

SMALL TOWN AMERICAS: REPRESENTING THE NATION IN THE MINIATURE

TOURIST ATTRACTION, 1953-2014

by

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Small Town Americas: Representing The Nation
In The Miniature Tourist Attraction, 1953-2014

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Nationally themed miniature tourist attractions are popular destinations in many areas of the world, however there is currently no site in the U.S. exactly analogous to such locations as Madurodam, Mini Israel, or Italia in Miniatura. What the U.S. does have, however, is a history of numerous “American”-themed attractions employing scale models and miniature landscapes that similarly purport to represent an overview of the nation. Developments in travel infrastructure and communications technology, the decentralization of national tourism objectives and strategies, the evolution of tourism and tourist attractions in the nation and changing American cultural mores can all be seen in the miniature American landscapes investigated in this project.

Significantly, while research has been conducted on the Miniaturk and Taman Mini Java parks and the ways in which they are constructed by/construct a particular view of national identity in Turkey and Indonesia respectively, no such study has looked at the meaning(s) contained in and conveyed by their American counterparts. And, while much has been written on miniaturization, tourism, and the themed environment, rarely has the interplay between these forms and phenomena been examined, especially as they engage with national identity.

The intervention I make with this project is to discuss how the nationally themed miniature tourist attraction performs in an American context and what we can learn about American culture through “close readings” of six of these potent sites: Roadside America (Shartlesville, PA), America Wonderland (Denver, PA), LEGOLANDs California and Florida, America In Miniature (Las Vegas) and Wonders of America (Phoenix). These miniature tourist attractions display evolving expectations of what constitutes an American itinerary to the domestic middle-class tourist and, by extension, evolving notions of what constitutes American cultural citizenship in the post-War era and who are recognized as full participants.

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Dedication

To my grandparents, who worked so hard to give their families the American Dream.

To Ellie, who was so patient while Mommy was writing her “book.”

And to my husband, Frank.

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INTRODUCTION: America The Miniscale

“The special pleasures of miniaturization: replicating the great things in handicraft dimensions that you can... change and rebuild in a never-ending variation fed by new ideas and information.”

— Frederic Jameson, “The Politics of Utopia”

This is the story of a creeping consumerism that has come to stand in for American cultural identity. The progression of the U.S. economy from agricultural to industrial to its post-War consumer-based incarnation is, by now, well-trodden territory. What I examine here instead is how the nature of American *cultural citizenship* has changed. This cultural citizenship I define as individuals sharing a sense of participation in American society as a collective enterprise. Through the examination of six nationally-themed miniature tourist attractions constructed (or proposed) between 1957 and 2014, reading these cultural products as primary sources, I trace the gradual shift in preferences of representative American symbols from historical or nationalist iconography to commercial images.

Considering the outsized exposure that touristic representations receive in the modern imaginary, as well as the habit of tourists seeking out their own expectations in their choice of destination(s), it is important to remember that these attractions do not exist in isolation but rather are part of a much larger cultural conversation about national identity and its expression. This leads to a kind of “crowdsourcing” of the dimensions and appearance of a reasonable facsimile of national geography that I read as an insight into how the nation contemplates itself.

The miniature American park is the epitome of the spectacle in so far as it’s understood as “an integrated and diffuse apparatus of images and ideas that produces and

regulates public discourse and opinion.”¹ To this I would add that the spectacle itself, in this case, is likewise a product of public discourse and opinion. Existing as these sites do, in commercial space, as opposed to public or private space, the validity of these depictions as reasonable and recognizable is affirmed by their continued tourist visitations.

This project came about after an off-hand comment made by a seminar-mate at the annual University College Dublin Clinton Institute for American Studies Summer School in Ireland. After I presented work on echoes of World’s Fair theming strategies in the casinos of the modern Las Vegas Strip, the student, a native of Italy, mentioned I might be interested in Italia in Miniatura, a nationally-themed miniature park in her home country. I was fascinated by her description of a themed tourist attraction featuring distinctive structures and iconography of Italy, especially when she mentioned that schoolchildren were taken there for educational field trips in Italian culture.

Her description reminded me of an attraction I’d visited years before called “Roadside America.” For miles along Route 78 in the Pennsylvania Dutch region of Central Pennsylvania signs for “The World’s Greatest Indoor Miniature Village” beckon travellers to exit at the otherwise unremarkable town of Shartlesville and “Be Prepared To See More Than You Expect.” Once inside, a tabletop landscape stretches the length and width of an Olympic swimming pool, presenting intricately hand-carved scenes of American life from the Revolutionary War era to the “present.” The “present,” in this case, being 1963, the year Roadside America’s creator Laurence T. Gieringer died, giving the whole attraction a hermetically sealed quality. Every twenty minutes, the “Night

¹ Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000), 321.

Pageant” begins, in which the room lights are lowered in a simulated sunset, lights turn on in the interior of the model, and Kate Smith’s “God Bless America” trumpets from the sound system as slides of Jesus are projected on the back wall next to a fluttering American flag. This singular vision of America at a very particular time in its history bore only a passing resemblance to the modern day nation I knew.

Initially, I set out to find an American iteration of the Italia in Miniatura model, to see what elements would be employed to constitute a uniquely “American” encounter. As a graduate student in American Studies, I was curious to see what would go into such a place. What icons, structures or places could stand for such a vast, diverse nation? This enterprise struck me as a modern-day twist on the “Myth and Symbol” origins of my field, literally looking for a representation of “America” that would encompass a national identity as wildly multicultural and hotly contested as ours. What is this “America” we speak of, anyway? What does it look like? Where is it? Who lives there? Looking to the nationally themed miniature tourist attraction for answers presented an excellent place to start.

I quickly learned that Italy was not alone in having a nationally themed miniature park. Numerous other countries had official and quasi-official miniature nationalist parks – so numerous, in fact, that the International Association of Miniature Parks formed as a trade organization in 2001. Significantly, while research has been conducted on the Miniaturk and Miniland Java miniature parks² and the ways in which they are

² See: Osmanoglu, Esin. *An Architectural Study on Miniature Parks and Miniature Models: Miniaturk*. diss (2005), Tureli, Ipek. “Modelling Citizenship in Turkey’s Miniature Park,” *Traditional Dwellings and Settlements Review (TDSR)*, 17(2), 2006, 55-69, Pemberton, John. “Recollections from ‘Beautiful Indonesia’ (Somewhere Beyond the Postmodern),” *Public Culture*, 6, 1994, 241-262.

constructed by/construct a particular view of national identity in Turkey and Indonesia respectively, no such study has looked at the meaning(s) contained in and conveyed by their American counterparts. And while much has been written on miniaturization,³ tourism,⁴ and the themed environment,⁵ rarely has the interplay between these forms and phenomena been examined, especially as they engage with national identity.

The intervention I make with this project is to discuss how the nationally themed miniature tourist attraction performs in an American context and what we can learn about American culture through “close readings” of six of these sites: Roadside America (Shartlesville, PA), America Wonderland (Denver, PA), LEGOLANDs California and Florida, America In Miniature (Las Vegas) and Wonders of America (Phoenix). These miniature tourist attractions display evolving expectations of what constitutes an American itinerary to the domestic middle-class tourist and, by extension, evolving notions of what constitutes American cultural citizenship and who are recognized as full participants.

Examining sixty years of America represented in miniature reveals numerous trends in the form and content of these cultural artifacts. Ironically, given Susan Stewart’s positing of the miniature as being “against speech, particularly as speech

³ See especially: Susan Stewart, *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984) and John Mack, *The Art of Small Things* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2007).

⁴ See: Dean MacCannell, *The Tourist: A New Theory of the Leisure Class* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976); John Urry, *The Tourist Gaze, 2nd Edition* (London: SAGE Publications Ltd., 2002); Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, *Destination Culture: Tourism, Museums and Heritage* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998); Sharon Bohn Gmelch, ed. *Tourists and Tourism* (Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press, 2004); Nick Stanley, *Being Ourselves for You: The Global Display of Cultures* (London: Middlesex University Press, 1998).

⁵ See especially: Scott Lukas, *The Themed Space: Locating Culture, Nation, Self* (Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books), 2007; and Mark Gottdiener, *The Theming of America: Dreams, Media Fantasies and Themed Environments* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2001).

reveals an inner dialectical, or dialogic, nature,”⁶ the emergent trends are distinctly dialogic in nature, highlighting categories of tensions within American society. The four major trends I’ll explore here are: travel without movement, there without here vs. here without there – i.e. the tension between the national and the local, a present without a past, and leisure without labor.⁷ These trends, taken together, trace a path from a national cultural identity represented by historical and literal imagery to one of mass, corporate, consumer iconography.

The sites investigated in this project occur at the intersection of miniaturization, tourism, and the themed environment, phenomena that, together, make them particularly compelling expressions of an otherwise contested national identity at a given moment. Effective nationalistic iconography allows individual participation with an abstract and impersonal unifying entity, and is capable of symbolically uniting otherwise disparate groups.⁸ Miniaturization, like the tourist attraction itself, concentrates imagery and collapses space and time,⁹ condensing a nation’s worth of landmarks and icons into a single location. Tourism, especially cultural tourism, has the ability to consolidate cultural representations into similarly bite-sized portions in the form of tourist attractions.¹⁰ Theming works to differentiate a space through a coherent, sustained motif, reinforced through both landscape and design.¹¹ Read as primary sources of American

⁶ Stewart (1984), 67.

⁷ This last element manifests in a curious kind of socioeconomic and racial flattening in which the miniature Americans of the model landscapes become evermore racially diverse though economically homogenous.

⁸ See Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, eds. *The Invention of Tradition* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009); and especially Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (New York: Verso, 2006) whom I’ll discuss a bit later in this introduction.

⁹ While I’ll return to this idea periodically later on, for an excellent discussion of the spatial and temporal collapse, see: Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (1998).

¹⁰ See: Stanley (1998).

¹¹ See: Lukas, *Theme Park* (London: Reaktion Books, 2007), Gottdiener (2001), and Miodrag

cultural production, these places offer a narrative of consumerism in the post-War era not as merely the foundation of the American economy, but rather the hallmark of American cultural identity and participation.

At first, I was somewhat dismayed not to find a one-to-one comparative model for study. There was no one single representative American site on par with Mini Israel or The Netherlands' Madurodam. This discovery, however, was something of a revelation that ultimately helped shape the course of the project. There was no one, static, universally acknowledged representative attraction because there was no one, static, universally acknowledged set (or sets) of American iconography on which to base it. There are, I think, a few reasons for this, some more obvious than others.

While the vast geographic area covered by the United States and its pluralistic society are certainly contributing factors to the lack of a commonly shared American cultural iconography in its present moment, more relevant is the largely dominant position the country has occupied since the post-War era. Indeed, even a cursory survey of nationalistic symbols shows that they tend to arise and proliferate during periods of crisis, when a sort of cultural consolidation takes place, wagons circling around unifying images separating "us" from "them." The sheer geopolitical, economy and cultural muscle the United States has enjoyed following World War II has meant that this kind of semiotic soul-searching has been rare, erupting infrequently and with very different precipitating factors.

This is akin to the phenomenon of World's Fair host countries not producing their own nationally representative pavilions. The power of the metropolitan hosts is

Mitrasinovic, *Total Landscape, Theme Parks, Public Space*. (Burlington, Vermont: Ashgate, 2006).

evidenced by their lack of representation, since they are all around. The ubiquity of American cultural exports (film, blue jeans, fast food, Rock ‘n’ Roll)¹² in the post-World War II global sphere has meant a lack of introspection in the domestic sphere as to what composes a uniquely “American” culture. Domestically this has created a vacuum into which superficial debates about abortion and gun ownership act as proxies for social divisions within the nation while ultimately not challenging its underlying structure.

Additionally, unlike most other countries, the United States has no tourism strategy coordinated at the national level. While individual states market themselves as tourist destinations and promote their virtues to potential visitors foreign and domestic, tourism in general has not been much of a priority for the U.S. government in the post-War era, with a few notable exceptions.¹³ Though many legislators in the House and Senate, responding to constituents’ desire for increased leisure revenue in their states, sought the creation of a federal entity to help promote U.S. tourism to potential visitors from overseas, others objected to the notion as a government subsidy for private business advertising. As a result, “in the late 1950s [the U.S.] was one of the few industrial nations in the world without a national tourism office.”¹⁴

The “quasi-official” Discover America, Inc. agency was organized with the assistance of Vice President Hubert Humphrey in 1965, working until 1968 “to develop

¹² Uta Poiger eloquently describes this cultural penetration in her *Jazz, Rock and Rebels: Cold War Politics and American Culture In A Divided Germany*, (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2000).

¹³ According to Teemu Moilanen and Seepo Rainisto in 2009’s *How to Brand Nations, Cities and Destinations: A Planning Book for Place Branding* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan), “Traditionally the Southern US states and locations have been most aggressive in marketing and are also well-represented abroad” (110), which is interesting considering the dearth of Southern states representations in the itineraries of the miniature themed attractions discussed herein.

¹⁴ Christopher Endy, *Cold War Holidays* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 190.

and promote the possibilities of domestic travel,” as a means to reinforce national values and solidarity.¹⁵ Oddly, despite the successful cooperation of state and national interests in infrastructure projects, ambivalence toward tourism policy in the U.S. resulted in underfunded, poorly coordinated government entities and confusing reversals. Aside from that short-lived foray into domestic tourism management, there would not be a single, official U.S. government body for tourism oversight until the passage of the U.S. National Tourism Policy Act, signed into law by President Reagan in 1981.¹⁶

The National Tourism Policy Act established the United States Travel and Tourism Administration (USTTA), charged primarily with the international promotion of U.S. tourism.¹⁷ This emphasis on international tourism, as opposed to domestic tourism, recurs frequently in federal tourism legislation. The newly created body, however, was sorely underfunded for the scope of its mandate, a nod to the objections of the Carter administration which had vehemently vetoed the bill on its first pass through Congress, reasoning that it unnecessarily expanded the role of government in private enterprise.¹⁸ Reagan himself professed a belief in smaller government, resulting in chronic underfunding of the new office.

The USTTA suffered another blow in 1996 when conservative Republicans, again championing a limited government, reorganized the entity into the Office for Travel and Tourism Industries, slashed its staff from 100 to 13 and radically reduced its budget.¹⁹ The new office maintained statistical data on tourism to, from, and in the United States,

¹⁵ Marguerite Shaffer, *See America First: Tourism and National Identity, 1880-1940* (Washington and London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2001), 312.

¹⁶ David Airey, “Tourism Administration in the USA,” *Tourism Management* 5(4), 273.

¹⁷ *Ibid*, 272.

¹⁸ *Ibid*, 274.

¹⁹ Ron Erdmann, OTTI, Telephone Interview With The Author, October 11, 2010.

but served more as an information clearinghouse than a promotional body. Most recently, the Travel Promotion Act of 2009, signed into law by President Obama in March of 2010, expands the authority of the OTTI to conduct further research but provides no additional funding.²⁰

There have been, of course, innumerable national symbols deployed as representations of the American nation or its characteristics since its inception. Internal cultural fashions have caused icons to fall in and out of vogue throughout its history. The personification of “Columbia,” for instance, the feminized representation of the United States on par with the United Kingdom’s Britannia or France’s Marianne, with her classical garb establishing a sartorial lineage between the new nation and great republics of ancient Western Civilization, was much more popular and recognizable in the print culture of the late 1800’s through the pre-war 1900’s. Modern Americans might puzzle at such a symbol, recognizing her only as the Columbia Pictures logo (if that) and not knowing she was once meant to represent the nation (nor would many modern Americans recognize “Columbia” as referring to their own country).

In the present moment, official federal or governmental symbols are both loaded and contested, associated with either conservative interests (i.e. politicians’ ever-proliferating flag lapel pins) or even farther right-wing organizations (e.g. the Tea Party’s affection for the Liberty Bell). This renders those symbols unappealing for more liberal Americans who then associate classic American nationalist imagery – eagles, flags, etc. – with reactionary factions within society and therefore not representative of their own interests or experience. National representations in tourist sites, however, seem to bypass

²⁰ Ibid.

conservative associations via the way such attractions are coded as ludic, family-centered or kitschy entertainment.

Nonetheless, I admit to being surprised at the rather vehement reactions my research into the sites presented here has provoked from some academic circles. One conference attendee opined that the places I examine “make [him] want to vomit.” A senior scholar pleaded with me *sotto voce* to make clear in my work that not all Americans go to these places and that many choose to spend their leisure time in more culturally enriching pursuits.²¹ Reactions from colleagues have also proved curious at times, with one seminar-mate, after hearing a description of Roadside America’s “Night Pageant,” murmuring, “Oh, that’s awful!” to the nodding approval of the class.

This discomfort regarding these attractions I attribute to a kind of “cultural intimacy,” defined by Michael Herzfeld in his eponymous book as “the recognition of those aspects of a cultural identity that are considered a source of eternal embarrassment but that nevertheless provide insiders with their assurance of a common sociality.”²² These attractions are intended for mass audiences, require no special aesthetic training to appreciate and are open to all who can afford the entrance fee. They are idiosyncratic and largely celebratory. This kind of cultural product has historically been viewed with no small amount of contempt or derision among some who may consider their tastes more refined. It is important to note, however, that such reactions against these locations, either as areas or inquiry or of recreation, reinforces their position as cultural products within the culture itself *as well as* the argument that they do not represent all Americans.

²¹ In deference to that scholar, I will state here for the record that Americans also go to museums.

²² Michael Herzfeld, *Cultural Intimacy: Social Poetics in the Nation-State* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 3.

The pastiche of imagery and rapid remixing of symbolism characterizing the Internet Age has also rendered nationalist imagery the raw material of satire and commentary, with American icons like the Statue of Liberty evoked in work critical of U.S. military conduct at the Abu Ghraib prison (among other foreign policy disasters). It is difficult, in a world of Google Image Search, to find unambiguously stirring or uplifting national symbols that have not been reworked into some form of mimetic protest, thus further complicating the notion of assembling resonant and, at least, not-immediately controversial images into a single environment. As we will see in the miniature Americas of this study, in today's America, an attraction self-consciously identifying as having an "American" theme only resonates if it's framed as kitsch like Roadside America (because "America" is a hokey, old-fashioned idea) or nestled within a corporate, commercial enterprise a la LEGOLAND where the comforting environment of mass culture and consumption neutralizes the uncomfortably nationalist bits.

These attractions, though created in different times and places under wildly different circumstances, share commonalities that make them ideal locations through which to compare some of the notions and images of Americanness in circulation in the popular imagination in the late 20th and early 21st centuries. First, they all self-identify as "American" sites and explicitly use their representations of "Americanness" as a selling point to entice tourists to visit.²³ This theming strategy would seem to indicate a

²³ This is especially interesting as it's somewhat of a rarity for "Americanness" to be used so explicitly in theming in the United States. This may be due in part to the contested notion of Americanness in American society, which makes the sites explored herein all the more remarkable for their willingness to stake a claim to reasonably representing the American landscape in their models. There is also, however, a cautionary tale in the use of American theming in tourist attractions in the case of Freedomland, a short-lived "American" themed amusement park that operated in the Bronx from 1960-1964, detailed in Gary Kyriazi's *The Great American Amusement Parks: A Pictorial History* (Secaucus, NJ: Castle Books, 1978, pp.

belief, at least on the part of the designers of these attractions, that “America” is a theme/concept attractive to domestic tourists and, significantly, that the quality of “Americanness” is elusive enough in the everyday lived experience of Americans that they would seek it out in a specially designated area (and pay for the privilege). Here, Americanness is on par with other theming motifs like the “Classical Civilization” or “Tropical Paradise.”²⁴

Secondly, each site examined here spotlights elements of the built environment and landscape in a way unique to the miniature. The miniature landscape provides a “god’s eye” view of the nation in a manner no other form can convey. Significantly, it’s material. That is, it exists in space. This is important for two reasons. One, while it is malleable to an extent – i.e. pieces can be designed/redesigned/swapped out/etc. – it is much less ephemeral than other media of national representation, particularly in the digital age. Thus, the miniature village or model nation is a conservative (small “c”) form that changes only slowly. Odds are, the miniature United States one sees on a day’s visit will be the same one would see on the next day’s visit. This conservative nature means additions and alterations are made only after considerable consideration has been given to the change.²⁵ The result is a more stable view of the American landscape than more immediately changeable forms would provide.

179-183). The inability of the park’s designers to come up with a coherent and appealing vision of America doomed the project, ambitiously advertised as the “Disneyland of the East,” to a legacy as an ill-fated foray in the history of American amusement parks and worse, as a literal footnote in a dissertation on American-themed tourist attractions.

²⁴ See: Gottdiener (2001). Indeed, later miniature Americas seem to combine the “American” theme with that of the “Urban Motif” Gottdiener identifies.

²⁵ Given the emphasis placed on sheer number of hours necessary to construct each miniature frequently touted by these sites as an expression of the skill of the model maker, alterations to the landscape require a great deal of planning, effort and consideration given to how the change will fit within the context of the larger scene.

The second reason its existence in space is important is the way the miniature landscape/model is encountered by its audience. The visitor experiences the miniature in three dimensions and engages with its representation of the nation with all five senses. This first-hand encounter goes beyond “seeing is believing” and imbues the miniature representation with the veracity of the physical.²⁶

Unlike attractions offering full-scale reproductions of interiors and exteriors,²⁷ the miniature permits a great deal more contextualization from the vantage point of the visitor. This contextual element is key for this project and the reason that miniature American tourist attractions focusing primarily on interiors or one particular time period have been eschewed in favor of those that show mostly exterior and landscape representations and contemporary (or co-contemporaneous) eras.²⁸ Here, the temporal disruption of an historic scene can be situated on the same plane as a modern scene, giving an effect of a particular American experience of time (and, to a large degree, timelessness).²⁹

Geography can likewise be manipulated to rearrange the literal landscape of the nation and bring far-flung metropolitan areas or natural wonders together. Given the vast geographical area of the United States, this spatial collapse is considered by designers

²⁶ See: Roy Rosenzweig and David Thelen, *The Presence of the Past: Popular Uses of History in American Life*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998) and Val Larson, “What the Symbol Can’t, the Icon Can,” in *Go Figure! New Directions in Advertising Rhetoric*, Edward F. McQuarrie and Barbara J. Phillips, eds. (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2008).

²⁷ Colonial Williamsburg, Skansen, etc.

²⁸ Sites that didn’t make the cut include the American interiors that are part of the Thorne Miniature Rooms collection at the Chicago Museum, the Pettus Randall Miniature Museum of American History at the American Village (Montevallo, AL), the travelling African-American Miniature Museum (primarily California), and the Mott’s Miniatures collection, formerly exhibited at the Knott’s Berry Farm amusement park (Buena Park, CA).

²⁹ This jibes with Herzfeld’s concept of the technology whereby the nation-state is perpetuated by means of a “construction of timelessness.” Herzfeld (2005), 21-22.

and visitors alike as a value-added element, enabling attraction-goers to “see” more of the country by going to the miniature park than they would be able to if they literally, physically traveled to each destination portrayed. This idea that an ersatz version of a nation would be preferable to the “real thing” is a notion that recurs frequently in literature regarding tourist attractions and themed environments.³⁰

Combined with the effect of travel-as-pilgrimage, whereby the tourist sites act as civic stations-of-the-cross,³¹ offering an avenue of physical participation in the culture of the nation (which in turn reinforces the sites as culturally significant), the American-themed miniature tourist attraction becomes a particularly rich location from which to glean the ways “Americanness” is understood at a particular place and time in American culture. While the sites explored in this project are examined in terms of the ways in which they illustrate the cultural history of tourism in America from the mid-20th through the early 21st century, my intuition is that they also give insight into the ways in which Americans see themselves and how that perception changes over time.

The sites explored herein are cultural artifacts in which *touristic* notions of Americanness are rendered in three-dimensional form. As the metaphorical landscape of American tourism changes, the literal landscapes of these miniature Americas change as well, reflected both in the forms of the models themselves and in the strategies employed to bring tourists to them. Combined, these sites present a physical, illustrated “tour”

³⁰ See: Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (1998), Lukas (2007), Gottdiener (2001), and of course Jean Baudrillard who calls the idea that there is a “real thing” into question, wryly noting that “Disneyland is presented as imaginary in order to make us believe that the rest is real.” (*Simulations*, p. 25, USA: Semitext(e) and Jean Baudrillard, 1983).

³¹ See MacCannell (1976), Urry (2002), and Marita Sturkin, *Tourists of History: Memory, Kitsch, and Consumerism from Oklahoma City to Ground Zero* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2007).

through the ways in which the tourist's experience of the United States evolved, concomitant with developments in tourism as a practice and an industry, and technological advancements in travel, tourist attractions, communication and the circulation of images. The emergence of a corporate based American culture is, for lack of any other form, the predominant expression of American cultural identity and has been since the mid 20th century. The mechanisms of tourism and mass media work together to circulate imagery and expectations for places as these places purport to represent the American physical and cultural landscape(s).

Some things, necessarily, fall outside the scope of this investigation. This study looks almost exclusively at domestic tourism – that is, travel to the locations in question by Americans already living in the United States. What is at issue here is how America is represented to *Americans*. While it would certainly be most interesting to hear how these sites “translate” to visitors from abroad, that line of inquiry is outside the scope of this project. How “America” is presented – the particular combination of scenes and icons and their orientation within the landscape – to Americans, with the intention of being received as a reasonable representation, is the subject of my investigation.³²

The sites investigated herein were conceived and designed explicitly with a domestic, and in most cases local, audience in mind. Both Roadside America and America Wonderland sought to take advantage of the local and regional travelers on the newly constructed highways off which they located their attractions. The lack of infrastructure able to support much in the way of long-distance travel (airports, etc.)

³² Not to ignore the “transnational” turn with which Stateside American Studies is currently enamored but, again, to try and fit all projects into a transnational/race/ class/gender/etc. paradigm risks reinforcing a blind spot that would necessarily overlook inquiries into domestic American culture at the macro level.

meant visitors would be drawn almost exclusively from the surrounding area and that more far-flung tourists would still hail from locales accessible by the nascent highway system and primarily those from the North East and Mid Atlantic.

The plans for LEGOLANDs California and Florida clearly state they intend for the bulk of tickets to be purchased by area families, hence the offering of ticket packages and season passes meant to cater to and encourage frequent, repeat visits. While both locations were designed to benefit as well from out-of-town tourists visiting any number of the large concentration of attractions in the vicinity, profit projections always included the lion's share being generated by the local population. This strategy is similarly employed in the market analysis undertaken for the America in Miniature and Wonders of America sites, with the Wonders of America version deliberately relocating to a region whose local population was deemed "underserved" by themed attractions and therefore an ideal area in which to build.

This is not, however, to diminish the importance of international perception on the notion of "America" as it is conceived and represented at home. With cultural pluralism a hallmark of the modern moment, it is telling that the most recently developed and proposed miniature Americas originate in foreign sources. In the case of LEGOLAND California, the park was designed by the Danish LEGO company while its successor, LEGOLAND Florida, is a creation of the multinational theme park concern that acquired the LEGO park properties. America in Miniature, in its initial incarnation, was the brainchild of a Dutch foreign national, as is the Mini America attraction currently under development in Georgia. This raises the question whether a foreign eye might be a necessary condition of imagining a cohesive American representation, one whose internal

fractures are less evident or one for which a non-native would not feel the same blushing “cultural intimacy” to propose.

Additionally, though I do discuss race and class to some extent in each chapter, gender is almost entirely absent from this project, as is age. There are a few reasons for this. Primarily, it is difficult, bordering on impossible to obtain demographically categorized attendance records from the attractions in question.³³ Where possible, visitor feedback is referenced in the forms of letters written either to the attraction, to a local periodical or to a travel-related website. Nonetheless, visitor reception is not the main focus of this project and, as such, does not figure prominently in the text.

Nor, again, is interrogating these sites strictly through the race/class/gender trifecta. Here, I am more concerned with the images and experiences these attractions contain and their relation to “America” as it features in the domestic tourist imaginary. That these sites occur in touristic space, thus excluding segments of the American populace without the disposable income and leisure time to travel to them, is a given.³⁴

Indeed, the idea of tourism and leisure time is so ingrained as a hallmark of middle-class identity in post-War U.S. culture that a recession-era neologism was necessary to describe a vacation in which one does not travel: the “stay-cation.” However, the nature of circulation of touristic imagery and the outsized proportion it occupies in the national imaginary nevertheless will affect even those populations for whom these sites do not present a recognizable (or reasonable) representation of lived experience. This imagery and its circulation introduces consumer-based tropes into the

³³ Internal corporate documents tracking attendance tend to look at ticket sales rather than to whom the tickets are sold. The best that can be hoped for here is a breakdown of adult tickets vs. child tickets (where applicable), but that’s not much help for this project.

³⁴ See Gmelch, (2004), 5.

domestic American imaginary that influence and effect even those segments of society for whom such cultural consumption is out of reach.

What is at stake in an already fragmented and fractious country without an otherwise unifying culture around which to cohere is that in this (arguably) post-national moment, we may be losing our ability to conceive of the nation as a collective project and with that losing our last bulwark against the exploitative forces of global capitalism. If marketing, the very handmaiden of corporatism, has trained us to think of ourselves as individuals without allegiance to anything greater than a brand (or a “lifestyle”), then we correspondingly narrativize our identities through acts of consumption instead of acts of civic participation. If international corporate brand logos supplant national icons, the fragile collective identity of a diverse United States is further weakened. When what one buys and can buy becomes the sum total marker of participation in one’s society, the exigencies of income inequality become even more dire. Legal citizenship means little in a country in which “voting with your dollars” becomes the ultimate expression of cultural enfranchisement.

Theoretical Framework

This project has provided a thoroughly enjoyable opportunity to stand on the shoulders of giants whose scholarship informs the way I approach and interpret these places. Melani McAlister’s work on the interpenetration of representations of “The Middle East” in American popular culture and American foreign policy,³⁵ while not immediately evident as an antecedent to my own project, was immensely helpful in thinking through unexpected effects of popular culture representations of identity in the

³⁵ Melani McAlister, *Epic Encounters: Culture, Media & U.S. Interests in the Middle East since 1945*, 2nd ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005).

society in which they occur. Her use of movies, television programs and museum exhibits as primary sources inspired me to think outside the box when it came to theorizing about elements in popular culture, in this case the miniature tourist attraction, that might similarly infuse the conversation with new and novel information.

Additionally, while McAlister clearly sees pop culture formulations as influencing American attitudes and opinions, she does not make the claim that all Americans partook of these elements nor that all Americans came to the same conclusions because of them. Instead, she treats these movies, exhibits, etc. as being the sources of many (though not all) popular formulations of Middle Eastern identity circulating in the collective American imaginary. Likewise, it is not my intention to suggest that all Americans seek out these places as their sole encounter with representations of their nation as a cultural entity. Rather, these places are artifacts of American culture (even when imagined by foreign nationals) and loci where Americans engage with notions of their nation and its forms.

While I do not claim that these sites depict all America for all Americans at all times, it is critical to note the ways in which locations become inseparable from their representations as tourist destinations. As with the Eiffel Tower or St. Basil's cathedral, tourism distills whole countries into, in many cases, a single representative icon (and almost always one from a popular tourist destination within the country). In a self-referential feedback loop, models of landmarks and vistas already circulating in the popular imagination are both employed and reaffirmed as reasonable representations of the areas portrayed. Thus, "New York City" comes to equal the sum of the Statue of Liberty + Empire State Building + Brooklyn Bridge. This has ramifications both in the

model world and its life-sized counterpart, as the veracity of the model depiction is confirmed by the inclusion of the appropriate elements while the tourist to “real” Gotham must visit (or behold) these elements on their trip to have successfully “done” New York City.

Tourism theorist John Urry describes this phenomenon as a two-part process. First, anticipation for the destination is instilled and stoked through mediatization of the spectacle (in this case, the miniature attraction) in “a variety of non-tourist practices, such as film, TV, literature, magazines, records and videos, which construct and reinforce [the touristic] gaze.”³⁶ This gaze itself is “constructed through signs, and tourism involves the collection of signs.”³⁷ In the case of the miniature attractions examined herein, nationalist icons like the Statue of Liberty and Mount Rushmore are combined with natural wonders and cityscapes (that function as signs of themselves) to create a pan-national impression of an American experience.

Tim Edensor discusses how such signs, in the form of “scenes and artefacts [sic] are repeatedly represented and circulated throughout the nation and beyond.”³⁸ The repetition of familiar imagery creates a self-reifying catalog of cohesion for participants in and outside of the culture represented. This echoes Benedict Anderson’s formulation of the profane state as one indicated by “infinite reproducibility made technically possible by print and photography [and] politico-culturally by the disbelief of the rulers themselves in the real sacredness of local sites”³⁹ with the “infinite quotidian

³⁶ Urry (2002), 3.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Tim Edensor, *Tourists at the Taj*. (New York: Routledge, 1998), 36.

³⁹ Anderson (2006), 182.

reproducibility of its regalia [revealing] the real power of the state.”⁴⁰ Conversely, this mass reproduction of national symbols also reveals the power of the structures of circulation, be they in the form of souvenirs, advertising material featuring images of particular landmarks and symbols, or in the design and development of tourist attractions employing miniaturization to “collect” these signs in a representative narrative.

While Anderson examined the circulation of these images in terms of imperial and post-colonial governing powers, it is crucial to note the critical importance of the organization of the nation-state in the American context. Having little to no traditionally bonding elements of society in common – language, religion, ethnicity, etc. – the nation-state is perhaps the only option, aside from pure commodity consumption, for organizing the American populace to act in a collective manner. The danger in corporate imagery supplanting national imagery in the hearts and minds of Americans is the destabilization of this collective will and the undermining of allegiances outside of one’s own socioeconomic stratum. The corporation values individuals as consumers while the nation demands individual appetites tempered for sake of the common good.

Arjun Appadurai’s work was especially helpful in thinking through the cultural negotiation of the national in a post-national world, particularly in his formulations of the various “-scapes” in which these negotiations occur.⁴¹ Where Appadurai figures “diasporic public spheres” as “the crucibles of a postnational political order,”⁴² I likewise posit commercial spheres functioning as the crucibles of a postnational *cultural* order.

⁴⁰ Ibid, 183.

⁴¹ Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity At Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalism*, (University of Minnesota Press, 1996). I’ve added a few homage “-scapes” of my own throughout this text – “touristscape,” “America-scape,” etc.

⁴² Ibid, 22.

Like Anderson, he notes the necessity of spectacle to grounding the nation to a “locality,” which he defines as “a site of nationally appropriated nostalgias, celebrations, and commemorations or a necessary condition of the production of nationals.”⁴³ To this I would add that, as we shall see in the following chapters, in the symbolic economy, “location,” unshackled from its spatial meaning connotes a piece of iconographic real estate whereby the nation’s “brand” is the referent represented by its “logo.” As long as the logo and, by extension, the brand, is in circulation, then the nation is understood to exist. Its spatial locality is secondary to its market share of the global imaginary.

Significantly, the sites investigated in this study occur in touristic space, itself a locus of negotiation both for navigating the boundaries of nationhood and for asserting one’s own cultural citizenship within them. The abundance and prosperity of the post-WWII American landscape created a fertile environment for domestic tourism⁴⁴ to act an arena in which pilgrimage and mobility marked their practitioners as fully *culturally* American. Improvements to highway infrastructure and travel technologies, along with cultural shifts, have drawn and redrawn the parameters of the American itinerary. Ideals of freedom and a democratic society have played out in tourist preferences and practices with the concept of leisure travel reinforcing post-industrial Western notions of a labor/leisure bifurcation (and, indirectly, the capitalistic priorities that produce it).

Nelson H.H. Graburn expresses the idea of tourism-as-ritual as a “ritual of reversal” occurring outside of everyday life, where the tourist is able to obtain an experience they do not get in their day-to-day. Similar to the concept of the artificial

⁴³ Ibid, 190.

⁴⁴ Not to disparage or dismiss the contributions foreign tourists make in defining the parameters of the American itinerary from without, however a proper discussion of the participation of foreign visitors at the sites in question is beyond the parameters of this survey.

reinforcing the authentic, or the acted behavior reinforcing the real, the practice of tourism is composed of “ritualized breaks in routine [that] define and relieve the ordinary.”⁴⁵ In other words, tourism is the state of exception that reinforces the quotidian.

In this conception, tour books and travel itineraries act as “scripts” which guide the restored behavior of the tourist performing the tourism ritual. Actions performed in every day life – eating, sleeping, taking a photograph – when performed during the tourism ritual are restored behavior: one only acts like a tourist when in a state of tourism. Adrian Franklin concurs that, like a shamanistic ritual, tourism practices offer “rituals of transformation” in the manner of pilgrimage and act as “the quintessential expression and performance of modern life.”⁴⁶

The collective construction of nationhood around sites through tourism, a practice typically categorized as a recreational or leisure enterprise, is all the more significant for its close relationship with performance. Performance Studies scholar Marvin Carlson sees such “actualization by representation” as key in developing a sense of “communitas,” or collective consciousness.⁴⁷ Tourism theorist Dean MacCannell concurs, further asserting that “the actual act of communion between tourist and attraction is less important than the image or the idea of society that the collective act generates.”⁴⁸ Franklin again invokes the concept of “communitas” for its ability to “describe a unique social bond between strangers who happen to have in common the

⁴⁵ Nelson H.H. Graburn, “Secular Ritual: A General Theory of Tourism,” in *Tourists and Tourism*, ed. Sharon Bohn Gmelch (Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press, 2004), 24.

⁴⁶ Adrian Franklin, *Tourism: An Introduction* (London: SAGE, 2003), 11, 38.

⁴⁷ Marvin Carlson, *Performance: A Critical Introduction*, (New York: Routledge, 1996), 27.

⁴⁸ MacCannell (1999), 137.

fact that they are in some way traveling...together.”⁴⁹ While tourism is sometimes denigrated as a purely ludic or superficial act, its intersections with ritual and play make it a powerful form of social cohesion, whereby a community is reinforced and one’s individual place within it reaffirmed.

The performance enacted by a visitor to Roadside America differed from the one on offer at America Wonderland. The former was an active, participatory affair and the latter was more passive, though still involved elements of pilgrimage and motion, i.e. an embodied experience. Likewise, visitors to the Miniland USA sections of LEGOLANDs California and Florida will find their overall experiences differ in environmental ways, with the layouts of the parks and the imagery contained therein varying, but remain quite the same in the tightly controlled “total landscape” manner of the modern American theme park. Visitors to the proposed America in Miniature and Wonders of America attractions would have encountered very different experiences in their own performance of virtual pilgrimage, with the former predicated on an aquatic river ride tour of the miniature nation, with the latter based on a self-propelled total landscape model.⁵⁰

Tourist sites concentrate and narrativize national iconography into coherent, embodied experiences. MacCannell formulates the relationships between markers, sights and tourists to the underlying structure of touristic imagery using the language of set theory to illustrate this phenomenon. To paraphrase his most famous work, scale model

⁴⁹ Franklin (2003), 48.

⁵⁰ One reader felt the innumerable internal motivations of individual tourists negated the idea of “Tourism Studies” as a meaningful field from which to draw effective tools of analysis for this study. While I do agree that the inner monologues of these performances are largely unknowable unless shared (hence some of my hesitation to make too much of audience response), nonetheless, the existence and continued patronage of these sites demonstrates the attractiveness of these miniature representations of the “at-large” culture.

landmarks in the miniature American attractions discussed herein can be understood as “elements in a set called ‘[America]’ where each of these items is a symbolic marker.”⁵¹ This complements Performance Studies scholar Dwight Conquergood’s description of “‘location’ ... imagined as an itinerary instead of a fixed point,”⁵² an itinerary one must tour in order to fully experience the place, as well as Dolores Hayden’s discussions of “place” (and one’s relation to it) as a series of cognitive maps.⁵³ Conceptualizing the idea of “America” as a set of symbols is an extremely useful method for organizing comparisons of sets that include different combinations of sights, especially as domestic representations of Americanness gain and lose preeminence over time.

The sheer geographic scale and subcultural plurality of the American touristscape demands a “set” approach to its symbolic itinerary, as its scope is too vast to be encompassed in a single representative icon. Thus, sites are not “American” by virtue of their geography, but rather “America” is a location composed of its sites. The act of visiting this set of symbols shifts the location of national cohesion to the tourist himself whose act(s) of travel both affirms his own cultural citizenship and reifies the sites visited as being culturally important.⁵⁴

This is where the miniature proves such a brilliant form for drawing these elements together, contextualizing them in relation to each other in a representativeAmericascape. By definition, the miniature is a representation of something that already

⁵¹ MacCannell (1999), 111.

⁵² Dwight Conquergood, “Performance Studies: Interventions and Radical Research,” *The Drama Review* 46, no. 2 (2002), 145.

⁵³ Dolores Hayden, *The Power of Place: Urban Landscapes as Public History*, (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1997).

⁵⁴ Franklin (2003), 43-44.

exists in larger form elsewhere.⁵⁵ The fidelity with which the model maker reproduces the referent structure, to be instantly recognizable to those familiar with its large-scale counterpart, is one of the measures of his skill.⁵⁶ The miniature American-themed tourist attraction assumes such familiarity on the part of its audience with the structures and landscapes represented and, accordingly, presents representations of those structures and landscapes most recognizable to the largest number of potential visitors.

The God's Eye effect is important too in terms of scale. The miniature, by sheer virtue of its smallness, is able to contain a great deal more imagery, scenes and representations than a larger form. This concentration and contextualization is what distinguishes the American-themed miniature attraction from other types of symbolic representations of the nation more commonly discussed in touristic literature. The American-themed miniature is *specific* in its presentation of exactly which elements compose the American itinerary in a manner that Disney's Main Street USA and The Mall in Washington, DC, for example, are not.

In the case of Main Street USA, the "total environment" of the Disney park uses slightly larger than human scale and anachronistic architecture and imagery to create an impression of a "golden age/small town" America that is neither urban nor rural. While atmospherically effective, this representation is, at best, imprecise. It does not give any specifics about the location of this America or its components – just a nostalgic feeling of Americanness that does not translate beyond the park enclosure.

While this hazy, American-ish setting can be seen as inclusive to the

⁵⁵ See: Stewart (1984), Mack (2003) and Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space* (Boston, Beacon Press, 1969).

⁵⁶ Along with the amount of time taken to create the miniature and the process by which the model is built.

heterogeneous hordes of visitors the House of Mouse attracts, it does not stake a claim as to where America (or Americans) reside in a concrete, geographical sense. The impressionistic American feeling the Main Street setting imparts is a savvy use of the total environment effect to create an immersive, emotional response. It does not, however, give us any clue as to what places in the country's geography or history resonate as representative of the American itinerary for Americans.

Similarly, the collection of museums and monuments that ring the National Mall in DC create an American landscape wholly overwhelming to mere mortals due to the grandness of their scale. While the official architecture of DC is deliberately constructed in Olympian proportions, this very grandness confounds any attempt by the visitor to grasp a sense of the nation itself in toto. There are simply too many discrete versions of Americanness jockeying for prominence on and around the Mall for the visitor to apprehend how the nation is knit together as a whole. Ironically, the giant scale of the Mall structure underscores the fractiousness inherent in American society while only vaguely hinting (similar to Main Street USA) at any transcendent, shared "American" experience.⁵⁷ One can only apprehend the totality of the nation thus on display by referencing a map of the area, which allows the God's Eye perspective via two-dimensional cartography that the miniature presents in 3-D.

Additionally, official monuments and museums are hamstrung by their necessary deference to a multiplicity of constituents in a manner that commercial enterprises are not. To neglect to include a particular segment of society in an official capacity in a

⁵⁷ John Mack uses the example of the grotesquely enlarged figures of the Brobdingnag citizens in *Gulliver's Travels* to underscore the ability of the miniature to render things beautiful by shrinking their flaws where enlargement magnifies their imperfections. See Mack (2007), 6.

national space is to risk alienating groups of citizens in a way that is anathema to the idea of the United States as a multicultural democracy. In commercial space however, an “American” attraction need only present a national representation accepted as reasonable by enough paying patrons to perpetuate its operation. The American miniature tourist attraction presents an environment simultaneously painstakingly deliberate in its construction yet unencumbered with the burden of “official” representation. In this sense, these locations fly under the radar of a great deal of inquiry (academic and otherwise) and are not subject to the same kind of scrutiny of a national museum, monument, etc.

The continued financial success of an attraction indicates it has hit a chord with its target demographic. Conversely, attractions that find themselves no longer financially viable may have fallen victim to a change in the cultural climate where their depictions of American nationhood are out of touch with popular understanding. Likewise, the tourist public would not support attractions presenting unrecognizable or controversial tableaux of American nationalist imagery.

Discussing simulated tourist environments, Lawrence Mintz raises the issue of tourists traveling to locations to “see their expectations,” with the inference that such tourism might lead to a feedback loop.⁵⁸ The standardization of “American” nationalist imagery in tourist destinations suggests that may be the case. Tourists at an “American” themed site expect to see the structures and places they already associate with America through photographs and other media. Once there, the holiday photos they take and share of the experience reinforce the links between these symbols and the nation and further

⁵⁸ Lawrence Mintz, “Simulated Tourism At Busch Gardens: the Old Country and Disney’s World Showcase, Epcot Center,” *Journal of Popular Culture* 32, no. 3 (1998), 47-59.

circulate these images in the American imaginary.

The miniature is a particularly good mechanism to present a national landscape as its diminutive size simultaneously allows for the inclusion of numerous types of people and places while eliding specific omissions. That is, the visitor's focus is on the sheer abundance presented in the miniature landscape and its jewel-like smallness shrinks the perception of exclusions in the same way the giant scale of the Mall makes omissions all the more glaring. Disney's Main Street USA and the monuments and museums of the National Mall telegraph an American nation that is both vague and unattainable. Conversely, the miniature landscape presents a vision of the nation as a whole – its component parts existing seamlessly on a single plane – its scale fully graspable and its semiotic narrative⁵⁹ of Americanness experienced as a truth language of material, three-dimensional, concrete representation.

The miniature landscape enables its architect(s) to play with notions of temporality and context on a single plan. “Life size” historic (or contemporary) recreations of iconic places and structures have a scale that only allows a single presentation to be enjoyed by the beholder. The visitor walking through the space of a recreated period room or a facsimile Venetian canal scene (such as that presented at the Venetian casino in Las Vegas) can only be in a single “place” or “time” at once. With miniatures, scenes from different times and places can coexist in a single presentation. In the miniature, comingling models and maquettes can simultaneously offer glimpses of

⁵⁹ Here, I am using this expression to describe the overarching story communicated by the use of signs and symbols from contemporary and historic America as employed in the miniature tourist attractions I investigate. As will become clear in subsequent chapters, each attraction tells a slightly different story of America, a nation whose narrative is both a unifying force and the subject of ferocious contestation.

the nation's past and potential, with historic representations sharing space with 3-D models of planned or proposed additions to the built environment depicted. These resulting tableaux of "America" present their subject as a contingent construct, a pointillist image resolved from a rich context of geospatial and temporal "points," that can illustrate both how Americans interpret their country's past(s) at a given moment and how they wish/expect to see its future.⁶⁰

Further temporal disruptions of the miniature landscape highlight a tension between theorists of the miniature as to its affect on its beholder. Bachelard describes a correlation between miniaturization and a deceleration of time, asserting that one lingers over the miniature in order to savor its delicate detail.⁶¹ However in the setting of the miniature theme park, promotional literature touts the expediency of being able to see a variety of exhibits/replicas/environments in a condensed period of time, inferring that the experience of the replica environment is more efficient than the real world.⁶²

In that view, the point of the miniature, at least insofar as it's deployed in the themed environment, is not for lingering, but to allow for maximum amounts of visual stimuli in the most time-conscious manner possible. This value of expediency in leisure travel may itself be an especially (though perhaps not uniquely) American cultural trait. For citizens of a nation with comparatively little vacation time – a standard two-weeks, if that – and little to no tradition of a "gap year" or any culturally recognized period of travel, time is of the essence.

⁶⁰ Again, providing a perspective that more monumental forms of representation are too unwieldy to pull off. Or, as Rem Koolhaas put it, "Bigness... exists; at most, it coexists. Its subtext is fuck context." (Rem Koolhaas, "Bigness: or The Problem of Large" in *S, M, L, XL* (New York: The Monacellie Press, 1995), 502.

⁶¹ Bachelard (1969).

⁶² Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (1998), Gottdiener (2001), Lukas (2007).

This collapse of time is enabled by the collapse of space engineered in the total environment created by the geography of the attraction itself.⁶³ Susan Stewart sees the total control enabled by the miniaturized form as relating to childhood and nostalgia, in practice and in reception.⁶⁴ In the case of Roadside America (and, to some extent, America Wonderland), the line between toy and toy-like appearance is blurred by the presence of whizzing model trains (themselves actual toys) and the push-button interaction with which the visitor can engage with the model in a performance of play. In the case of LEGOLAND, the miniature landscapes are constructed out of actual toys, the LEGO bricks, which further cements the relationship between the small, the toy and the nostalgic. All these factors heighten the experience of miniature versions of nationalist imagery as the “third clock” of tourism, combined by the processes of visual stimulation and memory, create an environment in which visitors are more likely to accept these nationalist representations uncritically in the moment and indelibly upon reflection.⁶⁵

The 3D maps created by the miniature landscapes delimit the parameters of the nation with a totality like that described by Anderson in his discussion of the map as an instrument through which the nation comes to be defined.⁶⁶ Visitors’ encounters with these model landscapes (since these attractions are marketed as family-friendly destinations) present to them a literal model of the nation. This encounter becomes both a personal memory of the trip to and engagement with the model, as well as a memory of a national form with which other nominally national presentations will be compared. These miniature attractions create indelible memories of the nation via an environment

⁶³ Mitrasinovic (2006).

⁶⁴ Stewart (1984).

⁶⁵ See Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (1998).

⁶⁶ See Anderson (1983).

carefully calculated for maximum emotional resonance.

So effective is the miniature in presenting a coherent vision of nationhood that nationally themed miniature parks have proliferated around the globe since the establishment of Madurodam in Holland in 1952. Mini-Israel, Miniaturk, Italia in Miniatura and Taman Mini Java are but a few of the nationally themed miniature parks that have flourished worldwide. Aside from the miniaturization of national landmarks and iconic structures, most every park describes itself as having an educational component (in addition to a recreational component) for its own citizenry.

The ability for the miniature park to communicate an organized, consolidated version of nationhood in a pleasurable setting is a boon both for amusement concerns looking to attract visitors and governments seeking to present a particular vision of their nation in a manner associated with recreation and leisure (as opposed to a less-ludic form of official propaganda). In the case of Splendid China for example, the Chinese government sought to export this cultural vision to the U.S. but the Florida attraction ultimately failed to find an audience. The lack of an “official” government-sponsored American park in the U.S. means that the only such miniature environments we have here are from private sector interests. This, in itself, is a telling indicator of the importance of the commercial in American society (i.e. the ability to build a miniature American themed attraction is one that could likely only occur domestically in commercial space), as well as, perhaps, an indication of the limits of the ability of the commercial space to host such an attraction in our modern era. It may be that, in the modern age, we have lost the ability to conceive of ourselves in a collective way in any sphere of our culture: politically, commercially or otherwise.

Methodology & Chapter Overview

Each site investigated presented a different set of challenges necessitating a variety of methodological approaches, critical to which were site visits where possible, to experience the attractions as they were intended to be encountered by the tourist. This psychologically layered experience occurs at several points – the travel to and encounter with the site, the memory of the encounter with the site, and the circulation and consumption of images of the site that reference images in the larger world. This tripartite phenomenon is self-reinforcing, as it encompasses elements of pilgrimage (the travel), personal encounter, memory of that encounter (e.g. it actually happened, therefore what happened is actual) and the perpetuation of the images of what one encountered continuing to circulate in the collective imaginary of national iconography.⁶⁷ These visits were augmented with close reads of proposed sites (where actual physical visits were not possible), archival research and interviews. Sites are then paired as foils in each chapter to further illustrate particular themes and ideas each express especially well.

With each attraction I attempted, to the best of my ability, not to impose a normative view, as such an approach is, at best, counterproductive and, otherwise, the worst kind of cultural snobbery. My objective was to approach the subject with somewhat the point of view of a native anthropologist⁶⁸ – making the familiar strange in order to peel back layers of meaning one might otherwise miss being steeped in the

⁶⁷ See Lauren Berlant, “The Theory of Infantile Citizenship,” *Public Culture*, 5 (1993): 395-410, Sturkin (2007), Lukas (2007).

⁶⁸ As Henri Varenne dryly notes in *Symbolizing America* (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1986), 2: “There has never been much anthropology of the United States” and certainly little about the artifacts and representations of the culture as *whole* as opposed to less unwieldy subgroups or subcultures.

culture whence it came.⁶⁹ Though Boorstin's take on the work performed by the spectacle (or "pseudo-event") was helpful in formulizing my own perspective, he and others consider attractions like the ones I investigate both superficial and indicative of a societal slide toward the inauthentic.⁷⁰

To this I would counter that mass popular entertainment in American culture is, like the nation itself, an artificial construct. Again, absent any other common practices in our wildly diverse population, the spectacle as the unifying principle of participation in modern American society seems as authentic as anything else jockeying for preeminence in the cultural landscape. And, just as the artificial "imagined community" of the nation is reinforced in part by its insignia, rituals and media, so too is a national culture predicated on mass consumer engagement epitomized in these themed, commercial areas.

I was also careful not to prejudice my research with a preconceived destination. It was important to me to take a "Big Data" approach to these sites, examining them carefully as cultural products in their own right and letting trends emerge from the research, rather than trying to shoehorn the research into any particular agenda. In this way, I feel my conclusions here are informed by the evidence and that makes me more confident of the result than if I had cherry-picked sites and anecdotes to fit a standing hypothesis.

Fittingly, given the subject matter, the following chapters are themselves organized into something of a travelogue, a tour through time and space covering over sixty years of miniature Americas across the country. Chapter 1 focuses on Roadside

⁶⁹ For all the inherent violence of the Yanomami culture one rarely reads an Anthropologist claim they "make him want to vomit."

⁷⁰ See Daniel Boorstin, *The Image: A Guide to Pseudo-Events in America* (New York: Atheneum, 1975).

America and America Wonderland and gives an historical context to their very different representations of America on display between 1957 and 1973. Ideas engaged with include the emergence of automotive tourism and the roadside attraction, “American” theming coinciding with the post-World War II heritage boom and “See America First” campaign, and rapid advances in media illustrated in the differences between attractions. The nascent transformation of the American economy into a consumer-based model is also evident in the models, as scenes of consumption are presented as necessary components of the middle-class suburban landscape and corporate advertising emerges as a hallmark of the urban landscape.

Roadside America, just off Interstate 78 in Shartlesville, Pennsylvania has been in operation at its current location since the mid-1950’s and continues to be a destination for highway travellers and Amish families that populate the Central Pennsylvania region. Here, I endeavored to recreate the tourist experience of the site, taking numerous photographs of the attraction – inside and out – and was fortunate to be able to interview Dolores Heinsohn, the current owner/operator of the attraction and the granddaughter of founder Laurence T. Gieringer. Mrs. Heinsohn granted me access to the family’s own archive of news clippings, correspondence dating back to the 1930’s, and a great deal of historic and unique ephemera.

America Wonderland, shuttered since 1973, had operated a mere 50 miles from Roadside America in Denver, Pennsylvania. Since it was no longer in operation, a site visit was not possible, however a visit to the Pennsylvania State Archives in Harrisburg yielded a great deal of information on the history and design of the attraction as well as the reception the site had received in the local press and from visitor letters. Research

into both locations was augmented through procuring additional visual ephemera and texts from eBay and online sites dealing in antique postcards and other souvenirs.

Chapter 2 looks at the “Miniland USA” sections of LEGOLANDs California and Florida, often referred to in promotional materials as the “heart” of the parks. Changing perceptions of tourist attractions as desirable elements of the local community are explored, framed by the initial resistance to LEGOLAND California by the residents of Carlsbad and the rehabilitation of an older theme park with the establishment of LEGOLAND Florida. Also discussed are the function of theming in the tourist attraction and the evolving proximity strategies employed by the parks, choosing locations near, but removed, from destination attractions and the reliance on the local population to make up the bulk of park attendance.

The difference in American scenes presented in the two Miniland USAs illustrates changing domestic perceptions of the American itinerary, as representations of more far-flung locales are eschewed in favor of models representing local landmarks and attractions. This privileging of the local coincides with the rise of the “staycation” and some contestation on where, exactly, “America” is located.⁷¹ These changes to the Miniland USAs also speak to the circulation and standardization of touristic images of America seen in the landmarks chosen for models.

These miniature Americas illustrate the next phase of American consumer culture. They are not only constructed entirely of consumer goods themselves (the LEGO bricks), but occur in a space created by a corporation to showcase its brand, brimming with other corporate tie-ins. The Americas of Miniland also feature

⁷¹ A great deal of ink spilled on the location of “real America” during the 2012 presidential election speaks to this.

performance as a key element of each location pictured in their itineraries. Not only does the tourist herself perform as the force unifying the separate scenes into a whole, but the scenes themselves are represented celebratory performances indicative of each location depicted – an inaugural motorcade in Washington, DC, a Mardi Gras parade in New Orleans, etc. Tellingly, though the penultimate chapter describes even more recent proposals for other miniature American themed attractions, the LEGO parks are the only concerns to successfully bring a mini U.S. to fruition since the 1990s.

LEGOLAND research was conducted on-site at LEGOLAND California and bolstered by archival research in the LEGO collection of the Carlsbad History Room of the Georgina Cole Library. While on-site research of the newly opened LEGOLAND Florida was not possible within the timeframe of field visits for this project, online research proved an invaluable resource in tracing the design, implementation and reception of the park. This research was rounded out by numerous personal communications with officials from LEGO headquarters in Denmark regarding their design process and inquiries regarding specific features of the parks.

Chapter 3 begins with the original conception of the America In Miniature park as a response to 9/11 and follows the evolution of the park through its radical reimagining as Wonders Of America. Antecedents to the modern nationally themed environment are discussed and contextualized within the “moment” in which the park was conceived. The changes in concept, design and location speak both to rapid advancements in technology (touristic and otherwise) and the necessity for/interest in “America” as theming device. Here, developments in the tourism industry and branding strategies are vividly displayed in the renderings of the park layouts along with a wholesale revision in the presentation

of the “American” experience that illustrates a seismic shift in the priorities and proclivities assumed of the American tourist as the domestic tourism economy became focused on “experience” over mere travel.

America in Miniature sought to employ a version of the international miniature park format, replete with static models of landmarks from across the country.

Conversely, Wonders of America planned to create an immersive environment using special effects technology and varying the scale of the features for a movie set-like affect, casting visitors as actors participating in celebrations in each of the locations depicted. The incursion of the virtual world into the material one is also evident in the proposed designs for the park, the perceived expectations of the target audience and the promotional mechanisms by which the parks sought to raise awareness of and investment in the project.

The America in Miniature and Wonders of America parks presented the greatest methodological challenge in researching as, to date, neither park has been built. Nonetheless, the planning and design of each raise fascinating questions about the meaning of American nationalism in what is, arguably, a “post-national” moment, as well as the future of the miniature tourist attraction as a form. The paramount importance of the internet in the conception and marketing execution of each incarnation of this attraction mirrors the central position of the online world in the lived experience of the nation in the 21st century.

Similarly, the internet became crucial to my own research on these sites, with close reads of their web-based promotional materials and renderings being, literally, the primary sources of information available. Articles in locally based online periodicals

helped me trace the chronology of the attractions' evolving formats and location strategies. Most helpful to this chapter was a long telephone interview with former Wonders of America CEO Craig Hudson who further detailed his own objectives as they dovetailed with and diverged from the original plan for the park.

Following the three chapters comprising the “meat” of the study, my conclusion puts these sites in dialogue with each other, teasing out the story of the evolution of the American itinerary as told through the landscapes of the miniature tourist attraction. I summarize the intimate link tourism enjoys with concepts of cultural citizenship in America, both in terms of the aforementioned civic pilgrimage aspect and the practice of tourism as indicative of one's status in the socioeconomic hierarchy. The sites examined herein illustrate a gradual shift from easily accessible tourist areas to more exclusive attractions, paralleling the yawning chasm of income inequality in the modern United States. National pilgrimage – even mimetic national pilgrimage to ersatz landmarks – is out of reach for an increasing number of citizens who are therefore unable to fully participate in tourism as a rite of cultural citizenship.

Likewise, the standardization of touristic images, facilitated by rapid advances in modern media, means that only select locations are understood to be part of the American itinerary. The quotidian has been eliminated from the touristic landscape in favor of portrayals of Americans at play. In this American-themed hall of mirrors, the domestic tourist sees herself and her own expectations of national travel reflected back in the miniature tourist attraction. Whereas Americans might travel abroad in search of how “people really live,” as domestic tourists they are uninterested in the minutiae that make up the typical American day. Consequently, the “American” themed miniatures present

increasingly more festive tableaux devoid of images of labor or banality.

The increasing corporatization of American society and the transformation of the American economy into a consumer culture is such that one's acts of consumption, goods consumed and ability to consume – to a large degree – determines one's place in it. American consumer culture, like religion, or indeed nationalism, is a concept and phenomenon that, in its ideal form, has within it the mechanism to help a great number of people transcend social and cultural differences that would otherwise cripple their potential for advancement in other types of systems.

In some societies, one's ability to participate, advance and thrive is wholly contingent on circumstances entirely out of one's control: sex, race, tribal affiliation, religion, "truth language," caste, ethnicity, sexual orientation – all these are factors that can predetermine – for one's entire life – the options available. The promise of a consumer culture is one that strikes these biases from transactions that are, at their heart, financially based and incentivizes the tempering of one's prejudices in order to advance materially. One's place in a consumer society is based on what one can buy or has bought and, in its ideal incarnation, this purchasing power would supersede bias.

What we have, however, is not ideal. Rampant income inequality in a consumer society has disastrous, entropic effects on the nation as a whole, as more and more people are unable to exercise their cultural citizenship through consumption. The inability to consume becomes an inability to take part in the consumer society and ergo the inability to fully claim one's cultural citizenship. The preference for ever more homogenized, ever more ludic scenes in the miniature American landscape is indicative not just of the consolidation of wealth among the tourist class, but also an inability or unwillingness to

figure labor (or even work) as a valued, valorized part of American life.

Finally, I offer suggestions for further research concerning the version of “America” presented in “Mini America,” a new American-themed miniature attraction proposed for the suburbs of Atlanta, Georgia, based on the international miniature park model. I also give a brief overview of miniature tourist attractions abroad that feature American-themed sections. Tobu World Square (Japan), Window of the World (Shenzhen, PRC), and Miniatur Wunderland (Germany) – to name a few – all contain miniature USA’s configured in relation to landmarks and symbols from other countries. Just as examining domestic miniature American-themed tourist attractions provides insight into the ways in which the touristic understanding of the country has changed over time, a comparative study of similar foreign sites may yield a greater understanding of the cultural constructions of “America” in the international sphere.

CHAPTER ONE: “Be Prepared To See More Than You Expect!”:

Roadside America & America Wonderland

Driving on I-78 through the rolling, bucolic landscape of Central Pennsylvania farm country, billboards beckon travellers to exit at Shartlesville and visit Roadside America, “The World’s Greatest Indoor Miniature Village.” At its current location since 1953, the attraction has been a local institution for decades, publicly exhibited in one form or another continuously since 1935. The sign over the door to the inner room housing the sprawling model greets visitors by boldly declaring:

Who enters here will be taken by surprises – Be prepared to see more than you expect! You will be amazed at Roadside America’s Beauty and Mechanical Skill – Over 60 years in the Making by Our Family...

Once inside, visitors have the option of walking around the model or climbing onto elevated platforms to look down on its rolling landscape. Local residents mingle with intrigued motorists and even the occasional Amish family as visitors crowd around the sprawling model, marveling at the miniature world contained within.

Every twenty minutes, the “Night Pageant” begins. Overhead lights in the room dim, simulating a sunset, while lights inside the model buildings turn on. While Kate Smith singing “America The Beautiful” plays over the PA system, a slide projector shines pictures of Jesus onto the far wall, next to a fluttering American flag. The legacy of model-maker Laurence T. Gieringer, Roadside America today stands as a site of both living history and lived history, with the many “contemporary” and historical scenes within the model preserved just as they were at the time of Gieringer’s death in 1963.

Roadside America presents a tableau of an electric, kinetic nation. Trains race along the tracks that crisscross the landscape of the model. Visitors are invited to push

buttons that activate vignettes within the scenes: two frontiersmen saw a log, the conveyor belt whirs in the model anthracite mine, a hot air balloon soars high over a baseball diamond where crowds cheer in the bleachers. Our tour starts here, at a site where the local is meant to stand in for the national, the nation's history is presented as a part of its present, multiple socioeconomic classes are figured as proximate (though distinct) and the placid countenance of Jesus and his angels beams down on it all. This distinctly 20th Century, Judeo-Christian American displays its cultural cohesion in shared labor and leisure activities: the crowds at the zoo, the rural folk across the way raising a barn, and posits consumption as an interaction between artisan and citizen or as an intersection between "downtown" and the residential suburbs. Roadside America invites its guests to linger and participate. "America," it asserts, "is here and you are part of it," a belonging predicated solely on proximity and not on consumption (though the gift shop outside the model room offers all manner of souvenirs).

Indeed, Roadside America was so successful that, for almost twenty years, a competitor miniature America operated just 50 miles up the road in nearby Denver, PA. Adam S. Hahn's America Wonderland promised visitors "The Only Living Historical Portrayal of Its Kind in the World!" and augmented its miniatures with music, narration, dramatic lighting and special effects. This production was sequential. Visitors walked the length of the room-sized diorama as the story of America was told to them "from the time of the Red Man,"⁷² through to the present – "the present" in this case being the period from its opening in 1957 through creator Adam S. Hahn's death in 1973. Tourists to America Wonderland beheld, rather than participated, as narration guided them from

⁷² William M. Hall. "Adam S. Hahn: Champion of America's Proud Heritage." *The Royle Forum* (1965, Sept. 15): 3.

frontier villages and the conquest of the West to the towering skyscrapers of a modern metropolis (Philadelphia, judging from the inclusion of Independence Hall), adorned with billboards advertising goods and services from national corporations.

Already, the influence of mass and consumer culture can be seen in America Wonderland compared to Roadside America. Here, landmarks from across the country are pulled into an amalgam nation, their inclusion suggesting that the local is no longer enough to suggest the presence of the national. The “present” of America Wonderland is one arrived at through an evolutionary process, the past a necessary (and completed) ingredient to the American “now.” The denizens of America Wonderland congregate in the schoolyard playground, the county fair, the racetrack, and amble through the streets of the downtown urban area, their destination a mystery. While at least one church dotted the landscape of American Wonderland, religion is not nearly as prominent as in Roadside America. The billboards and antennae on the roofs of the downtown buildings point to a nation being reshaped by mass media into one of audience rather than participant. “America,” it says, “is what you’re watching.”

While at a cursory glance the two attractions would seem to offer much the same experience – miniature buildings, landscapes and people; scenes of “modern” and “historical” American life; ample parking – a closer look at the sites and their respective histories reveals telling differences. The sites each present “Americas” that are amalgams incorporating their creators’ visions, their interpretations of touristic expectation, and the technologies of tourism and marketing current in their times. These attractions, especially when examined in contrast with each other, provide a cultural history of the interpenetration between American popular culture, American automotive

tourism and the American itinerary as it existed and evolved through the first half of the twentieth century. The effects of these phenomena and their rapid changes between the conception and construction of Roadside America and America Wonderland mark the form and content of the models and show dynamic shifts occurring in Americans' experience and understanding of the nation.

This chapter explores the rise of automotive travel in tandem with the heritage tourism boom of the post-War period and contextualizes Roadside America and America Wonderland in their contemporaneous days as displays reflecting American cultural citizenship at moments before and after the advent of mass consumer culture and its accompanying mass marketing. We will start with a brief history of the rise of the roadside attraction, segue into the individual histories of the sites, and compare and contrast their features, keeping in mind the ways in which they express notions of where, exactly, the nation resides, the relationship between the national past and its present, and the relationship between representations of labor and leisure.

The Roadside Attraction and Heritage Tourism

Both attractions benefitted from post World War II initiatives to improve mobility and national infrastructure, along with greater automobile ownership. This contributed to the rise of domestic tourism and the popularity of roadside attractions targeted specifically to this new tourist demographic. To this end, a series of Congressional Acts were passed, beginning in 1944 with the Federal Highway Act, which “established the new National System of Interstate Highways, an arterial network of 40,000 miles planned to reach forty-two state capitals, and to serve 182 of the 199 cities in the country [then]

having populations over 50,000.”⁷³ The Interstate Highway Act of 1956 granted subsidies for highway building, “responding to vigorous lobbying from automobile, trucking, construction, and oil interests among many others” that were keen to reap the financial rewards of greater investment in an automotive-based national infrastructure system.⁷⁴

The standoff between the United States and the USSR infused an element of righteousness into domestic tourism as citizens flocked to heritage sites across the country. These sites comprised an American itinerary based largely on historical events that themselves became stand-ins for American (and therefore not Soviet) ideals. The U.S. government encouraged its citizens to “See America First,” seeking to reverse the flow of tourist dollars heading across the Atlantic. The relationship between the economic and patriotic agendas of government and commerce were keenly understood by “presidents from Dwight D. Eisenhower to Lyndon B. Johnson [who] looked to tourism as a means of celebrating and supporting the American economy and national identity.”⁷⁵ Domestic tourism – as leisure pursuit and as civic pilgrimage – became a way to participate in a form of cultural citizenship.

American sightseers looking to undertake a road trip to heritage sites could choose from a plethora of materials describing different destinations and the best routes to take to get to them. *American Heritage* magazine published a guide to “Great Historic Places” around the country.⁷⁶ The American Automobile Association (AAA) published

⁷³ Boorstin, (1975), 112.

⁷⁴ Fraser J. Harbutt. *The Cold War Era* (Malden, Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers, Inc., 2002), 107.

⁷⁵ Shaffer (2001), 312.

⁷⁶ Richard M. Ketchum, ed. *The American Heritage Book of Great Historic Places*, (New York: American Heritage Publishing Co., Inc., 1957).

highway maps that included locations of note just as local chambers of commerce produced their own area maps to entice travellers to sightsee nearby. Plymouth and other auto-manufacturing corporations produced short films highlighting places of interest and reinforcing the ease with which they could be reached by car.

Along with improvements in infrastructure came a proliferation of attendant services – gas stations, motels and the like – catering to the growing automotive tourist market. Personal automotive travel was augmented by commercial automotive travel utilizing the same services and infrastructure. Coach bus lines offered trips to touristic sites of interest as well as full schedules of intra- and interstate direct travel.

Subsequently, a new kind of tourist destination emerged, that of the “roadside attraction.” Conceived initially either as areas part of or adjacent to rest stops or gas stations already catering to motorists on their way hither and yon, the roadside attraction was a physical manifestation of the Boorstinian “pseudo-event.”⁷⁷ Neither historically significant nor naturally wonderful, the roadside attraction was a type of branding mechanism that served to differentiate areas that offered basically the same goods and services. These sites attracted tourists *because* they were tourist attractions. The American itinerary expanded to include such homegrown spectacle as The World’s Biggest Ball of Twine, which took its place alongside the historic sites or landscape feature as an essential component of the American experience.

In mid-century Pennsylvania, miniature villages and model railroad based attractions dotted the landscape. Brookeville, Pennsylvania was home to the Charles Bowdish Exhibit, a sprawling hand-built model of Brookeville which boasted rotating

⁷⁷ Boorstin (1975) discusses this some, if disparagingly.

religious and historically themed displays with titles like “The Life of Christ: The World’s Greatest Story” and “Button Shoe Days.”⁷⁸ Central Pennsylvania boasted not one, but *four* miniature villages. For every “official” museum or historical site, an attendant roadside attraction seemed to be just down the road. The Eagle Museum shared brochure space with the Choo Choo Barn in Strasburg and Gettysburg’s Fort Defiance miniature village offered a tiny diversion from the National Civil War Museum in town. Some miniature villages, however, stood alone as destinations unto themselves.

Roadside America

Roadside America has its origins at the tail end of the 19th century, when young Laurence T. Gieringer, living an idyllic Tom Sawyer-like boyhood in the Central Pennsylvania hills, set out with his brother to climb nearby Mount Penn. From their vantage point, they noticed the towns below seemed to be made up of miniature houses, churches and other buildings. The boys decided to begin making miniature buildings themselves, a pursuit that would continue for Larry for over six decades.⁷⁹

The first public exhibition of what would later become Roadside America was in the form of a “putz,” a Pennsylvania Dutch tradition of holiday decoration in which a nativity scene and/or miniature village is arranged beneath a Christmas tree. As early as 1903 local paper the *Reading Eagle* was reporting on the popularity of Gieringer’s creation in its nascent stages.⁸⁰ Biographer Don Ambrose Agius notes two other early exhibitions of the display in Gieringer’s home in 1911 and 1916, the latter so popular that

⁷⁸ Due to ever-increasing crowds, by 1957 the Bowdish Exhibit was moved to the Buhle Planetarium in Pittsburgh where it remains, as a part of the Carnegie Science Center, to this day.

⁷⁹ His brother, Paul, largely gave up this hobby when he entered the priesthood.

⁸⁰ Dom Ambrose Agius O.S.B. *The Story of Laurence T. Gieringer and His Roadside America*. (Kutztown, PA: Kutztown Publishing C., 1961), 24.

a sign was erected reading “PLEASE DON’T PUSH THE GLASS IN.”⁸¹

The elaborate size and detail of Gieringer’s model village, complete with trains racing along miniature tracks, quickly became a local phenomenon, with a another reference to the model’s popularity appearing in a 1935 *Reading Eagle* article. Not long after, the Reading-area Rainbow Fire Company invited him to set up his display of handcrafted miniatures in their firehouse. The reputation of Gieringer as a master craftsman spread through newspaper articles and newsreels, reaching the attention of such notable institution as Ripley’s Believe It Or Not! Odditorium in New York City and the 1939 World’s Fair which both sought to exhibit the model in the late 1930s.⁸²

The Rainbow Fire Company exhibition was such a success that more followed, with what was at the time dubbed the “International Miniature Village” featured as an attraction at the Carsonia amusement park in nearby Reading. Carsonia Park itself was an example of the numerous mid-century “trolley parks,” most prevalent in the Northeast.⁸³ Conceived by trolley companies as a way to get riders out on the weekends, these amusement parks were located at the end of trolley lines and easily accessible via this public transportation. Designed to appeal to families (and hence, more riders), the typical trolley park would include some combination of rides, manicured gardens and events. At its height, Carsonia Park featured a ballroom and beer garden, in addition to other attractions.

⁸¹ Agius (1961), 33.

⁸² Ibid, 75-76. This source notes that Gieringer turned both offers down. Apparently, the Ripley’s organization wanted to exhibit the creation with its creator and outfit Gieringer with a pair of thick glasses to intimate that making the model had ruined his eyesight. He objected to the theatrics. See also the Laurence T. Gieringer papers, courtesy of Dolores Heinsohn.

⁸³ For an excellent discussion of these, see Judith Adams, *The American Amusement Park Industry: A History of Technology and Thrills*, (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1991).

Gieringer's "International Miniature Village" found a temporary home in a gazebo once used to house the park's carousel, vacated after the construction of a new carousel. Exhibited during the 1938 season, brochures beckoned visitors to the display where, for a 10-cent admission, they would be treated to miniaturized versions of scenes from the region and beyond. The trolley to Carsonia was discontinued in 1939, with the park itself closing in 1950.⁸⁴ The triple-whammy of the Great Depression, World War II and the post-war rise of the automobile as a preferred mode of transportation likewise doomed many of the trolley parks around the nation, with only a handful still in operation today. This confluence of circumstances was reflected in Gieringer's next move, a post-war relocation to Schlenker's service station outside of Hamburg.

Schlenker's, located on Route 22, was positioned to take advantage of some of the changes taking place in American infrastructural development and transportation preferences. Initiatives to improve national roads, increased automobile ownership and the easing of wartime restrictions on car travel and fuel consumption sparked a rise in domestic tourism. At Schlenker's, free admission was offered to servicemen and Greyhound drivers, an enticement for the long-distance coach services taking advantage of highway improvements.⁸⁵ Gieringer set up his model village, now rechristened "Roadside America," in the rear of the service station, in a building that had once held a dance hall. Now a sprawling 4,000 square feet, it attracted the attention of local and national print publications as well as national radio.⁸⁶

The 1953 relocation to its present site in Shartlesville came just before major

⁸⁴ "Carsonia Park," <http://www.defunctparks.com/parks/PA/carsonia/carsonia.htm>, accessed January 23, 2014.

⁸⁵ "Official Guide To Roadside America" brochure, undated, courtesy Dolores Heinsohn.

⁸⁶ Agius (1961), 63.

improvements were made to Highway 22, following which, motorists could pull directly off the Interstate right into the spacious parking lot in front of the gaily-decorated attraction. At its peak, Roadside America was outfitted with not just the model village, but also a petting zoo, restaurant, souvenir shop and, in a nod to the site's history, an outdoor, life-sized, "Indian" village.⁸⁷ Consistent with Gieringer's devout Catholic faith,⁸⁸ the attraction also featured a fully consecrated shrine to Our Lady of Lourdes.⁸⁹ The Pennsylvania Dutch Haus gift shop and café rounded out the offerings and Roadside America continued to receive accolades from both press and visitors after it's Shartlesville debut.

Underscoring the mutually reinforcing phenomena of roadside tourist attractions and automotive tourism, a co-promotion with the Plymouth automotive company resulted in a short travelogue film to encourage motor travel to Roadside America, a destination that required a car or coach to reach.⁹⁰ Similarly, Roadside America was featured in the numerous roadmap pamphlets printed by local and regional interests to encourage motoring tourists to visit their areas. The post-War motoring heritage tourists visiting the Civil War battlefield at Gettysburg could find a surfeit of heritage-themed attractions to whet their appetites at Charley Weaver's American Museum, the America at Gettysburg

⁸⁷ The present location was the site of a "massacre" written about by Gieringer in *The 1757 Attack On The Hochstetler Family*, ed. Daniel E. Hochstetler, <http://www.wvco.com/~dda/hochstetlerattackgieringer.php>, accessed April 4, 2014.

⁸⁸ Tim Raphael suggests that the orientation of the model might be a reflection of Gieringer's Catholicism, the simultaneity of the American cosmology echoing the religious cosmology referenced by Benedict Anderson in his discussion of time conceptions of medieval Christianity. See Anderson (1983), 23-25. This is an especially interesting notion when contrasted with Hahn's sequential, seemingly more "Protestant" conception of the American narrative in *America Wonderland*. Unfortunately I don't know enough about Hahn's own religious orientation to venture speculation in that area, but it's a fascinating angle to consider.

⁸⁹ Gieringer's own brother, Paul, was a monsignor.

⁹⁰ "Guided Tour," Hollywood Television Productions, undated c. 1950s, accessed April 5, 2014, <http://roadsideamericainc.com/our-story/>

Museum and Merritt's Museum of Early Americana.⁹¹ Amid other tourist offerings like the numerous steam railroads and railways, miniature villages and theme and "storybook" parks in the area, Roadside America was quite at home.

In its new location, Gieringer's vision reached its apex, an enormous 8,000+ square feet of model village featuring "over 300 miniature structures... up to 18 trains, trollies and cable cars... 10,000 hand-made trees... 4,000 miniature people... rivers, streams, and waterways [and] 600 miniature light bulbs,"⁹² all presented in a 3/8" scale. Visitors entering the display were presented with a self-guided tour brochure, highlighting various elements in the model. Audience participation was encouraged through a series of buttons ringing the miniature village that visitors could press to interact with scenes within the model – making trolley cars run, activating the conveyor belt at the anthracite mine, and bringing the wintering Barnum & Bailey Circus to life.

Contemporary promotional materials for the model describe it as "not one village, but many – really the American countryside as it might be seen by a giant so huge that he could see from coast to coast."⁹³ The giant, of course, would also have to be so huge as to be able to see both future and past simultaneously, given that "the exhibit spaces more than two hundred years in time and lets you see, in exquisite miniature, how people lived and worked in pioneer days... right up to the present" in "an unforgettable panorama of life in rural United States."⁹⁴ As the "present" of the model slowly became the

⁹¹ *Pennsylvania! Travel and Vacation Guide*, Pennsylvania Hotel Motor Inn Association, 1966. Though this particular piece of tourism ephemera was published about a decade after the period in question, it references sites that had been in operation when Roadside America moved to its Shartlesville location.

⁹² "Roadside America," <http://roadsideamericainc.com/>, accessed April 5, 2014.

⁹³ Roadside America Inc. *The Original Roadside America Inc.: Greatest Indoor Miniature Village* [brochure]. 2008.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

chronological “past,” the way its audience interpreted this miniature village changes as well.

A 1946 news item from the *New York Herald Tribune* establishes an unambiguous understanding of Roadside America as a factual representation of both “life in days of settlers and as it is today.”⁹⁵ This version of the display, while predating the Shartlesville location, was composed of essentially the same elements, including the “modern” village of “Fairfield.” A decade later, local publication the *Sunday News* likewise saw its own era reflected in the model, explaining “although it is presented as one village, it actually traces all phases of American architecture from the most primitive to today’s modern forms.”⁹⁶

A 1965 *Washington Post* article describes the diorama as “a huge montage of America, representing virtually every segment of life and spanning most of our history.”⁹⁷ The description of the display as a “montage” is significant, as a number of sources comment on the lack of, literally, a particular point of view. In *The Story of Laurence T. Gieringer And His Roadside America*, author Dom Ambrose Agius references the non-linear presentation of the model, explaining that:

Roadside America is not strictly chronological. The facets of life that appealed to Larry are woven into the general pattern like haphazard illustrations in a book of old prints. In sharp juxtaposition are a hunting cabin such as Theodore Roosevelt built, limestone caverns like those in Shenandoah Valley, early trestle railway bridges, enchanting views of mountain and lake scenery... In similar haphazard fashion one views a covered bridge, an old toll gate, a typical Pennsylvania Dutch farmstead, a pioneer settlement, a clapboard village of the middle 1800’s, and a modern town with its paved streets, attractive houses, busy commercial center,

⁹⁵ “Miniature Village In Pennsylvania Shows Life In Days Of Settlers And As It Is Today.” *New York Herald Tribune*, 1946, September 1.

⁹⁶ “Miniature Village: Exhibit in Pennsylvania Dutch Country Is One Of The Largest Of Its Kind.” *Sunday News*, 1956, September 23.

⁹⁷ Hal Willard. “The Village Began As A Hobby And Ended As A Career.” *The Washington Post*, 1965, June 13.

and public park.⁹⁸

Just as the display is non-linear, it also brings elements from across the country together “to capture in one immense exhibit the life of the United States, past as well as present,” including:

The Paul Revere Tavern [whose prototype stood near Boston] and the Lookout Tower [based on an observation post erected in Tennessee]... a stunning model of the San Francisco-Oakland Bridge... an 18th-century pioneer village and gristmill as well as a 19th-century tollgate and covered bridge [and a] miniature Pueblo Indian settlement.⁹⁹

This “haphazard” presentation creates the effect of an American cosmology that transcends time and space – an ineffable sense of American-ness greater than the sum of its parts. As a tabletop display, which visitors can walk completely around, the miniature village offers this cosmology as one complete in its own interior temporal and spatial logic and free of contamination from outside forces.¹⁰⁰

Curiously, though a roadside tourist attraction, itself a symbol of both the automotive age of American tourism (in form) and the midcentury turn to heritage tourism (in content), the landscape depicted in the Roadside America miniature village is noticeably absent significant representations of either of these phenomena. Though cars are prevalent on the streets of Fairfield, they share the downtown area with trolley cars and their limitations for distance travel are evident in a scene of a car stuck in the mud just beyond the town limits. There are no highways pictured connecting the various regions of the model, rather rail travel is figured as the chief transportation technology within the America figured in the tableau.

⁹⁸ Agius (1961), 75-76.

⁹⁹ Roger Carp. “A Trip Back In Time To Roadside America: This Landmark Attraction Reflects The Dreams Of A Great Model Maker [Part One].” *Classic Toy Trains*, 2001, October.

¹⁰⁰ See Stewart (1984).

Absent too are contemporary depictions of tourism or tourist destinations of the time. With the notable exception of a handful of billboards advertising regional natural wonders and a few local lodging sites¹⁰¹ there is almost no evidence of tourism within the world of the model. The only acknowledged tourist area in the miniature village is described in the self-guided tour brochure as “a back water resort of our Eastern States,” with reference to:

the trolley line which makes regular trips from the village to the summer resort on the Hill. Automobiles and Fishing not permitted on Sundays.¹⁰²

Already the form(s) of tourism and its technologies (transportation and advertising-wise) as portrayed in the model were becoming anachronistic. The type of tourism that provided the patrons for Gieringer’s own attraction was missing from the model itself.

As the highwayscape outside the front door of Roadside America changed, so too did the way it figured in the landscape of modern American tourist attractions. In 1959, Route 22 was refashioned into a “limited access highway.”¹⁰³ No longer able to simply spontaneously pull off the highway directly into the parking lot, motorists now had to map out their route more deliberately, taking the off ramp at exit 23 and following directions to the service road from there.¹⁰⁴ Gieringer’s death in January 1963 effectively rendered the display a time capsule of life in the first half of the 20th century. The

¹⁰¹ Including the Dutch Motel and Haag’s Hotel, both in Shartlesville.

¹⁰² Roadside America Inc. 2008. *The Original Roadside America Inc.: Greatest Indoor Miniature Village* [pamphlet].

¹⁰³ “Car Hobby” website, <http://www.carhobby.com/CCJ2011.htm>, accessed February 5, 2013.

¹⁰⁴ Tourism theorist John Jakle fixes this period as the beginning of the estrangement of the American tourist from his modes of travel, as the high-speed highway cut off opportunities for such spontaneous roadside encounters. Indeed, the modern visitor to Roadside America must plan to exit the highway at the appropriate exchange or risk missing the attraction altogether. See John Jakle, *The Tourist: Travel in Twentieth-Century North America* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1985), 190.

America of Gieringer's Roadside America was and remains an America absent the Kennedy Assassination, Civil Rights Act, Immigration and Nationality Act, moon landing, Vietnam War, 9/11 and hundreds of other turning points of the U.S.'s journey to its current modernity.

Now an old-fashioned touristic form (the roadside attraction), literally bypassed by a more modern form of transportation (the limited access highway), containing an evermore outdated model American landscape, Roadside America nonetheless enters its "second act" as a touchstone of nostalgic kitsch. Andrew Wood includes the attraction in his 2003 travel guide *Road Trip America: A State-By-State Tour Guide To Offbeat Destinations*. The retro-50s cover art of a nuclear family in a convertible driving across the Golden Gate Bridge tips off the reader that the places described in the book are meant to be experienced as kitsch.¹⁰⁵ This contrasts sharply with the Plymouth/Chrysler promotional film from the mid-50s that hailed the technological achievement of Roadside America and portrayed it as a must-see destination for the "modern" automobile tourist. Another 21st century tourism guide describes Roadside America as "one of the quirkiest tourist attractions in the United States..." and a "fine example of kitsch" that's "oddly compelling."¹⁰⁶

In contrast to contemporary responses in the 1940s and 1950s lauding Roadside America for depicting "life as it is today," modern appraisals of the miniature village comment on how it represents an "idealized view of America from the 1700s to the

¹⁰⁵ Andrew Wood. *Road Trip America: A State-By-State Tour Guide To Offbeat Destinations*. (Portland, OR: Collectors Press, 2003), 84.

¹⁰⁶ Jamie Jensen. "Roadside America" in *Road Trip USA: Cross-Country Adventures On America's Two-Lane Highways*, (Emeryville, CA: Avalon Travel Publishing, 2002), 332.

1960s”¹⁰⁷ and “an idealized version of American rural life in the 1700s.”¹⁰⁸ Writing for the *Philadelphia City Paper* in 1993, reporter Mike Walsh describes the exhibit as “Gieringer’s utopian vision of American life back in the good old days, when everyone worked hard and honored God and country,” adding that, “consequently, you’ll see no signs of unemployment, poverty, crime, or pollution in Roadside America.”¹⁰⁹ More recent correspondence to Roadside America expresses this sentimental feeling of nostalgia as in a 2006 letter which reads, “it brings a tear to my eye when the night show comes on to see the religious and patriotic values still being upheld in a world bending to be ‘politically correct’ ... please don’t ever stop playing Kate Smith’s version of ‘God Bless America.’”¹¹⁰

America Wonderland

As with Roadside America, Wonderland America creator Adam S. Hahn also had a history with earlier incarnations of his attraction. His first commercial enterprise, “Mountainside America,” was displayed in the Western Auto Store in Newfoundland, Pennsylvania and drew over 2000 visitors in 1948.¹¹¹ This prototype attraction “depicted a typical American small town, and the surrounding countryside with its farms, highways, wooded uplands and waterways,” and featured multimedia elements (sound, lights, etc.) that Hahn would go on to integrate into his masterpiece model.¹¹²

¹⁰⁷ Shawn Anderson. “Roadside Classics: Roadside America Idealizes Life in U.S.” *Reading Eagle*, 2003. October 1.

¹⁰⁸ Melanie Seitz. “Tiny Town Is A Big Attraction: A Lifetime Devoted To Miniatures.” *The Baltimore Sun*, 2004, January 1.

¹⁰⁹ Mike Walsh. “Roadside America: A Utopian Vision Of An America Long Gone.” *Philadelphia City Paper*, 1993.

¹¹⁰ Brent Schein. Letter To Roadside America, 2006, December 16.

¹¹¹ Peggy Bancroft. “Newfoundland In 1949: Many Marvelled At Model.” *The Pocono Record*, The Stroudsburgs, PA, 1965, November 27.

¹¹² Ibid.

The *New Era* hailed the pending opening of America Wonderland in 1957, breathlessly describing the coming attraction as “a panoramic sweep of American history in miniature [that] Adam Hahn, the creator of the exhibit, terms... a ‘Cineramic [sic] miniature display of American history from the time the white man came to the present day.’”¹¹³ A year later, a reporter from the *Pittsburgh Press* gave a detailed, first-hand account of Hahn’s work:

With his hand-carved miniatures, he traces the story of progress in America and augments the settings with a narration. Beginning with Indian days the visitor is taken out west to the early homesteads of the pioneers, the wagon trains, wood-burning locomotives, the Rocky Mountains and Yosemite Falls gushing from a precipice. The development of farming stretches from the corn patches of the pioneers to the Pennsylvania Dutch farm of today. There’s an animated county fair too, horse races and a baseball game. The history of railroads is dramatized as is the automotive business. There’s a glimpse of life in the ‘Roaring Twenties,’ modern cities in miniature and an operating Niagra [sic] Falls. Rounding out the historic panorama of our American heritage are the Statue of Liberty and Independence Hall.¹¹⁴

The narration is mentioned frequently as a major selling point in articles such as the one that appeared in the 1958 *Ephrata Review*, describing an America Wonderland experience in which “the lights will dim and the tour will start with spotlighted bits of action illustrating outstanding and historical events in the history of their country in their proper sequence.”¹¹⁵

As opposed to Roadside America’s montage orientation, Hahn’s diorama’s “Cineramic” presentation told a sequential story of American settlement, Westward expansion and technological advancement. In this version, American history moves along a predestined path, and the past’s connection to the present is performed as a linear

¹¹³ “340 Hand-Made Buildings Included In Tourist Exhibit Opening June 30, 1957.” *New Era*, 1957, June 19.

¹¹⁴ “A Hobby Grows: Display Depicts U.S. History.” *Pittsburgh Press*, 1958, June 1.

¹¹⁵ *The Ephrata Review*. 1958, September 4.

inevitability. The audio accompanying the display featured voiceover narration, literally telling the story of America as one of progress and triumph, as opposed to the self-guided tour of Roadside America which pointed out areas of interest in the model but generally left any further interpretation up to the visitor.

Throughout its existence, America Wonderland was cast as an important touchstone of American resistance to cultural threats from without and within. A 1965 article on the exhibit makes the connection explicit, beginning:

Pride of country, once instilled in the heart and mind of every boy and girl, is frowned upon today by many in this land of the free and the brave. Millions of citizens have no knowledge whatsoever of American history and tradition. Our schools and universities are more concerned with the political and economic aspects of education than with the principles upon which our nation is built.¹¹⁶

The article goes on to indict capitalism, consumerism and materialism for the erosion of American patriotism, asserting that “the average man or woman is so busy making money, striving for material possession, and getting ahead in the world that little or no thought is given to the debt they owe for their priceless heritage.”¹¹⁷ It also announces that “Hahn’s America Wonderland portrays in realistic, true to life reproductions the story of our nation’s progress... depicting the history and traditions of our land from the time of the Red Man to the present day.”¹¹⁸ Hahn himself is quoted in the article as “proud to be an American,” noting sadly that “too many today go about their daily lives without giving any thought to the hardships our forefathers endured in giving us the freedoms which we now enjoy.”¹¹⁹

¹¹⁶ William M. Hall. “Adam S. Hahn: Champion of America’s Proud Heritage.” *The Royle Forum* (1965, Sept. 15): 3.

¹¹⁷ Ibid. This is noted devoid of any irony that this “priceless heritage” is being presented in a commercial enterprise that charges admission.

¹¹⁸ Ibid, 4.

¹¹⁹ Ibid, 3.

A survey of letters sent to Hahn from visitors to America Wonderland reinforces the perception of the attraction as a bulwark against threats at home and abroad. So impressed was visitor Agnes Fowler of Ligonier, Pennsylvania, that she sent a pair of tickets to the diorama to President and Mrs. Eisenhower and declared in a 1959 letter to Hahn, "I think you have made one of the greatest single contributions, packing a tremendous wallop in our fight for freedom against communism."¹²⁰ An article in the *Latrobe Bulletin* a month later echoes her sentiment, describing the exhibit as "a skillfully displayed weapon in the fight for freedom against Communism."¹²¹ This triumphantly militaristic view was similarly expressed by Joseph Cataldi in his 1960 letter to Hahn, remarking that his visit to the attraction gave him "a patriotic feeling that all this is worth fighting for... anytime!!" going on to add that "when such a feeling can be instilled into the hearts of Americans, told and shown in your miniature way, then you are to be congratulated and your America Wonderland should be a 'must-see' on everybody's list."¹²²

A decade later, America Wonderland is figured as the antidote to turbulent conditions in domestic society. A letter writer underscores a perceived disconnection and ingratitude in American culture in a 1967 letter to Hahn praising the attraction as a "masterpiece" that "everyone who calls himself an 'American' should NOT miss." The writer goes on to add that, "if more Americans took more pride in their heritage and lived up to the principles of our forefathers, we would not have the chaos that exists today or as

¹²⁰ Agnes Fowler. Letter to Adam S. Hahn. Ligonier, PA, June 10, 1959.

¹²¹ Charles Borsari. "'Let Freedom Ring' Program Given D.A.R." *Latrobe Bulletin* (1959, July, 10).

¹²² Joseph Cataldi. Letter to Adam S. Hahn. Reading, PA, September 4, 1960.

many parasites on our backs. God bless America!”¹²³

Numerous violent scenes from the panorama reinforce this atmosphere of militaristic struggle and embattlement. An Indian attack on “an early white settlement,” a gunfight at an Old West saloon, an Indian with bow and arrow crouched behind a rock, a frontier hanging, “a country fire complete with sound effects of clanging bells, shouts, fire engines and smoke,” and a “one room school ‘where McGuffey’s Reader and a length of hickory taught our youngsters what was expected of them,’” all shared space within the display.¹²⁴ The same article that described these violent scenes recommended the attraction as an educational resource for “school children and advanced students... in the study of American history.”¹²⁵ These extreme scenes were glossed over by another local publication whose reporter related “one senses immediately that this is not merely a tourist attraction but rather a sharing of Mr. Hahn’s true scale-model portrayal of our nation’s history (with the exceptions of occurrences of violence which, he confides, might be painfully reminiscent to visitors).”¹²⁶ A chilling aside from a 1965 article notes “the latest addition to the panorama is a miniature missile, bringing the story of America right up to the present time.”¹²⁷

As a later arrival to the roadside attraction landscape, America Wonderland shows an American infrastructure increasingly dependent on automotive travel, with cars on a “bridge” straddling the border between an historical scene and the modern “downtown” area. Unlike Roadside America, Hahn’s modern downtown feature multi-family

¹²³ Mrs. J. Orio. Letter to Adam S. Hahn. Astoria, NY. November 6, 1967.

¹²⁴ *The Ephrata Review*. 1958, September 4.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Norma Blien. “Let’s Take A Trip.” *Unknown Newspaper*, 1959.

¹²⁷ William S. Hall. “Adam S. Hahn,” 4.

dwellings as well as skyscrapers. This downtown isn't named, instead appearing as an amalgam of American urban imagery, with Philadelphia's Independence Hall the centerpiece, located in front of a model Statue of Liberty. Gone are the trolley cars of Fairfield, as the urban area of America Wonderland is an auto-only environment.

America Wonderland presents an American itinerary incorporating a larger set of locations than that of the more regionally centered Roadside America. Iconic landmarks recreated in miniature at the Denver site included: "Mt. Rushmore, Independence Hall, Yosemite Falls, the Statue of Liberty, Drake's oil well near Titusville" and natural wonders the Grand Canyon and Niagara Falls.¹²⁸ This, and the "Cineramic" presentation of the attraction itself, is testament to the rapidly developing communications technology in the country.

During the construction of Roadside America, print loomed most largely in the inspiration for some models in the miniature village as well as the dissemination of information about the attraction. Gieringer was a subscription holder to *American Heritage* magazine and frequent contributor to publications like *Model Builder* (which in turn served as a form of publicity for his attraction). Articles in the local and national press further publicized his miniature village and the brochures and postcards available for purchase at the site, along with other traditional souvenir forms – plates, mugs, pennants, etc. - helped to further circulate the imagery of the attraction. While there is mention of some radio coverage in the late 1940s¹²⁹ and the aforementioned Plymouth reel in the 1950s, print remained the primary form of promotion for the site.

¹²⁸ Gary L. Trollinger, "Panorama of U.S. Life," *Reading Eagle*, undated.

¹²⁹ Dom Ambrose Agius O.S.B. *The Story of Laurence T. Gieringer And His Roadside America*. (Kutztown, PA: Kutztown Publishing Co., 1961), 63.

This particular “moment” in communications technology is evident in the landscape of the attraction as well. While Roadside America has plenty of electric lines crisscrossing the model, and even telegraph lines in the “Pioneer” section, television antennae are entirely absent, as is any outdoor advertising – billboards, etc. – save for those few mentioned before. The “downtown” section in the modern portion of the model features a movie theatre where, ostensibly, a movie reel like the one made by Plymouth might play, but Roadside America is a vision of an America in which print is still largely king and a mass market still assumed as the receptive audience in this pause before the age of market segmentation.

Conversely, the roofs of America Wonderland’s “modern” buildings feature television antennae and advertising billboards proliferate in his urban downtown area. The presentation of the model drew from a filmic (or “Cineramic”) model, with a passive audience looking on as the lights, music and narration guided their tour of the model. Likewise, Hahn aggressively marketed his attraction in a variety of media, sending press materials to dozens of local publications and radio stations and producing a series of promotional slides with musical and narrative accompaniment. The flip side of his “Grand Opening” advertisement in a local paper was replete with ads for movies like “Gunfight At The O.K. Corral,” “Johnny Tremain,” and a theatre called The Majestic which announced an “Exclusive Special Engagement” of “D.W. Griffith’s Immortal Masterpiece, ‘The Birth of A Nation.’”¹³⁰ In such company, Hahn’s attraction certainly would seem to have captured motifs of heritage and embattlement circulating in the popular zeitgeist.

¹³⁰ *Unknown Publication*, 1957.

Hahn kept meticulous notes of names and locations of other area tourist attractions to which to send brochures and corresponded with other similar attraction-owners throughout Pennsylvania, including Gieringer and Charles Bowdish, whose miniatures were displayed at the Buhle Planetarium in Pittsburgh. He readily sent slides, along with folders full of information on the site, to travel agents, civic groups and other organizations. This comprehensive approach allowed Hahn to get a great deal of exposure during his attraction's (comparatively) short tenure. In this way he was both a keen student and eager practitioner of the market segmentation techniques gaining steam in the world of commercial advertising as he targeted specific groups using a multimedia attack to reach potential visitors rather than "broadcasting" awareness of his attraction to a mass audience.

Gieringer and Hahn were aided in their promotional efforts by organizations created to take advantage of regional tourist destinations. Capitalizing on the rise in local domestic automotive tourism, the South Central Pennsylvania Travel Council, in association with the Bureau of Travel Department of the Pennsylvania Department of Commerce, sponsored a series of full-page display ads in the *New York Times* in 1965 featuring a host of historic and Pennsylvania Dutch tourist attractions. A small, unadorned ad in the middle of the page modestly read, "Visit Roadside America, World's Greatest Indoor Miniature Village," and gave directions from the interstate.¹³¹ Just below, an ad half the size emphatically announced "America Wonderland, An Inspiration and Educational Portrayal of American Heritage in Handcrafted Miniatures. Sensitively narrated with sound and lighting effects."¹³² These were nestled within a riot of ads

¹³¹ Display ad 393. *New York Times*, 1965, May 9.

¹³² Ibid.

beckoning travelers to visit such sites as the “America At Gettysburg Museum,” “Colonial York, PA – First Capital of the United States,” assorted ethnic Pennsylvania Dutch and Amish attractions and natural wonders like “Crystal Cave” and “Indian Echo Caverns.”¹³³ Each site was also featured in state- and locally-sponsored maps of the area, catering to motoring tourists and feature other local and regional attractions, lodging, services, etc.¹³⁴

The confluence of transportation infrastructure improvements, heritage tourism, advances in media and communications technologies and advertising synergies in the second half of the 20th century coalesced into the particular views of the nation on exhibit at Roadside America and America Wonderland. At these places, American tourists met their expectations of the nation as a unified whole, an episodic continuum of past and present ordered by an absolute internal logic. As the jet age dawned and America’s geopolitical foil collapsed, the composition of the touristicAmericascape would undergo a radical transformation.

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Though oddly enough, the attractions rarely appear together in the same maps and brochures, even though they were quite proximate.

CHAPTER TWO: “Will LEGO Not Attract More Whores?”:

LEGOLANDs California and Florida

“Dear Ms. Finnila,” the letter begins. “I am saddened to learn that otherwise intelligent persons, like yourself, are pursuing the LEGO project.”¹³⁵

The March 19, 1993 missive, written to City Councilmember Ramona Finnila by concerned local citizen Arnold Aubert Vernon, goes on to enumerate the plethora of ways he fears the establishment of a LEGOLAND theme park will disrupt the lives of Carlsbad residents.

“Will LEGO not attract more whores?” he demands. Will LEGO not attract more drug pushers?” The list goes on to include “pickpockets,” “minimum wage jobs for illegals with fake ‘green cards,’” and “congestion,” as further hidden costs of introducing the malevolent LEGO element to the community. “Mindless politicians are just that, mindless. Shame on all of you,” Mr. Vernon concludes, before politely adding, “P.S. Please share this with the other Members.”¹³⁶

LEGOLANDs California and Florida are case studies in the multiplicity of meanings inherent in the term “tourist attraction” and how they figured in the late 20th and early 21st centuries. The evolution of domestic travel from the era of the automobile to the jet age is evident in the conception and execution of the attractions, as are divides (and erasures) between the “local” and the “tourist” as anticipated in the establishment of these sites in their respective communities. Changing strategies in amusement parks, demographics and the expectation of domestic tourists all figure prominently in the story

¹³⁵ Arnold Aubert Vernon, Letter to Ramona Finnila, March 19, 1993, Legoland Development Collection, Box 1, Folder 21, Carlsbad History Room, Georgina Cole Library, Carlsbad, California

¹³⁶ Ibid.

of these outposts of the LEGO empire. Miniland USA, the “heart” of each park, presents a 3-D miniature rendering of these themes as they converge on LEGOLANDs East and West, their contrasting geographies illustrating cultural shifts in the touristic perception of the American itinerary and the centrality of consumption to the American cultural landscape, as well as shifts in the understanding of tourist attractions themselves.

The feature that unifies the discreet sections of Miniland into a representation of an American landscape is the visitor himself. Moving from one regional depiction to another transforms the tourist’s body into the connective tissue that knits the miniature nation together. Similarly, it is the visitor who performs a simulation of national tourism, visiting each area of the Minilandscape in a manner that mimes the experience of travel in the jet age. Tourists in Miniland, like tourists in the life-sized U.S., can go directly from New Orleans to Las Vegas or from New York City to California without having to traverse even a simulation of the “flyover country” in-between. The United States of Miniland is an archipelago of tourist destinations bound together by a touristically delineated “American” theme. “America,” it says, “is where you’re traveling.”

On their way to Miniland USA, visitors to LEGOLANDs East and West run a gauntlet of scenes based on current LEGO products and kits, each with a corresponding ride or display and a similarly-themed gift shop. Interestingly, the sub-themes employed in these scenes – “The Knight’s Table,” “Pharaoh’s Revenge,” etc. – are established popular theming elements in American society.¹³⁷ In this context, the Miniland USA section designates “America” as a theming device on par with the medieval and desert motifs already employed. This suggests that, by the 1990s, “America” itself can be

¹³⁷ See Gottdiener (2001).

understood as enough of an abstraction as to become its own theme.

The Theme Park And The Jet Age

Where the first American tourist attractions were located either at natural wonders - mountains, falls, hot springs, etc. - or sites of local/national/historical import - monuments, birthplaces, battlefields and the like.¹³⁸ The “theme park” as a bounded, commercial area of recreation emerged both from the World’s Fair and from the amusement park form, itself descended from the pleasure garden tradition. While theming performs a variety of functions, perhaps the most integral is that of differentiation.

The theme separates that which is within its borders from that which is outside (as do admissions fees and gates) and reinforces the uniqueness of the goods, services and experiences to be encountered within.¹³⁹ A tourist attraction offering basically the same types of rides, concessions, etc. with those around it can add value via this differentiation – the theme offers something special.¹⁴⁰ When Walt Disney opened his Disneyland in 1955, he almost single-handedly created a whole new category of tourist attractions – the *destination* themed environment. These places, of which there are truly only a handful in the world today, draw not only from local populations but also from long-distance tourists who plan multi-day excursions to the park and lodge in its surrounding environs.

LEGOLANDs East and West represent the next stage of modern tourist attraction

¹³⁸ The improvement of American travel infrastructure gave rise to the roadside attraction model of which Roadside America and America Wonderland are shining examples.

¹³⁹ See Lukas (2007, 2008), Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (1998), and Woody Register, *The Kid of Coney Island: Fred Thompson and the Rise of American Amusements* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

¹⁴⁰ Nowhere is this more readily in evidence perhaps than the casinos on the Vegas Strip. Despite offering basically identical types of gambling games and machines, the casinos masterfully employ various themes to create the illusion of difference.

location strategy. Rather than situate themselves along heavily trafficked areas or attempt to be stand-alone attractions in their own right (a risky proposition, even for a beloved global brand), these parks “cluster” in areas that both contain other tourist destinations and that have been evaluated by painstaking research to have a local population base demographically able to support another attraction. This allows the parks to take advantage of tourists already in the area to visit other attractions while capitalizing on local and regional populations to make up the bulk of their audience through season passes to the park.

By the time LEGOLAND California opened its doors in 1999 the era of jet travel had clipped domestic transit times considerably. With almost any location in the country now accessible in a matter of hours, tourism increasingly became focused more on destination than travel. Roadside attractions, bypassed by air travel (as well as by the literal bypasses that sprang up around highway enlargement projects), fell out of favor. Domestic destination tourism envisioned the United States as several distinct geographic zones, differentiated by metropolitan centers and regional characteristics (primarily climate, food and dialect). Tourist guides and maps reinforced this configuration, highlighting roughly the same delineation of regions: The Northeast, Mid-Atlantic, Southeast, Southwest, Midwest, and Pacific Northwest.¹⁴¹ A few especially large or culturally dense states – New York, Florida, Texas and California – frequently receive their own sections of guidebooks, independent of the regions in which they reside.

The seismic churn of 1990s geopolitics had rendered the United States a lone

¹⁴¹ For a contemporary example, see *Frommer's USA*, Kathleen Warnock, ed., (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley Publishing, 2009). Interestingly, the “islands” that make up the archipelago of LEGOLAND's Mini USA also follow along this metropolitan/regional representational strategy.

superpower in a radially reconfigured world order. With the unraveling of the Soviet Union, America “won” the Cold War, but lost a cultural foil against which to define its own national values and mores. For Southern California, decreased defense spending and an overall downturn in tourism attributed to the 1991 Gulf War acted as a one-two punch to its tourism and defense-dependent local economy.¹⁴² The precipitous shift in the American economy from production to service was now in full swing, with areas dependent on military (and other) industrial manufacturing undergoing a rapid transformation. LEGOLAND, as pitched to the Carlsbad community, was poised to not only revitalize the local economy, but to also present a coherent vision of the nation in its Miniland for a country faced with an identity crisis.

The encroachment of a foreign entertainment concern on Carlsbad was also symptomatic of the globalization underway in spheres not only economic but cultural, with an internationally franchised themed environment, itself rooted in a globally popular children’s toy, establishing a beachhead a stone’s throw from the American theme park that created the model for the destination attraction a half-century earlier. The same globalization that stabilized the post Cold War world enough for the domestic defense budget to contract could simultaneously siphon heavy industry from the Carlsbad economy and establish a European-based theme park in its place. This global dislocation was more than economic or geospatial, but represented a new paradigm in which “cultural, as well as other power, shifts to the competing transnational corporate actors, and the cultural product flows come not from one clearly identified state center but from

¹⁴² Sharon Bohn Gmelch identifies this period as one of only a handful of tourism downturns since the 1980s, underscoring tourism’s power as an especially robust and resilient industry. See Gmelch (2004).

the corporate global system.”¹⁴³

A large part of any themed environment’s appeal is that it imposes order on chaos. The landscape itself is tightly scripted, with the flow of visitors moving through a planned route in a predictable way.¹⁴⁴ Like modern-day Midways-Plaisance, the path through which a tourist winds his way through the themed environment provides an architecturally narrated, spatially choreographed and physically experienced series of vignettes in which to engage. In the case of LEGOLAND, this performance occurs in an immersive environment of consumer spectacle. The entire attraction is built around and, in many cases, of LEGO bricks, and the visitor to the park follows a predetermined route that results in multiple encounters with the product and brand in scenarios meant to normalize the experience of consumption as part and parcel of the tourist experience and – by inference – the American experience.

LEGOLAND California

When the LEGO company announced its intention to build its first LEGOLAND in North America, it was building on a successful track record in amusement parks. Its first park, opened in Billund, Denmark in 1968. Its stated mission was to be a serene oasis in which families with young children, aged 2-12, could engage in imaginative play, enjoy lush and beautiful landscaping and marvel at numerous scale models of familiar local and international sites, cleverly recreated using LEGO bricks.¹⁴⁵

Throughout the park, the primary “theme” was LEGO itself – the brand serving as both a

¹⁴³ Herbert I. Schiller, “The Basis For Perception,” in *Images of the US Around the World: A Multicultural Perspective*, Yahya R. Kamalipour, ed. (New York: State University of New York Press, 1999), 32.

¹⁴⁴ Mitrasinovic (2006), 156.

¹⁴⁵ The LEGO Group, *Lego Family Park USA*, 1993.

unifying motif for the attraction as well as a “lovemark,” i.e. a brand that transcends mere logoization to become a source of emotional attachment for its user.¹⁴⁶ That, along with the miniaturized LEGO landscapes, the active physical entertainment in which visitors participate and the order of the “total environment”¹⁴⁷ created by the park resulted in a remarkably resonant and cathartic visitor experience and was, upon opening, immediately popular.¹⁴⁸

Following the success of the second LEGOLAND in Windsor, England, LEGO announced plans to open a flagship park in the U.S. Like the Windsor model, the U.S. park was to include the popular “LEGO Driving School,” world monuments rendered in LEGO bricks and a section of homegrown iconic landmarks and structures. Where Windsor featured Big Ben, London Bridge and the like in its “Miniland” section at the center of the U.K. park, the American location would cull recognizable national imagery from across the United States.

In an unusual twist, two vastly different sites were proposed for the project: Carlsbad, California and Prince William County, Virginia.¹⁴⁹ Pitched competition between the two locales generated a great deal of press and letters to the editor in each community, alternately praising and damning the project. In Prince William County, the

¹⁴⁶ See Lukas (2008), 183.

¹⁴⁷ See Mitrasinovic (2006).

¹⁴⁸ Interestingly, in addition to the miniature Danish landmarks recreated at the Billund site, there is also “Legoredo Town,” a large section of the park devoted to scenes of the American West, complete with Mount Rushmore, a miniature railroad and cowboy-and-Indian motifs. For pictures, see the *Legoland Guide* (Denmark: Gronlund Publishers, 1992), 8.

¹⁴⁹ By an ironic coincidence, Prince William County was also once the proposed site of the “Disney America” theme park – another fascinating side note in the history of American heritage themed parks gone horribly awry. The proximity of the proposed park to the Manassas Battlefield drew accusations of Disney trying to appropriate hallowed ground and sparked a powerful local backlash that ultimately scuttled the project. For a brief discussion of the controversy, see Salvador Clave, *The Global Theme Park Industry* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: CABI, 2007), 259-260.

potential arrival of LEGO was used as an arena to express other controversies within the community (and, indeed, within the nation), as an activist group calling itself the “Prince William Area Forum” implored LEGO to abandon their plans to build there based on the “intolerance” of rival group the “Prince William County Christian Coalition.”¹⁵⁰ In Carlsbad, local resident Geoffrey Bell founded anti-LEGO community group NAIL, whose foreboding acronym stood for “Neighbors Against the Incursion of LEGO.” Their concerns, like those expressed so eloquently by Mr. Vernon, centered on quality of life issues and their promotional material sought to appeal to sympathetic locals by placing LEGOLAND in a rogues’ gallery of highly recognizable and generally unpopular civic initiatives.¹⁵¹

The vehemence of Bell and Vernon’s objections to the LEGO corporation building its flagship U.S. Park in Carlsbad, shared by many city residents at the time, stands in stark contrast to the ways in which LEGO itself promoted the attraction as a haven of family-friendly fun and community improvement. Fears that LEGOLAND would create “another Anaheim”¹⁵² in Carlsbad (referring to Disneyland), illustrate a perception of such a large-scale tourist attraction as a deleterious influence on its immediate environment.¹⁵³ Although the audience for the park was envisioned by LEGO as being primarily composed of local and regional residents and their families, to many of the residents themselves hosting the park within city limits connoted the introduction of a transient population which would bring with it an influx of crime and seediness.

¹⁵⁰ Charles Ashby, “Christian Group Files Back On Lego Letter,” *Potomac News*, July 6, 1993.

¹⁵¹ Tony Perry, “Family Fun, Or The Road To Civic Ruin?”, *Los Angeles Times*, May 16, 1994.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*

¹⁵³ Disney, though in a league of its own when it comes to such large-scale amusement engineering, had transformed and completely dominated Anaheim, formerly a small agricultural town south of pre-interstate Los Angeles.

Here, the very concept of the “tourist attraction” becomes a locus of contestation, as rival factions seek to define the issues at stake by defining the meaning of the park itself, and issues already latent within the community play out as a war for the city’s soul.

Ultimately, despite a pledge by Prince William County to improve highway infrastructure to the proposed park site, LEGO awarded the theme park to Carlsbad. Factors that tipped the scales in Carlsbad’s favor included climate, with over 300+ days of sunshine a year and generally mild weather, local demographics that indicated a built-in market for repeat visits to an attraction aimed at young children, an already developed tourist and transportation infrastructure and the town’s proximity to other established tourist attractions in the region, including Disneyland, the San Diego Zoo, and SeaWorld.

In this way, LEGO pursued a modern strategy whereby themed attractions cluster together in a tertiary market of a major tourist draw, building on the market that is already there and drawing greater numbers of visitors to mitigate the competition for tourist dollars between attractions. Anton Clave calls such a park the “me too” attraction, defining these projects as those in which there is:

little risk concerning their finance and viability, since they appeal to well-known, common experiences and to formats that are already developed in other locations of similar characteristics.¹⁵⁴

LEGO, with both its brand and theme park formula well in place, was in an excellent position to take advantage of its proximity to the other tourist attractions in the area, provided it could win over the hearts and minds of local residents. To achieve greater buy-in from area residents, LEGO sought to promote not only the recreational offerings of the park but also the park itself as a positive economic force for the community.

¹⁵⁴ Clave (2007), 328-329.

For its part, the Carlsbad Chamber of Commerce mounted a concerted publicity campaign to garner support from the community. They published *Issues & Answers*, a “community relations information bulletin,” that attempted to counter assertions by NAIL and others that LEGOLAND would have a negative impact on the city. Highlighted in its pages are job and financial statistics, including a projected “100 permanent... and 500-600 seasonal jobs,” and “total direct revenues from the project near \$230 million.”¹⁵⁵ A special supplement to the local Sun Newspapers ran LEGO-oriented articles with titles like “LEGO Is Cornerstone Of Economic Hopes,” bookended by blocks of advertising from local businesses taking pains to present themselves as LEGO-friendly.¹⁵⁶ A contrarian advertisement by NAIL also made the publication, though by now the anti-LEGO movement, though fervent, was effectively in the minority.

LEGO opened an “information center” in downtown Carlsbad and produced a series of informational publications touting the many benefits it assured readers the attraction would bring to the area, including “over 800 construction jobs, 600 new jobs in the park and millions of dollars in regional economic benefits and new tax revenues.”¹⁵⁷ As with the Chamber of Commerce, LEGO’s reinforcing the potential financial rewards of its park was a canny public relations move, positioning LEGOLAND as an economic lifeline to a city and region reeling from the effects of the nationwide recession and the collapse of the Southern California housing market.¹⁵⁸ Furthermore, LEGO took pains to differentiate its offerings from those of other, perhaps more problematic, theme parks by enumerating its “Nine Essential Core Values.” These include the child as focal point,

¹⁵⁵ Carlsbad Chamber of Commerce, *Issues & Answers*, (Carlsbad, undated, c. mid-1990s).

¹⁵⁶ Sun Newspapers, *Lego Park Carlsbad*, (Carlsbad, May 27, 1993).

¹⁵⁷ The LEGO Group, *Lego Family Park Carlsbad*, 1994.

¹⁵⁸ Paul Wiseman, “California Still Steeped In Recession,” *USA Today*, October 5, 1993.

“‘Miniland’ and beautiful landscaping,” “safety and quality,” and “synergy with the local community.”¹⁵⁹

Highlighted in each of the promotional brochures, Miniland USA, referred to as the “heart” of LEGOLAND, was modeled on the miniature landscape sections of LEGOLANDs Billund and Windsor. Each Miniland is described as featuring 1:20 scale reproductions of historic buildings and landmarks of its host nation, created entirely out of LEGO bricks. A good deal of copy is devoted to the skill with which the LEGO engineers built these models, detailing the enormous amounts of bricks and man hours going into each.

The “tourist attraction” as a site of cultural negotiation occurs within the park itself in the Miniland section. For LEGOLAND, Carlsbad¹⁶⁰ Miniland USA was to contain miniature versions of six different American locations: New York City, Washington DC, “New England,” New Orleans, Las Vegas and California. Notably, each of these areas in the country at large is itself a popular tourist destination, which undoubtedly influenced its being chosen for inclusion. In order to fully appreciate the fidelity with which the LEGO replicas were reproduced, the visiting public would need prior acquaintance with images of the landmarks depicted. Thus, structures whose images were already circulating in the popular imaginary as being representative of specific American places would be most suitable for simulation in Miniland and the mechanism of tourist imagery, its creation and circulation, would work to reify those areas as desirable.

¹⁵⁹ The LEGO Group, *LEGOLAND Carlsbad*, Carlsbad, California, 1997.

¹⁶⁰ The name was later changed to “LEGOLAND California” – another bone of local contention. See Sandra Hazeltine, “Lego Park Takes On New Name,” *North County Times*, March 5, 1998.

Inevitably, this leads to some idiosyncrasies. First, the American Midwest, Southwest, Northwest and South are almost entirely absent from this tableau. This is an America of points that, while overwhelmingly urban, are absent Chicago, Atlanta and other major metropolitan centers not coastally located. Second, the “New England” section is a curiously curated “harbor,” in which the region is portrayed as primarily agrarian, lacking any sort of metropolitan area or even colonial architecture. No natural wonders are in evidence. This is an America without a Grand Canyon or Niagara Falls or the need for them.

While the nature of the LEGO bricks – hard, rectangular – may seem to naturally lend themselves more to replicas of man-made structures, here I think the issue is more one of scale. Again, one of the appeals of the miniature is that we recognize the referent of the work and, in the case of the Grand Canyon and Niagara Falls, the sheer geological massiveness of each location is indivisible from the experience of the place itself. To render a miniature Grand Canyon, in LEGO or otherwise, risks making the model unrecognizable, and therefore less impressive. Additionally, because of the gargantuan proportions of the canyon and falls, while images of each natural wonder are amply circulated in the popular mediascape, there is no singular image (or series of images) recognized as the definitive representation for either. In each case, the area of and around these places is simply too large to be adequately represented by a photo and too large to be readily recognizable in miniature.

The New York City skyline has a number of faithfully reproduced iconic skyscrapers, oriented in a peculiar geography. The “Freedom Tower” and 9/11 memorial located at the tip of “Manhattan” are of a prototype architectural design rejected years

ago. The iconic Brooklyn Bridge originates in “Manhattan” and terminates in an empty, grassy “Brooklyn.” Times Square is sandwiched in-between the Woolworth Building and a less-defined “downtown” area. The Statue of Liberty rises in a lagoon just across from Mount Rushmore.

This is the modern tourist’s view of New York City, as well as the New York City most recognizable to consumers of movies, television and other images in circulation. In order to represent the location “New York City,” LEGO assembled a set of images – an itinerary – that recreates the tourist’s experience of the site. Places left off this itinerary include the outer boroughs less frequented by tourists (or portrayed in movies or television shows set in the city), primarily residential sections of Manhattan (the Upper and Lower East Sides, for instance) or neighborhoods that serve as concentrations of labor rather than leisure.

Popular tourist destinations and idiosyncratic geography are hallmarks of the other American cities depicted in the Miniland assortment as well. The iconic architecture of Washington, DC makes it a perfect subject for reproduction in LEGO. The orientation of the monuments and the dearth of explanatory signage, presents a decontextualized nation’s capitol, with the Olympic proportions of the buildings only reinforced by their miniaturization. Las Vegas aptly lends itself to LEGOization as the scale models of the whimsically themed casinos on the strip attest.¹⁶¹ New Orleans features a Mardi Gras parade, complete with Rex and Zulu Krewe floats, passing the wrought-iron railing balconies of a mini French Quarter. The “California Coast” section likewise features scenes from popular Northern and Southern California tourist

¹⁶¹ In what Scott Lukas refers to as a “meta moment,” see Lukas (2008), 170.

destinations (though notably absent is any reproduction of Disneyland or, indeed, any other themed tourist attraction).¹⁶²

Also noticeably absent are any representations of Carlsbad itself. Though a popular tourist destination since the turn of the century for its mineral springs (the “bad” in Carlsbad is German for “bath”), there is no trace of the town, historical or contemporary. Ironically, the Miniland California in LEGOLAND California erases Carlsbad from the itinerary of U.S. tourist destinations even as LEGOLAND proper seeks to make it one.

The overall effect of Miniland USA is a pastiche of American iconography, culled from a touristic itinerary of the United States in the late 20th Century. Absent are scenes of quotidian life, residential neighborhoods or workplaces, eschewed in favor of portrayals of already popular tourist destinations and the ludic celebrations – Mardi Gras parade, inaugural Marching band, etc. – performed there. Also absent are any scenes from American history. The America of LEGOLAND takes place in a “now” that references a scant few historic sites and then only as component of the built environments of their contemporary locations.

Just as the promoters of LEGOLAND sought to subvert the notion of the park as a “tourist attraction” due to the negative baggage the expression carried, the designers of Miniland demonstrated their model-making skills via fidelity to the touristic expectations of an American landscape. This in in keeping with the “view of the world” presented in

¹⁶² This is almost certainly due to the complex copyright issues inherent in recreating trademarked properties. Disney’s litigiousness is legendary enough to inspire Michael Sorkin to represent its Anaheim park with a photo of a bright blue sky, devoid of any Disney imagery whatsoever, in his chapter on the subject. See Michael Sorkin, “See You In Disneyland,” in *Variations On A Theme Park: The New American City and the End Of Public Space*, Michael Sorkin, ed. (New York: Hill and Wang, 1992), 207.

the original LEGOLAND in Denmark, where designers purposefully constructed tableaux of life as a “comical pageant” in which “the work of the world” becomes “a carnival of quaint motions.”¹⁶³ In the landscape of postwar American tourism as “the ultimate quest for self-indulgent individual pleasure... [revolving] around spectacle, fantasy, and desire,”¹⁶⁴ LEGOLAND serves as a location where this expectation is reflected and fulfilled in the encounter with Miniland’s models.

The introduction of a “Star Wars” themed section to Miniland in 2011 brought an element of fantasy to the Miniland feature and, along with additions to LEGOLAND including thrill rides and a water park, indicated a marked break from the character of the park as originally conceived. This evolution is indicative of the fierce market for travel and entertainment dollars in which LEGOLAND must compete, as well as the 2005 acquisition of the LEGOLAND parks by international theme park concern Merlin Entertainment. As early as 1993 the *Wall Street Journal* was making reference to a looming demographic shift that would affect the whole of the amusement park industry, as other forms of entertainment compete for the leisure dollars of “aging baby boomers who once crowded theme parks with their children.”¹⁶⁵

To read recent comments from visitors to LEGOLAND California is a study in irony. Though many praise the models of Miniland, they are at a loss for words to describe exactly what it is about the miniature replicas that so delights them. What they are more eloquent in describing, however, is their disdain for the (as of 2013) \$78 adult

¹⁶³ Henry Wienczek, *The World of LEGO Toys*, Harry N. Abrams, Inc. Publishers: New York, 1987, 147.

¹⁶⁴ Shaffer (2001), 320.

¹⁶⁵ Richard Turner, “New Theme Parks Will Take Owners On A Risky Ride,” *Wall Street Journal*, December 2, 1993.

admission fees (\$68 for children 3-12).¹⁶⁶ As numerous Yelp commenters have noted in one form or another, “it’s no Disneyland.” Though initially Carlsbad residents balked at the idea of becoming “another Anaheim,” contemporary visitor criticism lobbed at the attraction features constant comparison to Disneyland, now figured as the gold standard of tourist attractions, whores and all.

LEGOLAND Florida

Twenty years and a continent away from its Carlsbad counterpart, LEGO employed a wholly different strategy in establishing its East Coast location in 2011 in Winter Haven, Florida. In the shadow of another “House of Mouse,” Walt Disney World about 40 miles away in Orlando, LEGOLAND Florida was built in the repurposed ruins of the former site of Cypress Gardens, a defunct amusement park. Though, as with Carlsbad, the park was conceived of and built in a time of nationwide recession, its rehabilitation of a beloved local landmark resulted in quite a different reception from the local population. Additionally, changes in the composition of the Florida version of Miniland bespeak the rapid changes occurring in the tourism and theme park industry in the 21st century.

Cypress Gardens, the first theme park in Florida, predated Walt Disney World by nearly four decades, opening in 1936 in the otherwise sleepy Florida hamlet of Winter Haven.¹⁶⁷ The brainchild of entrepreneur Dick Pope, Cypress Gardens gained international fame for its botanical gardens and water-skiing shows, thanks to canny marketing and co-promotion via Hollywood newsreels, location shoots, and television

¹⁶⁶ “Walk-Up Pricing,” LEGOLAND California Website, <http://california.legoland.com/en/tickets/walkup>, accessed July 23, 2013.

¹⁶⁷ “Pieces In Place For Florida’s New Legoland,” *Daily Herald*, October 9, 2011.

programs broadcast from park grounds.¹⁶⁸ Its 1985 sale and subsequent transfers of the property to business conglomerates of various stripes echoes a corporate consolidation underway throughout American society and the end of the “mom and pop” era of themed attractions.

A brief genealogy of how the attraction changed hands gives some idea of the new level of complexity involved in the establishment and operation of the modern themed attraction. Dick and Julie Pope sold the attraction to publishing concern Harcourt Brace Jovanovich during its short-lived flirtation with branching out into other industries.¹⁶⁹ In 1989, HBJ sold the park to Anheuser-Busch along with six other parks, making the beverage giant and Busch Gardens namesake the owner of more theme parks than any other individual company at the time.¹⁷⁰

Current owner and operator of the LEGOLAND parks worldwide, Merlin Entertainment, was born when the “attractions division” of Vardon was acquired by venture capitalists APAX, along with J.P. Morgan Partners in 1998.¹⁷¹ In 2005, the Blackstone Group private equity firm through its affiliate Blackstone Capital Partners IV acquired Merlin’s theme park holdings.¹⁷² That same year, Merlin acquired all of the LEGOLAND parks worldwide for 375 million Euros.¹⁷³

The locations portrayed in the Miniland of LEGOLAND, Florida skew more

¹⁶⁸ Bob Gernert, “Pope’s Networking Brought Fame To Winter Haven: Incredible Success And The End Of An Era,” NewsChief.com, July 10, 2011, A3.

¹⁶⁹ See Gernert (2011); Clave (2007), 126; Judith A. Adams, *The American Amusement Park Industry: A History of Technology and Thrills* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1991), 122.

¹⁷⁰ Adams (1991), 118.

¹⁷¹ Clave (2007), 132.

¹⁷² Ibid, 131.

¹⁷³ Pernille Stanbury, “LEGOLAND Parks Sold For 375m Euro,” Internal communication/press release on LEGO Intranet, July 2005, provided courtesy Tine Froberg Mortensen, Records Manager, LEGO Group Archives, in personal communication with the author, November 9, 2011.

local. While the New York and Washington DC replicas follow the *modus operandi* of using well-known locations to highlight the versatility of the LEGO bricks and talent of their designers, other locations and landmarks depicted are of sites much closer to the attraction itself. The “Florida” of Miniland

encompasses the entire state from Mallory Square in Key West to Bok Tower in Central Florida and antebellum mansions in the Panhandle... Kennedy Space Center and an interactive Daytona International Speedway®.¹⁷⁴

The Kennedy Space Center as depicted is a peculiar scene, with a Space Shuttle from the now discontinued NASA program sitting on a launch pad, awaiting a blast-off that will never come. The addition of the antebellum mansions and life-sized replicas of the hoopskirted “Southern Belles” who once greeted guests to Cypress Gardens make it somewhat difficult to locate the LEGO “Florida” in time.

As in the California version of Miniland and in addition to the Florida section, Washington DC, New York City and Las Vegas are all figured as locations essential to the American itinerary so depicted.¹⁷⁵ Excised from this itinerary are New England and New Orleans and, as with the “Star Wars” addition to the California Miniland, an element of fantasy is introduced in a “Pirates” section. According to Marcy Harrison, the personal assistant to LEGOLAND Florida General Manager Adrian Jones, the criteria for the areas included in this version of Miniland were: “areas that have proved popular in other attractions,” “the opportunity to re-create models we have made before but ‘enhance’ with more lights and effects,” and “following existing plans [which] is also cost-effective.”¹⁷⁶

¹⁷⁴ LEGOLAND Florida Fact Sheet 2012, 3.

¹⁷⁵ A California section was added in 2012.

¹⁷⁶ Personal correspondence with Marcy Harrison via Tina Froberg Mortensen, Records Manager, LEGO Group Archives, November 11, 2011.

So, in addition to the budget efficacy of recreating models that had already gotten positive feedback elsewhere, we see the evolution of the American tourist itinerary as New England and New Orleans fall out of favor. Whether this is due to the somewhat lackluster presentation of “New England” as a section in the California version or the region’s inescapable synonymy with early American history (itself a theme we see falling out of favor in tourist preferences), the area is gone from LEGO representation of the American location archipelago. Likewise, New Orleans’ deletion from this mapping could be for any number of reasons – the lingering aftermath of Hurricane Katrina or the BP oil spill being the most immediate associations with the location in the current popular imagination, for example.

Regardless of the wherefores, the why of these locations’ exclusion from Miniland indicates a lack of confidence that these places are essential stops on a contemporary American tour. The awe and wonder with which the visitor encounters the models of LEGOLAND is dependent on his familiarity with the landmarks depicted. To omit previously included sites is to suggest they are losing their prevalence in the catalogue of the most recognizable and resonant American imagery.

Just as the effect of the circulation of “American” images in the media of the day was seen as having a standardizing effect on the miniature environment of American Wonderland (versus Roadside America), we see a similar effect at work here in the contrast between locations depicted in LEGOLAND California versus LEGOLAND Florida. The pre-internet LEGOLAND California contains imagery the likes of which one might find in a United States tourists’ guide of the 1990s.¹⁷⁷ With the rise of the

¹⁷⁷ With the exception, of course, of the 2000’s addition of the Freedom Tower.

internet and its digital pastiche of imagery past and present, the trend continues toward standardization and the paring down of locations meant to act synecdochically for the whole nation.

At LEGOLAND Florida, the American present takes precedence over any sort of historical antecedent¹⁷⁸ and the American itinerary is condensed into a smaller number of metropolitan locales with a greater emphasis on the immediate surrounding area. In a manner which resembles an inversion of the Roadside America “America Is Here” approach, LEGOLAND Florida makes the claim that “*Here* is America.” The nation in this case is not extrapolated from the local, but rather the local itself has come to stand in for the nation.¹⁷⁹

While the Washington DC area of Miniland Florida contains mostly the same models, right down to the marching band performing in front of the Capitol, and the casinos on the Vegas Strip remain largely unchanged, the New York City section reveals some striking departures from its Carlsbad contemporary. Most notably is the complete omission of the Freedom Tower, 9/11 Memorial and, indeed, much of Lower Manhattan below Wall Street. In its place, the island just terminates into a very narrow harbor, almost immediately abutting Liberty Island and a Statue of Liberty a stone’s throw from the Manhattan skyscrapers. Where LEGOLAND California anticipated the replacement of the Twin Towers with a building that ended up not being built, the designers of LEGOLAND Florida’s Manhattan deftly avoided having to deal with the matter at all by

¹⁷⁸ Other than the “Southern Belles,” though those refer to the earlier theme park that stood on the site rather than the more complicated and potentially problematic plantation history they may connote to someone not familiar with the attraction’s genealogy.

¹⁷⁹ With the tremendous influx of domestic migrants relocating to Florida from other states, rendering it now one of the most populous states in the Union, this may not be far from the truth.

simply leaving the entire site out. Other notable differences in the Florida version of New York include a Rockefeller Center with fountains instead of ice skating (in a nod to the Florida climate), and a Times Square whose logos have changed to Pepsi and Ford (instead of Coke and Volvo) in honor of the exclusive sponsorship deals brokered with these companies at the East Coast site.¹⁸⁰

Information as to which sections had proved popular before was based on “mostly guest feedback, but a lot of creative license on the part of the model builders, particularly unique zones like Pirates and Florida.”¹⁸¹ The addition of the Florida section was seen as essential since “at every LEGOLAND attraction we take on the ‘Face of the Place’ [giving] the Park/Discovery Centre a unique identity and [making] it relevant to the local community.”¹⁸² The repurposing of the Cypress Gardens site added an extra level of local pride as LEGOLAND took pains to preserve the infrastructure of the park and maintain beloved entertainment features like the water-skiing shows, along with two roller coasters and, among the native botanical elements, a banyan tree planted in 1939.¹⁸³

LEGOLAND Florida and LEGOLAND California highlight the tensions and symbioses between tourist destinations and their local populations. For Carlsbadians, there was an unseemly connotation to “tourist town” or “tourist trap,” based on their perception of the effect of Disneyland on the town of Anaheim, in which the people who lived there became mere background players in visitors’ vacations. It is no wonder that

¹⁸⁰ “Grab A Pepsi At Legoland,” *The Ledger*, Winter Haven, December 14, 2010, C4.

¹⁸¹ Personal correspondence with Marcy Harrison via Tina Froberg Mortensen, Records Manager, LEGO Group Archives, November 11, 2011.

¹⁸² Personal correspondence with Marcy Harrison via Tina Froberg Mortensen, Records Manager, LEGO Group Archives, November 11, 2011.

¹⁸³ “Pieces In Place For Florida’s New Legoland,” *Daily Herald*, October 9, 2011.

the residents of Carlsbad felt uneasy, as residents of areas frequented by tourists tend to be perceived as “acted upon” and the park represented a foreign incursion into the area that would transform the local landscape. In this version of the socio-economic stratification of tourism, capital equals mobility: those who can, travel and those who cannot are visited.¹⁸⁴ For Winter Haven residents, however, the LEGOLAND park was a chance to rehabilitate a shuttered homegrown tourist attraction that had once fueled the already service-based local economy.

The tourist attraction is an American cultural form in which social mores, anxieties and preoccupations are explored and negotiated. LEGOLAND California entered into this tradition in a time and place where economic turbulence and negative perception of the tourist attraction-as-form contributed to a local population conflicted about its arrival. Citizens and organizations that resisted the park feared the effects of an influx of transient tourists on the city of Carlsbad. In effect, LEGO sought to make tourists of the locals themselves, choosing a location demographically suited to supporting the park long-term and designing the “American” themed Miniland section in which visitors are invited to experience the post-modern dislocation of tourism as a leisure pursuit in an ersatz cross-country trip.

The introduction of the Star Wars section into LEGOLAND California’s Miniland underscores the unique challenge faced by domestic tourist attractions employing self-identified “American” theming. These attractions must create an

¹⁸⁴ This is not to suggest that no citizens of these places travel at all, but again, leisure travel is disproportionately the realm of the financially secure who tend to be the minority in major metropolitan areas around the world. This tendency is thrown into even sharper relief in the more economically disadvantaged tourist destinations in the developing world where the act of tourism – or often any travel at all outside the immediate area – is solely the domain of foreigners.

environment familiar enough to credibly represent the country to its own citizens, while simultaneously presenting an American landscape novel enough to attract visitors willing to pay for the experience of viewing the country in which they already live. If the familiar cannot be rendered sufficiently alien enough to entice, actual aliens may be utilized as a value-added feature, allowing patrons to augment their American itinerary with a visit to a galaxy far, far, away.

Conversely, the eagerness of Winter Haven residents to welcome LEGOLAND Florida to the erstwhile Cypress Gardens site was based on a local population that had a seventy-odd year tradition of operating both as the location of a tourist attraction as well as in the shadow of a much larger tourist area (Orlando) with an even bigger tourist infrastructure. Indeed, the tender treatment to a beloved local institution helped LEGOLAND Florida to garner the support of local residents who largely welcomed the return of an attraction to their area with only rare notes of wistful (and passing) dissent.¹⁸⁵ Additionally, plans to offer direct shuttle service from Orlando to Winter Haven to further encourage visitors to make LEGOLAND a day trip destination was met with great enthusiasm and the hope that it would succeed in siphoning off the critical mass of tourists that Cypress Gardens was, in the end, unable to.¹⁸⁶

Likewise, by highlighting Florida as an important part of the American landscape in the Miniland section¹⁸⁷, LEGO shrewdly positioned itself as a welcomed rehabilitator and celebrator of local tradition rather than an interloper. In doing so, LEGOLAND

¹⁸⁵ “Familiar Winter Haven Is Fading Away,” Chris Moran, Letter To The Editor, *The Ledger*, October 21, 2011, A10.

¹⁸⁶ Gary White, “Orlando Guests Can Shuttle To Legoland,” *The Ledger*, August 26, 2011, C8.

¹⁸⁷ With the omission of any suggestion of Orlando which, while I’m sure is impossible to include due to numerous copyright issues, would really be a thing to see recreated in LEGO bricks.

Florida won the hearts and minds of the local community in a way that LEGOLAND California, at least initially, was unable to. The citizens of Winter Haven did not need to be sold on the benefits of having LEGOLAND in their community, especially in the wake of the closing of Cypress Gardens and the simultaneous (though unrelated) downturn in the economy.¹⁸⁸ Nor did the visitors to LEGOLAND Florida's Miniland USA need to be sold on seeing local Floridian sights and landmarks in lieu of farther-flung vistas like New Orleans and New England. In the era of recession and staycation, foregrounding the local worked for park, residents and visitors alike.

The jet age, the post-Disney theme park environment, a sudden geopolitical reshuffling and a consumer culture in full bloom all left their marks in the design elements assembled to represent the nation in the Miniland USAs of LEGOLANDs East and West. Here, we see the domestic tourist's expectation of an American itinerary as it evolves into a regionally discrete, contemporarily focused experience. This is an America that exists in many places at once, deep in the heart of a consumer fantasy. The next incarnation of the American mini would branch out into environments both actual and virtual, heralding the arrival of Brand America in the Internet Age.

¹⁸⁸ Rick Rousos, "Winter Haven Has A New Magic Word: Legoland," *The Ledger*, Monday November 15, 2010, A1.

CHAPTER THREE: “The Most Sought-After American Experiences”: America in Miniature and Wonders of America

As culminating case studies go, America in Miniature could not have been more perfect. Its website described a 10 acre miniature theme park, similar in form and function to Italia in Miniatura, Miniaturk, or Mini Park Israel, in which visitors would be treated to a collection of miniature replicas of national landmarks.¹⁸⁹ To be built in Las Vegas, Nevada, visitors would tour the indoor park either on foot or on a boat ride along a “river” that snaked through miniaturized scenes of American history and modern American life. The park was to be oriented with regional juxtapositions roughly corresponding to real-world geography, indicated by their proximity to a large map of the continental United States located in the center of the attraction. Conceived as “an educational showcase of the beauty, history, ethnic and cultural diversity and industrial might that is America,”¹⁹⁰ the audience for the attraction was perceived as either already familiar enough with Americana to recognize and appreciate the models and scenes or, at least, sufficiently interested in American life and history to desire a total immersion in this environment.

Detailed renderings on the project website depicted the attraction as a patriotic oasis in the (literal) desert of Las Vegas, the white domed exterior of the building rising in an otherwise barren brown landscape ringed with distant mountains majesty. The entrance to the attraction, designed in the shape of a giant star flanked on either side by undulating stars and stripes, gave the suggestion of a billowing American flag. Clues to the imagined patrons of the attraction can be found in the parking lot scene, which shows

¹⁸⁹ America in Miniature website, <http://www.americainminiature.com>, accessed 2009.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid.

coach buses, shuttle buses (presumably from nearby casinos), and even stretch limousines, indicating a variety of socioeconomic levels and motivations on the part of the arriving customers. From family day-trips to bachelorette weekend excursions, America in Miniature positioned itself as a destination that would appeal to the “40 million visitors” who descended upon the “Entertainment Capital of the World” every year.¹⁹¹

The sights to be encountered within the park were detailed with the same specificity as the exterior. Not only would there be “over 200 realistic models of landmarks” representing natural wonders and man-made structures from sea to shining sea, but visitors would thrill to showings of films on topics from American history and the construction of the park itself in a “Multi-Use Theater” and partake in “3- and 4-D virtual reality rides.”¹⁹² The indoor setting of the park would enable the environment to be tightly controlled, with the interior temperature a cool respite from the punishing desert heat, and lighting effects employed to allow for the modeled scenes to appear as they would during the day or at night.

For months, I monitored the website for the attraction, noting with interest the contact page for potential investors and renderings of the park’s features-to-be. The park would be the lynchpin of my thesis, the proof of an almost innate desire to see one’s nation in miniature that, having been expressed in so many other countries, was finally making its way to the United States. A visit to America in Miniature would cap off my dissertation field research and I would return, triumphant, with souvenirs and

¹⁹¹ “A Letter from Edward van der Meer Founder of America in Miniature,” America in Miniature website, <http://www.americainminiature.com>, accessed March, 2015.

¹⁹² “Park Overview,” America in Miniature website, <http://www.americainminiature.com>, accessed March, 2015.

photographs in tow. Regularly, I refreshed the site, eagerly anticipating news of its grand opening.

Then, it disappeared.

In its place, in Fall 2009 a website appeared for an attraction to be called “Wonders of America.” This “10-acre, themed entertainment destination, with *both indoor and outdoor attractions*,” was to be located just outside of Phoenix, Arizona.¹⁹³ While Wonders of America was also to feature scale models of American landmarks and locations, these would function more as set pieces for performances of local and national celebrations like Mardi Gras in New Orleans and the Fourth of July in Washington, DC. These celebrations were to feature “special effects, such as lighting, sounds and music, video, aromas, water and interactive devices.”¹⁹⁴

The revised renderings of the Wonders of America site conceal to a large extent the surrounding landscape of the attraction, showing only a (very) slightly altered version of the giant star-and-American flag entrance now foregrounded against a brilliant azure sky with fluffy white clouds poised overhead. Gone was the parking lot, replaced with tiny human figures on foot making their way into the park with no indication of how they arrived at their destination. The lack of evidence of the surrounding environment and scant landscaping fails to outwardly anchor the attraction in any recognizable geographical location.

The ambiguity of the exterior setting continues in the rendering of the park’s interior. As seen from a cutaway “Aerial View,” the visitor would enter the park through

¹⁹³ [emphasis added] Wonders of America website, <http://www.americanminiature.com>, accessed September, 2009.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid.

the Gift Shop and afterward be immediately confronted by a Statue of Liberty model in a makeshift New York Harbor in an outdoor section of the park. The visitor would then have the option of proceeding on to the interior portion of the “New York” section of the attraction to their right, or heading left to the (also interior) “New Orleans” area. Also scattered throughout the rendering, with no discernable orientation strategy, would be indoor and outdoor models to include Niagara Falls, Mount Rushmore, the Seattle Space Needle, the “Hollywood” sign and the St. Louis arch. In a back corner of the park a conference center would offer meeting and event space.

Solving the mystery of the abrupt change in concept for the attraction illuminated another turn in the evolution of American tourism. The static “miniature park” concept of scale models and landmarks of national and historical import had yielded to a more participatory attraction centered on scenes of holiday and celebration. While scale models would still be employed, the revised park’s combination of performance and virtual elements mirror trends in both social interaction and the tourism industry. In order for a miniature simulation to recognizably represent a modern America it must exist in both physical and virtual space and its miniatures must be large enough to accommodate human-scale performances of festivity. In this most post-modern presentation of the nation yet, the perspective of the park-goer undergoes constant shifts in terms of scale, material-vs.-virtual and audience-vs.-performer.

The visitor to America in Miniature would engage in a more traditional miniature park tourist experience, that primarily of an audience member surrounded by a series of nationally representative spectacles. “America,” it said, “is where you are.” Wonders of America sought to make the visitor part of the festivities. These tourists would perform

their identities in a multiplicity of ways: as performers of their own pilgrimage in which they “act like” tourists, as members of an audience for the spectacles therein, and as participants in a series of recreated American festivals.

Wonders of America was to be a thoroughly branded environment in which performances of local and national holiday celebrations would take place against a backdrop of corporate tie-ins. “America,” it says, “it what you’re consuming.” Inherent in each attraction was the influence of the internet, the ubiquitous defining innovation of our age that takes the notion of traveling without moving to its apotheosis.

The Internet Age And Brand America

The genealogy of the nationalist-themed miniature attraction traces back through all the obvious antecedents and dovetails with evolving tastes in domestic tourist destinations. World’s fairs, organized by national pavilion, gave each attendant country a finite, condensed space in which to perform a distilled and concentrated representation of itself. These nationally themed pavilions “branded” participating nations with the imagery employed with various nations experimenting with scale and reproduction to create a physically immersive experience.¹⁹⁵ The large-scale landscape design of the pavilions’ orientation, coupled with the way in which visitors moved from one attraction to another presented a small-scale version of a global tourist’s experience.¹⁹⁶

These fairs, in conjunction with rapid advancements in photographic technology and the dissemination of images (technologies that, like the miniature, condensed time and space), gave rise to a phenomenon described by Timothy Mitchell wherein, “world

¹⁹⁵ The reproduction of Versailles at the 1893 Columbian Exposition, for example.

¹⁹⁶ The pavilion-as-form also reemerges in later tourist destinations, most notably the Epcot World Showcase at Orlando’s Walt Disney World and the variously themed casinos on the Las Vegas Strip.

exhibition... refers not to an exhibition of the world, but to the world conceived and grasped as though it were an exhibition.”¹⁹⁷ This touristic way of seeing is a concept that recurs in a variety of literature dealing with various aspects of the post-modern condition, from tourism to media studies.¹⁹⁸ The rise of the Internet has advanced this particular mode of interaction with the world, as many Americans find themselves in a constant state of virtual tourism in their day-to-day online activities.

In the modern themed environment, theming has in many ways become almost indistinguishable from “branding,” the strategy whereby corporate concerns present a uniform identity through logoization, visual consistency and strategic partnerships with other entities that reinforce the identity of the brand.¹⁹⁹ Without an overriding ethnic identity, the cohesive branding principle of the U.S. lies rather in a “civil religion,” the symbols of which “provide the potential for a unifying, all-inclusive religious devotion to America.”²⁰⁰ This semiotic expression of American nationalism allows “contradictory principles to coincide, such as nature and culture, the real and the imaginary, the past and the present, and the very distant and the here and now.”²⁰¹ As Brand America, its symbols can simultaneously evoke such contradictory themes as: Statue of Liberty = Liberty+Occupation, the White House = Democracy + Imperialism or the Empire State Building = Prosperity + Capitalism without any apparent cognitive dissonance in the

¹⁹⁷ Timothy Mitchell. “The World As Exhibition.” *Comparative Studies In Society In History* 31, no. 2, (1989): 222.

¹⁹⁸ See MacCannell (1976), Mitchell (1989) and Nicholas Mirzoeff, ed. *An Introduction to Visual Culture*, 2nd Edition (New York: Routledge, 2009).

¹⁹⁹ See Lukas (2007).

²⁰⁰ Michael Angrosino. “Civil Religion Redux.” *Anthropological Quarterly* 75, no. 2 (Spring 2002): 239-267.

²⁰¹ Jonathan E. Schroeder, “Visual Analysis of Images in Brand Culture,” in *Go Figure! New Directions in Advertising Rhetoric*, Edward F. McQuarrie and Barbara J. Phillips, eds. (Armonk, New York: M.E. Sharpe, 2008).

beholder.

This is in keeping with the idea of the theme as part of the escape fantasy inherent in tourism.²⁰² American tourists who would pay to visit an attraction purporting to offer a faithfully miniaturized version of the country in which they already live are looking for a very specific experience. The miniature America must walk a tightrope – presenting easily recognizable representations while avoiding the banality of the familiar (or the discomfort of the unseemly).²⁰³ The domestic tourist visiting a miniature America voyages from one America (the surrounding environs) to another (that of the attraction) which promises a heightened experience of concentrated nationalism and distilled Americanness.

This impetus toward creating a locus of concentrated Americanness is indicative of the particular “moment” in which America in Miniature was conceived. Post-9/11, patriotic fervor reached a fever pitch, heightened perhaps by a lack of outlets through which to channel it. Americans were encouraged to “go shopping” in the immediate aftermath of the attacks and to pursue leisure activities as a form of patriotism (and badly needed economic stimulus).²⁰⁴ President George W. Bush and then-Governor Pataki entreated the citizens of New York City, as well as the rest of the country, to travel and spend money on entertainment and dining out as a national imperative.²⁰⁵ In this way American identity, at least in its patriotic form, was explicitly yoked to mobility and

²⁰² Lukas (2007) is particularly useful here.

²⁰³ I’m guessing this is why so few sites include a DMV diorama.

²⁰⁴ This phenomenon is elucidated by Marita Sturkin in *Tourists of History: Memory, Kitsch, and Consumerism from Oklahoma City to Ground Zero*. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2007.

²⁰⁵ Diana Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2003), 243.

consumerism. Travel and consumption, the hallmarks of modern tourism, were specifically encouraged.

Barring the “disaster tourism” to actual sites of 9/11 attacks, there was nothing akin to a Cold War era heritage tourism itinerary through which to partake in cathartic civic pilgrimage. Just as *American Heritage* magazine offered its readers an itinerary of historic sites to visit and thereby affirm their cultural identity a half-century earlier, America in Miniature boldly asserted its own itinerary of American cultural landmarks for the 21st century. In this way, America in Miniature and, later, Wonders of America, represent the next incarnation of American miniature tourist environments, one to which a visitor can simultaneously perform an act of modern ludic escape tourism and a patriotic virtual pilgrimage to replicas of cultural touchstones. This type of travel reaffirms their status as fully participating cultural citizens both through its form (an ersatz national itinerary) and its function (leisure travel).

America In Miniature

The original website for America in Miniature touted the spatial and temporal compression offered by the attraction, noting “AiM enables guests to ‘visit’ all regions of the U.S. and see its buildings, monuments, and natural wonders from a unique perspective.”²⁰⁶ As we’ve seen before, this places a premium on the condensed geography offered by the miniature park form and, like LEGOLAND, organizes the experience according to the six regional “stereotypes”²⁰⁷ indicative of the touristic conception of the nation in its 21st century moment. While visitors could conceivably travel to any number of the sites represented in their full scale, it is the “unique

²⁰⁶ America in Miniature website, <http://www.americainminiature.com>, accessed January 2009.

²⁰⁷ See Jakle (1985), 199.

perspective” of the miniature that enables them to do so all at once.

The website explains the need for such an attraction in terms of scale and patriotism. The sheer size of the United States is presented as an obstacle for tourists and the allure of a one-stop site featuring miniature replicas is expressed as a benefit for both “Americans and foreign tourists [who] have actually seen relatively little of this great country.”²⁰⁸ A TIME/Gallup poll dated 11/2/04 is cited as the source for the assertion “during the past few years, there has been an upsurge by Americans in expressing patriotism, Americana, and family values as being more important to them than ever before.”²⁰⁹ Thus, the America in Miniature destination was to function as both an entertainment venue as well as a de facto cultural heritage site, in which simulated civic pilgrimage to replicas of historically and nationally significant places could occur.

America in Miniature was divided into a “series of six regions”²¹⁰ largely mapping onto contemporary touristic conceptions of the nation as seen in the configuration of the LEGOLAND California site. Also similar to LEGOLAND was the water ride, allowing visitors to experience the models in two different modes and providing a natural element of stagecraft for the harbor and maritime-based scenes. Within the regions themselves, “local” attractions and landmarks would be configured, again loosely conforming to their real-world geographic counterparts. While symbolically prominent locations – Washington DC (seat of government), New York (commerce and communication), California (Hollywood and entertainment) would all be represented, locales with less widely circulated imagery were also included

²⁰⁸ America in Miniature website, <http://www.americaainminiature.com>, accessed January 2009.

²⁰⁹ Ibid.

²¹⁰ “Park Overview,” America in Miniature website, <http://www.americaainminiature.com>, accessed March 2015.

In addition to the model landmarks throughout the park, the attraction was to engage guests with “popular, indigenous foods, beverages, and music representing” each of the regional areas highlighted.²¹¹ The peculiar use of the word “indigenous” is perhaps due in part to the origins of the park’s founder, Edward van der Meer. Van der Meer, a native of the Netherlands, is described in park promotional materials as “having spent his childhood in The Hague... in close proximity to the world famous park of Madurodam,” a miniature park featuring imagery from across the country.²¹² Indigeneity in this context most likely refers to native-born U.S. citizens rather than Native Americans, though depictions of their cultures are also listed among the exhibits proposed for the attraction.²¹³

In this vision, that which is quintessentially “American” includes quotidian scenes of leisure and labor, private life and public life, and sites of historical significance. Proposed scale models for the park included a wide variety of specific landmarks (the White House, Mount Rushmore, the Empire State Building, etc.), in addition to representational models meant to stand in for more abstract concepts within the American experience (religious buildings of numerous faiths, residential buildings, sports stadia, and educational facilities).²¹⁴ The Preliminary List of Models page lists dozens of possibilities including scenes of:

Labor - an open pit coalmine, sawmill, car factory
 Leisure – baseball stadium, circus, racetrack
 Religion – mosque, synagogue, St. Patrick’s Cathedral
 History – Colonial Williamsburg, Frederick Douglass home, a southern plantation
 Transportation – freeways, an international airport complex, train stations

²¹¹ Ibid.

²¹² Wonders of America website, <http://www.americanminiature.com>, accessed November, 2009.

²¹³ Specifically, the Mesa Verde Cliff Dwellings.

²¹⁴ “Preliminary List of Models,” America In Miniature website, <http://www.americanminiature.com/protected/prelim.html>, accessed January 29, 2009.

Culture – movie sets, theaters, fast food restaurants
 Buildings of Note – Falling Water, Hearst Castle, Seattle Space Needle
 Innovation – Thomas Edison’s Laboratory, observatory, electric power plant²¹⁵

The itinerary of America in Miniature presents a comprehensive tableau of scenes both ordinary and extraordinary, celebrating the culture, history and achievements of a dynamic nation.

This mirrors MacCannell’s observation of the taxonomy of structural elements in a tourist attraction, down to his description of “a North American itinerary [that contains] domestic, commercial, and industrial elements, occupations, public-services and transportation facilities, urban neighborhoods, communities and members of solidary (or, at least, identifiable) subgroups of American society.”²¹⁶ A visitor to this attraction was to come away with “an ‘edutainment’ experience that engages the five senses and combines with patriotic fulfillment with [sic] emotional satisfaction.”²¹⁷ The assumption is a desire for an entertaining and educational experience that will impart a greater knowledge of and appreciation for life in the United States.

As late as 2007, online periodicals detailing Vegas development were heralding the coming construction of the America in Miniature attraction. RoadsideAmerica.com (“Your Online Guide to Offbeat Tourist Attractions”), announced a partnership between America in Miniature and a proposed attraction called “The Wet Project,” described as “a vast, domed theme park with year ‘round indoor surfing and Alpine skiing.”²¹⁸ Here, Craig Hudson, the then-director of marketing for the project, touted the miniature park,

²¹⁵ “Preliminary List of Models,” America In Miniature website, <http://www.americainminiature.com/protected/prelim.html>, accessed January 29, 2009.

²¹⁶ MacCannell (1999), 45.

²¹⁷ America in Miniature website January 2009.

²¹⁸ “Sin City To Get Tiny USA,” RoadsideAmerica.com, August 18, 2007, accessed September 24, 2009.

which was to feature “200 to 300 landmarks... at 1:24 scale” as “a good chance to see all the really cool things about the United States in just a few hours.”²¹⁹

The target demographic for such an attraction was indicative of an effort in the mid 1990’s and early 2000’s to rebrand Las Vegas as a family destination. Entertainment concerns looked to broaden their offerings beyond gambling (and other vices) to attract parents with children and, presumably, develop a larger audience and greater profits. This effort was, however, short-lived, as attractions aimed at families failed to entice new customers and the 2003 “What Happens In Vegas, Stays In Vegas” advertising campaign put to rest any notion Vegas intended to purge the sins of Sin City.²²⁰

New communications technology allowed America In Miniature to establish a virtual presence in lieu of a physical one, with its organizers taking advantage of the fledgling internet to advertise its offerings and marketing goals. As early as 2002, the URL at <http://www.america-in-miniature.com> advertised the website as “coming soon,” with the full site up and running by 2007.²²¹ Indeed, its website fleshed out the design of the park with a series of artist renderings illustrating aerial views of the proposed building design as well as a cutaway version allowing a bird’s eye view of the park through what would be the ceiling of the structure. Utilizing the internet as a marketing and promotional platform enabled America In Miniature to contextualize itself in the world of international parks by embedding video from Madurodam, Tobu World Square, Park Mini Israel, Italia in Miniatura, Minimundus and Korea in Miniature.²²² In this way,

²¹⁹ Ibid.

²²⁰ Joseph Lee, “Las Vegas Returns To Sinful Roots: Tourism Is Booming As Las Vegas Retools Itself To Become A Destination For ‘Adult’ Visitors,” CNNMoney.com, May 28, 2004, http://money.cnn.com/2004/05/28/news/midcaps/las_vegas, accessed 2/19/13.

²²¹ <http://web.archive.org>

²²² “Miniature Parks Of The World,” America In Miniature – Park Overview,

the park established its pedigree and aspirations, linking itself digitally, visually and conceptually with other attractions successfully operating in the miniature park model.

Wonders Of America

By September 2009 however, the project and its governing corporate body, America In Miniature, LLC, had undergone profound changes. Hudson took over Van Der Meer's role as President, changed the proposed location of the park from Las Vegas to Phoenix, and radically reimagined the attraction, renaming it "Wonders of America" and subjecting the park to an almost complete redesign. No longer conceived as a miniature park, Wonders of America was envisioned as a "themed entertainment destination."²²³

Hudson's version of the attraction put primary emphasis on spectacle, distilling the concept of America into that of its "wonders" and creating a second-order ludic experience composed of scenes of celebration and recreation from a much smaller geographic sample. Gone are the "over 100,000 miniature people"²²⁴ that were to populate the former version of the attraction. Gone too, is the consistent 1:24 scale of the models, in favor of a park layout in which "scale varies and is appropriate for the experience" with a 48' Empire State Building model in one section and a 30' tall Niagara Falls replica in another.²²⁵ Here, the guests themselves make up the population of the park, ambling through indoor and outdoor "experiences" in a manner designed to create varied levels of intensity and keep visitors in the park longer.²²⁶

<http://web.archive.org/web/20080926190249/http://www.americaninminiature.com>, accessed February 8, 2014.

²²³ Wonders of America website, September 2009.

²²⁴ America in Miniature website, January 2009.

²²⁵ Wonders Of America Guest Experience, October, 2009, 4.

²²⁶ Wonders Of America Guest Experience, October, 2009, 8.

In Wonders of America, entertainment replaces “edutainment,” in a scenario where “technical, semiotic and organizational discourses are combined to ‘construct’ visitor attractions,”²²⁷ with “attractions” being the operative word. Visitors are assumed to come with either an already comprehensive enough knowledge of Americana and U.S. history to not desire (or be in need of) further education on the matter, or, conversely, an indifference to the theme beyond that which can be rendered spectacular. In part, this is due to what Hudson perceives as a disconnect between renderings of historically significant sites and visitors from other cultures who may not have the background or acculturation to engage with them.

Hudson notes that demographically, “Phoenix is at least 28% Hispanic [and] some Hispanics are as deeply involved in American culture as I am, but many are not” and in addition to “people from other countries around the world” these visitors may not experience as much enjoyment interacting with static representations of national landmarks.²²⁸ Further, “experiences cross cultural boundaries more easily: there’s a parade in every culture – there’s an Independence Day in every culture – there’s delicious local foods in every culture.”²²⁹ Thus, by expanding the concept of the attraction to include more spectacle and sensory stimulation, Hudson seeks to create an embodied experience of American-ness able to transcend language or cultural barriers.²³⁰

The embodied experience also finds a virtual counterpart in Wonders of America, where visitors would be encouraged to download apps to their PDAs or smartphones that

²²⁷ Urry (2002), 145.

²²⁸ Boardman, interview with Craig Hudson, 2009. It is not clear from the interview if he was referring to Latino Americans or more recent Latino immigrants to the area.

²²⁹ Boardman, interview with Craig Hudson, 2009.

²³⁰ It is also unclear how these considerations cache out with an audience conceived of being primarily local.

correspond to the attractions in the park, either in an informational or recreational way.²³¹ The introduction of the virtual complicates somewhat the interior/exterior binary of the park to its surroundings. Guests are presumed to be accustomed to simultaneously operating in material and virtual environments and to expect this toggling back-and-forth even in their ludic pursuits. Counterintuitively however, while Hudson embraces the idea of having a branded “Rivers Of Chocolate” experience within the park, he emphatically rejects other forms of conspicuous sponsorship for fear that such advertising will take people’s minds out of the park. So while guests are encouraged to enter into virtual environments while corporeally in the park, advertising poorly integrated into the overall theme of the attraction is considered a potential distraction to the authenticity of the experience.

Authenticity as it is constructed in Wonders of America is detailed in the confidential “Guest Experience” investor-relations document, which extolls the “authentic experiences” delivered to guests by the attraction, which are contrasted with and seen as “enhanced” in relation to the “authentic models” of the miniature park form.²³² Puzzlingly, what would make an experience “inauthentic” is unclear. The language becomes even more Boorstinian as it describes “up to forty attractions that *recreate authentic experiences* through combinations of state of the art techniques [including] *authentic settings* of America’s most famous landmarks, *realistic scale models*... and *dazzling special effects*.”²³³ Here, authenticity is regarded as a commodity that, like the marker of a sign, can be literally recreated experientially. It is likewise

²³¹ Boardman interview with Craig Hudson, 2009.

²³² Wonders of America Guest Experience, October (2009), 4.

²³³ Ibid 2, emphasis added.

coded in the faithfulness of the model reproductions, which counterbalance the “artistic license” of situating buildings and landmarks in geographically inaccurate arrangements.

The performance of celebrations becomes the central focal point for the Wonders of America attraction, though their origins as an explicitly nationalist holiday (the 4th of July), a hyper-local and religiously inflected tradition (Mardi Gras) and a department store-sponsored consumerist fete with roots in 20th century New York City (Macy’s Thanksgiving Day parade), offer very different versions of what constitutes an “American” experience. The temporal suspension required to go from a mid-Summer patriotic celebration in Washington, DC to a local Spring festival in New Orleans and a Winter parade in New York City is presented as a value-added feature of the attraction that improves upon the idea of visiting the actual locations. As Hudson explains, “even if [tourists] do go, they often go at the wrong time of year” and are not able to see the annual celebrations and parades as featured in the park.²³⁴

Wonders of America simplifies the ritual of civic pilgrimage by bringing the necessary iconography and celebrations together in the same place, scaled down to enable an expedient completion of a national circuit. Hudson explains the value offered by the compactness of the attraction, describing the park as:

A one-of-a-kind experience where in five hours they can travel the U.S. and find out what – and experience what it’s like – to be in the middle of forty of America’s most famous landmarks and celebrations. You can’t do that anywhere else. It is exciting, it’s aspirational, it’s what – you know – people long to do, but realize they’re never going to have a chance to do it unless they come to my park.²³⁵

His “aspirational” observation places value on a perceived desire by the audience to tour

²³⁴ Boardman interview with Craig Hudson, 2009.

²³⁵ Ibid.

an American itinerary featuring some of the same locations as the America in Miniature version and Miniland USAs of LEGOLAND – Washington DC, New York City, New Orleans – reinforcing these sites once again as desired and necessary inclusions in a touristic landscape of the country. This version also features natural wonders like Niagara Falls and regional depictions informing concession offerings like the proposed “Napa Valley Wine Bar” as well as the aforementioned “Rivers Of Chocolate,” which was to function in a co-branding partnership with a confectionary concern to be named later.

Each of the immersive location scenes then features its own depiction of a celebratory festival occurring outside of the normal clock of American life.²³⁶ In a surreal twist, several rendering of locations within the park are drawn as potential sites for weddings, so that in the world of Wonders of America, actual celebrations would occur concurrently with recreations of others. Nowhere, however, are scenes of “everyday” life such as the models in America in Miniature that referred to labor, religion or residential areas. At Wonders of America, the visitor brings the everyday with him by using technology to interact with the experiences in the manner in which he is presumed to interact with the world outside.

Concurrent with modern corporate marketing practices that emphasize “lifestyle” as part of the narrative of the brand and, by extension, the personal identity narratives of

²³⁶ Nick Stanley (1998), describes this phenomenon of celebrations performed for tourists as ethnic “events” removed from their temporal and cultural contexts and plenty has been written about historic World’s Fairs performances by indigenous people far removed from their societal import. It is relatively rare that you find such performances of American cultural traditions, however, though it can also be argued that our pluralistic society does not lend itself to universally embraced and consistently performed rituals and rites. Nothing, at least, that would easily be adapted to multiple performances numerous times per day. Also, for a discussion of the “third clock” of tourist time, see Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (1998).

consumers, both America in Miniature and Wonders of America put a premium on the desirability of the “experience” of the park.²³⁷ This is in keeping with the featured attractions, or “experiences” in the lingo of the park’s development, which represent the concretization of visitor expectation based on heavily mediatized imagery. While America in Miniature offered the experience of an American-themed version of the international miniature park (albeit with extra 3- and 4-D doodads thrown in for good measure), Wonders of America aimed to create an American-themed experience predicated on the sum total of experiences staged in its individually-themed areas. Visitors to the park are presumed to anticipate “the most sought after American experiences, which they have read about and seen on TV or in movies.”²³⁸

Likewise, Hudson counts on guests to have honed “gazing” skills, seeing “three major trends that will continue to effect how people take in entertainment.”²³⁹ These trends include movies, “where the special effects are so good, they impart a realism to movies that you could never have before,” video games in which “you feel like you’re in the game,” and “Las Vegas stage shows.”²⁴⁰ So not only are visitors’ expectations anticipated in terms of what they will want to see, based on “all these wonderful things on TV. and movies and magazines,”²⁴¹ but also *how* they will want to see it.²⁴²

²³⁷ For a really interesting discussion of the shift toward individual narrativization, see Kevin Meethan’s, “Introduction: Narratives of Place and Self,” in Meethan, Anderson and Miles’ *Tourism, Consumption & Representation: Narratives of Place and Self* (2006), 7-10.

²³⁸ Wonders of America Guest Experience, October (2009), 2.

²³⁹ Boardman, interview with Craig Hudson, 2009.

²⁴⁰ Ibid.

²⁴¹ Ibid.

²⁴² The focus on meeting tourist expectations with models of varying scale is consistent with the assumption that the imagery they expect has been encountered hitherto in a highly mediatized form. Stanley (1998) writes about this phenomenon and how an inconsistent scale fits precisely with mediatized touristic expectations – the scenes just need to look like the pictures and the subsequent pictures taken at the attraction just have to look like the tourists’ expect them to.

The experiences within the attraction assume an audience that expects “special effects,” not as an element of fantasy, but as an indicator of “realism.” Likewise, their experience of the attraction will be authenticated not by their own interactions with the real-life versions of the scenes depicted, but by how well the scenes compare to the “lifelike” video games with which they are assumed to engage. In other words, the success of the park as an authentic experience depends on how well it approximates a simulation (and not its referent).

The emphasis on “experience” is consistent with the “moment” of the Wonders of America park, during the ascendance of what has come to be called the “experience economy.”²⁴³ As theorized, the experience economy represents the current state of economic evolution, the market having already passed through the agrarian, industrial, service and knowledge stages.²⁴⁴ This divergence of goods-based and experience-based economies represents two concurrent phenomena: 1) a culture with a general baseline saturation of consumer goods, and 2) the increasing emphasis on marketing to higher income consumers.²⁴⁵ Most Americans now possess the physical consumer goods that were, in the post-War period, marketed as representing an ideal American standard of living: electric refrigerators, automobiles, televisions, etc.²⁴⁶

In the modern moment, the average American home has come to include

²⁴³ See B. Joseph Pine II and James H. Gilmore, *The Experience Economy: Work Is Theatre & Every Business A Stage: Goods and Services Are No Longer Enough* (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 1999).

²⁴⁴ As detailed in Jon Sundbo and Per Darmer, *Creating Experiences in the Experience Economy* (Northampton, MA: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2008), 2.

²⁴⁵ Elizabeth Cohen notes this trend as starting as early as the 1980s. See Cohen (2008), 312.

²⁴⁶ Indeed the abundance of such goods in the post-War period became a matter of foreign policy, most notably in the “Kitchen Debates” of 1959 in which the availability of modern conveniences to average Americans itself became a proxy of the success of American Capitalism versus Soviet Communism.

microwave ovens, dishwashers, and computers – a baseline of material wealth almost unimaginable by mid-century standards. Class status, once marked by access to and possession of particular goods (or their luxury versions) is now related to the consumption of “lifestyle,” an approach for which objects are merely accessories. The “experience,” becomes the indicator of the lifestyle to which one adheres (or aspires), marking the participant as an individual with the time to devote to the pursuit of such leisure activities, the “taste” to choose experience over a material item and the disposable income to enable an encounter from which the takeaway is primarily internal.

Experiences, unlike consumer goods, take place entirely within the individual consumer. The goal is not a shared standard of living or the participation in a group endeavor but a personal encounter, resonant for and unique to the individual. The experience becomes an expression of the consumer’s personal narrative, constructed actively, via choice of and participation in the event.

Of all the radically dissimilar elements between the two visions for the America in Miniature/Wonders of America parks, perhaps the most striking is how the attractions deal with the matter of class, both in the scenes depicted and in the conception of the park as a whole. As a miniature park, America In Miniature was able to incorporate diversity of region, race, ethnicity and class in historical and contemporary models. The Wonders of America incarnation, in contrast, highlights festival culture in affluent areas of primarily urban locations – New York, San Francisco, Washington DC, New Orleans. Any indication of work, residential populations or class stratification in these simulated locations is elided by both the flattening effect of miniaturization and the inclusion of only such buildings, scenery and events that produce a homogeneously recreational

effect.

Similarly, the change in location from Las Vegas to Phoenix immediately altered the audience for whom the park would be accessible. Las Vegas is a well-established international tourist destination with a comprehensive transportation infrastructure as well as a local population from a variety of socioeconomic strata. Locals of various means, as well as visitors from other parts of the country and around the world, would easily be able to get to the attraction. Phoenix, while still a popular travel destination, does not have nearly the volume of visitors – domestic or international - as Las Vegas.

The feasibility studies of the top 50 largest metropolitan areas in the country conducted by Wonders of America focused on Phoenix as an affluent location with a local population wealthy and active enough to sustain the attraction with the ability to accommodate (while not requiring) additional visitors from elsewhere, reinforcing Franklin’s insight that “many leisure investments made ostensibly for tourists and tourism rely on the fact that local people will visit them too.”²⁴⁷ This, in fact, is a popular strategy as we’ve read in the previous chapter and likewise indicative of the sweeping trend in 21st Century commercialism to eschew marketing at all to lower-income demographics in favor of heavily marketing to the more affluent.

The affluence presumed of the Wonders of America target market is further illustrated by the assumption that they will be not only tech savvy, but tech-dependent enough to require a virtual component to the attraction, accessible through their personal gadgetry, in order to fully enjoy their recreational experience. In this vein, automobility is another factor, with a highway currently under construction to enable visitors to reach

²⁴⁷ Franklin (2003), 5.

the site, which will be located outside of the metropolitan center. Hudson speculates that visitors will arrive by “car, or some bus... and when I say ‘bus’... I don’t mean the local bus, I mean charter bus,” which immediately precludes attendance by those reliant on public transportation.²⁴⁸ The relative distance from the heart of Phoenix proper would seem to indicate a confidence that those residents with means and mobility to attend the attraction would choose to do so over other options (including, perhaps, visiting the real-life locations depicted in the park).

This move to the suburbs is consistent with the general shift in the tone of the park from an attraction where the diversity of the pluralistic society was highlighted in the sheer number of miniatures on offer to one where a streamlined itinerary presented American locales differentiated primarily by skylines and types of parades. Interestingly, the suburbs themselves are absent from these tableaux of Americana, their erasure paradoxically suggesting either the ubiquity of the residential form as so absolute as to render its inclusion unnecessary in an American-themed environment, or that the most symbolically representative residential form of the past fifty years is losing its primacy. As Varenne notes in *Symbolizing America*, the “symbolic suburbs” are “those places where the dominant political institutions of America play themselves out most smoothly – at least superficially.”²⁴⁹ Here, the suburbs are positioned as the 21st Century inheritors of the “Main Street” imaginary of the mid-to-late 19th century, which located the heart of American-ness in the small-town experience of the Middle West, epitomized thematically in the configuration of Disney’s Main Street USA.²⁵⁰

²⁴⁸ Boardman, Hudson interview, 2009.

²⁴⁹ Varenne (1986), 39.

²⁵⁰ Jakle (1985), 210.

Given the social determination of tourist attractions,²⁵¹ the alteration in plans from America in Miniature to Wonders of America indicates at least a perceived shift in preference for particular signs and representations. Mediatization of nationalistic imagery results in a homogenization of symbols employed to evoke nationhood whereby these “most sought after” sites are gradually whittled down.²⁵² Trends in preference regarding U.S. tourist destinations have been historically tracked to reflect changing trends in tourism to specific regions and their perceived desirability based on advertising in travel magazines.²⁵³ In the case of America in Miniature and Wonders of America however, the change in format appears to have less to do with perceived preferences of particular regional representations and more to do with competing assertions of how visitors will want to experience a place (or its facsimile). Visitors to Wonders of America will be expected to have already internalized the “generalized stance to the world”²⁵⁴ necessary to fully appreciate the dually embodied and virtual planes on which the attraction simultaneously operates.

A representation of America in its current incarnation must incorporate a virtual element since the American experience is no longer one that exists purely²⁵⁵ in the material world. The ability to “visit” places virtually is one of the hallmarks of our age and epitomizes the travel without movement phenomenon. Likewise, the tourism industry is currently engaged in facilitating journeys in the “experience economy,”

²⁵¹ For a discussion of this see MacCannell (1999), 132.

²⁵² See Edensor (1998), 36.

²⁵³ See Sam A. Lollar and Carlton Van Doren, “U.S. Tourist Destinations: A History of Desirability,” *Annals of Tourism Research* (18), 622-633, 1991.

²⁵⁴ Franklin (2003), 5.

²⁵⁵ Or, arguably, even primarily, for some.

predicated on providing embodied, interactive happenings.²⁵⁶ The America In Miniature/Wonders of America attraction reveals changes in the domestic tourism landscape overall regarding the importance of branding and location strategies as well as a somewhat troubling assumption that the modern domestic tourist expects to see an American itinerary devoid of scenes of labor or history.

²⁵⁶ See Jon Sundbo & Per Darmer, *Creating Experiences in the Experience Economy* (Northampton, MA: Edward Elgar Publishing, Inc., 2008).

CONCLUSION: My Country, 'Tis of Wee

“Great God America has always proclaimed itself the paramount power, the vital cultural center, and all the other gods died laughing. Left alone in the cultural void, America became the lone target for resentment. So we killed America. Only we have not quite awakened to the fact that America really is dead. Our cultural life revolves around a void we have not quite realized is there.”

- McKenzie Wark²⁵⁷

As the tendrils of corporate culture, with its marketing strategies, imagery and consumption metastasized through American society, the ways in which Americans conceived of themselves and their nation changed. Alienated by market segmentation strategies, the evolution of mass media into personal media and rapid advancements in transportation technology, Americans became estranged from even the *ability* to view themselves as part of a larger, national project. As their conceptions of themselves as Americans changed, expectations of what would constitute an “American” landscape changed as well, as our tour through the miniature American themed tourist environments has demonstrated.

The American miniature landscape has developed over time just as the nation itself has developed, shaped by phenomena that have influenced the trajectory of American culture. Transportation technologies that have largely erased the impact of travel from everyday American life are reflected in the gradual excising of representations of the act of travel in these touristic environments. Communications technologies that aided and abetted the rise of commercial marketing and consumerism as the central organizing principle of American society have similarly helped to organize the

²⁵⁷ McKenzie Wark. “Latent Destiny: Perverse Readings of the Greater East Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere,” in *Images of the US Around the World: A Multicultural Perspective*, Yahya R. Kamalipour, ed. (New York: State University of New York Press, 1999), 25.

internal logic of the miniature geography to focus on the nearby and create an experience of America as a reflection of the self. In that vein, historical scenes are likewise excised from modern American minis, as the nation is presented in the modern moment, all the better to act as set dressing for the American consumer locating themselves within it and to accommodate demographic shifts that rendered parts of American history irrelevant to their own. Finally, in response to the marked shift in income equality and the jettisoning of marketing to other than the moneyed classes, the expectation of leisure, spectacle and “experience” is treated as paramount in the encounter with the modern American mini, as scenes of labor have been expunged from the landscape in favor of a wholly celebratory, ludic national portrayal.

Each place is still a stop on a pilgrimage. People must go to the miniature park, it does not come to them. By and large the experience of traveling to the attraction from wherever the tourist originates is not part of the story and does not “count” the way the travel to the recreated miniature sections of the country does. The travel to American-themed scenes within the attraction is the takeaway experience, not the travel to the park itself, which is as homogenized and standardized as any other commute in modern American life. The erasure of travel itself as a meaningful (or meaning-making) element of American life is evident in the erasure of imagery of travel in the attractions surveyed here.

Older miniature Americas in this survey emphasize technologies of transportation as “modern” marvels and an intrinsic component of an American landscape while later models largely excise scenes and methods of travel, even while depicting tourist destinations. In *Roadside America*, train travel is evidenced all over the miniature village

as locomotives of various types and eras race across tracks snaking across the model, linking the country physically and metaphorically as the cars pass through various historical scenes. Horse and wagon pairs abound in the earlier sections and cars are plentiful on the modern suburban streets, sharing the downtown byways with trolleys, though highways and interstates do not appear. A cable car ferries sightseers up a dramatic mountain incline and other Roadside denizens take to the air in a plane flying loops over a primitive airfield or sail aloft in a hot air balloon.

Similarly, America Wonderland makes explicit the connection between innovations in transportation technology and national development in advertising featuring a sequential progression of images from a wagon train to a horse-and-ride to a locomotive to an automobile.²⁵⁸ Within the model itself, trains twist through scenes and evolving model cars help identify the era to which the scenes they are in correspond. However, the “travel without movement” theme begins to emerge in a collection of geographically far-flung items – Independence Hall in Philadelphia shares a scene with the Statue of Liberty in New York Harbor on the same plane as South Dakota’s Mount Rushmore – presented without any representation of the travel technology necessary to create such an itinerary in real life (jet travel, specifically, or large-scale interstates).

Later miniature Americas in LEGOLANDs West and East present cartography of discrete locations literally fenced off from each other and separated by concrete walkways and water. The focus in LEGOLAND California is on the built environments of these locations. Its tableaux present an America not in motion but at rest, and at play, in its tourist-friendly cities. The mechanism whereby tourism occurs – the actual travel –

²⁵⁸ “America Wonderland: Home of The American Heritage Panorama,” advertisement, *Berks County Record*, May 17, 1962.

is all but absent from these scenes. Even in places where travel or transit is an essential part of the landscape – Times Square, for example – or locations renowned for highways and gridlock – Southern California and Washington, DC – cars are merely sprinkled around the models ornamentally and not presented as an integral feature of those places or their lived experience. Completely missing from the LEGOLAND California model are any scenes of other modes of travel that knit the vast nation together, specifically trains and airplanes. There is some nod to water travel, but other than that, there is no indication that the mini-residents of the model travel outside of the cities or that tourism happens between them.

LEGOLAND Florida continues this trend, presenting primarily Florida-centric tourist destinations as well as a few other iconic American cityscapes, but again with no connective travel infrastructure to suggest how these areas interrelate. So, though each area depicted is itself a popular tourist destination and the miniature LEGO people (or “minifigs” in LEGO parlance) within them are engaged in vacation-like leisure pursuits, there is no explicit representation of the act of tourism as it relates to travel. The only modes of transportation truly highlighted are either fast-but-ineffective (the Daytona Speedway) or powerful-but-non-terrestrial (the Space Shuttle).

The most recent incarnation of the miniature American tourist attraction have, so far, lived entirely online to date and present the most extreme evolution of the travel-without-movement theme. Here, visitors can take a virtual tour of a simulated American landscape without ever leaving the comfort of their own home (or, at least, laptop). Both *America in Miniature* and *Wonders of America* began as a series of renderings and webpages describing plans for their three-dimensional realizations to potential visitors

and investors alike. Both sold the notion of travelling without movement as a value-added component to their attractions, as it relates to the aforementioned expedience of “seeing” multiple American tourist destinations (or satisfying facsimiles thereof) together in one place.

Wonders of America took this idea even further, positing that the American tourist would expect a virtual component to his visit, one that would require an additional level of participation via smart phone while in the park and the use of Hollywood-style special effects to create a “realistic” American experience. While the America in Miniature version of the park *was* to feature representations of modern American car, air and water travel, scenes of transportation are expunged from the Wonders of America landscape in favor of, again, discreet scenes of separate American cities and landmarks, with the footsteps of the visitor the only connection between them.

There are a few things going on with these curious omissions of motion, the most significant of which I think has to do with the tension between concepts of the “national” and the “local.” Excising examples of the ways in which Americans travel from “Here” to “There” is one way of erasing the distinction between them. Roadside America presented a landscape of America extrapolated from the local environment, with only a few anachronistic items from outside the region. Its scenes, historical and contemporary, were based primarily on nearby landmarks and locales, with the implication of a shared American experience. America Wonderland presented a more geographically unmoored “America” with landmarks and symbols drawn from all over the country, but with no indication that Denver, Pennsylvania was itself an integral part of that landscape.

The ubiquity of the internet in modern American life is also evident in the

construction of later models, which take many of their design cues from the motionless travel of web surfing. As we've seen the evolution of communications technology and strategies has influenced the form of the miniatures. Roadside America is simultaneous, suggesting the chapters of a book, while America Wonderland is "Cineramic," demonstrating the influence of movies and television on its narrative strategy. Similarly, America in Miniature, conceived on the cusp of the internet age and largely consistent with more traditional, static models, is in sharp contrast to Wonders of America, which shows a shift to immersive environments that straddle the material and virtual.

The advent of the internet age has also given a "second act" to the older attractions. In the case of Roadside America, this has meant establishing an online presence with an evermore sophisticated website working cross-promotionally with the Pennsylvania Dutch Gift Haus attraction, located next door to the miniature village and also owned by Gieringer's descendants. The internet has also allowed for further circulation of Roadside America imagery via visitor photographs, videos and reviews on such sites as Flickr, YouTube and Yelp, respectively. Additionally, both modern and vintage Roadside American souvenir paraphernalia and promotional material can regularly be found on eBay and other such sites, again increasing the range and potential audience for the attraction and its images.

Though closed following Hahn's death in 1973, America Wonderland similarly lives on in its assorted internet-facilitated incarnations. The finding aid for Hahn's personal and business-related papers is readily available on the Pennsylvania State Archives website. And, like Roadside America, souvenirs and promotional material from the long-defunct attraction is still readily available on eBay and other sites specializing in

vintage attractions, Pennsylvania history and kitsch.

While LEGOLAND California takes its Miniland locations from popular tourist destinations in the U.S., it erases Carlsbad from that tableau, rendering it a non-place where other, more representatively American places are displayed. Despite Carlsbad's history as an albeit smaller-scale tourist location as well, absent are the Flower Fields, Pea Soup Andersen's or any other local landmark recreated in LEGO. LEGOLAND Florida reverses this trend, heavily featuring local Florida tourist attractions while eliminating some of the more nationally recognizable locations its West Coast counterpart includes in its itinerary. Along these lines, while America in Miniature was to be built in a wholly tourist-supported location, representation of Las Vegas within its own walls was noted as merely "subject to full sponsorship" on its website.²⁵⁹ Likewise, Wonders of America as it's currently envisioned, contains no representations of Phoenix or surrounding environs.

There are two ways to interpret the inclusion or omission of the host location in these attractions: either it's inconsequential to the national itinerary or it's so wholly American that its inclusion is beside the point. The latter would be analogous to the aforementioned World's Fair phenomenon whereby host countries needn't create national pavilions for themselves, but rather demonstrate their metropolitan might by having other countries (territories, colonies, etc.), come to them to be displayed. This is also indicative of the tension regarding what constitutes a genuinely American itinerary insofar as there is a debate concerning the location of "real" America.

Just as the tug-of-war between here and there is played out on these miniature

²⁵⁹ "Preliminary List of Models," America In Miniature website, 2009.

tableaux, we also see an evolution of an American itinerary featuring a present without a past. The older attractions in this study make explicit the connection between an American past and an American present. In Roadside America, these two are indivisible to the extent that they exist concomitantly on the plane of the model. At America Wonderland, a straight line is drawn directly from the American frontier invention to the “New Frontier,” reverse-engineering the inevitability of the “modern” American experience.

In each of these landscapes, the past is crucially important to understanding the present and is presented episodically as either a series of innovations or struggles that shaped the American character. Both locations were interpreted in their time (and, to some extent, Roadside America continues to be), as invocations of “simpler” times and a shared American experience to which a metaphorical return would act as panacea for the divisiveness of modern society. I will return to the historical omissions necessary to make this take place in a moment.

Later models take pains to either feature historic sites offensive to the fewest possible paying customers or sidestep the problem of history entirely and present an America wholly constructed within the modern moment. Frequently, even structures that could be presented in an historic context – the Washington Monument, Grand Central Terminal, etc. – are instead situated within the contemporary landscapes of each location without further commentary on their origins or development. In LEGOLAND California, the only referents to the past are a few “historic” sites commemorating places and/or events far enough outside the realm of lived and/or sympathetic experience as to render them completely innocuous.

For example, the “Chalmette National Historic Park” marker next to a replica structure in the “New Orleans” section explains that it is the “site of the last war ever fought between England and the United States, commonly called the Battle of New Orleans.” For all the rich, violent and continuing history in the Crescent City, the choice of this particular monument is, as regards tourist sensibilities, eminently safe. There is also explanatory signage next to a rendering of a New Orleans style vaulted cemetery with a “Jazz Funeral” occurring nearby that describes a “distinct aspect of New Orleans culture, the roots of the Jazz Funeral date back to Africa,” without getting into why such traditions would have been so transplanted and thereby eliding a painful and unfinished portion of American history. LEGOLAND Florida too presents “Antebellum Mansions” as part of its Florida itinerary, locating them on a spatial and temporal plane with the Daytona Speedway, Kennedy Space Center and neon facades of Miami’s South Beach neighborhood.

America in Miniature, perhaps due to its origin as the brainchild of a foreign national, did not shy away from presenting historic scenes in its list of proposed models that problematize a comfortably valorous American narrative. The Frederick Douglass birthplace, Iolana Palace, and Mesa Verde Cliff Dwellings all raise the troubling specters of American slavery, Colonialism and Westward Expansion/Imperialism. Not surprisingly then, these scenes are expunged from the Wonders of America incarnation of the attraction, supplanted instead by contemporary, urban scenes, flush with parades and merriment. Any suggestion of an American past at Wonders of America exists in the virtual material created for smart phones and other PDAs that can be accessed (or ignored) with the touch of a button. While the wonders of earlier miniatures relied

heavily on the notion of a shared past, the wonders in Wonders of America are modern, technologically enhanced and free from contestation.

This, I believe, is the reason behind the preference for contemporary representations in the more modern miniature attractions. The American past is a hotly contested one and one that, to paraphrase Faulkner, “isn’t even past.” The legacies of the American imperial adventures around the globe, Westward Expansion and its accompanying genocide(s) and, especially, slavery, continue to reverberate in our present moment, exacerbating tensions already inherent in our polyglot, multicultural society.

Additionally, any illusions of a “shared past” similar to those presented in Roadside America and America Wonderland are not applicable given the current demographic makeup of the country. Even those versions had to delete entirely or seriously gloss over troublesome aspects of American history in order to present anything like a shared American experience and they make certain assumptions about the homogeneity of their audiences and their expectations of what such a past would look like. Again, missing in either is even a suggestion of slavery. While slavery was not as prevalent in Pennsylvania overall as it was in other states, Southern and Northern alike, the commonwealth nonetheless contained slaves and tolerated enslavement for much of its history. Similarly, depictions of Native Americans, especially those displaced by local and frontier settlers, range from the “noble savage” archetype of Roadside America to the outright savage portrayals of America Wonderland.

Significantly, the “Immigrant Experience” frequently vaunted as an integral part of the American narrative is missing entirely from either of the older tableaux, unless you count the inferred settlement of the Pennsylvania Dutch as gleaned from traditionally

decorated barns and German surnames dotting the landscapes. Other first-wave ethnic groups are absent, as are successive waves of immigrants following the 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act. The demographic changes in the makeup of the nation that followed disrupted the “immigrate/assimilate” narrative envisioned by Oscar Handlin as subsequent generations migrants created community enclaves and retained language and cultural practices of their homelands.²⁶⁰ Laurence Gieringer’s death in 1963 precluded any alterations to the model to reflect subsequent demographic realities while the steadfast and unchanging nature of Adam Hahn’s diorama won it accolades from its visitors.

It is worth noting here that the diminutive scale of these attractions also helps them avoid some uncomfortable aspects of race and ethnicity in American life, as the tiny humanoid figurines that populate the models are, for the most part, too small to do anything more than suggest different racial and ethnic makeups and facial features are entirely blank. The figures of Roadside America appear in shades suggesting Caucasian, Native American and African-American, consistent with the demographics of Central Pennsylvania at the times displayed. Those in the extant photos of America Wonderland appear to be mostly Caucasian, with the exception of the residents of the “Indian” village in the Frontier section. The mini-figs of LEGOLAND are a resolutely multicultural bunch, appearing in a variety of hues. The figurines of Wonders of America have been replaced entirely by the bodies of the tourists themselves who will do dual performances as tourists and residents as they populate the models on their visit.

This dovetails neatly with the last trend I identify in these sites, which is the

²⁶⁰ Oscar Handlin, *The Uprooted: The Epic Story of the Great Migrations That Made the American People*. New York: Little, Brown and Company, 1973.

emergence of a consumer society, indicated by increasing displays of leisure without labor. There is more to this, I think, than just LEGO wanting to represent its playful ethos by showing recreational scenes. The nature of tourism in the United States has changed and with it its expression in these touristic sites, the expectations of the tourists themselves, and the opportunities to claim cultural citizenship through the act of domestic tourism.

While domestic tourism in the U.S. has always been a leisure practice, as the 20th century progressed and the 21st century opened, it has become increasingly consumption-based and ludic. This is no longer “travel” for education or citizenship or broadening one’s horizons, but “vacation” for indulgence, consumption and the absence of labor. The overriding impetus for tourism to places like Roadside America and American Wonderland was to stir patriotic sentiment and inculcate a personal relationship with the nation at the level of the individual through genuine travel to miniature replicas of places of historic and national import. While souvenirs and gifts were on offer for purchase at each site and admission was charged to visitors, the touristic expectation of visitors to these attractions was patriotic in nature, in keeping with the narrative of tourism as a key component to national social cohesion and identity.

There are, of course, glimmers of the emerging consumer society in the landscape of Roadside America – a scene of furniture delivery to a suburban home, the downtown commercial shopping district, etc. There are hints of other, more sweeping components to modern consumer capitalism as well, such as the replica of Henry Ford’s first factory in Dearborn, Michigan, but that is only a small portion of the model, which otherwise shows scenes of an American history based on producer or artisanal-based economy. In

this American past, farmers raise their own crops (and barns) and pioneer villages feature shops next to each other, helmed by trade specialists of an agrarian economy – blacksmiths, harness-makers, etc.

In the “present” of Roadside America, modern labor is represented in the model anthracite mine, however quite a bit of the jobs portrayed are sales and service-oriented. While there are the aforementioned furniture stores and auto dealerships in the downtown portion of Fairfield, the factories that produced these goods are located somewhere outside the boundaries of the model. Already, Fairfield suggests the midcentury turn from a producer economy to a consumer economy.

Roadside America, constructed largely prior to the sea change in the commercial advertising industry that emphasized market segmentation over “broadcasting,” shows a (largely) unified nation, culturally cohesive and consistent from its historical era through to its modern age. While prior to World War II the nation was largely imagined as a collective entity (or set of them) in advertising, the advent of market research led to the adaptation of a “divide-and-conquer” approach. Rather than trying to appeal to the largest number of citizens at once, market segmentation favored dividing the nation into distinct groups whose motivations, desires and aspirations were used to figure out how best to advertise goods and services to them.

The continuing evolution of America as a consumer society is reinforced in America Wonderland, an attraction initially conceived as a commercial enterprise. The representations of the America past are absent almost any portrayal of labor, even agrarian labor. There are churches, schools, and “main street” area with people milling about, but little to no suggestion as to where those people spend their days or how they

make a living. In the modern, urban portion of the attraction, billboards for national brands dot the top of skyscrapers, even as the shops portrayed in the town itself announce themselves with generic signs like “toys.” Visitor and New York World-Telegram reporter William Longgood, writing in 1961, noted the attraction “...generates the feeling of vitality of a new country in the making, the feeling of nostalgia for days and times past, the feeling of a great nation in flux.”²⁶¹ The linear march of the America Wonderland narrative and orderly streets of its most modern cityscape may have provided respite to American tourists confused by challenges to societal stability at home and abroad, but it also points the way to another sort of flux on the horizon – that of the transition of the American economy.

Here too, though only in its nascent stages at the time of America Wonderland’s debut, the effects of commercial encroachment can be seen in the attraction’s urban section, where advertising billboards crown the skyscrapers and television antennae bristle on apartment building roofs. The advent of television accelerated the “narrowcasting” of market segmentation as advertising became targeted to groups segregated by viewing patterns – e.g. daytime soap opera viewing housewives, Saturday morning cartoon watching kids and families clustered around the tube together in the evenings. Consumers of now-targeted “mass media” were repeatedly reminded of their membership in a particular group, the segmented advertising reifying the segments to which it appealed.

LEGOLANDs West and East see the progression of touristic expectation as something that becomes increasingly monetized, corporatized and branded. Each is

²⁶¹ William Longgood, New York, NY, Letter to Adam S. Hahn, November 7, 1961.

based on the international toy brand and “lovemark”²⁶² of the LEGO company. Where LEGOLAND California was a product of the original LEGO company, LEGOLAND Florida was created after the series of corporate purchases that ended up with the LEGOLAND parks decoupled from the LEGO toy concern. Even before the transfer of control of these properties, LEGOLAND California had begun to show a distinct departure from the original concept of the LEGOLAND parks as tranquil oases for families with young children to a more conventional amusement park model with water elements and thrill rides. The design of the parks, directing visitors through a series of themed scenes, each with an accordingly themed gift shop featuring LEGO products, foregrounds this commercial element

LEGOLAND California, itself a project born in a time of American economic recession, exposed the unease of local residents with the transition of their own local economy from defense manufacturing to one based largely on tourism and therefore primarily service-sector jobs. Within the Miniland portion of the park itself, indications abounded of just how far the American economy had swung to a consumer model. The ludic representations of leisure pursuits recreated in LEGO blocks and organized into urban tourist destinations show an erasure of almost any scene of labor at all. The tourist expectation of an American itinerary had become one devoid of even the suggestion of work.

This underscores the rising income inequality looming in the American economy as, increasingly, those able to go on vacations (or, at least, pay the admissions fees to a place like LEGOLAND), sharply diverged from an ever-shrinking middle class. The

²⁶² Lukas (2008), 183.

evolution of corporatization of American society is represented within Miniland primarily as billboards and advertising in the miniature Times Square (itself a tourist destination composed entirely of advertisements – its raw commercialism the attraction that draws the crowds). Co-branding and product tie-ins abound throughout the rest of the park, with a sports feature sponsored by the Top Flight trading card company, rides inspired by other LEGO toy lines and cross-promotional displays throughout the park – Star Wars, Harry Potter, Bob the Builder, etc. Even the Vegas section is, by design, a promotion for the casinos displayed therein, whose forms and themes work as three-dimensional promotions for themselves in their life-sized versions.

By the time LEGOLAND California was under construction, not only was market segmentation the norm in commercial advertising, but so was the conception of the United States as a set of “regions” to be toured. This functioned to differentiate areas from each other that were otherwise homogenized by the “leveling of experiences” created through the uniformity of modern commercial districts and the alienating experience of modern travel which, as experience via airplane, train and high-speed highways, alienated the modern traveler from the act of travel itself.²⁶³ The need for a distinctive experience upon reaching a destination, coupled with the need for a method to catalog the experiences encountered within that journey, was satiated through the mechanism of the regionally organized itinerary. Again, this “stereotyping” of geographic regions assisted the tourist looking to find their expectations confirmed.

LEGOLAND Florida, a product of the increasing international corporate consolidation inherent in the modern world, also features similar brands and cross-

²⁶³ See Jakle (1985), 190-199.

promotions to its California counterpart, in this case going so far as to inform the content of Miniland models. In the Time Square of Miniland Florida, due to the park's exclusive concession agreement with Pepsi Beverages Co.²⁶⁴, it is Pepsi billboards that look over the intersection of Broadway and Sixth, rather than the Coca-Cola signage of the California park. Rather than the Volvo driving school of the California location, Florida boasts a Ford driving school, with corresponding billboard endorsement in its Miniland as well. The "WB Games Zone," described as "an interactive area that lets kids play all the latest and greatest LEGO video games using the latest personal technology devices and video kiosks,"²⁶⁵ is a cross-promotional feature with Warner Brothers, further underscoring the corporate convergence inherent in the modern themed environment.

The development of LEGOLAND Florida took place in an even further accelerated landscape of marketing, touristic, demographic and cultural fragmentation, in which a whirring entropy made it almost impossible to define an "American" public writ large. The rise of cable television further continued the narrowcasting trend – now whole channels, as opposed to just programs, could be targeted to specific groups. Modeling themselves after successful advertising initiatives based on market segmentation principles, politicians based campaigns on appealing to particular demographics, rather than a broad swath of the population. Again, the more people were marketed to as groups, whether for commercial or political ends, the more they came to see themselves as members of distinct, subnational communities. In the case of Florida, the concept of the state as its own attraction, mirrored in the construction of the East Coast Miniland USA, was reinforced by the state's rapid population increase as migrants from around the

²⁶⁴ "Grab A Pepsi At Legoland," *The Ledger*, Winter Haven, December 14, 2010, C4.

²⁶⁵ "LEGOLAND Florida 2012 Fact Sheet," page 6, Merlin Entertainments Group.

country, especially Baby Boomer retirees, flocked to its warm clime in droves.

The plans for America in Miniature and Wonders of America also make explicit the incorporation of corporations into the fabric of the modern theme park. While America in Miniature sought to forge cross-promotional links with the casino models featured in its Las Vegas scene, Wonders of America saw sponsorship potential in a variety of its tableaux, from its “Rivers of Chocolate” section to the “Napa Wine Valley” dining facility. In each case, it was taken as a given that corporate tie-ins would be found that would both underwrite and legitimize these areas of the park with their endorsements. Even still, the use of brands within the park was to be tightly controlled, with CEO Craig Hudson careful to employ only those brands that would reinforce the authenticity of the atmospheres presented without taking the patron out of his immersive experience through incongruity or excessive signage.

Here, the shift in corporate advertising strategies between the narrowcasting early 2000’s and the hyperpersonal, hyperindividual approach of a decade later is thrown into sharp relief. During this period, corporate marketing shifted again from just segmentation, wherein groups would be delineated by advertisers who would target them in their campaigns, to “lifestyle branding,” where the goods themselves would be presented as having characteristics appealing to certain manners of living. The consumer himself then, is presented as a curator of his own identity, with the goods chosen serving a narrative function. In other words, consumers would now sell *themselves* to the products.

America in Miniature marketed itself as the American version of the international miniature park model in an era in which the internet was not yet the ubiquitous

communication/entertainment/commercial nexus it has come to be, with its long tail allowing for direct engagement with microaudiences and “communities of sentiment” organized around small-scale catalysts. Though it intended to market specifically to demographics encompassed in the group “Las Vegas Tourist,” it did not present a particular orthodoxy in its depictions of Americans or their cultural habits in its display.

Wonders of America, on the other hand, born only five years later (a lifetime in the Internet Age), understood its role and audience entirely differently. This vision of the miniature-based American-themed attraction intended for the experience to be an “aspirational” one, with the ability to travel to (and afford) the park itself a marker of class and lifestyle distinction. The lifestyles on display in each representative region in their respective parades and celebrations mirrored the expectations and aspirations of the economically comfortable, leisure-travelling, experience-seeking individual it anticipated as its audience.

As nations employ branding strategies, frequently in pursuit of tourist visits, the imagery with which they seek to differentiate themselves from other potential destinations becomes a highly articulated form of national identity that may differ significantly from that which its citizens would recognize from lived experience. Along this line, it is worth considering if the use of national theming does indeed bespeak the end of the “national” moment in any genuine, meaningful sense. As Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett has noted, the calcification of history into “heritage” usually occurs after the lived experience of that history has largely disappeared.²⁶⁶ Debord similarly imbues his “spectacle” with the quality of “everything that was directly

²⁶⁶ See Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (1998).

lived...moved into a representation.”²⁶⁷ If the American-themed miniature tourist attraction reinforces Brand America in the touristic realm, this may suggest that its signs and symbols, even those ostensibly set in contemporary times, are already passé.

Rather than reinforcing the idea of a shared national and cultural experience, modern minis reflect back a landscape of indulgence and fantasy devoid of underlying work, history or connection, all the better to inscribe and reinscribe a palimpsest of identity that need never extend beyond the borders of the self. Those for whom travel to the modern miniature America is out of reach needn't worry as they don't figure into the landscape anyway. For those who can afford it, the American itinerary is a permanent vacation.

Suggestions For Further Research

With the fate of Wonders of America seemingly still uncertain, it was with great interest that I noticed yet another American-themed miniature tourist attraction hanging out their digital shingle as I neared completion on this dissertation. The “Mini America” park in Emerson, Georgia (an Atlanta suburb) is described as “an educational theme park with famous American landmarks and moving miniatures... the place where America comes alive in miniature!”²⁶⁸ Though only a proposed venture since 2013, Mini America has already taken advantage of modern communications technology to establish an extensive web and social media presence. Its main website contains an electronic press kit, a “behind the scenes” digital video on a separate site aimed specifically at potential investors, a blog and a Twitter account.

²⁶⁷ Guy Debord, *Society of the Spectacle* (Detroit: Black & Red, 1983), section 3.

²⁶⁸ “About Mini America – Quick Overview”: <http://www.miniamerica.org/about-mini-america> accessed 5/3/14.

Founder Eric de Groot, like America in Miniature founder Edward van der Meer, is originally from the Netherlands and cited Holland's Madurodam miniature park as a source of inspiration. De Groot also discusses conceiving of the project a decade ago, which would put it in a similar post-9/11 timeline as the America in Miniature park. A PowerPoint presentation on its investor website identifies other cities to which they would seek to export franchises of the park if the concept proves successful. Ambitiously, they would look to identify their American-themed miniature park as its own lovemark,²⁶⁹ a brand emotionally resonant beyond mere logoization while replicable and exportable to areas around the country.

In de Groot's conception, Mini America would serve as a locus of concentration, a headquarters if you will, for a larger movement that seeks to reconfigure domestic perceptions of the United States from a society of consumption to one of production. Plans for the physical design of the park hearken back to a Columbian Exposition-like organization of structures, each meant to symbolize and highlight some aspect of American culture. Here, the visitor would walk through areas depicting themes of: Transportation, Sports, Skyscrapers, Hollywood, Rural America, the U.S Capitol, the Military, and American History.²⁷⁰ The park would also contain "Interior Exhibits," along with meeting facilities and a "Restaurant/Shopping Courtyard."

This version of the American landscape works in the realm of metaphor, as opposed to actual, physical place. Even locations nominally based on real geographical locations – the U.S. Capitol, Hollywood – are themselves metonyms for other thematic

²⁶⁹ See Lukas in *Theme Park* (2008), 183.

²⁷⁰ "About Mini America – Quick Overview": <http://www.miniamerica.org/about-mini-america> accessed 5/3/14. Also, see Figure 25 in the image appendix for rendering.

elements de Groot hopes to tease out, e.g. Democracy and Popular Culture. While history is a part of this Americascape, it functions as its own discrete location, present in, but separate from contemporary lived experience. The aim, de Groot explains, is to inspire entrepreneurship in individuals visiting the attraction. Ultimately, he hopes to create a self-reinforcing phenomenon, whereby attendees, inspired by examples of Yankee innovation and production will themselves go forth and create, bolstering the American economy and fostering a sense of collective investment in the nation's fortunes.

The physical manifestation of Mini America was initially intended for inclusion in the "Lakepoint Sporting Community & Town Center," a massive 1,300 acre sports and entertainment complex that opened in the Atlanta suburbs in 2014.²⁷¹ As of November 2014, plans had changed for the attraction to be located in another, as of yet undetermined site.²⁷² Ultimately, whatever final resting place the flagship park occupies, plans call for that to be only a small piece of the Mini America juggernaut, with physical and virtual Mini Affiliates hawking wares from each of the 50 states and creating their own locally-based miniature environments to display the best of what their state has to offer in goods, services and local attractions.

In this way, the America of Mini America may present a landscape hewing most closely to the actual configuration of the modern United States. Organized thematically, as opposed to geographically, in its physical space, Mini America would nonetheless allow for representations at the state level in its online and locally-affiliated physical locations. This neatly sidesteps the tension between Nationalist and Federalist visions of

²⁷¹ "About Us": <http://www.lakepointsports.com/about-us/> accessed November 11, 2014.

²⁷² Author conversation with Eric de Groot, November 18, 2014.

our confederation of states, privileging no particular geographical area over another, but rather uniting them all as partners (or “affiliates”) via the overarching themes of industry, ingenuity and innovation. In this way it is not unlike its Columbian Exposition ancestor, knitting the nation together through a similarly thematically organized schematic and reifying national values through the selection of those themes.

As with the proposed Wonders of America attraction, performance would also play a key role in the Mini America environment, with a rotating marquee of events further underscoring what de Groot considers key component of the Americans experience: Sports, Military, Holidays, History, Patriotism, Corporate Entertainment, Communications, Technology, Arts and the Environment.²⁷³ Unlike Wonders of America, however, Mini America again takes a decentralized approach as to *where* these performances take place, envisioning them as “[taking] place in a pavilion, auditorium, conference room, classroom or on the grounds of Mini America.”²⁷⁴ The performances, like the themes, are not location-specific, but rather free-floating – as at home in one area of the park as another.

The dual physical and virtual components of the park allow it to “live” and be accessed in the two modes in which modern American life is conducted. This crossover is highlighted in the “Mini Care Package” campaign launched on crowdfunding site IndieGoGo in November of 2014.²⁷⁵ This campaign sought funding for a series of “Mini Care Packages” of American-made goods and materials, to be sent to recipients around

²⁷³ “Planned ‘Mini’ Programs,” <http://www.miniamerica.org/vision/mini-america-the-experience/planned-mini-programs>, accessed November 11, 2014.

²⁷⁴ Ibid.

²⁷⁵ <https://www.indiegogo.com/projects/the-mini-care-package--2#home>, accessed November 18, 2014.

the country, inspired by the World War II era CARE package program undertaken in the European theatre. The care packages were to include: a miniature copy of the U.S. Constitution, a “Dream Journal,” a miniature American flag, candy and jewelry, with each product sourced from an American manufacturer.²⁷⁶ The goal, as with Mini America itself, was to correct a perceived misconception regarding a dearth of manufacturing in contemporary America by presenting tangible artifacts of a nation still capable of producing its own goods and not having outsourced the whole of its industrial might.

This virtual presentation of a physical package referencing the virtual incarnation of what is intended to be a physical site toggles back and forth between the material and virtual Americas while echoing the miniature as delivery mechanism of national insignia. Here, the care package functions not only as a promotional device for an attraction that doesn’t yet exist but as a souvenir for a tourist experience that hasn’t yet happened – the ultimate expression of a postmodern American encounter. While the effort is noble in its intention, to augment the overall mission to offer a counter-narrative to the notion that America is a nation of consumption rather than production, its lackluster funding performance, raising only \$56 out of a \$7600 goal,²⁷⁷ calls into question whether that narrative has a target market and, if so, if the miniature form (as theme park or care package) is an effective method of conveyance.

Following the thread of consumerism as expressed in the miniature American-themed tourist attractions primarily featuring the exterior built environment, I would also like to revisit locations ultimately left out of this initial encounter with the subject for

²⁷⁶ Ibid.

²⁷⁷ Ibid.

how they too may inform the conversation. Of particular note are the Mott's Miniatures, a series of recreations of historical American interiors that trace the evolution of the domestic sphere and its forms over three hundred years. Like the "International Village" incarnation of Roadside America that was exhibited at the Carsonia Park amusement park, the Mott's Miniatures were included as an attraction at California's Knott's Berry Farm amusement park for decades.

The Mott's Miniature story begins in the material world of the miniature, each scene showing a "typical" American interior of a particular historical era, complete with the furniture, room orientation and consumer goods corresponding to its time. It becomes a "value-added" attraction within an attraction until the early 1990s, at which time the Knott's Berry Farm park was itself undergoing a shift from family-run amusement park to new ownership which terminated the contract of what had become known as the Mott's Miniature Museum.²⁷⁸ After numerous attempts to reinvent the museum as a standalone attraction, the Mott family ended up selling off the physical models piecemeal, but created an online version of the museum in which the original creations live on.

The Mott's Miniature Museum offers a window into American perceptions of the American domestic *interior* which, through examining the miniature material artifacts depicted as standard accouterments of the American household, sheds a light on the ways in which Americans were influenced by consumer goods marketing at home. Its touristic incarnations – first at Knott's Berry Farm, as an unsuccessful attraction in its own right and finally as a digital version – echoes the corporate takeover of the American

²⁷⁸ "Museum History Page," <http://www.mottsminis.com/museum/Museum.htm>, accessed January, 2009.

amusement industry, one in which a Mom-and-Pop shop of the kind run by DeWitt and Allegra Mott (or, for that matter, Laurence and Dora Gieringer) faces long odds. The attraction's gradual dissolution of its physical form in favor of a digital one traces the evolution of the internet's rise as the ultimate "museum" and repository of historical – even formerly material – artifacts.

Another possible avenue for further investigation would be comparing depictions of the nation's past as displayed in the Pettus Randall Miniature Museum of American History at the American Village in Montevallo, Alabama and the travelling, Compton-based African American Miniature Museum. The Pettus Randall Miniature Museum, named for its publishing magnate founder, is a Cold War-Era attraction designed to provide a portable, roving exhibit of interior scenes from American history. Included therein are scenes from Colonial and Civil War history, along with a complete (as of the mid-1960s) set of President and First Lady figurines, resplendent in their inauguration finery.

On the other end of the spectrum, the African American Miniature Museum, the creation of former preschool teacher Karen Collins in 1990s Los Angeles, gives a very different view of similar eras in American history. Collins' miniature dioramas, also designed for portability and exhibited at local schools, include harrowing scenes of slavery, segregated water fountains and lunch counter sit-ins, alongside uplifting models of a church service, Hattie McDaniel winning an Academy Award and President and Mrs. Obama.

I would like to revisit these historical miniatures to compare and contrast their respective visions of the nation as well as engage with the relationship between actual

physical travel and the miniature. In this case, the miniature was intended to travel to the *audience*, unlike the miniature environments explored in this thesis. The use of the miniature to educate, especially in matters of history, and the similar aims of two very dissimilar people separated by half a century and a color line would be fascinating themes to investigate.

Of additional interest are four miniature world parks abroad that feature American-themed sections among their diminutive landscapes.²⁷⁹ Miniatur Wonderland in Hamburg, Germany adheres most closely to the indoor, “miniature village” variety of attraction (a la Roadside America and America Wonderland), as opposed to the “miniature park” type. The “America Section” is one of eleven internationally themed areas of the model and features scenes of Las Vegas, Area 51, Mount Rushmore, The Grand Canyon, and a “Christmas Village” nestled in a replica Rocky Mountains. The inclusion of Las Vegas, rather than the more typically depicted New York or Washington, DC scenes found in other such attractions, is explained by the creators of Miniatur Wonderland as being more a nod to form than representation, as the bright lights of Las Vegas enabled model-makers to create a dazzling LED display.²⁸⁰ The Area 51 and Christmas Village portions of the “America Section” are somewhat more puzzling, suggesting a view of “America” that is seemingly indivisible from that of fantasy.

Minimundus is an outdoor miniature park in Klagenfurt, Austria that features

²⁷⁹ As originally conceived, this dissertation would have examined these global minis as well, however a desire to finish the project in an (arguably) timely manner, coupled with a dearth of funding available to scholars who wish to travel the world going to itty-bitty theme parks prompted me to focus instead on these nonetheless fascinating domestic locations.

²⁸⁰ “About America,” accessed January 6, 2015, <http://www.miniatur-wunderland.com/exhibit/wunderland-sections/america/about-america/>

replicas of monuments, buildings, vehicles and locations from around the world. The “USA” models are similarly puzzling in both the choices made for inclusion and the narrative these replicas create when taken together. Included therein are miniature representations of: The Queen Mary, the steamboat “Natchez,” the Space Shuttle, the Rosedown Plantation in Southern Louisiana²⁸¹, something called “El Cabilo” (which as far as I can tell may refer to a number of sites, none of which are in the United States), Independence Hall, The White House, The Alamo, Mesa Verde and the Statue of Liberty. There seems to be a theme of technology, mobility and scenes from American history, but how the sum of its parts are meant to be taken as a whole is not readily apparent without a site visit.

Issues of scale at Window of the World in Shenzhen, PRC, another pan-national miniature park, are discussed at some length in Nick Stanley’s *Being Ourselves For You*. The models are not all scaled to the same ratio, causing the viewer’s perspective to vary wildly from miniature to miniature. Stanley speculates that the miniatures are intended for an audience that has only a pictorial experience of the originals (not unlike expectations of the crowds at Wonders of America).²⁸² This raises questions about the intended audience for the park, whether foreign or domestic tourists, and if the replicas are meant to be faithful to their real-world counterparts or rather to the touristic expectations of the visitor who may have only ever seen them in photographs or films.²⁸³

²⁸¹ This would make Minimundus one of the very few miniature tourist environments with an American themed area, at home or abroad, to depict a plantation.

²⁸² Stanley,(1998).

²⁸³ Arguably, this happens quite a bit at the nationally themed casinos on the Vegas Strip. Rather than hew to exact replication of famous monuments and structures, casinos like New York New York, Paris and the Venetian instead create an impressionistic version of these places, again using variably scaled miniatures and recreations.

The “America Zone” at Tobu World Square in Nikko, Japan offers a striking example of how a location as seemingly unlikely as a Japanese miniature park can turn into a virtual American heritage tourism site. This section features a replica of the World Trade Center, creating the effect of a Baudrillardian simulacrum: the copy for which there is no original. While there is no longer an actual World Trade Center, there does exist a 1:25 scale model replica half a world away. The remainder of the exhibits in the “America Zone” are all drawn exclusively from the Eastern United States and include depictions of the White House, Empire State Building, Chrysler Building and Statue of Liberty.

Perhaps most striking in these foreign depictions of American-ness, is the way that “not-German-ness,” “not-Chinese-ness,” “not-Japanese-ness,” and “not-Austrian-ness” is expressed through the choice of exhibition scenes. At Miniatur Wunderland, the “America Section” is smaller than the model of Hamburg, situating it in a geography that privileges the local, while still being the only non-European area portrayed in the attraction highlighting its global importance. The miniature America of Minimundus emphasizes technology and a history of U.S. racial conflict. Window of the World groups “The Americas” together in a way that seems utterly alien to the “native” American viewer, with Rio’s statue of Christ the Redeemer gazing down at the island of Manhattan, which floats in an archipelago next to Chile’s Easter Island. In Japan’s Tobu World Square, a miniature bank robbery is staged within the models of New York City sights. Just as the domestic audience configures what constitutes an American landscape with their own expectations, I am eager to see how these miniature Americas shape and are shaped by their host country’s interpretation of the American experience and how

these differ from place to place.

Given that the most recently proposed miniature American parks in this study were both originally proposed by foreign nationals, it may be that at this moment a “home grown” audience is unable (or unwilling) to present an unified vision of the nation. Whether this is due to the effects of over a half-century of corporate market segmentation conditioning Americans to see the self as the ultimate center of any national narrative, the multiplicity of perspectives in a diverse country, the embarrassment of “cultural intimacy” in the form or function of an American-themed miniature environment or the inability of such to resonate with a large enough segment of the domestic audience to maintain economic viability, the foreign lens offers an opportunity to view “America” as a single entity and investigate what elements of that resonate abroad. To “see ourselves as others see us,”²⁸⁴ may offer a clue, not only how “America” is interpreted overseas, but what components of an “American” landscape we may want to include in our own imaginings of the nation if, that is, we are still able to do so.

²⁸⁴ To paraphrase Burns.

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Appendix: Images

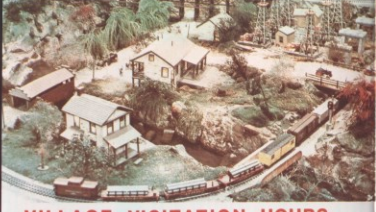


Figure 1: Roadside America exterior, 2009. Photo by the author.




Figure 2: Laurence T. Gieringer, undated uncredited photo from back cover of *The Story of Laurence T. Gieringer And His Roadside America* by Dom Ambrose Agius, O.S.B, 1961. The caption reads, "Laurence T. Gieringer at his work bench, constantly striving to improve Roadside America. Fervently, piece by piece, he whittles at blocks of wood, fashioning them to further perfect his 'Great Idea' – Roadside America.


A VIEW OF SEVERAL OF THE TRAINS WHICH RUN THROUGHOUT THE DISPLAY.



VILLAGE VISITATION HOURS
SUMMER— JULY Thru LABOR DAY
 Daily—9 a.m. to 6:30 p.m.
 Weekends—9 a.m. to 7 p.m.
WINTER— SEPTEMBER Thru JUNE
 Daily—10 a.m. to 5 p.m.
 Weekends—10 a.m. to 6 p.m.
 Telephone (610) 488-6241 — between 10 a.m. & 5 p.m.



THE FIRST GRIST MILL, IN THE FOREGROUND, WAS AMERICA'S FIRST INDUSTRY. NOTE THE WATER SHED WHICH OPERATES THE GRINDING MACHINERY.

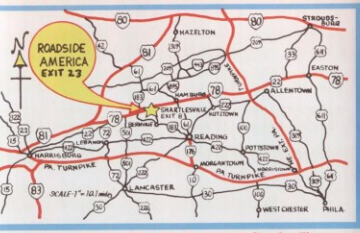


THE SHRINE CHURCH, A REPLICA OF A CHURCH IN BOLZANO, ITALY, GRACES THE LANDSCAPE.

COMPLETELY AIR CONDITIONED FOR YOUR COMFORT

YOU HAVE A FRIEND IN PENNSYLVANIA

In the heart of the beautiful Pennsylvania Dutch Country




BE SURE TO GET OFF I-78 AT EXIT 23-Shartlesville

MILEAGE TO ROADSIDE AMERICA

Allentown, Pa.	36
Baltimore, Md.	125
Binghamton, N.Y.	150
Easton, Pa.	52
Frederick, Md.	117
Gettysburg, Pa.	83
Harrisburg, Pa.	47
Lancaster, Pa.	46
Lebanon, Pa.	28
New York, N.Y.	128
Philadelphia, Pa.	76
Portville, Pa.	27
Reading, Pa.	25
Wilmington, Del.	69

"BE PREPARED TO SEE MORE THAN YOU EXPECT— YOU'LL BE AMAZED"



BE SURE AND VISIT OUR FAMOUS PA. DUTCH GIFT HAUS.

MATERIALS AND EQUIPMENT USED TO CONSTRUCT AND OPERATE ROADSIDE AMERICA


17,700 Board Feet of Lumber.	4,000 Feet Expanded Metal Under Plaster Work.
4,000 Pounds Sheet Iron.	\$16 Yards Canvas Used for Waterproofing.
5 Bushels Screened Sawdust.	600 Pounds Rubber Roofing for Waterways.
450 Feet Pipe.	44,000 Pounds of Stone.
75 Gallons Paint.	900 Pounds Nails.
75 Pounds Dry Color.	18,000 Pounds of Plaster.
3,510 Feet Railroad and Trolley Tracks for Four Trains and Six Trains.	\$7 Bags of Cement.
225 Bushels Natural Moss.	8,000 Pounds of Sand.
1 Electric Pump handling 6,000 Gallons of Water per hour.	31,500 Feet Electric Wires.
4,000 Miniature Figures.	200 Miniature Buildings.
88 Magnetic Speakers.	10,000 Miniature Hand-Made Trees.
\$200 Units Railroad Cars and Engines.	2000 Small Light Bulbs.
1,835 Wall Transformers.	3 Motors to Move Equipment.
95 Control Switches.	12 Record Players and Amplifiers.

The Original

ROADSIDE AMERICA

INC. ®

GREATEST INDOOR MINIATURE VILLAGE



BETWEEN ALLENTOWN & HARRISBURG ON RT. 22 & I-78 AT SHARTLESVILLE, PA.

Figure 3: Roadside America promotional brochure, circa 2009.

An Enchanted Miniature Land of
YESTERDAY & TODAY—

ROADSIDE AMERICA

GREATEST INDOOR MINIATURE VILLAGE
IN THE HEART OF THE BEAUTIFUL
PENNSYLVANIA DUTCH COUNTRY

ROADSIDE AMERICA is an unforgettable panorama of life in rural United States. The exhibit spans more than two hundred years in time and lets you see, in exquisite miniature, how people lived and worked in pioneer days . . . through the years since then . . . right up to the present.

In newspapers and magazines, **ROADSIDE AMERICA** has been acclaimed as the largest known miniature village—the most unique and detailed masterpiece of its kind in the world. Actually, it is not one village, but many—really the American countryside as it might be seen by a giant so huge that he could see from coast to coast.

How it all began

At the turn of the century, near Reading, Pennsylvania, Laurence Gieringer, age 5, often looked out of his bedroom window at night, gazing toward nearby Neversink Mountain. Crowning the mountain was the Highland Hotel with lights that twinkled and beckoned. To little Laurence, the glittering white building looked like something from a fairy tale, small enough to pick up and carry home. One day, the boy decided to do just that. Leaving the safety of his backyard, he set off through the woods to find the mountain top and the "toy" building. The inevitable happened. Laurence became bewildered, then completely lost. After a frightening night alone in the woods, he was found by anxious searchers the next morning. Despite this experience, the small boy was to retain his interest in "toy" houses for the rest of his life.

Going to work at age 16, Laurence, after a start in the printing trade, became a carpenter and painter, work which he felt gave more scope to his particular talents. Always he continued to work on his hobby of making model buildings. Skillfully, he whittled at blocks of wood, fashioning them to his dream of a miniature village . . . a church . . . bridges . . . a horse-drawn carriage . . . stables . . . farmhouses. He knew nothing of drawing to scale, yet arbitrarily established a size of $\frac{1}{8}$ " to the foot, which he adhered to in all his modeling.

So the years went by. Laurence had pursued his hobby for some **60** years, continually enhancing his skill and artistry. The miniature "village" had grown steadily in size and scope, and news of it began spreading through the countryside. At Christmas, 1935, Gieringer as usual set up a part of his miniature display for his children. Hearing of the splendor of the exhibit, the Reading Eagle newspaper published a feature story on it. Now interest mounted still more rapidly.


Every day through all 12 months of the year, throngs of visitors come to **ROADSIDE AMERICA**. The exhibit fascinates not only because of its authentic, beautifully crafted miniatures, but because of the excitement of continual movement. Swift trains glide through tunnels and over bridges . . . a tiny fountain bubbles in the miniature Zoo . . . a mountain trolley hustles through the woodland . . . aircraft swoop and dive . . . an old-time grist mill slowly grinds grain for flour. This is only a small part of the action at **ROADSIDE AMERICA**.

Boys are known to have active imaginations, but never in his most optimistic dreams, could the 10-year-old Laurence Gieringer have suspected that his beloved hobby would one day become a giant exhibit of museum calibre . . . an exhibit that annually delights hundreds of thousands of men, women and children.

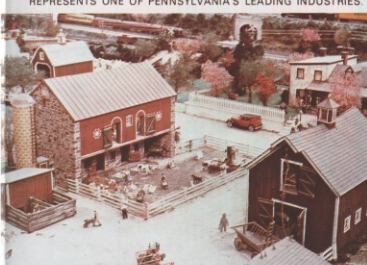
ROADSIDE AMERICA is a truly exciting treat for your children and for you.

Photographers are welcome to **ROADSIDE AMERICA**. Please take all the pictures you wish.

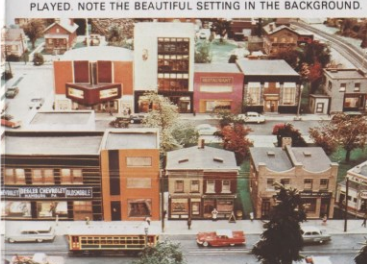
Reach us online at: www.roadsideamericainc.com



THIS REPLICA OF THE LOCUST SUMMIT, PA. COAL BREAKER REPRESENTS ONE OF PENNSYLVANIA'S LEADING INDUSTRIES.



A TYPICAL EASTERN PENNSYLVANIA DUTCH FARM IS DISPLAYED. NOTE THE BEAUTIFUL SETTING IN THE BACKGROUND.



A GENERAL VIEW OF THE TOWN OF FAIRFIELD REPRESENTS 100 YEARS OF AMERICAN ARCHITECTURE.

Figure 4: Roadside America promotional brochure flipside, circa 2009.



Figure 5: America Wonderland promotional postcard, undated. Photo credited to Jim E. Hess. Caption reads:

America Wonderland
 “In The Heart of the Penna. Dutch Country”
 U.S. Route 222 – Denver, Penna.
 ¼ Mile East of Reading Interchange of Pa. Turnpike
 between Lancaster and Reading.

Step into the enchanted world of AMERICA WONDERLAND – a world of moving miniatures, mountains, streams, cities and music – where in 20 minutes you can follow America’s great growth, its people, building, transportation and entertainment from 1700 to present day. Relax and enjoy the grandeur of a sunset, moonlit night and sunrise over this breath-taking miniature world that took 20 years to build.


Phone: Denver, Pa. Andrew 7-5325



Figure 6: Adam S. Hahn, undated photo credited to Mel Horst, from America Wonderland promotional brochure. Photo caption reads: "The Craftsman: Adam S. Hahn – Creator, Producer and Director of AMERICA WONDERLAND at his work bench."

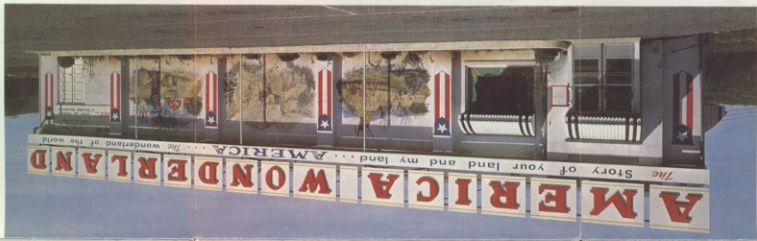
There is no other place in the World where you can re-live so much of America's Heritage.

Home of The American Heritage Panorama

Modern American City—Historic Independence Hall and Statue of Liberty in Bay Area.

Early America—County Fair, Penna. Dutch Farm, One Room School House, Drake Oil Well, Yosemite Falls and Grand Canyon in background.



AMERICA WONDERLAND

AAA Approved—See Listing under Ephrata

HOURS OPEN: Be here not later than one half hour before closing time.

July thru Labor Day—open daily 9:00 to 9:00.

Apr., May, June, Sept., and Oct.—open daily 10:00 to 6:00.

March and Nov.—Sat. and Sun. only 10:00 to 6:00.

Dec., Jan., and Feb.—open only by appointment.

Adults \$1.00 Children under 14: 40¢

Children under 6—FREE

For Special Group Rates for Organizational and Bus Tour Groups write to:

AMERICA WONDERLAND

Above schedule of time and prices subject to change without notice.

★ **EVERY AMERICAN SHOULD... SEE**

AMERICA

WONDERLAND

A LIVING PORTRAYAL OF YOUR HERITAGE

★ **EVERY AMERICAN SHOULD... SEE**

AMERICA

WONDERLAND

A LIVING PORTRAYAL OF YOUR HERITAGE



U.S. Route 222—Between Lancaster and Reading—6 Miles North of Ephrata, One Half Mile North of Pennsylvania Turnpike Exit #21.

Mailing Address:—Denver, Pa. 17517

U.S. Route 222—Between Lancaster and Reading—6 Miles North of Ephrata, One Half Mile North of Pennsylvania Turnpike Exit #21.

Telephone:—267-5325 (Area Code 215)

NEARBY POINTS OF INTEREST

★ OUR GIFT SHOP MAINTAINS A BROCHURE RACK FILLED WITH INFORMATION AND DIRECTIONS TO NEARBY POINTS OF INTEREST



NOTE: ⊕ Indicates Cloverleaf

Figure 7: America Wonderland promotional brochure, undated.

☆ See History . . . Come Alive!

AMERICA WONDERLAND

***Unbelievable yet Authentic** — Hand-Crafted Work of Art in Action . . . Created and Produced by the craftsmanship of one man — working over 20 years — in a sincere effort to promote and preserve Americanism.





***Entertaining** — An Action-Packed Production in life-like Miniatures . . . Re-create the growth of a struggling infant Nation to the Wonderland of today.





***Educational** — Thousands of figures in wood and hundreds of perfectly detailed authentic historic replicas — Re-enact the historic events — from the early days of the Indian to the Space Age.





***Fascinating and Fantastic** — America's Past and Present . . . Realistically enacted in historical sequence — synchronized to a sensitively narrated recording with Stereo Sound, Stirring Music, True Life Actions and Spectacular Lighting.





***Inspirational** — America's Priceless Heritage . . . Comes Alive with such unbelievable Realism and Great Impact that your emotions are aroused.





***Extraordinary** — The Only Living Miniature Production of its Kind in the World!

Scenes shown here represent small portions of this incomparable, beautiful and indescribable living panorama.

Figure 8: America Wonderland brochure flipside, undated.

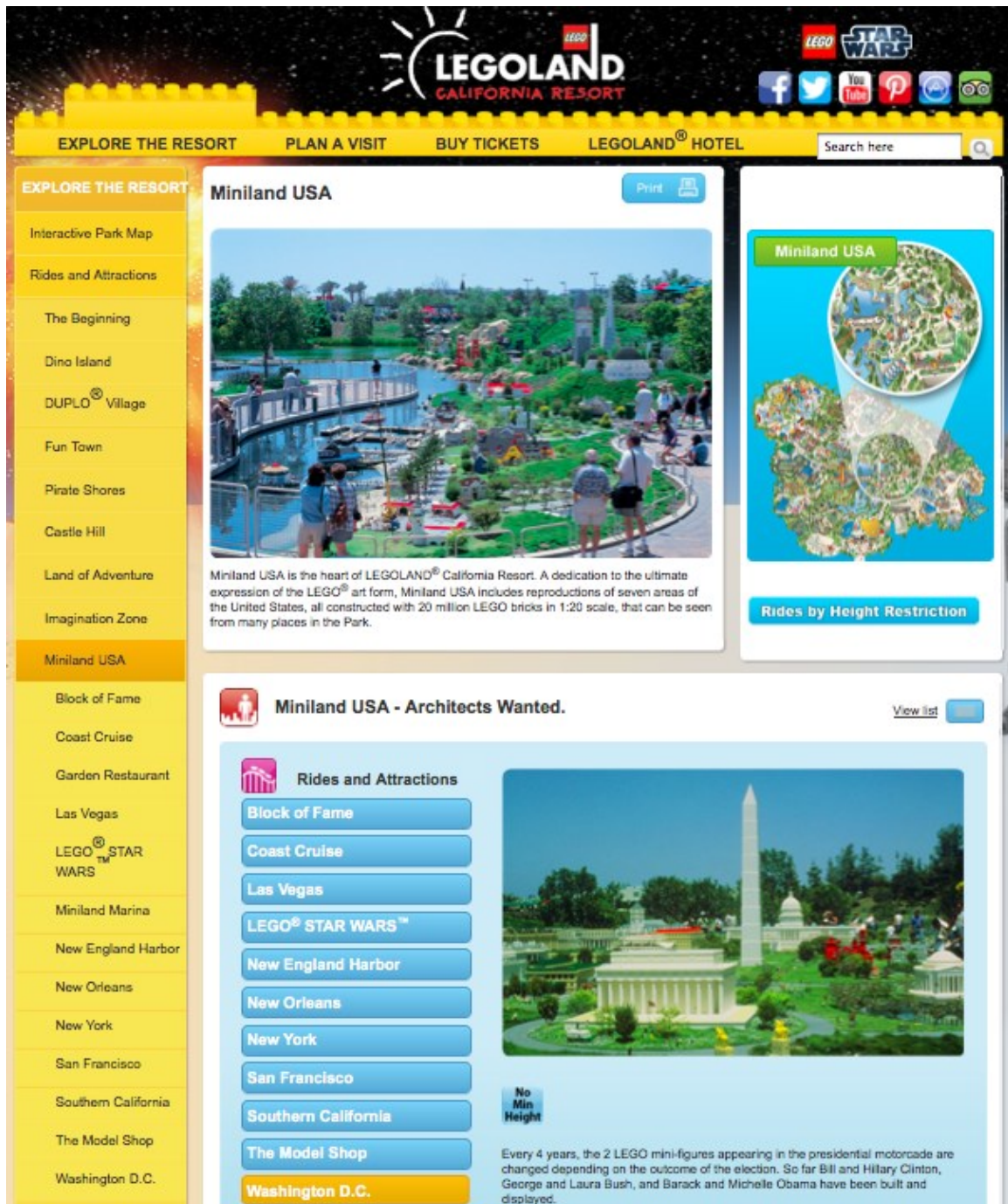


Figure 9: LEGOLAND California Miniland USA webpage, accessed 2014.



Figure 10: LEGOLAND California Miniland USA map & legend, accessed 2014.



Figure 11: "New York City," LEGOLAND California, 2010. Photo by the author. Note the Brooklyn Bridge that terminates in a grassy, undeveloped "Brooklyn," anachronistic "Freedom Tower" in upper right-hand corner and Mount Rushmore across the water in the upper left.



Figure 12: “Times Square,” LEGOLAND CA, 2010. Photo by the author. Note Coca-Cola, Volvo, Samsung & Kodak co-branding.

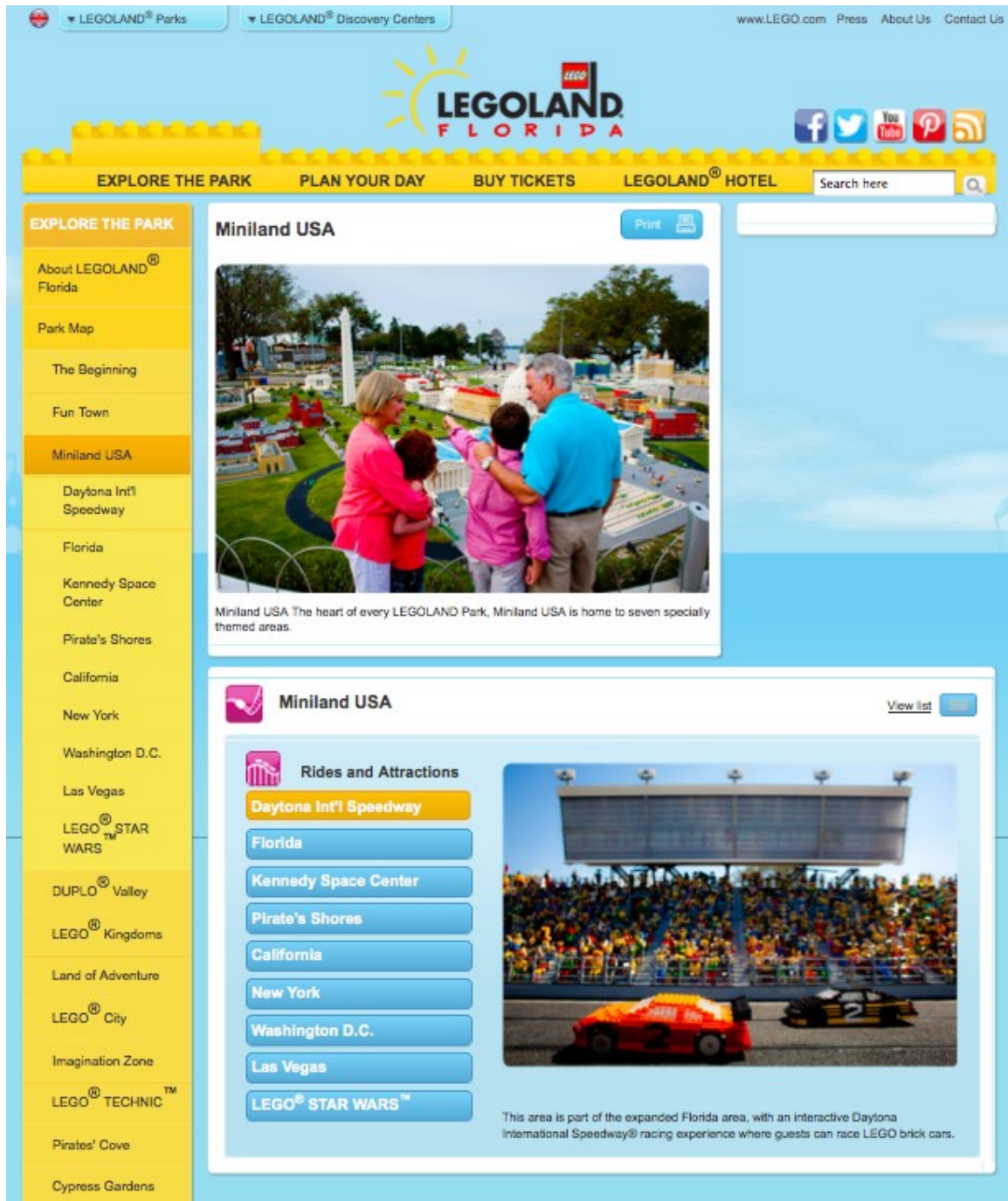


Figure 13: LEGOLAND FL Miniland USA webpage, 2014.



Figure 14: LEGOLAND FL Miniland USA map & legend, 2014.



Figure 15: "New York City," LEGOLAND FL, 2014. Photo courtesy of KerryAnnMorgan.com. Note in this version Liberty Island is moved closer to Lower Manhattan and the Freedom Tower and 9/11 Memorial have been excised entirely.



Figure 17: America in Miniature Website Welcome Page, circa 2009.



Figure 18: America in Miniature Park Renderings, circa 2009.



Figure 19: America in Miniature Exterior Rendering, circa 2009.



**AERIAL RENDERING
AMERICA IN MINIATURE**
LAS VEGAS, NEVADA

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Figure 20: America in Miniature Aerial Rendering, circa 2009.

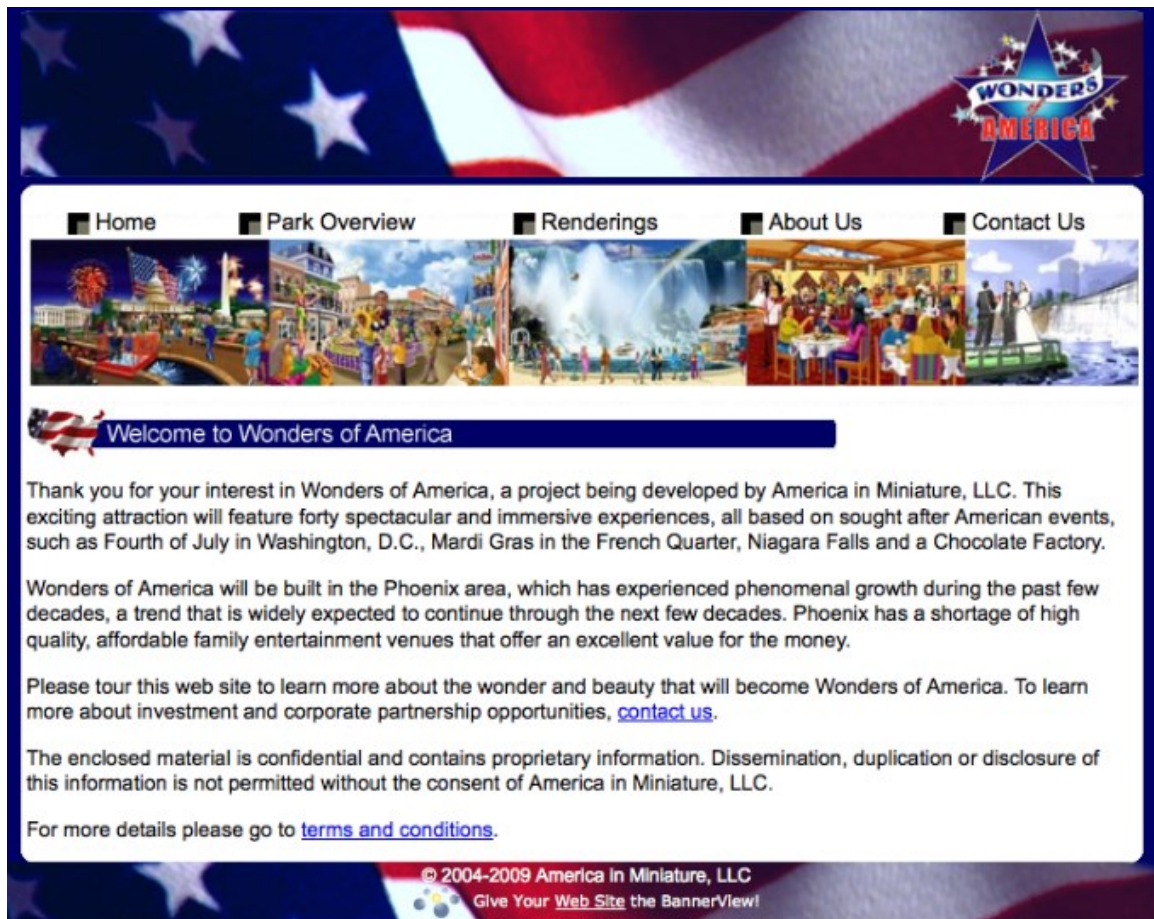


Figure 21: Wonders of America Website Welcome Page, circa 2009.



Figure 22: Wonders of America Park Renderings, circa 2009.



Figure 23: Wonders of America Exterior Rendering, circa 2009.

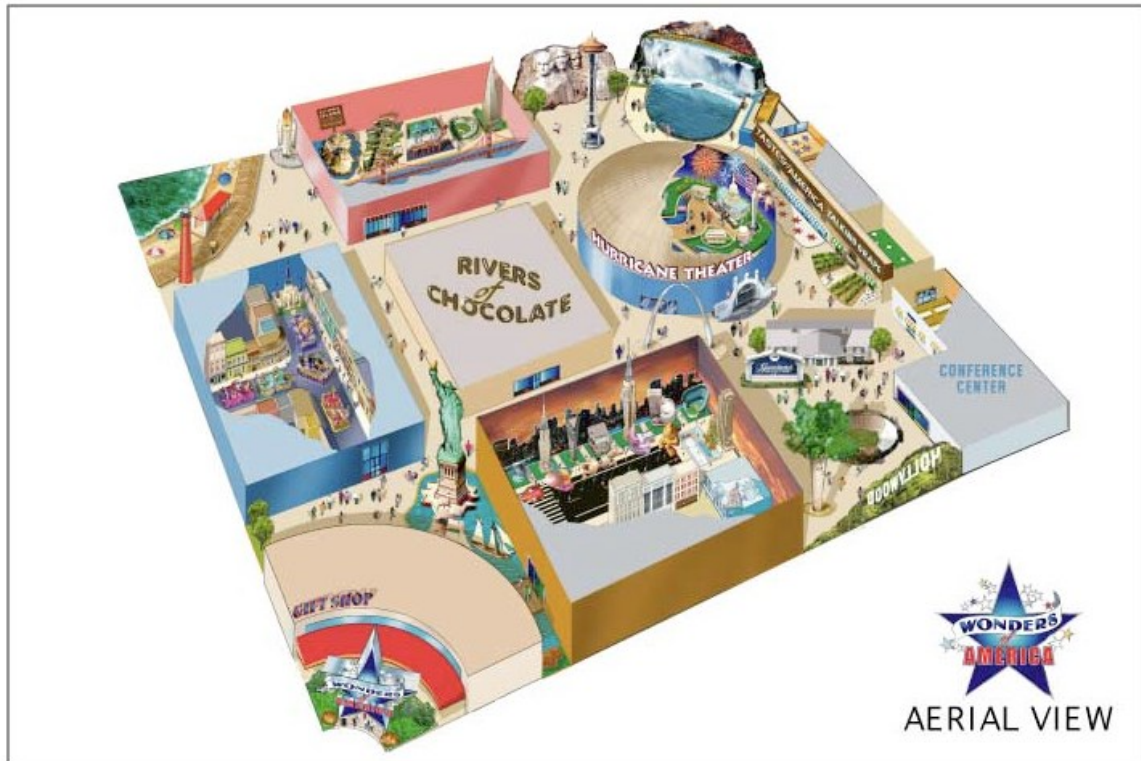


Figure 24: Wonders of America Aerial Rendering, circa 2009.



Figure 25: Mini USA Rendering, 2014.