum, interview by Liza Kirwin. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. October 27, 1986. <https://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/interviews/oral-history-interview-william-halsey-and-corrie-mccallum-12465#overview>.

<sup>127</sup> “Halsey Frescoes Theater’s Mural,” *Charleston News & Courier*, October 3, 1937; T. R. Waring, Jr., “A Cradle of America’s Theater Will Harbor the Drama Again.” The four panels selected were “The Enraged Musician,” “Modern Midnight Conversation,” and two prints from the series of the Rake’s Progress, the “Gaming House Scene” and the “Mad House Scene.”



central office drafted an announcement to be released to newspapers nationwide: “Hopkins to Dedicate Historic Theater Restored by WPA Workers.”<sup>128</sup> Excitement brewed in major cities across the country as Charleston prepared to unveil its reconstructed colonial gem. Newspaper editors from the *Associated Press*, *Washington Post*, and *New York Times* sent letters to Albert Simons and the CAA requesting information and photographs of the theater. Closer to home, the *State* newspaper in Columbia congratulated Charleston on its successful restoration project, which represented “the springing of a memorable past into this present New Deal modernity.”<sup>129</sup>

The first two performances of *The Recruiting Officer* were scheduled for Friday, November 26, and Saturday, November 27, and were invitation-only. One thousand invitations were issued to the city and state’s leading figures. Fifty tickets were distributed to the Charleston city council members and guests, three hundred to patriotic and civic organizations, three hundred to city boards and commissions, two hundred to federal and state officials, fifty to military units in the Charleston area, fifty to county officials, and fifty to colleges, newspapers, and dramatic critics (Figure 2.11). Making an appearance on opening night were senators from Berkeley, Horry, Richland, and Dorchester counties, and leading educators from the Citadel, Winthrop College, the Medical College of South Carolina, Newberry College, and Furman University. Taking their esteemed places amongst the state’s elite on Friday evening were federal representatives Harry Hopkins, WPA director; Ellen S. Woodward, assistant director in charge of women’s and professional projects; and Nickolai Sokoloff, director of the

---

<sup>128</sup> “Hopkins to Dedicate Historic Theater Restored by WPA Workers,” WPA Announcement No. 4-1615, November 21, 1937, RG 69, Entry 764, Box 11, NARA.

<sup>129</sup> Carolina Art Association correspondence, n.d., Dock Street Theatre Collection, 1933-1958, Container 21/195-197, SCHS; “Dock Street Theatre Restored,” *State* (Columbia, SC), November 24, 1937.

Federal Music Project. First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt was invited, but unable to attend because of Thanksgiving plans at Warm Springs in Georgia.<sup>130</sup>

The events of the evening recreated for theatergoers the ambience of the original theater's opening night in February of 1736, imitating the dress and entertainment of the initial eighteenth-century production. Citadel cadets and College of Charleston students, dressed in period garb, served as the ushers and escorted guests to their seats. They presented each guest in attendance with three souvenirs that celebrated the theater's completion after two-and-a-half years of painstaking research and construction: a commemorative booklet prepared by Douglas Ellington; the program to *The Recruiting Officer*; and handheld fans for the women in attendance (Figure 2.11). The fans were presented by Roberta Maybank, the mayor's daughter, and were similar to those ladies would have used in 1736 to conceal their blushes during the risqué performance.<sup>131</sup>

Once guests were seated, the evening formally began with a Charleston String Symphony concert illuminated by candlelight. Following the musical performance, WPA director Harry Hopkins presented the key to the theater to Mayor Maybank, enacting the giving and receiving of the "gift" of the Dock Street Theatre from the federal government to the City of Charleston. In his speech, Hopkins related to the audience his affection for Charleston and acknowledged its distinct heritage:

There is no city in America where this could have been done other than Charleston. This city has escaped the ruthless march of the industrial system. Here

---

<sup>130</sup> "Hopkins to Give Theater To City," *Charleston News & Courier*, November 11, 1937; "Playhouse Debut Bids Are Issued," *Charleston News & Courier*, November 16, 1937; "Dock Street Theatre Restored," *State* (Columbia, SC), November 24, 1937; "Formal Opening Begins Tonight at Dock St. Theater," *Charleston News & Courier*, November 26, 1937. Aubrey C. Williams, deputy administrator of the Works Progress Administration, was also invited, but was unable to attend the opening.

<sup>131</sup> "Souvenirs Will Be Presented at Opening of Dock Street Theater," *Charleston Evening Post*, November 26, 1937; "Dock Street Theater Ushers At Formal Opening To Be Cadets and Collegians," *Charleston News & Courier*, November 19, 1937; R. M. Hitt, Jr., "City's Culture Made Theater Gift Possible, Hopkins Says," *Charleston News & Courier*, November 27, 1937.

a heritage of culture and arts is honored and respected. In dedicating this theater I would dedicate it to the people of Charleston – proud, fearless, courageous, intelligent. You have accepted faithfully a proud heritage and I believe your children and your children’s children will accept the same heritage from you untarnished. Two hundred years from now our descendants may sit in this very theater. I hope they can say the same of us – proud, fearless, courageous, intelligent. It gives me great pleasure to present to the mayor of this city the key to this theater on behalf of the United States government.<sup>132</sup>

Hopkins surely romanticized the city’s illustrious past and unique claim to resisting modernity; Charleston had not escaped the march of industrialization. However, he accurately voiced the city’s deep commitment to ensuring that its built heritage survived for future generations to enjoy and protect.

After Hopkins’s speech, the evening’s lead actor recited a prologue written specifically for the theater’s opening by DuBose Heyward. The Footlight Players’ performance of *The Recruiting Officer* followed. The Society for the Preservation of Spirituals, which had gained national attention through tours and radio programs, closed the evening’s program with ten of its most famous songs. In the words of one audience member, “the concert provided an appropriate climax to a night filled with exact reproduction of life in Charleston two hundred years ago.”<sup>133</sup> Following the spirituals, Mayor Maybank invited the audience to inspect the theater which led to “marveling at the remarkable craftsmanship shown in the restoration of the old building, its beautiful mantels, paneling, woodwork and architectural strength and beauty.”<sup>134</sup> This tour of appreciation was a fitting end to the evening when the Dock Street Theatre reestablished Charleston’s significant theatrical tradition. Before leaving the city, Hopkins told a

---

<sup>132</sup> Hitt, “City’s Culture Made Theater Gift Possible, Hopkins Says.”

<sup>133</sup> Hitt, “City’s Culture Made Theater Gift Possible, Hopkins Says.”

<sup>134</sup> E. M. Collison, “Performances At Dock St. Theater To Be Repeated,” *Charleston Evening Post*, November 27, 1937.

reporter for the *Charleston News & Courier* that the Dock Street Theatre was “one of the great institutions of America.”<sup>135</sup>

The following night, the Charleston String Symphony performed an invitation-only concert featuring harpsichordist Lewis Richards, but performances on Monday through Wednesday evenings were open to the general public. Tickets for the three public performances quickly sold out, and after turning away 300 people from the ticket office, the Carolina Art Association (CAA) added one additional performance on December 2.<sup>136</sup> Still, a Charleston resident not involved in civic organizations and unable to afford tickets complained to the newspaper that the theater was a public project paid for by the government and therefore should be open for inspection by “those who would like to see it, and indirectly help to pay for it.”<sup>137</sup> In response, the CAA opened the theater to the general public the following week during specific times for no admission charge.<sup>138</sup>

The press coverage of opening night expressed an overwhelmingly favorable reception to the Dock Street Theatre’s restoration. On Sunday, the *New York Times* published a column and two pictures of the theater. The following month, *Life* published seven pictures of opening night, captioning them “First U.S. Theatre is Restored – Charleston blue bloods give it gala opening.” In January of 1938, *Architectural Record* published twenty-two illustrations of the restored theater. That same month, Charleston schoolteacher Daisy Mae Roberts’s article lauding the restoration project for representing

---

<sup>135</sup> “Roosevelt Waits to See Maybank,” *Charleston News & Courier*, November 29, 1937.

<sup>136</sup> “Players to Repeat ‘Recruiting Officer’ Tonight to Satisfy Demand,” *Charleston News & Courier*, December 2, 1937.

<sup>137</sup> “Public and Theater,” *Charleston News & Courier*, November 29, 1937.

<sup>138</sup> “Public May Visit Theater at Night,” *Charleston News & Courier*, December 3, 1937; Robert N. S. Whitelaw, “Whitelaw Tells of Future Plans,” *Charleston News & Courier*, December 5, 1937. The theater was open from eleven in the morning to one in the afternoon and eight to ten in the evening. Beginning December 15, visitors would be admitted during the same hours for a small admission fee.

“a perfect blending of the atmosphere of the past with the ingenuity of the present” appeared in *Scholastic*.<sup>139</sup> Hopkins, Maybank, Ellington, Simons, and Lapham could find proof in these editorials that their goal of recreating a powerful visual of Old Charleston had been achieved.

Robert Armstrong Andrews, director of the South Carolina FAP, simply expressed the cultural significance of the Dock Street Theatre’s restoration: “The story of this reconstruction is a chapter in the greater story of the government’s program of work relief. But it is also a chapter of compelling romance.”<sup>140</sup> The project was both practical and ideological, and exemplified the process of cultural production operating at the federal and local levels. The project dually served Burnet Maybank’s progressive plan to modernize the South and build his Democratic coalition and white Charlestonians’ agenda to safeguard structures which reinforced the racial and classist hierarchies. In achieving both goals, the WPA-funded project allowed Charleston to claim a role as a regional art center and restore the cultural status it enjoyed in a more prosperous era.

---

<sup>139</sup> “Charleston Opens Theatre as in 1736,” *New York Times*, November 27, 1937; “First U.S. Theatre is Restored: Charleston Blue Bloods Give It Gala Opening,” *Life*, December 20, 1937, SCL; Ellington, et al., “Charleston Opens Historic Playhouse with Historic Play”; Daisy Mae Roberts, “The Dock Street Theatre Rebuilt – A Federal Project,” *Scholastic*, January 15, 1938, RG 69, Entry 764, Box 11, NARA.

<sup>140</sup> “1736-1937: In Commemoration and Rededication of the Dock Street Theatre,” SCL.



Figure 2.1. Dock Street Theatre/Planters' Hotel façade, facing Church Street.  
Photographed by Frances Benjamin Johnston in 1936 or 1937. Library of Congress Prints  
and Photographs Division, Washington, D.C.

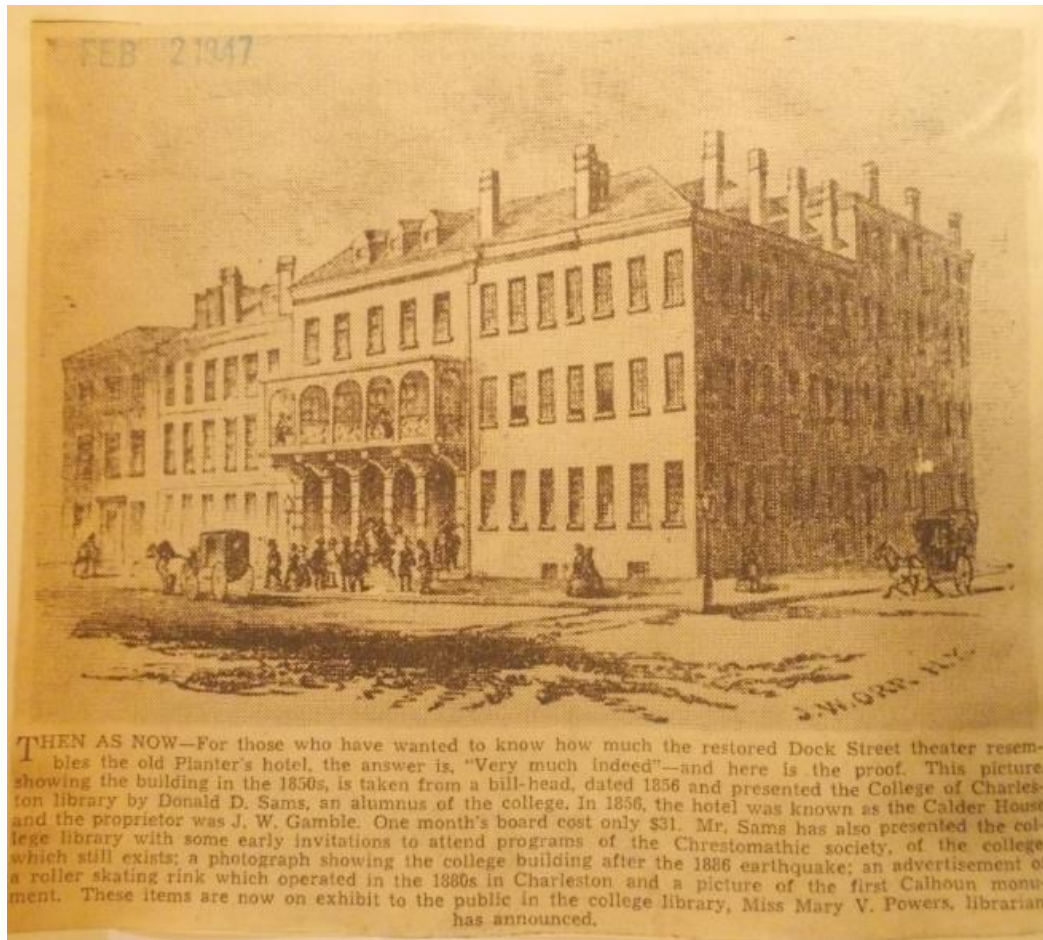


Figure 2.2. The Planters' Hotel, newspaper article from February 21, 1947. Carolina Art Association Scrapbook, Dock Street Theatre Collection, 1933-1958, Container 21/205: Carolina Art Association Clippings, Programs, & Misc., 1937-1957, Folder 21/205A, South Carolina Historical Society.



Figure 2.3. Entrance of the Planters' Hotel before the FERA restoration project. Albert Simons Papers, 1964-1979, Container 26: Dock Street Theatre Papers (1937-1950), Folder 26-35-1, South Carolina Historical Society.





Figure 2.4. View of Church Street facing north. The Dock Street Theatre is on the left and St. Philip's Church is in the center. Photographed by Frances Benjamin Johnston in 1936 or 1937. Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, Washington, D.C.

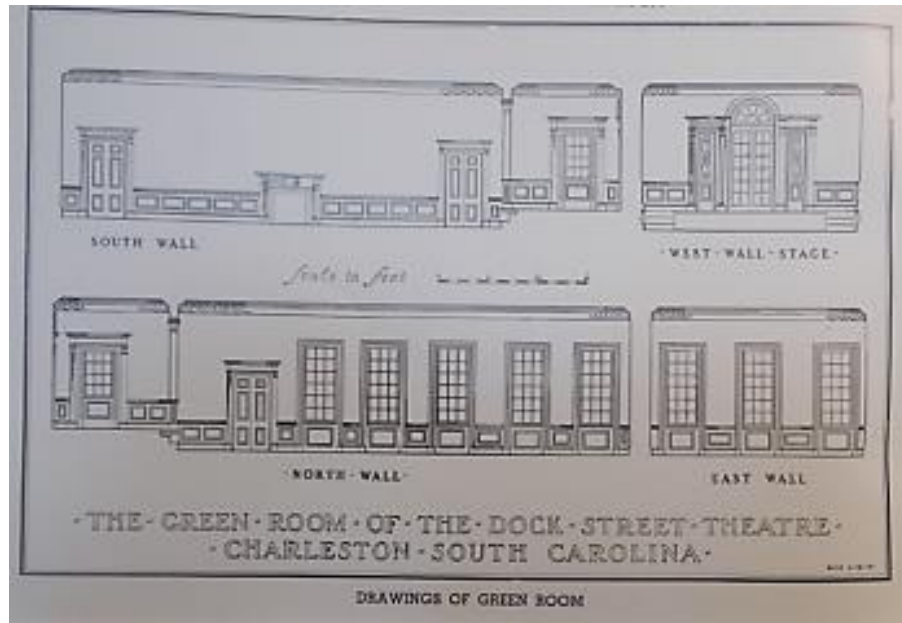


Figure 2.5. Architectural renderings of the green room and Church Street elevation of the Dock Street Theatre. Drawn by Simons & Lapham Architects, reproduced in "1736-1937: In Commemoration and Rededication of the Dock Street Theatre, Charleston, S.C.," (Charleston, S.C.: City of Charleston, 1937), 792 Se8, South Caroliniana Library.

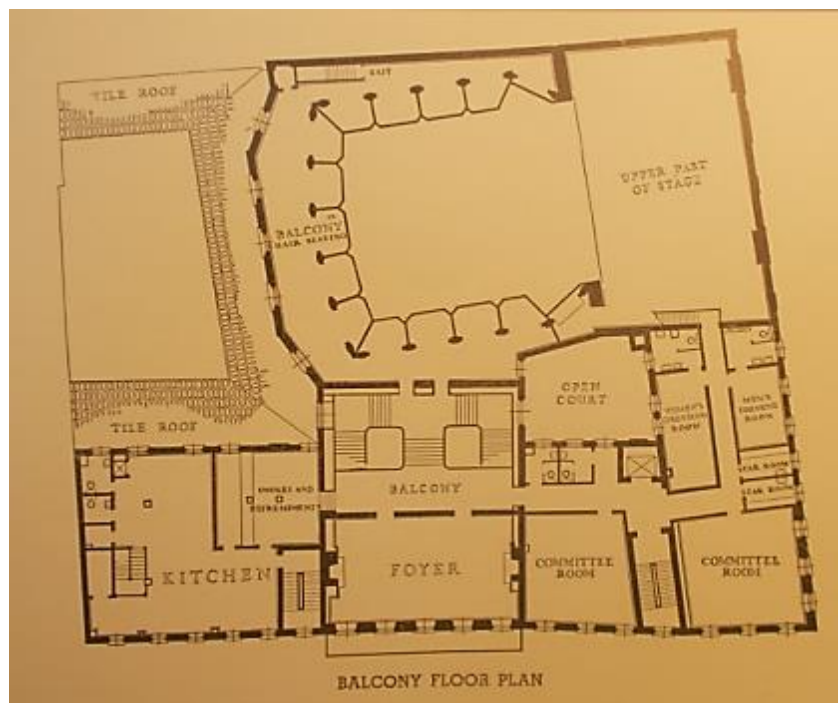
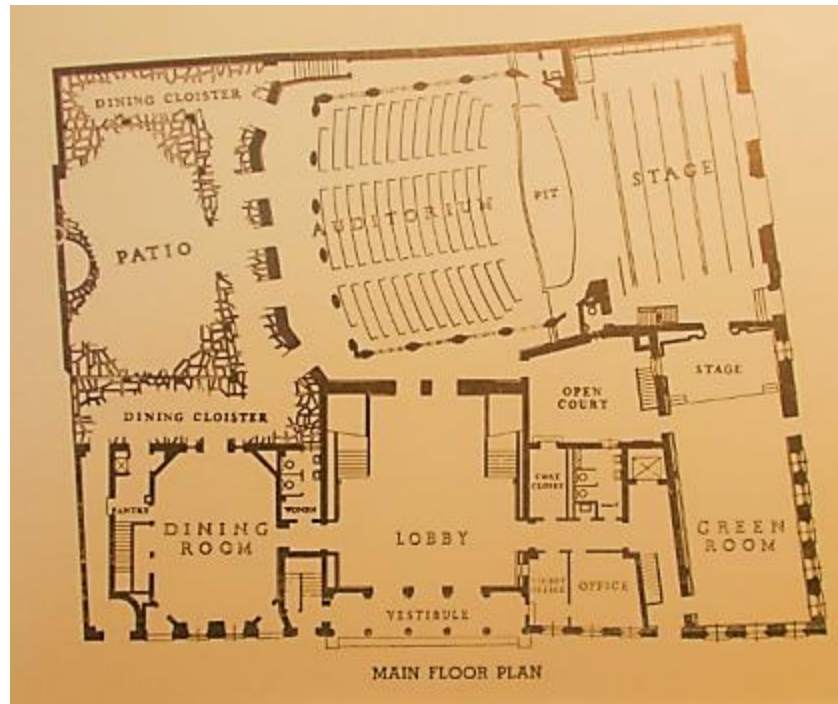


Figure 2.6. Simons & Lapham floor plans of first floor (top) and second floor (bottom) of the Dock Street Theatre, 1937. Reprinted in "1736-1937: In Commemoration and Rededication of the Dock Street Theatre, Charleston, S.C.," (Charleston, S.C.: City of Charleston, 1937), 792 Se8, South Caroliniana Library.



Figure 2.7. Interior views of the Dock Street Theatre's auditorium. Photographed by Frances Benjamin Johnston in 1936 or 1937. Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, Washington, D.C.



Figure 2.8. Salvaged architectural elements from the Radcliffe-King House. Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, Washington, D.C.

**Dock Street Theater Millwork Restored By A. H. FISCHER CO.**



DOCK STREET THEATER AUDITORIUM AS SEEN FROM THE REAR

DOCK STREET THEATER AUDITORIUM AS SEEN FROM THE STAGE

ALL CHARLESTON IS PROUD OF THE RESTORATION OF THIS ANCIENT LANDMARK  
THAT RETAINS THE QUIET DIGNITY OF THE PAST YET WITH THE  
STURDINESS OF MODERN CONSTRUCTION

The Millwork Throughout This  
Charleston Landmark Was Restored By  
**A. H. FISCHER COMPANY**  
QUALITY MILLWORK

IT HAS BEEN THE  
privilege to furnish  
millwork for the  
restoration of the  
dock street theater  
and one of the best  
rooms and places  
in the South-  
east.

BRIGADE STREET

TELEPHONE 141

We Extend Congratulations to  
**SIMONS & LAPHAM**  
Architects  
and co-workers for their untir-  
ing efforts in the restoration of  
this magnificent theater.  
**A. H. Fischer Co.**

Figure 2.9. Dock Street Theatre millwork advertisement. Charleston lumber company A. H. Fisher Company declared that “all Charleston is proud of the restoration of this ancient landmark that retains the quiet dignity of the past yet with the sturdiness of modern construction.” *Charleston News & Courier*, November 28, 1937.





Figure 2.10. Charleston artist William Melton Halsey's fresco in the courtyard. Photographed by Frances Benjamin Johnston in 1936 or 1937. Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division. Washington, D.C.

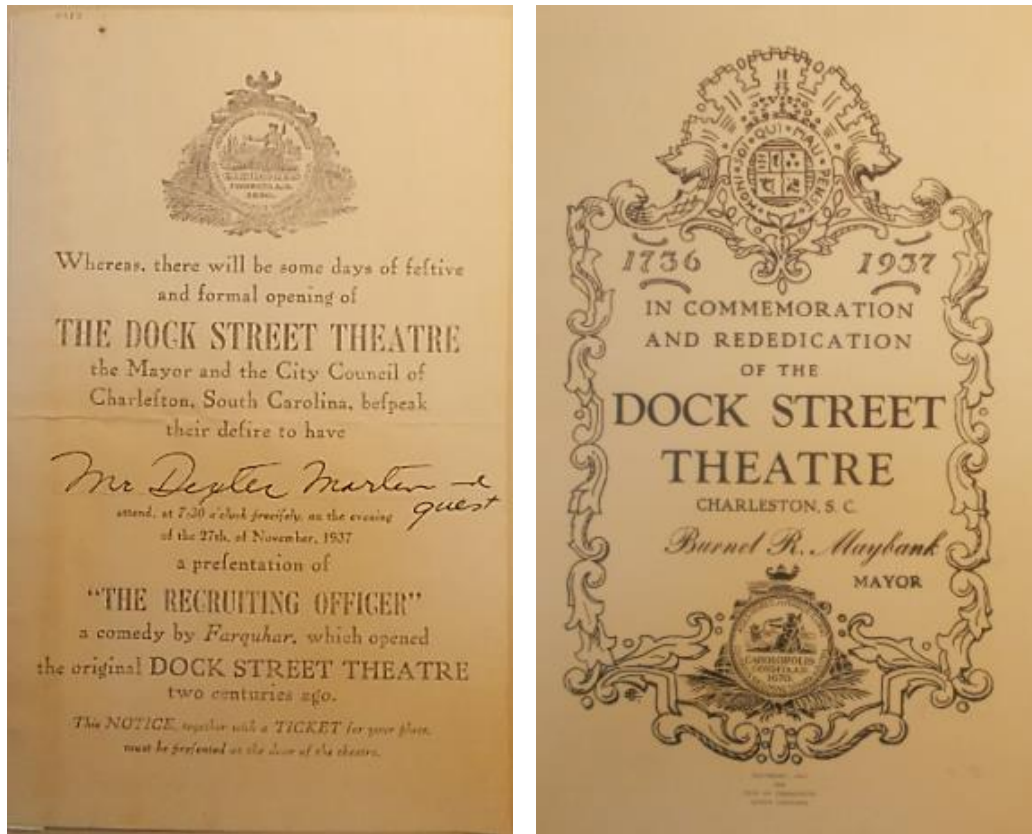


Figure 2.11. Invitation to the second opening night of the Dock Street Theatre on November 27, 1937. To the right is the commemoration booklet published in 1937 to celebrate the completion of the restoration project. Dock Street Theatre Collection, 1937-1947, Manuscript I&OIb (Dock Street Theatre), Scrapbook 1937, South Caroliniana Library.



## CHAPTER 3

### THE CHARLES A. LINDBERGH BOYHOOD HOME AND STATE PARK, LITTLE FALLS, MN: PRESERVING THE MINNESOTA FRONTIER

*Nine years ago today hundreds of visitors swarmed to the vacant Lindbergh homestead to view the boyhood scenes of the youth, who had just completed the first non-stop flight across the Atlantic. Hundreds swelled to thousands the next year – it was Sunday – and the house was in a state of delapidation [sic] by nightfall, so eager were souvenir hunters to take away a piece of it. Today, to make the anniversary more outstanding, word was received from WPA offices that final approval had been given the \$23,777 Lindbergh State park development project, which is sponsored by the State Park commission.<sup>1</sup>*

*Little Falls Weekly Transcript, May 21, 1936*



Upon landing in France on May 21, 1927, after his nonstop solo flight from New York to Paris, twenty-five-year-old Charles A. Lindbergh became an instant celebrity, adored worldwide by fans awestruck by his bravery and mastery of flight. That day, his 1907 boyhood home in Little Falls, Minnesota, became a historic shrine despite being less than thirty years old. The *Saint Paul Pioneer Press* reported that before his inspiring flight across the Atlantic, the “old Lindbergh residence” stood “unoccupied, neglected

---

<sup>1</sup> “Lindbergh Park Program Approved on Anniversary,” *Little Falls (MN) Weekly Transcript*, May 21, 1936.

and weedy...[it] drew no attention from passersby.”<sup>2</sup> The *New York Times* aptly characterized the home’s sudden rise notoriety as “just a farmhouse until the boy who once played about on its floors achieved great fame. Overnight it became a prized place of historic significance.”<sup>3</sup> Lindbergh’s success brought the small town of Little Falls in central Minnesota, population 5,000, and the modest farmhouse where the young flier spent his childhood into the national spotlight.

The Lindbergh home sat on property just southwest of the town center that the aviator’s father, Congressman Charles Lindbergh, purchased in 1898. When a fire in 1905 destroyed the first home Lindbergh, Sr., had built for his family, he and his business partner Carl Bolander, “a kind of architect,” according to family friend Martin Engstrom, constructed a second, smaller home on the same foundation.<sup>4</sup> The new structure, built between 1906 and 1907, had an exterior of rough-sawn lumber, beveled siding, plaster-on-wood interiors, and maple flooring.<sup>5</sup> The unassuming story-and-a-half farmhouse was built using native materials and on a hill that sloped in the rear toward the Mississippi River to take advantage of the scenic vista (Figures 3.1-3.3).

When Anne Morrow Lindbergh saw her husband’s boyhood home for the first time in July of 1936, she described it as unremarkable: “a good-sized house, clapboard,

---

<sup>2</sup> “Lindbergh’s Home at Little Falls Will Be Restored by Lions Club,” *Saint Paul Pioneer Press*, May 26, 1935.

<sup>3</sup> “Lindbergh Lauded for Paris Flight: Tenth Anniversary of Crossing is Marked at Celebrations Here and in Europe,” *New York Times*, May 21, 1937; “Real Home Town Greets Lindbergh,” *New York Times*, August 26, 1927.

<sup>4</sup> Bruce Larson, “Little Falls Lawyer, 1888-1906: Charles A. Lindbergh, Sr.” *Minnesota History* 43, no. 5 (Spring 1973): 162, 170; For a biography of Carl Bolander, see Algot E. Strand, *A History of the Swedish-Americans in Minnesota* (Chicago: Lewis Publishing, 1910), 1114-1115. By the early 1900s, Lindbergh and Bolander had built thirty-five houses and three commercial brick buildings in Little Falls on the west side of the Mississippi River.

<sup>5</sup> For a detailed description of the Lindbergh House, see Cathy Alexander, “Lindbergh, Charles A. House and Park,” National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form, American Association for State and Local History, November 20, 1970; “Lindbergh Home at Charles A. Lindbergh State Park: Pictorial Record,” Binder: Lindbergh Historical Doc., Charles A. Lindbergh Historic Site [hereafter CLHS].

of no particular form or style.”<sup>6</sup> To Charles’s mother, Evangeline Land Lindbergh, it was a quaint, family home with many charms and memories of her son’s happy childhood. Folks in the area who frequented the Lindbergh abode called it “the queerest house in Minnesota” because of its center-hall plan with seven doors.<sup>7</sup> The home’s weatherboard exterior painted light gray with white trim, stone foundation, gabled hip roof with red brick chimney, and simple front porch presented a familial and modest appearance.

However, with the instant celebrity of the hometown hero, the unassuming farmhouse became Minnesota’s premier tourist destination overnight. According to a *New York Times* article, it was Lindbergh’s “own action that directed attention to the farm where he had spent his boyhood” when he visited Little Falls in August following his famous flight, drawing the built environment of his childhood into the limelight.<sup>8</sup> Throughout the summer, souvenir hunters eager to claim a memento associated with the flier visited Little Falls and defaced his boyhood home. After four years of abuse, town residents successfully pushed for the creation of a ninety-three-acre Lindbergh State Park to protect the Lindbergh homestead and secure a state appropriation for its maintenance. Four years later, in 1935, the Minnesota Department of Conservation submitted a proposal to the newly created Works Progress Administration (WPA) to return the home to its 1907 appearance and further develop the recreational state park land.

The overarching goal of the WPA historic shrine restoration project was to recreate the mythologized frontier environment of Lindbergh’s youth. The WPA project’s

---

<sup>6</sup> Anne Morrow Lindbergh, *Locked Rooms and Open Doors: Diaries and Letters of Anne Morrow Lindbergh, 1933-1935* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1974), 292.

<sup>7</sup> Evangeline Lindbergh to Charles Lindbergh, n.d., Charles A. Lindbergh and Family Papers [hereafter cited as CAL Papers], Box 14, Minnesota Historical Society [hereafter MHS].

<sup>8</sup> “Lindbergh’s Home Near Restoration,” *New York Times*, June 28, 1931.

twofold nature – its preservation included both restoring the farmhouse and cultivating a modern state park - contributed to materializing this pioneer environment. Although Frederick Jackson Turner had declared the frontier closed as early as 1893, it remained a central symbol that connected the past to the present for the general American public in the 1930s.<sup>9</sup> The frontier became “a term of ideological rather than geographical reference,” historian Richard Slotkin has contended, that helped give Americans values and meaning through which they could interpret the changing world in which they lived.<sup>10</sup> Warren Susman, too, has explained Americans’ glorification of the frontier during the Depression years as a search for “a native epic...that extolled the virtues of extreme individualism, courage, recklessness, aloofness from social ties and obligations.”<sup>11</sup> In the mid-1930s, nobody exemplified the virtues associated with the pioneer past more so than the wholesome and hardy adventurer Charles Lindbergh.

Fans heralded Lindbergh as the ideal American man, and the image of the young flier earning his stripes by bravely conquering new frontiers abounded in the popular rhetoric surrounding his flight. He fascinated the American public largely because he represented a modern-day pioneer, a figure who by the 1920s had largely disappeared from reality but who had earned a steadfast place in American historical memory. Describing the public reaction to Lindbergh’s daring adventure, historian John William Ward wrote that the “lone eagle” symbolized the “pioneer” and “a long and vital tradition

---

<sup>9</sup> Frederick Jackson Turner, *The Frontier in American History* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1921); Richard H. Pells, *Radical Visions & American Dreams: Culture and Social Thought in the Depression Years* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1973), 24; Marlene Park and Gerald E. Markowitz, *Democratic Vistas: Post Offices and Public Art in the New Deal* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1984), 31.

<sup>10</sup> Richard Slotkin. *Gunfighter Nation: The Myth of the Frontier in Twentieth-Century America* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1998), 4-5.

<sup>11</sup> Warren Susman, *Culture as History: The Transformation of American Society in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), 30.

of individualism in the American experience.” He was likened in his exaltation to other heroes of the American frontier like Daniel Boone and Davy Crockett.<sup>12</sup> Chief Scout Executive of the Boy Scouts of America, James E. West, wrote in the preface to an organizational pamphlet that Lindbergh “called to the blood of the pioneer in every American boy, and the 1929 *Boy Scouts Handbook* featured Lindbergh’s profile alongside Abraham Lincoln, Teddy Roosevelt, and Daniel Boone.<sup>13</sup>

Lindbergh exerted a positive influence on America’s youth by making the old-fashioned traits of hard work and modest living alluring in a decade of decadence and moral degeneracy. Historian Dixon Wecter, writing about America’s tradition of hero-worship in 1941, argued that Lindbergh enjoyed popular appeal because he was “a quiet rebuke to the Lost Generation.”<sup>14</sup> In a vibrant era of great social change, Lindbergh put forth an admirable image of a genuine, native son with a down-to-earth nature. At a time when industrial developments drew large numbers from rural America to burgeoning cities and more people lost their direct connection with an agrarian lifestyle, Lindbergh, “filled the desire for heroes built from common country stock” and “affirmed heartland values of self-reliance and independence.”<sup>15</sup> These pioneer characteristics of the homegrown flier drew adoration from fans across the country and painted an image of Minnesota as America’s moral center.

---

<sup>12</sup> John William Ward, “The Meaning of Lindbergh’s Flight,” *American Quarterly* 10, no. 1 (Spring 1958): 9.

<sup>13</sup> Edward L. Rowan, *To Do My Best: James E. West and the History of the Boy Scouts of America* (Exeter, NH: Publishing Works, 2007), 155; Dixon Wecter, *The Hero in America: A Chronicle of Hero-Worship* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1941), 433. The 1940 *Boy Scout Handbook*, printed after Lindbergh began voicing his isolationist views, had a new Rockwell cover, and reference to Lindbergh’s “good manners” in the text was eliminated.

<sup>14</sup> Wecter, *The Hero in America*, 27-8.

<sup>15</sup> Thomas Kessner, *The Flight of the Century: Charles Lindbergh & The Rise of American Aviation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 204.

The legacy of the pioneer past factored significantly in the public's fascination with Lindbergh as a modern celebrity borne from the soil of America's heartland. Yet, at the same time that Lindbergh embodied the historical spirit of a frontiersman charting a path in unfamiliar territory as he expertly navigated the skies, he inspired hope in an industrial tomorrow. A paradox, even a conflict, between an agrarian past and an urbanized future thus resided in the exaltation of Lindbergh as an America celebrity and the historic shrine restoration project. This incongruity was mirrored in society at large during the Depression years as many Americans sought comfort in a fictionalized, uncomplicated past even as they embraced modern changes, many effected through New Deal programs.<sup>16</sup> This dichotomy especially manifested in the landscape of the Depression years and New Deal imagery. For example, photographers of the Historical Section of the Farm Security Administration (FSA) produced a "panoramic documentation of America life," which captured both the waning of the nation's agricultural era and the spread of urbanization in rural Americans' "march to the city."<sup>17</sup>

Lindbergh State Park embodied the tendency to look to the past to effectively manage problems or difficulties in the present, a strategy employed especially often in the Depression years. Working in tandem with the project's sponsor, the Minnesota Department of Conservation, and the National Park Service, WPA workers built rustic style structures that adopted the building methods and aesthetic of pioneer architecture,

---

<sup>16</sup> Susan M. Gray, *Charles A. Lindbergh and the American Dilemma: The Conflict of Technology and Human Values* (Bowling Green, OH: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1985), 13; Lawrence W. Levine, *The Unpredictable Past: Exploration in American Cultural History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 200; Leonard S. Reich, "From the Spirit of St. Louis to the SST: Charles Lindbergh, Technology, and Environment," *Technology and Culture* 36, no. 2 (April 1995): 365; Susman, *Culture as History*, 32-3.

<sup>17</sup> Julia L. Foulkes, *To the City: Urban Photographs of the New Deal* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2011), 1; Roy Emerson Stryker and Nancy Wood, *In This Proud Land: America 1935-43 as Seen in the FSA Photographs* (New York: Graphic Society, 1973).

but also advanced theories of modern park management and conservation policies. In doing so, the built environment of the Lindbergh homestead became “an expression of the romanticism of pioneer America” even as it advanced the New Deal’s conservation agenda.<sup>18</sup>

The Lindbergh historic site, therefore, provided a place for people to reconnect with nature as well as make advancements in the protection of the natural setting for future generations. In 1936, early in the restoration project, the American Legion in Minnesota celebrated the Lindbergh homestead when it chose a cubic foot of earth from the property as the state’s contribution to the Americanism Shrine at the organization’s national convention. Lindbergh State Park was selected as Minnesota’s historical representative because of “its brilliant background of Americanism and heroic deeds.”<sup>19</sup> This justification reflects an awareness of the direct link between the land and the historic feats it engendered.

The same year the Lindbergh property became a state park the Farmer-Labor Party gained control of state politics from the Republican Party and remained in power throughout the tenure of the WPA project in the mid-to-late 1930s. In a state led by what historian Richard Valelly has called “the most successful case of a radical, state-level third party that American politics has seen,” the Lindbergh project faced no opposition from the many players involved, which included the State of Minnesota, the National

---

<sup>18</sup> William C. Tweed, Laura E. Soulliere, and Henry G. Law, *National Park Service Rustic Architecture: 1916-1942* (San Francisco: National Park Service, Western Regional Office, Division of Cultural Resource Management, 1977), 105.

<sup>19</sup> “Earth from Lindbergh Home, Exhibit to Be Put in Americanism Shrine,” *Little Falls Weekly Transcript*, August 21, 1936.

Park Service, and the WPA.<sup>20</sup> While the project garnered support politically because the site was associated with an adored celebrity, it also benefitted because it put the environment and concerns about Minnesota's agricultural future at the forefront. The historic shrine restoration celebrated the hometown hero whose rural upbringing in Minnesota instilled in him the traditional American values of independence, resourcefulness, bravery, and a strict moral compass, but it also nurtured Americans' relationship with the historic built environment. The WPA's restoration of the Lindbergh homestead recreated the frontier, a cultural landscape especially dear to the hearts of Minnesotan farmers distressed by the agricultural depression. Reaffirming the pioneers' laudable work ethic and love of nature sent a positive message of rebirth and recovery to Minnesotans during the Depression.

### **CREATING LINDBERGH STATE PARK**

Shortly after completing his transatlantic flight, Charles Lindbergh embarked on a cross-country tour to promote aeronautics and greet his hundreds of thousands of fans. After visiting the Twin Cities of Saint Paul and Minneapolis, Lindbergh and his mother, Evangeline Land Lindbergh, headed to Little Falls to visit the family's old homestead on August 25, 1927 (Figure 3.4). Residents prepared for "the greatest day in its history" when Little Falls's "most famous native hero" would return to his roots.<sup>21</sup> A crowd of 50,000, about ten times the population of Little Falls, gathered to greet the celebrity. The much-anticipated homecoming included an elaborate parade with floats, bands and drums corps from several Minnesota towns, and replicas of Lindbergh's plane, the Statue of

---

<sup>20</sup> Richard M. Valelly, *Radicalism in the States: The Minnesota Farmer-Labor Party and the American Political Economy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), iii.

<sup>21</sup> "Crowds Pour in Home Town For Paris Hero Fete," n.d., Lindbergh Scrapbook, MHS.



Liberty, and the Eiffel Tower. The parade concluded at the city fairgrounds where Mayor Austin Grimes, Congressman Harold Knutson, Senator Christian Rosenmeier, and Governor Theodore Christianson gave speeches honoring the native son. The *Minneapolis Journal* reported that “the homecoming of Colonel Lindbergh to the soil of Minnesota is an affair of the heart.”<sup>22</sup> From the earliest celebrations for the flier, it was clear that people elevated the place of Lindbergh’s youth to a leading role in his personal achievements.

Before Lindbergh’s hometown visit, the *Little Falls Transcript* published warnings that pickpockets and souvenir collectors followed the flier from city to city during his national tour. Lindbergh’s most pernicious fans – identified as “relic hunters” in the press – traveled to Little Falls to claim a tangible keepsake associated with the celebrity. Admirers did not merely want to catch a glimpse of the flier or gather printed memorabilia; they wanted a piece of the physical environment which molded him. Martin Engstrom, a longtime friend of the Lindberghs and later named the first superintendent of Lindbergh State Park, had been keeping an eye on the house for the family and had boarded up the windows and padlocked the door immediately after the aviator landed in Paris. Despite these efforts, within a half hour he received a call that people were loitering around the property, and the modest, fairly secluded house had been ambushed by fans.<sup>23</sup>

Little Falls anticipated that the souvenir hunting would only escalate during the hometown visit, so local police and national guard units were assigned to the town for

---

<sup>22</sup> Bruce L. Larson, “Lindbergh’s Return to Minnesota, 1927,” *Minnesota History* 42, no. 4 (Winter 1970): 147-8.

<sup>23</sup> “Lindbergh State Park, Works Progress Administration Guided Walking Tour (Summer 2010) Script,” Binder: WPA & Great Depression 1930s, CLHS.

special duty in preparation.<sup>24</sup> The extra security proved ineffectual. The most aggressive of the thousands of tourists who visited the Lindbergh property that summer ripped boards from the sides of the house, chiseled pieces of rock from the foundation, carved their names and initials into the walls and ceilings, climbed old trees on the property, and dismantled Lindbergh's old Saxon automobile for its parts.<sup>25</sup> What they left in their wake, according to a *Washington Post* article about the wreckage, was "a dilapidated frame house." As the exterior presented a battered appearance, so, too, did the interior: a beautiful mahogany cabinet stood stripped of its base and missing its glass doors, and an oak bookcase once holding Congressman Lindbergh's law books had been emptied.<sup>26</sup>

Little Falls residents were dismayed by the rundown state of the Lindbergh property, a place of immense local and national pride. The Little Falls Board of Commerce wrote to Charles's lawyer in New York, Henry Breckinridge, as early as October of 1928 to express its dissatisfaction on behalf of the community with the management and lack of protection of the Lindbergh family homestead. The Board of Commerce representative explained that the home of Colonel Charles Lindbergh "is not in good shape and is in considerable need of repair," highlighting the major assaults perpetrated by tourists.<sup>27</sup> The board's concern expressed the deep affection Little Falls residents harbored for Lindbergh and his family's land, as well the recognition that the property could become the city's preeminent historic site and park if treated with care in proper proportion to the celebrity of its owner.

---

<sup>24</sup> Bruce L. Larson, "Lindbergh's Return to Minnesota, 1927," 146.

<sup>25</sup> "Lindbergh's Home at Little Falls Will Be Restored by Lions Club," *Saint Paul Pioneer Press*, May 26, 1935; Citizens Will Aid Lindbergh Park Project," *Little Falls (MN) Daily Transcript*, March 23, 1931.

<sup>26</sup> "Tourists Wrecking Lindbergh's Home," *Washington Post*, July 12, 1931.

<sup>27</sup> Sherman Leirs to Henry Breckinridge, 11 October 1928, Folder: Lindbergh State Park History: Formation and Early Restoration, CLHS.

By 1931, the Lindbergh home had attracted thousands more visitors from across the nation who continued to damage the home and lands. After over two years of legal inactivity, prominent citizens and politicians connected to Little Falls formed the Lindbergh Park Committee. Members included local dentist Charles H. Longely at its head; State Senator Christian Rosenmeier; family friend Martin Engstrom; automobile company owner, E. A. Berg; Morrison County attorney and former mayor of Little Falls, Austin Grimes; and president of the Board of Commerce, A. V. Taylor.<sup>28</sup> The board, on the recommendation of the Lindbergh Park Committee, proposed a plan to Lindbergh and his mother to safeguard the property: the City of Little Falls would purchase the home and its acreage, then “improve the property by restoring the home, cleaning up the entire property, and putting a care taker in charge...In other words making the whole estate into a State Park.”<sup>29</sup>

Nels Nelson Bergheim, estate attorney for the deceased Congressman Charles Lindbergh, urged the family to pass the property over to the city to start the process of creating the park. Bergheim had been renting the farm for cash for many years while the house itself remained vacant.<sup>30</sup> The rent gave him “just enough to keep the house...in proper repair.”<sup>31</sup> His appeal worked; Evangeline and Charles, along with his two half-sisters, ceded their interests and conveyed the 110-acre family property by trust deed to

---

<sup>28</sup> “Lindbergh’s Home Near Restoration,” *New York Times*, June 28, 1931.

<sup>29</sup> Sherman Leirs to Henry Breckinridge, 11 October 1928, Folder: Lindbergh State Park History: Formation and Early Restoration, CLHS.

<sup>30</sup> “Lindbergh’s Home Near Restoration,” *New York Times*, June 28, 1931. In 1931, the house had been untenanted for six years.

<sup>31</sup> Nels Nelson Bergheim to Evangeline Lindbergh, 29 January 1930, CAL Papers, Box 13, Folder: Charles A. Lindbergh Papers (Yale Univ.) Correspondence & Misc. papers, Jan. 1930-Nov. 1936, MHS.

Martin Engstrom, their old family friend, with the understanding that most of the land was to be converted into a state park.<sup>32</sup>

Lindbergh expressed his approval of the creation of a state park to be enjoyed by the public, but, true to his humble nature, was apprehensive to appear an attention-seeker. According to his personal lawyer, Lindbergh wished “that any attitude of his should not be interpreted as seeming to desire or encourage the establishment of any park or other institution as a memorial to himself or his actions.”<sup>33</sup> At the time, Lindbergh remained one of America’s favorite celebrities; in 1931, Charles and his wife, Anne, still received over one hundred letters a day, they had trouble dining in public because they were so recognizable, and magazines fashion magazines often featured the stylish Mrs. Lindbergh.<sup>34</sup> In many ways, Lindbergh was a reclusive celebrity, which made people all the more eager to learn of his doings. Engstrom assured Lindbergh that public desire for the park’s establishment was obvious, writing to his friend that “our people are very anxious to preserve the place.”<sup>35</sup> With final approval from the family, Engstrom made ready to oversee the transfer of the property deed first to the City of Little Falls and then to the State of Minnesota.

As Lindbergh requested, probably in part as a way to detract attention from himself, from its earliest conception the park was to be named after his father.

Congressman Charles Lindbergh had died in 1924 of brain cancer while he was

---

<sup>32</sup> Austin L. Grimes to Charles A. Lindbergh, 18 August 1930, CAL Papers, Box 18, Folder: Lindbergh Papers, Correspondence, Jan.-Dec. 1931, MHS.

<sup>33</sup> Henry Breckinridge [probably] to Austin Grimes, 25 September 1930, CAL Papers, Box 18, Folder: Lindbergh Papers, Correspondence, Jan.-Dec. 1931, MHS.

<sup>34</sup> Donald E. Heyhoe, “Lindbergh Four Years After,” *Saturday Evening Post*, May 30, 1931.

<sup>35</sup> Martin Engstrom to Charles Lindbergh, 14 November 1930, CAL Papers, Box 18, Folder: Lindbergh Papers Correspondence Feb. 1929-Dec. 1930, MHS.

campaigning for the governorship of Minnesota on the Farmer-Labor Party ticket.

Although Lindbergh Sr.'s political career faltered at the end, he was remembered in the state, especially in rural areas like Little Falls, for his staunch defense of farmers, his attack on trusts, and his opposition to American intervention in World War I.<sup>36</sup> A park named for him, and conveniently also for the famous son who shared his name, fit the political and cultural climate of the early 1930s.

The Farmer-Labor Party, a coalition of farmers, organized labor, and small businessmen, had recently gained control of the state with the election of the party's first governor, Floyd B. Olson, in 1930. Taking office at the beginning of 1931, Olson ended over fifteen years of Republican leadership of the state and was reelected governor in 1932 and 1934.<sup>37</sup> A strong advocate of farmers and agricultural reform, Governor Olson was a committed conservationist. He believed that commercial exploitation had "robbed our people of the greater part of their heritage of natural resources" and avowed to "guard what is left diligently and zealously." At his direction, the state legislature reorganized the Department of Conservation shortly after he began his governorship. Under the new plan, Minnesota's state parks were placed under the supervision of the Division of Forestry.<sup>38</sup>

Lindbergh State Park was one of the first parks proposed under the reorganized state park system. Republican State Senator Christian Rosenmeier sought the necessary

---

<sup>36</sup> Larson, "Lindbergh's Return to Minnesota, 1927," 151.

<sup>37</sup> For more on Governor Olson's political career during the New Deal, see James T. Patterson, *The New Deal and the States: Federalism in Transition* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1969), 36, 52, 129-130. For an overview of the Farmer-Labor Party as a political and economic movement in Minnesota, see Millard L. Gieske, *Minnesota Farmer-Laborism: The Third-Party Alternative* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1979).

<sup>38</sup> Barbara W. Sommer, *Hard Work and a Good Deal: The Civilian Conservation Corps in Minnesota* (Saint Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2008), 79, 99.

political support in the state legislature for the creation of the Lindbergh park.

Rosenmeier, a native of Little Falls, previously had served as Morrison County attorney and had been elected to the Minnesota Senate in 1922, where he became Conservative majority leader.<sup>39</sup> Former Republican Congressman, Ernest Lundeen, who by 1931 had joined the Farmer-Labor Party, also eagerly awaited the formation of the park. He had been “fighting for this ever since 1925” and had made at least twenty speeches on the radio.<sup>40</sup> Lundeen would later serve the Farmer-Labor Party in the House of Representatives from 1933 to 1937, and then in the Senate from 1937 to 1940.<sup>41</sup>

In early February of 1931, Senator Rosenmeier successfully pushed through the State Senate the bill to create a ninety-three-acre state park with an annual appropriation of \$5,000 for maintenance and minor reconstruction. By early March the Minnesota House Appropriations Committee had recommended the bill for passage by unanimous vote. With approval from both the Senate and House, Governor Floyd B. Olson signed the bill effectively creating the Lindbergh State Park the first week of March of 1931.<sup>42</sup>

With this official news, the City of Little Falls announced that the “boyhood home of flier

---

<sup>39</sup> Steven Dornfield, “Gordon Rosenmeier: The Little Giant from Little Falls,” *Minnesota History* 64, no. 4 (Winter 2014): 148-151. Christian Rosenmeier died in 1932, shortly after the park was established. His son, Gordon Rosenmeier, served as a state senator for three decades (1940-1970) and became known as “The Little Giant from Little Falls.”

<sup>40</sup> Ernest Lundeen to Chris Rosenmeier, 15 December 1930, CAL Papers, Box 18, Folder: Lindbergh Papers Correspondence Feb. 1929-Dec. 1930, MHS.

<sup>41</sup> Valelly, *Radicalism in the States*, 168-9. While in Congress, Ernest Lundeen served on the House Labor Committee’s subcommittee on unemployment insurance and advocated government- and employer-funded compensation to workers equal to wages lost through unemployment. The “Workers’ Bill for Unemployment and Social Insurance,” or the Lundeen Bill, proposed that local workers’ and farmers’ councils would administer the compensation to unemployed workers. He died before the end of his term as senator in plane crash in 1940.

<sup>42</sup> “Lindbergh State Voted By the Senate in Minnesota,” *New York Times*, February 6, 1931; Martin Engstrom to Henry Breckinridge, 5 March 1931, CAL Papers, Box 18, Folder: Lindbergh Papers, Correspondence, Jan.-Dec. 1931, MHS; “Lindbergh State Park Bill Passed by House,” *Little Falls Daily Transcript*, March 7, 1931; Roy W. Meyer, *Everyone’s Country Estate: A History of Minnesota’s State Parks* (Saint Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1991), 93.

[is] to become [a] mecca of tourists.”<sup>43</sup> The partnership of Republican and Farmer-Labor politicians to create the park set a precedent of political cooperation that later would characterize the WPA restoration project. Lindbergh’s hope that there be “no opportunity...for anyone to take advantage of the situation – political or otherwise!” seemed to be predictive.<sup>44</sup>

In April, members of the Lindbergh Park Committee, including family friend Martin Engstrom, traveled from Little Falls to Saint Paul to deliver the deed to the property to Stafford King, the state auditor.<sup>45</sup> King was a Republican who was elected to his first term in 1931 at the same time Farmer-Laborite Olson was elected governor. King served on the state’s Conservation Commission under the jurisdiction of the Department of Forestry, which now supervised the state park system.<sup>46</sup> In May, King visited the newly created Lindbergh State Park and named Engstrom its first superintendent, who then appointed as caretaker sixty-five-year-old Rufus Sutliff, a longtime Little Falls resident. Sutliff lived in the small tenant house across the road from the main house, the only two remaining structures on the almost one hundred-acre property (Figure 3.5).<sup>47</sup> Preliminary plans for the park, King outlined, called for a speedy opening in the summer of 1931 with the main property fenced off and visitation regulated. The state auditor estimated that it would cost between \$2,000 and \$3,000 to “make the house presentable,”

---

<sup>43</sup> “Citizens Will Aid Lindbergh Park Project,” *Little Falls Daily Transcript*, March 23, 1931.

<sup>44</sup> Charles Lindbergh to Martin Engstrom, 23 February 1932, CAL Papers, Box 18, Folder: Lindbergh Papers, Correspondence, 1932-1979, MHS.

<sup>45</sup> “Deliver Lindbergh Deed to Minnesota,” *Little Falls Daily Transcript*, April 1, 1931.

<sup>46</sup> Rolf T. Anderson, “Minnesota State Park CCC/WPA/Rustic Style Historic Resources,” National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form, September 3, 1988, E-14. Stafford King served as state auditor until 1969.

<sup>47</sup> “Engstrom Named Lindbergh Park Head,” *Little Falls Daily Transcript*, April 28, 1931; “Sutliff is Named Park Caretaker,” *Little Falls Daily Transcript*, May 1, 1931; “Lindbergh Home Being Repaired,” *Leader-Telegram* (Eau Claire, WI), May 21, 1936.

so no immediate plans were made to furnish the interior as they only had \$5,000 annually to cover all costs. However, King hoped that in time “trophies and relics can be secured.”<sup>48</sup>

During the summer, the *Little Falls Daily Transcript* reported the restoration work to be “in full swing.” Projects included rebuilding the porch overlooking the Mississippi River, replacing the siding and missing foundation stones, and painting the house white to cover the thousands of tourists’ names on the walls. The goal, according to superintendent Engstrom, was for the house to “look just like it did when the Lindbergh family lived there.” Tending to the house was the priority, but even at this early stage Engstrom, like King, had plans to expand the restoration by recovering or duplicating some of the family furniture that went missing during the summer of 1927 and developing picnic grounds across the road from the main house.<sup>49</sup>

The creation of the state park and restoration of the Lindbergh house captured the attention of the nation; the flier’s boyhood home was not just a Minnesota or even midwestern attraction. According to the *New York Times*, “the reconstruction of the Lindbergh homesite holds an interest that extends far beyond the borders of the State.”<sup>50</sup> The Little Falls newspaper reported that “practically every daily paper in the United States” carried news of the park’s establishment and interest in the place rivaled that of the summer of 1927. Despite the construction work, as many as five hundred tourists visited the Lindbergh site daily.<sup>51</sup> As to the genesis of the park project, credit was given

---

<sup>48</sup> “King Here on Park Details,” *Little Falls Daily Transcript*, April 27, 1931.

<sup>49</sup> “Work on the Lindbergh Home in Full Swing,” *Little Falls Daily Transcript*, July 11, 1931.

<sup>50</sup> “Lindbergh’s Home Near Restoration,” *New York Times*, June 28, 1931.

<sup>51</sup> “Work on the Lindbergh Home in Full Swing,” *Little Falls Daily Transcript*, July 11, 1931; “Lindbergh Home Assuming Former Neat Appearance; Will Be Opened September 1,” *Little Falls Daily Transcript*, August 13, 1931.



where credit was due: described as a “neighborhood project,” the *New York Times* recognized that the citizens of Little Falls had first conceived the idea to convert the private Lindbergh property into a public state park and maintained interest to see it through the state legislature.<sup>52</sup>

Taking advantage of the spotlight, Little Falls readied for the park’s dedication to be held on May 21, 1932 – the fifth anniversary of Lindbergh’s landing in Paris – with the hope that Charles and his wife, Anne Morrow Lindbergh, would attend. However, the tragic kidnapping of the Lindberghs’ first son on March 1 from their home near Hopewell, New Jersey, precluded any joyous celebration later that spring. Charles August Lindbergh, Jr., dubbed “the Eaglet,” was found dead on the family’s property several weeks later. The kidnapping of the Lindbergh baby, called the “crime of the century,” became one of the biggest news stories of the 1930s, surpassing stories on New Deal measures and the impending European war in readership numbers. Historian David Welky has described the highlight of the murderer Bruno Richard Hauptmann’s much-publicized trial in 1936 as “the Manichean relationship between Lindbergh and Hauptmann, America’s representation of good and evil.... To harm Lindbergh was to harm America.”<sup>53</sup> The kidnapping and trial greatly impacted the cultural milieu of 1930s America as they “tapped into the deepest insecurities of the depression generation.” If the sanctity of home could be destroyed for the Lindberghs, a beloved and protected couple, then any average family could be in danger.<sup>54</sup>

---

<sup>52</sup> “Lindbergh’s Home Near Restoration,” *New York Times*, June 28, 1931.

<sup>53</sup> David Welky, *Everything Was Better in America: Print Culture in the Great Depression* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2008), 29, 41.

<sup>54</sup> Joyce Milton, *Loss of Eden: A Biography of Charles and Anne Morrow Lindbergh* (New York: HarperCollins, 1993), 237, 299.

Dixon Wecter, describing the American public's hero-worship of Lindbergh, held that his name "implied mother and home and fundamental decency."<sup>55</sup> That the Lindberghs' first child was kidnapped from their own house, a place of safety and comfort, probably encouraged further sentimental attachment to Lindbergh's own boyhood home in Minnesota. The impetus to restore and protect the Little Falls property most likely strengthened as a result of the tragic kidnapping and trial that kept the Lindbergh family prominently in the news. However, in light of the tragedy, the dedication of Lindbergh State Park was "indefinitely postponed." As the *Little Falls Daily Transcript* forlornly pronounced, "whereas the beautiful home and grounds have always prompted happy thoughts," following the kidnapping "a tinge of tragedy must ever be associated with them."<sup>56</sup> In December of 1935, after three years of enduring hysteria surrounding the case, the Lindberghs moved to England to escape further scrutiny.

### **LINDBERGH STATE PARK BECOMES A FEDERAL PROJECT**

Throughout the years the kidnapping and trial kept the Lindbergh name in national headlines, Lindbergh State Park remained an extremely popular tourist destination. In 1934 it welcomed approximately 55,000 visitors.<sup>57</sup> The summer before the Lindberghs left America for England, Charles and Anne made a surprise visit to Little Falls. The occasion marked Anne's first visit to her husband's hometown and Lindbergh's first trip since his tour following his 1927 flight. The visit was informal, with

---

<sup>55</sup> Wecter, *The Hero in America*, 27-8.

<sup>56</sup> "Flight Anniversary Marred by Tragedy; Lindbergh Park Dedication Postponed," *Little Falls Daily Transcript*, May 20, 1932.

<sup>57</sup> "Lindbergh's Home at Little Falls Will Be Restored by Lions Club," *Saint Paul Pioneer Press*, May 26, 1935.

the famous couple spending a good part of their time with park superintendent Engstrom at his combined confectionery and hardware store, which Lindbergh frequented as a child. After visiting his old home Lindbergh “expressed both surprise and pleasure” with the changes made with the limited state appropriations of \$5,000 a year. Despite their mutual aversion to attention, the couple “made no attempt to dodge the public” on this trip and met “new acquaintances as graciously as old family friends.” Charles must have enjoyed his time spent in Little Falls for he returned at the end of August.<sup>58</sup>

The Lindberghs’ visit in 1935 coincided with the second reorganization of the Minnesota state park system. The previous year, the National Park Service (NPS) had appointed as supervisor of the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) work in state parks Harold W. Lathrop, an apprentice to Minneapolis City Park superintendent Theodore Wirth. This decision sparked an examination of the administration of state parks, which had been managed by the Department of Forestry since the first reorganization in 1931. State legislators wanted to place the parks under the jurisdiction of someone trained specifically in park management rather than forest management. On July 1, 1935, the Minnesota legislature created the Division of State Parks within the Department of Conservation, appointing Lathrop director. In his new role, Lathrop oversaw thirty state parks and coordinated the CCC and WPA work undertaken within the park system, following guidelines set by the NPS.<sup>59</sup>

---

<sup>58</sup> “Lindberghs Circle Over Home Town in Fast Plane As Surprise Visit Ends,” *Little Falls Daily Transcript*, July 29, 1935; “City Welcomes Lindberghs in Surprise Visit,” *Little Falls Daily Transcript*, July 27, 1935; “Lindbergh Off in Plane After Trip By Auto,” *Little Falls Daily Transcript*, August 31, 1935; “Lindbergh Revisits Minnesota Friends,” *New York Times*, August 31, 1935.

<sup>59</sup> Sommer, *Hard Work and a Good Deal*, 99-100. In 1971, the Conservation Department’s name was changed to Department of Natural Resources.

After the WPA was created in 1935, the Department of Conservation, sponsor for New Deal projects in state parks, applied for funds from the new work program to finance improvement projects in eighteen of the state's smaller parks, one of them being Lindbergh State Park.<sup>60</sup> The project applications were submitted to the WPA state office in Saint Paul, headed by the newly named state administrator Victor Christgau, a Farmer-Labor politician with a background in agriculture. A former state senator and U.S. Congressman, Christgau had been appointed assistant administrator of the Agricultural Adjustment Administration (AAA) in 1933, but returned to Minnesota in June of 1935 to assume the position as the first WPA state administrator.<sup>61</sup> One WPA worker described Christgau as "kind of a right-wing bureaucrat," while Mabel S. Ulrich, head of the Federal Writers' Project in Minnesota, appraised him as "a young liberal" who directed the expenditure of relief funds meticulously and judiciously.<sup>62</sup>

The initial project application for Lindbergh State Park requested funds to restore the house; finance a bridge over Pike Creek, a tributary of the Mississippi River that ran through the Lindbergh property; plant four thousand trees and shrubs; construct a picnic area; and develop two miles of foot trails. In September of 1935, Christgau approved \$26,204 for the Lindbergh home and grounds project. Of the total, \$2,504 would go toward the restoration of the boyhood home and \$23,700 for the improvement of the park grounds. When announcing the proposed allocation of funds, the *Little Falls Daily*

---

<sup>60</sup> Anderson, "Minnesota State Park CCC/WPA/Rustic Style Historic Resources," E-24. The State of Minnesota provided funding for projects at a ratio of federal to state funds at about eleven to one.

<sup>61</sup> Victor Christgau had previously served in the Minnesota State Senate until 1927 and as a Republican in the U.S. Congress from 1928 to 1932.

<sup>62</sup> Interview with Elizabeth Hoff Bruce, June 26, 1989, Twentieth Century Radicalism in Minnesota Oral History Project, MHS. [http://collections.mnhs.org/cms/display?irn=10362571&return=brand%3Dcms](http://collections.mnhs.org/cms/display?irn=10362571&return=brand%3Dcms;); Mabel S. Ulrich, "Salvaging Culture for the WPA," *Harper's Magazine* 178 (May 1939): 662.

*Transcript* declared the project to be “riding the crest of popular enthusiasm.” Interest in the proposal was further proven by the visit of a moving picture cameraman sent by the federal government to take photographs of Lindbergh State Park, as well as the flier’s high school and the nearby Camp Ripley, a National Guard training camp, where he had landed his plane many times.<sup>63</sup> That summer, a steady stream of tourists visited the Lindbergh park, with more than 18,000 visitors signing the guest register in the house.<sup>64</sup>

While state administrator Christgau pledged his support for the project, final approval of the allocation of funds rested in the central office of the WPA in Washington, D.C, as was the case with all WPA projects. While waiting for the confirmation of the project’s status, the *Salt Lake Telegram* reported that if Washington officials approved the grant, “the Lindbergh home will be restored and saved as a national shrine.”<sup>65</sup> However, funding for the Minnesota state park projects was delayed until the spring of 1936 because a state’s application was third in priority behind local and county projects and funds in Minnesota were allocated elsewhere first.<sup>66</sup> In May of 1936, on the ninth anniversary of Lindbergh’s historic flight, the central office approved the Charles A. Lindbergh State Park as Project No. 2-573 with sponsorship of the State Park Commission of Minnesota and initial funding of \$23,777. Work soon began at the project

---

<sup>63</sup> “Project to Make County Work Center,” *Little Falls Daily Transcript*, September 11, 1935.

<sup>64</sup> Theodore Blegen to Charles Lindbergh, 17 October 1936, CAL Papers, Box 2, Folder: Grace Lee Nute Correspondence: Lindbergh Home, 1936, MHS.

<sup>65</sup> “Like Father, Like Son,” *Salt Lake Telegram*, October 11, 1935.

<sup>66</sup> Anderson, “Minnesota State Park CCC/WPA/Rustic Style Historic Resources,” E-27-28. Over twenty state parks in Minnesota would receive WPA funds. To see a full list of state parks that received federal assistance from the Civilian Conservation Corps, the Works Progress Administration, and the National Youth Administration, see pg. E-17. According to this report, the Charles A. Lindbergh State Park received \$64, 171 from the WPA and \$7,132.55 from the State of Minnesota.

site; a crew of between forty and fifty local WPA workers were employed throughout the first summer.<sup>67</sup>

The imperative of the Lindbergh property project remained twofold: restore the house and develop the state park. Work first began on the house, which was only minorly repaired after souvenir hunters defaced it in 1927. The WPA project sought to finish returning the home to its appearance when Lindbergh lived there as a boy. Achieving this goal was made easier because Lindbergh himself was highly invested in the project. He provided much of the information guiding the restoration of the house in a series of letters penned to Dr. Grace Nute of the Minnesota Historical Society (MHS) between 1936 and 1939. Nute earned her doctorate in history in 1921 from Harvard University, where she worked with preeminent historian of the frontier thesis, Frederick Jackson Turner. After graduation she moved to Minnesota to become curator of manuscripts at the MHS. While curator, Nute gathered research on the Lindbergh family for a book she was preparing about August Lindbergh, the famous flier's grandfather who immigrated to the United States from Sweden. She communicated frequently with his grandson about the family's early years in Minnesota. While doing so, she kept Charles updated on developments at the state park.<sup>68</sup>

Despite living in England during the years of the restoration, Lindbergh rarely failed to reply to Nute's questions about the old homestead. The flier recalled that the

---

<sup>67</sup> Harold W. Lathrop to Victor Christgau, 24 March 1937, RG 69, Entry 754, Box 6, National Archives and Records Administration [NARA]; "Lindbergh Park Program Approved on Anniversary," *Little Falls Weekly Transcript*, May 21, 1936; "Lindbergh Park Project Approved," *Little Falls (MN) Herald*, May 27, 1936. The State of Minnesota allocated \$495 to the project.

<sup>68</sup> Minnesota Historical Society, "Grace Lee Nute: Biographical Notes," <http://collections.mnhs.org/mnauthors/10001268>. After Nute spent years researching the Lindberghs, which included a trip to Sweden that was financed in part by Lindbergh himself, MHS mysteriously ended its support of the project and the expected book on the Lindbergh family was never published.

family spent all of its summers on the farm between the year the house was completed in 1907 and 1920, as well as the three winters between 1917 and 1920 when he was in his late teens. Lindbergh's reminiscences of the activities of a childhood on the Mississippi River figured prominently in his letters to Nute. He described receiving his first gun and going on hunting expeditions with his father, playing on the farm with his beloved childhood dogs, sleeping in the screened porch overlooking the river regardless of the temperature, and swimming as a boy in the Mississippi River and Pike Creek, named after explorer Zebulon Pike who explored the upper Mississippi in 1805.<sup>69</sup>

Lindbergh also explained to Nute the backstory of the mysterious "Moo Pond" located in front of the house, which, he wrote, "has given rise to a great many amusing stories." The Moo Pond was a small cement pool Lindbergh built as a boy in the corner of the ducklings' enclosure (Figure 3.6). Lindbergh called it the Moo Pond because "Moo," he was told as a child, was the native Chippewa word for dirt. In the concrete of the pool he inscribed "Lindholm" – a name his mother and father intended to call the farm although "Camp" became the term generally used – and the names of his favorite dogs, "Dingo" and "Wahgoosh," meaning fox in Chippewa.<sup>70</sup> His propensity for incorporating the language of the Chippewa Indians into his childhood projects corresponded with the popular image of Lindbergh as a spirited youngster fascinated by local history and stories of conflicts between settlers and indigenous people.<sup>71</sup>

---

<sup>69</sup> Charles Lindbergh to Grace Nute, 27 July 1937, 23 March 1938, CAL Papers, Box 2, Folders: Lindbergh Papers, Grace Lee Nute Correspondence – Charles A. Lindbergh Jan.-Dec 1937 and Jan.-Dec 1938, MHS.

<sup>70</sup> Charles Lindbergh to Grace Nute, 12 January 1938, CAL Papers, Box 2, Folder: Lindbergh Papers, Grace Lee Nute Correspondence – Charles A. Lindbergh Jan.-Dec 1938, MHS.

<sup>71</sup> Lindbergh later published his recollections in *Boyhood on the Mississippi: A Reminiscent Letter* (Saint Paul: Minnesota Historical Society, 1972).

In his letters Lindbergh also included detailed descriptions of the house in which he grew up, which helped determine the accuracy of the work undertaken by the WPA on the exterior and interior spaces. For example, WPA workers added front stairs to the home's front porch and foot railings to both the front porch and side kitchen entrance, none of which existed when the Lindbergh family lived in the house (Figure 3.7). In 1936, upon receiving photographs of the property, Lindbergh wrote to MHS superintendent Theodore Blegen to confirm that the exterior appeared the same except for the addition of those porch steps. The interior presented some unfamiliar sights, too. The WPA added a new dining room table, floor rugs, and a dresser, but Lindbergh verified that the armchair and couch belonged to his family (Figure 3.8).<sup>72</sup>

In December of 1938, Nute informed Lindbergh that a representative from the Department of Conservation, the WPA project sponsor, visited her at the MHS in Saint Paint with a list of questions from visitors that had arisen at the state park. She, in turn, queried Lindbergh about the colors of the house and rooms when his family lived there and whether the old car beneath the porch was his. She also requested a diagram of the house showing the use of each room. Lindbergh responded in detail: the house was painted white with gray trim; the roof was originally covered with red cloth and later slate gray roofing; the interior walls were of varying shades of brown and gray or unpainted; and the old car was what remained of his Saxon 6, which his father bought in

---

<sup>72</sup> Charles Lindbergh to Theodore Blegen, 21 September 1936, CAL Papers, Box 2, Folder: Grace Lee Nute Correspondence: Lindbergh Home, 1936, MHS; "WPA Exhibit Text," March 28, 2008. Binder: WPA & Great Depression 1930s, CLHS. The Minnesota Historical Society staff eventually removed the front steps to give the house a more authentic appearance.



1915 but souvenir hunters had dismantled in the aftermath of his transatlantic flight.<sup>73</sup> As requested, Lindbergh sent a hand-drawn diagram identifying the rooms of the house. In a later letter, Lindbergh enclosed a rough sketch of the location of buildings on the grounds during the time he managed the farm between 1918 and 1920 while a student at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. The sketch included the main house, tenant house, icehouse, chicken house, hog house, barn, and other secondary farm structures (Figure 3.9).<sup>74</sup>

Evangeline Lindbergh, Charles's mother, also became involved in the restoration of her old home, writing a long letter to her son during the WPA project. She fondly described the old "homeland," the summer residence where the family was "always content to be."<sup>75</sup> She also agreed to send some of the family's original furniture from her home in Detroit to the park at a later date, if desired.<sup>76</sup> Meanwhile, Lindbergh's half-sister Eva Lindbergh Christie visited the home with Alma Kerr, the state director of the WPA Women's and Professional Division, to determine the placement of reproduction furniture. An additional \$800 grant from the WPA in 1936 funded the reproduction of some of the pieces souvenir hunters destroyed or stole in 1927, including Congressman

---

<sup>73</sup> Grace Nute to Charles Lindbergh, 27 December 1938; Lindbergh to Nute, 2 February 1939, 3 April 1939, CAL Papers, Box 2, Folder: Lindbergh Papers, Grace Lee Nute Correspondence – Charles A. Lindbergh Jan.-Dec 1938, MHS.

<sup>74</sup> Charles Lindbergh to Grace Nute, 6 June 1939, 8 August 1939, CAL Papers, Box 2, Folder: Lindbergh Papers, Grace Lee Nute Correspondence: Charles A. Lindbergh Feb.-Dec 1939, MHS. Because of World War I and the scarcity of farm labor, students from agricultural areas were permitted to leave school early to manage family farms and still earn their degrees, although Lindbergh unenrolled after his sophomore year preferring flying to studying.

<sup>75</sup> Evangeline Lindbergh to Charles Lindbergh, n.d., CAL Papers, Box 14, Folder: Charles, Lindbergh Augustus. Papers. Notes for CAL., Jr., MHS.

<sup>76</sup> Charles Lindbergh to Theodore Blegen, 12 June 1936, CAL Papers, Box 2, Folder: Grace Lee Nute Correspondence: Lindbergh Home, 1936, MHS. Some of Evangeline Land Lindbergh's furniture was moved to the site after her death in 1954.

Lindbergh's bookcase that held his law books (Figure 3.8).<sup>77</sup> While Lindbergh supported the restoration project overall, he expressed concern that the addition of furniture would require guards at the house, which would create an additional responsibility for the people of Little Falls. He was "particularly anxious" that the park should not become a "burden" to town residents, writing that he "did not want its upkeep to grow so complicated that it may become an obligation rather than an asset." MHS superintendent Blegen visited the house in October of 1936, and reassured Lindbergh that a "WPA assistant" had been assigned to guard the house.<sup>78</sup>

The detailed letters between Lindbergh and Nute revealed the flier's strong affection for the place where he spent much of his childhood. As early as 1927, when visiting Little Falls during his nationwide tour, Lindbergh consulted the family's lawyer about plans to "rehabilitate the building and re-establish both home and farm."<sup>79</sup> After the Lindberghs left the country in 1935, Martin Engstrom told the *Little Falls Daily Transcript* that he thought Charles would never be satisfied living in England. From his conversations during his visits that year, Engstrom gathered that Lindbergh "intended to spend more time around here. This is his home and he liked it."<sup>80</sup> The celebrity's concern for the management of the state park demonstrated an enduring interest and personal investment in what was to become of the property where he experienced much happiness and the freedoms associated with youth.<sup>81</sup>

---

<sup>77</sup> "Plan Mural at Lindbergh Home in Park," *Little Falls Daily Transcript*, June 11, 1936; "WPA Sets \$800 Aside to Furnish Home of Lindbergh," *Little Falls Daily Transcript*, January 22, 1936.

<sup>78</sup> Charles Lindbergh to Theodore Blegen, 12 June 1936; Blegen to Lindbergh, 17 October 1936, CAL Papers, Box 2, Folder: Grace Lee Nute Correspondence: Lindbergh Home, 1936, MHS.

<sup>79</sup> "Real Home Town Greets Lindbergh," *New York Times*, August 26, 1927.

<sup>80</sup> "Lindberghs Flee To England for Son's Safety," *Little Falls Daily Transcript*, December 23, 1935.

<sup>81</sup> Charles Lindbergh to Arch Grahn, 13 June 1950, Binder: Lindbergh Historical Doc., CLHS. See also, "Comments and Observations on the review of the Lindbergh property with Charles Lindbergh, Jr. in Charles Lindbergh State Park – April 19 and 20," April 27, 1966, Department of Natural Resources, Parks

## DEVELOPING THE LINDBERGH HOMESTEAD LANDS

While the Lindbergh family greatly aided in the restoration of the house, the further development of their former farmland into a recreational state park proceeded with much less input. However, Charles Lindbergh did express to Nute that the two things he was “most anxious to have done” were the planting of small pine trees and the reforestation of the valley on the side of the house facing the river, whose trees had been eradicated.<sup>82</sup> Coinciding with Lindbergh’s desire for his family’s homestead, the WPA project sought to recreate an earlier vista. The conceptual landscape underpinning the project was the Minnesota frontier, the environment the state’s first European pioneers faced when they settled the land in the mid-nineteenth century. Since the state park lands were to be developed for recreational purposes with trails, clearings, and park structures, it made sense that the more attractive concept to implement at the park was the pioneer frontier, rather than a reforested presettlement state or the small working farm the family managed with cultivated fields and secondary farm structures. Additionally, a pioneer landscape visually complemented the popular conception of Lindbergh as the ideal figure of frontier mythology in the 1930s.

The pioneer past was most effectively conveyed at Lindbergh State Park through the building of rustic style architecture. The implementation of this design philosophy connected the historic shrine project with broader contemporary state and national park

---

& Recreation, Records of the Lindbergh House, Folder: Records concerning the Charles A. Lindbergh House, 1955-1970, MHS. Throughout his life Lindbergh remained interested in the park named for his father and continued to provide his observations of the home in which he grew up. Decades later, in the 1950s, Lindbergh wrote to Arch Grahn of the Minnesota Historical Society with surprisingly detailed remembrances of his boyhood home, giving additional descriptions of the wall color of various rooms in the house and pieces of furniture and their placements. He also offered to send boxes of family items from his personal storage to the historical society if “the people in Little Falls would like to have them.”

<sup>82</sup> Charles Lindbergh to Grace Lee Nute, 29 October 1936, CAL Papers, Box 2, Folder: Grace Lee Nute Correspondence: Lindbergh Home, 1936, MHS.

architectural trends to invoke the past through construction and preservation activities. Inspired by the work of mid-nineteenth-century landscape architects Andrew Jackson Downing and Frederick Law Olmsted, rustic style practitioners “grew out of an architectural romanticism” and advocated the graceful blending of natural and manmade elements in their designs.<sup>83</sup> Merrill Ann Wilson, historical architect for the National Park Service, has described rustic style as “a natural outgrowth of a new romanticism about nature, about our country’s western frontiers.” Underpinned by a “conservation ethic” and admiration for the regional building techniques of early pioneers, the style extolled the use of native materials and made buildings accessories to nature rather than the principle features of a landscape.<sup>84</sup>

Rustic style architecture began to appear in America’s built environment in the Gilded Age summer camps in the Adirondacks, and in designs at national parks, like the Old Faithful Inn at Yellowstone National Park and Le Conte Memorial Lodge in Yosemite Valley. In Minnesota, architect and Saint Paul native Mary Elizabeth Jane Colter began to design park buildings using locally quarried stone and adobe, drawing influence from American Indian building construction rather than European traditions, which garnered the attention of the National Park Service.<sup>85</sup> Regional adaptations of rustic style appeared in other parts of the country; for example, Indian pueblos and Spanish Colonial adobes were built in the Southwest. Designers’ emphasis on incorporating

---

<sup>83</sup> Tweed, et al., *National Park Service Rustic Architecture*. For more on Downing and Olmsted, see William H. Tishler, ed., *American Landscape Architecture: Designers and Places* (Washington D.C.: Preservation Press, 1989), 31-33, 38-41; William C. Tweed, *Parkitecture: A History of Rustic Building Design in the National Park System: 1916-1942* (San Francisco: National Park Service, Western Regional Office, Division of Cultural Resource Management, 1978), 129.

<sup>84</sup> Merrill Ann Wilson, “Rustic Architecture: The National Park Style,” *Trends* (Summer 1976), 4-5.

<sup>85</sup> Anderson, “Minnesota State Park CCC/WPA/Rustic Style Historic Resources,” E-34-6.

native materials and adopting traditional building techniques mirrored literary critic and Federal Art Project's Index of American Design director Constance Rourke's anthropological focus on indigenous culture and myths. The cultural work of New Deal administrators, including folklorist Benjamin Botkin, writer Henry Alsberg, museum curator Holger Cahill, and musicologist Charles Seeger, sought to preserve folk culture in a similar way to rustic style builders.<sup>86</sup>

In the 1930s rustic style became the predominant style of New Deal environmental building projects, especially those undertaken by the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) and the National Park Service (NPS). In 1935, the NPS commissioned Albert H. Good, architect for the agency's State Park Division, to produce a pattern book of appropriate designs. In *Park Structures and Facilities*, Good articulated the guiding design principles of official NPS rustic style architecture:

Successfully handed (it) is a style which, through the use of native materials in proper scale, and through the avoidance of rigid, straight lines, and over sophistication, gives the feeling of having been executed by pioneer craftsmen with limited hand tools. It thus achieves sympathy with the natural surroundings, and with the past.<sup>87</sup>

Built structures were supposed to harmonize with the larger natural setting and appear handcrafted. In the northern part of Minnesota where timber resources were abundant,

---

<sup>86</sup> Constance Rourke, "American Art: A Possible Future," *American Magazine of Art* 28, no. 7 (July 1935): 390-405; Sharon Ann Musher, *Democratic Art: The New Deal's Influence on American Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015), 27-8.

<sup>87</sup> Albert H. Good, *Park Structures and Facilities* (Washington, D.C.: National Park Service, Department of the Interior, 1935), 3-4. The first edition sold out and an expanded three-volume edition titled *Park and Recreation Structures, Parts I, II, and III, Administration and Basic Service Facilities* was published three years later in 1938.

wood was the most appropriate building material; in south and northwest Minnesota, stone; and in central Minnesota, a combination of stone and wood.<sup>88</sup>

In Minnesota, state park design and the execution of rustic style philosophy was jointly overseen by the Minnesota Central Design Office in Saint Paul, a branch office of the NPS Regional Office in Omaha, and the Design Office of the Division of State Parks within the Department of Conservation. The Central Design Office, led by chief architect and Duluth native Edward W. Barber, typically designed park structures for CCC camps, while the Design Office of the Division of State Parks generally designed park buildings for smaller-scaled WPA projects, like the Lindbergh project.<sup>89</sup> The Division of State Parks office sometimes duplicated or adapted designs coming out of the Minnesota Central Design Office. For example, the T-shaped log kitchen shelter at Lindbergh State Park was nearly identical to the shelter at Bemidji State Park.<sup>90</sup>

This streamlined practice of park construction created a level of cohesion amongst the projects of the CCC and WPA, and an overall recognizable aesthetic to the state parks system in general. Moreover, all design work and construction were subjected to approval by the CCC or WPA park superintendent, inspectors from the NPS, the Director of State Parks, the NPS Regional Office in Omaha, and the Division of State Parks within the Department of Interior in Washington, D.C. The NPS praised the design and craftsmanship of the work in Minnesota's state parks, and the publication *Park Structures*

---

<sup>88</sup> Anderson, "Minnesota State Park CCC/WPA/Rustic Style Historic Resources," E-40. Limestone was most abundant in the southern portion of the state; dark basalt rock and sandstone in the east; quartzites in the southwest; granite along Lake Superior shorelines; and fieldstone in the west, north, and southwest.

<sup>89</sup> Sommer, *Hard Work and a Good Deal*, 100. Other employees of the Minnesota Central Design Office included architect V. C. Martin, landscape architect N. H. Averill, and engineer Oscar Newstrom.

<sup>90</sup> Additionally, the shelter pavilion at Lake Bronson State Park mirrored the one at Sibley State Park.

*and Facilities* featured the shelter pavilion at Scenic State Park and the well shelter and Old Timer's Cabin at Itasca State Park as excellent examples of rustic style architecture.<sup>91</sup>

Mark Buckman, superintendent of the WPA project at Lindbergh State Park, oversaw the implementation of a rustic style park design plan that echoed the architectural simplicity of the Lindbergh home and respected the local terrain. Buckman was the son of former Republican state senator Clarence Buckman, who preceded Charles Lindbergh senior as a congressman from Minnesota's sixth congressional district. While overseeing the construction of park structures at the Lindbergh site, Buckman would have consulted with A. C. Dunn, WPA area engineer in charge of projects in Morrison County. Dunn worked with the architects from the NPS Central Design Office and the Minnesota Division of State Parks.

As developing the state park constituted the second stage of the Lindbergh project proposed in 1935, most structures in Lindbergh State Park were actually constructed between 1937 and 1939, after the house restoration had been completed. They included a park shelter, water tower, two bridges, a restroom building, stone water fountains, parking lots, and three miles of foot trails. The park shelter, or "kitchen shelter," designed by draftsman Henry Nielsen and field engineer Lehmann Taylor of the Design Office of the Division of State Parks, was one of the first structures WPA workers built and was completed by the end of 1937 (Figure 3.10). Exemplifying Minnesota rustic style, the T-shaped shelter of log construction sat on a concrete foundation that was covered with stone. The shelter's saddle-notched corners and exterior doors, which lent to its rustic

---

<sup>91</sup> Anderson, "Minnesota State Park CCC/WPA/Rustic Style Historic Resources," E-38-41; Sommer, *Hard Work and a Good Deal*, 103, 105. Other excellent examples of rustic style architecture in Minnesota's state parks include the River Inn at Jay Cooke State Park, the Forest Inn at Itasca State Park, and the shelter building and bathhouse at Whitewater State Park.

appearance, were assembled by WPA workers without the use of nails, adopting the building methods of pioneers.<sup>92</sup> The exterior of “prefabricated, well seasoned cedar logs” was painted with a creosote and linseed oil stain to achieve a soft brown coloring.<sup>93</sup> The interior featured a large stone fireplace, sink, and four cast iron wood stoves.

The nearby restroom shelter was of the same stained peeled-log construction and notched corners as the park shelter. One of the last WPA structures built in the park was the water tower, designed by engineers from the Central Design Office (Figure 3.11). Completed in 1939 and constructed of native limestone, the three-story tower held 5,000 gallons of water. The water was pumped into the caretaker’s resident (the historic tenant house), the restrooms, and the drinking fountains, which were designed by landscape architect N. H. Averill of the Central Design Office.<sup>94</sup>

Along the three miles of foot trails were placed rustic benches, which WPA workers made using hand tools.<sup>95</sup> An additional grant of \$16,000 in 1938 – \$12,000 from the federal government and \$4,000 from the state – provided for the construction of a game warden’s building and a sewage disposal system, the final projects after which the park was no longer considered by the WPA state office “an ‘open pool’ for labor.” However, in the spring of 1941, another grant from the WPA of \$5,359 funded the reconstruction of the custodian’s cabin and some grading and landscaping work.<sup>96</sup>

---

<sup>92</sup> Theodore F. Meltzer, “Lindbergh State Park,” *The Minnesota Conservationist* (November 1937): 16.

<sup>93</sup> “Improvements Being Made by the Works Progress Administration in Chas. A. Lindbergh State Park” March 27, 1937, RG 69, Entry 764, Box 6, NARA.

<sup>94</sup> For more information on WPA structures and some alterations since their construction, see Rolf T. Anderson, “Charles A. Lindbergh State Park WPA/Rustic Style Historic Resources.” National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form, October 25, 1989, and “Charles A. Lindbergh State Park Management Plan – June 1998,” CLHS.

<sup>95</sup> “WPA Exhibit Text,” March 28, 2008, Binder: WPA & Great Depression 1930s, CLHS.

<sup>96</sup> “\$16,000 Fund to Complete Work at Park,” *Little Falls Daily Transcript*, January 26, 1938; “Improvements for Lindbergh Park,” *Little Falls Herald*, January 28, 1938; “Allot \$5,359 on State Park,” *Little Falls Daily Transcript*, March 10, 1941.



While rustic style design philosophy guided the aesthetic of Lindbergh State Park, the WPA project was also underwritten by a more utilitarian conservation agenda. The project sought to address the main environmental problem plaguing the park: soil erosion. The problem was the biggest environmental challenge statewide, as approximately one-fourth of an inch of the surface soil on Minnesota's farmlands disappeared yearly by 1936.<sup>97</sup> Little Falls newspapers closely followed discussions in Washington, D.C., over legislation that would improve the state's farming situation, and the *Little Falls Herald* called the Soil Conservation and Domestic Allotment Act of 1936 "perhaps the greatest movement for national preservation and progress ever undertaken by the government of our nation."<sup>98</sup>

At the Lindbergh park, the banks along Pike Creek were badly eroded and several large white pines were being subsumed by the stream, predicaments made worse by visitors climbing up and down the banks. To remedy the problem, WPA workers built a long stone retaining wall resembling riprapping and backfilled it with clay soil. Terraces, later to be planted with trees and shrubs with extensive root systems, additionally combated future soil erosion.<sup>99</sup> These environmental projects indicate that an important part of the state park development was implementing New Deal conservation policy. In the late 1930s, WPA state administrator Victor Christgau spoke on the Farm & Home Hour radio show which was broadcast from the University Farm at the University of

---

<sup>97</sup> Norman Christensen, "Floods in Minnesota Give New Emphasis to Old Warning: Stop Erosion or Lose Farm Lands," *Minneapolis Tribune*, May 17, 1936; Phoebe Cutler, *The Public Landscape of the New Deal* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1985), 108. The Forest Service located its Lake States Forest Experiment Station in Saint Paul, which was tasked with conducting background work to create a shelterbelt program. The Great Plains Shelterbelt project created windbreaks in midwestern prairie states to combat the destructive dust storms and prevent further soil erosion.

<sup>98</sup> "To Wage War on Tree Diseases," *Little Falls Herald*, April 17, 1936.

<sup>99</sup> "Improvements Being Made by the Works Progress Administration in Chas. A. Lindbergh State Park" March 27, 1937, RG 69, Entry 764, Box 6, NARA.

Minnesota. Christgau described the agricultural experimentation of the state's early settlers, which was "linked inseparably with the pioneer spirit," as "an early version of the question for a New Deal in agriculture."<sup>100</sup> The Lindbergh project evoked the same spirit as the agricultural reform programs in its emphasis on nurturing the soil and reintroducing native species. Moreover, in both its rustic style design and focus on conservation, Lindbergh State Park was similar to a CCC project, which probably contributed to the positive public perception of the WPA project as the CCC was highly regarded in Minnesota.<sup>101</sup>

In November of 1937, the *Minnesota Conservationist* magazine published an article on Lindbergh State Park and applauded the conservation efforts undertaken by the WPA. The author, Theodore F. Meltzer, wrote that "high, heavily wooded banks along [Pike] creek and a dense forest throughout the rest of the land made the Lindbergh homestead a wilderness spot of rare beauty." Meltzer romanticized the historic site, describing the "quiet and bucolic stream flowing through a peaceful landscape" and "an old barn made of hand-hewn timbers, the relic of some early settler." Less romantically, though equally important, Meltzer praised the reforestation work that protected and replaced the impressive number of tree species native to the Lindbergh land.<sup>102</sup> The

---

<sup>100</sup> Victor Christgau, "Architectural Education and Agricultural Planning," radio speech delivered over NBC, Farm & Family Hour, University Farm, University of Minnesota, December 29, 193X, Box 18, Folder: Speeches, Victor A. Christgau Papers, MHS.

<sup>101</sup> Neil Maher, *Nature's New Deal: The Conservation Corps and the Roots of the American Environmental Movement* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008). Maher argues that the CCC's popularity helped to build support for the New Deal; For reactions to the agency from CCC workers and the public, see Sommer, *Hard Work and a Good Deal*.

<sup>102</sup> Meltzer, "Lindbergh State Park," 26. This work included the planting of more than 21,000 trees of various species, including white, jack, and Norway pine; white spruce; red, northern pine, and burr oak; black and white ash; hackberry, white, red and rock elm; basswood; butternut; birch; hard and soft maple; thornapple, and wild plum.

emphasis on nurturing the landscape helped to recreate the nostalgic image of a forested frontier but also fulfilled an agricultural goal.

## **THE HISTORIC SHRINE AND THE PIONEER PAST**

In February of 1937, Minnesota WPA state administrator Victor Christgau received Information Service Letter No. 34 from the central office in Washington, D.C., asking for projects that could be included in the historic shrine restoration program. Surprisingly, Christgau replied, “we have no projects which can be properly included insofar as the WPA is concerned unless you want Lindbergh Park near Little Falls where the State of Minnesota has taken steps to preserve the birthplace of the famous flyer.”<sup>103</sup> Christgau also mentioned the restoration of Fort Ridgely, an 1853 U.S. Army fort associated with the history of the U.S.-Dakota War of 1862, and the Henry H. Sibley House, the home of the state’s first governor (although he probably meant the nearby Faribault House, home of the early fur trader Jean B. Faribault), but they were not WPA projects at the time.<sup>104</sup> There were other WPA preservation projects that Christgau did not mention, however, including the reconstruction of the Chippewa Lac qui Parle Mission at Lac qui Parle State Park and the restoration of the Longfellow House in Minneapolis,

---

<sup>103</sup> Victor Christgau to David K. Niles, 26 February 1937, RG 69, Entry 764, Box 6, Folder: HS – MN – Gen Correspondence, NARA.

<sup>104</sup> Sommer, *Hard Work and a Good Deal*, 106, 119-121; Ann Marcaccini and George Woytanowitz, “House Work: The DAR at the Sibley House,” *Minnesota History* 55, no. 5 (Spring 1997): 186-201. At Fort Ridgely CCC workers constructed new buildings of quarried Morton rainbow granite, restored the original commissary building, and conducted archaeological excavation under the direction of the MHS and upon the recommendation of the Regional Historian of the National Park Service. The CCC also reconstructed the Fond du Lac Trading Post at the Jay Cooke State Park and the North West Company Fur Post at Grand Portage State Park. The Faribault House restoration was sponsored by the Daughters of the American Revolution and the State Highway Department. It began as a Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA) project, but later received funding from the WPA and the Public Works Administration,

which indicates that Lindbergh State Park was a project of greater significance, or at least attracted the state administrator's attention more so than the others.<sup>105</sup>

While Christgau's wording suggests some reservation that the Lindbergh project aligned with the WPA's historic restoration program, the D.C. Information Service office abused him of that doubt. Associate Director Julius Stone replied that the WPA "would like very much to consider Lindbergh Park as a project which should be included in the historic shrine material."<sup>106</sup> Indeed, Christgau later wrote that the "WPA has been interested only in the Lindbergh Home," despite evidence of other historical restoration activities in the state sent to him by Ralph D. Brown, State Director of the Historical Records Survey.<sup>107</sup> Stone requested a narrative description and photographs of completed or in-progress work at Lindbergh State Park. The Minnesota WPA team complied and sent a summary of activities undertaken at the property, twelve pictures of the Lindbergh house and park, and a progress report on the project written by Harold W. Lathrop, director of the Division of State Parks. Although the home was originally designated as a state park in honor of Congressman Lindbergh, Lathrop noted that the WPA rehabilitation "reestablish[ed] the property as a tribute to the flier."<sup>108</sup>

---

<sup>105</sup> Anderson, "Minnesota State Park CCC/WPA/Rustic Style Historic Resources," E-24; Albert D. Wittman, *Architecture of Minneapolis Parks* (Charleston, SC: Arcadia, 2010), 20. The WPA restored the Longfellow House in Minneapolis in 1937. The two-thirds-scale replica of the poet's house in Cambridge, Massachusetts, was constructed by the entrepreneur R. F. Jones in 1906 to be the headquarters of a zoo. The WPA rehabilitated the house into the Longfellow Community Library.

<sup>106</sup> Julius F. Stone, Jr. to Victor Christgau, 4 March 1937; Christgau to Stone, 30 March 1937, RG 69, Entry 764, Box 6, Folder: HS – MN – Gen Correspondence, NARA.

<sup>107</sup> Victor Christgau to David K. Niles, 18 November 1937; Ralph D. Brown to Henry G. Alsberg, 16 March 1937, RG 69, Entry 764, Box 6, Folder: HS – MN – Gen Correspondence, NARA. Brown would have had greater knowledge of historical activities in the state and sent examples of other restoration projects in Minnesota to be considered in the program to Henry Alsberg, national director of the Federal Writers' Project. Brown's list included Fort Ridgely near Fairfax, the Faribault House in Mendota, the J. Harley Smith house and park in Montevideo; and the Northwest Company Post at Grand Portage State Park.

<sup>108</sup> Christgau erroneously called the property "Lindbergh's birthplace," a mistake often made, in his report included in Victor Christgau's letter to Julius F. Stone, 30 March 1937, RG 69, Entry 764, Box 6, NARA.

In his report, Lathrop described one of the highlights of the WPA work: the reconstruction of a simple foot bridge spanning Pike Creek. At the age of twelve, Lindbergh built a suspension bridge of barbed wire and wood slats so he could avoid fording the stream when he drove the cows to the barn to be milked. After hearing the story, project superintendent Mark Buckman searched for remains and found the rotted timbers that had supported the bridge and some rusted barbed wire from which the footbridge had been suspended. Based on the location of these remnants, WPA workers were able to reconstruct the bridge in its original location. Lathrop, upon learning of the project, expressed the opinion that when looking at the reconstructed bridge “one inevitably thought of the trail blazed across the Atlantic by the young builder.”<sup>109</sup> It is clear that Lathrop hoped visitors to the park would make the connection between the built environment of central Minnesota and the brave, history-making feats of Charles Lindbergh.

The WPA restoration of the Lindbergh home and development of state park lands was uncontestably a success story, both as a historic preservation project and a cultivated park landscape. Additionally, the project was remarkably successful when considered a political project of the New Deal. There were no complaints from WPA officials at the state or federal levels, nor negative stories printed in Little Falls newspapers from residents about the project in particular. The state park’s association with one of America’s leading celebrities and its focus on conservation in a Farmer-Labor Party-controlled state kept Lindbergh State Park in good standing in the WPA offices, the state legislature, and the town of Little Falls.

---

<sup>109</sup> Harold Lathrop cited in Meltzer, “Lindbergh State Park,” 16.

During the summer of 1937, superintendent Engstrom wrote to his friend Lindbergh of the park's success and popularity, especially with farmers from the area: "Most any evening one will find ten to fifteen of our local families down there with their picnic lunch."<sup>110</sup> In a public forum published in the *Little Falls Herald*, a farmer in his late fifties contended that "a happy environment, and making a good living depends on how well we are going to co-operate with nature."<sup>111</sup> If this man's perspective was shared by his fellow farmers, Lindbergh State Park as a WPA project presented both an opportunity for fulfilling work for those on the relief roll and a place to appreciate, or "co-operate," with nature. Visitation stayed high with approximately 86,000 people signing their names in the visitor register in 1938, and the following year almost 40,000 tourists from every state in the nation and several foreign countries visited during the summer season alone.<sup>112</sup>

What contributed to the overwhelmingly positive reception of the Lindbergh park project during the Depression years was its many accomplishments: it provided work relief, restored its visitors' relationship with nature by advancing an environmental conservation agenda, and celebrated Minnesota's history in a permanent and interactive way. Pragmatically, the Lindbergh project was important because it offered work and a paycheck to citizens of Little Falls, like Clarence Tuller. Born in 1909, Tuller moved to Lindbergh's hometown in 1920 with his father Arthur Robinson Tuller, a photographer who captured snapshots of WPA activity in town. Clarence helped build the picnic shelter at Lindbergh State Park and found employment as an unskilled worker at other WPA

---

<sup>110</sup> Martin Engstrom to Charles Lindbergh, 11 July 1937, Binder: WPA & Great Depression 1930s, CLHS.

<sup>111</sup> Anton Janson, "Public Forum: Park Breezes," *Little Falls Herald*, June 16, 1939.

<sup>112</sup> "Address of the dedication of Lindbergh State Park," n.d., CAL Papers, Box 3, MHS.

projects in Little Falls, including Camp Ripley, Pine Grove Park, and the water purification plant.<sup>113</sup> He remembered working with a crew of four others on the Lindbergh property, naming Ernest Como as the project leader. The supervisors were local men, although Tuller recollected officials, probably from the state WPA office in Saint Paul, inspecting the work. When they visited, the WPA workers paid them little mind since the officials “trusted people they put in charge of the project” to properly supervise the on-the-ground work. Tuller, who had trained as a teacher, stopped working for the WPA in 1938 when he was hired by the Little Falls school board. More than half a century later, Tuller spoke of his time with the WPA fondly, recalling that “somebody [was] laughing and kidding with somebody all the time.”<sup>114</sup>

While the WPA provided meaningful work and a steady paycheck for Tuller and other men and women of Little Falls, WPA workers were also conscious of the ideological role their projects played in the nation’s rebuilding efforts. As David Benson has suggested, CCC and WPA employees in Minnesota’s state parks sensed how their work contributed to “the Big Picture” of the New Deal through visits from officials, like those Tuller mentioned, and works-in-progress reports published by the agencies that connected local work to larger narratives of recovery.<sup>115</sup> Perhaps those who best understood how WPA projects contributed to the reconstruction of American identity

---

<sup>113</sup> “The W.P.A. – Conversations with Jan [Warner],” Morrison County Historical Society, [http://morrisoncountyhistory.org/?page\\_id=451](http://morrisoncountyhistory.org/?page_id=451); “Dream of Good Water in City Seen Reality,” *Little Falls Daily Transcript*, April 14, 1936; “WPA to Organize Historical in Morrison County,” *Little Falls Weekly Transcript*, July 25, 1936; “Kasperek Heads Historical Group,” *Little Falls Herald*, September 4, 1936. Other WPA projects in Little Falls included the addition of water mains throughout town, road resurfacing, and tree planting. In the summer of 1936, the WPA began proceedings to form a Morrison County Historical Society, based in Little Falls, which soon after initiated a project to record biographies of county residents. The water purification plant later became City Hall.

<sup>114</sup> Clarence Tuller Interview, March 20, 2007, Binder: WPA & Great Depression 1930s, CLHS.

<sup>115</sup> David Benson, *Stories in Log and Stone: The Legacy of the New Deal in Minnesota State Parks* (Saint Paul: Minnesota Dept. of Natural Resources, Division of Parks and Recreation, 2002), 60.

were those involved in works of cultural production, like the historic shrine restorations. While WPA workers assigned to the Lindbergh property did partake in prosaic projects like building restrooms and planting trees, they also participated in the ideological enterprise to recreate a built environment that had shaped one of Minnesota's most influential historical figures, Charles Lindbergh. The Lindbergh State Park restoration was not merely a practical project putting money in pockets, but one of cultural and historical significance underpinned by the imperative to infuse America with a renewed sense of spirit, embodied by both Lindbergh the man and his boyhood home.

In WPA-produced literature, the built environment of Lindbergh State Park was depicted as a confluence of history and nature, which fit the larger image crafted about the state. The, "Minnesota Recreation Guide," produced by the Federal Writers' Project (FWP) described the state as a "Vacation Land." Its lakes, forests, and brushlands attracted water enthusiasts, fishermen, and hunters, and made the North Star State a "modern playground, rich in the history of a not too distant past. The tradition of the explorer, the trapper and the hunter has not been broken."<sup>116</sup> The rhetoric of tourist literature like this WPA guide emphasized the state's many charms for outdoorsmen and the special connection between the land and its people.

Dr. Mabel S. Ulrich, state director of the Minnesota Writers' Project, oversaw the production of the state guidebook for the American Guide Series beginning in 1935. After *Minnesota: A State Guide* was published in 1938, Ulrich described the production process in *Harper's Magazine*. As directed, she explained, she would send off chapters of

---

<sup>116</sup> Federal Writers' Project of the Works Progress Administration, "Minnesota Recreation Guide," Works Projects Administration, Writers' Project Annals of Minnesota, Box 226, Folder: WPA. Writers' Project "Minnesota Recreation Guide," MHS.



the guide to the central office in Washington, D.C., for feedback and approval. Ulrich wrote that the office was “completely baffled by the tendency of all federal editors to regard us as inhabiting a region romantically different than any other in the country.”<sup>117</sup> The officials in Washington wanted Ulrich and her team of writers to highlight the state’s folklore, like the myth of Paul Bunyan and tales of Indians on the frontier. Ulrich considered featuring Minnesota’s rich Scandinavian heritage, but, as she told national Federal Writers’ Project director Henry Alsberg, they were hardly “uniquely Minnesota.”<sup>118</sup>

While Ulrich seems to have won that particular battle, since the published guide has no chapter on folklore, the guide highlighted the state’s pioneer heritage in other ways. In the essay on Minnesota’s architecture, buildings are described as collectively expressing the toughness, no-nonsense attitude, and aesthetic of the state’s homesteaders. Northern European immigrants “exchange[d] the picturesqueness and discomfort of their Old World stone cottages and thatched barns for a plentitude of lumber” when they arrived in the United States.<sup>119</sup> Lindbergh State Park’s simplistic and unpretentiousness rustic style structures reference the rather unornamented and practical architecture associated with these pioneers.

Other FWP writers penned pieces that glorified the pioneer legacy of the state’s Scandinavian forefathers, especially Charles’s grandfather August (born Ola Månsson), who arrived in central Minnesota from Sweden, and his father the congressman. FWP

---

<sup>117</sup> Ulrich, “Salvaging Culture for the WPA,” 657.

<sup>118</sup> Mabel S. Ulrich to Henry Alsberg, 8 March 1937, cited in Kenneth E. Hendrickson, Jr., “The WPA Federal Art Projects in Minnesota, 1935-1943,” *Minnesota History* 53, no. 5 (Spring 1993): 176-7.

<sup>119</sup> Federal Writers’ Project of the Works Progress Administration, *Minnesota: A State Guide* (New York: Viking Press, 1938), 3-4.

author Curtis Erickson likened the “privations and hardships” of the frontier environment the Lindbergh family experienced to the conditions the Pilgrims faced on the East Coast.<sup>120</sup> According to Erickson, because of the exciting and wild environment of his youth, Congressman Lindbergh became “the living expression of the spirit of agrarian class-consciousness and frontier revolt.”<sup>121</sup> Lindbergh, Sr.’s legacy as a defender of “the rights of plain people,” particularly Minnesota farmers, carried into the Depression years. When first learning of the proposal submitted to the WPA to restore the Lindbergh home, the *Salt Lake Telegram* had declared it “an excellent idea” and blazoned, “may the preservation of his home keep his memory green!”<sup>122</sup> Congressman Lindbergh’s defense of farmers and hardy frontier background resonated with Minnesotans troubled by the agricultural and economic depressions of the 1930s.

Charles Lindbergh, Jr., nicknamed “the blond Viking of the air,” was born into this rich heritage of Swedish frontiersmen, political sympathy for farmers, and a deep and abiding appreciation for the natural world. In his autobiography, published in 1978, Lindbergh imparted his understanding of his childhood as “one generation beyond the Minnesota frontier.”<sup>123</sup> While images of Indian canoes along the Mississippi and the fur trading expeditions of early trappers loomed large in Lindbergh’s mind as a child, they, too, featured a starring role in the way Minnesotans conceived of their state’s history. While speaking at Lindbergh State Park in 1981, Lindbergh’s daughter Reeve Lindbergh perceptively recognized that her father’s boyhood in Minnesota “made the American past

---

<sup>120</sup> Curtis Erickson, “The Father of the Lone Eagle,” Works Projects Administration, Writers Project Miscellaneous Manuscripts Historical Records, Box 232, Folder: WPA. Writers’ Project, Curtis Erickson, “The Father of the Lone Eagle,” MHS.

<sup>121</sup> Erickson, “The Father of the Lone Eagle.”

<sup>122</sup> “Like Son, Like Father,” *Salt Lake Telegram*, October 11, 1935.

<sup>123</sup> Charles A. Lindbergh, *The Autobiography of Values* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1978), 4.

more accessible” to him and taught him to value the natural world which he, like others, felt was disappearing from the American landscape.<sup>124</sup> In a similar way, Lindbergh’s boyhood environment, a shrine restored by the WPA, offered that visceral experience to Americans who felt disconnected from their native soil during the Depression and wanted to restore the important link between land, history, and personal character development.

Charles Lindbergh, the person, and the Charles A. Lindbergh State Park, the place, represented a society with one foot in an agricultural past and one foot in a new kind of frontier, a world increasingly industrial and urban. The Minnesota state guide’s section on ‘Agriculture and Farm Life’ acknowledged that by the 1930s “Minnesota has retained little of its pioneer flavor” as New Deal agricultural and economic programs helped modernize the state. Almost wistfully, it accepted that the farmer “can no longer be regarded as an isolated pioneer waging a single-handed battle with the soil.”<sup>125</sup> Even Anne Morrow Lindbergh acknowledged the homogenizing effect of modernity. During her first visit to her husband’s hometown she wrote in her diary that “Little Falls is just like hundreds of small towns in the West: the brick buildings on main street, the drugstore, the nondescript hotel, the gas stations, the plate-glass-store-front windows. Not one building stands out in my mind; not one different from another.”<sup>126</sup>

Anne came to realize, however, that Lindbergh State Park had become a historic place set apart from modern life and industrial society. In later years she said that the Lindbergh Falls property represented “the love of nature, the beauty of the wilderness,

---

<sup>124</sup> Reeve Lindbergh, introductory remarks at Charles A. Lindbergh Memorial Lecture, St. Cloud State University, June 17, 1981, CAL Papers, Box 1, Folder: “Charles A. Lindbergh Papers, Family Histories, Reeve Lindbergh Speech at St. Cloud State Univ. June 17, 1981,” MHS.

<sup>125</sup> Federal Writers’ Project of the Works Progress Administration, *Minnesota: A State Guide*, 72.

<sup>126</sup> Diary entry for “July 26, 1936,” Lindbergh, *Locked Rooms and Open Doors*, 290, 292-3.

the sense of freedom and adventure, of the rivers, the traditions, and inheritance of Minnesota pioneers, courage, independence, and a sense of the boundless future.”<sup>127</sup> While Main Street became modernized, Lindbergh State Park retained a sense of the pioneer life and a benevolent relationship with nature in the contours of its cultivated built environment.

In May of 1936, in the middle of the WPA restoration project, New York newspaper columnist Ward Morehouse visited Little Falls during a cross-country tour to uncover what “the Lindbergh legend” meant to his hometown. Morehouse’s syndicated story, appearing in the *Minneapolis Tribune*, noted that Little Falls had “a shrine in the form of a silver-gray frame house” which thousands of visitors “have come to prowl it, to gape at it, to touch it.”<sup>128</sup> Lindbergh’s boyhood home, the architectural pièce de résistance of the state park in the eyes of most visitors, was to the flier “of very secondary importance.”<sup>129</sup> The famous celebrity, who became an ardent conservationist in his later years, had always believed his old home’s greatest asset was its ability to provide an environment in which his fellow Minnesotans could reconnect with nature. He envisioned the state park foremost as a place of pleasure for the people of Little Falls to enjoy, “where families can go on Saturday and Sunday and where children can enjoy playing in the creek and river.”<sup>130</sup>

---

<sup>127</sup> Remarks at the special program observing the fiftieth anniversary of Charles A. Lindbergh’s flight, May 22, 1977, cited in John William Ward, “Lindbergh and the Meaning of American Society,” *Minnesota History* 45, no. 7 (Fall 1977): 291.

<sup>128</sup> Ward Morehouse, “Lindy’s Name Has Cash Value to Little Falls, His Home Town, But It Isn’t Commercialized,” *Minneapolis Tribune*, May 20, 1936; “A Columnist Looks at Little Falls,” *Little Falls Weekly Transcript*, May 20, 1936.

<sup>129</sup> Charles Lindbergh to Grace Nute, 2 February 1939, CAL Papers, Box 2, Folder: Grace Lee Nute Correspondence: Charles A. Lindbergh Feb.-Dec 1939, MHS.

<sup>130</sup> Charles Lindbergh to Martin Engstrom, 30 October 1936, Binder: WPA & Depression 1930s, CLHS.

While Lindbergh underestimated the sentimental value people ascribed to his boyhood home, his emphasis on the larger built environment of the state park aligned with the broader cultural significance underlying the WPA's restoration of the Lindbergh property. The state park, with its rustic style architecture recalling days of a not-too-distant past, represented the restoration of the pioneering spirit, inextricably linked to the land itself, which played a starring role in narratives of Minnesota's history. People from all corners of the United States flocked to the park throughout the 1930s because of its association with a living legend and its newfound "historic" designation. The project centered on the celebrity, but also propagandized the New Deal's endorsement of conservation and agricultural progress, quickly making the Charles A. Lindbergh State Park one of America's favorite historic places.



Figure 3.1. Charles A. Lindbergh's boyhood home. Façade, or west elevation (top) and corner of north and west elevations (bottom). WPA Research Folder, Charles Lindbergh Historic Site.



Figure 3.2. Views of west and south elevations looking northeast (top) and east elevation looking northwest (bottom). Photographs taken after 1933. Historic American Buildings Survey, Library of Congress.



Figure 3.3. Construction of the Lindbergh house, 1907. Minnesota Historical Society, HD6.73p8.





Figure 3.4. Charles Lindbergh's hometown visit, August 25, 1927. Lindbergh (right) and an unidentified man stand in front of the Lindbergh House holding a sign that reads "Little Falls: Lindbergh's Home Town." Collection I.480.7, Minnesota Historical Society.



Figure 3.5. Tenant House/Manager's House across the road from the Lindbergh family's home. Photograph taken after 1933. Historic American Buildings Survey, Library of Congress.



Figure 3.6. The Moo Pond. Lindbergh built this small cement pool for ducks as a boy. The words "Lindbergh" and "Wahgoosh" are inscribed on the bottom rim. Photograph taken by author on July 8, 2017.



Figure 3.7. WPA workers restoring the Lindbergh home, June 1936. Minnesota Historical Society, MM7.7Lp5.



Figure 3.8. Interior views of living room looking west (top) and southeast (bottom). The room displays reproduction furniture made by WPA workers. Photographs taken after 1933. Historic American Buildings Survey, Library of Congress.



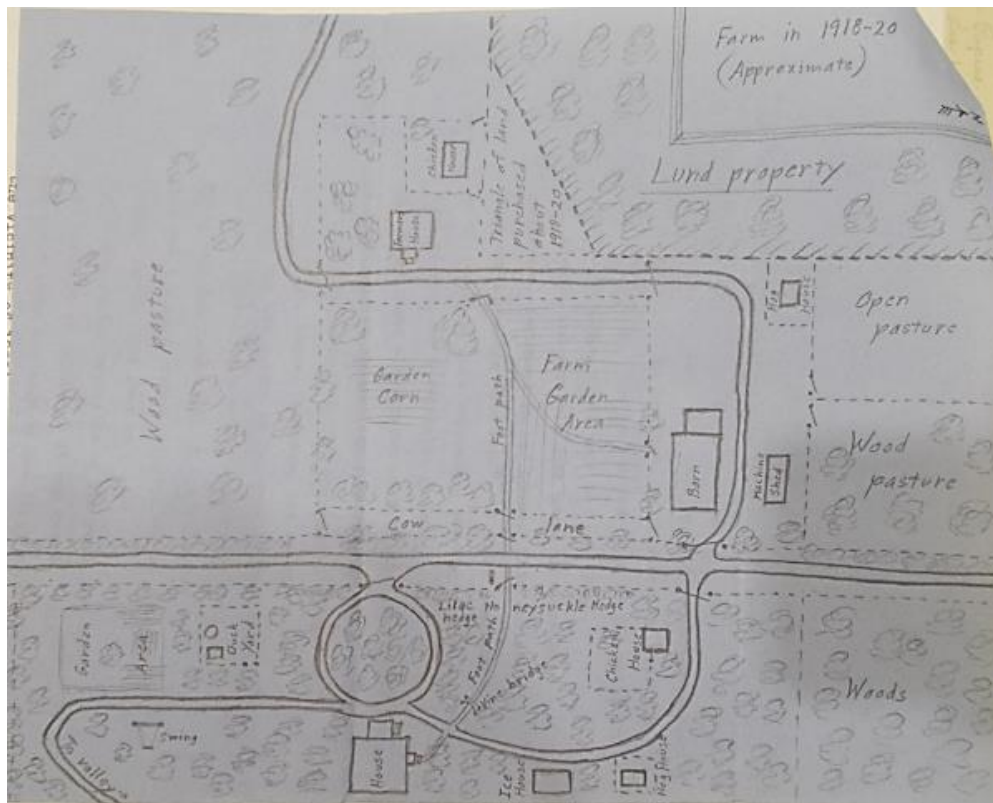
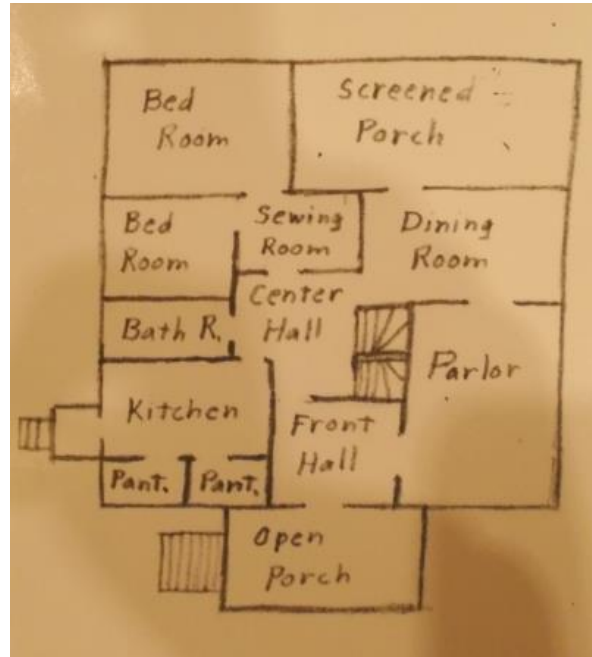


Figure 3.9. Hand-drawn sketches of the Lindbergh homestead. Letters from Charles Lindbergh to Grace Lee Nute of the Minnesota Historical Society, June 6, 1939, and August 8, 1939. Box 2, Charles A. Lindbergh and Family Papers, Minnesota Historical Society.

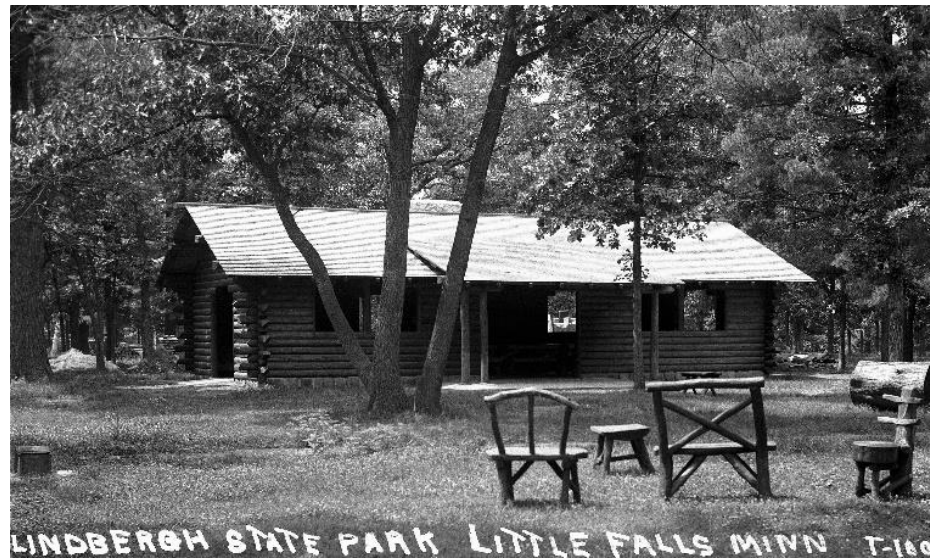


Figure 3.10. Rustic style park shelter at Lindbergh State Park, 1938. WPA Research Folder, Charles Lindbergh Historic Site.



Figure 3.11. Rustic style water tower at Lindbergh State Park, 1939. WPA Research Folder, Charles Lindbergh Historic Site.



## CONCLUSION

*The Cavalcade of American history is recorded in the nation's historic shrines. Each identifies some memorable event – adds a page to the inspiring Saga of our Nation's advancement.... All drew attention from these cradles of democracy that preserve America's history. Daughters of American Revolution, a few private organizations, these endeavor to preserve our hallowed shrines. The Federal Government extends a helping hand. Works Progress Administration Projects daily restore our heritage to its Colonial glory. Decayed structures are restored to their former beauty. Dilapidated buildings are repaired. Old public meetinghouses are renovated. Battle sites that gave our liberty are reproduced. Thus a richer tradition is insured for posterity.<sup>1</sup>*

“Cavalcade,” n.d.,  
Records Concerning the Restoration of Historic Shrines  
Works Progress Administration



In December of 1937, Ellen S. Woodward, assistant administrator of the Works Progress Administration (WPA), published “the story of what America is doing to Preserve its Historical Heritage” in the magazine of the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR). Regarding the general “neglect of historical landmarks and historical records” preceding the Depression years, Woodward commended the federal government for aiding in the “preservation of valuable historical treasures” as part of its work relief

---

<sup>1</sup> “Cavalcade,” n.d. RG 69, Entry 764, Box 1, Folder: Historic Shrines – Overview, National Archives and Records Administration [NARA].

program. With the support of “allies” like the DAR, but also local and state governments and committees, historical societies, preservation organizations, and other patriotic groups, Americans were roused to prevent the loss of more historic material as “modern modes replace the old ways of living.”<sup>2</sup> Through the New Deal’s work relief program, historic shrines across the nation were preserved as markers of the nation’s progress; they stood as reminders of the diverse feats, challenges, and landscapes that collectively formed the cultural economy of the United States.

The three WPA historic shrines discussed in this work all enjoyed success and popularity in the period immediately following their restoration. In the small New England town of Guilford, Connecticut, the Henry Whitfield State Museum welcomed visitors to the oldest stone house in the state to learn about the heritage bequeathed by its Puritan forefathers. While Democratic Governor Wilbur Cross narrowly lost the reelection in 1938 and the state returned to Republican control, the restored historic shrine was an enduring legacy of the New Deal and Cross’s commitment to Connecticut Yankeeedom.<sup>3</sup>

At the commemorative exercises celebrating the reopening of the Old Stone House in November of 1937, Theodore Sizer, director of the Gallery of Fine Arts and Curator of Painting at Yale University, gave an address in which he extolled the virtues of historic preservation: “Our ‘more abundant life,’” he counseled, “should mean something besides increased opportunity to race about or to go to the movies and cease

---

<sup>2</sup> Ellen S. Woodward, “Allies in Aims: The Story of What America is Doing to Preserve Its Historical Heritage,” *National Historic Magazine* (December 1937): 1078. RG 69, Entry 678, Box 15, Folder 290-B, NARA.

<sup>3</sup> Trustees Minutes, November 10, 1938, HWH Records, Box 1, Folder 3, CSL; James T. Patterson, *The New Deal and the States: Federalism in Transition* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1969), 158.

thinking. To understand of our historic and heroic past, is to enable us to evaluate aright the present and to know something of our destiny.”<sup>4</sup> In restoring the 300-year-old Henry Whitfield House as authentically as possible to its 1640 appearance, the WPA provided Guilford with the historic space in which to commemorate the past and prepare for the future.

While WPA workers restored the shrine under the guidance of architect J. Frederick Kelly, the town of Guilford began preparations for its tercentenary celebrations to be held in September of 1939 in honor of the 300-year anniversary of the arrival of Henry Whitfield’s company. The major theme underlying the festivities, as in the restoration project, was the exaltation of the town’s Puritan forefathers. Bishop Frederick De Land Leete defended Puritans as “the ancestors of all Americans,” and he urged Guilfordites to “recall and commemorate history,” for it is those who study the past and its lessons that contribute to the “strength and greatness of the nation’s future.”<sup>5</sup> Like other public historical reenactments of the 1930s, Guilford’s tercentenary included a pageant which depicted Whitfield and his company’s arrival and the settling of the town.<sup>6</sup> By the late 1930s, largely effected through the restored shrine of the Henry Whitfield House, the Puritan legacy had been revived.

In Charleston, South Carolina, the extensive and expensive restoration of the Dock Street Theatre also fulfilled its goal when its doors opened in November of 1937:

---

<sup>4</sup> Theodore Sizer, “The Yale Gallery of Fine Arts, The Garvan Collection, and The Historic House Museum,” in Evangeline Walker Andrews, ed., *The Henry Whitfield House: 1639: The Commemorative Exercises Held at Guilford, Connecticut, October 20, 1937, Upon the Restoration of ‘The Old Stone House’* (Hartford, CT: Prospect Press, 1937), 30.

<sup>5</sup> *Proceedings of Guilford Colony Tercentenary Celebration* (Guilford, CT: Shore Line Times Publishing Company, 1939), 103, 105-6, 974.62 G14, New Haven Public Library.

<sup>6</sup> *Proceedings of Guilford Colony Tercentenary Celebration*, 47-8; David Glassberg, “History and the Public: Legacies of the Progressive Era,” *Journal of American History* 73, no. 4 (March 1987): 972-3.

Charleston reclaimed its role as regional center of theatrical activity and created a version of the city palatable to its cultural elite. In March of 1938, Hallie Flanagan, director of the Federal Theatre Project (FTP), traveled to Charleston to discuss ways in which her New Deal program might help in the further development of the theater. During her visit, Flanagan said “the federal theater is extremely interested in the Dock Street theater, particularly because it was a WPA project.”<sup>7</sup> The resurrection of the famed colonial entertainment site put Charleston back on the cultural map of the nation, and advanced the political career of Burnet Maybank. The Charleston mayor’s skillful use of New Deal funds and strong relationship with leading figures in the Roosevelt coalition, including WPA director Harry Hopkins and South Carolina senator James Byrnes, helped Maybank win the governorship in 1938.

A month before the theater reopened to the public, Edmund P. Grice, the director of the WPA district office, remarked that “the whole idea behind this project was that it should be a contribution to the cultural development of the community. It is in no sense a commercial venture.”<sup>8</sup> His words rang true as the years following the theater’s restoration witnessed a flourishing of theatrical activity, but financial struggles for the management, too. However, in its first three years, with funding from a Rockefeller Foundation grant of \$15,000, the Dock Street Theatre developed its technical direction, welcomed touring

---

<sup>7</sup> “Theater Policies to Be Discussed,” *Charleston News & Courier*, January 22, 1938; “Experts Advise a Longer Lease,” *Charleston News & Courier*, February 3, 1938; “WPA Aid Offered Dock St. Theater,” *Charleston News & Courier*, March 31, 1938; Thomas C. Parker to Eola Willis, 29 October 1937, Eola Willis Papers, 1857-1951, Container 21/66: Correspondence, 1884-1951, Folder 21/66/11, South Carolina Historical Society [SCHS]. The previous fall, Flanagan had received a copy of Eola Willis’s “The Story of the Original Dock Street Theatre” from Thomas C. Parker, assistant director of the WPA and Federal Art Project (FAP), which brought to her attention the restoration.

<sup>8</sup> “Accomplishment of WPA Detailed,” *Charleston News & Courier*, October 13, 1937.

companies from Europe, hosted a foreign film series, and opened a theatrical arts school.<sup>9</sup> Additionally, Charleston's favorite literary figure, DuBose Heyward, lent his fame to the Dock Street Theatre by assuming the position of writer-in-residence from 1937 until his death in 1940.<sup>10</sup> As hoped for when plans for the restoration project first materialized, various art and cultural organizations made use of the Dock Street Theatre upon opening, including the Charleston String Symphony, the Charleston Philharmonic, the Poetry Society of South Carolina, the Dramatic Society of the College of Charleston, the Junior League of Charleston, and the Society for the Preservation of Old Dwellings.<sup>11</sup>

Despite the recommendations of theater experts to employ professional actors and staff and the interest of FTP director Flanagan, the Dock Street Theatre's operations remained community-based, with the local Footlight Players retaining its position as resident theater troupe. The Dock Street Theatre, while "a marvelous chance to attract people," was a treasure first and foremost for the employment and enjoyment of Charlestonians.<sup>12</sup> After five tornadoes struck the Charleston peninsula on September 29, 1938, Harry Hopkins directed the WPA to give \$500,000 to restore landmarks hit by the

---

<sup>9</sup> "\$15,000 Rockefeller Grant Given Dock Street Theater," *Charleston News & Courier*, May 24, 1938; "Rockefeller Report Cites Dock Street," *Charleston News & Courier*, August 8, 1939; Jack Irby Hayes, Jr., *South Carolina and the New Deal* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2001), 43. The Dock Street Theatre was the only community theater to receive a grant from the foundation, and only two other grants promoting drama were awarded overall (to the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and Western Reserve University).

<sup>10</sup> "Carolina Art Group Gets Rockefeller Aid," *New York Times*, November 9, 1939; Barbara L. Bellows, *A Talent for Living: Josephine Pinckney and the Charleston Literary Tradition* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2006), 198.

<sup>11</sup> "Dock St. Theater Has Big Season," *Charleston News & Courier*, April 9, 1939. Other organizations to use the Dock Street Theatre spaces included the Charleston Garden Club, the Thespian Players, the Charleston Museum, Ashley Hall, the City Federation of Women's Clubs, the Society for the Preservation of Spirituals, Charleston Free Library, St. Michael's Protestant Episcopal Church, St Paul's Protestant Episcopal Church, the local chapter of B'nai B'rith, the First Church of Christ Scientist, and the Society of Colonial Wars.

<sup>12</sup> "\$15,000 Rockefeller Grant Given Dock Street Theater," *Charleston News & Courier*, May 24, 1938.

storms, including the Dock Street Theatre, once again lending his support to protect Charleston's built heritage.<sup>13</sup>

Finally, in central Minnesota, the home and land of the state's favorite native son, Charles A. Lindbergh, became a premier historical and nature destination for residents and tourists alike to enjoy. For most of the 1930s Lindbergh remained the ideal American man, and the Lindbergh Boyhood Home and State Park became a place where Americans could adulate the state's greatest hero, honor the significant contributions of the area's Scandinavian pioneers, and reaffirm their relationship with the natural world. A success in the eyes of the general public, the project also represented remarkable cooperation between political parties and governmental offices. The WPA project benefitted from fortunate timing, however, as just after the park's completion came the end of the Farmer-Labor Party's control of the state and the fast decline in public opinion of the famous flier.

The Farmer-Labor Party had in the past bridged rural and urban interest groups, succeeding because of its joining of farm and labor leaders, but the rise of the Minnesota Farm Bureau weakened farmer-labor cooperation and lead to the election of Republican Harold Stassen as governor in 1938. Contributing to the decline of the Farmer-Labor coalition was Governor Elmer Benson's unwise politicization of the WPA and unfair ousting of WPA state administrator, Republican Victor Christgau, whom he feared was angling to campaign against him for the governorship.<sup>14</sup> Around the same time the

---

<sup>13</sup> "WPA Gives \$500,000 To Fix Landmarks; Hopkins Offers Immediate Help to Rebuild Here," *Charleston News & Courier*, October 1, 1938; "Dock St. Season to Go Forward," *Charleston News & Courier*, October 1, 1938; Tara Mitchell Mielnik, *New Deal, New Landscape: The Civilian Conservation Corps and South Carolina* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2011), 13.

<sup>14</sup> Richard M. Valelly, *Radicalism in the States: The Minnesota Farmer-Labor Party and the American Political Economy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 101-102; Elmer A. Benson, "Politics in

Farmer-Labor Party's influence waned, Lindbergh became embroiled in politics surrounding World War II and his reputation was marred by allegations of his sympathizing with Nazi Germany. However, as Roger Butterfield wrote for *Life* magazine in August of 1941, despite Lindbergh's ascension to the face of the America First Committee, he still held great appeal to the American public. People continued to gravitate toward "the magic of his legendary name, the appeal of his personality, the sincerity of which he comes before the microphone."<sup>15</sup>

While public opinion of Lindbergh shifted drastically with the continuation of the war, Lindbergh State Park fared better than the man. The historic shrine represented not Lindbergh's adulthood, but his formative years on the family farm and the hard work of his Swedish pioneering ancestors. The Lindbergh site was not tainted by Lindbergh's own meteoric fall from fame, his noninterventionist stance on the war, nor his increasingly rocky relationship with President Franklin Roosevelt. Its rustic style park architecture, scenic views, and welcoming trails and campgrounds remained a preeminent attraction for folks pursuing recreational activities and people intrigued by the tumultuous career of Charles Lindbergh.

In 1939, an article in the *New York Times* described the historic preservation impulse taking root across the nation as a "cultural renaissance of the country's appreciation of its heritage." This renaissance was "given government impetus" in 1935

---

My Lifetime," *Minnesota History* 74, no. 4 (Winter 1980): 154. Benson called WPA state administrator Victor Christgau "a thorn in my side while I was governor.... a right-wing, former Republican congressman who... had ambitions to switch to the Democrats and run for governor against me." For a New Dealer's account of Christgau's dismissal from the WPA, see Mabel S. Ulrich, "Salvaging Culture for the WPA," *Harper's Magazine* 178 (May 1939): 662-3.

<sup>15</sup> Roger Butterfield, "Lindbergh: A Stubborn Young Man of Strange Ideas Becomes Leader of Wartime Opposition," *LIFE*, August 11, 1941.

with the passage of the Historic Sites Act and the establishment of the WPA.<sup>16</sup> The WPA characterized its own efforts restoring America's favorite historic shrines as serving "a double purpose – employment for the deserving needy, and a visible reminder of the hardships endured by the Nation's founders."<sup>17</sup> The restoration of the nation's significant historic sites not only consecrated the architecture in which history transpired, but preserved the thoughts, beliefs, values, and ways of life that defined previous eras.

The WPA's historic shrine restorations aided in the reconstruction of American culture during the Depression years. Funded by the New Deal administration, they were projects conceived, sponsored, and directed by a wide cast of figures both related and unconnected to the federal enterprise. History was put into service in the 1930s through the historic shrine restorations in order to benefit contemporary and future generations. Historic buildings and landscapes that bore witness to great trials and triumphs served as symbols to inspire future Americans to invent, innovate, experiment, and succeed. Through these historic shrines, the WPA informed the nation, "the Genesis of American history is recalled."<sup>18</sup>

---

<sup>16</sup> S. R. Winters, "Movement to Save the Nation's Heritage Has Spread Throughout the Country," *New York Times*, July 2, 1939.

<sup>17</sup> "Historic Military Shrines Restored by U.S.," September 21, 1939, RG 69, Entry 678, Box 15, Folder 290-B, NARA.

<sup>18</sup> "Cavalcade," n.d. RG 69, Entry 764, Box 1, Folder: Historic Shrines – Overview, NARA.



## REFERENCES

### **Primary Sources**

#### **Manuscript Collections**

##### Charles A. Lindbergh Historic Site, Little Falls, MN

Binder: Lindbergh Historical Doc.

Binder: WPA & Great Depression 1930s

Folder: Lindbergh State Park History: Formation and Early Restoration

##### Connecticut Historical Society, Hartford, CT

“The Henry Whitfield House in Guilford, Connecticut,” (Guilford, CT: Board of Trustees, 1957), 974.62 G956hw

Folder: Whitfield State Hist. Site

##### Connecticut State Library / State Archives, Hartford, CT

RG 143 Colonial Dames of America, Connecticut Society, 1900-1942

RG 024:001 Henry Whitfield House Records, 1768-1957

RG 005:026 Governor Wilbur L. Cross, 1931-1939

##### Henry Whitfield State Museum, Guilford, CT

Folder: Kelly, J.F. Henry Whitfield State Museum (HWSM)

Folder: LIBRARY – Pamphlet House Booklet, 1935

Folder: Architecture – HWH 1930-31 + 1935-37 Restoration (Kelly)

##### Minnesota Historical Society, Saint Paul, MN

Charles A. Lindbergh and Family Papers

Charles A. Lindbergh Scrapbook

Victor A. Christgau Papers

Works Projects Administration: Writers’ Project Annals of Minnesota

Works Projects Administration, Writers Project Miscellaneous Manuscripts  
Historical Records

Twentieth Century Radicalism in Minnesota Oral History Project: Interview with  
Elizabeth Hoff Bruce, June 26, 1989, OH 30, AV1990.228.7

Department of Natural Resources, Parks & Recreation. Subject Files-Davison:  
Records of the Lindbergh House 103.E.19.10(F),

National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, MD

RG 69: Records of the Work Projects Administration, Entry 10, FERA,  
Administration Central Files, 1933-1937  
RG 69: Records of the Work Projects Administration, Entry 678, Information  
Service (Primary) File, 1936-42  
RG 69: Records of the Work Projects Administration, Entry 734, Press  
Information and Publicity Materials, 1936-1942  
RG 69: Records of the Works Projects Administration, Division of Information,  
Entry 755, "Best Project" Reports, 1940  
RG 69: Records of the Work Projects Administration, Entry 764, Records  
Concerning the Restoration of Historic Shrines, 1937-1938

New Haven Public Library, New Haven, CT

*Proceedings of Guilford Colony Tercentenary Celebration*. Guilford, CT: Shore  
Line Times Publishing Company, 1939). 974.62 G14

South Carolina Historical Society, Charleston, SC

Albert Simons Papers, 1864-1979, 1253.00  
Architectural Drawings of Albert Simons and Samuel Lapham, 42-89-A-B  
Dock Street Theatre Collection, 1933-1958, 1177.00  
Eola Willis Papers, 1857-1951, 1174.00

South Caroliniana Library, University of South Carolina, Columbia, SC

"Dock Street Theatre Collection, 1937-1947," n.d., Manuscripts I&Olb (Dock  
Street Theatre)  
"1736-1937: In Commemoration and Rededication of the Dock Street Theatre,  
Charleston, S.C." Charleston, S.C: City of Charleston, 1937. 792 Se8  
"First U.S. Theatre Is Restored: Charleston Blue Bloods Give It Gala Opening."  
*Life*, December 20, 1937. 792 F57 1937 Oversize  
Heyward, DuBose. "Dock Street Theatre: Carolina Art Association,  
Management." January 1938. 792 H49 1938 Oversize  
"WPA Photograph Collection," 193u-194u. Digital Collections.  
Shaw, Erin. "Preservation Prologue: Albert Simon's Adaptive Reuse of the  
Planters' Hotel as the Dock Street Theatre." Seminar Paper, University of  
South Carolina, Columbia, 1998. Manuscripts, Schulz, C.B.

Sterling Memorial Library, Yale University, New Haven, CT

Norman M. Isham Papers, Correspondence 1896-1939, Writings on Architecture,  
Group No. 1156  
George Dudley Seymour Papers, Group 442, Series V, Box 106  
Charles M. Andrews Papers, Evangeline Andrews, Group 38, Series V, Box 91,  
Folder 989, Henry Whitfield Historical Museum, Conn., 1933-53

**Newspapers / Magazines**

*Architectural Record*  
*Atlanta Constitution* (Atlanta, GA)  
*Charleston Evening Post* (Charleston, SC)  
*Charleston News & Courier* (Charleston, SC)  
*Hartford Courant* (Hartford, CT)  
*Herald Tribune* (New York, NY)  
*Leader-Telegram* (Eau Claire, WI)  
*LIFE*  
*Little Falls Daily Transcript* (Little Falls, MN)  
*Little Falls Herald* (Little Falls, MN)  
*Little Falls Weekly Transcript* (Little Falls, MN)  
*Minneapolis Tribune* (Minneapolis, MN)  
*Motion Picture Herald*  
*New York Times* (New York, NY)  
*Saint Paul Pioneer Press* (Saint Paul, MN)  
*Salt Lake Telegram* (Salt Lake City, UT)  
*Saturday Evening Post*  
*Scholastic*  
*Shore Line Times* (Guilford, CT)  
*State* (Columbia, SC)  
*Washington Post* (Washington, D.C.)

**Published Primary**

Andrews, Evangeline Walker, ed. *The Henry Whitfield House: 1639: The Commemorative Exercises Held at Guilford, Connecticut, October 20, 1937, Upon the Restoration of 'The Old Stone House.'* Hartford, CT: Prospect Press, 1937.

Atwater, Edward E. *History of New Haven to the Present Time.* New York: W. W. Munsell, 1887.

Brooks, Van Wyck. *The Wine of the Puritans: A Study of Present-Day America.* New York: Mitchell Kennerley, 1908.

———. "On Creating a Usable Past," *The Dial* (April 11, 1918): 337-341.

- . *The Ordeal of Mark Twain*. New York: E. P. Dutton, 1920.
- . *The Flowering of New England*. New York: E. P. Dutton, 1936.
- Cross, Wilbur L. *Connecticut Yankee: An Autobiography*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1943.
- Federal Writers' Project of the Works Progress Administration for the State of Minnesota. *Minnesota: A State Guide*. New York: Viking Press, 1938.
- Federal Writers' Project of the Works Progress Administration for the State of Connecticut. *Connecticut: A Guide to Its Roads, Lore, and People*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1938.
- Glicksberg, Charles I. "The Federal Writers' Project," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 37 (April 1939): 157-169.
- Good, Albert H. *Park Structures and Facilities*. Washington, D.C.: National Park Service, Department of the Interior, 1935.
- Hill, Everett Gleason. *A Modern History of New Haven and Eastern New Haven County*, Vol. II. New York: S. J. Clarke, 1918.
- Kelly, J. Frederick. "Restoration of the Henry Whitfield House, Guilford, Connecticut." *Old-Time New England*, Vol. XXIX, no. 3 (January 1939): 75-89.
- . *The Early Domestic Architecture of Connecticut*. New Haven, Yale University Press, 1924.
- . *Early Connecticut Architecture*. New York: W. Helburn, 1924.
- . "Early Domestic Architecture of Connecticut," published for the Tercentenary Commission. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1933.  
<https://cdm15019.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p128501coll2/id/227780>.
- . *The Henry Whitfield House, 1639: The Journal of the Restoration of The Old Stone House, Guilford*. Hartford, CT: Prospect Press, 1939.
- "Making an Appropriation for a State Historical Museum," *Special Acts and Resolution of the General Assembly of the State of Connecticut* Vol. XIII (Hartford, CT: Hartford Press: Case, Lockwood & Brainard Company, 1901), 515. 345.2 C761s, <https://connecticuthistoryillustrated.org/islandora/object/30002%3A21959867#page/9/mode/2up>.

Meltzer, Theodore F. "Lindbergh State Park," *The Minnesota Conservationist* (November 1937): 16-17, 26-7.

"Memorials of Our Country's Young Life." *Potter's American Monthly* (April 1875): 4, 40.

Halsey, William, and Corrie McCallum, interview by Liza Kirwin. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. October 27, 1986.  
<https://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/interviews/oral-history-interview-william-halsey-and-corrie-mccallum-12465#overview>.

Palfrey, John Gorham. *History of New England*. Boston: Little, Brown, 1859.

Prentice, Thomas Morgan. "Colonial Land-marks of New England." *Peterson Magazine* VII, no. 3 (March 1897).

Robinson, Emmett. "A Guide to the Dock Street Theatre and Brief Resume of the Theatres in Charleston, S.C. from 1730." Charleston: The Footlight Players, Inc., 1963. College of Charleston Libraries accessed via Lowcountry Digital Library.  
<http://lcdl.library.cofc.edu/lcdl/catalog/lcdl:22092?page=lcdl:22077>.

Rourke, Constance. "American Art: A Possible Future." *American Magazine of Art* 28, no. 7 (July 1935): 390-405.

Smith, Ralph D. *The History of Guilford, Connecticut, from Its First Settlement in 1639*. Albany, NY.: J. Munsell, 1877.

Ulrich, Mabel S. "Salvaging Culture for the WPA." *Harper's Magazine* 178, May 1939.

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service, *Park Structures and Facilities*, 1935.

Willis, Eola. *The Charleston Stage in the XVIII Century: With Social Settings of the Time*. Columbia, SC: State Company, 1924.

Writers' Program of the Works Projects Administration in the State of South Carolina, *South Carolina: A Guide to the Palmetto State*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1941.

Works Progress Administration for Connecticut, "Connecticut Work in Progress," (February 1936-May 1937).  
<https://archive.org/details/connecticutworki3637unit/page/n5>.

## **Secondary Sources**

“Preservation Office Surveys Rustic-Style Park Buildings,” *Minnesota History News*, January 2, 1989.

Alexander, Cathy. “Lindbergh, Charles A. House and Park.” National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form. American Association for State and Local History, November 20, 1970.

Alexander, Charles C. *Here the Country Lies: Nationalism and the Arts in Twentieth Century America*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1980.

Anderson, Rolf T. “Minnesota State Park CCC/WPA/Rustic Style Historic Resources.” National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form, September 3, 1988.

———. “Charles A. Lindbergh State Park WPA/Rustic Style Historic Resources.” National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form, October 25, 1989.

Auslander, Leora. “Beyond Words.” *American Historical Review* 110, no. 4 (October 2005): 1015-1045.

Axelrod, Alan, ed. *The Colonial Revival in America*. New York: W. W. Norton, 1985.

Aydin, Calgar. “The Potential of Virtual Heritage Reconstruction in Lost Ansonborough.” M.Sc. thesis, Clemson University, 2012.

Badger, Anthony J. *New Deal / New South: An Anthony J. Badger Reader*. Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2007.

Balmori, Diana, Diane Kostial McGuire, and Eleanor M. McPeck. *Beatrix Farrand’s American Landscapes: Her Gardens and Campuses*. Sagaponack, NY: Sagapress, 1985.

Baxter, Linda Trowbridge. *The Newcomers: A Study of Immigrants to Guilford, Connecticut, 1850-1930*. Dexter, MI: Thomson-Shore, 1985.

Bellows, Barbara L. *A Talent for Living: Josephine Pinckney and the Charleston Literary Tradition*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2006.

Benson, David. *Stories in Log and Stone: The Legacy of the New Deal in Minnesota State Parks*. Saint Paul: Minnesota Dept. of Natural Resources, Division of Parks and Recreation, 2002.

Benson, Elmer A. “Politics in My Lifetime.” *Minnesota History* 74, no. 4 (Winter 1980): 154-161.

- Benson, Susan Porter, Stephen Brier, and Roy Rosenzweig, eds. *Presenting the Past: Essays on History and the Public*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986.
- Bindas, Kenneth J. *Remembering the Great Depression in the Rural South*. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2007.
- Bland, Sidney R. *Preserving Charleston's Past, Shaping Its Future: The Life and Times of Susan Pringle Frost*, 2nd ed. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1999.
- Bluestone, Daniel. *Buildings, Landscapes, and Memory: Case Studies in Historic Preservation*. New York: W. W. Norton, 2011.
- Bold, Christine. *The WPA Guides: Mapping America*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1999.
- Brandt, Lydia Mattice. *First in the Homes of His Countrymen: George Washington's Mount Vernon in the American Imagination*. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2016.
- Brownell, Blaine A., and David R. Goldfield, eds. *The City in Southern History: The Growth of Urban Civilization in the South*. Port Washington, NY: Kennikat Press, 1977.
- Brundage, W. Fitzhugh. *The Southern Past: A Clash of Race and Memory*. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2005.
- Bucki, Cecelia. *Bridgeport's Socialist New Deal, 1915-36*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2001.
- Burghardt, Laura Ashley. "The Movement of Architectural Elements within Charleston, South Carolina." M.Sc. thesis, College of Charleston and Clemson University, 2009.
- Burness, Deborah G. "J. Frederick Kelly and the Colonial Revival in Connecticut." B.A. thesis, Southern Connecticut State University, 1994.
- Bustard, Bruce. *A New Deal for the Arts*. Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration in association with the University of Washington Press, 1997.
- Cann, Marvin L. "Burnet Maybank and Charleston Politics in the New Deal Era." *Proceedings of the South Carolina Historical Association* (1979): 39-48.

- Chauncey, George. *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Making of the Gay Male World, 1890-1940*. New York: Basic Books, 1994.
- Cobb, James C., and Michael V. Namorato, eds. *The New Deal and the South*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1984.
- Cohen, Lizabeth. *Making a New Deal: Industrial Workers in Chicago, 1919-1939*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990.
- Cohen, Robert. *When the Old Left Was Young: Student Radicals and America's First Mass Student Movement, 1929-1941*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1993.
- Cohen, Robert D. *Depression Folk: Grassroots Music and Left-Wing Politics in 1930s America*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2016.
- Contreras, Belisario R. *Tradition and Innovation in New Deal Art*. Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 1983.
- Corkern, Wilton Claude, Jr. "Architects, Preservationists, and the New Deal: The Historic American Buildings Survey, 1933-1942." Ph.D. diss., The George Washington University, 1984.
- Cromley, Elizabeth C. *The Food Axis: Cooking, Eating, and the Architecture of American Houses*. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2010.
- Cross, Wilbur L. *Connecticut Yankee: An Autobiography*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1943.
- Culvahouse, Tim. *The Tennessee Valley Authority: Design and Persuasion*. New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2007.
- Cunningham, Jan. "Whitfield, Henry, House." National Historic Landmark Nomination Form. Cunningham Associates, Ltd., November 30, 1995.
- Curtis, James. *Mind's Eye, Mind's Truth: FSA Photography Reconsidered*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1989.
- Cutler, Phoebe. *The Public Landscape of the New Deal*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1985.
- Datel, Robin Elisabeth. "Southern Regionalism and Historic Preservation in Charleston, South Carolina, 1920-1940." *Journal of Historical Geography* 16, no. 2 (1990): 197-215.
- Dawson, Jan C. *The Unusable Past: America's Puritan Tradition, 1830-1930*. Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1984.



- Denning, Michael. *The Cultural Front: The Laboring of American Culture in the Twentieth Century*. New York: Verso, 1997.
- Dorman, Robert L. *Revolt of the Provinces: The Regionalist Movement in America, 1920-1945*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993.
- Dornfield, Steven "Gordon Rosenmeier: The Little Giant from Little Falls." *Minnesota History* 64, no. 4 (Winter 2014): 148-157.
- Doyle, Don Harrison. *New Men, New Cities, New South: Atlanta, Nashville, Charleston, Mobile, 1860-1910*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990.
- Dwight, Timothy. *Travels in New England and New York*, Vol. 4. Cambridge, MA; Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1969.
- Esperdy, Gabrielle M. *Modernizing Main Street: Architecture and Consumer Culture in the New Deal*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008.
- Filene, Benjamin. *Romancing the Folk: Public Memory & American Roots Music*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000.
- Finnegan, Cara A. *Picturing Poverty: Print Culture and FSA Photographs*. Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2003.
- Foulkes, Julia L. *To the City: Urban Photographs of the New Deal*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2011.
- Gebhard, David. "The American Colonial Revival in the 1930s." *Winterthur Portfolio* 22, no. 2/3 (Summer-Autumn 1987): 109-148.
- Gieske, Millard L. *Minnesota Farmer-Laborism: The Third-Party Alternative*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1979.
- Gilmore, Glenda Elizabeth. *Defying Dixie: The Radical Roots of Civil Rights, 1919-1950*. New York: W. W. Norton, 2008.
- Glassberg, David. "History and the Public: Legacies of the Progressive Era." *Journal of American History* 73, no. 4 (March 1987): 957-980.
- Goodsell, Charles T. *The Social Meaning of Civic Space: Studying Political Authority through Architecture*. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1988.
- Gordon, Linda. "Dorothea Lange: The Photographer as Agricultural Sociologist." *Journal of American History* 93, no.3 (Dec. 2006): 698-727.

- Gough, Peter. *Sounds of the New Deal: The Federal Music Project in the West*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2018.
- Gray, Susan M. *Charles A. Lindbergh and the American Dilemma: The Conflict of Technology and Human Values*. Bowling Green, OH: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1988.
- Grieve, Victoria. *The Federal Art Project and the Creation of Middlebrow Culture*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2009.
- Halbwachs, Maurice. *The Collective Memory*. Translated by Francis J. Ditter, Jr. and Vida Yazdi Ditter. New York: Harper & Row, 1980. Originally published as *La Mémoire Collective* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1950).
- Handler Richard, and Eric Gable. *The New History in an Old Museum: Creating the Past at Colonial Williamsburg*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997.
- Harris, Dianne Suzette. *Little White Houses: How the Postwar Home Constructed Race in America*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013.
- Hayden, Dolores. *The Power of Place: Urban Landscapes as Public History*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1995.
- Hayes, Jack Irby, Jr. *South Carolina and the New Deal*. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2001.
- Heathcott, Joseph. "Reading the Accidental Archive: Architecture, Ephemera, and Landscape as Evidence of an Urban Public Culture," *Winterthur Portfolio* 41, no. 4 (Winter 2007): 239-268.
- Hendrickson, Kenneth E., Jr. "The WPA Federal Art Projects in Minnesota, 1935-1943." *Minnesota History* 53, no. 5 (Spring 1993): 170-183.
- Hill, Jeff. *The WPA: Putting America to Work*. Detroit, MI: Omnigraphics, 2014.
- Hirsch, Jerrold. *Portrait of America: A Cultural History of the Federal Writers' Project*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003.
- Hoffman, Frederick J. "Philistine and Puritan in the 1920s: An Example of the Misuse of the American Past." *American Quarterly* 1, no. 3 (Autumn 1949): 247-63.
- Hosmer, Charles B., Jr. *Presence of the Past: A History of the Preservation Movement in the United States Before Williamsburg*. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1965.
- . *Preservation Comes of Age: From Williamsburg to the National Trust, 1926-1949*. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1981.

- Hutchisson James M., and Harlan Greene, eds. *Renaissance in Charleston: Art and Life in the Carolina Low Country, 1900-1940*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2003.
- Jeffries, John W. *Testing the Roosevelt Coalition: Connecticut Society and Politics in the Era of World War II*. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1979.
- Jones, Alfred Haworth. "The Search for a Usable American Past in the New Deal Era." *American Quarterly* 23, no. 5 (Dec. 1971): 710-724.
- Kammen, Michael *Mystic Chords of Memory: The Transformation of Tradition in American Culture*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc, 1991.
- Karson, Robin. *A Genius For Place: American Landscapes of the Country Place Era*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2007.
- Kessner, Thomas. *The Flight of the Century: Charles Lindbergh & The Rise of American Aviation*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2010.
- Larson, Bruce L. "Lindbergh's Return to Minnesota, 1927." *Minnesota History* 42, no. 4 (Winter 1970): 141-152.
- . "Little Falls Lawyer, 1888-1906: Charles A. Lindbergh, Sr." *Minnesota History* 43, no. 5 (Spring 1973): 158-174.
- Leighninger, Robert D. *Building Louisiana: The Legacy of the Public Works Administration*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2007.
- Levine, Lawrence W. *The Unpredictable Past: Exploration in American Cultural History*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1993.
- Lindbergh, Anne Morrow. *Locked Rooms and Open Doors: Diaries and Letters of Anne Morrow Lindbergh, 1933-1935*. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1974.
- Lindbergh, Charles A. *Boyhood on the Mississippi: A Reminiscent Letter*. Saint Paul: Minnesota Historical Society, 1972.
- . *The Autobiography of Values*. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1978.
- Lowitt, Richard, and Maurine Beasley, eds. *One Third of a Nation: Lorena Hickok Reports on the Great Depression*. Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1981.
- Lugowski, David M. "Queering the (New) Deal: Lesbian and Gay Representation and the Depression-Era Cultural Politics of Hollywood's Production Code." *Cinema Journal* 38, no. 2 (Winter 1999): 3-35.

- Lyon, Edwin Austin. "New Deal Archaeology in the Southeast: WPA, TVA, NPS, 1934-1942." Ph.D. diss., Louisiana State University and Agricultural & Mechanical College, 1982.
- McDannell, Colleen. *Picturing Faith: Photography and the Great Depression*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2004.
- McDonald, William F. *Federal Relief Administration and the Arts: The Origins and Administrative History of the Works Progress Administration*. Columbus: Ohio State University, 1969.
- McElvaine, Robert S. *The Great Depression: America, 1929-1941*, Twenty-fifth Anniversary Edition. New York: Three Rivers Press, 2009.
- Maher, Neil M. *Nature's New Deal: The Civilian Conservation Corps and the Roots of the American Environmental Movement*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008.
- Marcaccini, Ann, and George Woytanowitz. "House Work: The DAR at the Sibley House." *Minnesota History* 55, no. 5 (Spring 1997): 186-201.
- Marling, Karal Ann. *Wall-to-Wall America: A Cultural History of Post-Office Murals in the Great Depression*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982.
- . *George Washington Slept Here: Colonial Revivals and American Culture, 1876-1986*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988.
- Mathews, Jane De Hart. *The Federal Theatre 1935-1939: Plays, Relief, and Politics*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1967.
- . "Arts and the People: The New Deal Quest for a Cultural Democracy." *Journal of American History* 62, no. 2 (September 1975): 316-39.
- Mecklenburg, Virginia M. *The Public as Patron: A History of the Treasury Department Mural Program*. College Park: University of Maryland, 1979.
- Melosh, Barbara. *Engendering Culture: Manhood and Womanhood in New Deal Public Art and Theater*. Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991.
- Meyer, Roy W. *Everyone's Country Estate: A History of Minnesota's State Parks*. Saint Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1991.
- Mielnik, Tara Mitchell. *New Deal, New Landscape: The Civilian Conservation Corps and South Carolina's State Parks*. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2011.

- Milton, Joyce. *Loss of Eden: A Biography of Charles and Anne Morrow Lindbergh*. New York: HarperCollins, 1993.
- Minnesota Historical Society. "Grace Lee Nute: Biographical Notes." n.d. <http://collections.mnhs.org/mnauthors/10001268>.
- Morrison County Historical Society, "The W.P.A. – Conversations with Jan [Warner]." n.d. [http://morrisoncountyhistory.org/?page\\_id=451](http://morrisoncountyhistory.org/?page_id=451).
- Muldrow, Ralph. "Simons & Lapham," *South Carolina Encyclopedia*, <http://www.scencyclopedia.org/sce/entries/simons-lapham/>.
- Mullen, Bill, and Sherry Lee Linkon, eds. *Radical Revisions: Rereading 1930s Culture*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1996.
- Murtagh, William. *Keeping Time: The History and Theory of Preservation in America*, 8<sup>th</sup> ed. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley, 2010.
- Musher, Sharon Ann. *Democratic Art: The New Deal's Influence on American Culture*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015.
- Natanson, Nicholas. *The Black Image in the New Deal: The Politics of FSA Photography*. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1992.
- National Society of the Colonial Dames of American in Connecticut. "Historical Activities," n.d. <https://nscda-ct.org/>.
- Noonan, Ellen. *The Strange Career of Porgy and Bess: Race, Culture, and America's Most Famous Opera*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012.
- O'Connor Francis V., ed. *Art for the Millions: Essays from the 1930s by Artists and Administrators of the WPA Federal Art Project*. Greenwich, CT: New York Graphic Society, 1975.
- Park, Marlene, and Gerald E. Markowitz. *Democratic Vistas: Post Offices and Public Art in the New Deal*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1984.
- Passos, John Dos. *The Ground We Stand On: Some Examples from the History of a Political Creed*. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1941.
- Patterson, James T. *The New Deal and the States: Federalism in Transition*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1969.
- Pells, Richard H. *Radical Visions & American Dreams: Culture and Social Thought in the Depression Years*. Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1973.

- Phillips, Sarah. *This Land, This Nation: Conservation, Rural America, and the New Deal*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.
- Pommer, Richard. "The Architecture of Urban Housing in the United States during the Early 1930s," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 34, no. 4 (December 1978): 235-264.
- Reich, Leonard S. "From the Spirit of St. Louis to the SST: Charles Lindbergh, Technology, and Environment." *Technology and Culture* 36, no. 2 (April 1995): 351-393.
- Reilly, Colleen K. "Staging Charleston: The Spoleto Festival U.S.A." Ph.D. diss., University of Pittsburgh, 2009.
- Rhoads, William B. "The Colonial Revival and American Nationalism." *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 35, no. 4 (Dec. 1976): 239-54.
- Rosenzweig, Roy, and Barbara Melosh. "Government and the Arts: Voices from the New Deal Era." *Journal of American History* 77, no. 2 (Sept. 1990): 596-608.
- Rotman, Deborah L., and Ellen-Rose Savulis, eds. *Shared Spaces and Divided Places: Material Dimensions of Gender Relations and the American Historical Landscape*. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2003.
- Rourke, Constance, and Van Wyck Brooks, eds. *The Roots of American Culture and Other Essays*. New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1942.
- Rowan, Edward L. *To Do My Best: James E. West and the History of the Boy Scouts of America*. Exeter, NH: Publishing Works, 2007.
- Rubin, Joan Shelley. "Constance Rourke in Context: The Uses of Myth." *American Quarterly* 28, no. 5 (Winter 1976): 576-588.
- . "A Convergence of Vision: Constance Rourke, Charles Sheeler, and American Art." *American Quarterly* 42, no. 2 (June 1990): 191-222.
- St. George, Robert Blair. *Conversing by Signs: Poetics of Implications in Colonial New England Culture*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998.
- Savage, Barbara Dianne. *Broadcasting Freedom: Radio, War, and the Politics of Race, 1938-1948*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999.
- Savage, Kirk. *Monument Wars: Washington, D.C., the National Mall, and the Transformation of the Memorial Landscape*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009.

- Sklaroff, Lauren Rebecca. *Black Culture and the New Deal: The Quest for Civil Rights in the Roosevelt Era*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009.
- Slotkin, Richard. *Gunfighter Nation: The Myth of the Frontier in Twentieth-Century America*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1998.
- Sommer, Barbara W. *Hard Work and a Good Deal: The Civilian Conservation Corps in Minnesota*. Saint Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2008.
- Steiner, Michael. "Regionalism in the Great Depression." *Geographical Review* 73, no. 4 (Oct. 1983): 430-46.
- Stipe, Robert, ed. *A Richer Heritage: Historic Preservation and the Twenty-First Century*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003.
- Stott, William. *Documentary Expression and Thirties America*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976.
- Stowe, David. W. *Swing Changes: Big-Band Jazz in New Deal America*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994.
- Strand, Algot E. *A History of the Swedish-Americans in Minnesota*. Chicago: Lewis Publishing, 1910.
- Stryker, Roy Emerson, and Nancy Wood, *In This Proud Land: America 1935-43 as Seen in the FSA Photographs*. New York: Graphic Society, 1973.
- Susman, Warren. *Culture as History: The Transformation of American Society in the Twentieth Century*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1984.
- , ed. *Culture and Commitment, 1929-1945*. New York: George Braziller, 1973.
- Tankard, Judith B. *Beatrix Farrand: Private Gardens, Public Landscapes*. New York: Monacelli Press, 2009.
- Taylor, David A. *Soul of a People: The WPA Writers' Project Uncovers Depression America*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2009.
- Taylor, Kieran W., ed. *Charleston and the Great Depression: A Documentary History, 1929-1941*. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2018.
- Tishler, William H. *American Landscape Architecture: Designers and Places*. Washington D.C.: Preservation Press, 1989.

- Tulla, Brittany V. Lavelle. "Huger, Cleland Kinlock and Burnet R. Maybank House." National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form. BVL Historic Preservation Research, October 5, 2015.
- Turner, Frederick Jackson. *The Frontier in American History*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1921.
- Tweed, William C. *Parkitecture: A History of Rustic Building Design in the National Park System: 1916-1942*. San Francisco: National Park Service, Western Regional Office, Division of Cultural Resource Management, 1978.
- Tweed, William C., Laura E. Soulliere, and Henry G. Law. *National Park Service Rustic Architecture: 1916-1942*. San Francisco: National Park Service, Western Regional Office, Division of Cultural Resource Management, 1977.
- Tweton, D. Jerome. *The New Deal at the Grass Roots: Programs for the People in Otter Tail County, Minnesota*. Saint Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1988.
- Tyler, Norman, Ted J. Ligibel, and Ilene R. Tyler, *Historic Preservation: An Introduction to Its History, Principles, and Practice*. New York: W. W. Norton, 2009.
- Ulrich, Laurel Thatcher. *The Age of Homespun: Objects and Stories in the Creation of an American Myth*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2001.
- Unrau, Harlan D. and G. Frank Williss. "To Preserve the Nation's Past: The Growth of Historic Preservation in the National Park Service during the 1930s." *The Public Historian* 9, no. 2 (Spring 1987): 19-49.
- . *Administrative History: Expansion of the National Park Service in the 1930s*. Denver: Denver Service Center, National Park Service, 1983.  
<http://npshistory.com/publications/unrau-williss/contents.htm>.
- Valelly, Richard M. *Radicalism in the States: The Minnesota Farmer-Labor Party and the American Political Economy*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989.
- Ward, John William. "The Meaning of Lindbergh's Flight." *American Quarterly* 10, no. 1 (Spring 1958): 3-16.
- . "Lindbergh and the Meaning of American Society." *Minnesota History* 45, no. 7 (Fall 1977): 288-291.
- Wecter, Dixon. *The Hero in America: A Chronicle of Hero-Worship*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1941.
- Welky, David. *Everything Was Better in America: Print Culture in the Great Depression*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2008.



- Weyeneth, Robert R. *Historic Preservation for a Living City: Historic Charleston Foundation, 1947-1997*. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2000.
- Wilson, Kristina. *Livable Modernism: Interior Decorating and Design During the Great Depression*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2004.
- Wilson, Merrill Ann. "Rustic Architecture: The National Park Style." *Trends* (Summer 1976): 4-5.
- Wilson, Richard Guy, Shaun Eyring, and Kenny Marotta, eds. *Re-creating the American Past: Essays on the Colonial Revival*. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2006.
- Wittman, Albert D. *Architecture of Minneapolis Parks*. Charleston, SC: Arcadia, 2010.
- Woodbury, Robert L. "Wilbur Cross: New Deal Ambassador to a Yankee Culture." *New England Quarterly* 41, no. 3 (Sept. 1968): 323-340.
- Yuhl, Stephanie E. "High Culture in the Low Country: Arts, Identity and Tourism in Charleston, South Carolina, 1920-1940." Ph.D. diss., Duke University, 1998.
- . *A Golden Haze of Memory: The Making of Historic Charleston*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005.