

“LOOK WEST,” SAYS THE *POST*: THE PROMOTION OF THE AMERICAN FAR
WEST IN THE 1920s *SATURDAY EVENING POST*

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INTRODUCTION

The American Far West has long been romanticized in American culture. Even in the present day, the West immediately calls to mind visions of the O.K. Corral, the eager 49ers, and Laura Ingalls Wilder. The expansive landscape and seemingly wild, untamed area are still seen as part of what sets America apart from its Old World, European counterparts. By the turn of the twentieth century, however, the West was largely settled and the contiguous frontier gone. With this realization, set out for people by Frederick Jackson Turner as early as 1893, older generations of Americans extolled the glory of days gone by when men were men and continually proving themselves on the frontier. Simultaneously, issues created by the newly settled and increasingly populated West prompted national discussion on the role of the federal government in citizens' lives, the need to curtail industry for the sake of nature and natural resources, and the mechanization of the agricultural industry. One outlet for both acclaiming the idealized West and discussing the very real issues presented by the region was the *Saturday Evening Post*, the nationally circulated periodical published by the Curtis Company of Philadelphia, that dominated the publishing industry during the first half of the twentieth century. This thesis will look at the various images of the West presented by the *Post* during the 1920s under the editorship of George Horace Lorimer, and will examine his editorial strategy that promoted the Far West as a last land of opportunity while also recognizing and weighing in on the challenges of that region.

The scope of this project is limited to the years 1920-1929. Having researched the issues from those decades, the majority of the relevant articles occur between the

years 1923 and 1929, largely due to a focus on international issues during and following the First World War. After 1929 and during the Great Depression, the content of the *Post* changed dramatically as Lorimer neared the end of his tenure and the attention of the nation shifted. This research only focuses on the non-fiction content, consisting mainly of articles and editorials. Though the *Post* is also well-known for its fiction, those pieces would require a different type of analysis that is not feasible within the scope of this research. These articles, as well as the correspondence and business papers of the *Post* available from this decade, will convey the image of the West Lorimer was attempting to promote among the American public, and the methods he used in doing so. This thesis as a whole will consider Lorimer's role in the content of the publication, the idealistic view promoted of the West, and the *Post*'s treatment of contemporary western issues of the 1920s.

Apart from the content of the *Saturday Evening Post*, primary sources consulted are housed in the George Horace Lorimer collection of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania. This consists largely of correspondence from several hundred *Post* contributors over a number of years. While these are helpful, they are not a complete collection of correspondence with each contributor and do little more than offer insight into the types of working relationships Lorimer had with each. This collection also includes the papers and correspondence of Adelaide Neall, who served as an associate editor under Lorimer from 1909 until his retirement, and Wesley Stout, who followed Lorimer as *Post* editor. The Saturday Evening Post Society, Inc. and the Curtis Company, now located in Indianapolis, Indiana, maintains an archive of the actual magazines themselves, however all other materials, such as internal memos, letters from

readers, editor's reports, manuscripts, etc. have not been preserved. Due to this lack of sources concerning the daily operations this thesis will focus on the content of the *Saturday Evening Post* rather than the operation of the magazine.

In researching this thesis materials that helped inform the question of editorial strategy and coverage were used. The bulk of the materials consulted at the Saturday Evening Post Society, Inc. archives in Indianapolis included all of the issues published throughout the 1920s, which were narrowed down to any article or editorial discussing western issues published during that decade. From the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, letters between Lorimer and writers that frequently wrote about the west were consulted as well as any items retained that had been sent in by the *Post's* reading public, namely responses to articles published and letters to the editor considered important enough to receive the attention of the chief editor. Also from the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, research included booklets and pamphlets published by the editorial staff of the *Saturday Evening Post* during the years of Lorimer's tenure, laying out editorial policy and administrative guidelines for prospective writers and advertisers.

The issues discussed in this thesis are a direct reflection of the issues, articles, and editorials of the *Saturday Evening Post* concerning the West during the decade of the 1920s. Over 254 articles were read, considered, and categorized in an attempt to discover the perspective of the *Post* on Western matters, the issues it chose to cover, and the stance it chose to take. The sources used in this thesis were chosen for either their exemplification of a particular *Post* perspective, their strength of argument on particular issues, or their reflection of Lorimer's idealistic view of the Far West and its role as an arena in which his bourgeois, nineteenth-century values could flourish. Sources not used

were discarded for their weaker representation of topics and beliefs better reflected in other articles or for focusing on issues which were not widely covered over the course of the decade.

Two groups of people that did receive some attention in the *Post* will not be included in this thesis. The first is Native Americans. While discussion of this people group was not as prevalent as other issues discussed in this thesis, the consistent representation of Native Americans was a negative one. Given the small sample of articles discussing them as a group and the extensive analysis that would be needed to dissect the attitudes and prejudices reflected by the *Post* writers, this group has not been addressed in this work. Likewise, members of the Church of Latter Day Saints received a small amount of attention from *Post* authors, however again, the sampling is too small and the complexity of the group, its history, and its representation in the American conscious makes consideration of them unfeasible for the purposes of this thesis.

The history of the *Saturday Evening Post* and the context of the United States and the American West will be discussed in Chapter One. The intangible component of romanticizing the West informs all of the *Post*'s western content and will be discussed in Chapter Two, beginning with the use of western icons like the pioneers and outlaws and ending with the promotion of the benefits that the challenge of living in the West could provide to a young generation seeking to develop their own "American" characters. Chapter Three will examine the *Post*'s stance on contemporary western issues and the duality of its treatment of federal involvement and western residents' rights.

CHAPTER ONE:

THE *SATURDAY EVENING POST* AND THE AMERICAN WEST IN THE 1920s

The *Saturday Evening Post* is an icon of American mass culture. The magazine's name invokes images of idyllic Norman Rockwell and J.C. Leyendecker covers portraying American life at its finest. Founded in 1821, the magazine achieved its zenith in the early twentieth century under the leadership of publisher Cyrus H.K. Curtis and chief editor from 1899 to 1936, George Horace Lorimer. As the nation moved through events including the invention of the car and radio, World War I, the Red Scare, and the Great Depression, Curtis and Lorimer were at the helm of the *Post* guiding their readers via the content of their publication. By the 1920s, the *Saturday Evening Post* was at its peak with weekly issues of two hundred or more pages and circulation numbers in the millions.

The *Post* of the 1920s encouraged its readers, especially its young, male readers, to look to the American West for the kinds of common opportunities and development that had prevailed, according to popular belief, in the bygone days of the nineteenth century. Concurrent to offering an idealized image of western heritage and opportunity, Lorimer and his writers sought to influence American thought on the West of the 1920s, including pieces, often biased and subjective, on contemporary western issues. Through the articles and editorials of the 1920s *Post*, Lorimer and his writers presented a calculated image of the West as the last bastion of economic and social opportunity, a land in which the young men of America could still hone their uniquely American characteristics while simultaneously increasing their wealth and social status. The

western-themed content of the *Post* through the 1920s shows Lorimer's editorial strategy in perpetuating the idealistic myth of the great American West of the past, the role that same West could play in preserving an American future, and the importance of the political and social issues dominating the West of the present.

The *Saturday Evening Post* is well-recognized as an iconic and influential feature of early and mid-twentieth century American life. Periodicals and other printed media have been an integral part of the American social and literary scene for over two hundred years. The first American magazine is often credited to either Benjamin Franklin, who began a magazine in 1740 but did not get it off the press until February 16, 1741, or Andrew Bradford, who managed to print his rival magazine three days earlier.¹

Originally a luxury of literate, upper-class Americans, magazines were produced for specialized audiences until 1825 when general magazines, focusing on politics, emerged.²

By the late nineteenth century, the mass-circulation magazine was the most prevalent form of cultural media. In the years between the Civil War and the turn of the twentieth century, American economic and social circumstances shifted, creating an ideal market for magazines to reach a nation-wide audience. In 1879, the United States Congress passed a law providing low-cost mailing privileges to periodicals. The lower cost of postage meant that magazines could reach subscribers across the country, increasing the geography of their circulation. A national audience meant a national market for advertising, and the relationship between magazines and industry was born. The last decades of the nineteenth century were a time of transition from an agrarian to an industrial economy. More efficient methods of production meant an increased demand

¹John Tebbel and Mary Ellen Zuckerman, *The Magazine in America: 1741-1990* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 3.

²*Ibid.*, 8.

for industrial labor which drew hundreds of thousands of people into major cities from rural areas. More people living in cities and working for companies instead of themselves provided a consumer market for those same companies to sell to. This new era of consumerism created a need for an advertising medium that could reach the maximum number of consumers and largely financed an explosion of national periodicals that would remain a dominant form of cultural media for most of the next century.³ As the content of these periodicals reached an ever larger audience, a national, or mass, culture developed.

In his study of the origins of mass culture, Richard Ohmann maintains that when a family purchased any of the mass magazines publishing during this time, they were not just buying a cultural commodity, but an item that simultaneously commodified them, presenting them to advertisers as a market.⁴ As magazines became a proven means of communicating with the nation as a whole, they also became a medium for more than just advertising, serving also as propagators of political ideas, contemporary issues, and changing cultural values. Ohmann asserts that crediting the editors of these magazines with growth of the magazine industry is too simplistic and in no way fully explains the phenomenon that occurred at the turn of the century. He favors Antonio Gramsci's hegemony theory, which argues that the bourgeoisie establishes control of communication in order to control the means of production, or the workers, because it favors the changes occurring within a capitalistic system.⁵ Ohmann explains the capitalist system that dominated the late nineteenth century and the cutthroat

³Theodore Peterson, *Magazines in the Twentieth Century* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1964), 4.

⁴Richard Ohmann, *Selling Culture: Magazines, Markets, and Class at the Turn of the Century* (New York: Verso, 1996), 8.

⁵*Ibid.*, 47.

competitiveness that led to price cutting and increased production, and inevitably, resulted in decreased profits. In order to stop this cycle, producers became both masters of production and engineers of consumption through advertising. The forum for advertising, the rising industry of magazine publishing, became the outlet that dictated acceptable societal values and norms.

Ohmann's theory is born out in the case of the *Saturday Evening Post*.

Revitalized in the early years of the twentieth century by its advertising revenue, the *Post* reflected to Americans, through its journalistic content and the products it advertised, the ideal of the American middle-class life. Ohmann's thesis on the development of mass culture, and the role magazines like the *Post* played in that development, supports this thesis's argument that when a periodical with the national presence of the *Post* covered certain topics, like western issues of the day, it was reaching the nation. One of the most widely circulated magazines of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the *Post* increased from a circulation of 2, 231 in 1897 to over one million copies a week in 1908.⁶ By 1929, the *Post* claimed that it had a weekly circulation of over 2.9 million copies.⁷

Founded in Philadelphia in 1821 by Robert S. Coffin, the *Post* was originally a weekly miscellany called the *Bee*.⁸ Coffin quickly sold the *Bee* to Charles Alexander, who formed a partnership with Samuel Coate Atkinson, associated with the printing business taking place in the same plant from which Benjamin Franklin's defunct *Pennsylvania Gazette* had been published. On August 4, 1821 the first issue of the newly

⁶Peterson, *Magazines in the Twentieth Century*, 12; Jan Cohn, *Creating America: George Horace Lorimer and the Saturday Evening Post* (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1989), 5.

⁷"The Saturday Evening Post," in *Curtis Facts and Figures*, George Horace Lorimer Papers, Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA.

⁸Frank Luther Mott, *A History of American Magazines: 1885-1905*, vol. IV of *A History of American Magazines* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1957), 672.

named *Saturday Evening Post* was published.⁹ The *Post* enjoyed success throughout the early decades of the nineteenth century, undergoing a series of owners and editors. This early version was a different periodical from what it would become, with news serving as the chief content. By the 1870s the *Post* was a sinking ship, listing along until 1897 when publishing magnate Cyrus H.K. Curtis, Jr., most recently famous for his success with the *Ladies' Home Journal*, purchased the periodical and all of its assets for one thousand dollars.¹⁰ At this time, the founding date on the masthead was changed from "Founded A.D. 1821" to read "Founded A.D. 1728" in a dubious attempt to claim a connection with Benjamin Franklin. In truth, the only real connection between the *Post* and Franklin was that it was first published from the shop in which the *Gazette* had published, and one of its founders, Atkinson, had been a partner of David Hall, the grandson of Franklin's partner.¹¹ In 1899, Curtis assigned George Horace Lorimer the editorship of the struggling periodical.

The newly revived periodical achieved its greatest success under George H. Lorimer, who served as editor-in-chief from 1899 to 1936. Born in 1867 to George Claude Lorimer, a well-known Baptist evangelist, Lorimer grew up in New York, Boston, and Chicago. After one year at Yale, he dropped out of college to work for P.D. Armour in his meat packing plant, rising to the position of assistant manager and traveling extensively across the United States. His biographer argues that this time of travel is part of what enabled Lorimer to sense so accurately what would appeal to the American people as a whole in his future career with the *Post*. Marrying in 1892, Lorimer worked as a reporter for the Boston *Standard* for only a few months before the

⁹Ibid., 672-673.

¹⁰Ibid., 681.

¹¹Ibid., 683.

paper folded. After another year of study at Colby College, he took a job with the Boston *Post*, eventually moving on to work for the Boston *Herald*. It was at the *Herald* that he learned of Cyrus Curtis's recent purchase of the *Saturday Evening Post* and search for an editor. Lorimer immediately wired Curtis asking for a job, and after a brief meeting in Boston, Curtis hired the thirty-one year old Lorimer.

From the beginning of his tenure, Lorimer left his mark on the *Post*. Both Lorimer and those who wrote for him attested that he set both the tone and the purpose of the *Post* by seeking writers and determining ideas for stories and articles to be written.¹² According to those who knew and wrote for him, Lorimer made it a strict policy to never guarantee any writer a place with the *Post*. None of Lorimer's writers were ever hired by contract; every piece ever submitted and run was on a strictly free-lance basis.¹³ In spite of this policy, Lorimer certainly had his favorites and a group of unofficial regular contributors slowly emerged based on a system of good pay and a mutual understanding of what Lorimer was seeking.¹⁴ Being a member of this inner cabal of writers, however, in no way assured that everything one wrote would be accepted. Lorimer always reserved the right to ultimately reject a piece, regardless of who wrote it for him or why it was commissioned. World War I changed this policy slightly, prompting Lorimer to choose some writers as foreign correspondents and leading to a later tradition of giving certain writers, either at their own proposal or Lorimer's, roving commissions for article series. This mutual understanding between Lorimer and his writers, coupled with his

¹²Cohn, *Creating America*, 3.

¹³Mott, *A History of American Magazines*, 693.

¹⁴Ibid.

ultimate veto power, created a unified *Post* voice, a voice that sounded significantly like George Horace Lorimer.¹⁵

Getting one's work accepted at the *Post* meant that one had to go through Lorimer himself, who spent every evening pouring over hundreds of manuscripts. Lorimer's editorial philosophy was heavily dominated by his own experience of the world and personal beliefs, informed by "an ideology constructed out of traditional values, an interpretation of the present, and a vision for the future."¹⁶ Lorimer, in spite of his privileged background, believed that he had brought himself up by his bootstraps during the booming business years of the Gilded Age. As a result, his understanding of the rapidly changing years of the early twentieth century was colored by a belief that all industrious young men should and could prosper as he had. A product of his time, Lorimer's vision of the future did not include industrious and business-savvy young women. With this nineteenth-century bourgeois ideology ingrained in him, Lorimer utilized the *Post* to express his ideology via article, story, editorial, and illustration, all of which, while entertaining, carried powerful messages of the value system of the periodical's editor, a value system that favored fair play, individual initiative, and common sense.¹⁷ At the beginning of his years with the *Post*, Lorimer believed that the American nation was not unified by a common sense of "Americanism."¹⁸ Creating and propagating his interpretation of an American consciousness that would transcend region and some ethnic roots became Lorimer's over-arching mission, and the pages of the *Post* continually presented the representative American: an individual that possessed

¹⁵Cohn, *Creating America*, 3.

¹⁶*Ibid.*, 6.

¹⁷*Ibid.*, 7-8.

¹⁸*Ibid.*, 9.

nineteenth-century values, worked hard, saved money, and assumed the duties of citizenship.¹⁹

This staunchly traditional, conservative outlook on life placed Lorimer firmly under the umbrella of the capitalist driven Republican Party and in opposition to the reforms enacted during the Progressive Era. In response to the monopolization of industries that occurred during the Gilded Age, Congress passed the Sherman Antitrust Act of 1890, which prohibited business activities that reduced marketplace competition, namely mergers in large industries for the purposes of creating monopolies, and required the federal government to investigate companies in suspicion of violations.²⁰ The 1914 Clayton Antitrust Act amended the Sherman Act with a much less flexible definition of illegal practices and trust building.²¹ That same year the Federal Trade Commission was established and given broad powers to investigate companies and issue orders against trade practices in violation of antitrust laws.²² Fiscally conservative, Lorimer was firmly against these anti-trust and industrial regulations and in no way supported the cause of the labor unions and activists. While he recognized the hardships endured by the working class, Lorimer could not shake his individualistically capitalistic convictions of the nineteenth century.²³ To Lorimer, the individual could not succeed and create wealth for himself in any system save American capitalism, and the value of that system superseded any individual's temporary hardships.²⁴ He believed that business should be left free to prosper and men and women should be left to succeed based on their own self-reliance,

¹⁹Ibid., 9-10.

²⁰James A. Henretta et al., *America's History*, 5th ed. (Boston, MA: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2004), 592-593.

²¹Ibid., 599.

²²Ibid.

²³Cohn, *Creating America*, 261.

²⁴Ibid.

courage, and hard work.²⁵ The prosperity of the 1920s, and the largely Republican administrations' choices not to enforce antitrust laws, seemed to validate Lorimer and other conservatives' opinions about minimal government regulation.²⁶ Both Lorimer, and by extension the *Post*, and the American people were surfing a tidal wave of fleeting prosperity and success with no clue of the devastation their actions and lack of regulation would wreak.

In spite of his own views, and their frequent seepage into the content of the *Post*, Lorimer decided early on that the *Post* should be politically independent, with the intention of keeping its readers informed and, in the case of significant issues, allowing for the presentation of alternative points of view.²⁷ While Lorimer allowed for these alternate viewpoints, they were always carefully vetted by him and required to be "responsible."²⁸ Groups which Lorimer considered a threat to the United States, like the Bolsheviks, were never given space in the pages of the *Post*.

If Lorimer's ultimate goal was to teach Americans how to be American, it appears that he succeeded. John Tebbel states in his biography of Lorimer, "He was the articulate voice of millions, the purveyor of entertainment, advice, and political sentiment to a considerable body of Americans."²⁹ During Lorimer's editorship, the *Post* dominated the magazine industry, even out-selling its sister periodical the *Ladies' Home Journal*. Under Lorimer, the *Post* focused on a largely male audience. According to historian Frank Mott, "...it was expected that some women would read it; and perhaps they read it,

²⁵Ibid.

²⁶Henretta et al, *American History*, 666.

²⁷Cohn, *Creating America*, 54-55.

²⁸Ibid., 55.

²⁹John Tebbel, *George Horace Lorimer and the Saturday Evening Post* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1948), 1.

even during that first decade under Lorimer, as much as men did; but the chief themes of the new periodical were chosen for their appeal to ambitious young men of the great middle-class American public.”³⁰ Mott maintains that Lorimer’s *Post* made its first success by promoting material prosperity and directing young men toward that goal.³¹ Not until 1908, after it became obvious that women were reading the *Post* as well, did Lorimer include content for them, largely advertising content for the home. This arose out of the realization on the part of Curtis, the manager of the publishing company, that while men might be the principal money-earners, women were the true consumers.³²

While Lorimer addressed his magazine to men of business, both old and young, he directed his work towards members of the middle class, though Lorimer himself insisted that there were no classes in America except “the worthy and the unworthy.”³³ The pages of the *Post* reflected to the reader a vision of an upper-middle American business class, whose members were hard-working and industrious though in no way common and coarse. As accorded a man who had worked hard to achieve his own success, Lorimer believed that the financial security and leisurely lifestyle of the rich bred laziness and mental deterioration.³⁴ He reserved equal contempt for the idlers that refused to work for their own success, writing, “The world has room for idlers—it has room for all sorts of people. But America has no room for them. That great workshop wants no idlers of whatever kind obstructing the aisles and hindering toilers at their

³⁰Mott, *A History of American Magazines*, 688.

³¹*Ibid.*, 703.

³²Cohn, *Creating America*, 66.

³³Editorial, “Commoner and Plutocrat,” *Saturday Evening Post*, March 16, 1901.

³⁴Cohn, *Creating America*, 10.

tasks.”³⁵ The readers of the *Post*, and of other like periodicals of the time, would have largely been concentrated within Lorimer’s own class of self-made businessmen and in the blue-collar, working class seeking to attain the lifestyle portrayed to them by Lorimer and his writers.³⁶

The lifestyle Lorimer portrayed was solely dependent on success in business. A booklet, “*The Saturday Evening Post*,” published by the editors of the *Post* in 1923 to explicate the periodical’s advertising and editorial policies states: “A periodical that pretends to reflect American life must reflect American business, which is so essential a part of it.”³⁷ According to Mott, the *Post*’s formula heading into the twentieth century included emphasis on three types of subject matter—business, public affairs, and romance—all of which overlapped and mingled to create a magazine that appealed to the young man eager to rise to the top as well as to the businessman distressed at the changing industrial and economic world.³⁸

America in the 1920s was a nation undergoing rapid and massive change, slowly developing the economic organization, political outlook, and cultural values that are more common to the present-day than to the pre-Industrial and Industrial eras.³⁹ Coming out of the First World War as a powerful international state, the United States found its role in the world greatly changed from the pre-war days of extreme isolationism. After Democratic President Woodrow Wilson, Republicans regained power in Washington with a platform promising a pro-business stance and a return to conservative cultural

³⁵Editorial, “Take Your Clothes and Go,” *Saturday Evening Post*, September 5, 1903.

³⁶Ohmann, *Selling Culture*, 118, 171, 174.

³⁷George Horace Lorimer et al., “*The Saturday Evening Post*,” Philadelphia, PA: The Curtis Publishing Company, 1923, George Horace Lorimer Papers, Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA.

³⁸Mott, *A History of American Magazines*, 688.

³⁹Henretta et al., *America’s History*, 666.

values.⁴⁰ Republicans would remain in the White House until 1932.⁴¹ For the first time in American history, women, having won the vote in 1919, became political activists, utilizing their power as a voting block to gain legislation such as the Sheppard-Towner Federal Maternity and Infancy Act, appropriating \$1.25 million for maternity and pediatric clinics and education.⁴² Moving pictures were becoming more prolific and new musical forms, like jazz, were becoming increasingly popular. Hemlines were getting shorter and the youth in America were embracing a culture of interaction between the genders much more free than the formal, more Victorian, societal mores their parents lived under. The speed with which these changes were happening led to a backlash of anti-modern sentiment and an emphasis on fundamental, essentially Protestant, values. The prohibition of alcohol, which went into effect in January of 1920, is a prime example of the emphasis on cultural morality typical of the period.⁴³ It is also a prime example of the failures of that backlash, leading to a decade of covert partying known as the “Roaring Twenties,” rather than the abstention its framers hoped for. The *Post* represents a voice of this anti-modern, culturally conservative, and business-driven sentiment.

Lorimer understood the appeal of his magazine and used his perceived influence consciously, covering issues and events that he believed were of great import to the American people. The April 21, 1923 issue provides an example of the wide range of topics covered in a typical edition of the *Post*. In that issue, Lorimer included articles titled “Thus Germany Wept,” discussing post-World War I inflation and political problems in Germany; “Popular Fallacies About Crime,” a former London policeman’s

⁴⁰Ibid.

⁴¹Ibid.

⁴²Ibid., 668.

⁴³Ibid., 688.

thoughts on modern crime; “Slowing Down Through Fleet Street,” a British journalist’s perspective on British newspapers and journalism; “John Citizen’s Job,” an article expounding on civic duty in the United States; “Ourselves and Those Others,” examining European economic troubles and America’s role in fixing them; and “Sierras By Camp Fire and Pack,” recollections of camping in the Sierras.⁴⁴ The *Post*’s features included an editorial on Russian relief policy following World War I and the Russian Revolution and an editorial on the stabilization of the radio broadcasting industry, while the “Who’s Who and Why” feature profiled Senator James Couzens, a Republican senator from Michigan.⁴⁵ The short stories in the issue included romance stories like “White Heat,” “Named by Izzy Iskovitch,” “Winnie and the Woolly Lamb,” “Grandfather Goes to the Ball,” “Four Long Sweet Hoots,” “A New York Knight,” “North of 36,” “Jacqueline,” and “Triumph.”⁴⁶ Beyond the plethora of articles, stories, editorials, and regular features, each issue contained some of the best illustrative artwork of the day and advertisements from major, national companies ranging from food products, jewelry, automobiles, and insurance.

This breadth of topics covered, coupled with the high circulation numbers of the magazine, makes a strong argument for the utility of the *Post* to present-day historians as an artifact of both 1920s popular culture and as a voice of anti-modern sentiment. The 1920s are often associated with the literary, art, and cultural movements of that decade, generally defined as Modernism. Modernism was in part a response by some intellectuals against the materialism of the developing consumer culture and what they

⁴⁴“Table of Contents,” *Saturday Evening Post*, April 21, 1923.

⁴⁵Ibid.

⁴⁶Ibid.

viewed as complacency, moralistic thought, and anti-intellectualism in America.⁴⁷ In essence, they were a small group of people reacting to the cultural dominance of men like Lorimer and the beliefs they espoused through periodicals like the *Saturday Evening Post*. The *Post*, with its emphasis on the business culture prevailing in America at the time, and the tone of public and civic morals that accompanied that culture, provides a unique lens through which to view the 1920s; not the lens of the men and women who are still remembered by posterity, but the lens of the anti-modernist, mass culture that those men and women were railing against.

One topic, boosterism of the West, frequently appears in the pages of the periodical. A survey of articles and editorials in the *Saturday Evening Post* from 1920 to 1929 shows that the *Post* viewed the West as a land of opportunity, essentially the newest incarnation of the nineteenth-century American dream. According to Lorimer's biographer, the future editor traveled extensively in the West during his days with Armour, and developed a life-long love for the Far West and a zeal for conservation of natural resources.⁴⁸ Douglas Ward's 2010 study of the *Post*'s circulation during the 1920s shows that the *Post* had a steadily increasing circulation in the West, with subscriptions in California dominating.⁴⁹ Coupled with Lorimer's convictions that nineteenth-century values and work ethic were the keys to success, and could only exist in a land that challenged the individual, his stated love for the region and the obvious significant readership in that area offer an explanation for the prevalence of the topic.

⁴⁷Henretta et al., *America's History*, 688.

⁴⁸Tebbel, *George Horace Lorimer*, 8.

⁴⁹Douglas B. Ward, "The Geography of an American Icon: An Analysis of the Circulation of the *Saturday Evening Post*, 1911-1944," *American Journalism* 27, no. 3 (Summer 2010): 68.

Historian David Wrobel maintains that western boosterism, or the promotion of an area as a prime location for both settlement and tourism, occurred in two distinct phases. The first phase, occurring in the late nineteenth century, consisted of extreme and grandiose claims that could not be substantiated without undergoing the arduous journey west. In the twentieth century a second phase was initiated with an attempt to be more official and scientific, though no less grandiose, in description. Western boosterism often included assertions about the climate, population, job market, agricultural bounty, and promise of attaining a better, more fulfilled life in the West. As David Wrobel writes, these boosters were literally trying to imagine into existence the West they envisioned rather than accurately represent the West they knew, and in doing so they influenced both the sense of place of western residents and the sense that prospective residents, and other Americans, had of western places.⁵⁰ The articles and editorials found in the *Saturday Evening Post* in the 1920s represent this second phase of boosterism, each being written with the intention of impressing upon *Post* readers the belief that the Far West was the last true land of opportunity in America. As a periodical whose influence remained strong for decades, this western boosterism not only influences contemporary readers' notions of the American West, but also contributed to the larger American public memory of the West.

The hope for a future in the post-frontier West, as well as a longing for the West of the frontier past, has been part of American thought since the perceived passing of the frontier around the end of the nineteenth century.⁵¹ In 1893, Frederick Jackson Turner delivered his address, "The Significance of the Frontier in American History," to the

⁵⁰David M. Wrobel, *Promised Lands: Promotion, Memory, and the Creation of the American West* (Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press, 2002), 2.

⁵¹*Ibid.*, 1.

annual meeting of the American Historical Society in Chicago. In this address, Turner claimed that the 1890 census's announcement that statistically the contiguous frontier no longer existed for the purposes of census taking was a significant milestone in American history. According to Turner, the continued existence of free land and the advance of American settlement westward comprised the force behind America's development as a nation. Because of this continued movement westward, "American social development has been continually beginning over again on the frontier. This perennial rebirth, this fluidity of American life, this expansion westward with its new opportunities, its continuous touch with the simplicity of primitive society, furnish the forces dominating American character."⁵² In this uniquely American character Turner included such traits as strength, acuteness, inquisitiveness, a restless, nervous energy, dominant individualism, and a buoyancy and exuberance associated with freedom.⁵³

Turner's thesis had a tremendous impact on both the field of history at the time and the nation in general, which was anxious about its future as the twentieth century approached. Theodore Roosevelt praised Turner for solidifying thoughts that had been developing for years.⁵⁴ The same year as Turner's speech, other intellectuals, including James A. Skelton, Theodore Roosevelt, Charles H. Pearson, Richard T. Ely, Ignatius Donnelly, and Francis Parkman, spoke or wrote on the closing of the American frontier.⁵⁵ While there is no evidence of Lorimer's having read Turner, as a well educated man in touch with current events and intellectual trends, it is likely Lorimer would have heard of

⁵²Frederick Jackson Turner, "The Significance of the Frontier in American History," *The Frontier in American History* (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1996), 2-3.

⁵³*Ibid.*, 37.

⁵⁴David M. Wrobel, *The End of American Exceptionalism: Frontier Anxiety from the Old West to the New Deal* (Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press, 1993), 37.

⁵⁵*Ibid.*, 37-41.

the Frontier Thesis and the subsequent manifestations of it. Despite the lack of concrete evidence of Lorimer's connection to Turner, his writings and editorial selections for the *Post* display a clear Turnerian belief in the role of a frontier, and a frontier's challenge, in the making of "real Americans."

From the arrival of the first Europeans to this continent, the West has held a magnetic appeal. Prior to the Revolutionary War, the European push westward resulted in conflicts with Native American groups and clashes between the pioneers pushing westward and those governing them back east over Indian policy, political representation, and debts.⁵⁶ After the Revolutionary War, the short-lived Articles of Confederation addressed the issue of westward expansion with various ordinances concerning the settlement of the trans-Appalachian West, culminating in the Northwest Ordinance of 1787, which created territories that eventually became the states of Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, and Wisconsin.⁵⁷ The American people expanded West with incredible fervor. In 1790, the first national census recorded 3.9 million Americans, with only 200,000 of them living west of the Appalachian Mountains.⁵⁸ By the 1820 census, 2 million Americans inhabited nine new states and three new territories west of those same mountains.⁵⁹ Westward expansion led to conflict between the whites and Native Americans as treaty after treaty was made and broken, and the Native Americans found themselves slowly removed from their lands and eventually settled on reservations. Americans would continue to stream westward, in a seemingly unending flow, for the next century. The discovery of gold in California in 1849 sparked a rush and led to a

⁵⁶Hentretta et al., *America's History*, 129.

⁵⁷*Ibid.*, 198-199.

⁵⁸*Ibid.*, 222.

⁵⁹*Ibid.*

mass migration, mostly of men, over the Rocky Mountains and to the west coast.

Through the Homestead Act of 1862, the federal government lured settlers westward onto the Great Plains with the promise of 160 acres to any individual that filed an application, improved their 160 acres for five years, and then filed for deed of title.⁶⁰ Even after the declaration of the 1890 census that there was no more frontier to settle in the United States, Americans continued to find their way westward with expansion finally peaking in 1920.⁶¹ This rapid settlement of the land, coupled with the intervention of the U.S. federal government from the earliest days of westward expansion, led to a range of new issues concerning land policy, land use, and land preservation.

In the articles and editorials of his magazine, Lorimer maintained that those important traits in the American character, and the frontier-like atmosphere in which they could flourish, were not entirely gone. He encouraged the young men of the day to look West, where the social hierarchies of the East did not exist and development was still young enough to be influenced by the entrepreneurial spirit of a determined individual. In the 1920s, the *Saturday Evening Post* presented an idealistic and hopeful view of the West in many ways. Reminiscences of the old timers who recalled the “wild and woolly” West evoked an iconic and revered time past and articles extolling the remaining wilderness in the present offered a region in which true American characteristics could be honed. Many authors touted the opportunity for improvement, both personal and civic, still available in such a young land and praised the economic and social development possible in the Far West. Not just focusing on the ambiguous and intangible view of the West, Lorimer included several pieces discussing the nation’s misconceptions of the

⁶⁰“Teaching with Documents: The Homestead Act of 1862,” <http://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/homestead-act/> (accessed 31 March 2012).

⁶¹Hentretta et al., *America’s History*, 632.

West and the region's continuing development in terms of civilization and industry. In the pages of his *Post*, Lorimer created an image of the West as a land offering the exciting opportunities, yet not lacking in the culture and civilizing influences of the East.

Apart from his attempts to create a specific image of the Far West in the minds of his readers, Lorimer also sought to influence those same readers' opinions regarding contemporary western issues. In spite of the *Post*'s glorification of the western past, the Far West of the 1920s faced modern circumstances singular to that region. The oil industry; policies of land use, including environmental conservation; irrigation, water rights, and agriculture; and immigration from Mexico were all realities that dominated western life. Oil was a booming industry in the Far West, especially California, and the *Post* sent two of its most trusted writers to analyze not only the industry but the speculation running rampant through it. By the 1920s, the federal government had become increasingly involved in administering its lands, and policies ranged from the Homestead Act to the creation of national parks. A conservation movement also emerged, and policies on land and water in the west were central areas of concern. These lands and the discussion within the conservation movement, the region, and the nation concerning their use dominated much of the *Post*'s discussion. Water and agriculture, two closely related issues, also received attention from *Post* writers. The *Post*'s writers portrayed federal reclamation projects, begun around the beginning of the twentieth century, as both failures and wastes of government money and resources while the decade long agricultural problem, created from the excessive demands of World War I, were viewed by the conservative *Post* as the folly of individual farmers. Immigration, especially of workers from northern Mexico, outraged the nativistic *Post* writers and

many pages were dedicated towards its eradication. All of these issues shared a common thread of extensive federal involvement in key components of everyday western life. The *Post's* coverage of these issues not only demonstrates Lorimer's views, but the importance he placed on these issues as topics of national interest.

The 1920s saw the rise of a tremendous oil boom in southern California, the frenzy of which rivaled that of the famed '49 gold rush. During this time, the Los Angeles basin became the site of the most intensive oil field development in history.⁶² The development of these oil fields drastically affected the growth of industry and suburbs, and contributed to the rise of exorbitant real estate speculation.⁶³ While the rapid wealth generated by the oil industry seemed a prime example of the economic promise of the West, the accelerated rate of environmental destruction that unregulated drilling caused exemplified the West's long struggle with the price of economic growth and expansion.

California began producing oil in the 1890s, but it was not until the 1920s that drilling and extracting reached unprecedented proportions. By the summer of 1923 southern California produced so much oil that prices collapsed from \$2.15 a barrel in 1921 to \$0.68 a barrel with surpluses building up in storehouses at an alarming rate.⁶⁴ The southern California oil fields were on land originally divided into parcels for town lots designed for residential construction and often owned by small landowners. An archaic legal principle known as the "rule of capture," however, awarded ownership of an oil deposit to the first person to "capture" the oil regardless of who owned the surface

⁶²Nancy Quam-Wickham, "Cities Sacrificed on the Altar of Oil: Popular Opposition to Oil Development in 1920s Los Angeles," *Environmental History* 3, no. 2 (April 1998): 189.

⁶³*Ibid.*, 189.

⁶⁴*Ibid.*, 191.

property, creating economic incentive for landowners to drill wells first.⁶⁵ This extensive and unplanned development led to incredible waste of resources, both economic and natural, and extreme pollution. Gushers rained oil over the landscape ruining agriculture, well fires darkened the sky and destroyed buildings, and contaminated waste water was pumped into the oceans.⁶⁶ In April of 1926 lightning struck a tank in Orange County, causing a fire that consumed eight times more oil than was spilled in the wreck of the *Exxon Valdez*.⁶⁷ With the destructiveness of unrestricted drilling evident, the rampant problems associated with the oil industry in southern California led to local and state opposition, slowly enacting conservation through restriction and regulation at the local level. This realization of the damage man could wreak upon the environment not only changed westerners' views on oil production but began to change the conservation movement as a whole.

Beginning with the creation of Yellowstone National Park in 1872, America embarked on a mission to preserve and protect a part of its wilderness and environment. Throughout the nineteenth century, Americans sought something about their nation that could distinguish them from the Old World, which was perceived as being far superior in civilization and culture. The fledgling United States could not hope to compete with Europe in terms of history, tradition, literature or art. However, the American landscape, and its inherent wilderness, had no counterpart in the pastoral lands of the Old World.⁶⁸ By the late nineteenth century, concerned Americans worried that much of the beautiful natural landscape was vulnerable to destruction by private landowners. These citizens

⁶⁵Ibid., 192.

⁶⁶Ibid., 192-193.

⁶⁷Ibid., 193.

⁶⁸Roderick Frazier Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind*, 4th edition (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001), 67.

believed that monumental scenery, found mostly in the American West, should be preserved and saved from destruction wrought by development. Through years of campaigning, they persuaded the federal government to preserve these lands when Congress passed first the Yosemite Act in 1864, setting aside land in California, and then established Wyoming's Yellowstone National Park in 1872. These lands were largely preserved because of their perceived uselessness for agriculture or lack of natural resources and were largely ignored for the first thirty or so years of their preservation. The Antiquities Act of 1906 furthered the cause of preservation and conservation by allowing the president to set aside, without congressional approval, historic landmarks, historic and prehistoric structures, and other objects of historic or archaeological interest.⁶⁹ These parks set aside were placed under the management of the United States Department of the Interior.⁷⁰ By 1916, the Department of the Interior was responsible for fourteen national parks and twenty-one national monuments, and had turned to the United States Army for assistance in policing and managing them.⁷¹ With no clear mandates or system of governance in place, this method proved inefficient and left the parks vulnerable to poachers and competing interests.⁷² By 1915 concerned citizens began a campaign for a national parks bureau, utilizing newspapers and periodicals, including the *Saturday Evening Post*, to reach the public.⁷³ In 1916, congress responded and President

⁶⁹Richard White, *"It's Your Misfortune and None of My Own: A New History of the American West"* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991), 411. Richard White incorrectly identifies this legislation as the Lacey Act.

⁷⁰"The National Park Service: A Brief History,"

<http://www.cr.nps.gov/history/hisnps/NPSHistory/npshisto.htm> (accessed 12 March 2012).

⁷¹Ibid.

⁷²Ibid.

⁷³Ibid.

Woodrow Wilson signed the bill creating the National Park Service and housing it within the Department of the Interior.⁷⁴

The terms preservation and conservation have come to signify vastly different objectives since the early days of the movement. Historian Paul S. Sutter argues that preservation sentiment in the United States has not evolved over time from a strictly low form of appreciation to a higher one, but has rather reworked its ideas throughout eras to confront and reflect contemporary circumstances.⁷⁵ Sutter analyzes social history's view of wilderness as a reflection of class bias, arguing that the preservation of nature and the protection of wildlife have served the recreational and aesthetic interests of an urban leisure class while simultaneously closing off subsistence options to local populations.⁷⁶ As will be discussed later, the wealthy, Eastern-based *Saturday Evening Post* exemplifies this point through its advocacy of federal protection of western lands, especially from local ranchers and farmers seeking to exploit the lands' resources.

In the years after the initial legislative acts, a divide became clear in the preservation movement. Preservationists believed that nature and wilderness should be preserved solely for its aesthetic value and beauty and that it should not be invaded for its resources or usefulness to mankind. Conservationists, alternatively, believed that nature should be preserved but also exploited for its utility. A school of thought known as "wise-use" developed, which argued that nature's resources should not be "wasted" through a hands-off policy, but rather should be used intelligently and with forethought to

⁷⁴Ibid.

⁷⁵Paul S. Sutter, *Driven Wild: How the Fight Against Automobiles Launched the Modern Wilderness Movement* (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 2002), 10.

⁷⁶Ibid., 12.

the future. This divide was demonstrated by the Hetch Hetchy Valley controversy, a watershed moment in the fight for conservation and preservation.

The Hetch Hetchy Valley had been designated a wilderness preserve by the same act that created the Yosemite National Park.⁷⁷ In 1901 the city of San Francisco petitioned the federal government for the right to dam the Hetch Hetchy Valley and create a reservoir for hydroelectric power. The city's application was granted in 1908 leading to a bitter battle between preservationists and those who believed that natural resources should be developed. In 1913, after a long battle in Congress, President Wilson approved the Hetch Hetchy grant.⁷⁸ By the end of 1913 the O'Shaughnessy Dam and miles of tunnels, peripheral dams and reservoirs, hydroelectric power houses, a railroad line, and a 150-mile aqueduct were under construction, effectively removing any trace of the beautiful valley that had once existed.⁷⁹ The Hetch Hetchy controversy extended over ten years and symbolized the growing schism developing between the different factions of conservationists in America.

By the 1920s, the movement for the preservation of places of natural beauty and unique attributes consisted of diverse interest groups within the preservationist and conservationist divide. Most of the preserved land existed in the Far West and was managed by the federal government. Local, western residents felt that they were being denied their rights to work their land and earn both income and profit while the federal government sold grazing rights and timber, at profit, off the western "public lands." Cities and towns vied for water rights and both groups demanded access to the water on

⁷⁷Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind*, 161.

⁷⁸*Ibid.*, 179.

⁷⁹"Hetch Hetchy Water and Power System," Tuolumne County Historical Society, Sonoma, CA, http://www.tchistory.org/tchistory/Wonders_10_print.htm (accessed 2 October 2011).

reserved lands. As tourism of national parks and wilderness proved popular, it offered economic incentives to maintain and preserve the lands. Within years, however, tourism also offered proof of the devastation that mankind could inflict upon the environment. This led to groups that advocated for increased tourism, with special attention given to tourists' interests, and groups that demanded that tourism be halted before further damage was done.

Lorimer and the writers of the *Post* felt very strongly about the continued preservation of wilderness lands and generally advocated for federal management. As an upper-middle class magazine published in the East, the *Post*'s prevailing view toward local westerners' complaints seemed to be one of disdain. The magazine's articles usually asserted that it was clearly better for the nation as a whole to maintain the national parks and wilderness areas as public lands. Therefore, westerners should make do with what they were allowed to have.

"Making do" proved more difficult for western residents as the twentieth century progressed. As settlers moved west, land that was ideally suited for agriculture was quickly purchased, leaving newcomers with the obstacle of farming in arid lands that saw little or unreliable rainfall. From the mid-nineteenth century, farmers and journalists promoted extensive irrigation, a system of engineered canals and ditches to provide water to these arid areas, as a way to transcend the limits of nature and liberate farmers from dependence on rainfall alone.⁸⁰ In 1894, the United States Congress passed the Carey Act, also known as the Desert Land Act, which authorized the federal government to give each desert state one million acres to irrigate and sell to farmers. The sale money would

⁸⁰Mark Fiege, *Irrigated Eden: The Making of an Agricultural Landscape in the American West* (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 1999), 11.

go to the federal treasury.⁸¹ The states would be responsible for constructing irrigation systems and settlers could acquire up to one hundred and sixty acres at a nominal cost with the price of the intended waterworks included.⁸² The Carey Act did not achieve great irrigation of the West, however, as several states did not even ask for their appointed land, and those that had did not successfully irrigate theirs. This failure led to the 1902 Newlands Act, or National Reclamation Act. This bill essentially applied the same principles as the Carey Act, with the exception that the federal government would both sell the land to the farmers and be responsible for constructing irrigation systems. These two acts spiked migration to these arid western states between 1900 and 1920, as would-be farmers realized that irrigation in these areas offered one of the last opportunities in an industrializing America to acquire a farm.⁸³ These farmers and engineers seeking to water the West often referred to irrigation work as a “conquest,” or “defeating” or “taming” nature, drawing parallels between their work and the work of the frontier pioneers of the century past.⁸⁴

This conquest was not to be, however, as irrigators soon learned that no matter what their design was, in the end, irrigation was still completely determined by nature.⁸⁵ If drought occurred, it dried up the rivers and main sources of irrigation, regardless of how many ditches and reservoirs were dug, and water shortages were only intensified with increased numbers of farmers. In times of sufficient water, leaks and seepage of both reservoirs and canals meant that significant amounts of water were lost in the

⁸¹Donald Worster, *Rivers of Empire: Water, Aridity, and the Growth of the American West* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1985), 157.

⁸²Ibid.

⁸³Fiege, *Irrigated Eden*, 17.

⁸⁴Ibid.

⁸⁵Ibid., 24.

process and led to the construction of drainage ditches to catch lost water and return it to reservoirs and rivers.⁸⁶ These irrigation systems on public property led to disputes over water rights as westerners tried to take water that flowed through streams as common property and privatize it as it applied to their individual lands.

Two of Lorimer's main western writers, Garet Garrett and Albert Atwood, wrote extensively about the irrigation of the West, each from differing perspectives. Garrett found the entire concept to be folly and lambasted the Federal Reclamation Service and westerners alike for their misuse of resources and waste of federal money. Atwood, however, advocated strongly for continued reclamation works along the Colorado River, expounding a classic conservationist's argument by maintaining that allowing so much water to go to waste, or not be utilized by humans, was not only shameful, but sinful.⁸⁷

These irrigation problems were directly related to the successes and failures of agriculture in the American West in the 1920s. The number of farmers in the West increased steadily in the first two decades of the 1900s, peaking in 1920.⁸⁸ According to scholars Randal S. Beeman and James A. Pritchard, American farmers have been going broke in episodic cycles since the nineteenth century, due in large part to the mechanization of farming that occurred around the same time as the industrialization of American manufacturing.⁸⁹ This mechanization, of which irrigation was a part, promised more production for less labor, but demanded more debt to sustain, simultaneously leading to over-production, falling market prices, and decreased profits.⁹⁰ By the 1920s

⁸⁶Ibid., 25-31.

⁸⁷Albert W. Atwood, "Waters of Wrath," *Saturday Evening Post*, September 11, 1926; Albert W. Atwood, "Water and the Land," *Saturday Evening Post*, July 3, 1926.

⁸⁸Henretta et al., *American History*, 632.

⁸⁹Randal S. Beeman and James A. Pritchard, *A Green and Permanent Land: Ecology and Agriculture in the Twentieth Century* (Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press, 2001), 2-3.

⁹⁰Ibid., 4.

this cycle was keenly felt on the farms of the American West as farmers who had responded to government incentives during the First World War, largely through the dedication of fields to one-crop farming, declared bankruptcy all across the West. These farmers begged the federal government for assistance, prompting Lorimer to send Gareth Garrett on a fact-finding mission to the region. Garrett concluded that the farmers themselves were to blame and had no right to demand or receive assistance from Uncle Sam. That the *Post* would take this harsh stance on western farmers that had responded so earnestly to the demands of World War I is particularly ironic given the prevalence of advertising space in the *Post* of World War I days dedicated to the call for more agricultural production.

The fact that these western farmers demanded federal assistance with their failed farms is in direct contrast to their simultaneous demands that the federal government remove itself from the management of “public lands.” This paradoxical, complicated relationship between the residents of the American West and the United States Government can be seen throughout all of the key issues of western life. Historian Patricia Nelson Limerick sees the entire history of the West, from its early days with the sale of government land to railroads and the Homestead Act of 1862, as a history of federal involvement and resulting dependence by and resentment from settlers. According to Limerick, the American West is the arena in which the expanded role of federal government, that is common in American life today, first took hold.⁹¹

Another aspect of western life for which residents demanded federal assistance was the control of immigration from Mexico along the Mexican-American border.

⁹¹Patricia Nelson Limerick, *The Legacy of Conquest: The Unbroken Past of the American West* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2006), 28.

Western residents, particularly large ranch and farm owners, relied on Mexican immigrants for cheap labor and lobbied the United States government to keep the border open. Lorimer, and the *Saturday Evening Post*, believed strongly that these immigrants were a threat to the American way of life. From the last decade of the nineteenth century through the 1920s, America was ravaged by extreme animosity towards immigrants of every kind, an animosity labeled nativism and defined by the intense opposition to an internal minority on the grounds of its foreign connections.⁹² Lorimer, and by extension his magazine, was no exception to this national sentiment. In 1918, at the close of World War I, Lorimer wrote of immigrants on his editorial page: “So in planning our list of imports [immigrants] let us include only desirables. Under our laws we send rotten food to the dump because it is a menace to our health. Rotten men who are poisoning America with rotten propaganda belong there too.... We do not want them. America for Americans and men who want to be Americans.”⁹³ Lorimer’s biographer, Jan Cohn, argues that this was Lorimer’s announcement for the *Post*’s agenda for the years ahead, to define America anew and eliminate all that was not truly American.⁹⁴

In the 1880s, this nativism resulted in the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 and by the end of the First World War, American immigration policy restricted immigrants in eight different groups: contract laborers, Asians (excluding Japanese and Filipinos), criminals, persons who failed to meet certain moral standards, diseased or disabled persons, paupers, radicals, and illiterates.⁹⁵ Two more extensive immigration laws, the Immigration Act of 1917 and the Immigration Act of 1924 saw quotas placed on

⁹²Roger Daniels, *Guarding the Golden Door: American Immigration Policy and Immigrants since 1882* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2004), 7-8.

⁹³Editorial, “Only the Stump of Dagon was Left,” *Saturday Evening Post*, December 28, 1918.

⁹⁴Cohn, *Creating America*, 134.

⁹⁵Daniels, *Guarding the Golden Door*, 27.

immigrants from almost all parts of the world with the exception of the independent countries of the Western Hemisphere. No restrictions were placed on this area because western legislators insisted that their region needed Mexican agricultural labor.⁹⁶ While Canadians and South Americans were not restricted by this law, the group largely affected was Mexicans moving to the United States seeking agricultural labor. Where previously other ethnic groups from other countries might have competed for these low-paying jobs, after 1924, Mexicans were the only group left able to easily enter the United States and willing to take on the work. The restrictive immigration laws, coupled with the lack of restriction and subsequent influx of one particular group, meant that by the late 1920s Mexicans were perceived by most Americans as a pervasive threat to American workers and taxpayers. More than one million Mexicans traveled north to America between 1910 and 1930 looking for work and a better life, accepting jobs as migrant farm workers and living on the significantly low wages they were paid by their American bosses.⁹⁷ Two *Post* contributors, Albert Atwood and Kenneth Roberts, wrote on this issue of Mexican immigration, both opposing continued entrance. Atwood offered condescending platitudes regarding Mexicans' suitability for hard labor while Roberts vehemently attacked the immigrants and strove to warn readers of the imagined threat they posed to the American way of life.

The habit of demanding that the federal government step in and provide solutions, and funding for solutions, to western problems, like the demand for immigration control, is a phenomenon particular to western history. Historian Richard White argues that western history is a story of colonization, with the federal government leading the first

⁹⁶Ibid., 52.

⁹⁷Camille Guerin-Gonzalez, *Mexican Workers and American Dreams: Immigration, Repatriation, and California Farm Labor, 1900-1939* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1994), 26-27.

pioneers west and molding their settlement, rather than slowly trailing behind them.⁹⁸

According to White, “The armies of the federal government conquered the region, agents of the federal government explored it, federal officials administered it, and federal bureaucrats supervised (or at least tried to supervise) the division and development of its resources.”⁹⁹ The federal government was able to expand its power so rapidly in the West because of a lack of strong state and local governments that existed in the East, meaning that the history of the West is not only the history of a region, but of a national government creating itself, a phenomenon that began as early as the Northwest Ordinance of 1787.¹⁰⁰ The *Post*, a typically conservative periodical, reflects some of the ambiguity felt as this national creation occurred, as well as the unique western circumstances that created an arena for federal expansion. For the *Post*, federal involvement was perfectly acceptable when furthering a desired cause, such as conservation or extraction of resources, or the restriction of unwanted immigrants, however when it took on a more social role and began doling out economic assistance to farmers, it stood in the face of the ruggedly individualistic life the *Post* prescribed its readers.

A close examination of the western content of the *Saturday Evening Post* during the decade of the 1920s shows clearly Lorimer’s idealistic vision for a land he loved as well as his realistic opinions, typical of an upper-middle class white man, of the issues that affected both that land and the nation as a whole. The image of the West found in these articles reflects not only the beliefs of Lorimer and his writers, but those of many of the American people. The writers and contributors that covered the West for Lorimer were some of his best, most prolific, and most trusted. This indicates that not only was

⁹⁸White, “*It’s Your Misfortune and None of My Own*,” 58.

⁹⁹Ibid.

¹⁰⁰Ibid., 59.

the topic dear enough to Lorimer to warrant significant space on *Post* pages, it was relevant and important enough to dedicate the time of his best writers. While it is, of course, impossible to determine the effect that this *Post* content had on its readers, the sheer scope of the magazine's reach, via circulation numbers, proves that the periodical was reaching an enormous number of people during these years, a time when, in the absence of television or wide-spread access to radio, many would have been reading extensively. The circulation numbers do not account for families who shared their copies with other families, or for businesses that provided copies in waiting rooms, making the potential audience for the *Post*'s message almost limitless. Lorimer truly believed that he could influence the opinions of his readers with his content; however, his readers, through their continued subscriptions, influenced his editorial decisions. This symbiotic relationship between the *Saturday Evening Post* and its readers created an inestimable example of conservative political, business, and cultural sentiment in the United States during the first half of the twentieth century and offers an abundance of evidence of the changes occurring within the American West as it transitioned from a nineteenth-century pioneer land into a twentieth-century industrialized sector of the national economy.

CHAPTER TWO:

THE DEPICTION OF AN IMAGINED WEST IN THE *SATURDAY EVENING POST*

The West of American imagination bears a stark contrast to the realities of that region. From the earliest days of white settlement in this country the West has taken on mythic proportions, largely stemming from its great distance from the eastern population centers, awe-inspiring landscape, and the challenges it presented to settlement. This imagined West, in all of its glory, has played a significant role in the perpetuation of the myths of the American dream, the democratic principles of citizenship for every man, and the existence of a uniquely “American” people. In the 1920s, this western mythology took on even more meaning as the U.S. wrestled with increased numbers of immigrants bearing overwhelmingly different political and cultural ideologies. This chapter will examine the various forms of the imagined West presented in the pages of the *Post* and the ways in which the *Post* utilized these idealized images to disseminate the great American myths. Describing western iconic characters such as pioneers, cowboys, lawmen and gunslingers, and miners and gamblers, the *Post* lauded the self-starting, self-reliant character traits these mythologized groups possessed. The *Post* also discussed the physical aspects of the western region and the opportunities it afforded for contemporary young men to cultivate the same iconic traits as the aforementioned heroes. The authors employed in the boosting of these western ideologies were often associated with the West themselves, and well-versed in the methods of boosterism and myth-building.

As the twentieth century opened, American culture rapidly became one of industrialized consumption rather than self-sufficiency and home-based production. The

scope of this transition was apparent to George Lorimer as he edited the *Saturday Evening Post*, and throughout his editorship he sought to make sense of this changing culture, striving to interpret the emerging world of business as it hovered between these ideologies of production and consumption.¹⁰¹ In Eastern cities, big business slowly edged out small business owners, and promotion within factories and mills was limited, keeping the individual firmly planted in the working (or lower-middle) class. These individuals, seeking to better themselves and feeling trapped, were the exact audience for Lorimer's *Saturday Evening Post*. In common with the societal mores of his time, Lorimer perceived this group to be comprised of males and targeted his content with that in mind. Lorimer had come of age in the last years of the nineteenth century and had successfully worked and negotiated his way up from employee in an Armour meat-packing plant to editor of one of the most prominent periodicals in the country. As editor, Lorimer sought to impart the values that had served him so well to the male youth looking to "get ahead" in their own right. In attempting to translate these nineteenth century values of thrift and hard work to the new economic realities of a post-Industrial Revolution nation, the editor looked to America's Far West as a last bastion of opportunity for the young men of the decade. Throughout the 1920s, Lorimer included articles and editorials that held out the West to *Post* readers as a land of opportunity and development.

In the mid-nineteenth century, as pioneers began pushing across the continent, John L. O'Sullivan, editor of the *Democratic Review*, stated of the American people, "Our manifest destiny is to overspread the continent allotted by Providence for the free

¹⁰¹Jan Cohn, *Creating America: George Horace Lorimer and the Saturday Evening Post* (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1989), 8.

development of our yearly multiplying millions.”¹⁰² O’Sullivan was merely expressing the sentiments of the population, and the latter portion of the nineteenth century saw the expansion of the American people across the continent. O’Sullivan’s articulation of America’s vision of Manifest Destiny contained inherent implications of the white race conquering the supposedly savage Indians and Mexicans already living in the new land. The chauvinistic image of Americans proudly and bravely taking up their Manifest Destiny and marching across the prairie, intent on wresting the land from savages for the future of the white race, is not a new one, nor is it a concept the *Post* hesitated to adapt to modern circumstances. The racial connotations of Manifest Destiny played well into the *Post*’s nativist dogma, and the concept of an American West, where men could hone their American qualities while developing the land, was reserved for the white race only.

One of the most wholesome of American icons is the long-suffering pioneer, member of the advance wave of Americans that conquered the West. The *Post* held these “men of action” up to its readers as the ultimate examples of true Americans, simultaneously lamenting the loss of conditions that created these pioneers and advising young men to mimic their hard work, citizenship, and responsibility.¹⁰³ In an age when physical bravery and challenge was no longer required, when the monotony of industrial work and the languor of sedentary lives threatened the American people, the *Post* uplifted the brave, *white* souls of the past as iconic heroes, whose examples should be both applauded and modeled. Articles like “Stories of the Old West: The Overland Mail,” by Frederick R. Bechdolt, celebrated both the men who settled the land and the men who connected them to the rest of the country. Frederick Bechdolt was a twentieth century

¹⁰²James A. Henretta et al., *America’s History*, 5th ed. (Boston, MA: Bedford/St. Martin’s, 2004), 372-373.

¹⁰³Frederick R. Bechdolt, “Stories of the Old West: The Overland Mail,” *Saturday Evening Post*, January 17, 1920, 48.

author with an interest in pioneers of the Old West, and was known for looking upon the passing of the old order with regret.¹⁰⁴ In this piece, Bechdolt claims that fortune, in whatever form, is the driving factor of this timeless push westward. This would appeal greatly to Lorimer's young male readers' desire to achieve some level of personal fortune and greatness in their own lives. Bechdolt observes that while a few of these overlanders found a success that justified the challenges faced, and many lost everything, each one carried away an invaluable treasure: memories of their own part in the rough drama that was the Winning of the West.¹⁰⁵ Bechdolt then explains that one of the most noteworthy acts of this drama was the story of the Overland Mail riders who carried the post before the arrival of the railroads. He catalogues the stories of these larger-than-life men and their travails, including their bravery when faced with "savage" Indians.

The piece contains vivid illustrations by Harry Wickey of men leading their horses through the desert, of Native Americans sneaking up on a party of white men, and of a prisoner being brought to justice by one of the overland riders. In closing, Bechdolt notes that even as he wrote, another pioneer died in his airplane bringing the Overland Mail west.¹⁰⁶ Bechdolt is referring to the United States Post Office Department's overland air mail service, which it took over from the United States Army Air Service in 1918.¹⁰⁷ This pioneering aviation network provided contemporary readers of the piece with a tangible connection to the pioneers of the past and offered a way in which to

¹⁰⁴Geoff Sadler, ed., *Twentieth-Century Western Writers*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: St. James Press, 1991), 48.

¹⁰⁵Bechdolt, "Stories of the Old West," 48.

¹⁰⁶*Ibid.*, 54.

¹⁰⁷"The Post Office Flies the Mail, 1918-1924," *U.S. Centennial of Flight Commission*, http://www.centennialofflight.gov/essay/Government_Role/1918-1924/POL3.htm (accessed 16 March 2011).

participate in future pioneering efforts: America's frontier was no longer limited to the earth and the open land, but now included the skies.

Another celebration of these first overlanders was included in part of the *Post's* regular feature "Out-of-Doors," frequently authored by Emerson Hough, a man known to *Post* readers for his work in western fiction.¹⁰⁸ The "Out-of-Doors" feature appeared in most issues of the *Post* and focused on topics like outdoor sports, camping, gardening, and general outdoors life. The February 14, 1920 edition discusses Sylvester and James O. Pattie, father and son, and six others, who wandered the wilderness from 1824 to 1828 before arriving in San Diego.¹⁰⁹ The author closes by saying, "Old days and old trails! Is the theme interesting to every American? To-day we begin to talk about a broader and deeper Americanism. How can we get that if we do not know about the American of yesterday, when Americans were really Americans?"¹¹⁰ This statement is reflective of the growing nativism in America at the close of World War I and shows the growing fear that the new wave of immigrants would not assimilate as easily into what was considered the American way of life.

In light of the tensions and apprehensions arising over immigration during the immediate postwar years, the American pioneers of the past, and the values they represented, were mythologized as the indomitable American spirit that should be an integral part of every true American. To shore up this sense of a singularly American heritage, Courtney Ryley Cooper, in "Present-Day Pioneers," argues that neither the pioneer spirit, nor the pioneer himself, could be viewed as a thing of the past in Western

¹⁰⁸Cohn, *Creating America*, 58.

¹⁰⁹"Out-of-Doors," *Saturday Evening Post*, February 14, 1920, 42.

¹¹⁰*Ibid.*, 46.

America.¹¹¹ Cooper was a circus performer, author, newspaperman, and press agent for both the Sells-Floto Circus and Buffalo Bill Cody's Wild West Show.¹¹² He authored several books, over 750 stories, and directed several motion pictures.¹¹³ Cooper's work with publicizing Buffalo Bill Cody's Wild West Show and the Denver-based Sells-Floto Circus shows a long history of western boosterism.

In "Present-Day Pioneers," Cooper states that homesteading in 1926 is just as difficult as it was for the original pioneers, and that men still have the courage and hope to "forgo gladly an easier existence that they may even face and meet death in their answer to an urge which may seem inexplicable, but which exists nevertheless—the urge to answer the call of the land, particularly if that land hold the allure of being free."¹¹⁴ He then opens an extensive discussion of the hardships and methods of homesteading. In a later article, "The Last of the Argonauts," Cooper turns to the Black Hills of South Dakota, which is teeming with old pioneers and their memories. Cooper maintains that it was in the Black Hills that the true pioneer made his last stand, and where history, in the form of these aged adventurers, is alive and vibrant.¹¹⁵ According to Cooper, the West was formed in waves: the Oregon Trail, the gold rush into California, the Santa Fe Trail, the surge for Pikes Peak country, the building of railroads, and the agony of settlement in hostile Indian country.¹¹⁶ Throughout all of this, the Black Hills reservation lands were bypassed, thus becoming the last frontier, the place that the old-timers flocked to when

¹¹¹Courtney Ryley Cooper, "Present-Day Pioneers," *Saturday Evening Post*, April 3, 1926, 30.

¹¹²"C.R. Cooper, Author, Kills Himself Here: Body of Writer Found in Hotel Room—Motive is Unknown," *New York Times*, September 29, 1940, 43; Stanley J. Kunitz and Howard Haycraft, ed., *Twentieth Century Authors: A Biographical Dictionary of Modern Literature* (New York: The H.W. Wilson Company, 1942), 311.

¹¹³Kunitz and Haycraft, *Twentieth Century Authors*, 312.

¹¹⁴Cooper, "Present-Day Pioneers," 30.

¹¹⁵Courtney Ryley Cooper, "The Last of the Argonauts," *Saturday Evening Post*, September 17, 1927, 6.

¹¹⁶*Ibid.*, 7.

the original frontiers had ceased to be frontiers.¹¹⁷ Cooper's claims have interesting implications when considered in light of Turner's Frontier Thesis. South Dakota was the location for the Wounded Knee Massacre in 1890, the last major armed encounter between the U.S. Army and Native Americans, tying Cooper's assertions about the area closely to Turner's contention that the closing of the frontier occurred only after the suppression of Indian tribes. Festivals such as the "Days of '76" celebrate the violent times when the gold rush of 1876 lured many adventurers—Cooper's last stand of pioneers—into the Black Hills Indian reservation.

This method of keeping the western story alive through pioneer reminiscences became a very large factor in the endurance of the concept of the frontier heritage.¹¹⁸ Stemming largely out of an older generation of westerners seeking to maintain their status in a changing West, these stories served to remind younger generations not only of the pivotal role of the elders in the past, but of the courage and stamina needed to achieve greatness in their own lives.¹¹⁹ According to sociologist John Walton, this production and maintenance of collective memories can be explained by the theory of "cultural hegemony," which states that "the same forces that dominate the economic and political machinery of society also control cultural production and create history for the purpose of legitimating their power and preserving the status quo."¹²⁰ The prevalence of these kinds of reminiscence articles in the *Post* becomes significant when viewed through Walton's theory of cultural hegemony and the nativistic lens of the 1920s. As a magazine edited

¹¹⁷Ibid., 119.

¹¹⁸David M. Wrobel, *Promised Lands: Promotion, Memory, and the Creation of the American West* (Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press, 2002), 11.

¹¹⁹Ibid., 13.

¹²⁰John Walton, *Storied Land: Community and Memory in Monterey* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2001), 289-295, quoted in Wrobel, *Promised Lands*, 13.

by a wealthy, upper middle class white man for a readership of middle class, or aspiring middle class, white Americans, the *Saturday Evening Post*'s representation of these pioneer memories solidified the image of the white race's superiority in conquering the West, as well as enhancing faith in its ability to continue to conquer through economic development. While there was no longer a physical "West to be won" as there was in the days of these pioneers, *Post* readers could still apply the character traits these men [and women] metaphorically represented in their own pursuit of the American dream.

These articles about an older generation of white Americans that participated in these iconic American moments contained moral lessons for the *Post*'s readers.¹²¹ They served to emphasize the greatness of the native-born American people, who by the 1920s were defined as families who had been in the country for over a generation. Simultaneously, they stressed the need for the current generation of Americans to emulate their forefathers and preserve and protect that greatness from the intrusion of the ideologies and immigrants flocking in from Eastern Europe. Twentieth-century Americans identified immigrants from Eastern and Southern Europe as "new immigrants" and saw them as subpar to the immigrants of the previous century, comprised of Britons, Germans, and Scandinavians.¹²² Likewise, Americans perceived the "old immigrants," progenitors of the same individuals reviling the "new," as immigrants seeking permanence and stability, hoping to better their new homeland, while believing that the "new" Eastern European immigrants intended only to take advantage of American wages and return to their homelands.

¹²¹Wrobel, *Promised Lands*, 128.

¹²²Roger Daniels, *Guarding the Golden Door: American Immigration Policy and Immigrants Since 1882*, (New York: Hill and Wang, 2004), 30, 36.

Another iconic image of the American Frontier West was the cowboy and this symbol also received attention in the *Post*. May 12, 1923's article "Topping 'Em Off," by Philip Ashton Rollins, claims that bronco bucking as performed by cowboys and cowgirls in the American West is a highly specialized, essentially American activity.¹²³ This is a misleading image of American cowboys, which were in reality a very diverse group comprised not only of whites, but of African Americans, Native Americans, and Hispanics.¹²⁴ Rollins's presumably deliberate misrepresentation of cowboys as wholly "American" serves to further the *Post*'s image of the West as a land for whites only. The rest of his article offers the reader a better understanding of bronco bucking, cow-puncher terms, tips for staying on a bucking horse, and finally a review of the various western rodeos. The article contains photographs of various cowboys engaged in bronco bucking and rodeo shows.

Rollins, born in 1869, spent most of his youth in the West and developed a fascination with its culture that lasted throughout his lifetime.¹²⁵ A graduate of Princeton and a lawyer, he wrote *The Cowboy, An Unconventional History of Civilization on the Old-Time Cattle Range* in 1922 and several other pieces concerning the Oregon Trail and American West.¹²⁶

Rollins's 1926 article "Real and Synthetic Cowboys" discusses the differences between the "real" cowboys of the past, whose habits and attire were all necessary accoutrements of their daily lives, and the "synthetic," phony cowboys of the 1920s,

¹²³Philip Ashton Rollins, "Topping 'Em Off," *Saturday Evening Post*, May 12, 1923, 18.

¹²⁴Henretta et al., *America's History*, 464.

¹²⁵"Philip Ashton Rollins Collection, 1887-1950 (bulk 1900-1930): Finding Aid," Princeton University Library Manuscripts Division, <http://diglib.princeton.edu/ead/getEad?eadid=WC001&kw=> (accessed 18 February 2011).

¹²⁶*Ibid.*

whose exaggerated accents, swaggers, and costumes serve only as incompetent caricatures of the glories of the past. It is unclear whether Rollins is referring to those who portrayed cowboys in moving pictures, or to the tourists who arrive in the West outfitted in ridiculous costumes meant to represent the trappings of the cowboys of old. Rollins sets out to debunk misconceptions about these cowboy archetypes, and in doing so further glorifies them for *Post* readers, stating that they were not gunslingers as supposed, though these courageous men did not hesitate to form vigilante committees when the need arose.¹²⁷ Likewise, cowboys did not habitually rescue maidens, due to a lack of maidens in the West, and their recalcitrance with strangers was the result of a life of solitude on the range and not unfriendliness. True characteristics of most cowpunchers included youthfulness, toleration, bravery, sentimentalism, and resourcefulness.¹²⁸ Rollins then catalogues several examples of these characteristics in various stories of old-time cowboys and closes with a discussion of the true cowboy's hatred for the American East and Europe and love for the open plains of the cattle country.¹²⁹

In 1928, Will James wrote and illustrated two brief articles discussing the attire of the cowboy. James was born Joseph Ernest Nephtali Dufault in Canada in 1892 and began working as a cowboy in his youth. In 1910 he came to the United States and took the name William Roderick James.¹³⁰ He served time in a Nevada prison for cattle rustling, worked as a stunt man in western movies, served in the U.S. Army from 1918 to

¹²⁷ Philip Ashton Rollins, "Real and Synthetic Cowboys," *Saturday Evening Post*, May 22, 1926, 24-25.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 25, 213.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 218.

¹³⁰ "Will James: Nevada Writers Hall of Fame 1991," University of Nevada, Reno Mathewson-IGT Knowledge Center, <http://knowledgecenter.unr.edu/friends/hallfame/james.html> (accessed 18 February 2011).

1919, and was a horse wrangler in the 1919 Nevada Round-up.¹³¹ His western drawings and short stories appeared in several national magazines, including the *Saturday Evening Post*, *Red Book*, and *Scribner's Magazine*.¹³² In "The Big Hat," James lays out all the uses of the wide-brimmed cowboy hat and laments that in rodeo shows he recently attended, the hat's size is decreasing. "Hooks" discusses the spurs worn by cowboys and the uses to which they are put.¹³³ These cowboy articles glorify an iconic image of the American western past that is different from the stalwart pioneer and whose life is less attainable for Americans in the present. While the perceived traits of the "American cowboy," traits of courage, loyalty, and taciturnity, might be cultivated, the lifestyle is forever gone, left only to be imitated by the "synthetic" dude ranchers.

The images of the steadfast pioneer and the noble cowboy were not the only two archetypes presented in the pages of the *Post*. Many articles offered reminiscences and anecdotal accounts of the West's gunslingers and lawmen such as Jesse James, Wild Bill Hickok, and lesser known individuals. These pieces served as a contrast to the image of the West extant in the 1920s, in which a person would not have these men to contend with, while simultaneously lending the region an air of romance and adventure. These specific famous men, whether for good or bad, served an iconic function in the prose and illustrations of the *Post*. The articles and stories about them are meant to invoke reverence for a time and a people that are gone. Articles like "Draw, Stranger!" by Courtney Ryley Cooper served to propagate the image of the Wild West, complete with saloon violence and gunfights. Cooper's article, the result of an interview with a John

¹³¹Ibid.

¹³²Ibid.

¹³³William James, "The Big Hat," *Saturday Evening Post*, September 1, 1928; William James, "Hooks," *Saturday Evening Post*, December 15, 1928.

Kuykendall who came to the West in 1866 during its heyday, discusses the killing instinct of the gunslingers, the degree of professionalism with which men like Wild Bill Hickok went about their life's work, and the development of the peculiar language that came to be associated with the West.¹³⁴ In spite of this, Cooper maintains that the truly lawless men of the West were not so many, but rather the few covered a lot of territory.

This kind of exposé of the myths of the Wild West, while their own veracity might be questioned, helped Lorimer present the romance of the past in contrast with his imagined reality of the West as it existed during his years with the *Post*. Not only did these pieces further the image of the "Wild West" of the outlaw, but they reassured the reader that the "wildness" of the "Wild West" was both exaggerated and extinguished. Always seeking to promote business and economic development, Lorimer was careful to promote the ideal character traits created by the West of the past, and by promoting them, highlight their desirability in the young men of Lorimer's day, while also reminding his readers of the allure of the West in the present day as a location for industrious, hard-working individuals.

In a similar vein as "Draw, Stranger!," the two stories "Fill Your Hand" and "Hands Up!" both serve as reminiscence pieces about the wildness of bygone days. The byline of both articles states that the stories were told to an A.B. Macdonald by Fred E. Sutton, a well-known pioneer associated with Oklahoma. In "Fill Your Hand," the author claims to have known personally such greats as Bat Masterson, Wild Bill Hickok, Bill Tilghman, and many others. Sutton, speaking through Macdonald, states that these men lived when "there was no Sunday west of Kansas City and no God west of Fort

¹³⁴Courtney Ryley Cooper, "Draw, Stranger!," *Saturday Evening Post*, January 1, 1926, 30.

Smith.”¹³⁵ “Fill Your Hand” offers insight into the methods of the gunslingers, the differences between a double-action and a single-action gun (and which one the killers preferred), and the changes to the weapons they would make to increase their firing speed. Though much of the story centers around the killing these men were best known for, and the marks they would make on their guns after each death, the portrayal of the gunfighters is not one of cold-hearted violence, but rather of the toughness needed to survive and maintain order in a lawless West. Many of those whom Sutton discusses eventually served as U.S. Marshals and sheriffs in various western territories, and he states at the end of the piece, “When they [Wild Bill, Masterson, and others] had to shoot a man, they did it deliberately as a man brings down a sheep-killing dog. They might regret that their business had in it such unpleasant work, but I have never known that type to be remorseful.”¹³⁶ While the *Post* did not advocate gunslingers’ violence in the 1920s, their confidence and ability to do what is both right and necessary was just what would be required of a young man seeking to make his name in the new West.

In “Hands Up!” Sutton briefly discusses the last opening of Oklahoma Territory in 1893, and his part in it, before moving on to discuss the closing of the West and the ways in which men like Bill Tilghman, by then a U.S. Marshal, helped put an end to the lawlessness. Sutton tantalizes the reading audience with the promise that some of these characters from the past are still among them in 1926. He mentions Rose of the Cimarron, the most reckless woman bandit of the Oklahoma Territory, who at the time of writing was married with three children and a respected member of her church.¹³⁷ Rose of

¹³⁵ A.B. Macdonald, “Fill Your Hand,” as told by Fred E. Sutton, *Saturday Evening Post*, April 10, 1926, 15.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 173.

¹³⁷ A.B. Macdonald, “Hands Up!” as told by Fred E. Sutton, *Saturday Evening Post*, April 24, 1926, 74.

the Cimarron's transition from a wild and adventuresome youth to a respectable and settled adulthood mimicked the transition experienced by the nation during these years.

Hoffman Birney, who also wrote as David Kent, was known in the twentieth century for his romantic western novels. He served as a western book reviewer for the *New York Times* and in 1954 received the Western Writers of America Spur Award for non-fiction.¹³⁸ Birney's 1929 "Vigilante: Enter Henry Plummer" tells the story of men who were shot while playing cards and buried with the cards they were dealt in one hand and the other still wrapped tightly around their gun. Another man is tried by a miner's court for horse theft and hanged within a half-hour of the trial. The article closes with the story of Henry Plummer: "Among all the bad men of the old West he stands alone as the most mysterious, the most unapproachable."¹³⁹ Plummer immigrated to California in 1852 from origins unknown and was said to possess the most gentlemanly of manners.¹⁴⁰ He murdered and seduced his way across the West before arriving in Bannack, Montana where he was hanged by a vigilante committee on January 10, 1864.¹⁴¹

The final image of the old West promoted in the pages of the *Post* was that of the mining towns and gambling halls. Also included in Hoffman Birney's "Vigilante" is the story of the discovery of gold in Alder Gulch, Montana, the mining camps that subsequently sprang up, and the wickedness that pervaded these settlements. Three anonymously written but carefully illustrated articles (all titled "Playing the Gold Camps") chronicle the story of a young man born in a gold-mining camp in California

¹³⁸Sadler, *Twentieth Century Western Writers*, 60.

¹³⁹Hoffman Birney, "Vigilante: Enter Henry Plummer," *Saturday Evening Post*, February 23, 1929, 92.

¹⁴⁰Thomas Josiah Dimsdale, *The Vigilantes of Montana, or, Popular Justice in the Rocky Mountains* (Virginia City, MT: D.W. Tilton, Publisher, 1882), 231.

¹⁴¹*Ibid.*, 234.

and raised in the gambling halls and saloons that thrived in such areas. As the boy grew up, he tried mining himself before an old-time gambler, Plunging Jim, offered him a position as a poker dealer in his saloon. From this point on the boy learned all the ins and outs of cards and soon left the saloon to travel the West as a gambler. The rest of the series recounts the rise and fall of the boy's fortunes as he enters a cycle of wins and losses all across California, New Mexico, Arizona, Texas, and Nevada. To avoid promoting a vice among the *Post's* readership, the author concludes, "And yet, gambling, either under supervision of law or without, is bad, and has no proper place in our present social system....It is true that while I was being lured on from place to place through all the different phases of Western life I saw much to excite and stimulate my fancies...the evidence was being constantly forced upon me that there was a price to pay."¹⁴²

Returning to the genre of pioneer reminiscence, Courtney Ryley Cooper interviews Poker Alice Tubbs in December 3, 1927's "Easy Come, Easy Go." The seventy-four year old, English-born Alice recounts her arrival in Colorado as the young wife of a mining engineer who soon had to support herself when widowed by a mining accident.¹⁴³ She learns poker and, though she remarries, makes a career out of traveling and playing the game. Though it should be unique to get a woman's perspective on life in the Wild West, Poker Alice's account is very similar to the men's reminiscences, with an emphasis on possessing quickness of mind, self-reliance, and accepting luck, both good and bad.

In conjunction with these tales of the rough and tumble West that the old-timers faced, the *Post* sought to offer the West of the 1920s as a land of wilderness in which

¹⁴²"Playing the Gold Camps," *Saturday Evening Post*, July 21, 1923, 125.

¹⁴³Courtney Ryley Cooper, "Easy Come, Easy Go," as told by Poker Alice Tubbs, *Saturday Evening Post*, December 3, 1927.

young men could still discover and hone the qualities that would make them true Americans and equal to their ancestors. As Turner and other intellectuals of the time argued, the presence of a wilderness was necessary for the preservation and creation of a truly American identity. In "Sight-Seeing by Wireless," Coloradan Enos Mills discusses his travels through various parts of the American desert. Born in Kansas in 1870, and dying just a few years after these *Post* pieces in 1922, Enos Mills is best known for his work in promoting the Rocky Mountain National Park in Colorado.¹⁴⁴ The entire piece is Mills' account of mirages he has seen in the deserts of the Southwest. In a similar vein, Mills' piece "Wet Spots in the Desert" discusses his travels through the desert and the challenges he faced along the way, such as thirst, mirages, sand storms, and tricks that saved his life, like eating the pulp from a cactus.¹⁴⁵ Both of these articles serve to present the West as a wilderness that still challenges man's fortitude and ability.

Furthering the image of men living and discovering the characteristics that make them truly men, Courtney Ryley Cooper's "High Country" in 1924 expounds on the author's trip through the Rocky Mountains of Colorado. Cooper explains that he is not discussing the tourist area of the Rockies that everyone sees, but rather the land above the timberline, the country of the prospectors of old.¹⁴⁶ Cooper explains that the land is barren, majestic, lonely, beckoning, and largely unvisited because the tourists of the 1920s prefer to explore in their automobile.¹⁴⁷ Dovetailing with this piece, Cooper's 1925 article, "Smoothing It," laments the consequences of sharing the true wilderness represented by the higher elevations of the Rockies with his friends from the East.

¹⁴⁴James H. Pickering, *Enos Mills' Colorado*, (Boulder, CO: Johnson Books, 2006), xxiii-xxv.

¹⁴⁵Enos Mills, "Sight-Seeing by Wireless," *Saturday Evening Post*, January 24, 1920; Enos Mills, "Wet Spots in the Desert," *Saturday Evening Post*, February 28, 1920.

¹⁴⁶Courtney Ryley Cooper, "High Country," *Saturday Evening Post*, September 27, 1924, 10-11.

¹⁴⁷*Ibid.*, 11.

Cooper states that after showing his friend Bill from New York the truly rough country of the Rockies, Bill's "...entire thoughts for the following six months will concern the most delicious manner in which to murder a person who he thought was a true friend..."¹⁴⁸

Cooper goes on to state that there was a time when every individual's life, whether city or country, involved a certain degree of exercise, but because of the car, society is now lazy and incapable of roughing it in the glories of nature.

Portraying the West as a wilderness in which appropriate qualities could be honed, and pitfalls of sedentary life avoided, was an integral part of the *Post's* goal to present the West as a place for overall improvement, the ultimate message that Lorimer, his editors, and his authors wished to convey. Several articles and editorials focused entirely on the idea of the Far West as a land in which one's life could only be enhanced. Albert W. Atwood, born in New Jersey in 1879, began a newspaper career in 1903.¹⁴⁹ In 1914, looking to supplement his income, Atwood wrote to Lorimer at the *Saturday Evening Post*. In his autobiography he states, "I had never aimed that high in my writing, had never met Mr. Lorimer or sent him any articles...I realized that if I could write articles for the Post [sic] I was made..."¹⁵⁰ Lorimer accepted his articles and thus began a working relationship that would last for twenty-three years, with Atwood supporting himself and his family through his free-lance work.¹⁵¹ Atwood traveled extensively in the West and in his autobiography states his desire to write articles about the excitement of his life there.¹⁵² In 1923's "The Spirit of the Southwest," Atwood discusses life in the 1920s Southwest and the unique attitudes of those living there. Atwood states that in the

¹⁴⁸Courtney Ryley Cooper, "Smoothing It," *Saturday Evening Post*, January 3, 1925, 44.

¹⁴⁹Albert W. Atwood, *These Eighty Years*, (n.p., 1961), 6, 71.

¹⁵⁰*Ibid.*, 122.

¹⁵¹*Ibid.*, 123.

¹⁵²*Ibid.*, 158-159.

Southwest, “There is no dead hand of custom or convention, no deep ruts such as one finds in the more thickly settled communities. The real difference, I sometimes think, is that a young man here comes in far more direct contact with the leaders in the community, and finds they are not so much better than himself.”¹⁵³ Atwood also claims that westerners are more entrepreneurial and democratic than their eastern counterparts. These sentiments are reinforced as a resident of the Southwest tells Atwood, “I could never live in the East again. The trouble with the East is that family counts so much. Everything depends on who your father and mother were. Out here the only question is what you are yourself.”¹⁵⁴

When discussing issues that had more immediate relevance to the *Post*'s contemporary readers, editorials were also employed, many of which were written by Albert Atwood in the 1920s.¹⁵⁵ In a 1923 editorial titled, “Go Where, Young Man?” the *Post* asks its readers whether a young man will get ahead faster in the East or the West. After stating that it truly depends on the character and wishes of the individual, the editorial claims, “The Far West, whether north or south, magnifies the importance of the individual, removes many inhibitions, levels to a considerable extent social barriers and frees men for the most part from the impersonality of great cities.”¹⁵⁶ The editorial closes with, “Actual opportunity may not be so much greater, if as great, but there is more zest in seizing it, more actual joy in victory. The West still has the spirit of youth, and, more than the East, does the day's work with a smile.”¹⁵⁷ His 1924 editorial, “The Center of the Country” discusses the misplaced superiority the Easterner from a metropolitan city

¹⁵³Albert W. Atwood, “The Spirit of the Southwest,” *Saturday Evening Post*, June 2, 1923, 20.

¹⁵⁴*Ibid.*, 150.

¹⁵⁵Cohn, *Creating America*, 175.

¹⁵⁶Editorial, “Go Where, Young Man?,” *Saturday Evening Post*, November 17, 1923, 26.

¹⁵⁷*Ibid.*

feels towards the rural Westerner. Just as the earlier editorial emphasized the importance of the individualism of the West, this one states, “The masses of people who live in or near great cities, complacent and self-satisfied, seem curiously unaware that the individual counts for several times as much in the newer and more sparsely settled regions.”¹⁵⁸ The author continues to overtly state all of the themes previously discussed in more subtle ways by saying, “But in any case there is developed in the West not only hope but a quality, a spirit of heartiness and enthusiasm which carries one far on the hard road of life....The Westerner still feels in his nature the urge of the pioneer.”¹⁵⁹

Its efforts to promote the West as a land of opportunity places the *Post* squarely in David Wrobel’s second phase of western boosterism, however, Lorimer’s ultimate goal of informing his readers led to several pieces examining and criticizing the more fraudulent claims of western boosters. In an attempt to add some veracity to their contributors’ often extravagant claims about what kind of life could be expected in the West, the *Post* also included articles that either offered to explain the reasons behind western boosterism or simply expose it as a fraud. Not content to simply claim that one could live a better life in the West, the *Post* ran several articles examining the realities of life in the West. A series of articles by Garet Garrett represent this strategy. Born Edward Peter Garrett, this author wrote for the New York *Sun*, the *Times*, the *Wall Street Journal*, and the *Evening Post*, and also served as an editor for the *Times Annalist* and the *Tribune*. Garrett left those positions in 1918 to write free-lance on political and economic topics, mostly for the *Saturday Evening Post*.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁸Editorial, “The Center of the Country,” *Saturday Evening Post*, February 23, 1924, 28.

¹⁵⁹*Ibid.*

¹⁶⁰Sadler, *Twentieth Century Western Writers*, 518-519.

In “How in the West?” Garrett claims the boosters of the West exist because of their pride of place and aspirations of civic grandeur, achievement, and success. These western towns are “...all lighted and paved and policed in the same way; all clean, tidy and sinless.”¹⁶¹ In this piece, Garrett introduces an interesting topic as a reason for promotion of the West, and the Pacific Northwest specifically, the thesis of Filtered Sunshine—that is, sunshine veiled by clouds. Boosters claimed that the Pacific Northwest has less sunshine than other areas of the Far West and was therefore more appealing to members of the “Nordic” race, originating in the British Isles, Northern France, Holland, Germany, and other northwestern European countries. “The Nordic races flourish best where there is less than 2000 hours of intense sunshine per annum. Progressive and energetic men and women were not developed basking in the sunshine on a pile of sand, or seated under the shade of a palm tree.”¹⁶² The theory further expounds that throughout history, the white races set up brilliant civilizations only to be overtaken by darker people from hotter climates and have their achievements destroyed. These claims are an example of both the overt racism of the 1920s and the attempt on the part of boosters to use quasi-scientific terms, like the “thesis of Filtered Sunshine,” to legitimate their claims.

It was important for the *Post* to convey not only a sense that opportunity was great in the West, but that it was a realistic opportunity for the young man of the 1920s. In “Why Go West?” Albert Atwood reintroduces a common theme and questions whether the West is a better land of opportunity. According to Atwood, an unnamed former governor of a western state claims, “...opportunities in the Far West, are not, on the

¹⁶¹Garet Garrett, “How in the West?,” *Saturday Evening Post*, November 22, 1924, 10.

¹⁶²*Ibid.*, 78.

whole, as great as in the East, but that the inclination of all young men is for the West rather than for the East.”¹⁶³ Atwood admits the truth that the old West is no more, but neither, he says, is the old East; however men still go West as often as they ever did because the West still fulfills a need for something new and different. In a second quote from the mysterious governor, the theme of Turner’s frontier thesis returns, “We have been told a thousand times that the frontier is no more; that the old easy days of immense tracts of free land and unlimited opportunity, which provided a safe outlet for restless adventurers, are of the past.”¹⁶⁴ Atwood goes on to claim that the westward movement of the 1920s is not actually related to a belief in greater opportunity, but rather driven by a blind desire to get away from an old life and into new surroundings. He maintains that a newcomer in the West must essentially create his own opportunities, but that the West is a land that encourages such initiative. Returning to the overarching ideas of pioneer greatness and nativism, Atwood instructs the reader, “What are called restless people now may be looked upon as respected pioneers fifty years hence. It may be that those who push on carry within them a concentrated essence of Americanism [i.e. nativism] and superior initiative.”¹⁶⁵

In the 1923 article “We Californians,” Lowell Otus Reese’s ostensible purpose is to explain the reasons behind the prevalence of California “Boosters.” Reese was raised in Indiana and moved to California in 1894, getting a job in 1900 with the Los Angeles *Times* and continuing to write for newspapers and magazines until his death in 1948.¹⁶⁶ While claiming to give a logical and rational explanation for California boosters, Reese

¹⁶³Albert W. Atwood, “Why Go West?,” *Saturday Evening Post*, February 19, 1927), 38.

¹⁶⁴Ibid.

¹⁶⁵Ibid., 72.

¹⁶⁶John I. White, *Git Along Little Dogies: Songs and Songmakers of the American West* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1975), 181.

merely falls in line with them as he begins extolling the virtues of his adopted state. He describes those who come expecting to be met by a “choir of flapper angels” and then states that they are only disappointed because of their ridiculous expectations, going on to say that those individuals that may return “East” unhappy almost inevitably return to California, this time with the right attitude. They settle down and become as vociferous a booster as the rest.¹⁶⁷

Reese discusses several contemporary concerns that Californians were facing at the time, among them being the misconceptions that the rest of the country seemed to have regarding California and the Far West. From the Gold Rush of 1849, California had a reputation as a rough, lawless place fraught with dangers from the Native American populations, immoral men looking to get rich quick, and ever wandering cowboys. In the early twentieth century, California began to work to change its image, and its boosters walked a precarious line between appealing to the country’s sense of adventure and hope for new opportunities in the West while simultaneously reassuring them that the worst of the dangerous days were safely in the past. As historian David Wrobel writes, “The end of the phase of frontier opportunity was always placed in the future, but the end of frontier inconvenience and danger was always placed in the past.”¹⁶⁸ Another concern of Californians was the influx of Chinese and other Asian immigrants to the Pacific Coast, known as the “yellow peril.” As these immigrants poured into post-gold rush California willing to work for lower wages and competing with white Americans for scarce jobs, the Chinese became scapegoats for those Americans that had gone West with such high

¹⁶⁷Lowell Otus Reese, “We Californians,” *Saturday Evening Post*, April 14, 1923, 9.

¹⁶⁸Wrobel, *Promised Lands*, 59.

hopes only to find a much harsher reality.¹⁶⁹ This anti-Asian sentiment fed into the nativism that developed in the early twentieth century, and the same complaints lodged against the Asians prior to 1882 would be used by the *Post* later to rail against Mexican immigrant workers.

A significant feature of Reese's article is his perpetuation of the free and unfettered Western identity that became closely associated with booster literature and residents of the West. The hardy and independent image of the western pioneer is a constant theme in western boosterism, perhaps as an attempt to maintain and restore white Americans' social status in a changing West.¹⁷⁰ Reese's article, and the frequent portrayal of the West in the *Saturday Evening Post*, both utilized this feature. In spite of the fact that Reese himself is not a native Californian, he is quick to adopt a feeling of superiority in both ruggedness and individuality over his eastern counterparts.

In the same vein as Reese's article, Harry Leon Wilson's "The Green Land" sets out to correct misconceptions about the Pacific Northwest while simultaneously (and perhaps intentionally) contributing to the exaggerated view of the area. Harry Wilson was a novelist, humorist, and playwright. By the age of twenty he was living in the Far West in various mining camps, gambling and working as a stenographer. In his later years he moved first to the East and then to Europe.¹⁷¹ He returned to the United States in 1912 and died in 1939. In "The Green Land," Wilson takes issue with something printed in an unidentified magazine that states that loggers in the Northwest must survive by eating boiled beans. According to Wilson, every day of a logger's life is a veritable

¹⁶⁹Patricia Nelson Limerick, *The Legacy of Conquest: The Unbroken Past of the American West* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1987), 262.

¹⁷⁰*Ibid.*, 4.

¹⁷¹Kunitz and Haycraft, *Twentieth Century Authors*, 1530.

feast because they work in a "...fat green land where many desirable things to eat grow vivaciously almost of their own accord."¹⁷² Not only is the food supply plentiful but, unlike California, water is abundant. In fact Wilson claims that if the Californian, especially one not native to California, were to be shown this green land it would shock him, perhaps even shake his confidence in his own land. Wilson goes on to state that Oregon will build cities in no time, complete with schools and churches. He closes with the claim that the mild and quiet land produces a mild and quiet people, so different from the noisiness and bustle of California.

This sentiment concerning the differences and level of social development between the Pacific Northwest and California was not unique to the 1920s. In a 1967 speech given to the Pacific Coast Branch of the American Historical Association, Dorothy O. Johansen stipulated that the first settlers to a community determine the character of that community and communicate that character to other potential migrants, essentially selecting the type of migrants that will follow and perpetuating the community character. In light of this theory, Johansen explains Oregon's development as the respectable choice for migration, particularly over California, for families and individuals with more long-term goals than those promised by the gold rushes and land booms in California. As a result of this, the types of societies that developed in each area reflect the ideals of those early settler groups.¹⁷³ Seventy or more years after those first settlers, Wilson's writing shows that the character of the two regions had not changed.

Sometimes this boosting in the *Post* took place in the form of humor, such as the 1926 piece, "Florida Versus California: A Debate Held Before the Prevaricators' Club of

¹⁷²Harry Leon Wilson, "The Green Land," *Saturday Evening Post*, May 14, 1927, 4.

¹⁷³Dorothy O. Johansen, "A Working Hypothesis for the Study of Migration," *Pacific Historical Review* 36, no. 1 (February 1967): 11-12.

America,” by Will Rogers. Rogers, a star in the 1917, 1922, and 1924 stagings of Ziegfeld’s *Follies*, worked in moving pictures from 1929-1935.¹⁷⁴ Known for his dry humor, he had syndicated columns in the *New York Times* and other papers.¹⁷⁵ In “Florida Versus California,” Rogers writes the dialogue of a pretend debate between the two states full of hyperbole and vitriol. The piece is illustrated by Herbert Johnson, a frequently featured cartoonist in the *Post*, and furthers the theme of exaggeration with pictures of Californians blithely sailing on a giant fish with a fin big enough to serve as a sail while Floridians (after the boast that Florida has over 500 different kinds of fish) are pictured desperately fighting off the numerous fish that are overrunning the swampland.¹⁷⁶

Moving from a focus on friendly corrections into exposé, Kenneth L. Roberts acerbically writes of the attitudes and lifestyles he witnessed in southern California. A prolific writer for the *Post* beginning in 1919, Washington, D.C.–based Roberts had attempted to quit in 1923, prompting Lorimer to send him on a working vacation to the West.¹⁷⁷ Roberts set out to document the truth about a variety of topics including Indian reservations, California lifestyles, and Mexican immigration.¹⁷⁸ In “The California Ray,” Roberts’s tongue-in-cheek strategy is obvious from his opening statement: “There is a theory in California—where there are more theories to the square inch than exist to the square mile in any other section of the world—that some sort of ray is exuded by certain unknown minerals that underlie the state. This ray...causes Californians to develop

¹⁷⁴Kunitz and Haycraft, *Twentieth Century Authors*, 1191.

¹⁷⁵*Ibid.*

¹⁷⁶Will Rogers, “Florida Versus California: A Debate Held Before the Prevaricators’ Club of America,” *Saturday Evening Post*, May 29, 1926, 11.

¹⁷⁷Sylvia Whitman, “The West of a Down Easterner: Kenneth Roberts and *The Saturday Evening Post*, 1924-1928,” *Journal of the West* 31, no. 1 (1992), 88.

¹⁷⁸*Ibid.*

theories that would never be developed anywhere else.”¹⁷⁹ Roberts asserts that people from other parts of the United States do not feel compelled to endlessly expound the virtues of their region, but the instant someone migrates to California, they seem unable to stop.¹⁸⁰ Roberts’s condescension is further evidenced by “California Diversions,” in which he caustically claims that California seems to be the only thing capable of curing the down-trodden New England conscience (which consists mostly of a strong work ethic) by encouraging individuals to hunt for diversions such as golf, hunting, and vacationing.¹⁸¹ “Flaming Hollywood” is a particularly vitriolic piece and according to Lorimer’s biographer John Tebbel, Lorimer was forced to remove half of a paragraph from the piece, stating, “printing it would simply result in a year’s controversy for you and me with the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce.”¹⁸²

As part of the *Post*’s coverage of the realities of the opportunity in the West, a significant amount of *Post* content was dedicated to discussion about the reality of the economic and social development taking place in the Far West during the 1920s. In a two-part series, “The Star of Empire,” Albert Atwood looks at the consequences of the westward population flow. According to Atwood, “If the star of empire is still to continue to wend its way westward, its onward progress must be traced mainly and fundamentally in an economic conquest, either agricultural or industrial.”¹⁸³ Atwood analyzes the industry and economy of the West, finding that due to the still comparatively small population, the supremacy of the East and Midwest in these areas is not yet

¹⁷⁹Kenneth L. Roberts, “The California Ray,” *Saturday Evening Post*, September 4, 1926, 8.

¹⁸⁰*Ibid.*, 9.

¹⁸¹Kenneth L. Roberts, “California Diversions,” *Saturday Evening Post*, September 18, 1926, 13, 90.

¹⁸²John Tebbel, *George Horace Lorimer and the Saturday Evening Post* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1948), 94.

¹⁸³Albert W. Atwood, “The Star of Empire,” *Saturday Evening Post*, October 27, 1923, 6.

threatened. He includes discussion of the lost economic revenue the West suffers from due to the necessity of the double overland haul. In essence, the West must ship its raw materials east to be manufactured and then ship the finished products back to the West for consumption, losing a significant opportunity for profits. In the second part of this series, Atwood states that the real danger to western industry is the scheming done by Easterners. “There is one danger in the Far West which I have no desire to exaggerate but which is real none the less. It is a too great readiness at times to listen to the siren song of slick promoters from the East, who make rosy promises of what will happen when they have put across their particular proposition.”¹⁸⁴ Atwood then discusses Los Angeles’s reputation as an open shop labor city, which attracts employers and manufacturers. He states that because so many come to the West for personal reasons, like health, they do not work as class-conscious labor groups, but rather as individuals, and that “...Southern and Central California are fortunate in having many native American factory workers, unaffected by Bolshevik doctrines or as yet uninterested in the more extreme demands of the more tyrannical portions of organized labor.”¹⁸⁵

Continuing his study of the economy in the West, Atwood’s “Testing Big Business in the West” focuses on the development of the big water-power companies, particularly around the Colorado River. Atwood states, “If the power of the Colorado River should be developed the whole Colorado River Basin, comprising portions of the states of California, Arizona, Nevada, Utah, Colorado, and New Mexico, might with eventual pressure upon the land in the East sustain a population in excess of that of Great

¹⁸⁴ Albert W. Atwood, “The Star of Empire,” *Saturday Evening Post*, November 3, 1923, 15.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

Britain.”¹⁸⁶ He notes the use of customer and employee ownership as a political device to avoid public ownership and mentions San Francisco’s building of the Hetch Hetchy Dam, expected to provide a significant amount of water to the city. In other articles, Atwood would promote the further development of the West, even in the face of others arguing for a halt in development and the preservation of the West’s natural resources.

In “The Land of Plenty,” Atwood tackles the agricultural industry in California stating, “Due to its size and climactic diversity, it boasts of more different commercial crops, some 180 in all, than any other state in the Union, or perhaps any other part of the world.”¹⁸⁷ In an eerie foreshadowing of the impending Great Depression, Atwood addresses concerns of overproduction, “How do we know, they ask, what a growing and prosperous nation will consume in the way of food in future years?...no one can say that there are too many raisins or lettuce heads or pears or anything else.”¹⁸⁸ Atwood discusses the ways technology is improving the industry, such as the ability to move fresh produce further across the country with refrigerated cars, stating that this will change national tastes and reduce the danger of surplus. Discussing the predominance of farms in the Far West, Atwood states, “This feeling that there is essential virtue in farming, no matter if the farmer can make only the barest living, seems almost indestructible. This state of mind is found everywhere, but naturally is much accentuated in the Far Western States with their great areas.”¹⁸⁹

In “Wealth in the Outdoor West,” Atwood discusses the West’s resources, such as minerals and land, and the difficulties facing industry in the West, the most obvious being

¹⁸⁶ Albert W. Atwood, “Testing Big Business in the West,” *Saturday Evening Post*, December 22, 1923, 16.

¹⁸⁷ Albert W. Atwood, “The Land of Plenty,” *Saturday Evening Post*, June 26, 1926, 6.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 7.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 93.

the distance between the raw materials of the West and the manufacturing and markets in the East. Atwood maintains that reclamation and irrigation are helping, but it is a gradual process, and one that requires an increasing population. Atwood delves into this never-ending quest for population as the driving force of western boosters, stating “There is an Eastern fear of the desert in general, and of whole states, that is childishly ridiculous.”¹⁹⁰ Atwood then engages in some boosting of his own, stating that one of the West’s greatest resources, the climate, is inexhaustible and that the tourist attractions of the West have only been briefly explored. He closes with this statement: “There are two thrills which no one should miss. The first is going East and beginning to sense the might and power of the Eastern financial and industrial supremacy...The other thrill is going West, and it comes from the beauty and majesty of the open. Who can say which is the greater resource? To deny that the stimulating buoyancy and the spirit of hope which the Far West inspires are part of the nation’s riches is to turn the back upon reality.”¹⁹¹

As the 1920s opened, the young men of America sought guidance in a rapidly changing society and economy. George Horace Lorimer, through his magazine and his writers, offered them the American West, advising them to seek a life in the last part of the country providing true challenge and opportunity. Through reminiscence pieces that glorified the past and journalistic works meant to convey a sense of the reality and potential of the West, Lorimer sought to influence the perceptions of his readers and the nation. Responding to national anxieties about the loss of the frontier, which was perceived as continually molding the essential American character, and the infiltration of immigrants bringing new social customs and political ideologies, Lorimer saturated his

¹⁹⁰ Albert W. Atwood, “Wealth in the Outdoor West,” *Saturday Evening Post*, January 8, 1927, 149.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 150.

periodical with a clear message of true Americanism and how to preserve it. By holding up the mirror of a glorified American past, Lorimer urged his readers to seek the opportunities and challenges that had faced the pioneers and to develop the type of character that had dominated the mythologized western lawmen. To accomplish this, Lorimer painted the West of the past as an exciting place where adventure, danger, and obstacles honed independence, strength of character, and individualism in American pioneers, and portrayed the West of the present as a developing land, where true wilderness could still be found and Eastern hierarchies and social conventions did not hamper the development of those same characteristics in Americans of the twentieth century. Apart from the ideological content, the *Post's* coverage of the realities of economic challenges and opportunities of Western development represent the best Lorimer had to offer in terms of journalism. Readers of the *Post* could count on Lorimer and his writers not only to deliver exciting pieces extolling the virtues of the West, but hard-hitting works clearly exposing both the advantages and disadvantages facing the region. Engaging in his own form of Western boosterism, Lorimer sought to create in the minds of his readers a West that lived up to his personal image of the American past and offered a place to cultivate his vision of the American future.

CHAPTER THREE:
THE *POST*'S COVERAGE OF CONTEMPORARY WESTERN ISSUES

As the twentieth century progressed and the advances wrought by industrialization changed daily life, Americans began to consider what type of world they were creating for future generations. Lorimer and his writers were no exception and the periodical published many articles on extraction of natural resources, conservation of the natural environment, the economics of irrigated agriculture in the Far West, and the effects of Mexican immigration on American society. These were all contemporary western issues that in some way affected the entire nation.¹⁹² These issues largely revolved around the role of the federal government in western life, and the attitudes of both western residents and the *Post* writers reflect a curious ambivalence towards the larger role of government in daily life. It is interesting to note that in spite of the *Post*'s extensive circulation numbers in the western part of the country, the periodical and local residents were not always on the same side concerning contemporary western issues and the government's role.

When confronted with the rampant over-production of oil taking place in southern California, *Post* writer Isaac Marcossou seemed to feel that government intervention was impossible, reflecting the conservative and capitalistic, free market views of big business, the market, and the federal government's relationship with it. As the effects of several years of federal management policy on national parks and federally reserved land became

¹⁹²Though Asian immigration also had a tremendous impact on western development and sentiments, Asians are only mentioned in the *Saturday Evening Post* of the 1920s as either a former problem or "exotics at home" to encourage tourism. This is likely due to the Immigration Act of 1917 which severely restricted immigration from most of Asia.

apparent, the *Post*, in contrast with western residents, applauded Uncle Sam's work and demeaned the locals that bemoaned their restricted lives. Conversely, the *Post* lambasted failed irrigation projects, meant to help beleaguered farmers, and accused the federal government of overstepping its bounds. Likewise, the *Post* condemned any recommendation of government assistance for farmers suffering because of over-production and falling market prices, both residual effects of World War I. While simultaneously denouncing the long arm of the government in providing assistance to American farmers, Lorimer and his writers demanded legislative action and government policing of the Mexican immigrant, as well as penalties for the American employers hiring them. These issues and the conservative *Post*'s coverage of them, exemplify early twentieth-century-America coming to terms with and deciding the new directions the country, and the West, would take.

This chapter will look at the *Post*'s coverage of the twentieth century issues in the West and examine the *Post*'s stance on each. The very new issue of the oil industry and its relationship to big business and simultaneous destruction of the environment provides an excellent example of the *Post*'s duality regarding the government's role in the regulation of business and the conservation of the environment, a duality that is never overtly acknowledged in the pages of the periodical. Similarly, the *Post*'s support of the conservation movement in spite of the hardships it presented to local western farmers and ranchers is a paradox in light of Lorimer's typical advocacy for the success of the hard-working individual. Lorimer's view of success, however, left no room for mistakes, and his magazine expressed a very dim view of government agricultural and irrigation assistance for farmers suffering the after-effects of World War I. Lorimer and his writers

felt that overproduction, in agriculture and oil, was the direct fault of the individual farmers and oil companies, and saw no national benefit in federal support of these local businesses. The *Post's* shrill nativism almost overwhelms the reader in its coverage of Mexican immigration. This nativistic racism, coupled with the condescension shown to farmers unable to succeed in a poor agricultural market, shows that the *Post's* message of attaining the American Dream through hard work was not truly meant for every man, but rather for the worthy and deserving, though arbitrarily determined, few.

At the opening of the twentieth century, uses for petroleum oil expanded while eastern oil reserves simultaneously dwindled.¹⁹³ The development of independent oil companies in the West posed serious competition to John D. Rockefeller's Standard Oil, which had monopolized the industry since its formation in 1870.¹⁹⁴ California, an oil producing region behind only Texas and Oklahoma, produced more oil than any other state between 1920 and 1926.¹⁹⁵ Historian Michael R. Adamson argues that there is a connection between the oil boom in California during the early twentieth century and the boosterism of that area during the same time.¹⁹⁶ Concentrating his study on Ventura, California, Adamson argues that these oil companies wielded influence comparable to local industrialists and elites and determined the outcome of the civic boosters' efforts through the control of local politics.¹⁹⁷ Local politics, rather than federal, also became the vehicle for initial restriction and regulation of oil extraction. Two prominent *Post*

¹⁹³Richard White, "*It's Your Misfortune and None of My Own:*" *A New History of the American West* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991), 395.

¹⁹⁴*Ibid.*, 396.

¹⁹⁵*Ibid.*

¹⁹⁶Michael R. Adamson, "Oil Booms and Boosterism: Local Elites, Outside Companies, and the Growth of Ventura, California," *Journal of Urban History* 35, no. 1 (November 2008): 152.

¹⁹⁷*Ibid.*, 171.

writers, Albert W. Atwood and Isaac F. Marcosson covered both the western oil industry and the oil industry of California extensively.

The conservation movement, which began in the last decades of the nineteenth century, saw significant changes in the twentieth. During the first two decades of the century the movement saw the split between preservationists and conservationists, most aptly demonstrated by the Hetch Hetchy dam issue. Preservationists essentially believed in the preservation of nature for its aesthetic value only and that the best policy concerning the natural environment was one of non-intervention. Conservationists, alternatively, believed that nature offered too much utility to mankind for a non-intervention policy and that, in order to both utilize its value and preserve its beauty, a policy of wise-use of natural resources was the best. From the beginning of the conservation movement, the federal government served as the vehicle to protect and set aside the public lands. As the magnitude of the area needing conservation and preservation became apparent, the federal government increasingly controlled the oversight of the lands and projects. By the 1920s Washington, D.C. was heavily involved in the management of much of the land in the West, a phenomenon that occurred in that region as it never did in any other part of the country, in large part because there were more publicly held lands in the West than in any other part of the country. Part of the developing controversy within the conservation movement concerned western residents' feelings that conservation hindered their ability to utilize their land's natural resources for profit in the way that Easterners had done. Westerners saw federal management of timber, water, and land resources as Washington, and therefore the East, encroaching on the residents of the West's rights to earn a living off of their land, which they had settled

and cultivated.¹⁹⁸ Preservationists maintained that it was better to save, or preserve, the natural wonders of the land before they were lost to exploitation, as the wilderness of the East had been. Preservationists also felt that the western residents themselves could not be trusted to preserve the wilderness for the nation as a whole due to their desire to profit from the resources.¹⁹⁹

Water, and the scarcity of it, drove much of western political and social development. Throughout the nineteenth century, western states and the federal government slowly moved water rights from the English common-law system of riparian rights, giving the water to whomever possessed the land where the source was, to a new system of appropriative rights, giving whomever could muster the resources the right to appropriate water rights for development for an arbitrarily determined “greater good” of the public.²⁰⁰ A facet of appropriative rights included the right of “prior appropriation,” giving the settler that had claimed water rights first the right to take his share before others in times of drought or scarcity. This created discord among settlers, often leading to brawls at the head gates of waterways, and required constant vigilance on the part of the individual farmers to ensure their water was used on their land. After several private entities and local state and city governments attempted to develop the West’s water resources and found the scale of the projects required too daunting, developers of both cities and agriculture began to call for federal involvement in water development, opening yet another avenue for federal management of western resources. This resulted in complicated irrigation districts and a large number of western farmers, both big and small, paying fees for the use of water being pumped in by the federal reclamation

¹⁹⁸White, *It's Your Misfortune and None of My Own*, 408.

¹⁹⁹*Ibid.*, 407-408.

²⁰⁰*Ibid.*, 401.

projects. These reclamation projects were not always successful or efficient, due to both nature and bureaucracy, and the farmers often owed money on failed or unsold crops.²⁰¹

Part of the underlying reasons behind the construction of such extensive irrigation systems was the increased demand at the beginning of the twentieth century for increased agricultural product. During the First World War, war torn European nations, with fields ravaged by the fighting, looked to the United States for food and supplies. In 1916 America entered the war and found itself grossly unprepared for the task at hand. Apart from the rapid training of troops and appropriation of factories for supplies, the United States Government needed extraordinary amounts of food and grains to keep US and Allied troops fed. Using one of the most extensive and famous propaganda campaigns of the century, Uncle Sam implored American farmers to increase production, encouraging them with the slogan, “Food will win the war.”²⁰² The increased demand drove prices up and many individuals took up farming on credit while existing farmers borrowed heavily and increased their crop output. These farmers often switched to one-crop farming in an attempt to maximize profits. In 1918, however, when the war ended, so did the excess demand for crops, causing agricultural prices to plummet and leading to a significant agricultural depression throughout the 1920s, years before the Stock Market crash of 1929 would send the entire country into the Great Depression.²⁰³

One of the unforeseen side effects of this increased, one-crop agriculture was the use of cheap migrant labor, mainly immigrants moving north, both legally and illegally,

²⁰¹Ibid., 401-406.

²⁰²James A Henretta et al., *America's History*, 5th ed. (Boston, MA: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2004), 649.

²⁰³Ibid., 668.

from Mexico.²⁰⁴ Between 1900 and 1930 over one million Mexican immigrants entered the United States.²⁰⁵ These immigrants came seeking escape from a land ravaged by the Mexican Revolution, as well as better wages and better jobs. As is the case in the twenty-first century, even the lowest of American wages far exceeded their expectations. Accustomed to lives of poverty in Mexico, these immigrants lived frugally in small villages and adapted to a migratory lifestyle. While many came intending to work, save, and return, a large portion ended up staying in America and bringing their families to join them, creating Hispanic communities in the larger cities of the American West and Southwest. The widespread nativism that dominated American thought after the First World War created significant animosity towards these Hispanics and the topic received vitriolic coverage in the *Post*.²⁰⁶

Lorimer and his conservative periodical often adopted an approving view of the development of the West and the federal government's role in managing it, though this view often depended on the circumstances. When government involvement only meant deciding which trees stayed and which were cut, or where the irrigation ditches should be dug, Lorimer and the *Post* felt that Washington was doing splendidly. When federal intervention meant the extension of credit to the beleaguered farmer, or the continued admittance of the Mexican "peon," however, the *Post* took a much dimmer view. This seeming ambiguity on the part of the *Post* concerning the role of government in the West

²⁰⁴ A great number of Hispanics residing in the American Far West, mainly in Texas, California, New Mexico, Arizona, and Colorado, were U.S. citizens, who were descendents of the Spanish and Mexicans that settled the area before the United States controlled it. Though these individuals were also involved in the migrant labor economy, the *Saturday Evening Post* does not distinguish these citizens from the immigrants moving north from Mexico. This could be due to a lack of understanding of the true situation in the region on the part of *Post* writers, or a symptom of the extreme racism which viewed all peoples of Hispanic descent as part of one "breed."

²⁰⁵ Camille Guerin-Gonzalez, *Mexican Workers and American Dreams: Immigration, Repatriation, and California Farm Labor, 1900-1939* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1994), 1.

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 1-8.

reflects the periodical's national political stance. Issues of resource management such as conservation and irrigation were new concerns, unique to the West with no precedents in the more settled East for public opinion to have been settled on, leaving room for the federal government to become involved without anyone feeling like boundaries were being overstepped. Immigration and federal assistance to farmers, however, fell into the category of issues long debated on the national scale apart from the West, and Lorimer's strict conservatism is reflected in the tone of the *Post*. Some of the *Post*'s ambiguity towards federal involvement could be explained by its belief that western residents were too parochial and short-sighted in their demands for local management of western resources and unrestricted Mexican immigration. Part of the *Post*'s urging of young, Eastern, i.e. well-informed and ambitious, men to head west can be seen as an attempt to counter this parochialism with a new breed of western residents that possessed a broader understanding of the national impact of these western issues.

The *Post*'s view on these issues is not too surprising. The periodical had long been an advocate of anti-immigration policy and viewed the West's insistence on retaining its cheap labor as a threat to the American people, while a refusal to consider the need for assistance to the American farmer falls squarely in line with the *Post*'s general belief in a laissez-faire, capitalist market where the individual is solely responsible for his own success or failure. Likewise the *Post*'s overall opinion seemed to be that western residents should be able to support themselves without destroying things that benefitted the American people as a whole, namely the conservation of publicly set aside land. Despite his conservative opinions, Lorimer often included pieces written

from the opposing viewpoint, offering his readers as full a picture of any situation as he could.

In 1926, Albert Atwood wrote an article for the *Post* that covered all of these topics. Atwood was a long-time sojourner in the West and fancied himself an authority on the area. His article, however, seems more reflective of an outside, Eastern perspective of the region. In “The Youngest Brother: The West and its Share of the National Heritage,” Atwood opens with the statement that America is one people and one country.²⁰⁷ This statement of inclusion, coupled with the title of the piece, is actually very revealing of the divide, whether real or imagined, between the two sections of the country. One of the main complaints of western residents against conservation and the national parks was that the designation of those lands as publicly owned prevented locals from using those resources to support themselves and their families. Atwood demonstrates the controversy within the conservation movement by stating, “I am a conservationist, but I don’t believe the East has a right, after having made an empire of its own, to conserve this country [the West] and keep it from development.”²⁰⁸ Atwood states that the federal government owns thirty percent of the eleven states of the Rocky Mountain, desert, and Pacific Coast region, leading to problems of absentee ownership and landlordism, yet he feels that turning the land over to state governments would only lead to more political fighting and corruption. Atwood contradicts his earlier statement, saying that it makes more sense to have conserved the western lands before they were depleted by development rather than to have to buy them back and re-introduce the natural timber and wildlife. This contradiction likely reflects Atwood’s attempts to reach

²⁰⁷ Albert W. Atwood, “The Youngest Brother: The West and its Share of the National Heritage,” *Saturday Evening Post* December 4, 1926), 18.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

a wider audience rather than any of his own beliefs. Addressing the issue of westerners' demand for independence, Atwood quotes Theodore Roosevelt who complains that westerners want independence until something happens, when they immediately want the government to step in and fix it.²⁰⁹ Historians Richard White and Patricia Limerick analyze this phenomenon, finding that while western history can be seen as one long fight for independence from federal management, it is in reality one long story of dependence on federal assistance, an interpretation that the content of the *Post* supports.

Atwood next discusses the Reclamation Act of 1901 and states that he believes its failures were largely due to western lack of planning causing funds to be allocated in the wrong places.²¹⁰ Atwood is perhaps the only *Post* writer to approve of the federal reclamation attempts, and he states firmly that because of the West's scanty population and meager local resources, it needs outside help to develop. He highlights the West's continued connection to the East by stating that the development of the West still depends almost entirely on the coming of more Easterners and their capital.²¹¹ This seems to indicate a view of Westerners as an almost helpless group which cannot hope to develop their land without the help of the older, wiser East. Atwood's article reflects historian Richard White's argument that the West was, from its beginning, dependent on a world economy that depended fully on the two things that connected it to the East and world market centers: the railroad and the telegraph.²¹² White maintains that most Anglo-American settlers in the West showed no interest in subsistence farming, instead entering straightaway into extractive businesses such as harvesting lumber, raising mass cattle

²⁰⁹Ibid., 202.

²¹⁰Ibid.

²¹¹Ibid., 205.

²¹²White, *It's Your Misfortune and None of My Own*, 236.

herds, and establishing large one-crop farms, all of which depended on eastern and European markets for consumption and profit.²¹³

As Atwood's article shows, the issues facing the West of the 1920s were diverse, with a long connection to the history of western development up to that point and had long-lasting implications for the West's future development. Often in the *Post*, Lorimer's writers would focus on these issues individually, educating the *Post*'s readers on the details of the problems and the conservative view of the solutions.

In 1923 Albert Atwood wrote a series of articles concerning the oil boom. He discusses the recent booms in California real estate and oil, stating that "this is an account of the transfer or migration of wealth from every part of the country to Los Angeles."²¹⁴ He then focuses on the oil fields of southern California, maintaining that the discovery of oil in California led to an oil boom because the long continuance of real estate speculation in that area created an atmosphere in which frenzied buying and selling flourished.²¹⁵ Referring to those who try to sell shares in oil fields to the public he states, "Wealth from oil appeals to no one age, sex, class or group. It has universal appeal, this possibility of sudden wealth; it strikes a responsive chord in every breast."²¹⁶ Atwood claims to have gone "undercover," posing as a gullible tourist and allowing a beautiful girl with a megaphone to lure him, along with other susceptible individuals, onto a bus that promised to drive him out to the oil fields, show him what he'd be buying, and provide a hot lunch. Upon arriving at the fields, the unsuspecting consumers were herded into tents and the impending riches available after investment in the oil fields were

²¹³Ibid., 236, 242-243.

²¹⁴Albert W. Atwood, "Money from Everywhere," *Saturday Evening Post*, May 12, 1923, 10.

²¹⁵Albert W. Atwood, "When the Oil Flood is On," *Saturday Evening Post*, July 7, 1923, 86.

²¹⁶Albert W. Atwood, "Mad From Oil," *Saturday Evening Post*, July 14, 1923, 10.

extolled, complete with the timed entrance of an individual claiming to have purchased shares early and become extremely rich. Atwood is sure to indicate that he himself was not fooled by these underhanded tricks of the oil schemers.

Isaac F. Marcossion, a journalist from Louisville, Kentucky, had a career working for the *Louisville Times* and *World's Work* in New York before joining the *Saturday Evening Post* in 1907.²¹⁷ Marcossion interviewed most of the Allied leaders during World War I, covered the Russian Revolution, and continued his coverage of world leaders for the *Post* audience into the 1920s and 1930s.²¹⁸ In a 1924 series he states that oil is the one commodity born from uncertainty and travail.²¹⁹ He considers the oil industry in America from a business perspective, laying out the economics of supply and demand that drive oil's production and discussing the methods of locating oil, the way competition works in the oil market, the increased costs of drilling, and the storage of oil. He concludes by pointing out that the oil industry is rushing along at break-neck speed with no controls on production, stating that "...the American producers do not cooperate to standardize the supply and prevent recurrent over and under production. To do so would at once be running afoul of anti-trust and anticonspiracy laws."²²⁰ Marcossion then focuses specifically on the oil industry in California, stating that California stands supreme among American oil producing fields.²²¹ He traces the history of the oil fields in California, finding similarities between the rush on oil and the gold rushes of the past. In 1927, Marcossion returns to his consideration of the oil industry, again lamenting the

²¹⁷"Isaac Frederick Marcossion," *Dictionary of American Biography*, New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1981, *Gale Biography in Context* (accessed 14 March 2011).

²¹⁸*Ibid.*

²¹⁹Isaac F. Marcossion, "The Black Golconda," *Saturday Evening Post*, March 22, 1924, 3.

²²⁰*Ibid.*, 166.

²²¹Isaac F. Marcossion, "The Black Golconda—California's Oil Empire," *Saturday Evening Post*, April 5, 1924, 12.

effect of competitive drilling on the market's production.²²² Marcossou follows his previous pattern by considering the specific narratives of various fields in California, Texas, and Oklahoma, examining the state of the industry at the time.²²³ The series continues into early 1928 with Marcossou's cry for the conservation of oil and the cessation of overproduction, and pondering of the future when there is no more oil to drill.²²⁴ Marcossou's concern for the conservation of oil, via limited production, and the results for the future reflect the conservation movement's stance that Americans had a responsibility to preserve something for future generations.

The need to conserve natural resources was frequently discussed within the pages of the *Post*, whose authors often advocated for better and more stringent methods of conservation than those being pursued.²²⁵ It is important to note the distinction between the terms "conservation" and "preservation." Conservationists believed in the preservation of natural resources and wilderness lands but supported the regulated, wise-use of those same resources and lands for the benefit of the nation and public. Preservationists valued natural resources and wilderness lands solely for their aesthetic value and believed that they should not be exploited or used by humans in any capacity. The stance maintained by the *Post* was one of conservation, so long as the "wise-use" of the natural resources was being regulated by the federal government and not the local residents. Often, the threatening use of the land the *Post* writers argue against is coming

²²²Isaac F. Marcossou, "The Deluge of Oil," *Saturday Evening Post*, December 17, 1927, 3-82.

²²³Isaac F. Marcossou, "The New Black Golcondas," *Saturday Evening Post*, December 31, 1927.

²²⁴Isaac F. Marcossou, "Oil and Conservancy," *Saturday Evening Post*, February 18, 1928; Isaac F. Marcossou, "After Petroleum-What?" *Saturday Evening Post*, March 3, 1928.

²²⁵Jan Cohn, *Creating America: George Horace Lorimer and the Saturday Evening Post* (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1989), 259-260.

from the local western residents and states, not the federal organizations created to manage the resources.

Lorimer's biographer, John Tebbel, argues Lorimer's beliefs developed during his days as a travelling manager for P.D. Armour's meat packing plant. According to Tebbel it was the forays into the American West during this time of travel that developed both Lorimer's lifelong love of the area and his intense zeal for its conservation.²²⁶

Throughout the articles, authors and editorialists continually advocate for conservation while also supporting the federal government's regulation of the lands and forests being conserved. This is a singular stance for the same conservative periodical that espoused big business with little government intervention in a laissez-faire, capitalistic market, and reflects the newness of conservation as a nationally relevant issue.

In 1920's "The Last Wilderness," Elizabeth Frazer discusses her trip to Jackson Hole, Wyoming, near Yellowstone National Park, to recuperate after her trials as a field reporter during World War I.²²⁷ In keeping with both the *Post's* tendency to glorify the past and contemporary conservation rhetoric, she states that setting out to Jackson Hole was, "...a picnic, a pioneer enterprise, and a religious pilgrimage all in one."²²⁸ After much discussion of her time and activities in the park, she lobbies for its continued protection, which is threatened by a group of local stockmen seeking to use part of the park as winter feeding ground for their cattle. She maintains that there are two kinds of beauty, nature and man-made, and that original sources of beauty should be preserved

²²⁶John Tebbel, *George Horace Lorimer and the Saturday Evening Post* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1948), 8.

²²⁷Biographical information could not be found on Elizabeth Frazer. However, she appears to have been a regular contributor to the *Saturday Evening Post* from approximately 1906 to 1939. The Fiction Mags Index, <http://www.philsp.com/homeville/fmi/d809.htm#A33218> (accessed 3 July 2011).

²²⁸Elizabeth Frazer, "The Last Wilderness," *Saturday Evening Post*, January 24, 1920, 141.

because they are capital that does not belong to the present, but to all generations.²²⁹ She closes by stating that America's mad, frenzied pace to increase wealth is costing the country not only its natural resources and beauty, but its integrity, peace of mind, and contentment.²³⁰ Historian Jackson Lears writes that this search for a return to nature was indicative of a national search for meaning and revitalization in a world that no longer required fortitude and strength of character for survival, especially among the bourgeoisie.²³¹ Frazer's article, which openly admits her frail and nervous state of mind after the terrors of the First World War, signifies this search for revitalization in nature that Lears posits.

The 1920 "Out-of-Doors" regular feature, most likely written by *Post* regular Emerson Hough, uses the iconic images of the Old West discussed in the previous chapter to justify the preservation and conservation of western land in the 1920s.²³² The author discusses several first-hand accounts of nineteenth century pioneers moving West that he has encountered, stating that these books and journals enable one to "...see the West-bound advance, how it came halting, pushing ahead, holding its own and going forward."²³³ Reflecting Jackson Lears's thesis and the *Post*'s promotion of opportunity in the West, the author states, "I want chiefly to remind the men of to-day that America was once a wonderful country for a man....That world is much changed, but it is not destroyed. We ought to keep at least a part of it as nearly as possible as it once was, because there are plenty of Americans coming on in whose hearts there will smolder or

²²⁹Ibid., 156.

²³⁰Ibid.

²³¹Jackson Lears, *Rebirth of a Nation: The Making of Modern America, 1877-1920*, (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2009), 234.

²³²John Tebbel's biography, *George Horace Lorimer and the Saturday Evening Post*, credits Hough with the regular feature "Out-of-Doors" during the First World War and states that both Hough and Lorimer were ardent conservationists (Tebbel, *George Horace Lorimer and the Saturday Evening Post*, 139.)

²³³"Out-of-Doors," *Saturday Evening Post*, January 31, 1920, 52.

will flame the old love for adventure and sport in the out-of-doors.”²³⁴ This statement reflects the increasing feelings of Americans that “proving” oneself in the great outdoors was necessary to retain the vigor that once made America great as well as the rhetoric of the conservation movement’s argument for the benefit wilderness can provide future generations.

Apart from advocating the conservation of natural beauty and resources for future generations, or the western wilderness’s ability to revitalize the wearied soul, some conservationists in the *Post* chose to highlight and lament the resources already lost. In “Sierras by Camp Fire and Pack,” Hal G. Evarts states that within the last sixty years at least nine-tenths of the timber of the land in the Sequoia National Park has been cut or transferred to private owners.²³⁵ Evarts was an American western fiction writer from Topeka, Kansas who spent his life as an outdoorsman in Wyoming and other parts of the West.²³⁶ He served as outdoor editor for the *Saturday Evening Post* for several years before dying in 1934 of a heart attack while on a South American cruise.²³⁷ In “The Last Stronghold,” Evarts discusses several issues facing Yellowstone National Park and recounts the changing local perception of the park, from that of a white elephant retarding growth and development to the current view of the park as a money-maker and draw for tourists. Evarts uses the development of park tourism to advocate for continued conservation, a tactic that was widely used by conservationists in the twentieth century.

After the 1913 loss of the Hetch Hetchy Valley, conservationists realized that national parks and conservation would not be sustained on the basis of their scenic merit

²³⁴Ibid.

²³⁵Hal G. Evarts, “Sierras by Camp Fire and Pack,” *Saturday Evening Post* April 14, 1923, 18.

²³⁶Stanley J. Kunitz and Howard Haycraft, ed., *Twentieth Century Authors: A Biographical Dictionary of Modern Literature* (New York: The H.W. Wilson Company, 1942), 431.

²³⁷Ibid.

alone and began to link the lands to economic growth and national health in an effort to continue preserving the parks.²³⁸ According to Evarts, the locals who are still demanding the use of the area for stock grazing and farming are refusing to see the bigger picture. He states that those economic practices could never generate the kinds of revenues that tourism is bringing in because tourism is still in its infancy and can only grow exponentially. In spite of his own use of economics as incentive, Evarts maintains that the locals' demands to use the land for their own profit are wrong, stating that "Money talks" is a sentiment with no place in this discussion, but rather that the value of the preserved lands should count more than profit.²³⁹ Evarts cleverly puts forth his own preservationist view of the land's pure, natural, and therefore priceless, value while simultaneously advocating the park's economic value as a wise-use incentive, and denigrating the local westerners' proposed use of the land.

Several *Post* editorials discussed the issue of support for the continuation and expansion of the national parks and land conservation movement. The 1926 editorial "Does the Public Want It?" addresses the conservation issue in relation to the ancient redwoods in California. According to the editorialist most people are in favor of the theory of conservation, but not of the economics. The author pleads with readers stating, "Failure to add to the existing reservation would reflect for all future time upon the intelligence of the American people."²⁴⁰ "New Boundaries for Yellowstone" also argues for the inclusion of more land under the protection of the national parks, arguing that Congress should assign the Tetons to the Yellowstone National Park.²⁴¹ "The Roosevelt

²³⁸White, *It's Your Misfortune and None of My Own*, 413.

²³⁹Hal G. Evarts, "The Last Stronghold," *Saturday Evening Post* May 12, 1923, 26, 27, 160.

²⁴⁰Editorial, "Does the Public Want It?," *Saturday Evening Post* January 9, 1926, 42.

²⁴¹Editorial, "New Boundaries for Yellowstone," *Saturday Evening Post*, February 6, 1926, 32.

Park Project,” of the same year, complains that every attempt to increase the national parks is hampered continuously by petty local interests.²⁴² In particular the editorial laments the opposition to the creation of Roosevelt Park, which would be added to the Sequoia National Park in California, and encourages all to support the project. The fight for the redwoods continues in “Hope for the Redwoods,” excitedly proclaiming that there is now a chance, thanks to legislation introduced by Senator Arthur H. Breed, that these trees will be saved.²⁴³ The author of the editorial reflects the trend of economic incentive, also stating that the creation of scenic parks and forest reservations no longer requires a defense of sentiment or aesthetics, because now such things have been proven to pay through tourism.²⁴⁴

Though tourism was often promoted as the necessary economic incentive to support the conservation of lands, it soon became obvious that it posed its own threat to the wilderness. The editorial “Mt. Hood’s Escape” supports the chief of the United States Forest Service’s decision not to allow a tourist cableway to the summit of Mt. Hood. The director of the Forest Service, Colonel William B. Greeley states that the decision was made because, “...I cannot but believe that the aesthetic or sentimental value of such outstanding natural features would be impaired through subjecting them to this type of development.”²⁴⁵ While praising the Forest Service in this instance, the editorial is quick to remind the reader that the organization is still too tolerant of commercial interests in general and the tourist industry in particular. This particular editorial reflects, perhaps, the overall ignorance with which the *Post*, by virtue of its eastern roots, regarded western

²⁴²Editorial, “The Roosevelt Park Project,” *Saturday Evening Post*, April 17, 1926, 32.

²⁴³Editorial, “Hope for the Redwoods,” *Saturday Evening Post*, March 5, 1927, 30.

²⁴⁴*Ibid.*

²⁴⁵Editorial, “Mt. Hood’s Escape,” *Saturday Evening Post*, May 21, 1927, 32.

issues. The United States Forest Service was founded and placed under the United States Department of Agriculture with the express and only purpose of managing public forests and grasslands, not to promote or encourage tourism in the National Forests.²⁴⁶ The author states, “To most of our city dwellers open country is a new world which had remained undiscovered until the advent of the motor car...It may take a generation to learn that hot-dog stands, soft-drink signs plastered over the landscape, funicular railways, tourist litter and the wholesale destruction of wildflowers add nothing to Nature’s loveliness...”²⁴⁷ Historian Hal Rothman argues that western tourism is in reality an extractive industry, with the by-products of real estate developments, loss of open space, and the transformation of a physical environment into roads and reservoirs that solely provide activities for visitors.²⁴⁸ The effects of this extractive industry were already being felt by the 1920s, as these *Post* writers began to lament the destructive nature of tourism and call for its limitation.

Even among the wise-use conservationists, controversy arose over the exact type of wise-use best suited for various natural resources, showing that greed and self-interest prevailed even in a movement often associated with more high-minded intent. In “The West Speaks to the East,” Elizabeth Frazer discusses the controversy over the grazing fees charged by the government for western stockmen’s use of federal lands. Frazer highlighted the numerous groups with a stake in this issue: the stockmen of the Far West, whose main interest is cheap pasturage; the stockmen that live too far away to graze on federal land and must pay a higher price to private land owners; non-western citizens who

²⁴⁶“U.S. Forest Service History,” <http://www.foresthistory.org/ASPNET/USFHSHome.aspx> (accessed 26 November 2011).

²⁴⁷Editorial, “Mt. Hood’s Escape,” 32.

²⁴⁸Hal K. Rothman, *Devil’s Bargains: Tourism in the Twentieth-Century American West* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1998), 13.

think the stockmen are taking advantage by exploiting public land; irrigation, mining, and municipal interests looking for water supplies; recreationists wanting more roads; and big game hunting enthusiasts wanting to preserve habitat for wild game.²⁴⁹ All of these groups are certain that their desired use for the federal land is the best and deny vehemently any other interest's right to the resources. This article, with its analysis of each group, shows that in spite of the *Post's* continuous claims that the West and the East were united as one people, the issues and solutions were still very divisive. Frazer promotes the glory of days gone by stating that behind the desire of the stockmen is a background of pioneer tradition and emotion. In spite of this, Frazer maintains that the old ways of the West are gone and, "A new West is here, and that new West is for conservation up to the hilt...because conservation is to our self-interest."²⁵⁰ Frazer closes by offering no solutions but stating that everyone should be tolerant and understand one another's positions. Her article is an example of the complexity and the varied interests driving western development in the early twentieth century and the difficulties faced in arriving at any mutually satisfactory resolutions.

Apart from sending journalists into the West to research these issues, Lorimer also included works by Westerners and individuals with hands-on experience. Horace M. Albright served as assistant director of the National Park Service when it was created in 1916, and from 1919 to 1929 he served as superintendent and assistant field director of Yellowstone National Park.²⁵¹ He then served as the director of the National Park

²⁴⁹Elizabeth Frazer, "The West Speaks to the East," *Saturday Evening Post*, July 16, 1927, 38.

²⁵⁰*Ibid.*, 42.

²⁵¹Marian Albright Schenk, "National Park Service: The First 75 Years, Biographical Vignettes," "Horace Marden Albright, 1890-1987," http://www.nps.gov/history/history/online_books/sontag/albright.htm (accessed 22 June 2011).

Service from 1929-1933.²⁵² In “The Everlasting Wilderness,” Albright praises the defeat of a 1928 proposal to build more roads into Yellowstone National Park, showing the evolution of the conservation movement’s debate away from increased tourism. Sixty years earlier, conservationists heavily advocated road building and tourism in an attempt to gain economic validity for the preservation of the lands. By the 1920s, the tourists, and the accompanying industry of resorts, dude ranches, camp sites, and restaurants, had wreaked its own share of havoc on nature and the conservationists began to demand the protection of the land from the same group they had so heavily recruited. According to “The Everlasting Wilderness,” the National Park Service decided that the land should be preserved from further construction, but Albright also reminds readers that the present road-building only includes a few miles and in many places involves realignment to existing roads. Given Albright’s extensive work with the National Park Service, it is to be expected that he would approve of that organization’s actions both in this instance and in the past. “The Everlasting Wilderness” also provides a good example of the *Post*’s support of not only the conservation movement, but the role of the federal government in that movement. Albright argues that the national parks system is a distinctly American institution. He explains the various groups of people interested in the National Parks, mainly divided into a group that wants no roads and all natural trails and a group that wants vehicular access.²⁵³ Albright describes the parks as our great heritage of primeval America and states that it is fortunate that Americans have realized the importance of the preserving their wilderness before it was entirely destroyed.²⁵⁴

²⁵²Ibid.

²⁵³Horace M. Albright, “The Everlasting Wilderness,” *Saturday Evening Post*, September 29, 1928, 63.

²⁵⁴Ibid., 68.

In Lorimer's coverage of the conservation issue, his dedication to making the *Post* a forum for national discussion is clearly evident. While the editorials and the bulk of the articles make it clear that Lorimer and the *Post* supported federally managed conservation, Lorimer afforded some writers the opportunity to dissent. This would have gone a long way towards maintaining extensive readership in the West, a region with high *Post* circulation numbers. Many western residents felt they were being kept from making the most of the land they had chosen to settle and especially resented the federal government's often absentee management. Many residents felt that Congress and executive branch agencies which managed western lands made their decisions from plush Washington offices with little to no understanding of, or concern for, the realities of the region. Providing an alternative viewpoint to the mainstream conservation movement of the 1920s, Joseph M. Dixon advocates for the return of national park land to the management of the states. Dixon was born in North Carolina in 1867 and moved to Montana in 1891 to study law.²⁵⁵ Elected to the Montana legislature in 1900, the US House of Representatives in 1902 and 1904, and the U.S. Senate in 1906, Dixon went on to serve as head of Theodore Roosevelt's Bull Moose Party and as governor of Montana in 1920.²⁵⁶ In 1929 he was appointed First Assistant Secretary of the Department of the Interior.²⁵⁷ While serving in that post, he wrote "The New Conservation," in which he maintains that the land is going to waste under federal management and that the states should be allowed to control the lands within their borders.²⁵⁸ He complains that the

²⁵⁵ "Guide to the Joseph M. Dixon Papers, 1772-1944," University of Montana—Missoula Maureen and Mike Mansfield Library Archives and Special Collections, <http://nwda-db.wsulibs.wsu.edu/ark:/80444/xv95079> (accessed 22 June 2011).

²⁵⁶ Ibid.

²⁵⁷ Ibid.

²⁵⁸ Joseph M. Dixon, "The New Conservation," *Saturday Evening Post*, December 7, 1929, 238.

mismanagement of the lands by both the federal government and the railroads is intolerable and that the states could do a significantly better job. According to Dixon, the states already have agencies in place to handle these lands and the transition would be almost painless.²⁵⁹

Apart from the conservation movement, and the government's role in managing public lands, the *Post* focused much of its attention on the issues of western development and survival, mainly irrigation and reclamation projects and agriculture. In the 1920s, the federal irrigation of the arid west was still fairly new and the topic received much attention in the *Post*. In 1902, Congress passed the National Reclamation Act, also known as the Newlands Act. This act, which included the thirteen states in which the government owned public lands, set aside the money from any sale of those lands into an "arid land reclamation fund" to be used to fund federal irrigation projects. These lands would be sold in parcels of 160 acres with the price determined by the cost of water development for each parcel. The goal of this act was to utilize federal resources to reclaim the entirety of the arid west as agricultural farmland. The act, though much maligned by westerners, was devised by a western politician, Francis Newlands of Nevada, and promoted by western lobbyists, highlighting the complexity of the issue.²⁶⁰ Historian Donald Worster defines the modern American West, beginning with this act in the early twentieth century, as a hydraulic society or social order based on intensive, large-scale manipulation of water and its products in an arid setting.²⁶¹ Worster maintains that the development of irrigation in the West, and the federal government's

²⁵⁹Ibid.

²⁶⁰Donald Worster, *Rivers of Empire: Water, Aridity, and the Growth of the American West* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1985), 160.

²⁶¹Ibid., 7.

subsequent “imperialistic” control of water has been the shaping force in the region’s history.²⁶²

In 1925, Garet Garrett wrote an exposé on the federal government’s involvement in western irrigation projects, largely with the intent of examining why reclamation had failed. Garrett takes a negative view of the projects in the West, and particularly of the westerners’ tradition of relying on the government for both assistance in creating the projects and for assistance when the projects fail, stating, “Settlers found that by demanding more relief and sitting tight, they could always get what they wanted.”²⁶³ This statement is indicative of a common view held by those in the East of westerners as abusers of government generosity.

According to Garrett, the original reclamation system, by which each farm was charged an equal cost of its related reclamation project, is untenable because the productive power of land is variable as well as the value at which each parcel was purchased. The only fixed cost on all of the acres involved is the cost of the government’s irrigation projects. Garrett challenges even the initial impetus for government involvement, implying that the need for the irrigation projects was manufactured when, “The pioneer spirit that created in this country the most prosperous agriculture in the world, with no assistance at all, was tried and found wanting.”²⁶⁴ Garrett’s overall opinion seems to be that the farmers in these areas should have been left to make do on their own, irrigating and farming their land using their inherently “American” initiative and ingenuity. This opinion, a fairly common one held by those

²⁶²Ibid., 4-5.

²⁶³Garet Garrett, “The Tale of Uncle Sam’s Voyage in an Irrigation Ditch,” *Saturday Evening Post*, January 17, 1925, 8.

²⁶⁴Ibid., 9.

not living in arid, western areas, is highly misinformed. As historian Patricia Nelson Limerick shows, federal involvement in the success of western farming has been not only integral, but pivotal. Beginning with the Homestead Act, in which the federal government provided settlers with their land, federal management and aid has largely dictated the successes of western farming. In discussion of an elaborate credit scheme proposed by a group commissioned to examine the problem, Garrett calls upon the *Post's* long-present image of the true pioneer, whose only capital was in his heart and whose homestead shack now stands as a more impressive symbol than any engineering feat of the United States Reclamation Service.²⁶⁵ In spite of his ranting, Garrett acknowledges that the true pressure for reclamation and irrigation in the West was the American passion to exploit the value of land. He closes with a biting comment regarding the efficiency of the US government stating, "Every individual misfortune on a U.S. Reclamation project will be found to combine in variable portions these two constant factors, namely bureaucratic stupidity and bad personal judgement."²⁶⁶

Albert Atwood also tackled the issue of western irrigation in a series of articles. The first, "Water and the Land," lays out the situation, explaining that the Far West is being developed on the basis of artificial application of water. Unlike Garrett, he advocates that the use of the Colorado River for these purposes would greatly influence and stimulate the development of the West.²⁶⁷ Atwood maintains that the controlled use of the Colorado River is conservation and that, "The undertaking to coordinate the use of the state's available waters will be, from the civic and economic point of view, one of the

²⁶⁵Ibid., 119.

²⁶⁶Ibid., 126.

²⁶⁷Albert W. Atwood, "Water and the Land," *Saturday Evening Post*, July 3, 1926, 18.

greatest works of man ever attempted in any country.”²⁶⁸ In “Waters of Wrath,” Atwood continues his discussion of the Colorado River, stating “The Colorado River, one of the largest on the continent, discharges unused into the sea sufficient water ultimately to support in its territory a population perhaps half that in the entire country at the present time, provided the stream were fully impounded and regulated for domestic, irrigation, and power purposes.”²⁶⁹ Showing the tensions in the argument between conservationists and preservationists, Atwood maintains that never has such a “ruthless and wasted natural force been so capable of being turned into a willing, obedient, and useful servant of man.”²⁷⁰ It is interesting to note that in Atwood’s opinion, the waste of a natural resource is defined by the amount of usefulness the human population is able to obtain from it. Atwood argues that allowing such a magnificent resource to simply run its course without extracting from it its benefits to man is the worst kind of waste, and thus irrigation is a type of conservation.

Seeing waste in a different light, a 1927 editorial, “A Policy in Federal Reclamation,” lambasts the waste that has been brought about by the U.S. Reclamation Service, listing countless dollars spent, projects unfinished, and debts unpaid. The editorial states, “Neither the country nor the world has stood in need of the foodstuffs that have been so laboriously wrested from the soil by the frontier settlers under the direction of reclamation engineers.”²⁷¹

Closely tied to the topic of irrigation, western agriculture, another area of western development, received significant attention from the writers of the *Saturday Evening*

²⁶⁸Ibid., 19.

²⁶⁹Albert W. Atwood, “Waters of Wrath,” *Saturday Evening Post*, September 11, 1926, 6.

²⁷⁰Ibid.

²⁷¹Editorial, “A Policy in Federal Reclamation,” *Saturday Evening Post*, February 5, 1927, 28.

Post. World War I had so increased the demand for food that already existing farms borrowed money and greatly increased their output while new farms were started up, all on debt, with alarming rapidity. When the war ended, demand for that level of production dropped off dramatically, causing prices to fall and crops to go to waste. Farms began failing all across the country, but the problem was felt even more keenly in the West, where many farms owed debts not only to banks but to the government for the extensive irrigation projects that had allowed their land to become farmland in the first place.

In 1924, Garett Garrett wrote a series of articles on the farm problem, specifically focusing on the Northwest, which he considered the northern plain states of North Dakota, South Dakota, Montana, and Wyoming. He begins by laying out the problem very succinctly, stating that American agriculture is on the verge of economic collapse because the government incentivized farmers to increase production for patriotism (meaning World War I) and then abruptly abandoned them afterwards to the mercy of bankers.²⁷² Garrett argues that the mentality of the current American farmer is that of the gold seeker and an expression of the pioneer mentality. In short, these farmers suffer from a restless, excitable imagination, love of adventure, a fantasy of wealth by luck and discovery, and an aversion to the slow, repetitious toil of farm life.²⁷³ Garrett also maintains that American farmers are exploiting new lands faster than they are needed, resulting in a food surplus. In essence, farmers are killing profit in their rush to seize it.²⁷⁴ According to Garrett, both Congress and Wall Street attempted to bail out the farmers of the Northwest by giving them new capital, but ended up falling short. Garrett

²⁷²Garett Garrett, "That Pain in Our Northwest," *Saturday Evening Post*, April 12, 1924, 3, 47.

²⁷³Garett Garrett, "A Fifty-year Crisis in Agriculture," *Saturday Evening Post*, April 19, 1924, 4.

²⁷⁴*Ibid.*, 113.

goes on to blame the failures of Northwestern farmers on a lack of diversification, stating that those who failed did so because they were trying to get rich quick growing wheat.²⁷⁵ By the end of the series, Garrett is taking a very dim view of the American farmer, stating, “That the American farmer, taking him freely, is the most prosperous, the most assisted, the most entertained, the most exhorted in his own behalf, the best informed, the best housed, the best dressed, the most extravagant and the least bent farmer in the whole world....And yet the American farmer is very discontented.”²⁷⁶ Garrett goes on to recommend that the farmer balance his production and start growing crops America imports rather than only staples like wheat for export, and that they should increase their efficiency and stop hauling food from the West to the East when the same food can be grown in the East.²⁷⁷

These articles by Garrett were not well-received by the western farmers he so harshly judged. On April 15, 1924, R.A. Nestos, governor of North Dakota, wrote Lorimer a letter announcing that he had just read Garrett’s article “That Pain in our Northwest.” In the letter, the governor includes an editorial from the *Grand Forks Herald* responding to the article. The editorial accuses Garrett of only using extreme examples of bankruptcy and farm failure to support his article and states that his actions in doing so will give the rest of the nation a false image of the Northwest and its residents.²⁷⁸ Nestos argues that Garrett draws unjust conclusions and generalizes the situation across several states instead of acknowledging the unique situations each

²⁷⁵Garet Garrett, “Bringing up the Northwest,” *Saturday Evening Post*, October 11, 1924, 3,4,178.

²⁷⁶Garet Garrett, “Exposing the Farm Problem,” *Saturday Evening Post*, November 8, 1924, 3.

²⁷⁷*Ibid.*, 162, 169.

²⁷⁸Editorial, “Libeling a Territory,” *Grand Forks Herald*, April 14, 1924, 6.

western state faces.²⁷⁹ Nestos then includes his own opinion, stating that, "...the article of Garrett is a libel upon the builders of these commonwealths, upon a people who do not seek the mines, the factories, and the crowded centers of the great cities but have become builders of homes and of strong settlements with splendid educational and religious institutions upon the prairies of the Northwest."²⁸⁰ Lorimer passed Nestos's letter on to Garrett, who responded that he had only taken up the series of articles because the President of the United States had declared a crisis in the Northwest and because North Dakota had sent men to Congress explaining North Dakota's existence as a one-crop state and asking for money to provide livestock and food to the impoverished farmers.²⁸¹ South Dakota and Montana also responded negatively to Garrett's articles, sending in letters to the editor and copies of local newspaper responses to the series. All of these seem to have been forwarded to Garrett who replied to each civilly while maintaining his stance and defending his work.

Furthering Garrett's view that the farm problem in the West is largely due to an excessive number of farms and over-production, J.R. Jones's "The Bet I Made with Uncle Sam" is an autobiographical story of the author's attempt at homesteading in 1912 in Wyoming and subsequent failure.²⁸² After a long discussion of the hardships he endured, he admits that he sold out after two winters and has never regretted the decision, stating that the best spots of the West were taken long ago.²⁸³

²⁷⁹R.A. Nestos to George Horace Lorimer, April 15, 1924, George Horace Lorimer Papers, Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA.

²⁸⁰Ibid.

²⁸¹Garet Garrett to R.A. Nestos, April 28, 1924, George Horace Lorimer Papers, Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA.

²⁸²No biographical information could be found on J.R. Jones.

²⁸³J.R. Jones, "The Bet I Made with Uncle Sam," *Saturday Evening Post*, May 17, 1924, 198.

Another *Post* heavyweight, Albert Atwood, also tackled the agricultural problem. In 1926, Atwood wrote about the worries of agricultural over-production, stating that many advocate farming as not only a business but as a mode of living. He points out the folly in that saying that there is no point extending a mode of living unless it can be supported by the business.²⁸⁴ In accordance with Garet Garrett, Atwood laments the one-crop system, though he does not specify a region in which this system is predominant. Apart from farm failures, he worries about the development of a labor problem. These large, one-crop fields require hordes of workers doing back-breaking work, that, even in 1926, it was acknowledged the white man had no intention of doing himself.

This immigrant labor was a final component of western development that was heavily considered in the *Post*. Largely under discussion was the migrant Hispanic population. As discussed in previous chapters Lorimer, and subsequently the *Post*, was decidedly xenophobic and nativistic. These sentiments extended to any foreign people not deemed capable of rapid assimilation into the American way of life, however, when discussing the West the focus of animosity was aimed directly at Mexican migrants. Mexico's proximity and the development of Hispanic communities in American towns meant that the newly arrived Mexicans were presumably able to retain more of their culture for a longer period of time than other immigrants, making them seem especially inassimilable.²⁸⁵ By the 1920s, federal legislation severely restricted the immigration of Asians and Eastern Europeans, both groups that had typically done low-paying agricultural labor. As a result, many American farmers began expressing their preference

²⁸⁴ Albert W. Atwood, "Water and the Land," *Saturday Evening Post*, July 3, 1926, 40.

²⁸⁵ Patricia Nelson Limerick, *The Legacy of Conquest: The Unbroken Past of the American West* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2006), 245.

for Mexican workers for seasonal, low-skilled jobs, complaining that other national groups and US workers demanded higher wages and better working conditions.²⁸⁶

In the last three decades of the nineteenth century, political and social circumstances in Mexico meant that many Mexicans could no longer sustain themselves and their families, with land policies under Mexican President Porfirio Díaz stripping as many as five million families from their farms.²⁸⁷ Concurrently, the American Southwest experienced an economic and industrial boom in mining, railroads, and intensive agriculture that created a need for a large manual labor workforce.²⁸⁸ These circumstances converged to create a wave of immigrants heading north from Mexico looking for a better life. Patricia Nelson Limerick maintains that the motivations of the migratory Hispanic laborers were in keeping with the traditional image of America, and especially the American West, as a land of opportunity.²⁸⁹ The *Post*'s adamant stance against these immigrants and their search for the American Dream proves that the land of opportunity so touted by the periodical was a land and opportunity meant for whites alone.

Albert Atwood's 1926 "Water and the Land" warns that the West's system of massive one-crop farms will only exacerbate the immigration problem as it requires hordes of nomadic workers, something white workers are not willing to be. According to Atwood the backbreaking labor is, "...held to be suitable only for Orientals, Mexicans, Porto Ricans, Filipinos, and negroes."²⁹⁰ Atwood then focuses his argument on Mexican

²⁸⁶Guerin-Gonzales, *Mexican Workers and American Dreams*, 25.

²⁸⁷*Ibid.*, 27.

²⁸⁸*Ibid.*, 30.

²⁸⁹Limerick, *The Legacy of Conquest*, 244.

²⁹⁰Atwood, "Water and the Land," 40.

labor, stating that once Mexicans arrive in the US they multiply rapidly, just like other prolific labor class, due to having enough to eat. It is with Atwood's piece that we are introduced to the incredibly condescending tone that *Post* writers used when discussing Mexican laborers. According to Atwood, the Mexican worker has many excellent qualities. "He is grateful for kind treatment; he loves his family and is exceedingly good to its members. He is peace loving and fond of music. He is docile and obedient, without much initiative."²⁹¹ Atwood then qualifies his list of virtues by stating that they apply, at least, to the pauper, peon, illiterate, Indian, or racially mixed, class that comes to the US as labor.

By 1928, the *Post's* tone regarding Hispanic workers in the West had become decidedly antagonistic and Kenneth Roberts, the same *Post* writer that derided the lavishness of California, took up his pen against the impending Mexican threat. In a series of articles with titles offensive to any modern reader, Roberts highlights the issue as he sees it and demands action from Americans. "Wet and Other Mexicans" opens by stating that there is a wide variety of opinions about the Mexicans, stemming largely from the fact that Mexico is a large country with many different "breeds."²⁹² His use of the term "breed" is significant showing his disdain not only for the class of Mexican immigrants coming to America, but for the people and culture as a whole. He goes on to say there are three classes of Mexicans: the ruling class; the *cholo* or "greaser" class; and the Mexican riffraff which is comprised of stupid, dirty, shiftless criminals.²⁹³ Roberts introduces scientific racism into his argument saying that biologists and social workers usually agree that the *mestizo*, or racially mixed class of any country is regarded as

²⁹¹Ibid.

²⁹²Kenneth Roberts, "Wet and Other Mexicans," *Saturday Evening Post*, February 4, 1928, 10.

²⁹³Ibid., 11.

undesirable additions to the population of any other country. He then explains the term “Wet Mexican” as describing those that illegally enter the United States by swimming across the Rio Grande, leading him into a diatribe against the lack of sufficient border patrols along the US and Mexican border. Roberts follows a common line of racist thought for the 1920s by stating: “Anybody with a long winter evening to waste on meditation might do worse than meditate on the difference between people who haven’t bettered their lot materially in 200 years, and those who settled Pennsylvania and New York and New England, took advantage of the smallest toe holds and the most inconspicuous privileges, and universally bettered themselves and their conditions.”²⁹⁴ Roberts gives no acknowledgement to the displaced peoples that were affected by those hard-won toe holds or the exploitive nature of white settlement and expansion.

In “Mexicans or Ruin” Roberts continues his rant, lambasting the western states for preferring cheap labor to the welfare of America. According to Roberts, as long as there are tales of fabulous wages, the gullible and docile Mexican immigrant will come. He explains that these Mexicans pouring into America’s southwest and western region are the descendants of Mexican peons held in slavery. According to Roberts, this slavery destroyed their energy and self-reliance, leaving birthrights of laziness and dependence for the present generation.²⁹⁵ The accusation of laziness seems incongruous next to the admission that these workers are performing labor that the superior white man refuses to consider. “The Docile Mexican” addresses the threat that these Mexican immigrants pose to the American people. Roberts claims that most arrests for petty crimes are of Mexicans, Mexicans utilize hospital resources more than whites, they live in shacks, have

²⁹⁴Ibid., 146.

²⁹⁵Kenneth Roberts, “Mexicans or Ruin,” *Saturday Evening Post*, February 18, 1928, 15.

lower intelligence than native American stock and therefore cannot learn, are more susceptible to disease, and will likely intermarry, tainting the American race.²⁹⁶ In short, “...they’re not like our people and the never will be like our people.”²⁹⁷ While Roberts does not propose a specific policy or recommendation as a solution to the “Mexican problem,” the overall theme of all of his articles is the belief that the only solution possible is the restriction of this immigration.

After Roberts’s series of articles ran, the *Post* ran an editorial stating that many letters had poured in commending both Roberts’s and the periodical’s stance on the Mexican labor problem. The editorial furthers Roberts’s argument by stating that the letters tell of many white men out of work because the Mexicans are willing to work more cheaply and closes by stating that the Mexicans cost more in the long run because they use American healthcare resources and civic resources without contributing to them.²⁹⁸ The parallels between these discussions found in the *Post* and the debated held over Mexican immigration in the twenty-first century are striking.

The *Post*’s coverage of these contemporary, early twentieth century issues offers a glimpse into the history of the development of the American West and its place within the national picture. As recent scholars argue, the history of the West is a complex one with many layers. In the 1920s, the West was a changed place from the imagined glory days of the pioneer past, a place struggling with the same modernization of society that the rest of the country faced, while simultaneously contending with issues completely unique to the region. From oil to conservation to the interference of irrigation and intensive agriculture, and the social issues created by the same, the *Saturday Evening*

²⁹⁶Kenneth Roberts, “The Docile Mexican,” *Saturday Evening Post*, March 10, 1928, 39, 41, 165.

²⁹⁷*Ibid.*, 41.

²⁹⁸Editorial, “The Cheap Labor Issue,” *Saturday Evening Post*, May 5, 1928, 32.

Post covered the West for America, educating its readers on the issues and the solutions, even as it sought to create its own image of the area and its opportunities.

CONCLUSION

Under the leadership of George Horace Lorimer, the *Saturday Evening Post* achieved national recognition and widespread circulation. The nation looked to this periodical for a reflection of itself and for discussion of the relevant issues of the day. Without maintaining a finger on the pulse of what his subscribers considered those issues to be, Lorimer would not have succeeded in keeping his magazine at the top of the circulation lists for so long. Reviewing the *Post* from the beginning of Lorimer's tenure in 1899 through his retirement in 1936, one can obtain an over-arching sense of what mattered to white America through one of the most transitional periods of its history as a nation. Though it is clear from the histories of the magazine and the biographies of Lorimer that his own opinions heavily influenced the content of the magazine, the American public still dictated his choices through their letters to the editor and continued subscriptions. The fact that he was able to retain such high readership and so frequently promote his own views indicates that Lorimer's life and beliefs were a reflection of the widely held beliefs of the millions of white, middle class subscribers he spoke to through his magazine each week. Today, the *Post* serves as a cultural artifact, a representation of popular anti-modern sentiment during a decade that popular history has remembered as the "Roaring Twenties." As a magazine that came out weekly and reached millions of people, it is a time capsule of both the profound and banal aspects of entertainment, literature, and information accessed by a majority of Americans.

Lorimer's choice in so heavily promoting the American Far West as both an ideal place for social and economic opportunity as well as a region whose very real

contemporary issues mattered to the nation makes a strong argument for the importance of that region in American history and life in the 1920s. In a post-Industrial Revolution world, where life and business in the East looked vastly different from the days of Lorimer's youth, the American West still provided the allure of promise and success. In a decade fraught with irrational and intense fear of anything, and anyone, foreign and still reeling from the horrors of the First World War, the West also provided a reminder of the greatness and spirit of the American people. Many believed that the challenge and work of conquering the frontier were part of what kept Americans American and with those days of trial gone, many, including the *Post*, sought ways to recapture that sense of "Americanness." In spite of the glorification of its past, however, the West was growing and developing rapidly, taking its place in the American political conscious as issues like conservation, irrigation, agriculture, and immigration received attention on the national stage. The *Post* did not hesitate to discuss these western issues or to provide a forum for dissenting opinions regarding them. In doing so, the *Post* not only affected its contemporary readers' views of the region, but contributed to the development of a national, long-term public memory of the West as a place of romance and opportunity.

One of the key components to the *Post*'s treatment of the West was the idealized vision of a land of burgeoning opportunity that the periodical held out to its readers. Articles reminiscing about the days of the pioneers, cowboys, gunslingers, and mining towns offered a tacit example for those seeking to make their own way in an up and coming land. The young men of America would need the tenacity, hard work ethic, and indomitable spirit of the pioneer in order to succeed in business and life, whether in the West or not. The quiet dignity and unspoken moral code of the iconic cowboy and

gunslinging lawmen should be emulated by all, and the entrepreneurial spirit, though not the vices, of the mining camp days should never die. These *Post* articles have their own place in the history of western myth-making. Though presented as legitimate memories of individuals who lived the experiences or as historical accounts, their ultimate purpose was not to provide a forum for reminiscence or history but to remind current readers of the desirable character traits of true Americans.

Always promoting a business and entrepreneurial spirit, the *Post* also strove to represent the American West as a place where those American qualities could still be developed. Lorimer and his writers sought to present a West to their readers that was still young and fresh, though no longer dangerous and deadly. Writers compared the class-dominated society of the East with the more open society developing in the West, extolling the degree of advancement and achievement an ambitious person could achieve there that was no longer available in the more established East. Thanks to conservation, more space, and less settlement, the West's wilderness still provided a challenging and exciting environment to test the strength of both one's body and character. Many of these articles convey a sense of the status of the business and economic realities of the West as well as the realities of life there, distinct from the efforts of boosters. These pieces reflect Lorimer's commitment to always inform his readers. While he clearly advocated the settlement of the West, Lorimer sought to instruct his readers on the realities of twentieth-century life in the region and provide them with as full a picture as possible.

Part of this overall picture meant discussing major issues facing the American West in the 1920s. These included the newly booming oil industry, the ongoing controversy over conservation and resource management, federal involvement in

irrigation and agriculture, and the perceived threat of Mexican immigration to the American way of life. Though the *Post* supported an unregulated business market, it was sure to warn its readers of the highly speculative oil industry and the dangerous highs and lows of the petroleum market. Always an advocate for conservation, the *Post* applauded the federal government's role in the management of western lands and derided the local farmers and ranchers who desired to use those lands for personal profits. Likewise, the *Post* chided the farmers that sought to farm using federal irrigation, and denounced the federal management of the reclamation projects as unnecessary to begin with and a failure in the present. Showing no mercy to the farmers that had amped up production and helped America win the First World War, the *Post*, true to its individualistic views on success and failure, denounced the western farmer for expecting assistance when the post-war crop market essentially crashed. A by-product of the one crop farming created by the war, Mexican immigrant labor greatly concerned the Lorimer and his writers and the *Post* dedicated significant space to demanding that something be done to halt the influx of immigrants from Mexico.

The *Post*'s stance on these contemporary issues show an interesting juxtaposition between the periodical's advocacy of those individuals going West seeking success and opportunity and its negative view of those western residents, mainly farmers, who sought government assistance to achieve opportunities. This seeming inconsistency in the *Post*'s treatment of western residents demonstrates that the *Post* overlooked the fact that all who went west, including those initial pioneers, did so with the help of Uncle Sam. The *Post* shows a similar inconsistency in its expectations for the role of the federal government in western life, choosing to accept government involvement on issues it felt deserved

national attention, mainly conservation and immigration, while stridently demanding that the government stay out of issues the *Post* felt had no real importance, like irrigation and agricultural assistance.

The image of the American West that appears in the *Post*, as well as the image of the American East's perception of the western region, is one of nuance and complexity. A still young region, newly settled, the West could still be promoted as a land of opportunity and advancement where the seemingly threatened American spirit could thrive, flourish, and conquer the invading alien cultures and ideologies. Yet, simultaneously, the American West presented issues of national importance that required the journalistic efforts of some of the *Post*'s best writers and offered a chance for many, including Lorimer and his staff, to discover their own beliefs about the increasing significance of the Far West in American life.

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