

THE AGE OF SAIL IN THE AGE OF AQUARIUS;  
PRESERVING MEMORY AND IDENTITY AT NEW YORK'S  
SOUTH STREET SEAPORT

by

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## **Abstract**

### **The Age of Sail in the Age of Aquarius; Preserving Memory and Identity at New York's South Street Seaport**

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While historic preservation in the postwar era has been conventionally explored as a response to urbanism and urban development, this dissertation examines the preservation impulse of the 1960s as a sign of the cultural crisis of that decade. The postwar urban crisis - culminating in summer riots in 1967 and '68, student takeovers, draft card burnings, and proliferating protests against the nation's racial, financial and political hierarchies across the country- indicate the crisis of the 1960s was much broader than simply one of urban crime rates and deindustrialization. This larger cultural landscape of the '60s, its ubiquitous challenges to the political, financial, racial, and moral foundations of the country, gave birth to an "anguished scrutiny" surrounding the meaning of the most fundamental tenets of American society. For many, the answer to the question of the urban crisis was found in the preservation and commemoration of American origin stories, of maritime-inspired myths, of a time *when we were good*. The crisis of the 1960s is *the* critical landscape from which historic preservation and commemoration emerged at the South Street Seaport Museum in lower Manhattan, a commemorative landscape reimagined to recall traditional American hero myths and a "different breed of men" which seeded the city's early prosperity during the golden Age of Sail.

## **Dedication**

To Clem: true public scholar, generous and gracious teacher, once in a lifetime friend.

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## INTRODUCTION

*Under the impact of modernity, the beliefs, ideals, and traditions that have been central to Americans and to the character of American democracy – whether religious, such as Jewish and Christian beliefs, or civic, such as Americanism – are losing their cultural compelling power.<sup>1</sup>*

- Os Guinness, *The American Hour; A Time of Reckoning and the Once and Future Role of Faith* (1993)

*The city does not tell its past, but contains it like the lines of a hand, written in the corners of the streets, the gratings of the windows, the banisters of the steps, the antennae of the lightning rods, the poles of the flags, every segment marked in turn with scratches, indentations, scrolls.<sup>2</sup>*

- Italo Calvino, *Invisible Cities* (1972)

In the spring of 1967, amidst the backdrop of social, political, and cultural fracturing that characterized those long hot summers between 1966 and 1968, a grassroots preservation start-up known as the Friends of the Seaport procured a charter from the State of New York Board of Regents for the creation of the South Street Seaport Museum. Situated along the East River in lower Manhattan. South Street Seaport was conceived “to tell the story of the men in ships who built the city’s greatness in the century that the young American republic came of age.”<sup>3</sup> Fundamental to the founding

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<sup>1</sup> Os Guinness, *The American Hour; A Time of Reckoning and the Once and Future Role of Faith* (1993), 27

<sup>2</sup> Italo Calvino, *Invisible Cities* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1974), 11

<sup>3</sup> South Street Seaport Museum, *South Street Seaport: A plan for a vital new historic center in Lower Manhattan* (New York: South Street Seaport Museum, 1969), 1. The South Street Seaport Museum, chartered by the State of New York on April 28, 1967, was conceived to interpret the vernacular history

vision behind the Seaport Museum were two questions: *what has our city become?* And *what do we want this city to be?* Preservation and commemoration of the city's oldest maritime district was "intended to weave back into the fabric of city life some of the warmth and accessibility that have been lost along the way," and to provide a vital amenity to the shape that the modern city had become.<sup>4</sup> Early writings from Museum founders and supporters indicate a concern not only with the question, *what has our city become?* but query more broadly: *who are we?* And *what have we become?*

Echoing "antimodern" sentiments – we will examine this term more closely in Chapter 1- found in the writings of Nathaniel Hawthorne, Frederick Law Olmstead, and Henry Miller, Museum founder Peter Stanford's plans for the South Street Seaport Museum were steeped in a pastoral yearning for a more heroic era, one which might guide the city forward. Stanford asked, "Could one bring an actual fishing schooner back to teach the slower rhythms of life in this preoccupied, hurrying, noisy environment?"<sup>5</sup> The sailing ship represented a remedy to the age-old paradox of the machine in the garden. Not a noisy locomotive barreling through the pastoral landscape, offending the senses of smell, sight, and sound; the sailing ship – whether schooner, square-rigger, or lightship - instead represented a pastoral idyll in the chaos of the machine that was postwar era New York City. The sailing ship conjured imagery of a nineteenth century way of life which "involve[d] a direct relationship with the elements.... With doing

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and heritage of the East River waterfront surrounding the Fulton Fish Market during South Street's heyday, the mid-nineteenth century.

<sup>4</sup> South Street Seaport Museum, *South Street Seaport*, 1

<sup>5</sup> Peter & Norma Stanford, *A Dream of Tall Ships: How New Yorkers came together to save the city's sailing-ship waterfront* (Peekskill: Sea History Press, 2013), xxvi

things with your hands, with your body, which you don't do in our society, our mechanized society.”<sup>6</sup>

When he christened his own schooner *Athena*, Stanford recalled the days of the ancient Greek agora, when the city served as a meeting place where citizens gathered to talk about “home truths and meanings of the human experience.” The ideals and functions of the original democratic city-state inspired Stanford during his own socio-political climate, where “in a time of unrest in city streets and college campuses, we admired the classic moderation of the Greek civilization, which shone for us like a beacon.” The cultural dissent and disruption manifesting in anti-war protests, campus takeovers, and the urban riots of the late 1960s were not relegated to the sidelines of the Friends’ vision for a restored South Street Seaport but in fact informed its very foundation. Indicating a critical sensibility was lacking in the present cultural landscape, Jakob Istanbrandt, shipping magnate and original chairman of the South Street Seaport Museum, announced “We’re not just going back to the past here; we are getting back to fundamentals.”<sup>7</sup>

Just as Herman Melville and Ernest Hemingway had done through literature, with *Moby Dick*, *Billy Budd*, and *Old Man and the Sea*, Stanford and the Friends of the Seaport sought to bring the romance and heroism of the sea to life. For it was at sea where “one could deal with honest realities and learn to make one’s way by man’s God-given gift to learn life’s truths.” A local sea captain insisted, “Schooners like this were sailed by a different breed of men.” Ours is, historically, a maritime nation, and the

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<sup>6</sup> Peter & Norma Stanford, *A Dream of Tall Ships: How New Yorkers came together to save the city’s sailing-ship waterfront* (Peekskill: Sea History Press, 2013), 443

<sup>7</sup> Stanford, *A Dream of Tall Ships*, p. xxvi, xx, 318, 346, 443



seafaring life is the heritage of all Americans. To the Friends of the Seaport, South Street's history was an important collective history, one which recalled "a hard life and a rough one, but it was clean and free and held satisfaction."<sup>8</sup> *Clean and free and held satisfaction. Dignity. Tough, but free.*

This is the stuff of traditional American hero myths, and we see these hero myths play out in maritime-inspired characters from Captain Ahab to Billy Budd to *On the Waterfront*'s Terry Malloy to Hemingway's Old Man Santiago: a different breed of men, each inextricably tied to the sea. Their relationship to the sea made each of these men better. Stronger. More dignified. The South Street Seaport Museum extended this heritage of dignity and strength to the cobbled streets and old brick walls of Fulton Street and Schermerhorn Row, where Stanford and Friends desired "to summon back a few of the vanished ships that had brought the neighborhood into being as a rich seedbed for the whole city" during its hey-day in the mid-nineteenth century.<sup>9</sup>

Fundamentally at stake in the preservation of the old cityscape was *meaning*, during a time characterized by lack of consensus on any meaning, whether cultural, political, or racial; a time when the country was divided between hawk and dove, right and left, straight and freak, black and white. With the nation's escalation into the Vietnam War raising questions both political and moral, Stanford acknowledged "we were working to achieve something valuable while we continued to protest the war we each opposed." On the home front, Stanford found the counterculture revolution disheartening, lamenting "the glorification of meaninglessness so fashionable in our time,

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<sup>8</sup> Stanford, *A Dream of Tall Ships*, 330, 45, 416, 447

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, 147

from Andre Gide's gratuitous act to Andy Warhol's soup can."<sup>10</sup> Stanford felt he was speaking for his entire generation; the project at South Street was meant to resuscitate the value inherent in old brick and cobbled streets of the seaport district, storehouses of memory that could teach something much needed in the meaningless present and into the "unknowable future." Stanford recalled, "The people of our generation clearly, and very nearly unanimously, felt the same."<sup>11</sup>

We must understand, then, that while conventional wisdom explains the resurgence of historic preservation in New York City following the 1963 destruction of Pennsylvania Station as a reaction against the physical transformations of the urban landscape in the name of urban renewal, preservation and commemoration of the cultural and physical landscape was more deeply rooted in notions of collective identity and cultural meaning. The Federalist era buildings lining Schermerhorn Row *meant* something to the Friends of the Seaport, just as the unfurled masts of a schooner sailing into South Street *meant* something. These reminders of the maritime past evoked a panorama of values found wanting in the present cultural landscape of the late 1960s.

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<sup>10</sup> Stanford refers to French writer Andre Gide's irreverent depiction of *crime without motive*, a senseless act amounting, in many ways, to hoax. *Les Caves du Vatican* (1914) is often described as Gide's definitive illustration of the 'gratuitous act,' in which Gide mocks the clerical tradition as one led by fools. In *Les Caves du Vatican*, the gratuitous act of a dispassionate murder symbolizes the foolishness of an indifferent society, in which one acts *simply because one feels like it*. American artist Andy Warhol's now-iconic work of Pop Art, "32 Campbell's Soup Cans" (1962), created a sensation in the art world when it first appeared at the Ferus Gallery in Los Angeles. The piece includes 32 hand-traced reproductions of Campbell soup cans. While the youthful art and film world responded to Warhol's piece with intellectual curiosity and critical acclaim for its novelty, most folks over 30 responded with disdain. *This was art??* Where was the evocation of beauty? What of this piece uplifted the human spirit? What on earth did it *mean*? Taken together, Stanford's use of these two examples indicate his – and, according to Stanford, his generation's – concern with the proliferating sense of meaninglessness associated with modernity.

<sup>11</sup> Stanford, 48, 278, 189, 277

## BORN IN AN IDENTITY CRISIS

This dissertation examines the construction of place-based meaning and collective identity along New York's waterfront, uncovers what the waterfront meant at different times and to whom, and explores why this identity was important at the mid-century, when urban renewal threatened to destroy all remaining vestiges of the nineteenth century cityscape. We read cultural productions – artistic and literary representations - of the waterfront in order to understand the ways in which these aesthetic depictions of the landscape helped to create a very particular urban identity. Why do we care about streetscapes, architecture and things in the first place, and why it is that seemingly disparate actors and communities attached particular significance to the myth of a more heroic collective identity in the midst of a current cultural crisis? Conventional wisdom surrounding the re-emergence of historic preservation in the 1960s places extraordinary focus on distress with modernism's zeal for urban renewal and the subsequent physical transformation of the city under an increasingly centralized planning authority. Here, I examine and explain the identity of the seaport – past and present – through a lens previously unexamined. This work examines cultural and artistic representations of New York's waterfront and the seafaring life; the imagery of sailor as heroic-man-of-action; and explores how this imagery informed collective memories associated with lower Manhattan's waterfront. One cannot remove the cultural process from its larger social-political landscape. Historic preservation, like everything else, does not occur in a cultural vacuum.

The historic preservation boom of the 1960s was born in an identity crisis, in which insecurities and anxieties festered amidst a rapidly changing and turbulent world. The preservation impulse in the 1960s arose as part of a larger conversation on American

identity during a time of vocal challenge and dissent to the status quo, a full decade before historic preservation as an urban revitalization strategy emerged in the late 1970s and flourished with the ubiquitous festival marketplace in the 1980s and '90s. Collective memory, informed by the narrative of historic preservation, is a tool used to legitimate group identity amidst an uncertain and hyper-changing world. We must understand how and by whom memories are shaped for collective consumption; what do public memories attempt to legitimate during periods of challenge and dissent? The nostalgic impulse fueled simultaneous maritime-inspired preservation projects in lower Manhattan in the late-1960s, when growing anxieties created by the restructuring of American society manifested in a sentimental yearning for a collective memory that was itself a myth; an idealized conception of the past born from present-day anxieties about the changing political, economic, and social landscape.

The 1960s' resurgence of historic preservation involved a process of shoring up cultural authority and recalling a more heroic personal and collective narrative amidst the political and cultural turmoil of that decade. While support for historic preservation of the mid-nineteenth century cityscape was gaining momentum in lower Manhattan, cities were besieged by social and political upheaval and dissent. Urban historian Jon Teaford remarks upon this age of urban crisis, in which, "as was so often the case in the late 1960s and 1970s, the most dire news was from New York City."<sup>12</sup> It is important to note that this process of shoring up cultural authority – the cultural authority of an era which produced "a different breed of men" – is nuanced, is informed through an appreciation for official as well as vernacular history, and does not necessarily constitute a partisan

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<sup>12</sup> Jon Teaford, *The Metropolitan Revolution; The Rise of Post-Urban America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 134

conservative consensus. The motivating sensibilities behind this process are as diverse as the actors involved. Stanford and the Friends of the Seaport focused on the restoration of sailing ships and teaching the craftsmanship and vernacular history of maritime trade - recalling an era when life's rhythms were at once "slower" and also attuned to the "daring, sacrifice, and endurance"<sup>13</sup> which emerged from a life battling the sea. At the same time, counterculture supporters like musician Pete Seeger promoted a radical left-leaning political sensibility, while the lower Manhattan business community, led by David Rockefeller, sought to realize its own historic preservation project recalling traditional patriotism and heroism of the Revolutionary War era. Diverse actors on the growing historic preservation scene in the late 1960s in lower Manhattan chased diverse notions of exactly *whose* cultural authority demanded revitalization. The consensus lies in the *process* of revitalizing a more desirable identity or collective meaning during an era of cultural dislocation.

The historic preservation movement of the 1960s, illustrated here through the development of the South Street Seaport Museum and the Fraunces Tavern museum block project, emerged during that decade's sense of unraveling of the American cultural landscape, and was part of a larger cultural dynamic of the period which alternately questioned, challenged, and supported the status quo. More specifically, preservation and commemoration of the nation's maritime roots during the cultural and political ferment of the late 1960s sought to revitalize the personal and collective identity of an era that had produced "a different breed of men," an era which appeared to folks on many sides of the

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<sup>13</sup> Peter and Norma Stanford, "The Road to South Street," Alfred Stanford, *Pleasures of Sailing*, 13-14

political and socio-economic spectrum to embody a more noble sense of roots and pride, a sense presently wanting in the cultural landscape.

The return to historic preservation as an urban necessity is not simply the story of a dawning new urbanism, but indicates a more complicated gestalt, one that places the historic preservation movement within a larger paradigm shift questioning the tenuous notion of an “American” identity. Both the South Street Seaport Museum – supported by New York State Senator Whitney Seymour, Peter Stanford, Friends of the Seaport, shipping magnate Jakob Istanbrandt, and numerous maritime aficionados; and the Fraunces Tavern museum block project – garnering even wider support from the Sons of the Revolution, the downtown financial community led by David Rockefeller and Chase Manhattan Bank, the Museum of the City of New York, and several key offices in City administration - envisioned commemoration of the Golden Age of Sail as streetscape preservation on a neighborhood scale. Ranging from historic preservation to history-inspired re-creation, the objectives of both the South Street Seaport and the Fraunces Tavern projects meant to recreate a streetscape evocative of the city’s roots in maritime trade and create collective memories of a time *when we were good*.

Scholarship has tended to locate the rise of historic preservation in the 1960s as a response to the destructive course of the urban renewal bulldozer and the “bright white nothingness”<sup>14</sup> of modern urban planning. Conventional wisdom cites Jane Jacobs’ *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* as the seminal rallying cry against federally-funded urban renewal and the ongoing razing of “blighted” downtown districts. Postwar

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<sup>14</sup> M. Christine Boyer, *The City of Collective Memory; Its Historical Imagery and Architectural Entertainments* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1996), 18

urban renewal “provoked opposition and even outrage”<sup>15</sup> from architecture journalist Jacobs and sociologist Herbart Gans, both of whom travelled up and down the Eastern seaboard, writing extensively on the sociological impact of postwar urban restructuring on local communities. At stake was the city’s cultural and historic landscape, its very livability.

Jane Jacobs’ *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* was perhaps the most highly influential text on the development of contemporary urban planning and the need for preservation of the old cityscape. Jacobs’ community-based vision for urban growth and sustainability served as a catalyst for civil rights era community activism in neighborhood planning through her rejection of modernism’s ruthless savagery and centralized approach to local urban concerns. Challenging architect and modernist urban planner Le Corbusier’s modernist rant, “Death of the street!” Jacobs insisted mixed-use streets and sidewalks were critical elements of any vital city. Contemporary critic Max Page challenges several aspects of Jacobs’ vision, asserting this woman-on-the-street ignored the contentious issues of racial segregation that had been festering for decades, and directly contributed to an ever-growing tide of NIMBY’ism.<sup>16</sup> Still, Jacobs’ vision for a more locally-controlled urbanism reflected a larger ideological shift, where by the 1970s, a growing disillusionment with liberalism and New Deal/Great Society policies signaled “the fate of liberalism hung in the balance in a postwar struggle over rights,

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<sup>15</sup> Sharon Zukin. *Naked City; The Death and Life of Authentic Urban Places* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 11

<sup>16</sup> “NIMBY” = Not In My Backyard. Max Page and Timothy Mennell, *Reconsidering Jane Jacobs* (Chicago: Planners Press, 2011)

racial identity and taxation.”<sup>17</sup> Inspired by Jacobs’ impassioned and vernacular tone, a growing cadre of historic preservationists, upper-class urban dwellers, and grassroots community preservationists rallied against the physical reconfiguration of cities at the hands of a tightly centralized authority during this “age of urban crisis.”

Urban historian Jon Teaford coined this term – *the age of urban crisis* – to describe the myriad urban woes infecting Eastern and Midwestern cities during the post World War II era. During the Cold War era, Jacobs, Gans, urban critic Lewis Mumford, editors from *TIME* and *LIFE* magazines, keynote speakers at both Democratic and Republican conventions, and emerging scions of rock and roll remarked with increasing urgency on a proliferating unrest and disease affecting the nation’s urban centers. With two generations of hindsight from which to more widely analyze and interpret the era, recent scholarship from Thomas Bender, Jefferson Cowie, Miriam Greenburg, Alison Isenberg, Suleiman Osman, Daniel Rodgers, Robert Self, Jonathon Soffer, Thomas Sugrue, and Sharon Zukin examine the ruins left in the wake of a national trend towards decentralization and deindustrialization, increasing violence associated with the struggle for racial equality and civil rights, and the age of fracture in the postwar metropolis.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Robert O. Self and Thomas J. Sugrue, “The Power of Place: Race, Political Economy, and Identity in the Postwar Metropolis,” in *A Companion To Post-1945 America*, Jean-Christophe Agnew & Roy Rosenzweig, eds. (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 26

<sup>18</sup> Volumes have been written on the age of the urban crisis, decentralization and deindustrialization, and the postwar city. To linger here would diverge from this author’s focus, which concerns cultural, artistic, and media representations of the South Street waterfront across the nineteenth and twentieth centuries as well as the cultural landscape of the 1960s. See Thomas, Bender, *A Nation Among Nations; America’s Place in World History* (2006); Bender, Thomas, *The Unfinished City; New York and the Metropolitan Idea* (2002); Cowie, Jefferson and Joseph Heathcott, *Beyond the Ruins; The Meanings of Deindustrialization* (2003); Greenburg, Miriam, *Branding New York; How a City in Crisis Was Sold to the World* (2008); Isenberg, Alison, *Downtown America; a History of Place and the People Who Made It* (2004); Osman, Suleiman, *The Invention of Brownstone Brooklyn; Gentrification and the Search for Authority in Postwar New York* (2011); Rogers, Daniel T., *Age of Fracture* (2011); Self, Robert O. and Thomas Sugrue, *The Power of Place; Race, Political Economy and Identity in the Postwar Metropolis* (2007); Self, Robert O., *American Babylon; Race and the Struggle of Postwar Oakland* (2003); Soffer, Jonathan, *Ed Koch and the*



By the 1960s, a search for “authenticity” and a growing interest in the commodification of history evolved as a means to address the postwar urban crisis. Historian Suleiman Osman traces the history of Brooklyn’s “brownstoning” movement to the 1940s, when artists and white-collar professionals sought out the borough’s cheaper housing prices as the Manhattan real estate market soared. By the 1960s, these gentrifiers – predominantly white (99%), educated (99.9%), and affluent (98.3%) - promoted “a new urban ideal of close-knit housing, street life, and face-to-face contact” in the midst of “sameness, conformity, and bureaucracy in a city that was increasingly technocratic.”<sup>19</sup> Brooklyn brownstoners latched on to the historic value of these neighborhoods – and invented charming names such as Boerum Hill, Carrol Gardens, and Prospect Heights – in response to the urban renewal bulldozer and the effect it had on both real estate values *and* the city’s walkability and intimacy.<sup>20</sup> “Authentic” neighborhoods could still be found across the East River. For these brownstoners, nostalgia and romanticism mingled with a political sensibility that challenged centralized government, urban renewal policies, and failed postwar liberal programs.<sup>21</sup> Historian Wanda Rushing likewise locates the 1960s resurgence of historic preservation as a response to federally-funded urban renewal, which “motivated local citizens to form historic preservation organizations,

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*Rebuilding of New York City* (2010); Sugrue, Thomas, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis; Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit* (1996); Teaford, Jon, *The Rough Road to Renaissance; Urban Revitalization in America, 1940-1985* (1990); Zukin, Sharon, *Naked City; the Death and Life of Authentic Urban Places* (2010)

<sup>19</sup> Suleiman Osman, *The Invention of Brownstone Brooklyn; Gentrification and the Search for Authenticity in Postwar New York* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 5, 11, 12

<sup>20</sup> Osman, 14, 19-21

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid*, 9-10

nonprofits, and community development corporations to preserve, restore, and rebuild homes and businesses, often after considerable community losses had occurred.”<sup>22</sup>

Sociologist Sharon Zukin argues this search for “authenticity” in the urban landscape occurs during moments when “identities are unstable.”<sup>23</sup> Like Osman, Zukin is concerned with urban residents and their quest for “authenticity” in the physical and cultural landscape of New York City neighborhoods. “The desire for an authentic urban experience began as a reaction to the urban crisis of the 1960s, when American cities were routinely described as hopeless victims of a fatal disease.”<sup>24</sup> Zukin argues diverse community and preservation groups responded to postwar urban renewal policies that funded the razing of poor and working class neighborhoods in favor of massive public housing projects and government centers. These historic preservationists, community activists, and gentrifiers “spoke up for authenticity,” for a different kind of city, in which *all* residents, not simply the wealthy, corporate, and government interests, retained their rights to the city.<sup>25</sup> While these scholars attribute the rise of 1960s’ historic preservation to reaction against federal urban renewal policy, private redevelopment, and the local political alliances that made widespread razing of the urban landscape possible, this dissertation examines a broader cultural landscape – and deeper questions surrounding collective identity and cultural meaning- from which the preservation movement emerged.

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<sup>22</sup> Wanda Rushing, *Memphis and the Paradox of Place; Globalization in the American South* (Chapel Hill: University North Carolina Press, 2009), 66-67

<sup>23</sup> Sharon Zukin, *Naked City; The Death and Life of Authentic Urban Places* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), xii

<sup>24</sup> Zukin, 4-5

<sup>25</sup> Ibid, 11

While the deindustrialization and decentralization of cities had begun its long march south, west, and all points suburban in the 1920s, the full impact of the urban crisis became readily apparent following World War II's brief economic boom. In the 1950s and '60s, urban crime rates soared; Eastern and Midwestern cities continued to suffer decentralization and an ongoing exodus to the suburbs and Sunbelt; racial tensions fueled violent civil protests across the nation. Teaford has noted, "The disintegration of the city was readily apparent."<sup>26</sup> In September 1967, *U.S. News and World Report* asked, "Can the Big Cities Ever Come Back?" Citing riots, skyrocketing crime, and ongoing financial problems, the report concluded "The crisis of the big cities, coming to a head in recent years, continues without let up."<sup>27</sup>

Modern urban planning's solution to the social and economic ills of the city was found in the physical restructuring of its hodgepodge and antiquated urban core. Build it better, newer, glossier, and businesses and middle-class consumers will come. One might understand the impetus, however sociologically misguided, to raze ten square blocks of dilapidated tenement housing leftover from the nineteenth century in order to build, for example, the United Nations Building along Manhattan's East River waterfront. One could not fathom, however, the demolition of that majestically-inspired and glorious architectural achievement of Pennsylvania Station, only fifty-four years old and yet, in the days of decreasing rail travel, already an untenable financial hardship on its owners, the Pennsylvania Railroad Company.

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<sup>26</sup> Teaford, *The Metropolitan Revolution*, 126

<sup>27</sup> "Can the Big Cities Ever Come Back?" *US News World Report*, Sept. 4, 1967, p. 28, 31

Conventional wisdom locates the formation of New York City's postwar historic preservation movement in that 1964 destruction of Penn Station. However, recent scholarship by historians Max Page and Randall Mason places the 1960s' historic preservation impulse within a larger historical trajectory, rooted in Progressive Era social reform. Historic preservation was, therefore, not new to the 1960s, and yet the cultural landscape of the postwar era – including the physical demolition of architecture both grand and vernacular, *and* the age of urban crisis – informed its resurgence.

Of course, when we think of downtown historic preservation in the contemporary cityscape, we usually think in terms of economic revitalization plans so prevalent in recent decades. The redevelopment of Boston's Faneuil Hall, Baltimore's Inner Harbor, and New York's SoHo speak to the commercial revitalization motivation behind downtown historic preservation. In fact, festival marketplaces had become the "hottest fad" of 1980s commercial development and by the 1990s, historic preservation had become *the most popular strategy* for revitalizing smaller downtown American cities because "visitors appreciated environments inspired by nostalgia."<sup>28</sup> And while San Francisco's Ghirardelli Square waterfront redevelopment proves a strong example of early commercial revitalization via historic rehabilitation, in the early 1960s this project was more than a decade ahead of the national trend.<sup>29</sup>

Looking to the past in order to build a new city had started to become an economic and commercial revitalization strategy only by the late 1970s, after the National Trust for Historic Preservation had launched its Main Street Pilot Program.

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<sup>28</sup> Alison Isenberg, *Downtown America: A history of the place and the people who made it* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004) 272, 257

<sup>29</sup> Teaford, 176

Using the principles of historic preservation, the downtown redevelopment of small cities like Hot Springs, South Dakota; Madison, Indiana; and Galesburg, Illinois yielded uneven successes but sparked a national trend towards the marketing of nostalgia in order to revitalize flagging downtown districts. With “the past” now understood by urban planners as a marketable commodity, historic preservation became a national strategy in commercial revitalization, “seized with nostalgia for past architectural styles, transforming enclaves of their architectural patrimony into city tableaux arranged for visual consumption.”<sup>30</sup>

Architectural historian M. Christine Boyer’s skepticism of festival marketplaces and the manufactured charm-factor of cobbled downtown cityscapes uncovers the “stench of nostalgia” used to pervert the public’s sense of history. There is no wharf rat, contagion, slave auction, or infant mortality in the consumable past. This argument has been well-made in the collective literature on memory, historic preservation, and the inevitable state of *nostalgia de la boue*, memory with the rough stuff taken out. The festival marketplace of the 1980s, the development of urban hipster neighborhoods like Georgetown, SoHo, and central Austin represent *exaggerated* visions of the myth of historic cityscapes and the lives they produced. What is critical to note here is Boyer’s charge that this recollection of history *occurs most often in moments of crisis*. The current cultural landscape - whether this includes the physical razing of downtown city centers, social upheavals associated with racial strife, economic malaise of postindustrial decentralization, or vocal challenges to the nation’s fundamental ideologies – informs the form and function of historic preservation:

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<sup>30</sup> Boyer, 407

Since a return to history most often occurs in moments of crisis, it is not surprising to find that city tableaux repeat visual ideals and normative views conservatively sanctioned by public authorities, who attempt in this manner *to regain a centered world or a concrete system on which moral, political, or social foundations can stand*.<sup>31</sup>

Our affection for history, then, rises and falls with the changing social-political-economic climate. During times of social crisis, concerted efforts to recall and represent “the past” serve to shore up those very moral, political, and social foundations under threat. The razing of Penn Station was a siren call, to be sure, among New York City’s historically and civically inclined populace. However, there is a more complicated cultural landscape marking the decade of the 1960s when downtown historic preservation felt its postwar resurgence. That complicated and often contentious cultural landscape provides a trove of evidence as to the necessity for remembrance of a more heroic past during a decade of seemingly ubiquitous dissent.

The term “cultural landscape” can be described in moderately differentiated ways, but this study will use the term to denote both the totality of all visible and material things that humans have added to, or subtracted from, the natural landscape of the earth and the matrix of cultural productions that mark a society’s humanity, such as the arts, architecture, and language. The cultural landscape of lower Manhattan’s waterfront district in the 1950s and ‘60s included the dilapidated piers and still-active shipping industry along the riverfront, the Mafia’s continued control over the Port of New York, the seafood eateries sprinkled along Fulton and Water Streets, and the modernist office towers quickly replacing any remaining vestiges of the nineteenth century cityscape. The

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<sup>31</sup> Boyer, 377

cultural landscape of New York City also included newsstands containing weekly issues of *TIME* and *LIFE* magazines reporting on the crisis of the week, living room television sets tuned to the *CBS Evening News with Walter Cronkite*, the student takeover of Columbia University, anti-war protests in Central Park, draft card burnings in front of the Whitehall Street induction center, and growing numbers of teenage hippies making their homes in Tompkins Square Park. Further, the cultural landscape is not static or uniform; middle-class New Yorkers with issues of *LIFE* magazine stacked on the coffee table and Walter Cronkite reporting through the television set did not necessarily intersect with the marginalized cultural landscape of the waterfront Mafia scene or the Tompkins Square Park hippie scene, but likely gleaned this landscape through *LIFE* magazine's photo-essays or Hollywood's production of *On the Waterfront*.

Critical to note is not only the landscape itself, but more importantly *what we make of it*, what it means to various communities who travel within the cultural landscape. Material culture scholar D.W. Meinig remarks, "Any landscape is composed not only of what lies before our eyes, but what lies within our heads."<sup>32</sup> That is, we read the cultural landscape not only for what it provides visually for our examination and interpretation, but for what it clarifies in our own minds. What did the cultural landscape of New York's South Street Seaport district mean to supporters of that maritime preservation project? What did the 1960s cultural landscape of the seaport represent, and what did its more glorious nineteenth century cultural landscape evoke and evince in light of the social reality of the Sixties?

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<sup>32</sup> D.W. Meinig, "The Beholding Eye" in *Interpretation of Ordinary Landscapes*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), 34

Looking back on the Sixties from three decades hence, political activist, writer and filmmaker Susan Sontag described the decade as “a sea-change in the whole culture, a trans-valuation of values – for which there are many names. Barbarism is one name for what was taking over. Let’s use Nietzsche’s term: we had entered, really entered, the age of nihilism.”<sup>33</sup> Historians Maurice Isserman and Michael Kazin argue the Sixties was a time of intense conflict and change. Acknowledging no single narrative of the decade would “satisfy every reader,” and cautiously arguing *the meaning* of the decade depends upon an individual’s particular needs and/or observations, Isserman and Kazin nevertheless characterize the 1960s as a time when “Americans were plunged back into an ‘anguished scrutiny’ of *the meaning* of their most *fundamental beliefs* and institutions.”<sup>34</sup>

Historian David Farber likewise engages in this sort of deep excavation towards uncovering what, fundamentally, explains the decades’ sense of fracturing. Farber argues the decade experienced broad challenge to American common sense, “because American common sense had been subverted and hollowed out by the radical, political, cultural, and economic changes of the postwar era.”<sup>35</sup> From civil rights demonstrators who practiced nonviolent resistance as a means “to turn the world upside down, invert the social order;” to the counterculture, which had become “a mass-media phenomenon;” to the dispatches from Vietnam via nightly news reports, which “magnified the confusing features of a war that, at best, was hard to fathom,” contemporary historians recognize a

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<sup>33</sup> Susan Sontag, “Thirty Years Later,” *The Three Penny Review* (Summer 1996)

<sup>34</sup> Maurice Isserman & Michael Kazin, *America Divided: The Civil War of the 1960s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), ix, 4-5. Italics added.

<sup>35</sup> David Farber, ed. *The Sixties; From Memory to History* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994), loc 94 of 7563. Kindle edition



ubiquitous challenge to America's political, racial, and social structures which converged in an existential crisis of national identity and legitimacy.<sup>36</sup> The "disruption and turmoil of the decade,"<sup>37</sup> far from mere trope, has been recounted in reports and narratives from the moment they occurred *and* from contemporary historians who continue to examine the decade as a monumental time when "many began to question the legitimacy of the activist state – not because it failed... to protect the national interest of overall prosperity and stability, but because *it failed to embody the ideals* and historical images American state makers had used to justify its very existence."<sup>38</sup> Columbia University Professor of Journalism and writer Charles Kaiser adds, "the Sixties and the Thirties were the only modern decades in which large numbers of Americans wondered out loud whether their country might disintegrate."<sup>39</sup>

The very point of scholarship is to challenge preconceived assumptions and to examine the world through new lenses and in light of present-day concerns. While the decade of the Sixties has been described in all manner of Technicolor and hyperbole in the four decades since, some recent conversations on the decade have in fact questioned whether the Sixties were really as *far out* as we have been led to believe. Were the Sixties really so riotous? Were The Fifties, for that matter, really so conformist? If we are going

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<sup>36</sup> Kenneth Cmiel, "The Politics of Civility, in Farber's *The Sixties*, loc 5694 of 7563; Cmiel, in Farber's *The Sixties*, loc 5736 of 7563; Chester J. Pach, Jr. "And That's the Way it Was; The Vietnam War on the Network Nightly News" in Farber's *The Sixties*, loc 1960 of 7563

<sup>37</sup> George Lipsitz, "Who'll Stop the Rain? Youth Culture Rock n Roll, and Social Crises," in Farber's *The Sixties*, loc 4470 of 7563

<sup>38</sup> Mary Sheila McMahon, "The American State and the Vietnam War," in Farber's *The Sixties*, loc 987-988 of 7563

<sup>39</sup> Charles Kaiser, *1968 In America; Music, Politics, Chaos, Counterculture, and the Shaping of a Generation* (New York: Grover Press, 1997), xv

to examine the role of historic preservation and the recollection of a heroic history in light of the cultural landscape during the time in which it occurred, it behooves us to read the Sixties as the decade was written, by journalists and artists and writers and musicians who experienced their world in their own time.<sup>40</sup>

*Greensboro 4..... Freedom Rides.... Southern Christian Leadership Conference.... Students for a Democratic Society... Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee.....Congress Of Racial Equality....President John F. Kennedy assassinated...Malcolm X assassinated.....Tet Offensive...Stop the Draft Week.... President LBJ won't seek another term.....Martin Luther King Jr. assassinated.... Black Power.....Columbia University occupation...Grand Central Station rally and police riot....Robert Kennedy assassinated....Democratic National Convention protest and police riot.....Riots in Philadelphia.....Watts.....Boston...Kansas City... Newark... Plainfield.....Detroit....Chicago....Washington D.C... Baltimore...Stonewall....March on the Pentagon....Black Panthers..... Woodstock.....Charles Manson.....My Lai.... Hey, hey LBJ, how many kids did you kill today?*

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<sup>40</sup> Read for example: Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr. "America 1968: The Politics of Violence," *Harper's* Aug. 1968; any issue of *The Atlantic Monthly*, *Harper's Weekly*, *TIME* magazine, *LIFE* magazine; *The CBS Evening News With Walter Cronkite*; Paul Goodman, *Growing Up Absurd* (New York: Vintage Books, 1959); Theodore Roszak, *The Making of a Counter Culture: Reflections of the Technocratic Society and Its Youth* (1969); Tom Wolfe, *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test* (New York: Bantam Books, 1968); anything by Hunter S. Thompson; Judith Clavir & Stewart Edward Albert, *The Sixties Papers: Documents of a Rebellious Decade* (New York: Praeger Special Studies, 1984); Todd Gitlin, *The Sixties: Years of Hope, Days of Rage* (New York: Bantam Books, 1987); Bob Dylan, "The Times They Are A'Changin'," 1963; Joni Mitchell, "Woodstock," 1969; Paul Simon, "Mrs. Robinson," 1967; Steven Stills, "For What It's Worth," 1966.

By 1968, cultural and political instability had fractured any remaining notions of “American exceptionalism” and split society along lines of race, class and generation. Mel Brooks said, “The world is being turned upside down, conventional wisdom is being thrown out the window.” The counterculture, guided by the words of Abbie Hoffman and Jerry Rubin and Ken Kesey, scored by the music of Jimi Hendrix and Janis Joplin and Bob Dylan, fueled by marijuana and LSD, warned “Don’t Trust Anyone Over 30.” The generation over 30 worried, too, informed by Pulitzer Prize -winning journalists writing for the *New York Times* on a hated war in a foreign land not understood. Indeed, the fear of a violent present and uncertain future created an environment in which feelings of nostalgia and the desire to preserve and/or re-create memories of a glorified past were intensified.

The 1960s represented a crisis of cultural authority, in all its possible representations and permutations. This crisis marked the decade during its own time and from a wide array of communities and populations, both domestic and abroad. The world witnessed global outrage and opposition in cities as diverse as Prague, Paris, Moscow, and Mexico City. For a number of intrinsically complicated and nuanced reasons - far beyond the scope of this study - dissent and challenge, emanating primarily from a burgeoning youth population, characterized the age. In America, the challenge against both domestic and foreign policy underscored an attack on the core of the nation’s fundamental ideals and official dogma. At the core of this crisis of cultural authority was modernity itself:

Under the impact of modernity, the beliefs, ideals, and traditions that [had] been central to Americans and to the character of American democracy – whether religious, such as Jewish and Christian beliefs, or civic, such as Americanism –

[were] losing their cultural compelling power. [This crisis] concerns the fact that the nation [was] torn in a series of so-called ‘culture wars,’ between the forces of those who were culturally conservative and those who were culturally progressive. But deeper still, it also concerns the fact that even those who say they believe in America’s beliefs, traditions, and ideals no longer show that they do in ways that they once did or in ways that former generations did.<sup>41</sup>

The 1960s’ crisis of cultural authority was certainly not the first time such skepticism or fear of threat had been felt among the nation’s middle and professional classes. Historian Jackson Lears has made an extensive study of American culture across the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and finds a pervasive disquiet among the late Victorian bourgeois in the midst of increasing immigration, industrialization, and secularization. By the close of the nineteenth century, Lears notes, “modern culture began to show signs of strain, cracks in the surface of official optimism. Among educated Americans there was a growing sense of dis-ease.” A growing perception among the educated and middle classes on the limitations of modernity “helped to generate a crisis of cultural authority, rooted in *the social and psychic turmoil* of the late nineteenth century.” Lears’ argument that public denouncements made by the educated and professional classes against the social upheavals of the day caused “their audiences to rethink official optimism.”<sup>42</sup> As we examine journalistic exposes, song lyrics, photo-essays, and nightly newscasts across the 1960s, we will find a similar dis-ease at play three-quarters of a century after late-Victorians experienced their own crisis of cultural

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<sup>41</sup> Os Guinness, *The American Hour; A Time of Reckoning and the Once and Future Role of Faith* (New York: The Free Press, 1993), 27-28

<sup>42</sup> Jackson Lears, *No Place of Grace; Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture, 1880-1920* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 25-26

authority, although concern in the late 1960s arose from a broader community than what anyone would simply characterize as middle-class bourgeois. The 1960s' conflagration of urban riots, racial antagonism, anti-war protest, counterculture dismissal of traditional middle-class values, and questions of political legitimacy created the cultural landscape from which we must examine the rise of historic preservation and commemoration of a more heroic collective identity.

By examining the cultural landscape and the material culture contained within, we gain enormous insight into the mechanism of historic preservation and commemoration, and the social and psychic bases for and implications of these processes. Just as we read City Planning Commission recommendations, Regional Plan Association reports, or City zoning ordinances in order to better understand the trajectory of urban development, so too we read the cultural landscape of the 1960s and *what was imagined as a better landscape* in order to more fully understand the role of commemoration and preservation of the past and why these were critical not only to the development of a city, but to the development of *a society*. Further, societal values, ideals, and norms are revealed in the cultural landscape that often do not appear in the written historical record since much of society and culture operate from a subconscious level; we don't always spell it out. The father of material culture studies, Jules Prown, states what may appear obvious and yet must be made clear in order to fully appreciate what is at stake in the process of historic preservation, which is fundamentally the preservation of material culture from another era:

The underlying premise is that human-made objects reflect, consciously or unconsciously, directly or indirectly, the beliefs of the individuals who commissioned, fabricated, purchased, or used them and, by extension, the beliefs

of the larger society to which these individuals belonged...Underlying cultural assumptions.... are detectable in the way things are said, or done, or made – that is, in their style.<sup>43</sup>

We study material culture – what folks create and leave behind - to discover the values and attitudes, often unspoken, of a particular society at a particular time and we do so from the cultural context of our own time. Therefore, when a Federalist style sloped-roof building is admired and restored for its aesthetic appeal in 1967, or when a sailing ship from the mid-nineteenth century is relocated to an East River landing in 1969 and restored to its former glory, we must understand that all of this restoration and re-creation has less to do with the physical structure of architecture or object of material culture and more certainly to do with the need to resuscitate a value system and mode of living wanting in the present condition. The distress Jackson Lears finds amongst late-Victorian bourgeois at the close of the nineteenth century is a distress similar to what we find among a growing community of concerned citizens in the late 1960s, although the later concern stems not only from the educated and professional classes, but also from liberal and conservative politicians, Civil Rights activists, counterculture youth, artists and cultural critics. Further, where Victorian era bourgeois found heroism and dignity in the mythical warrior, represented through *objects d'art* of the Orient and from antiquity, South Street Seaport preservationists found in the mighty sea-captain and brawny sailor of the mid-nineteenth century. In both cases, the social disorder of the day proved an

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<sup>43</sup> Jules David Prown, “The Truth of Material Culture: History or Fiction?” in Steven Lubar, W. David Kingery, eds. *History from Things; Essays on Material Culture* (Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1993) 1, 4

unsatisfactory climate in which to locate heroism. The true hero was to be found elsewhere:

To bourgeois moralists preoccupied by the disorder of their society, the warrior's willingness to suffer and die for duty's sake pointed the way to national purification; to those who craved authentic selfhood, the warrior's life personified wholeness of purpose and intensity of experience. War promised both social and personal regeneration.<sup>44</sup>

What the warrior represented to the bourgeois in 1900, the mariner represented to a growing cadre of preservation supporters at New York's South Street in the late 1960s: authentic selfhood, wholeness of purpose, and intensity of experience. The simplest way to realize our deepest values and ideals is by "acting out." That is, by engaging in activities which, on the surface simply amuse us, we are actually "demonstrating in action the values by which we live."<sup>45</sup> The work of historic preservation, the work of restoring a square-rigger ship alongside an East River dock, of sailing schooners and romancing the sea, each *demonstrate in action the values by which one lives*. Historic preservation during this era embodied a social and personal regeneration for a generation – or two – seeking inspiration and uplift in the midst of a contentious cultural landscape: the Age of Sail represented an era when we were strong and good, during the disquieting dawning of the Age of Aquarius.

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<sup>44</sup> Lears, 98

<sup>45</sup> Leslie Fielder, *The Art of the Essay* (New York: Crowell Publishers, 1958), 259

# 1

## POSTWAR PASTORAL; MILLER, MUMFORD AND RETHINKING MODERNISM

*Few societies in the march of mankind live with so little visible or functional reminder of their past as ours today. The purposes of the city and the evolving principles on which it has been built are lost to most citizens.*<sup>46</sup>

- Peter Stanford, South Street Seaport Museum (1969)

*Goodbye, brothers! You were a good crowd. As good a crowd as ever fisted with wild cries the beating canvas of a heavy foresail; or, tossing aloft, invisible in the night, gave back yell for yell to a westerly gale.*<sup>47</sup>

- Joseph Conrad (1897)

When you think about historic preservation in New York City in the 1960s, at the forefront appears the staggering demolition of Penn Station, images of its marble eagles unceremoniously dumped into the New Jersey meadowlands. You think about Jane Jacobs and her public battles against the city's icon of urban development, Robert Moses. You might turn to Greenwich Village and the planned Lower Manhattan Expressway, and the outcry from Jacobs and her cadre of supporters, intent on protecting the uniquely

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<sup>46</sup> South Street Seaport Museum, *South Street Seaport: A plan for a vital new historic center in Lower Manhattan* (New York City: South Street Seaport Museum, 1969), 21

<sup>47</sup> Joseph Conrad quote, cited in NYHS, Guide to the Margot Gayle Papers 1959-2005, MS 241; Box 19: Stanford, Peter, *A Walk through South Street in the Afternoon of Sail* (New York: South Street Seaport Museum, 1967), 24



twisted streets of the West Village from modernist urban planning that would cut right through the quieter cityscape. You might then ask yourself, how many other interesting and historic structures were lost to the demands of urban expansion and renewal? You might try to take an inventory in your mind of the buildings the city has lost, and the buildings the city has saved.

But historic preservation in lower Manhattan in the 1960s was about much more than salvaging nineteenth century bricks and mortar, or challenging the proliferation of steel and glass superblocks transforming the city's skyline, or maintaining the more "human scale" of Federalist-era architecture. Beyond the well-studied Jane Jacobs-Robert Moses debates on the physical reconfiguration of the city and what that meant for its commercial development as well as its livability, the postwar historic preservation movement amounted to the resuscitation of a mythical, more noble collective identity in the midst of myriad challenges to American identity and the status quo. In fact, the process of re-creating and commemorating the city's preindustrial past served as a mechanism to reconnect with a more heroic collective identity and inspire better citizens. The restoration of carefully chosen vestiges of the urban landscape were meant to evoke memories of a glorious past and remind the public of America's origin myths during a time of social, cultural, and political upheaval.

Postwar era historic preservation in the urban landscape has been primarily explored, and explained, as a reaction against modernist architecture - that "bright white nothingness of modernity"—and the urban renewal bulldozer's utter transformation of the cityscape.<sup>48</sup> The tearing down of New York's Pennsylvania Station in 1963 galvanized

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<sup>48</sup> The "bright white nothingness of modernity" comes from M. Christine Boyer, *City of Collective Memory; Its Historical Imagery and Architectural Entertainments* (1996). On the era of modernist urban

supporters of historic preservation and led to the passing of the City's Landmarks Preservation Law in 1965. This is certainly one side of the story, but this is not the entire story. Historic preservation and heritage commemoration in the 1960s served as a mechanism, like the earlier Colonial revival architectural movement and the American folk music revival, to shore up cultural authority during an era fraught with domestic civil strife and an increasingly questionable foreign war.

In order to fully appreciate the subtext permeating the work of historic preservation and heritage commemoration, we must understand the movement as one sprung from two equally compelling paradigms. First, we must examine the history of "antimodern" sentiment in American culture. Since the onset of the industrial revolution, *the machine* has come to represent the physical manifestation of modern society; the machine equals progress and ingenuity. However, with the machine's incessant encroachment into all aspects of human activity, many writers, scholars and artists have called for a rejection of the amoral machine in favor of a more noble, pastoral idyll. Thus, historic preservation in the postwar era must be understood as part of this larger trajectory of dis-ease and dissatisfaction with the modern urban condition; this was not unique to

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renewal and its destruction of the nineteenth century cityscape *and* the effects these had on the creation of the postwar era "memory boom," there is extensive literature: See Thomas Bender, *The Unfinished City; ....con't....New York and the Metropolitan Idea* (2002); Mark Crinson, "Urban Memory; history and amnesia in the modern city," (2005); Dolores Hayden, *The Power of Place; Urban Landscapes as Public History* (1995); Alison Isenberg, *Downtown America; a History of Place and the People Who Made It* (2004); Michael Kammen, *Mystic Chords of Memory; the Transformation of Tradition in American Culture* (1993); David Lowenthal, *The Heritage Crusade and the Spoils of History* (1998); Randall Mason, *The Once and Future New York; Historic Preservation and the Modern City* (2009); Suleiman Osman, *The Invention of Brownstone Brooklyn; Gentrification and the Search for Authority in Postwar New York* (2011); Max Page and Randall Mason, *Giving Preservation a History; Histories of Historic Preservation in the United States* (2003); Jon Teaford, *The Rough Road to Renaissance; Urban Revitalization in America, 1940-1985* (1990); Sharon Zukin, *Naked City; the Death and Life of Authentic Urban Places* (2010)

the 1960s, although the circumstances of the 1960s were challenging in very unique and specific ways.

Second, we must understand historic preservation and heritage commemoration at New York City's seaport district as an effort to resuscitate the cultural authority of a "different breed of men" who seeded the city's early prosperity during a more heroic – real or otherwise - Age of Sail. These maritime-inspired origin myths, illuminated through early twentieth century histories on the port of New York as well as through the arts and literature, created imagery and collective memories of a time *when we were good*, and were part of a larger conversation surrounding the fundamental values and ideals of the nation's identity amidst an increasingly contested social and political landscape.

In his study of the American Folk Music revival, *When We Were Good; The Folk Revival*, historian Robert Cantwell recalls his generation's collective feeling of "apocalyptic dread" during the Cuban Missile Crisis and the mounting tension of the Cold War. The larger political and social realities – and horrific possibilities - of the Cold War, a burgeoning dread "so deep, prolonged and pervasive that it had become unconscious," moved a generation of young people towards a lyrical idyll that offered an otherwise powerless youth the opportunity to experience strength and solidarity through the "defiant spirit" of folk music.<sup>49</sup> For a slightly older generation experiencing the fragmentation and social upheaval of the 1960s, the project of historic preservation offered many of the same antidotes to the potentially devastating modern condition that Cantwell found through music.

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<sup>49</sup> Robert Cantwell, *When We Were Good; The Folk Revival* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), 15

Understood in light of these two prevailing themes – an “antimodern” sentiment and an attempt to resuscitate a collective cultural authority – historic preservation at New York’s old seaport district was about much more than restoring slope-roofed buildings and square-rigger ships, or populating small shops with tradesmen and artisans, or providing a commercial boost to a stagnant local economy. Preserving the built environment of the “stirring times in the days of old, when the entire business and social life of the community centered on the toe of Manhattan Island” would remind visitors to South Street of an American identity steeped in heroic roots and national pride.<sup>50</sup> This message was critical during an era of violent contention and cultural upheaval, as a means to reinforce origin myths, secure collective identities, and inspire better citizens. Long before modernist architecture and federally funded urban renewal brought down the hammer on the jumbled hodge-podge of the nineteenth century cityscape, artists, scholars and urbanists have noted with alarm the impact of modernism on the human condition.

#### PASTORALISM IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

Since the eighteenth century, artists and intellectuals have sounded alarm at the machine’s denigration of traditional culture. Freidrich Schiller in 1795 cautioned against the machine’s nefarious ability to fracture man and society, while Thomas Carlyle accused modern technology of threatening man’s “pure moral nature” and “true dignity of soul and character.”<sup>51</sup> Adding to this rage against the machine, Charles Fraser wrote in

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<sup>50</sup> Richard McKay, *South Street; A Maritime History of New York* (New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1934), 123

<sup>51</sup> Freidrich Schiller, “Letter VI; Letters Upon the Aesthetical Education of Man,” in *Essays Aesthetical and Philosophical* (London, 1910), 37-44; Carlyle quoted in Leo Marx, *The Machine in the Garden; Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1964), 188

1846 that steam power “seems destined, in its future action and developments, to disturb *the moral economy* of the world by opposing that great law of the universe, which makes labor the portion of man, and condemns him to earn his bread by the sweat of his brow.”<sup>52</sup> In more modern writings, a nostalgia for the lost idyll of preindustrial America is evident from Herman Melville to Henry Miller, whose works focus on the “trope of the interrupted idyll” – modernity’s booming, disquieting noise cutting through the serene landscape of the American wilderness.<sup>53</sup>

This collective appreciation for the return to a pastoral idyll in the midst of increasing technologies is loaded with morality judgment, in which the agrarian world is seen as a virtuous and morally superior aesthetic in contrast to the urban and industrial forces that threaten to destroy it. In *Machine in the Garden*, published in 1964, scholar of American Studies Leo Marx argues the process of industrialization was the most critical event in American history, spurring a shift from a predominantly agrarian society to an urban and industrial one. Marx reads various artists across the American centuries as antennas of the age, whose literary works are “singularly useful in getting at the more elusive, intangible effects of change – its impact on the moral and aesthetic, emotional, and sensory aspects of experience.”

Marx’s contribution to present-day understandings of antimodern sentiment in the American cultural landscape is important as a seminal work of cultural history in which Marx, along with fellow scholars Herbert Gutman, Warren Sussman, and Nathan

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<sup>52</sup> Charles Fraser, “The Moral Influence of Steam,” *Hunt’s Merchants’ Magazine*, XIV (June 1846), 499-515

<sup>53</sup> Leo Marx, *The Machine in the Garden; Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1964), 370

Huggins, put “culture at the center of analysis.”<sup>54</sup> As part of the American Studies boom of the 1950s, Marx’s cultural approach to history highlights the rise of American Studies during that decade and its concerns with the “inner contradictions” and “conflicting values” imbedded in American culture.<sup>55</sup> Marx’s role in the historiography of American Studies scholarship is itself an interesting cause for study, as Marx-as-social-critic provides “a commentary on the American social and cultural landscape through the lens of literature, working under the premise that literature reflects the society from which it comes.”<sup>56</sup> Marx’s aesthetic representation of a machine in a garden exposes for his reader the “social conflict between myth and history, between the pastoral ideal and the growth of technology.”<sup>57</sup> Marx’s argument, that the conflict of the machine in the garden is *the* central conflict in the American cultural experience, rests upon a single dialectic: the conflict between the pastoral ideal and technology. Some critics have faulted Marx’s reliance on this single dialectic at the expense of other equally compelling conflicts, such as the Civil War, westward expansion, and imperialism.<sup>58</sup>

Whether or not Marx successfully defends his thesis that there is a single dialectic which can describe the American cultural experience is a concern for another author. For the purposes of this study, Marx’s primary contribution to our understanding of antimodern sentiment in the American intellectual and cultural landscape rests in *his*

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<sup>54</sup> James Cook & Lawrence Glickman, eds. "Introduction," *The Cultural Turn in US History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 18

<sup>55</sup> Cook & Glickman, 10

<sup>56</sup> John Lark Bryant, “A Usable Pastoralism; Leo Marx’s Method in *The Machine in the Garden*,” *American Studies*, Vole 16 No 1 (spring 1975), 63

<sup>57</sup> Bryant, 64

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid*, 65

*search for a usable past* in the 1950s and '60s. Marx "searches the past" in order to answer questions in his own time, and for this we look to his work as evidence of midcentury concerns surrounding technology and modernity. That is, *Machine in the Garden* tells us as much about myth-making about the American past during Marx's own era, as it tells us about eighteenth and nineteenth century thought.<sup>59</sup> Further, "Marx considered himself an activist, and expected *The Machine in the Garden* to engage if not actually to provoke a debate over the place of technology in late-twentieth century life."<sup>60</sup> Marx expresses a voice of concern for the increasing role of technology in the 1950s, '60s, and going forward. Marx's approach - tracing the development of a single cultural concept across several centuries - reveals to us his own concern, and the concern among certain intellectuals and cultural critics, of the encroachment of technology not during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, but during Marx's own mid-twentieth century. As such, *Machine in the Garden* determines *for us* the significance of antimodern thought in the 1950s and '60s.<sup>61</sup> Concerned with the "cultural tensions and contradictions provoked by technology,"<sup>62</sup> Marx reveals to the contemporary reader a disquieting unrest as modernity and technology continued to advance across the American midcentury.

Urban historian Thomas Bender explores intellectual and institutional reactions to the nineteenth century's rise of industrialism. Less concerned with distinguishing "pro-urban" or "anti-urban" responses to the century's industrial transformation, Bender

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<sup>59</sup> Bryant, 68

<sup>60</sup> Jeffrey L. Meikle, "Leo Marx's *The Machine in the Garden*," *Technology and Culture*, Vol 44 No 1 (Jan, 2003), 152

<sup>61</sup> Meikle, 153

<sup>62</sup> Gary Kulik, "America as Second Creation: Technology and Narrative of New Beginnings" *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, Vol 35, No 2 (Autumn 2004), 307

instead explores “the ways in which cultural traditions and social developments interact to form a meaningful psychological reality.”<sup>63</sup> Bender uncovers a shift in American intellectual thought across the nineteenth century, in which the previously held ideal of the Jeffersonian “good citizen” as one who lives and works in the country ceded ideological territory to the modern realization that America’s cultural and political life was increasingly tied to the growth of its great cities. By the mid-nineteenth century, Bender argues, Americans wanted it all: the moral fortification of nature *as well as* the advances won by modern science and urban civilization.<sup>64</sup>

Not all modern writers, surely, have viewed progress as disruptive or damaging to man’s moral nature. In the vein of manifest destiny, many writers and artists of the modern age have appreciated progress as a formidable aspect of America’s destiny and birthright. While *Machine in the Garden* uncovers nineteenth century rhetoric on both sides of the technology debate, it is critical to note that arguments on both sides focused on the effects of technology on man’s morality and virtue, for good or for bad. This point is critical: commentary on modern technology and scientific progress has been intricately laced with morality judgments and concerns for man’s virtuosity. We do not simply quantify the appearance of technology and scientific progress in the American landscape; the emergence and proliferation of these invoke morality judgments as to how the latest technological innovation will affect the soul of man. The tools of modernity can either makes us, or break us. There is little neutrality, and each of Marx’s author-subjects engage with the debate surrounding the machine’s impact on the human condition.

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<sup>63</sup> Thomas Bender, *Toward an Urban Vision; Ideas and Institutions in Nineteenth Century America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982), iix

<sup>64</sup> Marx, 4,9,13



In the early nineteenth century, the locomotive emerged as the primary symbol of this disruption caused by the machine in the garden. The startling noise of the locomotive engine disrupts the psyche and causes profound alienation. Never before had human beings suffered such audible onslaught. By the 1830s, the locomotive had become a national obsession, an instrument of never-before-seen power, speed and noise. The locomotive presented “a sudden, shocking intruder upon a fantasy of idyllic satisfaction,” where its brute masculine force disrupts the tranquil landscape before it.<sup>65</sup> As a prelude to the oncoming brave new world of total industrialization, the locomotive, with its explosive fire, iron and smoke, symbolized the seismic shift from agrarian to industrial society. The locomotive neatly embodies the transformative shift from the Age of Sail to the Age of Steam and Steel, for at the center of that transformation was power and noise. If, according to the transcendental sensibilities of Nathaniel Hawthorne, the noise of the locomotive is disruptive and alienating, we can easily appreciate the relative quiet of sailing ships as easier on man’s psyche and soul.

Many scholars of the nineteenth century certainly embraced scientific and technological innovations of the industrializing nation in conjunction with an appreciation for the natural world. The emergence of the machine in the garden was not systematically met with disapproval or consternation. One did not necessarily have to choose the machine *or* the garden. Men like John James Audubon, Frederick Law Olmstead, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Herman Melville, and Walt Whitman held an appreciation for scientific progress *and* for man’s humanistic heritage. The ideals were not mutually exclusive. Olmsted, leader of the mid-nineteenth century’s Parks movement

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<sup>65</sup> Marx, 27, 29

and designer of both Manhattan's Central Park and Brooklyn's Prospect Park, believed nature and art exacted a civilizing influence on the urban population, and argued for "the usefulness of art, romantic nature, and beauty in refining and stabilizing the disorderly and individualistic society of Jacksonian America."<sup>66</sup> This ideal - that nature, art and the teachings of humanism would create better citizens, that a romantic or pastoral landscape harbored the moral power to calm the soul and uplift the citizenry - was the guiding force behind the Parks movement. For Olmsted, the city park – complete with rural landscaping and public monuments – created a breeding ground for civic-minded, democratic ideals and would create better citizens. "The main object and justification [of a park] is simply to produce a certain influence in the minds of people and through this to make life in this city healthier and happier."<sup>67</sup>

Steeped in an ideology of environmental determinism, the Parks movement, like the City Beautiful movement that would reach its height of aesthetic and symbolic appeal a few decades later, relied heavily on the physical environment's ability to shape one's character. That is, the urban environment must be structured via grandiose architecture and cultivated green spaces in order to make better citizens of the immigrant masses and the poor. Public monuments, classical architecture, and the cultivated landscaping of green spaces in Central and Prospect Parks combined to impart a very distinct sense of cultural authority and impart moral values. These were aesthetic projects meant to influence the constant flux of urban residents and to bolster the creation of good citizens.

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<sup>66</sup> Thomas Bender, *Toward an Urban Vision*, 162

<sup>67</sup> Bender, 175

The American response to modernization and to cities themselves is ripe with competing arguments directed at both the glory and vices of urbanization. Thomas Roderick Dew, of The College of William and Mary, likened the grandeur of certain northeastern American cities to that of ancient Egypt, Rome, and China. Wrote Dew:

I know full well that great cities are cursed with great vices. The worst specimens of the human character, squalid poverty, gorgeous, thoughtless luxury, misery and anxiety, are all to be found in them. But we find, at the same time, the noblest and most virtuous specimens of our race on the same busy, bustling theatre. It is the cities which have hurried forward the great revolution of modern times, "whether for weal or woe." It is the cities which have made the great improvements and inventions in mechanics and the arts. It is the great cities which have pushed every department of literature to the highest pitch of perfection. It is the great cities alone which can build up and sustain hospitals, asylums, dispensaries - which can gather together large and splendid libraries, form literary and philosophical associations, assemble together banks of literati, who stimulate and encourage each other. In fine, it is the large cities alone which can rear up and sustain a mere literary class.<sup>68</sup>

Clearly "antimodern" is neither a particularly helpful nor definitive characterization of the scholarly thinking on cities, unless we understand this term does not simply entail a derision of modernity, but encompasses a more complicated view on the *problematic changes* associated with the modernizing city. In addition, antimodern sentiment by the turn of the twentieth century must be understood as more than simply a part of this historical trajectory of pastoral yearning. Instead, we must consider Progressive Era "antimodernism" as a very specific response to the cultural landscape *at*

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<sup>68</sup> Thomas Roderick Dew, *The Southern Literary Messenger*, 1836

*that time*. American cultural historian Jackson Lears argues, “Antimodern dissenters recoiled from this ethic [of industrial rationality] and groped for alternatives in medieval, Oriental, and other ‘primitive’ cultures.”<sup>69</sup> Like Marx, Lears notes an acute subtext of morality judgment fundamental to antimodernist thought, and finds Progressive Era middle and upper-class nostalgia for moral and spiritual renewal a very specific response to the perceived immoral effects of industrial technology. This nostalgia was felt primarily among the educated and affluent middle and upper-classes, a nostalgia not simply laced with escapism, but a much more complex ambivalence wrapped up in a dual-edged appreciation for modern conveniences and material progress *and* fueled by a sentimentality that “reflected not only a particular world view but also a particular class and power position.”<sup>70</sup> That is, this nostalgia sprung from a very specific bourgeoisie privilege in which one both appreciated modern conveniences, and lamented the loss of a perceived primitive authenticity these conveniences displaced.

It is important to clarify what in fact Lears means by “antimodern.” The historian is careful to explain that late Victorian dissenters were not against modernity so much as increasingly aware of the problems, limitations, and contradictions associated with progress. This turn-of-the-century antimodernism was not simply concurrent with the tumultuous industrial landscape of the era, but that turmoil was in fact *the basis* for antimodern dissent. Cultural ferment, challenges to the traditional order, an influx of immigration, and heightened urban change fueled tensions and created longings for *a better version* of a preindustrial American society. Lears argues that through its very

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<sup>69</sup> Lears, xi

<sup>70</sup> Lears, 7, xvi

core, turn-of-the-century antimodern sentiment, in all its forms, was a mechanism used by the ruling class to retain cultural authority and sense of control amidst an unruly social, economic, and political climate.<sup>71</sup>

Antimodernism, therefore, is not simply a cry against the modern urban condition, and throughout this study should not be understood as such. More accurately, antimodernism should be understood as *an awareness of a dis-ease* associated with industrialization, capitalism, technological progress, and urbanism. By the turn-of-the-century, late Victorian fears related to issues of race and class, immigration, the urban problem and the social question lead to a sense of social disorder that made the bourgeoisie quite nervous.<sup>72</sup> Sensing burgeoning social chaos and a “crisis of cultural authority” over the physical and moral decay of the nation’s cities, the spread of science and rational technology into all aspects of daily living, and the decreasing value placed on previously held religious tenets, the ruling classes of the late Victorian era found themselves in the midst of a spiritual and cultural transformation. Indeed, “antimodern impulses were rooted in longings to recapture an elusive ‘real life’ in a culture evaporating into unreality.”<sup>73</sup>

Part of this longing looked adoringly upon the work of the premodern artisan, the man who worked with his hands, worked “rooted in a genuine community.” The decades surrounding 1900 witnessed the Arts and Crafts Movement and a revival of handicrafts, prized primarily among the educated bourgeoisie, including the business and professional

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<sup>71</sup> Lears, 26, 5

<sup>72</sup> Ibid, 28

<sup>73</sup> Ibid, 31-32

elite, “the class most troubled by the crisis of cultural authority during the late nineteenth century” who felt their position had become tenuous and vulnerable amidst the social upheavals of the day.<sup>74</sup> This aspect of Lears’ argument is critical: the threat of massive change in the prevailing social structure, in the cultural landscape, and in the hegemonic order created a collective sense of nostalgia for a more authentic way of life when power structures were more firmly rooted.

#### THE CRISIS OF TECHNOLOGY IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

By the dawn of the twentieth century, new discoveries in science and technology, deeply entrenched in Darwinism and emerging race theory, produced a conviction among Progressive Era reformists and urbanists that social engineering, steeped in environmental determinism, was the key to orderly development of the chaotic industrial city. Immigration, disorder and chaos characterized cities of the mid-nineteenth century; an understanding of the city as fragmented, diverse and contentious was not new to twentieth century urbanists.<sup>75</sup> The difference, however, between nineteenth century perceptions of a city divided and those that would dominate the twentieth century is found in the earlier expectation that fragmentation would last only a generation or two. Environmental determinism grew out of the central tenet that a careful molding of the physical and cultural landscape – which included not only the structures in which urban dwellers lived, worked and played, but also addressed cultural practices like child rearing, personal hygiene, and religious practices – was exorbitantly influential on

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<sup>74</sup> Lears, 60-61

<sup>75</sup> Writing in the 1860s, Charles Loring Brace found urban society to be highly fragmented, in terms of geography, class, and behaviors, and believed volunteer associations and philanthropic organizations were most necessary to bridge the gaps between these diverse and divided communities. See Bender p. 132

individual and group behavior. The legacy of this ideology of environmental determinism will not go unnoticed in the resurgence of historic preservation in the 1960s.

Historian Daniel Rogers argues Progressive reform ideals were heavily influenced by transnational ideologies, as global interdependency and discourse on how to attend to the urban problem crossed both sides of the Atlantic in response to rapid urbanization, the effects of unregulated industrialization and the resulting social crisis.<sup>76</sup> While the urbanistic impulse during the Progressive Era appears one of hope and optimism for a cleaner, safer, more rational environment, reformist concerns surrounding the state of America's industrial cities were steeped in an understanding of the modern city as *essentially* chaotic and disorderly, in need of rational planning and humane direction.

A "canary in a coalmine" describes an early warning sign of danger. The artist frequently represents the leading public voice of challenge to the status quo, presenting a visual or literary manifestation of his acute perceptions on the life he witnesses and experiences; a canary in a coalmine. Artistic and cultural representations, therefore, constitute a critical form of evidence in any analysis of American cities and perspectives on the modern urban experience.

Since the early twentieth century, scholars and artists alike have characterized the modern American experience as an *urban* experience, and yet responses to the urban condition across the century have tended to represent the city as dysfunctional. From Theodore Dreiser's *Sister Carrie*, to Nathan West's *Day of the Locust*, to Richard Wright's "The Man Who Lived Underground," to Henry Miller's *Air Conditioned Nightmare*, to Don DeLillo's *Underworld*, to Philip Roth's *American Pastoral*, to T.C.

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<sup>76</sup> Daniel Rodgers, *Atlantic Crossings: Social Politics in a Progressive Age* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1998); Thomas Bender, *Nation Among Nations; America's Place in World History* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2006)

Boyle's *Tortilla Curtain*... there exists no end to the literary canon exploring the contentious urban experience. From the Progressive Era through Modernism and into the Postmodern age, artists and scholars of urbanism have expressed a marked dis-ease with the urban landscape in its *present condition*. While the city might embody the spirit of opportunity and represent a critical site of intellectual and cultural life for diverse communities – an ideal that illuminates the “triumph of the city” - the growth of this organism known as The City must not go unchecked.<sup>77</sup>

Urban historian Thomas Bender argues the American city has been culturally represented in two allegorical forms, which he dubs the “City of Ambition” and the “City of Making Do.”<sup>78</sup> While the “City of Ambition,” *appears* glossy and triumphant, these entrapments are merely superficial, meant to temporarily obscure an urban reality that is disarming, alienating, often fatal. Written at the turn-of-the-century, Theodore Dreiser's *Sister Carrie* depicts Chicago and New York City as sites of possibility and potential, where the reader soon finds a city riddled with darkness and despair. The city is where you make it or lose it; lives are improved or destroyed. The city is hypnotic, the lure of its influence irresistible. Dreiser offers no real reason for Hurstwood's downfall, this is simply how it goes in the Big City of capitalist consumption: Carrie rises and Hurstwood falls. Much like Edward Bellamy's *Looking Backward From 2000 to 1887*, in which a

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<sup>77</sup> On the paradox of the city and reactions to modernity and urban change, see Daniel Rogers, *Atlantic Crossings*; Thomas Bender, *The Unfinished City: New York and the Metropolitan Idea* and *A Nation Among Nations*; *America's Place in World History*; Michael McGreer, *A Fierce Discontent*; *The Rise and Fall of the Progressive Movement in America*; Davarian Baldwin, *Chicago's New Negroes*; *Modernity, the Great Migration, and Black Urban Life*; Allen Scott & Edward Soja, *The City: Los Angeles and Urban Theory at the End of the Twentieth Century*. On literary representations of the urban experience, see Carlo Rotella, *October Cities*; *The Redevelopment of Urban Literature*; Thomas Heise, *Urban Underworlds*; *a Geography of Twentieth Century American Literature and Culture*.

<sup>78</sup> Thomas Bender, *The Unfinished City: New York and the Metropolitan Idea* (New York: New York University Press, 2002), 104



well-to-do protagonist suddenly awakens to find himself located in a socialist nightmare one hundred and thirteen years hence, Dreiser warns a tantalizingly modern, comfortable lifestyle is dangerously tenuous in the capitalist system; it could all be gone in an instant.<sup>79</sup>

Bender's "The City of Making Do" offers a counter-representation to this "City of Ambition." Ashcan School artists, led by Philadelphian John Sloan, portrayed the social and economic inequalities of urban life with an entirely new focus on vernacular life in the city, its sidewalks and streets. Sloan's work helped create a collective image of urban life in the American consciousness; the work of Ashcan artists documents the lives of ordinary people on the urban scene, thus engaging the viewer through a new eye-level perspective.<sup>80</sup> The work of Ashcan School artists such as John Sloan and Everett Shinn, along with the later 1920s paintings of muralist Reginald Marsh, sought to "interpret and give visible form to the dynamic social forces that were shaping and reshaping New York City."<sup>81</sup> These streetscapes alternate in temperament and feeling between the vitality of the evening rush hour, as depicted in John Sloan's *Six O'Clock, Winter*, which captures the busy end to a busy day for appropriately-dressed New Yorkers who have just completed an industrious day of work, shopping, or other urban pursuit, to Everett Shinn's *Eviction*, which offers a somber portrayal of an unfortunate family, downcast eyes and banished to the streets, their belongings still in the process of removal from

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<sup>79</sup> Richard Lehan. *The City in Literature: an Intellectual and Cultural History* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1998), 199

<sup>80</sup> Heather Campbell Coyle and Joyce K. Schiller, *John Sloan's New York* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 90-92

<sup>81</sup> Robert W. Snyder & Rebecca Zurier, "Picturing the City," in *Metropolitan Lives: The Ashcan Artists and Their New York* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1995), 85

what was once home. The city can offer opportunity and interaction, or dejection and desolation. In either event, and applicable to all scenarios in between, the city must, however, be reckoned with.<sup>82</sup>

The urban dynamism captured in these early twentieth century works of art reappears in Hollywood musicals such as *On the Town* and *42nd Street*, which depict the best cinematic representations of the city. Here, New York City is portrayed as open, receptive and fascinating. These films, however, are not concerned with social realism or criticism, rather “stylizing and mythologizing the social universe so an audience could escape” into a romantic fantasy.<sup>83</sup> These films add to the city-mythmaking of an otherwise contentious urban landscape. In the 1970s and 80s, Woody Allen’s films provide an antidote to artistic representations of urban madness which can be traced back to the earliest dystopian films such as *Metropolis*, *The City*, and film noir, and those that predominate Allen’s own era, such as *Death Wish*, *Taxi Driver*, *Escape from New York*, *Midnight Cowboy*, *Chinatown*, *Saturday Night Fever*, and *Blade Runner*. Allen’s is a city of promise, possibility and grandeur, populated by a Manhattan-centric upper middle class cast of characters. However, films like *Manhattan* represent a *memory* of Old New York, a mythical ideal of the old “city on the hill,”<sup>84</sup> a fantasy similar to the stylized cityscape of the old Hollywood musicals.

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<sup>82</sup> See John Sloan, *Six O’clock Winter*, 1912, oil on canvas. The Phillips Collection, Washington D.C.; Everett Shinn, *Eviction*, 1904, gouache on paper, National Museum of American Art, Smithsonian Institution

<sup>83</sup> Leonard Quart, “Woody Allen’s New York,” in *The Films of Woody Allen; Critical Essays*, Charles L.P. Silet, ed. (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2006), 14

<sup>84</sup> Quart, 19-20

While these paintings and films are very specifically situated in New York City, the effect these and other cultural representations of Gotham have had on the conceptualization of “American cities” in the public realm cannot be overstated. Philip Kasinitz argues for much of the twentieth century, New York dominated understandings of what a modern American city was, claiming “More than any other city, New York embodies the diversity, complexity and artifice of modern urban life, which many Americans find morally suspect.”<sup>85</sup> While today’s scholars and artists understand that no unified conceptual understanding of “the city” exists, cultural representations of New York City do point to larger trends in American cultural consciousness as to the symbolism of the modern urban condition.

Literature across the early-to-mid twentieth century, which speaks to the dysfunction of American urban and industrial society in the 1930s, 40s and 50s, is ripe with antimodern sentiment and reflects a simmering malaise in the public consciousness. Underworld literature of the 1930s and 40s reflects a moral panic over the urban environment: racial strife, immigration and the urban masses as an unstoppable organism. Assimilation and the enculturation of immigrant populations had not, as Progressive reformers anticipated, proceeded in an orderly and rational manner. In response to continued social contestation, themes of the underworld predominate literature, photography and film. Now, not only is the city understood as an organism, so are the masses who inhabit it. The chaotic impulse of the crowd dominates dystopian writings and film noir, in which the struggle between man, nature and the urban machine creates a gritty urban landscape.

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<sup>85</sup> Philip Kasinitz, ed. *Metropolis: Center and Symbol of Our Times* (New York: New York University Press, 1995), 87

American writer and social critic Henry Miller's *The Air-Conditioned Nightmare* protests against all that is wrong with the industrial landscape of modern America. Perhaps no other literary figure of the mid-century so clearly bemoans and finds horror with the condition of the American urban scene. Miller returned to the United States in 1939, after ten years living abroad as an expatriate in Paris and Greece. He undertook a yearlong, ten-thousand-plus mile trek around the U.S. in 1940, the experiences from which he wrote and then published his book in 1945. Miller's journey began on a steamship from Greece to New York City, stopping first in Boston. "I was prepared to like Boston." Instead, he was grossly disappointed and saddened by what he viewed upon his arrival, writing, "the American coast looked bleak and uninviting to me. I didn't like the look of the American house; there is something cold, austere, something barren and chill, about the architecture of the American home." Not only the architecture, but the Boston "mob" nauseated Miller, who was happy to leave port as soon as possible. Miller's characterization of New York City fared no better: "I felt as I had always felt about New York- that it is the most horrible place on God's earth."<sup>86</sup>

Having lived abroad the previous decade, Miller observed upon his 1939 return, "a great change had come over America, no doubt about that... We were only witnessing the prelude to something unimaginable. Everything was cock-eyed, and getting more and more so... The lack of resilience, the feeling of hopelessness, the resignation, the skepticism, the defeatism... And over it all that same veneer of fatuous optimism – *only now decidedly cracked.*" Miller found mid-century American urban life loathsome, dull,

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<sup>86</sup> Henry Miller, *The Air-Conditioned Nightmare* (New York: New Directions Books, 1945), 11,12

monotonous, and terrifying. “Nowhere else in the world is the divorce between man and nature so complete.”<sup>87</sup>

From Pittsburgh, Miller writes “never has the status quo seemed more hideous to me.” The traveler describes gangs of armed brutes terrorizing the streets of Pittsburgh, men who looked ready “to kill on the slightest provocation.” While the amenities of Miller’s hotel were admittedly nice enough, he found the air deadly, the city’s spirit wretched. Miller describes flagging industrial towns of the Northeast – Pittsburgh, Youngstown, Detroit, Bayonne, Bethlehem, and Scranton -- as veritable wastelands. While the New Yorker admits he witnessed miseries and suffering in the South as well as the North, at least, he writes, he felt some peace in the South. Miller found the worst form of suffering in the country’s North and East, “in the very heart of progress.” This “progress,” the physical and social detritus of industrial capitalism, had wreaked havoc on the nation’s natural beauty, with tract after tract of rich land transformed to wasteland. “Wherever there is industry there is ugliness, misery, oppression, gloom and despair.”<sup>88</sup>

Miller locates America’s golden age about one hundred years before his assessment of the state of the nation; a time, in fact, still dominated by sail over steam. Since that time, “everything that was of beauty, significance or promise has been destroyed and buried in the avalanche of false progress.” The dreams and visions of the “great Americans,” had, by 1945, crumbled and vanished. The poets and the seers of an earlier age had tried their best, but “some other breed of man has won out.”<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> Miller, 13, 20. Italics added

<sup>88</sup> Miller, 27, 30

<sup>89</sup> Ibid, 36, 24

E.B. White, frequent contributor of both sketch and prose to *The New Yorker* magazine throughout the mid-twentieth century, wrote in 1949 perhaps his most famous essay, “Here is New York.” White, a one-time quintessential New Yorker, had by this time relocated with his wife, *The New Yorker’s* literary editor Katharine Angell, to the cooler climes of North Brooklin, Maine. On his 1948 return – during an unbearable summer heat wave - White describes a city filled with possibility and even magic, but at the same time cramped and suffocating. The paradox of New York is that it is changeless, and yet constantly changing. Amidst White’s appreciation for the city he clearly fell in love with years ago, a city “unique, cosmopolitan, mighty, and unparalleled,” the reader senses more than a glimpse of sadness for what has been lost. “The city has never been so uncomfortable, so crowded, so tense...The normal frustrations of modern life are here multiplied and amplified.” The New York harbor, however, was one of White’s bright observances, of which he writes, “I am told this is the greatest seaport in the world, with six hundred and fifty miles of water front, and ships calling here from many exotic lands.”<sup>90</sup>

Urbanist and cultural critic Lewis Mumford, the leading authority on architecture and urbanism throughout much of the twentieth century, writes with caution on the increasing role of technology and the machine in all aspects of modern life in his 1967 book, *The Myth of the Machine*. What the locomotive symbolized for Nathaniel Hawthorne in the 1830s, the machine symbolized for Lewis Mumford by the 1960s. In his earlier writings, Mumford insisted the city was primarily a social construct, less a

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<sup>90</sup> E.B. White, *Here is New York* (New York City: The Little Bookroom, 1949, 1999), 52, 22

physical construction.<sup>91</sup> Heavily influenced by Patrick Geddes' *Cities in Evolution*, Mumford called for the decentralization of crowded industrial cities of "the old palaeotechnic order" during the height of 1920's urban density, to regional garden cities where humans could live more closely – and in better health - with nature. In the 1920s and '30s, Mumford worked closely with the Regional Planning Association, which called for the decentralization of over-crowded Eastern and Midwestern cities as a remediation for their inevitable and continued growth. By the 1960s, Mumford had become less focused on urban growth *per se* and was heavily concerned with the proliferation of the machine and *technics* – a term Mumford used widely to connote the iterative relationship between technological innovation and all aspects of a society's cultural milieu - into now every aspect of modern life.

The proliferation of technology over the course of a century had, by the American mid-century, exacerbated concerns about the brave new world of mechanization well beyond the warnings of Hawthorne and Progressive Era reformers. By the early 1960s, it was clear to artists and academics alike that technology and mechanization now "dominated every aspect of our existence" and rendered many individuals across Western society "hyper-emotional and irrational," a sentiment Mumford equally abhorred.<sup>92</sup> Mumford provides literary evidence to man's historical resistance to the machine by citing romantic writers dating back to Bacon, Shakespeare, Goethe, Rousseau, and Hugo, each of whom attempted to place human activity at center stage "instead of accepting the

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<sup>91</sup> Lewis Mumford, *The Culture of Cities* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, Inc., 1938)

<sup>92</sup> Lewis Mumford, *Technics and Civilization* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962), 4, 286

machine as center and holding all its values to be final and absolute.”<sup>93</sup> This romantic reaction against the machine manifested in three distinct forms: the cult of history, the cult of nature, and the cult of the primitive, each of which embodied an overreaction – hyper-emotional and irrational – to the encroachment of the machine into everyday life. Since the machine has complete disregard for place or past, the cult of history – and its offspring, the fetishization of history- emerged as a reaction to this disregard.

The cult of history and the cult of nature represent to Mumford something of an unwelcome romantic idyll, steeped in man’s need to control the machine as he attempts to assert restraint on its ever-increasing presence.<sup>94</sup> These romantic, and, as Mumford argues, *irrational* responses are motivated by “the lure of more primitive conditions of life, as an alternative to the machine.” Further, Mumford cautions this cult of history constitutes a “bedraggled retreat” from modern life, here echoing Sigmund Freud’s amazement at the “tendency of presumably civilized men to idealize simple and often primitive conditions of life... the implication that mankind would be happier if our complex, technical order could somehow be abandoned.”<sup>95</sup> Mumford finds this retreat absurd, cautioning “if such defeatism becomes widespread, it would mean something more than the collapse of the machine: it would mean the end of the present cycle of Western Civilization.”<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> Mumford, *Technics and Civilization*, 4, 286

<sup>94</sup> Ibid, 289, 295

<sup>95</sup> Marx, 8-9

<sup>96</sup> Mumford, *Technics and Civilization*, 299



By 1967, Mumford appears less critical of these emotional reactions against the machine, and becomes personally concerned that man is well on his way to becoming a “passive, machine-serving animal” in the age of the Megamachine. In *The Myth and The Machine: Technics and Human Development*, Mumford reports technology is now completely disassociated from the larger cultural sphere of humankind and predicts things will go very badly in an age of increasing automation. “We must, in fact, ask ourselves if the probable destination of this system is compatible with the further development of specifically human potentialities.”<sup>97</sup> By the late 1960s, Mumford cautions man cannot flourish as a cog in the larger machine, as an inorganic automaton:

What in fact will be left of human life if one function after another is either taken over by the machine or else genetically suppressed, if not surgically removed?<sup>98</sup>

#### MODERN MELANCHOLIA

Americans have long experienced a complicated and often uneasy relationship with modernity and the modernizing city; an alternate -either past or future - iteration is idealized. This dis-ease with the modern condition should not, however, come as a surprise. The present, by its very nature, is problematic because it neither lives up to our expectations of what a modern city should be, nor has it yet realized the idealized visions we hold for the future. Nostalgia, a sentimental yearning for that which never actually existed, colors many interpretations of the past, urban and otherwise.

It is pointless to ask whether the new [cities] are better or worse than the old, since there is no connection between them, just as the old post cards do not depict

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<sup>97</sup> Mumford, *Technics and Civilization*, 314

<sup>98</sup> Lewis Mumford, “Technics and the Nature of Man,” *Technology and Culture*, Vol.7, No. 3 (Summer 1966), 314

[the old city] as it was, but a different city which, by chance, was called Maurilia, like this one.<sup>99</sup>

- Italo Calvino, *Invisible Cities* (1978)

Italian writer Italo Calvino proposes there is no real connection between the old city and the new, they simply share the same name and are located upon the same topographical landscape. *This* city is not *that* one. Calvino stresses the new city, “when compared to the old, cannot compensate for a certain lost grace, which, however, can be appreciated only now in the old post cards, whereas before, when that [old city] was before one’s eyes, one saw absolutely nothing graceful and would see it even less today.”<sup>100</sup> The graceful old city *can be appreciated only as such in hindsight*, through picture postcards and the preservation of old buildings; we must remember that in its day, the old city did not appear especially graceful to its inhabitants. We create these images of “the past” only from the cultural landscape of our present circumstance. The postcard city is the city of our dreams, the city as we wish to remember it and to know it.

#### WHEN WE WERE GOOD: THE COLONIAL REVIVAL

Clearly, a tradition exists in both scholarly and literary writings as to the disorienting effects of industrialization and the modern urban condition. We call this dissatisfaction “antimodernism,” but qualify this term as representing less a stance against the progress associated with modernity, and more accurately as a growing understanding of and concern for *the problematic and alienating nature of modern urban and technological society*. Modernity did not yield Utopia. Responses to these concerns

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<sup>99</sup> Italo Calvino, *Invisible Cities* (New York: Harcourt, Inc. 1974), 31

<sup>100</sup> Calvino, 30

manifest in a number of ways, including a growing nostalgia for a perceived lost idyll, a better version of American society located in the pastoral or preindustrial realm. Two cultural movements which illustrate this nostalgic look back to a better version of American society, to a time *when we were good*, include the Colonial Revival movement in architecture beginning in the 1870s, and the American folk music revival which grew steadily from the early 1900s. While on the surface, both movements were fueled by a nostalgic yearning for a “simpler,” more *authentic* era, in subtler ways, they served to shore up cultural authority and collective identity in the face of challenge to the reigning status quo.

We must first understand the role that visual and material culture – including architecture and art - play in the creation of identity and memory. We must understand how and by whom memories are shaped for collective consumption; what do these collective memories attempt to legitimate? In the social landscape of the late nineteenth century, the Colonial revival in architecture was one such mechanism meant to identify and solidify the primacy of the nation’s colonial heritage. Psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi explains humanity’s psychological need for objects, answering why, among a variety of reasons, we need things. Csikszentmihalyi argues objects serve as totems, symbols of power. Objects are the physical manifestation of our often-unconscious ideals and value systems and help identify us to ourselves and to the outside world. In times of heightened social-political-cultural change, the use of objects as a means to shore up personal and collective identities intensifies.<sup>101</sup> The precariousness of societal change leads us to perceive objects as symbols of stability that provide meaning

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<sup>101</sup> Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, “Why We Need Things,” from Steven Lubar and W. David Kingery, eds, *History From Things: Essays on Material Culture* (Washington D. C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1993), 27

in an otherwise unruly cultural landscape. Buildings of a preferred architectural style, monuments commemorating idealized figures, and interior furnishings and objects d'art of a bygone era each serve this purpose of legitimizing cultural ideals because antiquity equals value, and what is preserved is remembered as valuable, while the rest is forgotten in its perceived insignificance.

Philosopher-writer Alain de Botton expands upon Csikszentmihalyi's theory of why we need things and includes the human need for recurring and positive reinforcement. Why are we so vulnerable to our surroundings? Why do we even ask our environment to speak to us, to influence our very mood? Beautiful objects – however we define the term – remind us of our highest ideals, and ground us in what we value and hold dear in the face of incessant dissatisfaction with the disappointments of life. Home is our refuge from the world, and what we admire in the architecture of home, we admire in the architecture of public buildings as well.

De Botton describes the myriad ways in which the built environments of our homes and workplaces have the ability to inspire or degrade our larger aspirations. “We are different people in different places...and it is architecture's task to render vivid to us who we might ideally be.”<sup>102</sup> De Botton acknowledges the power of architecture lies simply in its ability to *suggest* a moral message or ideal, but has no power to enforce these. Like the steadfast belief in environmental determinism which dominated the social reform movement of the Progressive Era, de Botton argues architecture speaks to us and has the ability to alter the ways in which we confront a seemingly random and challenging world. Much in the same way that we read nonverbal cues from people, we

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<sup>102</sup> Alain de Botton, *The Architecture of Happiness* (New York: Vintage International, 2006), 13

read buildings and ascribe human attributes to them. “What we search for in a work of architecture is not in the end so far from what we search for in a friend. The objects we describe as beautiful are versions of the people we love.”<sup>103</sup> Architecture, whether from the classical, gothic, baroque, or modernist periods, can *make us good* because something of the integrity and honesty of its origin— whether real or imagined — survives its creators and permeates the environment in which it remains. De Botton offers:

It is perhaps when our lives are at their most problematic that we are likely to be most receptive to beautiful things. Our downhearted moments provide architecture and art with their best openings, for it is at such times that our hunger for their ideal qualities will be at its height.<sup>104</sup>

“When our lives are at their most problematic” is key. It is during times of disorder and dissent when we, as insecure human beings, most often seek comfort and strength in the solidity of objects. Immigration, industrialization, and social disorder following post-Civil War reconstruction characterized many cities of the mid-to-late nineteenth century. By the dawn of the twentieth century, new discoveries in science and technology, deeply entrenched in Darwinism and emerging race theory, produced a conviction among progressive reformists and urbanists that social engineering, steeped in environmental determinism, was the key to orderly development of the chaotic industrial city. Progressive Era reformists acknowledged the urban problem, raised the social question, and pushed for civilizing influences that would transform immigrant and ethnic populations into solid American citizens. With this new perspective on environmental

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<sup>103</sup> de Botton, 88

<sup>104</sup> Ibid, 150

determinism emerged the theory that material culture – including architecture, objects, and artifacts - held the power to *transform one's character*. Environmental determinism allows that simply being in the presence of colonial antiques could ennoble one's character, believing objects crafted by preindustrial tradesmen of the Colonial Era “embodied the superior values” of the day, represented the “spirit of the past,” and, most critically, *transmitted the noble spirit of the past* to their new owners.<sup>105</sup> Late nineteenth century collectors of Colonial Era antiques felt these objects represented a better (if more stratified) version of American society, a time when:

Social life was cultivated and enjoyed, and the distinctions of class were observed and acquiesced in...without any loss of self-respect or happiness to those who acknowledged the refined, the wealthy, and the intellectual superiority of others.<sup>106</sup>

Eliza Greatroix' 1875 assertion, reflecting her nostalgia for an era when “the distinctions of class were observed and acquiesced in” indicates what, exactly, was sentimentalized in the homage to all things colonial. By the end of the nineteenth century, amidst a large increase in immigration, post-Reconstruction migration, and a growing awareness that an urban problem demanded attention, material culture of the Colonial Era served as a reminder of an imagined American society in which folks allegedly “acknowledged the refined, the wealthy, and the intellectual superiority of others.”

This was a firmly delineated class hierarchy, with the lower classes more solidly bound in place. By the end of the nineteenth century, objects and architecture of the

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<sup>105</sup> Karal Ann Marling, *George Washington Slept Here: Colonial Revivals and American Culture, 1876-1986* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988), 87. Italics added

<sup>106</sup> Eliza Greatroix, *Old New York from the Battery to Bloomingdale* (New York: 1875)

Colonial Era represented, in addition to aesthetic tastes in interior wainscoting and exterior pillars, traditional class distinctions and social hierarchies. When de Botton tells us, “What we search for in a work of architecture is not in the end so far from what we search for in a friend,” he argues a neoclassical pediment above an arched doorway is not simply aesthetically pleasing to its present-day admirer; its design evokes the character and values of those who dwelled there.

Patriotic sentiment fueled the Colonial revival from the 1870s through the 1950s, in which preserved and restored Colonial Era buildings “were almost, without exception, ennobled by their associations with America’s early political and military heroes.”<sup>107</sup> The popular appeal of the Colonial style, to which the later revival harkened, was as much about patriotism and a national style distinct from European styles as it was about an architectural aesthetic. Horace Mann, architect and a member of the Sons of the Revolution, declared in 1915:

There remains in our own Colonial or Georgian style... a real sense of ownership. It has grown up with the nation, and no more tangible expression of our national character could be found. There is between Americans and Europeans an actual difference of habit of mind. We are less complex and more direct, less formal and simpler, and all this our Colonial work expresses.<sup>108</sup>

The symbolism associated with any architectural style is at least as important, if not more so, than its aesthetic appeal in garnering our favor. The appreciation for the Colonial architectural style, then, is loaded with value judgments, just as in the pastoral

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<sup>107</sup> William B. Rhodes, “Colonial Revival and American Nationalism.” *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, Vol 35 No. 4 (Dec, 1976), 239

<sup>108</sup> Horace B. Mann, “Style in the Country House,” *American Architect*, CVII (May 12, 1915), 297

ideal. The Colonial style represents a visible symbol of national character, distinct in both time and place. By the early twentieth century, the ongoing Colonial revival in architecture promoted the nation's "authentic" cultural origins and helped define "our own inalienable heritage" in the midst of the First World War, economic depression, and socio-demographic flux.<sup>109</sup> In the midst of challenging circumstances of national or regional proportion, the power of cultural representation, while perhaps not quite propaganda, serves to impart and solidify desired collective values.<sup>110</sup>

By the 1930s, resurgence in American nationalism following the devastation of World War I and the Great Depression included this belief in the power of architecture to remind us of past values, of "a simpler, puritanical, family-oriented world of manageable scale."<sup>111</sup> Home décor magazines of the 1930s were filled with photographs and exposés on the Colonial-type home, and helped fuel a middle-class patriotic sentiment. In addition to magazines such as *House and Garden*, *Architecture*, and *House Beautiful*, Hollywood films fastidiously promoted the Colonial style, with almost every film of the 1930s set against a Colonial-style suburban backdrop.<sup>112</sup> While home interior design of the 1930s evoked an idealized vision of the colonial past, it simultaneously took full advantage of modern conveniences, the latest technological gadgets, and home appliances. We don't want to actually *live* in an antique home, we simply want to create the aura of one with all

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<sup>109</sup> Ralph Adams Cram, "The Influence of the French School on American Architecture," *American Architect*, L XVI (25 November 1899), 66

<sup>110</sup> See John Bodnar, *Remaking America; Public Memory, Commemoration and Patriotism in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993)

<sup>111</sup> David Gebhard, "The American Colonial Revival in the 1930s." *Winterthur Portfolio*, Vol 22, No. 2/3 (Summer-Autumn, 1987), 146

<sup>112</sup> Gebhard, 110, 116



the comforts of the modern age, many of which available to middle-class consumers through home-delivery catalogues like Lillian Vernon.

The popularity of Colonial Williamsburg further sparked an already lively colonial-inspired historic preservation fixation across the 1930s. The park's 1937 guidebook cites the patriotic and inspirational benefits of historic preservation during the "topsy-turvy times" of the Great Depression and the spread of "anti-democratic" forces at home.<sup>113</sup> Industrialist John D. Rockefeller, Jr. meant to instill "the lesson ...of patriotism, high purpose, and unselfish devotion to our forefathers to the common good" when he first laid plans to recreate the colonial village at Williamsburg. Not everyone was a fan, however, and among the dissenters was the modernist architect Frank Lloyd Wright, who characterized Colonial Williamsburg as a "hangover," indicating "a mawkish sentimentality for a past that wasn't any good."<sup>114</sup> Wright's comments challenge the *historical amnesia* quality of these restoration/preservation projects: What of history is omitted? What in fact is being preserved or restored? Who comes out ahead in the commemoration of a selective version of history?

If we detect a certain amount of xenophobia in the motivations behind the Colonial revival movement, we would not be misguided. The subtext of the Colonial revival, in which the popular consumption of Colonial Era architecture and décor serves to shore up the cultural authority of an Anglo-white middle class which feels itself threatened by immigration, the Great Migration of southern African-Americans into the north, and an increasingly multi-ethnic population, has been criticized as a mechanism for

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<sup>113</sup> Richard Guy Wilson, *Re-creating the American Past; Essays on the Colonial Revival*. (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2006), 17, citing John D. Rockefeller Jr's "The Genesis of the Williamsburg Restoration," *National Geographic*, April 1937, 401

<sup>114</sup> Rhea Talley, "The Genesis of the Williamsburg Restoration," *National Geographic*, Apr. 1937, p. 401

maintaining the hegemonic order.<sup>115</sup> Colonial style and the symbolism ascribed to it were associated with the heritage of the nation's forefathers, a strong foundation in family life, and a keener religious sensibility. "Because upper and middle-class dominance was being threatened in various ways, these cornerstones became all the more precious. By resorting to bygone modes, these groups strove to preserve their sense of the nation's beginnings, to maintain traditions, and *to make the present less threatening*."<sup>116</sup>

Memory is constructed, not reproduced, through a process by which we reshape our understandings of the past to fit present-day concerns. We tend to construct a mythologized and stable past in response to the troublesome and threatening changes in the present. Understood in this light, a cultural ideal as apparently benign as an architectural style becomes loaded with value judgments of authenticity and purity. The Colonial revival appealed to the middle-class as a way to legitimate links to the past and provided a sense of roots – real or imaginary - amidst challenges to the status quo during the height of industrialization, immigration, and urbanization. Similar efforts to retain cultural authority during times of social turbulence are seen in the folk music revival of the early-mid 1900s, and again in the resurgence of the historic preservation movement amidst the social turbulence of the 1960s.

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<sup>115</sup> Wilson, 6

<sup>116</sup> Bridget A. May, "Progressivism and the Colonial Revival: The Modern Colonial House, 1900-1920." *Winterthur Portfolio*, Vol 26 No. 2/3 (Summer-Autumn, 1991), 110. Italics added.

# WHEN WE WERE GOOD: THE AMERICAN FOLK MUSIC REVIVAL

Modernity generally, or more precisely its threat to the cultural hegemony of the Anglo-American middle class, was the enemy, and folk culture, understood as a survival from a more respectable past, might be a bulwark against it.<sup>117</sup>

-Robert Cantwell, *When We Were Good; The Folk Revival* (1996)

It is critical to avoid making the generalization that heritage commemoration in any era necessarily privileges one class or community at every turn. In the case of the Colonial revival in architecture, a white Anglo tradition belonging to the founding families of the Colonial Era was idealized as noble, honest and good. In the case of the folk music revival, what began at the turn of the twentieth century as a celebration of the hegemonic cultural authority of the Scotch-English descendants in Appalachian communities had morphed, by the 1930s', to a celebration of "ordinary folk" idealized as noble, honest and good in their struggles to stay afloat during the Depression, and would morph yet again by the 1960s. These revivals in architecture and music were steeped in notions of heroism, with the former locating heroism in the traditions of the nation's patriotic founding families, and the latter locating heroism in the strength of ordinary folk, often marginalized, but standing for the best of "American values."<sup>118</sup> Both traditions sought to honor a time *when we were good*, promoting an overt, and sometimes covert, value system seemingly lacking in the present cultural landscape.

The American folk music revival dates to the early twentieth century, when American folk music collectors began forming state folklore societies. These primarily

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<sup>117</sup> Cantwell, 31

<sup>118</sup> Benjamin Filene, *Romancing the Folk: Public Memory and American Roots Music*. (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 132

academic collectors meant to catalogue and preserve America's folk heritage through traditional ballads and vernacular music not corrupted by the popular music of modern society.<sup>119</sup> Englishman Cecil Sharp, an authority on British folk songs, travelled to America's Appalachian region in 1916, where he recovered and collected over sixteen hundred versions of five hundred songs, eventually publishing these in *English Folk Songs from the Southern Appalachians* the following year. Sharp intended to replace the popular music of the day with traditional Anglo folk songs that had survived within these insulated mountain communities. He wanted to "flood the street with folk tunes," displacing the cacophony of "coarse music-hall songs," making "the streets a pleasanter place for those who have sensitive ears and will do incalculable good in civilizing the masses."<sup>120</sup> In the early twentieth century era of environmental determinism, folk music - like the contemporaneous City Beautiful and Colonial revival movements in architecture - was seen as a civilizing influence on the public, offered as an antidote to the chaos created by modern music in a modern society.

By the early twentieth century, traditional middle and ruling-class culture was being challenged on several inorganic and "perverted" fronts, including commercialization, secularization, science, urbanization and industrial capitalism.<sup>121</sup> From this troublesome cultural landscape, Sharp imagined and helped to create an idealized vision of folk culture through recovered folk music. Sharp presented this folk culture for popular consumption as natural and wholesome, in marked contrast to what he

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<sup>119</sup> Filene, 10, 17, 22

<sup>120</sup> Filene, 22

<sup>121</sup> Georgina Boyes, *The Imagined Village: Culture, Ideology, and the English Folk Revival* (New York: Manchester University Press, 1993), 65

described as the spiritual vacuum of modern industrial society. Appalachian life – to the outsider, if not to those who lived it - was decidedly better, more authentic, and pure. Folk music represented a mountain people “immune from that continuous, grinding, mental pressure due to the attempt to make a living, from which all of us in the modern world suffer.”<sup>122</sup> With his marketing of folk music as the true musical heritage of the nation, Sharp sentimentalized the preindustrial culture of “ordinary” mountain folk.

Sharp’s interest in reviving American folk music contained more than a hint of supercilious racism; his project centered on legitimizing the specifically Anglo heritage of American culture. By choosing Appalachia for his study, he chose a relatively ethnically homogeneous region, one in which Anglo descendants - themselves the children of immigrants - were often impoverished and illiterate. This was a revival seeking not the idyll of a longed-for past....but the idyll of a *past which never actually happened*. In Sharp’s implication that *traditional* American culture was a *white Anglo-Saxon* culture and the nation’s true “authentic” heritage, the emergence of the folk music revival underscores a mechanism similar to that at play during the Colonial revival. The 1910s mark a decade when “racial boundaries in America were being tested,” with increasing immigration from southern and eastern Europe and the first Great Migration of African-Americans creating widespread demographic shifts in the nation’s urban centers. Sharp’s vision of the folk revival – located in rural Appalachia - intended to shore up America’s “authentic” heritage against potential challenges from other cultural and ethnic groups.<sup>123</sup>

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<sup>122</sup> Filene, 24

<sup>123</sup> Filene, 25-26

To be sure, not all folk music collectors focused solely on English folk songs and their white singers. African-American spirituals were becoming popular by the late nineteenth century, as some collectors saw the value in preserving these spirituals and the old Negro tradition. However, “early collectors exoticized African-Americans in part to keep them at a distance and in part because black culture truly did differ markedly from the white middle-class life to which most collectors were accustomed.” By the mid-twentieth century, African-American culture via The Blues was more heavily integrated into the folk music revival, when music collectors, disillusioned by the overt commercialism and bourgeois materialism which had already corrupted “authenticity” in the folk music scene, looked to the bluesman as a “truer” embodiment of the authentic folk ethos.<sup>124</sup>

These collectors, in publicizing and marketing the authentic blues with some recordings dating back to the 1920s, set the stage for the later rebel soundtrack of the 1960s. Rock and roll began where two roads converged- the rockabilly of Elvis Presley, himself raised in the Mississippi Delta and heavily influenced by black bluesmen; and the British Invasion led by the Rolling Stones, who idolized the Delta bluesmen and just wanted to be “the best blues band in London.”<sup>125</sup> As such, white marketing entrepreneurs from Chicago influenced white musicians from the American South and from postwar London, who combined to create a phenomenon which would change the world. All of them stood on the shoulders of disenfranchised black men from the Mississippi Delta. The poetic prose of W.E.B. Du Bois traces the connection between old Negro spirituals

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<sup>124</sup> Filene, 31,32,116

<sup>125</sup> Keith Richards, *Life* (Brown, Little & Co., 2011), 109

and contemporary American musical culture, and argues the songs – not just the blues - of white America have been “distinctively influenced” by the Sorrow Songs and melodies of Negro slaves and their descendents.<sup>126</sup>

The 1930s saw a renewed wave of folk revival during the Great Depression, when “images of the folk attracted Americans because they suggested sources of purity and character outside the seemingly weakened and corrupt mainstream of society.” Many Americans placed hardship and blame at the feet of business and political leaders, and instead found courage and strength of national character in ordinary folk.<sup>127</sup> Whereas the Colonial revival was very much a pro-establishment movement, honoring, in the words of John D. Rockefeller, Jr., the lessons of “our forefathers to the common good,” the folk revival scene of the 1930s was very much *anti-establishment*, privileging folk and vernacular culture – sometimes radical - over that of the ruling parties of the day.

The popular appeal of folk music in the 1920s and 30s served as a remedy to the rapid social and economic transformations and change in the prevailing order of the post-WWI and Depression eras. A vocal faction intent on creating a secure link between mountain music and white-Anglo culture, during a time when immigration to southern states was rapidly surpassing that of their northern counterparts due to the South’s drive to catch-up in the industrial economy, corroborates similar arguments pertaining to the

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<sup>126</sup> W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (Rockville, MD: Arc Manor Publishers, 2008), 166, 169. In his poetic description of Negro “Sorrow Songs,” Du Bois illustrates the link between the old spirituals to the blues, for both black and white musicians: “Through all the sorrow of the Sorrow Songs there breathes a hope – a faith in the ultimate justice of things. The minor cadences of despair change often to triumph and calm confidence. Sometimes it is faith in life, sometimes a faith in death, sometimes assurance of boundless justice in some fair world beyond. But whichever it is, the meaning is always clear: that sometime, somewhere, men will judge men by their souls and not by their skins. Is such a hope justified? Do the Sorrow Songs sing true?”

<sup>127</sup> Filene, 64-65

ways in which cultural authority is bolstered during times of challenge and flux.<sup>128</sup>

Cantwell argues that during the Great Depression:

The collapse of the American economic system... had drawn back the glittering veil of consumer capitalism that for more than a generation had been absorbing the forms of the traditional institutions of American culture into itself; the solution to social and economic recovery seemed to lie in the older provincial and republican society.<sup>129</sup>

An increasing nostalgia for the years before the Great War and before the Great Depression sentimentalized not only the artisan communities of the provincial small town, but also looked for a remedy to the debilitating economic, cultural, and racial ailments currently “tearing the social fabric apart.”<sup>130</sup> Folk music, then, served not only to codify a sense of authenticity of roots, but also offered a clue to an earlier time, a time which might hold the key to mending the economic, social and political challenges in the present.

By the 1940s, the folk music scene was heavily influenced by leftist politics, with songs that promoted labor unions and racial justice, and sang against economic inequality. As such, the folk revival was not simply about paying homage to the past; the folk singer/songwriter worked within a musical tradition to confront present-day challenges and concerns. However, by the 1950s and under the watch of a much more conservative political leadership, folk music had for the most part ditched its overt leftist

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<sup>128</sup> David Whisnant, *All That Is Native and Fine; The Politics of Culture in an American Region* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2008), 200

<sup>129</sup> Cantwell, 99

<sup>130</sup> Cantwell, 100



political slant. In the early 1960s, New York City's Greenwich Village harbored a folk scene alive and well. "The beats had been brained into existentialism, but the folkniks were full of piss and vinegar and ready to make a lot of noise about change. Greenwich Village was alive and radiating young talent and enthusiasm."<sup>131</sup> Folk and rhythm & blues singer Richie Havens recalls of the early 1960s, "We instinctively knew that big changes in our American culture were brewing all around us. The air was electric and it was going to be like that for most of the decade."<sup>132</sup>

By the late 1960s, however, even Greenwich Village's prince of folkniks, Bob Dylan, was romancing the electric guitar, and folk music's sinking popularity among a growing youth culture gave way to the nosier rebel soundtrack of Rock and Roll. The rise of Rock and Roll in the 1950s and 60s:

had shaken adult society's aesthetic and moral foundations...A backlash against the escalating youth culture quickly developed; the assault was both aesthetic and moral, with racial overtones. ... Youth – the heart of the family and hope of the future – were seemingly running wild. There was considerable alarm.<sup>133</sup>

"ACCELERATING CHANGE: RADICAL, WRENCHING, EROSIVE OF BOTH TRADITIONS AND OLD VALUES"<sup>134</sup>

Leo Marx concluded *Machine in the Garden* with the prediction that by 1964, its date of publication, the pastoral response to industrialization would begin to fade into an

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<sup>131</sup> Joe Smith, *Off the Record: An Oral History of Popular Music* (New York: Warner, 1988), 13, 156

<sup>132</sup> Richie Havens, from *They Can't Hide Us Anymore* (New York: Avon, 1999), 30

<sup>133</sup> Ronald D. Cohen, *Rainbow Quest: The Folk Music Revival and American Society, 1940-1970* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2002), 96, 133

<sup>134</sup> *Time* magazine, "Man of the Year: the Inheritor," Jan 6, 1967, p.18, 23

anachronism. When the 1960s and beyond instead saw a renewed devotion to environmentalism and radicalism, Marx later acknowledged “a much deeper ideological continuity between nineteenth-century pastoralism and the radical movement (or counter-culture) of the 1960s.”<sup>135</sup> Indeed, 1960s radicals were equally repulsed by and reviled the “technocratic direction” of their own contemporary American society.

In 1966, *TIME* magazine named Youth its annual Man of the Year, citing “For better or for worse, the world today is committed to accelerating change: radical, wrenching, erosive of both traditions and old values.”<sup>136</sup> The middle class felt itself challenged on several fronts: a youthful and rebellious counterculture; civil rights activists demanding fundamental changes to the nation’s social and legal structures; and antiwar protesters attacking not only the elder generation’s foreign policy, but its very legitimacy as well. By the 1960s, well over a century of “antimodern” sensibility in artistic, academic, and public spheres spoke to an ongoing alarm regarding the machine’s encroachment in the garden and the disruptions of modernity on the human psyche.

Remedies to this alarm manifested in the cultural revivals of Colonial architecture, American folk music, and, as we shall see, the nation’s preindustrial maritime history. If, as Jackson Lears argues, the threat of massive change in the prevailing social structure and hegemonic order created a collective sense of nostalgia for a more “authentic” cultural landscape during the Progressive Era, the landscape of challenge and dissent in the 1960s provides a dynamic matrix in which grew a resurging interest in heritage commemoration and historic preservation.

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<sup>135</sup> Marx, 384

<sup>136</sup> *Time* magazine, “Man of the Year: the Inheritor,” Jan 6, 1967, p.18, 23

In New York City, this renewed interest turned to the city's old seaport district, to a different time, to the nation's Golden Age of Sail, as worthy of remembrance and commemoration of a time *when we were good*. The belief that the natural landscape – for Olmsted in the 1860s this meant the parks, for Seaport founder Peter Stanford and the Friends of South Street in the 1960s this meant the sea and the harbor – would positively influence the city dweller's mind and soul and would make for a better citizenry, rotates upon an axis of urban turmoil. While Olmsted was confronting the chaos of increasing immigration and industrialization, Friends of South Street were confronting the chaos of the Civil Rights era, Vietnam War protests, and the “meaningless of the age.” Underlying the process of historic preservation during the culturally fracturing Age of Aquarius was the impetus to resuscitate the collective heroism of a potentially fleeting and yet seemingly fundamental American identity.<sup>137</sup>

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<sup>137</sup> To those astrologically minded, this author acknowledges that the 1960s is actually located during *the dawning* of the Age of Aquarius. For the sake of brevity, and in keeping with conventional understanding of the term, I will generally refer to the late-1960s as the Age of Aquarius, omitting the “dawning of.”

## 2

### BATTLE LINES BEING DRAWN

*The world today is asking a terrible question – a question which every citizen of this Republic should be putting to himself: what sort of people are we, we Americans? And the answer which much of the world is bound to return is that we are today the most frightening people on this planet.*<sup>138</sup>

– Arthur Schlesinger, Jr.,  
City University of New York commencement speech (1968)

*The country was in a really profound state of turmoil... The country was coming unhinged.*<sup>139</sup>

- NEH Chairman William Adams (2014)

The demolition of New York’s grandiose Pennsylvania Station in 1964 was the rallying point that spurred the city’s historic preservation movement – practically hibernating since the Progressive Era – to action. New York City’s Mayor Robert Wagner signed the Landmarks Preservation Law in response to this publically controversial demolition of McKim, Mead and White’s monumental homage to classical architecture and the power of public art and in response to the outrage Penn Station’s demolition evoked from historically-minded citizens and arts organizations speckled

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<sup>138</sup> Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr. “America 1968: The Politics of Violence,” *Harper’s Magazine*, Aug. 1968, p. 19

<sup>139</sup> “The country was in a really profound state of turmoil.... The country was coming unhinged, and this was especially clear when I got back from Vietnam... Twenty-four hours after retuning from Vietnam, I was gassed as I tried to move in and around Berkeley. It was unbelievable, just mind-bending.” National Endowment for the Humanities Chairman William Adams, from *Humanities*, Nov/Dec 2014, p. 11

across the city. Bolstered by its meager ration of power, the Landmarks Preservation Commission had, by 1966, designated a string of the city's Colonial Era structures to the National Historic Landmarks registry, including St. Paul's Chapel, the Morris-Jumel Mansion, the Voorlezer's House, and the Old Merchant's House.

Commemoration of the city's founding fathers, their homes and accomplishments, dominated historic preservation across the 1960s and 70s. Conventional scholarship locates the re-emergence of the preservation impulse as a reaction against the ahistorical nature of modernist urban planning and the historically-callous urban renewal bulldozer. Certainly, this reaction against modernist urban planning fueled the impulse to salvage what remained of the eighteenth and nineteenth century cityscape. However, the social and political landscape of the 1960s, until now considered as only a minor factor in the reemergence of historic preservation in the 1960s, must instead factor significantly into any analysis of historic preservation and heritage commemoration across the decade. Plans for lower Manhattan's South Street Seaport Museum and the Fraunces Tavern museum block both emerged in the 1960s as commemorative sites dedicated to remembering the city's maritime history. As these plans to commemorate the country's maritime prowess as a powerful beacon of American vigor and prosperity emerged mere blocks from one another, the fundamental identity and foundational ideals of American society were being challenged on several vocal and demanding fronts.

Popular magazines *TIME*, *LIFE*, *Harper's Weekly*, *Esquire*, and *The Atlantic Monthly* devoted issue after issue to a new generation of malcontents: counterculture youth, anti-war activists, Black Power activists, student protestors....what exactly did these rebels want? Permeating media coverage of civil rights and student protests, anti-

war and counterculture demonstrations, sit-ins, be-ins, takeovers, assassinations, sex, LSD, and battle lines being drawn was a sense of ubiquitous challenge to The Establishment, to the status quo, to what sort of nation America had become. The operating structures of modern American society – capitalism, the military-industrial complex, the consumer’s republic, the hierarchy of race - incited protest, violence, and conflict among a younger generation seemingly hell-bent on questioning the very existence of American exceptionalism. Media coverage - ramped up in both timeliness and ubiquity on network nightly news broadcasts, in popular weekly magazines, through photo essays and music criticism – prompted the nation to ask itself, *what sort of people are we, we Americans?*

In the 1960s, *LIFE* magazine was the publication of record of contemporary and popular culture. Millions of Americans – largely white and middle-class - watched Walter Cronkite’s nightly television newscast on CBS, they watched their sons being killed in the jungles of Vietnam and racial tensions flare in cities across the country, and they saw Peter Ut’s photos of napalmed children in the pages of *LIFE* magazine, wondering where their country was going. A search through *TIME* and *LIFE* magazines’ archives today provides “a compelling historical and visual record” of contemporary life across the mid-twentieth century. Through its exposes and photo essays, “the magazine sought to influence attitudes and shape perceptions of popular culture” of the day.<sup>140</sup>

In *Once Upon a Distant War*, military historian William Prochnau assures the millennial reader that during the mid-century, publishing mogul Henry Luce’s *TIME* and *LIFE* magazines:

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<sup>140</sup> Gabrielle Esperdy, “Ugly America; From the pages of Life, a complex view of the mid-century commercial landscape,” *Places Journal* (Nov. 2014) <https://placesjournal.org/article/ugly-america>

Wielded their power in places that the other great media institutions of the day, the *New York Times*, did not bother to go. The *Times* could take the intelligentsia, and did. But *LIFE* sat on the coffee table of every middle class home in America; *TIME* became the intellectual Bible of the Elks Club in Peoria, the Rotarians in Walla Walla, the housewife in Flint. The *Times* pitched straight at the ruling elite and became part of it. Henry Luce took middle America.<sup>141</sup>

*TIME* magazine covered “Protest: The Banners of Dissent,” “Hippies: Philosophy of a Subculture,” “Speed Kills,” “Doctrines of the Dropouts,” and “the Politics of Yip,” while its sister publication *LIFE* offered photo essays capturing mayhem on American streets and in the Vietnamese jungle with “The Spectacle of Racial Turbulence in Birmingham,” “To L.B.J.: What IS Our Aim in Vietnam?” “Selma: The Savage Season Begins,” “Arson and Street War: Most Destructive Riot in U.S. History,” “Plot to ‘Get Whitey!’ Negro Revolt: The Flames Spread,” “Runaway Kids,” and “University Under Siege.” *Harper’s Weekly* reported, often through long-form journalism than ran well over sixty pages in length, “Anti-Americanism in America,” “Rebellious Students and Their Counterrevolution,” and “America 1968: The Politics of Violence,” while *The Atlantic Monthly* explored the nation’s “Sense of Crisis” and “The War Against the Young,” tried to make sense of “The Battle of the Pentagon,” considered we might in fact be “Misunderstanding Our Student Rebels,” and revealed the glaring generation gap with “The Class of ’43 is Puzzled.” Music of the late 60s was heavily influenced by drugs and sex of the counterculture, daily newspapers and television reporting brought the friction of protest, urban rioting, LSD trips, and the bloody reality of the Vietnam war broadcast into American middle class homes on a daily basis. If

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<sup>141</sup> William Prochnau, *Once Upon a Distant War: David Halberstam, Neil Sheehan, Peter Arnet – Young War Correspondents and Their Early Vietnam Battles* (New York: Crown Publishing, 1995), 60

challenge, on the whole, came from a minority percentage of the nation's population, its media-generated influence on the public consciousness cannot be underestimated. In the words of writer Alfred Kazin, *everybody felt it*.

The once-solid core of American life – the cement of loyalty that people tender to institutions, certifying that the current order is going to last and deserves to – this loyalty, in select sectors, was decomposing... The liberal-conservative consensus that had shored up national satisfaction since 1945 – the interwoven belief in economic growth, equality of opportunity, and the Cold War – had fallen afoul of black revolt and Vietnam, and it was as if once the keystone of the arch was loosened, the rest of the structure teetered.<sup>142</sup>

– Todd Gitlin, President, Students for a Democratic Society (1963)

Determining whether the decade spanning 1960-1970 was, quantitatively or qualitatively, *the most* internally divisive, externally violent, riotous or challenging in American history does not further the purpose of this thesis. “The decade” is, first, an arbitrary marker of time, although we tend to reflect on both personal histories and larger collective histories in terms of this classification. We characterize decades as “gay,” “roaring,” or obsessed with “me.” Second, American society has known challenge and dissent from its very foundation. The 1860s, by vernacular and scholarly accounts, saw a country coming unglued. It does us no good to argue the 1960s was *the* most turbulent decade known to American history. What matters is the *collective perception* of an American public which experienced an increasing and ubiquitous climate of dissent against established leadership, challenge to the postwar consensus of national unity, and disillusionment with the middle-class status quo and its cultural and political hegemony.

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<sup>142</sup> Todd Gitlin, *The Sixties: Years of Hope, Days of Rage* (New York: Bantam Books, 1987), 343



By 1968, sixteen out of seventeen American homes owned a television set. The sounds of Americans running from billyclub-wielding cops on our city streets, joined by the sounds of machinegun fire rattling a jungle across the globe, blasted into American homes on a nightly basis. Images of napalm explosions above Vietnamese villages competed with images of African-Americans pinned against shop windows by high-pressure water hoses in Birmingham. The sounds of college students chanting, “Hey, hey, LBJ, how many kids did you kill today?” were answered by the sounds of Buffalo Springfield singing, “What a field day for the heat, a thousand people in the street.” Any sense of national consensus uniting the country during WWII and during the immediate postwar boom was coming undone in the 1950s and became an intensified national concern by the 1960s. In this landscape, commemoration of a glorified history served to shore up the cultural authority of a perceptively more noble American identity and developed as part of a larger conversation which asked, *what sort of people are we, we Americans?* Eliza Greatroix’ 1875 nostalgia for the Colonial Era’s seemingly proper observance of class distinctions and the civility that came with a respected – if not coerced – a social hierarchy that might still be shared in 1960 by some hangers-on, but would face increasing scrutiny and challenge in the years to come.

Street riots, draft card burnings, anti-war demonstrations, a university takeover, and the hippie invasion combined to alter the physical and social landscape of New York City and reflected The Movement’s local presence. However, in much broader terms, the burgeoning social and political upheaval and dissent – on a national scale – and the increasing and ever-present role of the mass media in providing traction and a sense of ubiquity to this dissent, raised a larger question, not only for New Yorkers, but for the

nation as a whole. That question - *what sort of people are we, we Americans?* - would fuel the impulse to commemorate the nation's earlier glory as a beacon of vigor and prosperity at the site of its maritime roots.

#### THE 50S: THE SILENT GENERATION

We've grown unbelievably prosperous and we maunder along in a stupor of fat. We were badly scared by the Communists, so scared that we are leery of anybody who even so much as twits our ideas, our customs, or our leaders.<sup>143</sup>

- Eric Goldman for *Harper's Magazine* (January 1960)

Current scholarship exposes the 1950s as not so neatly unified or harmonious as conventional wisdom might recall, nor can we rely on such Hollywood productions as *Happy Days*, *Laverne and Shirley*, or *American Graffiti* to paint a nuanced picture of the postwar decade. Constraints by race and gender meant that not everyone – minorities and women included – felt the “good life” was equally accessible to all. Large numbers of Americans felt left behind in the great rush towards prosperity brought on by the boom in the postwar economy and the surge in suburbanization. Shifting gender roles and expectations in postwar America belie the 1950s' mystique of “contented domesticity” in the suburban life of the “American dream.” We can't fit The Fifties into a tidy package of harmony, national consensus, and increasing prosperity, and yet the decade known as

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<sup>143</sup> Eric Goldman, “Good-by to the ‘fifties - and good riddance,” *Harper's*, Jan. 1960

harboring the Silent Generation reveals an outward push towards consensus and hegemony that would come under attack a few years later.<sup>144</sup>

Cultural representations of family life in the '50s and for its contemporary audience – television shows like *Leave It To Beaver*, *The Donna Reed Show*, and *Father Knows Best* – depicted white middle class life as the ideal. Even when the realities of a more diverse American experience said otherwise, the *cultural image* of the “American experience” was that of the white, middle class, nuclear family.<sup>145</sup> A 1957 report, based on national interviews, found forty percent of young men wanted to be just like their fathers.<sup>146</sup> Father indeed knew best. These young adults of the '50s became known as the Silent Generation, trudging through a cold war which required Americans to unite against the Soviet enemy; any hint at diverse expressions or ideology could be – and was – charged as subversive, un-American, and treasonous. The 1950s saw millions of Americans “nationalist almost to the point of nativism,” characterized by a “self-righteous sense of American superiority [steeped in] pride in democracy, free enterprise, and material success.”<sup>147</sup> Looking back on his Harvard Class of '43 from 1968, writer Nicholas von Hoffman reports:

As a generation [we] have been accused of being apathetic and acquisitive, people who struck a devil's bargain with their government, by which, in return for full employment and a little domestic turf, they would occupy themselves with car

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<sup>144</sup> Alexander Bloom and Wini Breines. *Takin' It To The Streets; A Sixties Reader* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 5. Also see David Halberstam, *The Fifties* (Ballantine Books, 1994) for a cultural history of the decade.

<sup>145</sup> Bloom and Breines, 5

<sup>146</sup> Terry H. Anderson, *The Movement and the Sixties* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 19

<sup>147</sup> Tom Wicker, “The Wrong Rubicon: LBJ and the War,” *The Atlantic*, May 1968, p. 65

payments and question neither the bomb-builders nor the bomb-droppers in the recurring anti-Communist wars.<sup>148</sup>

For the majority of white Americans, the windfall promised for hard work and respect for the established power structure was a share in the nation's bountiful fortune. During the economic boom of the postwar years and with a rapidly expanding middle class, much of America was living comfortably amidst a national plentitude fueled by a thriving industrial economy. However, signs of discontent and disease become measurable when the decade is examined under more careful scrutiny: the number of life insurance policies increase remarkably during this decade, as does the number of Americans seeking psychiatric care. Increases in personal debt, concerns with national security, and a festering Jim Crow reveal a generation not as fat and contented as the next generation would argue.<sup>149</sup> Todd Gitlin, President of the Students for a Democratic Society, looked back in 1963 on his childhood and asked, "So much of America in the Fifties seemed content, so many of the old promises redeemed; why were middle-class children of the fifties looking in such strange places for heroes?"<sup>150</sup>

Indeed, across the 1950s, music and film aimed at a growing postwar youth culture created rebellious teen idols like Marlon Brando in *The Wild One*, James Dean in *Rebel Without a Cause*, Elvis Presley, Lenny Bruce, J.D. Salinger's Holden Caulfield, and the satirical force of *Mad Magazine*. Suddenly, teen angst and rebellion were the new normal, with a generation beginning to move in a very different direction from that of its

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<sup>148</sup> Nicholas von Hoffman, "The Class of '43 is Puzzled," *The Atlantic*, Oct 1968

<sup>149</sup> Gitlin, 16

<sup>150</sup> Ibid, 2

parents, this rebellion popularized and disseminated by growing media outlets.<sup>151</sup> While forty percent of young men reported wanting to be just like their fathers, a growing teen culture rejected middle-class norms and challenged the perceived hypocrisy of contemporary life. Young people of the 1950s blurred racial lines when they listened and danced to R&B, read with delight *Mad Magazine*'s mockery of "nearly everything" reported on in mainstream weeklies like *LIFE* and *Reader's Digest*, and read with vigor novels that expressed the alienation of youth, perhaps best embodied in Salinger's Holden Caulfield.<sup>152</sup> Following WWII, this generation "had extracted the lesson that the fate of the world is not something automatically to be entrusted to authorities."<sup>153</sup> These youngsters had witnessed the consequences of passivity and felt a subsequent skepticism towards authority. By the mid-1960s, magazine articles and books examined why the Fifties, a seemingly prosperous and contented decade, had reared a new generation so cynical and delinquent.<sup>154</sup> A vocal faction of the baby boom cohort, raised on skepticism and haunted by the atrocities of WWII, was ready to say good riddance to a decade chastised as "overfed, oversanctified, and overbearing."<sup>155</sup>

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<sup>151</sup> Gitlin, 29

<sup>152</sup> Maurice Isserman and Kazin, Michael. *America Divided: The Civil War of the 1960s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 19

<sup>153</sup> Gitlin, 84

<sup>154</sup> Midge Decter, "Anti -Americanism in America," *Harper's* (April 1968), 42

<sup>155</sup> Eric Goldman, "Goodby to The Fifties and Good Riddance," in Katharine Whittemore and Ellen Rosenbush, eds, *The Sixties: Recollections of the Decade from Harper's Magazine* (New York: Franklin Square Press, 2010), 6

## THE SIXTIES: RAGE AGAINST THE MACHINE

The once-solid core of American life – the cement of loyalty that people tender to institutions, certifying that the current order is going to last and deserves to – this loyalty, in select sectors, was decomposing.<sup>156</sup>

– Todd Gitlin, *Students for a Democratic Society*

While the political and social activism that characterizes the decade can trace its origins to a much deeper history of American rebellion and resistance,<sup>157</sup> the emerging role of mass media in giving national and ubiquitous traction to the rage marks a significant shift in the way American culture was now both reported on and, concurrently, created. *The Movement of The Sixties*, as it would be known, began on February 1, 1960 at a Woolworth's in Greensboro, North Carolina when four black students from the North Carolina Agricultural and Technical College sat down at a white-only lunch counter. Belonging to the youth chapter of the local NAACP, the quiet protestors of Jim Crow segregation were refused service but sat all the same, returning the following day with twenty-five additional supporters. By the fifth day of sitting-in, over three hundred protestors joined the original four and the protest attracted national

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<sup>156</sup> Gitlin, 343

<sup>157</sup> For history of riots, rebellion, dissent and general mob-rule in America, there is extensive scholarship. To begin, see Iver Bernstein, *The New York City Draft Riots; Their Significance for American Society and Politics in the Age of the Civil War*; (Bison Books, 2010); Edwin Burrows and Mike Wallace, *Gotham: A History of New York City to 1898* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999); Michael Feldberg, *The Turbulent Era; Riot and Disorder in Jacksonian America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980); Paul A. Gilge, *The Road to Mobocracy* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1987); Kenneth Jackson and David Dunbar, *Empire City; New York Through the Centuries* (New York: Columbia Univ Press, 2002); Michael McGerr, *A Fierce Discontent; The Rise and Fall of the Progressive Movement in America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003); Joanne Reitano, *The Restless City; A Short History of New York from Colonial Times to the Present* (New York: Routeledge, 2006); Carl Sandburg, *The Chicago Race Riots, July 1919* (Dover Books, 2013)

media attention, fueling further sit-ins across the country. Within two months, fifty-four cities in nine states witnessed sit-ins related to the Civil Rights Movement.<sup>158</sup>

The sit-in was not a new form of civil disobedience. National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) activists had sat-in across the South during the 1940s and '50s, protesting ongoing segregation in public accommodations, but these earlier events rarely received national media coverage and were thus relegated to insignificant status. (If no one hears you protest, did a protest occur?) These sit-ins and public protests, as well as those organized in May 1960 against the House Un-American Activities Committee at San Francisco's City Hall, inspired and fueled a burgeoning white student protest movement that took lessons from black civil rights activists.<sup>159</sup> Again, as with the music movement sweeping from Rhythm & Blues to Rock and Roll, white middle class children took their lead from black children of the Jim Crow South. The power of the sit-in as a form of civil disobedience lies not in a direct appeal to authorities or to the prevailing power structure, but is rather an action *that asserts one's right to enact change*. The Movement was, from the very start, action-oriented and self-determined: we are going to establish a better form of society right here, right now. We are not going to ask for it; we are going to take it.

*LIFE* magazine, published by Time-Life Incorporated, was one of the most popular weeklies of the decade, enjoying an average weekly circulation of 6,700,000 in 1960. Flip through any issue of *LIFE* in the early 1960s and one finds advertisements dominated by life insurance companies, home appliances, vodka and gin, women's hair

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<sup>158</sup> Gitlin, 82

<sup>159</sup> Gitlin, 83

color products, American made automobiles, and travel ads to the Bahamas. The weekly's target audience was one that was white and middle-class, enjoying enough disposable income or good credit rating to be able to participate widely in the expanding consumer's republic. In 1960, the magazine's top articles focus on Hollywood stars and starlets, the crisis in the Congo, the USSR, democracy and the world, the Rockefellers, fashion, modern living, and sports. The magazine's cover photos are as likely to feature models and actresses as world events.

Only a sprinkling of articles in 1960 speaks to domestic trouble, issues of civil rights, or nagging disquiet. A May 23 cover article examines "A Crucial U.S. Debate on our National Purpose," while a September 19 photo essay reports "The Negroes Drive for Right to Vote, Learn, Practice Politics." Glossy photos depict well-dressed African-Americans lined up outside a courthouse in Haywood County waiting to register to vote. Included is a map depicting various locations of recent sit-ins across the South.<sup>160</sup> The magazine's conveyance of any sense of simmering domestic disquiet is underwhelming in 1960. The reader need not be alarmed.

By 1961, the sit-in as a form of protest against continued segregation of public accommodations in the South was trumped by that summer's series of Freedom Rides. On December 5, 1960 the Supreme Court declared segregated interstate bus terminals unconstitutional and ordered the integration of interstate buses. More frequently than not, southern authorities ignored this ruling. Enter the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), under the direction of James Farmer, and the Freedom Rides: integrated bus rides into southern cities meant "to provoke the southern authorities into arresting us and thereby

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<sup>160</sup> *LIFE* magazine, "The Negroes Drive for Right to Vote, Learn, Practice Politics." Sept. 19, 1960, p. 35-43



prod the Justice Department into enforcing the law of the land.” The subsequent attacks on the Freedom Riders were dramatic, public, and horrifying. Locals set fire to a bus headed to Anniston, Alabama; pipe and chain-wielding Ku Klux Klan members attacked men and women as they disembarked a Birmingham-bound to use the restroom facilities. Among the casualties was a sixty-one year old Freedom Rider who suffered permanent brain damage from his injuries. In Montgomery, Alabama a mob attacked Freedom Riders as their bus pulled in to the station, where women were beaten with clubs and men were left lying unconscious. Eyewitnesses reported policemen stood idly by. One man lay bleeding with spinal cord damage for two hours before authorities were called for transport to the local hospital. Montgomery police commissioner L.B. Sullivan announced, “We have no intention of standing guard for a bunch of troublemakers coming into our city.”<sup>161</sup> For generations of white southerners, reared in a landscape of racial segregation in which, historian Jason Sokol argues, Jim Crow *defined* their very minds and lives, the actions of these civil rights protesters tore through the existing social landscape and thoroughly challenged the attitudes and customs and race-based ideology of white Americans. For white southerners, “their cherished way of life seemed gone for good.”<sup>162</sup>

Throughout 1963, *LIFE* informs the American public of the lives of Soviet people; astronauts and the space race; the Kennedys; the crisis in Cuba; princesses of Europe; what high school youth were up to; American troops in Vietnam; and the shocking assassination of President Kennedy. Magazine coverage is increasingly focused

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<sup>161</sup> Gitlin, 137

<sup>162</sup> Jason Sokol, *There Goes My Everything: White Southerners in the Age of Civil Rights, 1945-1975* (New York: Vintage Books, 2006), 6

on foreign and domestic turmoil, exposing “The Viscous Fighting in Vietnam,” in which full color photos depict a napalm strike in the Vietnamese jungle, Vietnamese troops and their captured Vietcong prisoners, and “a field of death” – Vietcong soldiers slain by the dozens, face up and face down in the mud, their captured comrades huddled at the edge of the camera’s frame.<sup>163</sup>

The May 17 issue includes a photo essay entitled “They Fight A Fire That Won’t Go Out; The spectacle of racial turbulence in Birmingham.” Inside, the reader is confronted with full-page photos of African-Americans pinned to storefront windows by high-pressure water hoses wielded by the Birmingham Fire Department, or else splayed out on the sidewalk under the pressure of those hoses. The accompanying text reads, “The pictures on these eleven pages are frightening.” Photos capture a violent reaction to a non-violent demonstration, the brutal force used by white firemen against African-American civil rights demonstrators, exposing the deep chasm between white and black in contemporary American society. More photos capture attack dogs biting at the behinds of African-Americans, the dog’s teeth snarling and clothing being torn away from bodies.<sup>164</sup>

The domestic brutality here trumps the images of a foreign war; this savagery is happening on our own city streets. Robert Kennedy, brother of the President, Attorney General and future presidential candidate himself, takes keen and sudden interest in the Civil Rights Movement and convinces his brother to do the same. Later in Atlantic City, New Jersey, Mrs. Fannie Lou Hamer testifies in front of the Democratic National

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<sup>163</sup> *LIFE* magazine, “The Viscous Fighting in Vietnam,” Jan 25, 1963, p. 22-33

<sup>164</sup> *LIFE* magazine, “They Fight A Fire That Won’t Go Out; The spectacle of racial turbulence in Birmingham,” May 17, 1963, p. 26-40

Committee as to her arrest following a voter registration workshop, and describes the subsequent beatings she suffered while incarcerated at the Montgomery County Jail. Mrs. Hamer, an African-American voting rights activist and civil rights leader, was placed in a jail cell with two African-American men, who were thereby ordered by State Highway Patrolmen to beat her with a blackjack until the men “were exhausted.”

All of this on account we want to register, to become first-class citizens, and if the Freedom Democratic Party is not seated now, I question America, is this America, the land of the free and the home of the brave where we have to sleep with our telephones off of the hooks because our lives be threatened daily because we want to live as decent human beings, in America?

*... What sort of people are we, we Americans?*

#### RED DIAPER BABIES

Taking a cue from the Civil Rights Movement’s practice of civil disobedience, student activists – generally white, wealthy, well educated, and articulate – shifted concerns from black voter registration in the South to the New Left and the Free Speech Movement by 1965. White students who had become involved with the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), an organization founded in 1960 intended to support southern civil rights groups through a network of student affiliation and communication, generally believed in the illegitimacy of racial segregation and felt “the status quo of the Fifties was flawed if not intellectually bankrupt.”<sup>165</sup>

The Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) was founded at the University of Michigan-Ann Arbor and spearheaded by undergraduate Tom Hayden. In 1961 the group

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<sup>165</sup> Anderson, 57

met at Port Huron, outside Detroit, with the goal of defining its political and social positions. From this early effort emerged a manifesto, entitled The Port Huron Statement, in which these young academics from rather privileged backgrounds acknowledged their comfortable status in the nation's socio-economic hierarchy and were not pleased with the world upon which they now looked. "We are people of this generation, bred in at least modest comfort, housed now in universities, looking uncomfortably to the world we inherit."<sup>166</sup> The Port Huron Statement rejected the pervasive ideology of the 1950s, echoed in Paul Goodman's *Growing Up Absurd*, in its declaration that individuals – not the collective, not the power structure, not the prevailing elite, *i.e.* most certainly *not* the status quo – should direct the political, social, and economic processes that structure American society.<sup>167</sup> The SDS and its political base, the New Left, borrowed strategies such as the sit-in, protest march, and nonviolent demonstration from the Civil Rights Movement. The dynamism of the SDS was located in its declaration that change was imminent, that the younger generation would form the template for revolt, and that *permanent opposition* was the way to avoid the inevitable corruption that power and establishment wrought.<sup>168</sup>

Mario Savio, a student at the epicenter of campus dissent and protest, the University of California Berkeley, was named President of the local Friends of the SNCC after travelling to Mississippi to participate in the Mississippi Freedom Summer's black voter registration drive. In December 1964, Savio led a takeover of UC Berkeley's Sproul

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<sup>166</sup> Anderson, 62

<sup>167</sup> Ibid, 62

<sup>168</sup> Gitlin, 4

Hall on behalf of the newly formed Free Speech Movement, during which time he offered his statement:

There is a time when the operation of the machine becomes so odious, makes you so sick at heart, that you can't take part...and you've got to put your bodies upon the gears... and you've got to make it stop.<sup>169</sup>

What of “the machine” had become so odious? What need to adopt a platform of permanent opposition, and against what forces? Savio and his cohort, born at the tail end of World War II, felt they had grown up in an absurd time in which the responsible citizen was compelled to question authority, to question the very existence of reality, because Nazi atrocities had guaranteed that nothing was beyond the realm of human cruelty. Authority must not be followed idly. Savio's generation had learned that one had an obligation to speak up. Silence was not an excuse. Silence made you culpable.

I'm not Jewish, but I saw those pictures. And those pictures were astonishing. Heaps of bodies. Mounds of bodies. Nothing affected my consciousness more than those pictures... They meant to me that everything needed to be questioned. Reality itself....It's like a dark grotesque secret that people had that at some time in the recent past people were being incinerated and piled up in piles... Those pictures had an impact on people's lives.<sup>170</sup>

In December 1964, the College Press Service named 1964 the “Year of Protest on Nation's Campuses.”<sup>171</sup> Actually, only a minority of students was ever involved in

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<sup>169</sup> Mario Savio speech on the steps of Sproul Hall, University of California Berkeley, Dec. 1964

<sup>170</sup> Mark Kurlansky, *1968: The Year that Rocked the World* (New York: Random House Trade Paperback, 2005), 100

<sup>171</sup> Anderson, 127

campus protest. And yet media attention – from campus publications, to weekly magazines, to nightly news coverage, to national newspapers – presented its audience with a steady stream of student protest and demonstration. Media coverage and the ensuing public dialogue spread the conversation surrounding detractors and dissent. There were, however, conservative student groups actively protesting the protesters. The Young Americans for Freedom counter-protested the demands of the New Left “red diaper babies,” – the term applied to the children of American communist activist parents, and left-leaning themselves - and through the YAF’s *New Guard* charged that “Free Speech” advocates were simply cry-babies, demanding rule over the university’s quite competent power structure.<sup>172</sup> During his 1964 acceptance speech for the Republican nomination to the presidential election, conservative Barry Goldwater criticized the unruly and amoral culture of dissent which threatened the very fabric of American society, speaking for the “deep conservatives” who claimed victory at the convention:

Tonight there is violence in our streets, corruption in our highest offices, aimlessness among our youth, anxiety among our elderly, and there’s a virtual despair among the many who look beyond material success toward the inner meaning of their lives. And where examples of morality should be set, the opposite is seen... I seek an America proud of its past, proud of its ways, proud of its dreams and determined actively to proclaim them.<sup>173</sup>

Goldwater’s charge that America must be proud of its history and heritage, proud of its culture and proud of its vision, indicates a conservative admonishment against the

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<sup>172</sup> Anderson, 109

<sup>173</sup> “Transcript of Goldwater’s Speech Accepting Republican Presidential Nomination,” *New York Times*, Jul 17, 1964

New Left's rabble-rousing. *Goddammit, this is America!* Be proud! Proclaim our strength and our morality and our heritage! Barry Goldwater was not the only American who felt this way, and his words reflect a considerable portion of society that felt itself under attack from within its own borders. The foundation upon which a tradition of cultural authority rested was being shaken by a minority of malcontents who did not simply disagree with a particular party line or political agenda, but who challenged the very legitimacy of established authority and leadership. A *New York Times* reporter, covering the convention, noted the conservative Right's discontent stemmed from nostalgia, "a yearning for simpler, purer days when... we did not have to worry about overcrowded cities and Negroes demanding their rights and foreign countries refusing to follow the American way.... There is also a great sense of frustration about the state of the world."<sup>174</sup> The very term "nostalgia" ushers in a host of conservative sensibilities, a wishful and melancholy sentiment for a lost – if mythical – past.

#### ANTI-AMERICANISM IN AMERICA

By the mid-1960s, the various movements challenging multiple facets of American society – including its foreign policy, domestic policy, civil rights, capitalism, higher education, the generational divide, the "American dream," and the ideals and values of modernism – constituted a very real voice of dissent and challenge to the status

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<sup>174</sup> Persistent boos, cat-calls, and fistfights were not uncommon to the 1964 Republican National Convention, which was held at the Cow Palace in San Francisco. Gov. Nelson Rockefeller, a moderate, was almost booed off the podium. *New York Times*' reporter Anthony Lewis found "no great mystery" in the week's animosity: "Within the Republican party, the deep conservatives who were dominant this week have long felt that they were the real majority," unhappy with the Eisenhower administration, Eastern liberals, and "sensation seeking columnists and commentators." Reporter Lewis acknowledges this deep conservative stems from nostalgia: "a yearning for simpler, purer days when... we did not have to worry about overcrowded cities and Negroes demanding their rights and foreign countries refusing to follow the American way.... There is also a great sense of frustration about the state of the world." Anthony Lewis, "Convention Mood Reflects a Historic Change," *NYT* Jul 19, 1964.

quo. The Movement was primarily a movement of young people, and this was new. “For the first time in our history, a major social movement, shaking the nation to its bones, is being led by youngsters.”<sup>175</sup> From middle-class college students, to hippie dropouts, to political dissenters, the youth of America was, for the first time in history, steering a national course.

The influence of television on The Movement and on how the American public perceived this barrage of challenge was tremendous. TV played a pivotal role in alerting the American public to these voices of dissent and offered a public arena for the demands of protestors. By 1960 Americans had purchased over fifty million television sets. Contemporary writers remind us that in our current age of real-time journalism via the Internet and twenty-four-hour news coverage, news is disseminated on a minute-by-minute basis to an audience much less unified than that of the 1960s, when millions of Americans *simultaneously* watched the *CBS Evening News with Walter Cronkite* and *The Huntley-Brinkley Report* on NBC. Walter Cronkite’s nightly send-off, “That’s the way it is,” informed millions of Americans en masse of the news of the day, creating a collective and unified experience surrounding the day’s events.<sup>176</sup> To offer some perspective: on the day of the attack on Pearl Harbor, there were a mere ten thousand television sets in American homes. During the Tet Offensive twenty-seven years later, ninety-four percent of American homes had a television set; such a change over a quarter century is among the most profound in American cultural history. Public perception as to

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<sup>175</sup> Anderson, 49

<sup>176</sup> Douglas Brinkley, *Cronkite* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 2012), location 4492 of 14466



the state of the nation and the state of the world, while formed individually, was created contemporaneously and on a scale previously unknown.<sup>177</sup>

With media spreading this “cultural panic” of a rebellious youth culture via the evening news, in published weeklies, through rock and roll lyrics, and on television, the events of the decade “began to blur from a chronological experience to a psychological one: hefty white policemen with guns and clubs, fire hoses blasting demonstrators off their feet, vicious dogs snapping at terrified marchers, tear gas and fire in the streets.”<sup>178</sup>

Images were key to the creation of public culture in the 1960s and no print publication provided more comprehensive visual coverage of the week’s events than *LIFE* magazine. The magazine’s headlines and photo essays had grown more alarming since the start of the decade, and to a middle class reader, headlines such as “Plot to ‘Get Whitey’” indicated a volatile racial situation adding to an already troubling cultural landscape. As Walter Cronkite did through the evening news, *LIFE* magazine did through print media: these media productions helped to create a shared experience in the interpretation of the country’s often-staggering cultural climate.

In 1965, the majority of Americans supported President Johnson’s policy in Vietnam. Still, questions circulated as to our nation’s role in what appeared to be a matter of keeping the communist North Vietnamese out of their weaker neighbor’s affairs. *LIFE* editors rolled out the New Year with a direct appeal to the President, published in the opening pages of the January 8 issue, asking, “What IS Our Aim in Vietnam?” Racial antagonisms and student discord at home remain the weightiest issues on the home front,

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<sup>177</sup> Brinkley, loc 5859 of 14466

<sup>178</sup> Anderson, 82

with a February 26 article exposing the “Plot to Behead the Statue of Liberty,” in which an undercover rookie cop uncovers a plot by the Black Liberation Front to blow the head and arms off of the Statue of Liberty, and to blow up the Liberty Bell and the Washington Monument. The acts of terrorism were meant to show the BLF’s hatred for its native country. In a conversation with the undercover cop, one of the ringleaders referred to Lady Liberty as “that damned old bitch.”<sup>179</sup>

A few weeks later, the March 19 cover headline reads “Civil rights face-off at Selma: The Savage Season Begins” over a photo of African-American civil rights marchers crossing a bridge into Selma to awaiting Alabama State Troopers. The inside photo essay provides eight glossy pages of Alabama troopers swarming upon and tackling African-American marchers to the ground. Readers view full-color photos capturing the state officers spraying tear gas and wielding billy clubs, with a caption that reads: “As the skirmish moves back down the road, troopers regroup before white onlookers who cheered them on. Dazed and wounded Negroes helplessly await aid.” A following story reports, “U.S. Embassies Are Under Siege,” with American embassies in Sudan, Bolivia, Bulgaria, Cairo, Prague, Jakarta, Hue, Uruguay, Budapest, Uganda, Caracas, and Moscow under attack by foreign dissidents.<sup>180</sup> Trouble strikes from within and without and from both directions, America’s historically brave and bold image of itself is reduced to glaring inconsistencies and moral ambiguity.

By mid-decade, *LIFE*’s pages contain photo essays covering all aspects of the nation’s crisis of character, from ongoing urban and racial violence in “Arson and Street

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<sup>179</sup> *LIFE* magazine, “Plot to Behead the Statue of Liberty,” Feb 26, 1965, p. 38

<sup>180</sup> *LIFE* magazine, “Civil rights face-off at Selma: The Savage Season Begins,” Mar 19, 1965 p. 30-37, 38-42

War – Most Destructive Riot in the U.S.,” “Plot to ‘Get Whitey,’ Red-hot young Negroes plan a ghetto war,” and “Negro Revolt: The Flames Spread;” to the escalation in troops in Vietnam and the death of the American Dream in “The Blunt Reality of War in Vietnam” and “Students in a Ferment Chew Out the Nation.”<sup>181</sup> In April 1964, students demonstrated by tens of thousands on the Washington Mall, calling for the U.S. to withdraw its troops from the increasingly controversial Vietnam War. One Stanford University student lamented, “I don’t believe in the American ideal. Everything around me contradicts it,” while a student from Tufts University challenged, “We are trying to change society. In the ‘50s, the Beat generation ran away from it. My generation knows we have to strike at the system to make it respond.”<sup>182</sup> These students, and tens of thousands across the country like them, were protesting the nation’s growing – and often indiscernible – mission in Vietnam. The November 26 *LIFE* cover story, “The Blunt Reality of War in Vietnam,” offers twenty-four pages of war coverage. These photos capture Vietnamese mothers carrying their naked and wounded children, tiny casualties resulting from a U.S. jet strafing before landing. One anguished mother’s mouth is open in a mid-cry of grief and terror. The reader learns that although Marine medics airlifted the baby to a hospital ship, the child could not be saved.<sup>183</sup>

Antiwar demonstrations flowered into more subversive action in 1965 with the arrival of public draft-card burnings. President Johnson steadily increased the draft in

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<sup>181</sup> *LIFE* magazine, “Arson and Street War – Most Destructive Riot in the U.S.,” Aug 27, 1965; “Plot to ‘Get Whitey,’ Red-hot young Negroes plan a ghetto war,” June 10, 1966; “Negro Revolt: The Flames Spread,” Aug 4, 1967; “The Blunt Reality of War in Vietnam,” Nov 26, 1965; “Students in a Ferment Chew Out the Nation,” April 30, 1965

<sup>182</sup> *LIFE*, “Students in a Ferment,” p. 22-33

<sup>183</sup> *LIFE*, “The Blunt Reality” p. 50-74

1965 after ordering the escalation of U.S. forces in Vietnam; draft calls doubled by the end of the year. *LIFE* reported “a rash of draft-card burnings;” *Newsweek* scolded, “No government can condone this kind of defiance and still govern.” The *New York Times* reported thousands of young men were trying to escape their patriotic duty by burning draft-cards or by refusing to register or by feigning homosexuality.<sup>184</sup> For those American boys under the age of majority who were given a 1-A status, the option to either take up arms or dodge the draft was made even more problematic in light of the fact these lads had neither the right to vote in or out of office their Commander in Chief. The voting age held steady at twenty-one.

Paul Potter, new President of the SDS, spoke to 25,000 student demonstrators at the April 1965 rally in front of the Washington Monument. If Middle America didn’t understand why these New-Left-Free-Speech-Antiwar-Antiestablishment-Youth would not fulfill their patriotic duty and fight with their country the way hundreds of thousands of young American men had done for generations, if the Conservative Right didn’t understand, if the Generation Over Thirty didn’t understand, then Potter’s speech to America, blasted across the pages of *LIFE* magazine and delivered to the front doors of middle-class American homes, reported on by Walter Cronkite - “the voice of God on TV” - on the *CBS Evening News* into millions of American living rooms, would inform the country and the world what, exactly, was wrong with this picture:

The incredible war in Vietnam has provided the razor, the terrifying sharp cutting edge that has finally severed the last vestige of illusion that morality and democracy are the guiding principles of American foreign policy... The further we explore the reality of what this country is doing and planning in Vietnam, the

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<sup>184</sup> *LIFE* Aug 1965; *Newsweek* Nov 1965; *New York Times*, Oct 1965

more we are driven toward the conclusion of Senator Morse that the United States may well be the greatest threat to peace in the world today. That is a terrible and bitter insight for people who grew up as we did.<sup>185</sup>

Potter charged that America's moral high-ground bubble had burst. While black Americans struggled for liberty and equality in their own country, the United States government claimed its presence in Vietnam was meant to secure the rights of liberty and equality for the citizens of that far and away nation. The hypocrisy! The SNCC, vocal in antiwar efforts alongside the SDS, released its position paper on Vietnam in the spring of 1966, claiming violence and other offenses were being perpetrated by the U.S. government against its own citizens. The SNCC was ripping the "hypocritical mask" off the face of national policy.<sup>186</sup>

What sort of people are we, we Americans, when State Troopers club to the ground nonviolent protestors, impervious – no possibility they were unaware – to the reporter's camera and pen? What sort of people are we, we Americans, when ten thousand black Americans take to the streets "in marauding bands," looting, shooting at law enforcement officers, setting fire and causing forty million dollars in property damage in six days in Watts, Los Angeles? What sort of people are we, we Americans, when National Guardsmen are called in to patrol our urban streets with bayonettes? What sort of people are we, we Americans, when foreign *civilians* – women and children and

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<sup>185</sup> Paul Potter speech "March On Washington," April 17, 1965, re-printed in Alexander Bloom and Wini Breines. *Takin' It To The Streets; A Sixties Reader* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 183; Judith Clavir Albert & Stewart Edward Albert. *The Sixties Papers: Documents of a Rebellious Decade* (New York: Praeger Special Studies, 1984), 219

<sup>186</sup> Bloom and Breines, 193

babies and the elderly – are attacked from the sky by napalm strikes delivered by U.S. troops?

“A CYCLONE IN A WIND TUNNEL”

In its 1967 hit “For What It’s Worth,” rock band Buffalo Springfield sings of armed men in the streets, vocal youth rebelling against the established hierarchy of their elders, battle lines drawn between young and old, right and left, black and white. Resistance.<sup>187</sup> Todd Gitlin, former President of the SDS, later described the years 1967-1970 as “a cyclone in a wind tunnel. Images spewed forth from television every night, hyping the excitement and dread and overload and the sense that America was at war with itself.”<sup>188</sup> While The Movement always represented a minority of the American population, it was very vocal and its protest and demonstrations were captured nightly on the evening news and throughout mainstream print media. Voices of The Movement attacked just about every institution in American society, from business to religion to government to the armed forces to the consumer’s republic. Because the long-held notion of American exceptionalism was predicated upon the conviction – no, the knowledge – that the American experience was especially unique, founded upon a birthright of Manifest Destiny and ordained by the grace of God, the very structure of the “American way” claimed supreme legitimacy across all aspects of the political, economic, and

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<sup>187</sup> David Frey, Scott Davis, Stephen Stills, Ben McDonald, “For What It’s Worth” lyrics, 1966

<sup>188</sup> Gitlin, 243

cultural landscape. When the rationales for these institutions came under attack in the 1960s, “the habit of doubt and defiance threatened to unravel the whole fabric.”<sup>189</sup>

*LIFE*’s June 10, 1966 cover image of a disheveled Elizabeth Taylor, playing Martha to husband Richard Burton’s George in *Who’s Afraid of Virginia Wolfe?* is trumped by the cover headline “Plot to ‘Get Whitey,’ Red-hot young Negroes plan a ghetto war.” The editor’s note inside the cover pages warns of “a story of hatred and massive, planned violence that few people except the police and the extremists themselves know.” The author warns his reader that across the country, a growing cult of Black Power extremists is organizing in the black ghettos. The era of Martin Luther King Jr.’s peaceful resistance is over; chaos and urban rioting are imminent.<sup>190</sup> Earlier in 1966, Stokely Carmichael, elected president of the SNCC, claimed “Black Power!” as the organization’s rallying cry and summarily excluded all whites from the SNCC. In a written statement, Carmichael acknowledged that whites had indeed played a critical role in the early successes of the organization, but the time had come for blacks to assume total responsibility for the movement: Black self-determination. Carmichael explained, “We cannot be expected any longer to march and have our heads broken in order to say to whites, come on, you’re nice guys. For you are not nice guys. We have found you out.”<sup>191</sup> Concerns for an impending “race war” reached the highest offices across the country, with future President Richard Nixon cautioning in 1966, “Private conversations and public concern are increasingly focusing upon the issues of disrespect for the law and

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<sup>189</sup> Gitlin, 344

<sup>190</sup> *LIFE* magazine, “Plot to Get Whitey,” Jun 10 1966, p.110 – 114

<sup>191</sup> Stokely Carmichael speech, “What We Want,” 1966, cited in Albert & Albert, 137

race turmoil.”<sup>192</sup> Carmichael’s cry for Black Power! was a far cry from the Civil Right Movement’s anthem, Pete Seeger’s “We Shall Overcome,” just a few short years before.

Indeed, the long hot summers of ’67 and ’68 became known as “riot season.” The August 4, 1967 cover of *LIFE* depicts U.S. armed troops patrolling a Detroit street alight in flames. The magazine’s editorial opens with the sound of alarm:

Not for one hundred and two years – not, that is, since Appomattox – has the essential fabric of this republic been so cruelly strained. The sites of 1967’s Negro riots are numerous and varied enough to define a national crisis: Omaha, Chicago, Boston, Tampa, Cincinnati, Atlanta, Kansas City, Buffalo, Minneapolis, Plainfield, Newark, Detroit.<sup>193</sup>



D.C. Riot. April '68. Aftermath. Courtesy Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Online Catalog. No known restrictions on publication.

<sup>192</sup> Bloom and Breines, 293

<sup>193</sup> *LIFE* magazine, “Negro Revolt: the Flames Spread,” Aug 4 1967, p. 16-29



*LIFE*'s editorial further cautions its reader to the very real possibility of a white backlash against this Negro Revolt; blacks would be unable to defend themselves against a white majority which feels the authorities are unable to keep the peace.<sup>194</sup> This editorial stance is rather shocking in its implicit understanding and potential justification for white vigilantism in the face of black urban revolt. *TIME* magazine reports that in 1967, racial upheavals across 168 cities resulted in 82 deaths, 3,400 injuries, and 18,800 arrests. During the singular month of April, 1968, 202 racial upheavals in 172 cities resulted in 43 deaths, 3,500 injuries, and 27,000 arrests. One month. The summer of 1968 proved less destructive than the previous four years had suffered, however. "The summer of 1968 now ranks as the most tranquil since 1964."<sup>195</sup>

It is important to note that while present-day discourse on this season of urban violence alternates between terming these upheavals "riot," "rebellion," or "revolt," in the years between 1964 and 1968- when the country was literally feeling heat and wrath raining down across urban America - the violence was most certainly characterized as *riotous* in the mainstream press. Mainstream media referred to the summer months of 1967 and 1968 as "riot season." *TIME* and *LIFE* served as a check on the pulse of the nation; these uprisings were most certainly understood as riots to the majority of the country as they were happening. As a journalist for *The Atlantic Monthly* remarked in 1968, *TIME* magazine was "an invaluable publication for revealing what is socially and politically acceptable in the society at any given time."<sup>196</sup> What was socially and

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<sup>194</sup> *LIFE* magazine, "Negro Revolt: the Flames Spread," Aug 4 1967, p.16-29

<sup>195</sup> *TIME*, "Scorecard for the Cities," Sept 13, 1968

<sup>196</sup> Dan Wakefield, "Supernation at Peace and War," *The Atlantic*, Mar 1968

politically acceptable was the charge that the urban crisis had reached a violent and riotous crescendo.

These were violent years for the nation as a whole, and for New York City in particular. New York City firefighters called these “The War Years,” owing to the escalation of arson and false alarms. Murders, rapes, and armed robberies skyrocketed in New York City from the late 1960s and into the early 1970s: murders increased from 734 in 1966 to 1,740 in 1973; rapes from 1,154 to 3,735; robberies from 25,539 to 72,750.<sup>197</sup>

1967 arrived with a new challenge to the status quo: hippies and their counterculture. *TIME* was so fascinated with this new breed of rebellious youth, as if chronicling a foreign culture, the editors created an ongoing series, “Hippies.” In 1967, *TIME* covers the counterculture movement with its reporting on “Hippies: Philosophy of a Subculture,” “Hippies: Within the Tribe,” “Hippies: Dream Farm,” “Hippies: Where Have All the Flowers Gone?” “Speed Kills,” and “Runaway Kids.”<sup>198</sup> The magazine informs its readers of hippie philosophy and cultural practices, including the ideals of utopianism and transcendentalism, the practice of hippie love and “free love,” the attraction and dangers of LSD, marijuana, and communal living in crash pads. *TIME* reports hippies are predominantly white, middle class, educated youth, ranging in age from seventeen to twenty-five.

What made this generation so “engaging, perplexing and infuriating” to its elders was the counterculture dropout mentality, the idea that one could simply opt-out of work,

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<sup>197</sup> Vincent Cannato, “No-Fault Liberalism,” *City Journal*, June 3, 2004

<sup>198</sup> *TIME*: “Hippies: Philosophy of a Subculture,” Jul 7, 1967; “Hippies: Within the Tribe,” Aug 25, 1967; “Hippies: Dream Farm,” Sep 8, 1967; “Hippies: Where Have All the Flowers Gone?” Oct 13, 1967; “Speed Kills,” Oct 20, 1967; and “Runaway Kids,” Nov 3, 1967

status, money and power: the complete rejection of the American Dream.<sup>199</sup> *TIME* covers hippie weddings and hippie pot farms, bad LSD trips, the gang rape of hippie women, and the recent rash of middle class kids running away to Haight-Ashbury in San Francisco or the East Village in New York City to hook up with fellow hippies in flop houses. Of the tens of thousands of runaway middle class and affluent kids from middle American suburbs, now high on LSD, meth and pot, *TIME* warns: *these could be your kids*. “Girls resent the constraints of living at home, and sexual scare talks do not frighten them anymore. The hippie subculture has provided a place where they can go and be easily accepted... Bewildered mothers walk the streets looking for their children.”<sup>200</sup>

Tom Wolfe, the American writer whom historian David Farber calls “one of the most perceptive contemporary cultural critics in the Sixties,”<sup>201</sup> travelled with uber-hippie Ken Kesey (author of *One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest*) and The Merry Pranksters on a cross-country acid trip in 1964-65. In his subsequent romp, *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test*, Wolfe interprets the hippie mindset for anyone amused enough by his New Journalism commentary to enjoy the ride. Wolfe explains to his reader the mindset of the hippie youth, in which the American Dream, and everything mom, dad, grandma and grandpa worked for and fought for and believed in, was pure fantasy:

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<sup>199</sup> *TIME*, “Youth: the Hippies,” Jul 7, 67, p. 3 of 10

<sup>200</sup> *TIME*, “Runaway Kids,” Nov 3 1967, p. 18-29

<sup>201</sup> David Farber, ed. *The Sixties; From Memory to History* (Chapel Hill: Univ of North Carolina Press, 1994), loc 56 of 7563. Kindle edition

It was a fantasy world already, this electro-pastel world of Mom&Dad&Buddy&Sis in the suburbs... *you're already there, in Fantasyland*, so why not move off your snug-harbor quilted-bed dead center and cut loose – go ahead and say it – Shazam! – juice it up to what it's already aching to be!<sup>202</sup>

Explained through Wolfe's supercharged prose, the hippie mindset and its counterculture philosophy sees very clearly, in all manner of psychedelica and shazam! The American Dream was nothing more than fantasy. None of it was real; how did dropping acid make the unreal any *less* real? Further, these hippie kids, far from feeling disenfranchised, were a part of "the first wave of the most extraordinary kids in the history of the world... Postwar American suburbs – glorious world! Superkids! the world's first generation of the little devils – feeling immune, beyond calamity."<sup>203</sup> Children of the middle-class rejecting the hand that feeds them, challenging The Establishment *from the inside*, abandoning the established structures of American society, clashing with both the elder generation's traditional ideals and the truly disenfranchised urban communities among whom they now "crashed." These hippie kids could *afford* to tune in and drop out. These kids had means, they had status; they had *options*.

It was one thing to upset, disappoint, or terrify one's own family, to run off and join the other delinquents in Tompkins Square Park or the Sunset Strip. It was quite another thing to interrupt the well-oiled machine of capitalism and the free exchange of commodities. On August 24, 1967, hippie-turned-Yippie! and anti-establishment prankster Abbie Hoffman led a group of Yippies! - the cheekily and hastily dubbed Youth International Party - to the floor of the New York Stock Exchange, whereby the

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<sup>202</sup> Tom Wolfe, *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test* (New York: Bantam Books, 1968), 35

<sup>203</sup> Wolfe, 35

dissidents dropped dollar bills over the floor of the nation's leading stock exchange, halting the ticker as brokers scrambled to pick up the discarded George Washingtons. Hoffman then set to burning money in front of aghast, or amused, reporters. This spectacle was an effort to protest capitalism's stranglehold on American society.

Earlier that same year, South Street Seaport Museum founder Peter Stanford - a part of the nation's proliferating media circle himself as copy writer for Madison Avenue's Compton Advertising - created an ad celebrating the Stock Exchange's 175th anniversary. The New York Stock Exchange: veritable symbol of capitalism and American economic supremacy. Stanford's ad featured an old print of lower Manhattan's commercial district, including a ship in the background with sails unfurled. While Stanford meant to bring "some depth and color to the story of the fabled buttonwood tree under which traders met at the corner of Wall and Broad Streets,"<sup>204</sup> thereby celebrating the nation's earliest success in capitalist trade, Hoffman's Yippies! were intent on challenging that capitalistic structure altogether.

The following May, Hoffman and his Yippies! held a vernal equinox celebration at New York's Grand Central Station, in which some reported six thousand supporters came out to engage in the "festivities." Someone set off a series of cherry bombs, a melee ensued, and cops charged the crowd, clubbing Yippies! and non-Yippies alike, while the crowd chanted "Seig Heil!" Hoffman was clubbed unconscious. With full media coverage on the scene, the New York City press later termed the event a "police riot."<sup>205</sup> Hoffman's antics with his Yippie! cohort were fueled by spectacle and the power of

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<sup>204</sup> Stanford, *A Dream of Tall Ships*, 68

<sup>205</sup> Gitlin, 238

public display. The Yippie! agenda was to create a spectacle which required media response. It was all part of a grand theater, during which the Yippies! challenged the very basis of capitalism, mass commercialism, authority, and the corporate structure of American society.

Across 1965, '66, and '67, student demonstrators protested the lending practices of Chase Manhattan Bank, headquartered in lower Manhattan. Early in 1965, at the invitation of Standard Bank's chairman, Chase had assumed a minority participation in Standard Bank's South African holdings. Through the purchase of what amounted to 14.5% of Standard's shares, Chase now held branches in Johannesburg, South Africa; Lagos, Nigeria; and Monrovia, Liberia.<sup>206</sup> The acquisition of South African branches fueled an uproar among Civil Rights activists in this country, who were seeking racial equality at home and abroad. In March 1965, four hundred demonstrators picketed outside Chase Manhattan Bank headquarters at 1 Chase Plaza, across from Battery Park. The "predominantly white and youthful marchers" protesting Chase loans to the white supremacist government of South Africa, shouting "Chase Manhattan supports South African racism!" Protestors from the SDS, CORE, the National Student Christian Federation, and Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee called for the bank's executives to halt all financial support to South Africa's regime of apartheid. In an era of violent confrontation for Civil Rights on American soil, what were the ethical implications of an American institution supporting a racist regime overseas?

In December 1966, protestors again gathered outside of Chase's downtown headquarters, during which time a Chase spokesman indicated the bank had no intentions

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<sup>206</sup> David Rockefeller, *Memoirs* (New York: Random House, 2003), 205

of pulling its loans out of South Africa. The following March, Chase's Chairman, David Rockefeller, defended his institution's financial positions at the annual stockholder's meeting. Far from endorsing South Africa's segregationist policies, Rockefeller hoped the Bank's financial dealings would "exert a constructive influence on racial conditions in South Africa."<sup>207</sup> In his *Memoirs*, David Rockefeller recalls:

The consensus that had unified the country in the postwar period had ended abruptly in the mid-1960s. Strong popular opposition to the Vietnam War and rising unrest in our cities were accompanied by a growing antipathy toward business in general and big banks in particular... I believed Chase did have a responsibility to help redress the legitimate social and economic problems that confronted the country.<sup>208</sup>

Noting the "complex urban issues of the day," Rockefeller felt the communication gap between the generations and between the races "cried out for immediate action." Rockefeller, reared in a climate of inter-generational family philanthropy and currently supporting the Fraunces Tavern museum block project just steps away from Chase headquarters, firmly believed that social responsibility was the obligation of the private sector. The "major ills of our country" required immediate attention, and in his memoirs Rockefeller recounts his eagerness to address the climate of urban unrest. In doing so, he sought to forge a "new image" for Chase Manhattan Bank, which involved charitable giving, personal participation, and a strong philanthropic ideology.<sup>209</sup>

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<sup>207</sup> The *New York Times*, "Chase Bank Defends South African Loans: Companies Hold Annual Meetings," Mar 29 1967

<sup>208</sup> D. Rockefeller, 214

<sup>209</sup> D. Rockefeller, 214-215

Runaway hippie teenagers invading Tompkins Square Park on New York City's lower east side; subversive Yippies! dropping dollar bills on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange in the city's downtown financial district; young men burning draft cards at the Whitehall Street induction center in lower Manhattan; and protests outside of Chase Manhattan Bank's headquarters are but a few examples of where the decade's era of discord and dissent played out on the streets of New York City. An anti-war rally from Central Park to the United Nations building in April 1967 included hippies as well as "Columbia scholars," a prelude, perhaps, to the rash of student takeovers that would spread across university campuses over the next year. In New York City, students at Columbia effectively shut down the University during an occupation that highlighted the social and political divide between student protestors and the status quo.

On April 23, 1968, less than three weeks following the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., 300 chanting students marched into Hamilton Hall and took Dean Henry Coleman hostage. Organized by Columbia University's SDS chapter president, Mark Rudd, the focus of the opposition was two-fold: opposition to the University's plans to build a gymnasium in a nearby public park in Morningside Heights, which would encroach upon the predominantly African-American community that currently used the park; and opposition to CIA and Department of Defense funding to the University for weapons research. Columbia students were joined in their takeover by the Harlem chapter of CORE, the Harlem Committee for Self-Defense, the United Black Front, and the New York chapter of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee. A conservative



counter-demonstration group of about 150 students, Students for a Free Campus, protested against the protestors.<sup>210</sup>

With Dean Coleman barricaded in his office, the protestors drafted a mandate, which demanded the University halt all construction plans for the Morningside Park gym; grant amnesty to all students currently facing disciplinary actions for previous demonstrations; remove the ban on campus demonstrations; and proceed with open hearings in any/all future charges against students accused of wrongfully demonstrating. By Day 2 of the takeover, protestors occupied two more campus buildings and the black contingency asked the white protestors to vacate Hamilton Hall and seize an alternate building. White students of the SDS then took over the office of University President Grayson Kirk, while Dean Coleman was released from his captivity at Hamilton Hall. By Day 3 of the takeover, 600 students occupied buildings across the campus, including Low Library. Anti-protest students erected a human blockade and vowed to prevent food and medical supplies from getting inside to the student occupiers. At 2:30 a.m. on April 30, one week after the takeover and at the request of University administration, 1,000 policemen rolled in to remove protestors from the occupied buildings. "Wearing helmets and carrying flashlights, they fanned through the darkened campus, which they had divided for purposes of the assault into seven sectors that were designated 'target areas.'" During negotiations with CORE, the Harlem Committee for Self-Defense, the United Black Front, and the New York chapter of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating

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<sup>210</sup> The *New York Times*, "300 Protesting Students Barricade Office of College Dean," Apr 24, 1968

Committee, University administrators agreed to halt plans for the gymnasium construction in Morningside Park.<sup>211</sup>

Painting a picture of a larger ideological divide between the dissatisfied youth culture and the established status quo, Mark Rudd of the SDS, and Columbia University President Grayson Kirk, each held fast to his personal conviction that this rift was much larger than one simply between two individuals:

Dear Grayson, I see it as a real conflict between those who run things now – you, Grayson Kirk – and those who feel oppressed by and disgusted with the society you rule – we, the young people. We can point, in short, to our meaningless studies, our identity crisis, and our repulsion with being cogs in your corporate machines as a product of and reaction to a basically sick society... We will take control of your world, your corporation, your university, and attempt to mold a world in which we and other people can live as human beings. – Mark Rudd<sup>212</sup>

Our young people, in disturbing numbers, appear to reject all forms of authority from whatever source derived and they have taken refuge in the turbulent and inchoate nihilism whose sole objectives are destructive. I know of no time in our history when the gap between generations has been wider or more potentially dangerous. – Grayson Kirk<sup>213</sup>

While the incidences at Columbia University, Grand Central Station, the New York Stock Exchange, and Chase Manhattan Bank involved a relatively small percentage

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<sup>211</sup> The *New York Times*, “Students Run Columbia Protest Along Principles of Democracy,” Apr 27, 1968; “Columbia Closes Campus After Disorders,” Apr 25, 1968; “1000 Police Act to Oust Students,” Apr 30, 1968

<sup>212</sup> Kurlansky, 1968, 197

<sup>213</sup> Columbia University President Grayson Kirk, statement issued on April 12, 1968

of counterculture activists, Yippie! guru Abbie Hoffman acknowledged the great power of the media in escalating not only these actions, but the ideological torrent underscoring them. One only had to *act* as if the entire youth generation was engaged in the counterculture movement for the myth to become real. The media was critical in hyping and perpetuating this myth, which required amplification in order to create the impression that the State had lost control, had lost its legitimacy to govern.

In light of ongoing events, this impression might not have been much of a stretch for the myriad dissenters now organizing demonstrations across the country. Antiwar protestors *did* argue the State had lost legitimacy with its claim of securing the rights of freedom and equality for citizens of a foreign land, while America's own citizens did not always enjoy these rights at home and were instead clubbed and sprayed under high-pressure hoses; Black Power supporters *did* argue the State had lost legitimacy with its refusal to fully enfranchise the black American community; the New Left and the SDS *did* argue the State had lost its legitimacy to govern due to the "unrepresentative character of the political system [and] its repressive response to human need and protest."<sup>214</sup> The events surrounding the 1968 Democratic National Convention in Chicago were perhaps the pivotal moment highlighting these charges that an illegitimate leadership was coercing its people.

"THE LATE SIXTIES' DEFINITIVE SEQUENCE OF FEELINGS"<sup>215</sup>

This new generation of the Left hated the authority because the authority lied. It lied through the teeth of corporation executives and Cabinet officials and police

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<sup>214</sup> Tom Hayden, quoted in Norman Mailer, "Miami and Chicago" *Harpers*, Nov 68, p. 95

<sup>215</sup> Gitlin, 331

enforcement officers and newspaper editors and advertising agencies, and in its mass magazines.<sup>216</sup>

-Norman Mailer for *Harper's Weekly* (1968)

By 1968, Norman Mailer writes the difference between the New Left and the Yippies! was purely insignificant, each group had so influenced the other through demonstration tactics, street activity, and the politics of confrontation.<sup>217</sup> The liberal-conservative consensus that had carried the nation through the postwar years had clearly unraveled, and in 1968 - a year of presidential primaries - that divide was surly felt among the candidates, the delegates, and the general population. When the Republican National Convention convened in Miami in early August, nominee Richard Nixon spoke in defense of good, strong, hardworking Americans everywhere, reminding the nation and the world that the majority of Americans were not shouting in the streets, were not challenging the very foundation of American society, were not maligning the spirit and pride of this great nation. Nixon spoke in the voice of those who insisted that America was in fact good, and could be better still, if we would only get back to the business of progress and the support of private enterprise:

The voice of the great majority of Americans, the forgotten Americans – the non-shouters; the non-demonstrators. They are not racists or sick; they're not guilty of the crime that plagues the land; they are Black, they are white, they ran businesses and worked blue-collar jobs in factories, they worked in government and served our country on the battlefields of war. They give drive to the spirit of America...lift to the American dream...steel to the backbone of America...good people...decent people...America is a great nation today not because of what

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<sup>216</sup> Norman Mailer, "On the Steps of the Pentagon," *Harper's*, Mar 1968, p. 83

<sup>217</sup> Norman Mailer, "Miami and Chicago," *Harpers*, Nov 68, p. 94

government did for people, but because of what people did for themselves over one hundred and ninety years in this country...What we need are not more millions on welfare rolls but more millions on payrolls...The greatest engine of progress ever developed in the history of man – American private enterprise.<sup>218</sup>

Richard Nixon - he of the Checkers Speech, the ultimate straight-arrow upper-class white American, the very embodiment of The Establishment, his wife smiling proudly in her Republican cloth coat - called to private enterprise, to the spirit of hard work and steel and ingenuity, celebrating America as a nation of industry and progress. Nixon implicitly recalls an American origin myth and challenges his supporters to return to those origins. Build the American Dream! Participate in the engine of progress! America was built on the strength and wits of men like you, men of mark, men of brains and brawn! America achieved success because of what people did for themselves for over one hundred and ninety years in this country. Private enterprise: *this* is our heritage, this is our success story. *And we've got to get ourselves back to the garden.*<sup>219</sup> Hippies weren't the only group of Americans looking for a way back to Eden. To Richard Nixon and his conservative supporters, the garden was made up of good people who worked hard, supported private enterprise, and served their country

Two weeks following the Republican National Convention in Miami, the Democrats convened in the hot summer of Chicago, where the media showed greater concern for what was happening outside the walls of the convention center than within. Congregating in Lincoln Park, thousands of hippies, Yippies!, supporters of the SDS, the Mobe, the Black Panthers, and myriad "freelance militants" gathered in more and in less

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<sup>218</sup> Richard Nixon speech, as reported by Norman Mailer "Miami Beach, Chicago," 70-71

<sup>219</sup> Joni Mitchell, "Woodstock" lyric, 1969

unified fashion to protest the convention's proceedings. The protest was a general voice of dissent against the candidacy of Vice President Hubert Humphrey – an HH nomination would mean four more years of LBJ's pro-Vietnam War policy – and against the coercive force now routinely being used by local officials against demonstrators.

On behalf of the Yippies!, Hoffman and Rubin had attempted to obtain a permit for the week's festivities, which would include a music festival, various hippie-inspired workshops, and a march across town "to haunt the Democrats." Mayor Daley refused to grant such a permit and tensions between the protestors in Lincoln Park and the city ran high. Anticipating a raucous week of confrontation, writers William Burroughs, Norman Mailer, Jean Genet, Mike Royko, and countless journalists writing for *Esquire*, *Harper's Magazine*, the *Chicago Sun-Times*, *Newsweek*, the *Washington Post*, the *Chicago American* were on the scene to witness and to record the anticipated spectacle.

In a police raid on the night of August 26 against a gathering of protesters in nearby Lincoln Park, in which "the attack by the police had been ferocious," seventeen reporters were counted among the wounded, including a photographer for the *Washington Post*, two reporters for the *Chicago American*, a photographer and a reporter from *LIFE*, three network television cameramen, and three reporters plus one photographer from *Newsweek*.<sup>220</sup> Todd Gitlin was in Chicago to participate in the demonstrations and described the police riot:

Tuesday night, six hundred National Guardsmen materialized, in full battle dress, rolling down the faded elegance of Michigan Avenue in jeeps outfitted with barbed-wire cages, stopping between us and the Hilton to relieve the police. My

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<sup>220</sup> Mailer, "Miami and Chicago," 100

feelings cascaded: astonishment, then fright, then euphoria – *the late Sixties' definitive sequence of feelings.*

The lines were drawn, the storybook confrontation pure, although whether it pointed toward revolution or counterrevolution wasn't at all clear and didn't seem to matter. I remember an eerie satisfaction: *At last. We've shown they can only rule at gunpoint. The world is going to see.*<sup>221</sup>

And on Wednesday, after ten thousand demonstrators gathered in Grant Park for a protest rally, someone lowered the American flag and replaced it with a red Communist flag. A fracas ensued. As the police moved in and formed a wedge, Gitlin describes:

A network television camera recorded a Guardsman in extraterrestrial-looking gas mask halting one driver, telling her to turn around, getting enraged by her hesitation, then poking a grenade launcher in her child's face. And then the Guard in their masks sprayed vast clouds of tear gas from converted flamethrowers slung on their backs, the gas filling the park in every direction and wafting across Michigan Avenue to the Hilton, where eventually it disturbed Hubert Humphrey in his shower.<sup>222</sup>

*What sort of people are we, we Americans?...*

*...The answer is that we are today the most frightening people on this planet.*

This was not the Soviet Union, this was not Czechoslovakia, or France, or Italy, or Poland, or Cuba, or any of the countless "other" nations that had witnessed their own series of riotous confrontations between civilians and the militia. This was the United

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<sup>221</sup> Gitlin p. 333. Italics added

<sup>222</sup> Gitlin, 332

States of America, and this was a nation divided. Divided between black and white, between Left and Right, between hawk and dove, between old and young, between straights and freaks. Both the nation's and the city's collective identity – whether ever fully realized or not - were in tatters; this was an age of cultural fracturing. This spectacle, this culmination of a near decade of dissent in the long hot summer of 1968, was unacceptable to young hippies and elder statesmen, to Anglos and Black Panthers alike. With Presidential candidate Richard Nixon's campaign slogan in 1968 demanding "Bring Us Together!" many Americans, as had occurred in earlier ages of chaos and concern, looked back in order to go forward.

The proliferating demands of student protesters, antiwar dissenters, counterculture drop-outs, and Civil Rights defenders affected a cross-section of New Yorkers in much the same way they affected a cross-section of Americans across the nation: diversely. Political conservatives, those aligned with Barry Goldwater in 1964 or Richard Nixon in 1968, dug in their heels and called for a return to hard work and gritty determination in order to build the nation onward and upward. These conservatives called for "good, decent people," to shape American enterprise and build upon two hundred years of ingenuity and determination. College students at the City's top university, feeling "oppressed and disgusted" with a society their elders lay before them, demanded a changing-of-the-guard and a more humane world order. The Black Power faction of Harlem lay claim to its turf; Bob Dylan, Joan Baez and their folksie followers in Greenwich Village embodied youthful sexuality and the ideals of democratic freedom; middle-class white New Yorkers listened to *the voice of God on TV* – Walter Cronkite – in attempts to understand and digest the new American drama. The question, *what sort*



*of people are we, we Americans?* begged to be answered. At the core of that fundamental query lies an acute dilemma: *is* there a collective identity to be had? And if so, where might we find it?

3

**PAST PERFECT; HISTORY and IDENTITY  
ON THE WATERFRONT**

We must now explore how history, memory, and identity converged in ways that made the New York waterfront an iconic, mediated symbol over time. In the summer of 1968, while Republican National Convention delegates were nominating Richard Nixon for the Presidential ticket and reporters were covering nightly police riots against civilian protesters at the Democratic National Convention, while President Johnson continued the nation's escalation of troops in Vietnam, while runaway hippies flooded into the Haight-Asbury in San Francisco and Tompkins Square Park in New York City - some high on LSD or pot, others pregnant, almost all fleeing middle-class homes and the modern conveniences their affluent parents had provided them, while America's moral authority and national character were being challenged both on the streets and through the media, a decidedly better version of collective identity was experiencing a determined resuscitation at New York City's old seaport. The Movement of the Sixties, in all its forms – from Civil Rights protests, to anti-war protests, to Black Power demands, to student takeovers of their too-conservative universities, to counterculture drop-outs – proved a vocal and often violent challenge to business-as-usual and the reigning political, social, and cultural ideologies upon which the nation had grown. Comprising a similar social-cultural mechanism found in the previously examined commemorative movements of architecture and folk music revival, historic preservation of the city's preindustrial past

swelled in the 1960s from within this troubling cultural landscape. In New York City, the history and imagery of the city's Golden Age of Sail glowed like a beacon in the midst of a grittier reality.

The realities of a turbulence with which Americans and New Yorkers coped with varying degrees of unease necessitated the creation of public memories. Such memories serve a critical role in the remembrance and renegotiation of America's past in light of the social and political landscape of the present. The physical manifestations of historic memory – whether these take the form of historic preservation of architecture, the creation of public monuments and commemorative sites, or the popularization of old folk tunes – legitimize certain histories and effectively erase others. On the one hand, these representations of history and identity anchor collective memories in the cultural landscape and are especially useful during times of challenge and turmoil; on the other hand, what is left out of the commemorative structure represents a negative space in which certain memories are disregarded or erased as counter to the official narrative. In the search for a usable past at New York City's seaport, which memories might be salvaged at the bottom of the harbor and among the narrow streets and sloped roof buildings? More significantly, which stories did not qualify for remembering, which would not enter the canon of collective memory? Woven into the very pungent sense of place at the mid-century seaport are memories glorious and gritty, dignified and derelict. Boosters of historic preservation at South Street and across lower Manhattan, dissatisfied with what the area had become, sought to remember a better version of the city's seafaring past – and collective spirit – which no longer dominated the cultural landscape of the city's waterfront.

By the mid-twentieth century, the cobbled streets and aging slips of New York's South Street seaport embodied a deeply felt sense of place, where a cultural landscape littered with "storehouses of memory" still inhabited the district surrounding the aging Fulton Fish Market. Unfortunately, this urban landscape represented the wrong sense of place for both commercial developers and boosters of historic preservation and heritage commemoration projects along the waterfront. By the 1960s, the seaport was gritty and the bustling days of New York as a vibrant port city had quite obviously deteriorated. What remained on the east side of lower Manhattan just south of the Brooklyn Bridge was, by some accounts, a no-man's-land, a dark urban jungle, a jumbled mix of junk shops, narrowly twisted streets, impossible traffic, and the rank stench of the fish stalls comprising one of the last reminders of the city's preindustrial marketplace. At mid-century, the best one could hope for along Fulton Street and Schermerhorn Row was a tasty bowl of chowder or a plate of finnan haddie. Surrounding the cobbled slips of the old seaport, Wall Street's ever-multiplying pillars of finance emerged from the razed nineteenth century landscape in a process of urban renewal.

John De Pol, one of the most prominent engravers of the twentieth century and whose work would feature prominently at the future South Street Seaport Museum, presents an image of the mid-century seaport in his 1950 woodcut, "South Street." The artist's view presents a solitary tugboat in the foreground, behind which stand a row of four-story slope-roofed buildings facing the East River. Lower Manhattan's skyscrapers and smokestacks fill the background and dominate the skyline. De Pol's burin etches a grey and black sky – we see only slight clearing in the distance –evoking feelings of coldness and dank mist. There are no people in this etching, only the stillness of the

buildings and the stillness of the tugboat moored alongside a dock extending like so many of the fingerlike appendages reaching out from the island of Manhattan. A sailboat just barely emerging from beneath the Brooklyn Bridge suggests human activity, yet the lack of any human forms in this image depicts a waterfront that has become desolate and, perhaps, forgotten by the city. By the early 1960s, when several preservation projects meant to commemorate the city's maritime history were in their infant stages, this waterfront scene represented a far cry from the nation's golden age of sail.

#### THE GOLDEN AGE OF SAIL

By the early eighteenth century, New York City had become the nation's busiest port and was known as the oyster capital of the world. Historically, ours is a maritime nation, and New York City was the capital of this maritime-based prosperity due to its 771 miles of waterfront, very little fog or ice to clog up shipping, and a plentiful supply of cheap immigrant labor.<sup>223</sup> In his 1934 survey of the city's seafaring past, *South Street; A Maritime History of New York*, historian Richard McKay declares, "The maritime greatness of New York is its greatest historical asset."<sup>224</sup> His is the master narrative of maritime history that preservation boosters of the 1960s would have known; one would not classify this work as inaccurate, although certainly sanitized and glorified by today's standards in historiography. McKay's narrative provides a history of New York City's shipping trade, shipping magnets and prosperous merchants, from the colonial period to World War I. McKay's history recalls the prosperous days of sail in marked contrast to

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<sup>223</sup> James T. Fisher, *On the Irish Waterfront; The Crusader, the Movie, and the Soul of the Port of New York* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009), 2

<sup>224</sup> Richard C. McKay, *South Street; A Maritime History of New York* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1934), 309

the author's contemporary landscape dominated, regrettably, by steel and railroad. In 1797, McKay writes, "There was a high tone prevailing at that time, which is now nowhere to be seen."<sup>225</sup>

McKay presents a history of great shipbuilders and shipmasters, from Old John Aspinwall, a sea captain who commanded ships out of New York harbor years before the onset of the Revolutionary War, to the impossibly named Preserved Fish, Junior (son of Preserved Fish, Senior) a senior partner in a packet ship business,<sup>226</sup> to Misters Morgan and Vanderbilt in the mid-1800s, to Mr. William H. Webb, New York City's most famous clipper shipbuilder, who "employed more than a thousand of the most intelligent and skillful mechanics whom the country had ever known, and the East River shipyards often had at the same time twenty or thirty great vessels on the stocks awaiting completion" under his direction.<sup>227</sup> This a history of the great shipbuilding men and merchants who formed the basis of the city's economy in the block surrounding the old seaport, reaching its height of activity and profitability by the middle of the nineteenth century. John Lambert, an Englishman visiting New York in 1807, described the bustling scene along the East River waterfront thus:

When I arrived at New York, in November, the port was filled with shipping and the wharfs were crowded with commodities of every description. Bales of cotton, wool and merchandise; barrels of pot-ash, rice, flour, and salt provisions; hogsheads of sugar, chests of tea, puncheons of rum, and pipes of wine; boxes,

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<sup>225</sup> McKay, 22

<sup>226</sup> While on a stroll across the lower east side of Manhattan, this author quite literally stumbled upon the final resting place of said Preserved Fish at the New York City Marble Cemetery, the city's second non-sectarian burial place open to the public. Preserved Fish's final resting place is located on East 2nd Street, internment location #75. The New York City Marble Cemetery received historic designation status from the NYC Landmarks Preservation Commission in March, 1969.

<sup>227</sup> McKay, 310

cases, packs and packages of all sizes and denominations, were strewed upon the wharfs and landing-places, or upon the docks of the shipping. All was noise and bustle. The carters were driving in every direction; and the sailors and labourers upon the wharfs, and on board the vessels, were moving their ponderous burthens from place to place. The merchants and their clerks were busily engaged in their counting-houses, or upon the piers....Such was the appearance of this part of the town when I arrived. Everything was in motion; all was life, bustle and activity.<sup>228</sup>

A year later, our Englishman noted with dismay the effects of President Jefferson's Embargo Act upon waterfront activity. The Embargo, which took effect on December 25, 1807, caused a "melancholy dejection" on all activity and "rendered the city gloomy" until its repeal in March 1809. The War of 1812 likewise resulted in a suppression of port activity, after which shipyards, wharfs, and merchant activity along the East River and South Street immediately sprung back to life, "a renewal of the characteristic din and noise made by clamorous cartmen, stevedores and others."<sup>229</sup>

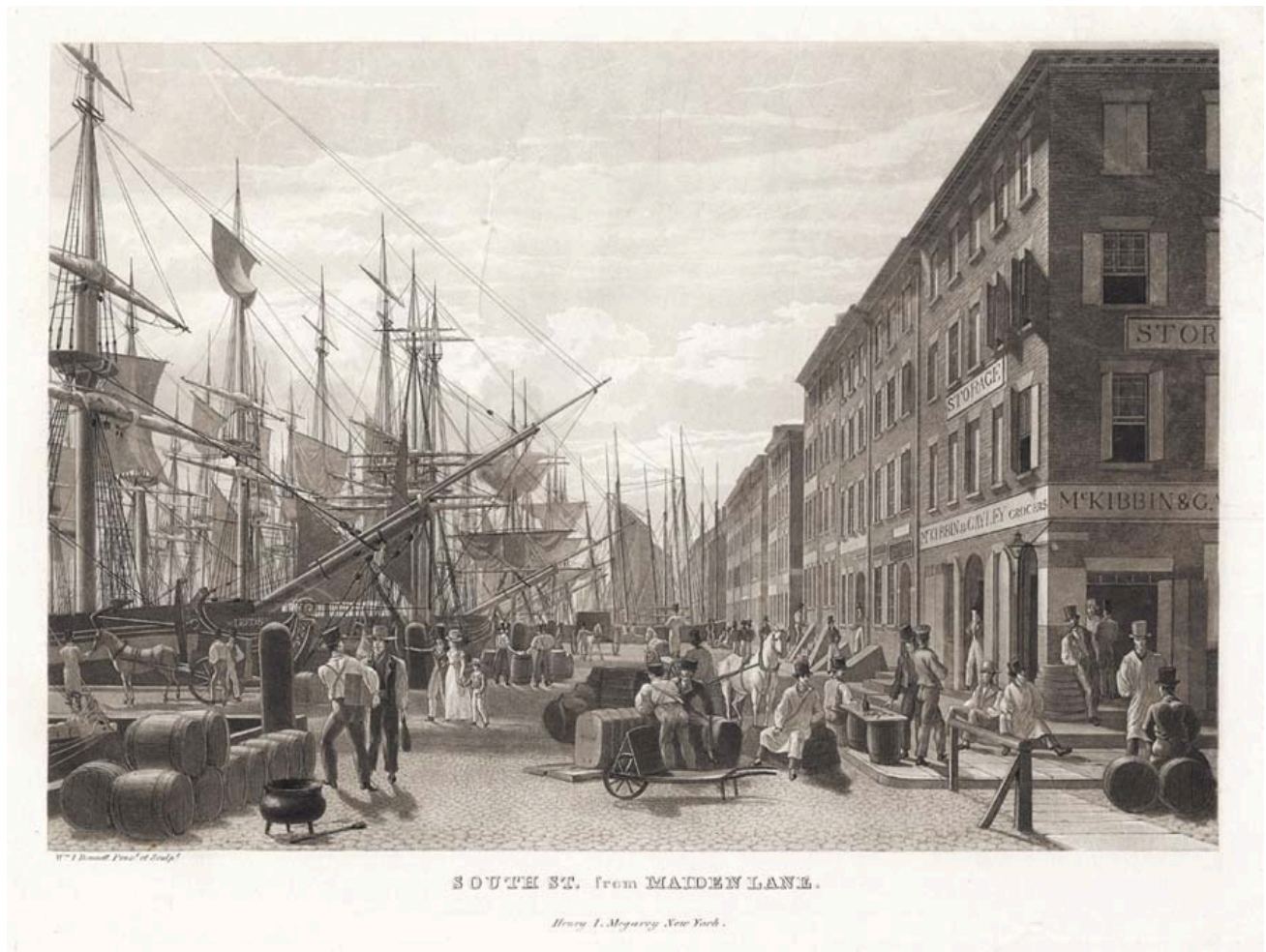
Artist William James Bennett's 1834 aquatint of New York's seaport provides a lively depiction of the hustle and bustle of the very district illustrated in De Pol's 1950 woodcut. "South Street from Maiden Lane," in marked contrast to De Pol's later work, captures the flurry of activity of New York City's maritime economy, which peaked in activity between 1815 and 1860. Here, Bennett portrays "a forest of masts" lining the piers of the East River, while across South Street stand a row of four-story buildings housing grocers, storage facilities, and merchant houses. The street is filled with pedestrians in fashionable dress, stevedores taking a break from the day's work, men in top hats and breeches, and horse-drawn carriages ready to load or unload their

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<sup>228</sup> McKay, 54-55

<sup>229</sup> Ibid, 90

passengers. The ships' sails appear awash in sunlight, and the sky is bright with cheer. Bennett's cobblestone streets appear immaculately clean – reality be damned; this is a scene of industry and prosperity and Bennett's intent, or that of his patron, is to depict the East River waterfront as nothing short of glorious.



William J. Bennett, "South Street from Maiden Lane." Aquatint, 1834.  
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For five decades following the end of the War of 1812, America flourished in the shipping trade and dominating shipbuilding and trans-oceanic trade until the start of the Civil War. These balmy years, 1812-1860, marked the true heyday of the city's seafaring



economy. State Street, located just opposite the Battery at the tip of Manhattan, offered the stateliest homes for wealthy merchants and their families. These homes enjoyed expansive views of the New York Harbor and were located mere blocks from the counting houses and mercantile exchanges along South Street. McKay describes these “stirring times,” when:

An old wealthy merchant could get up at daybreak, look out of his window, and see what old cronies were walking upon the Battery. Then he could stroll over before breakfast, and, while enjoying the sea breezes, he would shake hands and talk politics with his constituents, [any one of] the more prominent merchants who then resided on State Street.<sup>230</sup>

McKay’s study – a glorified and sanitized history to be sure - presents a heroic narrative, complete with strapping men of strength, wit, and wealth. He describes shipbuilders and ship’s captains as “men of mark, as well as men of brains and brawn.... Intelligent in trade as in navigation. Life and character and fortune depended on his skill and vigilance.” McKay’s heroes are the capitalist shipbuilders who built the great merchant vessels, as well as the brave men who officered and sailed those merchant ships across the treacherous seas. Of these men, songs and poems and engravings were commissioned. McKay offers tales of dignity and nobility, men larger than life, the best of the best. Indeed, McKay describes one seaworthy gentleman as “superior to all human beings at that time.”<sup>231</sup> Johnny Appleseed and Paul Bunyan most certainly had rivals at the port of New York. These were men who invested wisdom and capital into the very heart of American commerce and industry; the East River waterfront was indeed the very

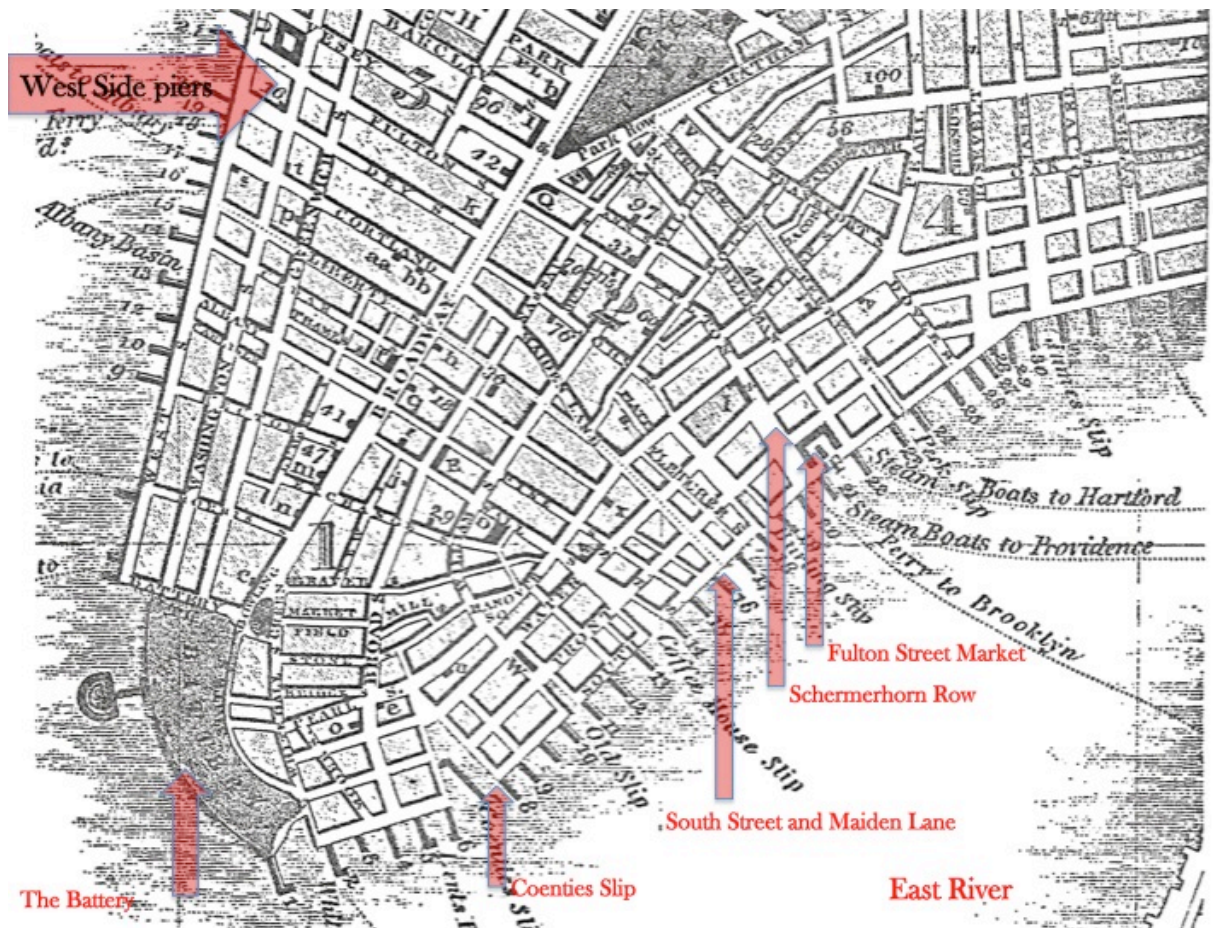
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<sup>230</sup> McKay, 125

<sup>231</sup> Ibid, 172, 266

epicenter of mercantile capitalism in a flourishing national economy, captured in one look upon the scene at South Street.

As one walked up or down South Street, he would be jostled by a continuous stream of men, of wonderful diversity, of every shade of cleanliness, honesty, industry, and intelligence. In fact, every species seemed to be represented.<sup>232</sup>



Map of Lower Manhattan 1835. Drawn by D.H. Burr. Printed at Bowne Printers. Copyright permission courtesy of Browne Printers, South Street Seaport Museum, New York. Highlighted locations added by this author.

<sup>232</sup> McKay, 249

McKay's glowing history of South Street's prosperity only briefly acknowledges trouble on the waterfront amidst these "stirring times." Does a hero emerge in light of the grittier reality, or despite it? We want to know that our heroes suffered adversity and overcame despicable hardships. McKay provides little evidence of this here. Dock thieves and small gangs trolled the docks and piers in search of an easy mark or cargo left untended. The economic depression of 1857 saw ships standing idle at port for months at a time, during which time "the working classes were thrown into a state of severe destitution, to which a long, severe winter added more horrors." At all times, longshoremen were forced to suffer the shape-up, a demoralizing practice in which a stevedore hand-selects a few favored men from among a hungry group for loading and unloading detail. These longshoremen, "ragged and dirty; they were heavy, lifeless, and even monotonous in various shades of ignorance," hurried to the attention of the approaching stevedore, standing motionless in hopes of receiving the nod of approval and ability to earn a day's pay. The unfortunate majority not selected for work would subsequently disperse into their small groups, relapsing "into their habitual stolidity and inertia."<sup>233</sup> The shape-up would in fact prove to be the bane of the longshoreman's existence well into the twentieth century.

Unbeknownst to McKay's general reader, New York City in fact found itself in the midst of contention and antagonism during South Street's heyday of industry and prosperity. Of the first four decades of the nineteenth century, historian Joanne Reitano argues, "no other period witnessed so many incidents of violent struggle."<sup>234</sup> The 1830s

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<sup>233</sup> McKay, 404, 250

<sup>234</sup> Joanne Reitano, *The Restless City: A Short History of New York from Colonial Times to the Present* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 32

surge in immigration caused an outpouring of anti-immigrant, especially anti-Irish Catholic, antagonism. 1834 was the “year of the riots,” followed in 1836 by the “year of the strikes.”<sup>235</sup> Five Points, New York City’s infamous slum and boiling pot of contention in the early nineteenth century, was home to thousands of poor Irish Catholics, blacks, and nativist Protestants. Located behind City Hall and walking distance from the East River waterfront, living conditions in this immigrant ward belied the prosperity marked by the merchant houses along South Street. Five Points would become the national symbol of urban strife and violence, when “the city was exploding under the pressures of change.”<sup>236</sup> Due to ethnic and racial conflict, a series of economic recessions, and class antagonisms, the first half of the nineteenth century was plagued by riots, strikes, and violence. In an effort to bring order and sanitation to the dirty and unpaved city streets, officials banned hogs from the streets in 1821, setting off a series of hog riots. From the 1820s to the 1850s, municipal hog catchers snatched untended hogs, inflaming poor New Yorkers who relied on the animals for food and as a source of income, inciting riots. A series of anti-abolitionist riots in July 1834, when anti-abolitionists broke up meeting at the Chatham Street Chapel near Five Points, lead to several days of mob violence aimed at black churches, homes, and schools.<sup>237</sup>

1836 was the year of the strikes, in which no fewer than eighteen strikes occurred across the city. Violence erupted in June between two hundred dockworkers and police along the city waterfront; the next day five hundred dockworkers went on strike.

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<sup>235</sup> Sean Wilentz, *Chants Democratic: New York City and the Rise of the American Working Class* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 286

<sup>236</sup> Reitano, 33, 36

<sup>237</sup> Reitano, 35

Stevedores and laborers, demanding an increase in wages, marched through the streets of lower Manhattan, causing the High Constable of New York to declare, “Gentlemen and Blackguards – Go home or go along with me. ‘Tain’t no way this to raise wages... make no riots here.”<sup>238</sup> On day three, the mayor called in the militia to quell the strike.<sup>239</sup>

New York’s waterfront, like much of the cultural landscape at the time, was a racialized space. The Irish dominated waterfront activities around the piers at South Street and on the piers, spreading up both sides of the Manhattan waterfront. By 1850 the New York Waterfront was primarily white and Irish and the International Longshoremen’s Association (ILA) was the purview of *white* laborers. Maritime historian Jeffrey Bolster describes that even during the hey-day of the nation’s maritime trade, “the color line determined what a black man might do aboard American ships.” African-American mariners, *Black Jacks*, were generally relegated to work aboard the most dangerous whaling ships, which were “dirtier, more dangerous, more estranging, and worse paying than merchant or coastal shipping.” Social and occupational mobility remained lateral for most Black Jacks; while a contingency of black seamen provided fodder for mythmaking and imagery depicting a democratic brotherhood of the sea, the seafaring life rarely propelled the Black Jack out of unmitigated poverty. In light of an entrenched color line aboard seafaring vessels, racism in urban America, and decreasing economic mobility in the antebellum period, black mariners tended to be drifters in and out of the maritime labor market, returning to low-paying and low-status employment on dry land. Coerced labor, flogging, class violence and racial antagonisms created an

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<sup>238</sup> McKay, 207

<sup>239</sup> Reitano, 51

environment which placed the Black Jack “wholly at the mercy of tyrant captains and brutal officers, subject as he is to the unholy prejudice... of his native country.”<sup>240</sup>

The New York City Draft Riots of July 1863 were fueled by Irish dockworkers’ resentment of black “scabs” hired during a labor strike.<sup>241</sup> Tensions between black and white, Catholics and Protestants, “aristocrats” and laborers, revealed a climate of antagonism in which segments of the city’s population were “pitted against one another.”<sup>242</sup> Due to changing demographics, economic instability and a contentious civil war, the cultural landscape of the early to mid-nineteenth century was exceptionally contentious.

#### FULTON STREET MARKET

All-night ferry service from South Street across the East River to Brooklyn allowed the Fulton Street Market to operate at all hours of the day and night.<sup>243</sup> In 1816 the city had voted to build a new market along the East River and near the many ferry terminals, replacing several dilapidated structures that had been in operation since the previous century. The Fulton Street Market sold not just seafood, but also beef, mutton, pork, and produce. An account from *Harper’s Magazine* in July 1867 describes the Market as “a butcher’s store, a fruiterer’s stall, an oyster-counter, a coffee-shop, a

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<sup>240</sup> Jeffrey Bolster, *Black Jacks: African American Seamen in the Age of Sail* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), 176-180

<sup>241</sup> Fischer, 2-3

<sup>242</sup> Reitano, 35

<sup>243</sup> Mark Kurlansky, *The Big Oyster: History on the Half Shell* (New York: Ballantine Books, 2006), 152

poultry-yard, and a fish-monger's establishment. It is every thing in one – a *magnum* not in *parvo* but a *magnum* in *magno*.”

Oysters, however, were the *raison d'être* of the market. Historian Mark Kurlansky explains, “In the nineteenth century, there was no better New York experience than to go down to one of the markets late at night and eat oysters.”<sup>244</sup> From 1681, when Britain established a colony in the former Dutch New Jersey, George Carteret reported, “The Bay and Hudson's rivers are plentifully stored with sturgeon, great bass, and other scale-fish, eels, and shellfish, as oysters, etc. in great plenty and easy to take.” By 1750, New York was the top city in the colonies for oyster and alcohol consumption, and prostitution. During the Colonial Era, oysters were sold from street carts and from boats moored along the docks at the end of Broad Street. In 1819 the first cannery opened in the city, canning oysters and codfish, to be shipped up the Hudson River and Erie Canal to parts of the country lacking in such sea-riches.

By 1850 New York City was known as having the best oysters in the world, was by this time the greatest port in the world, and was considered the oyster capital of the world. Environmental historian Ted Steinberg examines the history of New York Harbor's oyster trade and reports upon an 1869 exclamation, “New York without oysters would cease to be New York.”<sup>245</sup> Along with oyster carts, oyster cellars dotted the city, ranging from high end to sleazy. “Like bordellos, oyster cellars catered to different clientele depending on the neighborhood... Prostitution and oysters, often found together,

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<sup>244</sup> Kurlansky, 235, 197

<sup>245</sup> Ted Steinberg, *Gotham Unbound: The Ecological History of Greater New York* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2014), 166

were the two most famous New York experiences.”<sup>246</sup> When oyster carts and oyster cellars weren’t adequate to sate the appetites of the city’s oyster-loving populace, oyster dealers began tying up special oyster barges along the waterfront. Like houseboats, these two-story structures were affixed in a row and accessed by a gangplank from the waterfront, bobbing up and down with the tide. These garish barges were painted pink or yellow or green, complete with ornate decorative roofs and balconies. By 1860, over twelve million oysters per year were sold in the Manhattan markets.<sup>247</sup>

Following the Civil War, shipbuilding and shipping activity fell off dramatically in the United States, serving a keen blow to New York’s waterfront activities. Two burdensome federal policies drove this decline. First, the Union Army commandeered all sea vessels during the war for official transport services, effectively eliminating private and corporate ownership of ships and shipbuilding. Second was a shift in federal policy, whereby Southern legislators, intent on crippling Northern powers, engaged in lengthy congressional debates regarding national policy on merchant marines. The resulting legislation cancelled all federal subsidy contracts with the merchant marine industry. These two policies struck a painful blow to the American shipping industry, centered as it was in New York City.<sup>248</sup>

The seaport district surrounding South Street, no longer the epicenter of trade and commerce, began to shrink as shipping magnates left the waterfront in pursuit of continued riches in iron, steel, and the railroads. The waterfront was showing signs of

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<sup>246</sup> Kurlansky, 62, 65, 102, 158, 113, 160

<sup>247</sup> Kurlansky, 173, 184

<sup>248</sup> McKay, 404



decrepitude, its wooden piers degrading into “rotten structures, the abode of rats and the hiding places of river thieves.”<sup>249</sup> With the decrease of industry, South Street, Fulton Street, and State Street became less lively and less fashionable; after the Civil War residents began to move out of the area for more glamorous locations uptown, although the Fulton Market remained active and the all-night ferries to Brooklyn provided a customer base for oysters, produce, and prostitutes day and night.

#### CHANGING NEW YORK

Artist Charles Mielatz captures the late nineteenth century waterfront along South Street in his 1890-91 etching, “Coenties Slip.” From the artist’s vantage point at the end of the slip, we look upon a row of four- and five-story buildings lining South Street, while dinghies and small sailboats occupy the foreground. The red brick tower of George B. Post’s giant Produce Exchange Building reaches into a clear sky marked only by a faint sweep of cloud.<sup>250</sup> The jumbled rooflines of the buildings along South Street create a hodge-podge affair; some of the roofs lay flat, while other slope at impossibly steep angles. Gone are the grand sailing ships of William Bennett’s 1834 view. The boats lining this slip are small and squat in comparison; gone too are the stevedores and bustling foot traffic. Untended barrels and crates line the pier, while two lone fishermen sit in the foreground, sharing a single fishing rod, possibly trolling for the day’s supper.

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<sup>249</sup> The *New York Times*, April 22, 1870

<sup>250</sup> George B. Post’s New York Produce Exchange building, erected in 1884, was demolished in 1957 during the national wave of postwar urban renewal. The original structure, ablaze in fiery red brick, was the focal point of the nation’s produce and commodities exchange, where national and global prices for commodities like wheat, corn, petroleum, and turpentine were set daily. Post went on to design the New York Stock Exchange with his firm in 1903. Christopher Gray, “A Brick Beauty Bites the Dust,” *The New York Times*, Aug. 24, 2014.

Mielatz's etching depicts an East River waterfront past its prime; the bright and prosperous air of Bennett's South Street from a half-century earlier has now become more than a little dingy. Or perhaps Bennett's depiction of South Street merely masked the grime. Bennett's cobbled streets, after all, exist in impossible sparkle and shine; this was the *waterfront*, after all, complete with horse-drawn wagons, fish stalls, sailors who hadn't bathed since who knows when. Mielatz's work offers a more complicated sense of the working landscape which we don't get from the Bennett drawing. There is industry in this visual representation, but little glory. The quietness of the two lone fishermen in the foreground offers a precious form of joy; calm in an otherwise noisy and chaotic city.



Charles Mielatz, "Coenties Slip." Etching, 1890-91. Possession of the author.  
No copyright permissions required, work created prior to 1923 is in the public domain. Per Stanford University Libraries, "Copyright and Fair Use"

By the close of the nineteenth century, the heyday of the East River seaport had since passed. Writing for the *New York Times* in 1919, the New York art gallery H. Wunderlich & Company comments on the work of Charles Mielatz, noting the artist's focus on forgotten corners of the city and acknowledging this "has less to do with [the

locale's] intrinsic merit than with the feeling of place for which Americans are developing as their historic past slips further and further into the background."<sup>251</sup> The public's preoccupation with place and with the past was already lending a nostalgic nod towards an era slowly vanishing. By the turn of the century, remembrance of the city's past as a mechanism by which to shape the urban environment amounted to the first wave of the modern *heritage crusade*. Says David Lowenthal, "We long for islands of security in seas of change."<sup>252</sup> This sea of change during the Progressive Era included the instability associated with political corruption, increasing immigration, entrenched poverty, and public health crises, each adding up to a "cultural dislocation" which cried out for historic preservation and its sense of "firmness and stability."<sup>253</sup> Historian Randall Mason uncovers the ideology behind Progressive Era preservationists and explains,

[They] were not exclusively devoted to saving old things; they saw preservation as one aspect of their larger project of transforming the city and its citizens. Preservation was integrated with city planning, public art, civic architecture and other reform efforts. Transcending, yet not abandoning the purist approaches to buildings as artifacts, urbanistic preservation led to more flexible strategies and negotiations.<sup>254</sup>

Although Wunderlich & Company's astute perception of the public's fascination with place and with history – already evident by the early 1900s - presages our own

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<sup>251</sup> H. Wunderlich & Co., "Work of an American Etcher; Art at Home and Abroad," *The New York Times*, July 6, 1919

<sup>252</sup> David Lowenthal, "The Heritage Crusade and Its Contradictions," in Max Page and Randall Mason, *Giving Preservation a History* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 23

<sup>253</sup> Randall Mason, "Historic Preservation, Public Memory, and the Making of Modern New York City" in Max Page and Randall Mason, *Giving Preservation a History* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 142

<sup>254</sup> Randall Mason, *The Once and Future New York; Historic Preservation and the Modern City* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009), 143

appreciation for sense of place in the early 2000s, South Street had not quite become a ghostly remnant of its former self. South Street at the turn of the twentieth century still held on to a distinctly maritime ambiance, although admittedly less golden and prosperous than the previous century had witnessed. While the city's infamous oyster market had been shaken – by 1850 New York Harbor's oyster beds had been overharvested and by 1915 the city closed all shellfish beds, including oyster beds, in Jamaica Bay due to sewage contamination – the Fulton Market and South Street were very much alive, if not quite as well. Charles Henry White, writing for *Harper's Magazine* in 1905, offers a flaneur's rollicking perspective of the busy waterfront:

Bordering the water-front are the old warehouses and lofts of the sail-maker and boat-builder, with nautical-supply stores and saloons elbowing one another for breathing-space; while stretching out into the river, like long arms, are the massive piers, and moored to these – their quaint figureheads facing the buildings, and their lofty bowsprits half spanning the street – are the deep-sea merchantmen from beyond the seas, with a swarm of stevedores in blue overalls and jumpers bustling about, unloading the cargo and placing it along the waterfront to be loaded on the numerous trucks lined up to receive it... There is an irresistible movement here that is exhilarating.<sup>255</sup>

Throughout the 'teens and 'twenties, shipping and market activity along the East River waterfront carried on. The Seaman's Church Institute provided a home to sailors moving in and out of the port. Founded in 1834 as a Church of England mission, the Institute at Coenties Slip offered dormitories, reading rooms, postal service, a navigation school, employment and welfare offices to sailors. This boarding house was erected in marked contrast to the many rooming houses dominated by "land sharks," those seedy

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<sup>255</sup> Charles Henry White, "In the Street," *Harper's*, Feb. 1905, 275

characters and thugs who extorted wages from sailors and kept these seamen locked in an insufferable cycle of poverty and misery. Richard McKay described these illicit rooming houses as purveyors of:

The vilest dens, the deadliest rum, the basest companions, gamblers and women, lodgings in cellars where no human being ought to have been kept, bad literature, bad songs and corrupting music, held as in chains of steel the New York sailor.<sup>256</sup>

Sailors could rent a room on the cheap at the Institute, without the fear of extortion or robbery that typified less reputable rooming houses. While the dormitory might be “heavy with the steamy odors common to sailormen,” and appear to the gentle visitor “brusque at times,” these mere inconveniences were attributable to the transient schedules of the sailors and their constant inter-mingling with an “army of bums and panhandlers” who also found sanctuary in the building.<sup>257</sup>

#### FRAUNCES TAVERN

A short walk west from the Seaman’s Church Institute leads one to the corner of Pearl and Broad Streets at the tip of lower Manhattan. Situated at this intersection is Fraunces Tavern, perhaps best known as the site of General George Washington’s farewell address to his staff upon his giving up command of the Continental Army on the night of December 4, 1783. The Tavern was built as a family home in 1719 for Etienne De Lancey, a French Huguenot merchant. No known images survive of the original three-story brick structure, but written descriptions of the home recall its design, quite vaguely,

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<sup>256</sup> McKay, 416

<sup>257</sup> Kenneth Campbell, “South Street,” *The New Yorker*, Apr. 28, 1928. p. 34

“in the British taste.” As the neighborhood became increasingly commercial, the De Lancey family moved out of the home to a more fashionable location uptown, after which the building was used as an office and warehouse for the mercantile firm of Delancey, Robinson & Company.

In 1762, West Indian Samuel “Black Sam” Fraunces purchased the building and opened the Queen’s Head Tavern, named after King George III’s wife, Queen Charlotte. Samuel Fraunces had a personal and professional relationship with George Washington. During the Revolutionary War, Fraunces’ daughter Pheobe served as General Washington’s housekeeper at his Mortier house on Richmond Hill. November 23, 1783’s “Evacuation Day” elicited cheers from the New York citizenry, when General Washington led his officers into Manhattan, ceremoniously driving out the British troops which had occupied the city during the Revolutionary War. Although military engagements had ceased two years prior, the Definitive Treaty between Great Britain and the United States was not signed until September 3, 1783 in Paris. The treaty officially ended the Revolutionary War and called for the evacuation of all British troops from their hold on the “Empire City.”

On the evening of December 4, 1783, New York State’s first Governor, George Clinton, entertained Washington and his troops at Fraunces Tavern, where Washington gave his infamous and emotional farewell address to his officers in the Long Room.<sup>258</sup> Samuel Fraunces renamed the tavern after himself following this auspicious occasion; Queen’s Head Tavern no longer seemed appropriate. In 1789, Washington returned to New York City as President of the United States, and asked Fraunces to serve as steward

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<sup>258</sup> *Sunday News Magazine*, New York, Oct 16, 1983, “Changing Scene: New York Then and Now,” by Margot Gayle. N-YHS, Guide to the Margot Gayle Papers 1959-2005, MS 241; Box 6, Folder 24: Fraunces Tavern. p. 17

in his presidential household. When the federal government moved its offices from New York to Philadelphia the following year, President Washington asked Fraunces to join him yet again. Samuel Fraunces died in 1795 and the Fraunces Tavern was sold in 1801.<sup>259</sup>

The building saw a number of real estate transactions exchange its ownership across the next century, and by 1900 the building was threatened with demolition to make way for a modern skyscraper. The Sons of the Revolution, a patriotic order founded in 1883 in the Long Room one hundred years after Washington's speech there, tried to purchase the property and were rebuffed. The group joined forces with the Daughters of the Revolution and with Andrew H. Green, president of the Society for the Preservation of Scenic and Historic Places and petitioned the city for an injunction.

In 1903, the City Board of Estimate and Appropriation passed an ordinance to buy the building and save it from condemnation; the Sons negotiated a contract and purchased the Tavern in 1904. By this time, interest in preserving the building was considerable, with both the Sons and Daughters of the Revolution joining efforts to preserve the building associated with George Washington and his heroism and leadership during the fledgling days of the new republic. This was the Progressive Era, when historic preservation became part of the larger urban reform movement intent on building a modern city and creating better citizens through a determined reorganization of the built environment. Progressive Era reformers sought to solidify social and cultural identity through the physical and aesthetic landscape of the city. Shoring up the cultural authority of the nation's foundational identity, as previously examined in the first chapter, was

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<sup>259</sup> N-YHS, Guide to the Papers of Harmon Hendricks Goldstone 1906-1979 (Bulk 1966-1979) MS 25; Box 4, Folder 2: Landmarks Preservation Commission Reports (Nov 1978) "Fraunces Tavern Block Historic District Designation Report," City of New York, Edward I. Koch, Mayor. 1978, p. 11-12



motivated by the social, economic, and political challenges of the rapidly industrializing city.

Immediately, the Sons hired architect W.H. Mercereau to begin restoration efforts on the Tavern. The Sons' goal was to restore the building "to what it may well have looked like" when Samuel Fraunces ran the Tavern from 1762 to 1785, and this thus became the New York City's first historic restoration project.<sup>260</sup> A series of fires in 1832, 1837, and 1852 significantly altered the appearance and structure of the building and in 1890 the first floor of the building was actually removed in order to lower the first floor to the ground level.<sup>261</sup> By the turn of the twentieth century, the building represented a veritable storehouse of memory, although its eighteenth century structural "authenticity" was questionable.

The series of fires across the mid-nineteenth century had severely altered the building from its original construction, including its height and roofline. In addition to the lack of any certain imagery of the building's original appearance, these fires further complicated any understanding of what the original structure purchased by Fraunces may have actually looked like. Mercereau began the restoration by removing the fourth and fifth floors, which had been added to the building over the course of the nineteenth century, and reconstructed the roof line based on imprints the original roof line had left

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<sup>260</sup> *Sunday News Magazine*, New York, Oct 16, 1983, "Changing Scene: New York Then and Now," by Margot Gayle. NYHS, Guide to the Margot Gayle Papers 1959-2005, MS 241; Box 6, Folder 24: Fraunces Tavern. 17

<sup>261</sup> N-YHS, Guide to the Papers of Harmon Hendricks Goldstone 1906-1979 (Bulk 1966-1979) MS 25; Box 4, Folder 2: Landmarks Preservation Commission Reports (Nov 1978) "Fraunces Tavern Block Historic District Designation Report," City of New York, Edward I. Koch, Mayor. 1978. p. 10,12

on a neighboring building.<sup>262</sup> In 1907, the newly renovated Fraunces Tavern opened to the general public. Over the next several decades, the Sons acquired several other properties on the block, thereby resisting the commercial redevelopment, if only quite locally, that would transform the landscape of lower Manhattan across the twentieth century.

#### LANZA'S FISH MARKET

The Fulton Fish Market still engaged in big business, raking in an annual income of \$18-20 million in 1931 and second only to Billingsgate of London in the global fish trade.<sup>263</sup> When a 125-foot section of the Market collapsed into the East River in 1936, newspaper reports assured concerned New Yorkers that fish shortages would not occur: fish deliveries would be re-routed to safe piers until the structure was rebuilt.<sup>264</sup> New Yorkers continued to love their seafood and the Fulton Market, by now receiving the majority of seafood by truck instead of by boat, was still a flurry of activity, a mélange of sights and smells and the site of “bewildering traffic”:

Strange things happen. Eels wriggle from their bins and start a carefree wandering over the wet and slippery floor. Salesmen, diving back from the trucks, bend over and scoop them up without losing a stride. Then lobsters clamber out and head quietly for Fulton Street. They are recovered in the same fashion. And occasionally one of the loggerhead turtles will get away and poke into a business

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<sup>262</sup> Gayle, 17

<sup>263</sup> *The New York Times*, “Fears Fish Racket Rise,” Jan 16, 1934

<sup>264</sup> *The New York Times*, “Fulton Market Doomed by City,” Aug 12, 1936

that is not its own. Fortunately, the mobile exhibits are slow – and the workers fleet.<sup>265</sup>

By the 1930s frequent fires, union strikes, and charges of racketeering dominated any discussion of South Street and the Fulton Fish Market. Reports on waterfront blazes generally acknowledged these fires originated with “causes unknown.” According to Commissioner of Markets William F. Morgan, Jr., the 1933 repeal of Prohibition led to a major spike in racketeering in other New York City markets once the repeal put bootleggers out of business.<sup>266</sup> In the interwar years, an ethnic shift had taken place in which Italian-American dockworkers outnumbered the long-entrenched Irish on the New York waterfront everywhere except Manhattan’s West Side.<sup>267</sup> Mob control at the Fulton Fish Market dates back to the 1920s, when Joseph “Socks” Lanza, a capo of the Luciano (originally Morello, later Genovese) crime family, established himself as boss of the United Seafood Worker’s, Smoked Fish and Cannery Union Local 359. “Not a scallop moved through the place that Lanza did not profit from.”<sup>268</sup> Lanza controlled all aspects of the fishing trade, including loading and unloading all fish at the Fulton Market; fisherman crews were not allowed to unload their own catches, instead required to pay a

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<sup>265</sup> The *New York Times*, “Fish and Fame in Fulton Market,” Jul 5, 1931

<sup>266</sup> The *New York Times*, “Fears Fish Racket Rise,” Jan 16, 1934

<sup>267</sup> Fisher, 7

<sup>268</sup> Robert J. Kelly, “The Last Waterfront: The Fulton Fish Market and the ILA as Family Businesses.” In *The Upperworld and the Underworld; Criminal Justice and Public Safety* (New York: Kluwer Academic/Plenum Publishers, 1999), 106. To note: The Morello Family was among the first and most powerful crime families in New York, and spawned legendary mobsters and future dons Lucky Luciano and Frank Costello. Renamed the Genovese family when Vito Genovese became Boss in the 1950s, the family still exists today.

fee for “public loaders” to the union’s benevolent fund.<sup>269</sup> Lanza’s control of the Fulton Fish Market served as the Genovese crime family’s revenue and power base and was an “intractable fact of life” during his reign.<sup>270</sup>

In 1931, a federal investigation into charges of racketeering at the Fulton Fish Market fell under the direction of Special Assistant to the Attorney General, Albert J. Law. In June 1933, two union heads at the Fulton Market were indicted under the Sherman Antitrust Act. Charles Skillen, president of United Sea Food Workers Union, and Lanza, business agent of the union, were indicted by a grand jury on counts of extortion and coercion after individuals from Connecticut trucking companies had testified the men had demanded payment of \$50 and \$100, under threat of bodily injury, before they could transport their cargo to the Market.<sup>271</sup> Later reports uncovered a history of payoffs for “protection” at the Market, with the Fulton Market Fish Mongers Association acknowledging for the past six years it paid \$5,000 in “protection” fees annually to an organization referred to only as “they.” In addition, every boat was required to pay a \$10 unloading fee at the South Street piers.<sup>272</sup>

While serving a two-year sentence on the Sherman Antitrust conviction, Lanza, self-proclaimed Czar of the Fulton Fish Market, pleaded guilty to a similar charge in the

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<sup>269</sup> James B. Jacobs, *Mobsters, Unions, and Feds: The Mafia and the American Labor Movement* (New York: New York University Press, 2006), 61

<sup>270</sup> James B. Jacobs, Coleen Friel, Robert Riddick, *Gotham Unbound: How New York City Was Liberated from the Grip of Organized Crime* (New York: New York University Press, 1999), 46-7

<sup>271</sup> The *New York Times*, “Hunt Fish Trade Racket,” May 3, 1933 and “Fish Union Heads Indicted in Racket,” Jun 30, 1933

<sup>272</sup> The *New York Times*, “Market Men Glad To Buy Protection,” Jan 16, 1934

saltwater fish market, for which he received an additional one-year prison term.<sup>273</sup> After serving his time at Leavenworth federal penitentiary, Lanza returned to New York and was reelected to his post as business agent of Local 16,975 of the United Sea Food Workers Union. In a story not uncommon to many an underworld crime drama, Lanza immediately faced new charges of extortion upon his return home, when union officers claimed he had continued to extort \$120 per week from Teamsters members while he was incarcerated at Leavenworth. In January 1941, “Socks” was arrested on these new charges at his racketeering headquarters in the old Meyers Hotel at Peck Slip and South Street, after which he was committed to the Tombs and later sentenced to 7 ½ to 15 years.<sup>274</sup> Parole officer Abe Simon later acknowledged, “The market should be called Lanza’s Fish Market. Fulton Fish Market is a misnomer.”<sup>275</sup>

Mobster control notwithstanding, the Fulton Fish Market occupied “one of the liveliest places in New York” and fulfilled the city’s and the country’s insatiable demand for seafood. Following the 1936 collapse of a dilapidated portion of the market into the East River, a new facility re-opened in June of 1939, although the modern amenities and “new orderliness” were not necessarily welcomed by every old-school fish monger.<sup>276</sup> In keeping with the modernist push for order and rational use of space, the new building would better serve the ongoing shift from sea to surface traffic; by this time 85% of all fish to the market arrived by truck or by rail, and traffic congestion around the market

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<sup>273</sup> The *New York Times*, “Pleads Guilty in Racket,” Mar 8, 1938

<sup>274</sup> The *New York Times*, “Dewey says Lanza Ran Racket In Jail,” Jan 9, 1941; “Lanza is Indicted With Aides in Plot,” NYT Jan 18, 1941; “Socks Lanza Gets Term,” Jan 30, 1943

<sup>275</sup> “Cook, Fred. Politics, Protection and Fish,” *The Nation*, 480

<sup>276</sup> The *New York Times*, “A New Day for the old Fulton Fish Market,” Charlotte Hughes, Apr 24, 1938

was insufferable.<sup>277</sup> In fact, Mayor Fiorello LaGuardia ordered a stop to the open-air sale of fish at Fulton Street, much to the dismay of the fishmonger community, claiming the curbside selling of seafood had created an intolerable traffic hazard.<sup>278</sup>

By 1945, five million pounds of seafood entered and left the Fulton Fish Market every week. New York continued its long tradition as seafood purveyor and connoisseur; the nineteenth century oyster cart and oyster barge sellers would have been pleased. When a fire, of undetermined origin, broke out on the roof of the Market and affected an entire block at South, Fulton, Beekman and Front Streets, fish sellers and their customers on the street level continued to conduct business as usual while firefighters battled the blaze on the roof.<sup>279</sup>

#### DOWN AT THE OLD FISH MARKET

Joseph Mitchell, writer for *The New Yorker*, spent many mornings wandering the streets, fish sheds, and waterfront along the Fulton Fish Market in the 1930s, '40s and '50s. With the majority of commercial maritime traffic now engaged along Manhattan's West Side and New Jersey's Hoboken piers across the Hudson River, activity at South Street and the Fulton Fish Market would only become increasingly anachronistic. A throwback. A backwater. The bottom of the harbor. The Fulton Fish Market, buried beneath the Brooklyn Bridge and the regular foot traffic that characterized lower Manhattan's typical weekday rush, became Mitchell's destination of choice. The writer's colorful depictions of this salty locale added to the mythology, collective meaning, and

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<sup>277</sup> *The New York Times*, "South Street Perks Up," Leba Presner, Jun 11, 1939

<sup>278</sup> *The New York Times*, "To Improve Market Area," Mar 1, 1940

<sup>279</sup> *The New York Times*, "Old Fish Market Burns," Jun 12, 1946

placemaking of the old cobbled seaport. Mitchell writes of the downtown backwater, “The smoky riverbank dawn, the racket the fishmongers make, the seaweedy smell, and the sight of this plentifulness always give me a feeling of well-being.”<sup>280</sup> Mitchell captures the vanishing – not yet deceased - life of the fisherman, the sea captain, and the fishmonger, and illustrates what the seafaring life around the harbor had dwindled to by the mid-century.

By the 1920s and 30s, oyster harvesting around New York Harbor suffered under a number of factors which compromised the city’s long-standing designation as oyster capital of the world. Large-scale oyster industry, with its machinery and dredging equipment, squeezed out the old oysterman and his manually-operated oyster rake; contaminated waterways presented a public health hazard – “bad” oysters were implicated in outbreaks of typhoid fever - and required the shut-down of oyster beds across several decades; the dredging of channels for larger ships destroyed oyster beds around New York waterways; and natural seedbeds gave out due to overharvesting.<sup>281</sup> The once-bountiful New York oyster, traditional foodstuff of street carts and oyster cellars, had become an expensive delicacy.

One of Mitchell’s real-life literary characters included fisherman Archie M. Clock, commander of the *Jennie Tucker*, “a battered, stripped-down, thirty-eight-foot sloop powered with a motor the Captain took out of an old Chrysler.”<sup>282</sup> Captain Clock descended from a long line of fishermen and oyster farmers: his forefathers trolling the waters of Long Island Sound for two centuries. Clams – Clock no longer trolled for

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<sup>280</sup> Joseph Mitchell, *Up in the Old Hotel* (New York: First Vintage Books, 1938, 1993), 439

<sup>281</sup> Steinberg, *Gotham Unbound*, 166-169

<sup>282</sup> Mitchell, *Up in Old Hotel*, 303

oysters - harvested from the waters of Long Island Sound and South Bay were taken to the Fulton Fish Market and to restaurants in Manhattan and Brooklyn, or trucked to the Campbell's Soup factory in Camden, New Jersey.<sup>283</sup> The process of getting fresh clams to market had not changed much over the past century:

After they had been culled, the clams were poured into woven-wire baskets and dipped in a tank of tap water in which an antiseptic solution had been poured. Then some were emptied into great, three-bushel barrels and others into tubs holding three pecks. Soon the room was crowded with loaded barrels, [to be delivered to] various restaurants and Fulton Market dealers.<sup>284</sup>

Saltwater farmers like Captain Clock were part of the thriving fish business around New York harbor in the 1930s and '40s, but one increasingly dominated by large-scale industry. In 1938, General Foods Corporation harvested, canned, and shipped approximately 100,000 gallons of shucked oysters from the waters surrounding New York Harbor.<sup>285</sup> Servicing the best oyster farms in the world, Mitchell describes 25,000 fishermen at work - hauling, shoveling, culling and shucking oysters. Another of Mitchell's informants, a Captain Kwaak, declared, "There are millions of dollars worth of oysters lying out there on the bottom of the bay."<sup>286</sup> Transporting this seafood to the City was itself no small feat, whether mobsters grabbed you in a shakedown or drunks blocked your way during the pre-dawn trek into Fulton Street. Captain Clock recounted to Mitchell a typical journey with his partner, trucking in from Long Island to the Fulton

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<sup>283</sup> Mitchell, 303, 306

<sup>284</sup> Mitchell, 312

<sup>285</sup> Joseph Mitchell, *My Ears Are Bent* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1938, 2001), 241

<sup>286</sup> Mitchell, *My Ears Are Bent*, 245



Market, where upon “entering South Street, he had to climb out of the cab and drag a sleeping drunk out of the road. Truck drivers have to slow-poke through here just because of drunks. I drag one out of my way at least once a week.”<sup>287</sup>

Sloppy Louie’s was Joe Mitchell’s restaurant of choice, a “busy-bee” located steps from the old Fulton Market along Schermerhorn Row. With a clientele consisting primarily of fishmongers and fish buyers, but including a growing number of folks from the nearby financial district, the joint was packed on any given day. The line of lunchtime latecomers waiting for a table got on Louie’s nerves. Mitchell describes a typical Sloppy Louie’s customer through a composite sketch he calls Old Mr. Flood:

Mr. Flood visits the fish market every weekday morning. He rises at five, has a cup of black coffee in the Hartford dining room, lights a cigar, and begins a leisurely tour of the fish stalls, the oyster sheds, the flounder-filleting houses, the smoking lofts, and the piers. When he reaches Fulton Street, the pandemonium in the market invigorates him... To him, the reek of the fish houses is not unpleasant.<sup>288</sup>

Through his meanderings around the seaport and along the East River and Hudson River waterfronts, Joe Mitchell portrays the lived reality of a dwindling community of fishermen and the fish trade as they existed in the 1930s, ‘40s and ‘50s. These essays describe a very particular sense of place in the decades approaching the mid-century. It is important to note that Mitchell’s essays do not engage with the criminal element thoroughly ensconced at the waterfront, including “Socks” Lanza’s racket at the Fulton Fish Market, or the occasional dismembered body discovered by junk collectors in the

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<sup>287</sup> Mitchell, *Up in Old Hotel*, 313

<sup>288</sup> Mitchell, 384

predawn hours, or the shakedown along the Hudson River piers. Mitchell writes with a pen meant to enchant. What he offers his reader is a literary depiction of a dwindling community of local fishermen, with the implication that *this* was the seafaring heritage of old New York. While the seaport at South Street, the eateries along Schermerhorn Row, and the fishermen and oyster shuckers who brought in the catch continued to exist in various manner of hustle and bustle, Mitchell's nostalgia for the past to which these cling is palpable. Mitchell depicts a fish market still "quivering with life," presents a cast of characters whose vibrancy and intrigue added to public perceptions and helped to create meanings associated with a South Street past its hey-day but still tethered to another era.

#### ON THE WATERFRONT or THE OLD MAN AND THE SEA

By the mid-1950s, while Joe Mitchell was wandering through the old seaport, Fulton Fish Market remained a profitable industry contained within the larger commercial activity at the Port of New York. The Market processed over 250,000,000 pounds of seafood per year, operating in much the same manner as fishermen of the 1840s would have known. With only five percent of seafood now arriving by boat, the majority of the Market's wares arrived by truck, including such diversities as Cuban swordfish, Florida red snapper, Alaskan king crab, German brook trout, Canadian sturgeon, South African lobster tail, and Indian shrimp. Employing approximately two thousand fishmen swinging baling hooks and hatchets, and sales clerks yelling out transactions in code, the Market tallied a \$125 million per year business and in the predawn hours was "quivering with life against the backdrop of a still sleeping city."<sup>289</sup>

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<sup>289</sup> The *New York Times*, "Fulton Fish Market Becomes an Exchange for Products of the World," Jun 24, 1956

However, the Port of New York, including the Hudson River waterfront and the East River waterfront in both Manhattan and Brooklyn, had become by this time an “outlaw frontier... where criminal gangs operate[d] with apparent immunity from the law.”<sup>290</sup> Malcolm Johnson’s Pulitzer Prize-winning investigative series “Crime on the Waterfront” ran in the *New York Sun* in late 1948 and exposed the gritty realities of what the waterfront had become. New Yorkers, their legislators, and Hollywood were captivated by the series.

Criminal activity on the waterfront was not new to 1948. Crime had been a festering sore within New York City’s markets since the repeal of Prohibition. Little or nothing, Johnson reported, had been done about it. After the end of World War II, crime on the waterfront escalated such that mobsters now controlled all aspects of the port’s commerce and activity. Kickbacks, the loading racket, pilfering, entire truckloads of cargo gone missing, and all other forms of corruption drove the cost of business at the New York port to unsustainable heights. As a result, many shipping companies had begun to divert their business to other ports along the eastern seaboard, where loading and “protection” fees did not exist.

Mobsters controlled all aspects of longshoreman activity through the union, with known criminals appointed as hiring bosses and union officials. The Czar of the Fulton Fish Market, “Socks” Lanza, still in prison, nonetheless continued to control the piers of lower Manhattan and the Fulton Fish Market through his lieutenants on the outside.

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<sup>290</sup> Malcolm Johnson, *On the Waterfront: The Pulitzer-Prize Winning Articles that Inspired the Classic Film and Transformed the New York Harbor* (New York: Chamberlain Bros., 2005), 3

Johnson declared, “The law on the waterfront is essentially the law of the jungle. It’s every man for himself.”<sup>291</sup>

The “shape-up,” that demoralizing practice carried over from the previous century and outlawed in London and other U.S. ports, was still in use in New York.

Longshoremen were required to gather on the piers at 7:00 am and again at 1:00 pm, forming themselves into a horse-shoe, waiting obsequiously in the hopes of receiving one of the few coveted brass tickets doled out by the hiring boss which would allow the man to work a half-day shift. This practice, rife with graft and favoritism, was the root of evil on the waterfront, keeping the men in a state of perpetual job-insecurity, provoking antagonism and a man-against-man mentality, and requiring men who did not get a day’s work to borrow from the ever-present loan-sharks, members of the same mob controlling the International Longshoremen’s Association, who in turn garnished the laborer’s next day’s pay.<sup>292</sup>

In addition to the shape-up, longshoreman suffered the kickback, in which each man was required to pay the hiring boss a 10% fee for the privilege of being chosen during the shape-up. Finally, the loading racket, which was institutionalized at the Port of New York after World War I, required that all incoming cargo must be loaded onto trucks via “public loaders” - members of the ILA – with “loading fees” paid directly to the racket bosses. Truckmen were not allowed to load or unload their trucks using their own loaders, finding it safer to suffer the extortion than to sit with a load of cargo that did not move. “He uses the public loaders because he knows that if he refuses, his trucks will not

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<sup>291</sup> Johnson, 4, 5, 9, 19

<sup>292</sup> Johnson, 132, 3

be loaded... Truckmen have become so intimidated, so resigned to this racket, that they don't even complain anymore."<sup>293</sup>

By the mid-century, a crew of mob bosses – Irish, Italian, and Sicilian - controlled the waterfront on both sides of the Hudson and East Rivers. Mickey Bowers ran the Hudson River piers along Manhattan's West Side; Tim O'Mara ran the piers from 42nd to 14th Streets; John M. Dunn, in Sing Sing awaiting his sentence to the electric chair, controlled the piers below 14th Street; "Socks" Lanza controlled the piers of lower Manhattan and the Fulton Fish Market; Albert Anastasia controlled the East River and South Brooklyn piers. Their boys controlled each and all activity on the piers, including the loading and unloading of trucks, shylocking, bookmaking and kickbacks. New York District Attorney Frank Hogan claimed the New York waterfront produced more murders per square foot than anyplace else on earth. While a certain exaggeration, the rampant violence and death on the waterfront had become so familiar, it was impossible to determine which victims were the result of mob violence or the usual gang warfare.<sup>294</sup>

Elia Kazan's film *On the Waterfront* was released in 1954, based on Budd Schulberg's screenplay which itself was based on Malcolm Johnson's 1948 "Crime on the Waterfront" expose. The film, starring Marlon Brando, Karl Malden, and Eva Marie Saint, received twelve Academy Award nominations and won eight, including Best Motion Picture, Best Actor, Best Supporting Actress, Best Director, Best Story, and Best Screenplay, and launched Marlon Brando into the Hollywood stratosphere. *On the Waterfront* riveted audiences one year following a very different maritime-based work of

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<sup>293</sup> Johnson, 53, 22

<sup>294</sup> Ibid, 8, 9, 100

literature, Ernest Hemingway's book, *The Old Man and The Sea*, for which Hemingway won both the Pulitzer and Nobel Prizes, and the subsequent film starring Spencer Tracy. These two works, each critically and popularly acclaimed in the early 1950s, illustrate at once the romance and brutal agony tied to a life of the sea and, when placed in conversation with one another, present a stark juxtaposition between man's romance with the sea and the reality of a crime-infested and racket-ridden waterfront. This juxtaposition is critical in order to provide a context from which maritime commemoration in 1960s' New York City can be better understood.

Written in the great tradition of maritime-inspired prose, in which the romantic lure of the sea is equaled to the devastating trials of bravery a life upon the sea demands, Hemingway's tale follows the works of writers such as Herman Melville and Joseph Conrad, who write of heroism and human fate at sea. *Moby-Dick* stands out as the epic tome of man's trials upon the sea, however when Melville's tale was originally published in 1851, it was met with little popular interest. Hailed as "one of the most brilliant critics of his day,"<sup>295</sup> literary critic Carl Van Doren's 1917 essay, published in the *Cambridge History of American Literature*, renewed interest in Melville's tale for a twentieth century audience.<sup>296</sup> As *Moby-Dick* began to receive both critical and popular acclaim following Van Doren's essay, we must ask: what questions were early-twentieth century modernists posing, and what answers were they seeking, in Melville's *Moby-Dick*? Van Doren proclaims *Moby-Dick* one of "the greatest sea romances in the whole literature of the world," and describes Melville as a transcendentalist and a romantic, a writer who filled

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<sup>295</sup> Richard Kreitner, "February 9, 1737: Thomas Paine is Born," in *The Nation* online edition, Feb. 9, 2015

<sup>296</sup> Richard H. Brodhead, ed., *New Essays on Moby-Dick; or, The Whale* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 16-18

his work with “moral or poetic significance.”<sup>297</sup> On the fundamental meaning of *Moby-Dick*, Van Doren describes an eternal conflict between man and nature:

The chase after Moby-Dick comes to have the semblance of a conflict between the eternal, unscathable forces of nature and the ineluctable enmity of man; and the eventual catastrophe, which leaves ship and sailors strangling in the water while the great beast shoulders his white way off on other business, seems the crash of a tumbling order.<sup>298</sup>

More recent literary criticism on Melville’s work concurs. Richard Brodhead, now President of Duke University, praises Melville’s literary strength in creating “the power and presence of the full-fledged heroic self.”<sup>299</sup> Brodhead describes the tale as “outrageously masculine,” a tale that illustrates for its readers a fantasy of what it means to be a man. Captain Ahab joins the rank of other literary giants like Hamlet, Lear, and Oedipus, heroes who “sum up some fact of human potential and bare the contours of some exemplary human fate.”<sup>300</sup>

Melville’s other well-praised tale of the sea, *Billy Budd*, tells the story of a fated sailor, consigned to the sea and later to death, caught up in the naval wars between France and England. Set in 1842, *Billy Budd* is a tale of good versus evil, innocence versus “malice, envy, and spite.”<sup>301</sup> Melville wrote *Billy Budd* in the late 1880’s, a period of

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<sup>297</sup> Carl Van Doren, “Romances of Adventure,” in *The American Novel* (New York: MacMillan, 1921), 73-74. Of note: Carl Van Doren is a relation of this author.

<sup>298</sup> Van Doren, 74

<sup>299</sup> Brodhead, 2

<sup>300</sup> Ibid, 2,4,9

<sup>301</sup> Alan Trachtenberg, *The Incorporation of America: Culture and Society in the Gilded Age* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1982), 201, 203

cultural turmoil and unrest. Historian Alan Trachtenberg agrees that Melville's work offers a social commentary on his own time, finding "the similarities of historical moment-of mass unrest and challenges to authority, of issues brought to law and settled by authorized force-resound too insistently to be ignored."<sup>302</sup> Billy Budd the "Handsome Sailor," the "incarnation of natural goodness," is the tale's hero, a hero who stands up "against the receding utopia of the rights of man."<sup>303</sup> Melville's symbolism and allegory help to fuel the reader's understandings of Melville's own social landscape, and provide insights into the larger societal questions with which Melville grappled.

Some recent scholarship seeks to complicate the traditional wisdom on *Moby-Dick* and *Billy Budd*, uncovering the novels' "infrapolitics" and nuanced narratives. Sterling Stuckey's *African Culture and Melville's Art: The Creative Process in Benito Cereno and Moby-Dick* uncovers the influence of African culture on Melville's life and work. Literary historian Wai Chi Dimock's *Empire for Liberty: Melville and the Poetics of Individualism* views Melville as social critic and seeks to uncover the "dialogic relation" between Melville's work and the social landscape of the nineteenth century.<sup>304</sup> While adding to the reader's understanding of Melville's personal influences and his work as a social critic, neither of these arguments negate the traditional interpretation of *Moby-Dick* and *Billy Budd* as tales of heroism. Each of these literary critics – from Van Doren to Trachtenberg to Dimock - remind us that the writer's cultural landscape, as well as the larger questions posed by his reader, provide much insight into the meanings

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<sup>302</sup> Trachtenberg, 202

<sup>303</sup> Ibid, 205, 206

<sup>304</sup> Wai Chi Dimock, *Empire for Liberty: Melville and the Poetics of Individualism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), 6



imbedded in and ascribed to literature, and help to clarify *why* these meanings resonate with different audiences at different times.

Hemingway's *The Old Man and The Sea* continues in this tradition of heroic and maritime-inspired literature. Unlike *Moby-Dick*, *Old Man* was an "instant success" from the moment it was released.<sup>305</sup> When *LIFE* magazine first serialized the story in its September 1, 1952 issue, 5.3 million copies sold within the first forty-eight hours. Scribner published the book the following week, where it remained on the best-seller list for six months.<sup>306</sup> While some critics have faulted the tale for its "lachrymose sentimentality," such criticisms exist in the minority.<sup>307</sup> The tale is most frequently described as brilliant. Upon the book's publication, literary critic Leo Gurko praised Hemingway's "incurable reliance on the individual," and tied *The Old Man and The Sea* to the works of Melville and Conrad.<sup>308</sup> Calling the title character "the clearest representation of the hero... heroic even in his bad luck," Gurko understands that true heroism is tested mano-a-mano. "When the great trial comes, one must be alone. The pressure and the agony cannot be shared or sloughed off on others, but must be endured alone."<sup>309</sup> As one man battling one great fish, old man Santiago exudes the deepest sense

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<sup>305</sup> Jon Robert Adams, "Chapter 1: The Great General Was a Has-Been; The World War II Hero in 1950s Conformist Culture," in *Male Armor; The Soldier-Hero in Contemporary American Culture* (University of Virginia Press, 2012), 26

<sup>306</sup> William E. Cain, "Death Sentences: Rereading *The Old Man and the Sea*," *The Sewanee Review*, Vol 114, No 1 (Winter, 2006), 112

<sup>307</sup> Cain, 112, 113

<sup>308</sup> Leo Gurko, "The Heroic Impulse in 'The Old Man and the Sea'" *The English Journal*, Vol 44 No 7 (Oct 1955), 380

<sup>309</sup> Gurko, 379-380

of heroism in a world where there are two kinds of men, “the greater men and the lesser; heroes and ordinary humans.”<sup>310</sup>

More recent literary criticism on *The Old Man and The Sea* confirms prevailing wisdom that this tale embodies “an exemplary, concise modern classic about courage,” in which one man’s battle against his adversary “raises him, irrespective of triumph or defeat, to a higher plane of *dignity and pride*.”<sup>311</sup> One-half century later, Hemingway’s tale “retains its power as a seductive modern myth,” teaching that through courage and dignity, one can attain “moral stature and a justification for [one’s] existence.”<sup>312</sup> Santiago’s struggle is a universal one; his fight against the great marlin and the sharks that thwart his efforts represents “a Darwinian struggle for survival.” And so while Santiago’s adventure occurs in the tropical waters off the coast of Cuba, his trials represent a “permanent and universal challenge, that of life itself.”<sup>313</sup>

Literary critic William Cain finds prevailing themes of “majesty and the pointlessness of human effort” in Santiago’s tale.<sup>314</sup> In light of this pointlessness of effort and the assurance of death, the question Hemingway poses, is: *how should we live?* Hemingway explores this essential query through Santiago’s life and trials: how should one live? What is a dignified life? What does heroism and strength look like? *The Old Man and The Sea* is at once a simple tale of heroism and perseverance upon the open sea,

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<sup>310</sup> Gurko, 378

<sup>311</sup> Mario Vargas Llosa and Thilo Ullman, “Hemingway,” *Salmagundi*, No 128/129 (Fall 2000-Winter 2001), 42. Italics added.

<sup>312</sup> Ibid, 44

<sup>313</sup> Llosa and Ullman, 44

<sup>314</sup> Cain, 117

yet at the same time illustrates the “theater of cruelty” that is life. Hemingway’s tale explores the fundamental question, *what is life, in the midst of adversity and death?* How should we live? What does dignity look like?<sup>315</sup> As Santiago endures his battle with the great fish, “the reader revisits ideas about what makes a man.”<sup>316</sup>

Hemingway’s old man Santiago represents an archetype, an iconic and idealized symbol of the pre-industrial seaman – a character not unlike the hard and tough seamen we meet through Joe Mitchell - who would later be commemorated at South Street. Santiago’s dignity and heroism conjure the historic landscape from which such heroism emerged, in the days before steel and iron and mobsters and rackets invaded the nation’s maritime trade. By the American mid-century, seafaring men like Santiago had long since become a myth, an ideal. And yet, Santiago embodies a lasting vision, which, at the mid-century, recalled an era belonging to a different breed of men.

In *The Old Man and The Sea*, Hemingway presents one man and one fish, locked in a battle of wills and strength. The book’s hero, Santiago, lives a traditional fisherman’s life on the coast of Cuba, in a simple shack not far from the water’s edge. Santiago fishes for his supper every day and owns few worldly possessions: his boat, the mast, and his fishing gear. The old man tends to the stations of his cross like every other fisherman in the village, and like their fathers and grandfathers before them.

Hemingway speaks to the romantic associations that tie man to the sea. He writes that Santiago:

Always thought of the sea as *la mar*, which is what people call her in Spanish when they love her. Sometimes those who love her say bad things of her but they

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<sup>315</sup> Cain, 120

<sup>316</sup> Adams, 26

are always said as though she were a woman. Some of the younger fishermen, those who used buoys as floats for their lines and had motorboats, bought when the shark livers had brought much money, spoke of her as *el mar* which is masculine. They spoke of her as a contestant or a place or even an enemy. But the old man always thought of her as feminine and as something that gave or withheld great favors, and if she did wild or wicked things it was because she could not help them. The moon affects her as it does a woman, he thought.<sup>317</sup>

Santiago's quest, to land the massive marlin on his hook, leads him further and further from shore, well into the night and the following day, a relentless pursuit in a battle of wills. The fish is noble and dignified; this is an honorable endeavor and a trial of strength. Santiago says to the fish:

They are not as intelligent as we who kill them; although they are more noble and more able... There is no one worthy of eating him from the manner of his behavior and his great dignity... Never have I seen a greater, or more beautiful, or a calmer or more noble thing than you, brother.<sup>318</sup>

When sharks begin to seek out Santiago's catch, this huge marlin larger than the boat to which it is strapped, the old man knows he is in for a battle. The shark is fearless and will take what he wants without hesitation. The sharks threaten the old man's work, profit, and glory. They will steal from him. Once the first shark approaches and tears away a chunk of the marlin, Santiago knows that more sharks will soon follow the scent of the fish's blood, and he "knew that a very bad time was coming... They were hateful

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<sup>317</sup> Hemingway, 29-31

<sup>318</sup> Hemingway, 63, 75, 92

sharks, bad smelling, scavengers as well as killers.”<sup>319</sup> The old man knows the sharks will get the better of him and his fish; he cannot fight them all. Even an old man such as Santiago has the strength and fortitude to engage in battle one-on-one; yet against a school of sharks, he knows he will be beaten. While the sharks succeed in robbing the old man of his prized marlin and of his glory, Santiago drags his exhausted body back to shore to rest and to live to fish another day.

A hero who stretches his powers of strength and will to the limit, Santiago exercises freedom of action. Literary critic Leo Gurko explains this heroic tradition in writing disappeared from Western literature after World War I when it was replaced by Kafkaesque protagonists. After the War, “the huge complicated mushrooming of politics, society, and the factory age began to smother freedom of action on the individual’s part.”<sup>320</sup> Santiago’s agency upon the open sea epitomizes the myth of the heroic seaman. It is of no consequence whether Santiago exists off the coast of Cuba, or New York, or Nantucket; Hemingway captures the romance of the sea and evokes a *traditional* fisherman’s life. Santiago is an archetype and an allegory. He is master of his own ship and of his own fate; he harkens back to a different breed of men. Bernard Berenson, art connoisseur and cultural aficionado whose discriminating eye dominated the art world across the first half of the twentieth century, described *The Old Man and The Sea* as “an idyll of the sea as sea.” And while Hemingway vehemently denied *Old Man* was about anything more than one particular man battling one particular fish, Berenson complicates the what-you-see-is-what-you-get assertion with astute literary criticism: “No real artist

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<sup>319</sup> Hemingway, 106, 108

<sup>320</sup> Leo Gurko, “The Heroic Impulse in *The Old Man and the Sea*.” *The English Journal*, Vol. 44, No. 7 (Oct, 1955), 381

symbolizes or allegorizes... but every real work of art *exhales symbols and allegories*.<sup>321</sup>

*LIFE* magazine serialized *Old Man* in 1952; Scribner's published it later that same year. Hemingway's Santiago personified freedom of action for his readers and would provide a stark contrast to the downtrodden longshoremen depicted in Kazan's 1954 film *On the Waterfront*. Where Hemingway tells the romantic story of one man battling one fish, a man living a fish-to-market existence much the same as generations of fisherman would have experienced before him, Kazan depicts the criminality of contemporary waterfront life, where longshoremen do not work for themselves but are at the mercy of mobsters and institutionalized corruption seeking to destroy man's dignity. A close examination of these concurrent works reveals a representation of the 1950s' waterfront in marked contrast to the romantic mythology of the traditional seaman's life and the glory of the sea. Understanding the juxtaposition of these artistic representations highlights the notion of a usable past at the South Street Seaport. Commemoration at South Street would reject everything the contemporary crime-ridden waterfront had become – everything Johnson and Kazan depict *On the Waterfront* - while bringing to life the strength, honor, and humanity of the preindustrial seaman's life as romanticized in Hemingway's tale.

*On the Waterfront* begins with longshoreman Brando's Terry Malloy, leaving Longshoremen's Local 374 with a cadre of thugs in tow. We see Terry approach an apartment building where he shouts from the sidewalk, "Hey, Joey!" As Joey appears from an upstairs window, Terry releases a homing pigeon to its rooftop coop. Heading to

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<sup>321</sup> Bernard Berenson, on *Old Man and The Sea*, reprinted in Carlos Baker, ed., *Ernest Hemingway, Selected Letters; 1917-1961* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1981), 785. Italics added.

the roof to retrieve his bird, Joey suddenly falls six stories to his death. Terry looks completely bewildered, naïve in his mumbling, “I thought they was going to talk to him...I figured the worst they were gonna do is lean on him a little bit...” During the ensuing investigation with local police, the victim’s mother cries to the officer, “He was the only longshoreman who had the guts to talk to that crime investigator, everybody knows that.” An older longshoreman coming to check out the crime scene tells his buddy, “I’ve been on the docks all my life, boy, and there’s one thing I learned. You don’t ask no questions, you don’t answer no questions, unless you wanna wind up like that.” A pigeon’s death.

As the story unfolds, we learn that mob boss Johnny Friendly controls all waterfront activity through the union local and is currently under investigation by the federal Crime Commission. Friendly explains to Terry, “We got the fattest piers and the fattest harbor in the world, everything moves in and out we take our cut.” Sensing Terry’s dismay over the murder of his friend, an indignant Friendly shouts, “you don’t suppose I can afford to be boxed out of a deal like this, do you? The deal I sweat and bled for, and I got one lousy little cheese-eater, that Doyle bum who thinks he can go squealing to the Crime Commission, do ya?”

In a scene right out of Malcolm Johnson’s expose, longshoremen fight one another like dogs at the morning shape-up. Father Corrigan, local pastor and moral authority, is filled with righteous indignation at the site of this dehumanizing treatment. Father asks the men who have been shut-out from a day’s work, “well what about your union? No other union in the country would stand for a thing like that!” To which a

disaffected longshoreman replies, “The waterfront’s tougher, Father, like it ain’t part of America.”

You’ve got to be D&D on the waterfront – deaf and dumb – if you want to survive. Everyone knows it: the mobsters know it, the longshoremen know it, readers of Malcolm Johnson’s expose know it, and now Hollywood and the American audience knows it. When word gets out that another longshoreman, Timothy Doogan, has spoken with federal investigators, Johnny Friendly instructs his henchmen, “We got the best muscle on the waterfront and the time to use it is now, pronto, if not sooner.” Later, a load of crates is dumped on Doogan while he works in the cargo hold of a ship and the “pigeon” is killed. This latest act of intimidation and murder compels Father Corrigan to deliver his real-life alter ego’s infamous “Jesus is in the shape-up speech.” Father councils the men, “only you, with the power of God’s help, have the power to knock ‘em out for good.” This is a moral crusade, one that demands collective action and public outrage to silence – for good! – the cowardly and un-Christian mobster vice that has corrupted the good people of the waterfront for generations.

After Terry testifies against Johnny Friendly in court, Edie finds Terry on the rooftop and cautions him, “There’s no place safe for you now on the waterfront.” In the film’s dramatic conclusion, Terry seeks out Johnny Friendly on the dock, where the two men fight, mano-a-mano, until Terry gets the better of the mobster and Friendly’s thugs are called in. Terry is beaten to a pulp while the union can only look on. Father Corrigan appears, helps Terry up, and challenges our hero to “finish what you started,” go in there and take back the union from the thugs. Terry staggers up the pier, bloody and unstable. He stumbles up to the shipyard entrance, right up to the shipping owner who stands in



front of his enterprise and, impressed with Terry's fortitude and moral strength, shouts "Let's get to work!" The longshoremen pour in for a day's work, Friendly has lost control of the local. Terry and his moral high ground are victorious. The waterfront has been reclaimed, at least for these men. It is possible to fight corruption and reclaim an honest space.

*On the Waterfront* is a tale of corruption and exploitation, and ultimately of heroism and personal vindication against larger forces. Kazan's longshoremen experience indignity as they grovel for work and for their livelihood. Based on Johnson's *New York Sun* expose, this film offers a tale of the longshoreman at the mid-century. Revisiting De Pol's 1950 woodcut of South Street, we can easily place Terry and his fellow longshoremen within that dank and somber landscape, although not so easily in Bennett's earlier and quite cheery vision of waterfront prosperity. *On the Waterfront* presents a dramatic illustration of New York City's gritty and crime-ridden seaport at the midcentury.

Heroism, dignity and agency characterize Hemingway's Santiago and recall nineteenth-century sailors and seamen, full of bravado and strength. Where was heroism, dignity and agency along the mid-century's racket-ridden waterfront? What had once represented the capital of capitalism among the nation's ports during the profitable Age of Sail had deteriorated, by the mid-century, into the racket-ridden domain of organized crime where seamen and fishmongers eked out a living only by the grace of men more powerful than they. McKay bemoaned the loss of our nation's maritime prowess in the wake of the Civil War; the twentieth century had been no kinder to New York's waterfront. When McKay elicited his call to action, "Americans, east, west, north and

south, must be ship-minded, incurably maritime!” he may not have known the call would be taken up by the historic preservation movement thirty years later. Following the shipping industry’s shift to containerization in the 1960s and with the issue less about shipping as industry and much more fundamentally about *identity* and *collective memory* of New York’s maritime greatness, the battle of the port would be one of representation and perception. The heroism of a Terry Malloy or Old Man Santiago might still be found along the city’s aging waterfront, and New York’s greatest historical asset might yet be located in its maritime history.

## 4

### **BATTLE OF THE PORT; PRESERVATION and COMMEMORATION at THE SOUTH STREET SEAPORT**

*Any landscape is composed not only of what lies before our eyes, but what lies within our heads.*<sup>322</sup>

– D.W. Meinig, “The Beholding Eye” (1979)

It comes as no surprise that by the late 1960s, diverse communities of Americans were looking for a moral authority they could believe in. The decade’s increasingly volatile early and middle years necessitated a response to the question, *what sort of people are we, we Americans?* The police riots and attacks on civilian demonstrators during the 1968 Democratic National Convention were, perhaps, the culminating manifestation of a systemic fracturing of any perceived sense of national ideology, identity, or consensus, and indicated a gap that spanned much more than the generations. From Muhammad Ali to Neil Armstrong to Marlon Brando, a nation searched for

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<sup>322</sup> Meinig, D.W. “The Beholding Eye” in *Interpretation of Ordinary Landscapes* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), 34

heroes.<sup>323</sup> Simon and Garfunkel, hipster folk-rockers of the Sixties and Seventies, sing of the nation's collective lonely eyes searching for heroes. Even baseball great Joltin' Joe DiMaggio had left the scene. Our heroes had gone away.<sup>324</sup>

The broad cultural landscape from which any generation seeks its heroes is home to people, places, and events both present and past. In light of the social reality of the present, memories stored in the cultural landscape of the past take on a heightened, even mythologized meaning. And while Malcolm Johnson's 1948 expose had shone a very bright light on the widespread criminal activity monopolizing New York City's waterfront, ten years following a citywide investigation along the waterfront, a city crime commission reported, "The hoodlums never went away." Through the 1960s, the Mafia continued its steady presence on the waterfront, and was now affiliated with Jimmy Hoffa and his Teamsters Union. Rampant pilferage, cargo gone missing and the ever-present loading racket continued to plague the waterfront.<sup>325</sup> If, as historian Richard McKay declared, New York's greatest historical asset was its maritime greatness, what did the current infestation of crime on the waterfront say about the city's identity?

The story of historic preservation in 1960s' New York City is not simply about bricks and mortar. It is about memories and pride.<sup>326</sup> When supporters of preservation and commemoration in lower Manhattan – from Peter Stanford to Whitney Seymour to

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<sup>323</sup> An earlier version of this chapter was published as "Battle of the Port: Memory, Preservation, and Planning in the Creation of the South Street Seaport Museum," *Journal of Urban History*, Vol. 39, No. 5. (September 2013), 890-908.

<sup>324</sup> Paul Simon, "Mrs. Robinson" lyric, 1967

<sup>325</sup> Johnson, 273

<sup>326</sup> Phrasing borrowed from "Bricks, Mortar, Memories, and Pride: The James Street Commons Reconsidered," Newark Public Library public exhibition, June – Dec. 2013. Co-curated by Dr. Clement A. Price and this author.

David Rockefeller to the Sons of the Revolution - looked across the physical landscape, they each saw not only what lay before their eyes, but what lay inside their heads.

Questions seeking solutions. The resurgence of this preservation impulse was part of a larger gestalt of the era, in which the tenuous notion of a collective identity fractured under the weight of domestic unrest and a questionable foreign policy. Led by South Street Seaport Museum founder Peter Stanford, preservationists at South Street sought to “revive mythical values” amidst a cultural landscape in which “crises were everywhere.”<sup>327</sup> Historian James Lindgren, who has conducted a complex organizational history of the South Street Seaport Museum, characterizes the city’s cultural landscape during the Museum’s founding years as one that was “socially, racially, and economically fracturing.”<sup>328</sup> Lindgren describes the motivating sensibilities behind the Friends of the Seaport, in which nostalgic notions of a more heroic past mingle with Progressive Era reformists’ vision for an improved civic landscape:

They regarded those vessels as representative of an era that seemed better than their own and could teach Americans about their failings and prepare them for the rough seas ahead. Myths, nostalgia, and wishful thinking partly shaped Seaporters’ perspectives, but they were as much concerned about bettering their own world as lamenting the lost past.<sup>329</sup>

While critics of the city’s crooked streets and muddled arrangement found fault with the nineteenth century’s lingering effects on the cityscape, preservationists at South

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<sup>327</sup> Lindgren, James M. *Preserving South Street Seaport; The Dream and Reality of a New York Urban Renewal District* (New York: New York University Press, 2014), 32, 79

<sup>328</sup> Lindgren, 35

<sup>329</sup> Ibid, 54

Street meant to preserve a small remnant of the previous century's "more natural, a little out of plumb" character.<sup>330</sup> The physical transformations wrecking havoc on the city's nineteenth century landscape threatened to eradicate this "more natural" human scale; this has become the conventional wisdom explaining the preservation impulse during the age of urban renewal. However, upon closer examination of internal memos, personal conversations, and museum proposals surrounding the plans to commemorate the Age of Sail in lower Manhattan, we find a much deeper tie, amongst "the people of our generation," to notions of resuscitating a more noble – indeed mythical - identity in the midst of an unwelcome "meaninglessness so fashionable in our time."<sup>331</sup>

Beyond the urge to buffer – not halt - the physical reconfiguration of lower Manhattan, a wide-ranging group of preservationists envisioned commemorative projects dedicated to remembering the strength and heroism of the city's preindustrial maritime roots and the people who built that cultural landscape. The actions of historic preservation supporters of the late 1960s demonstrate for us today the values by which they lived and the ideals they privileged.<sup>332</sup> In the midst of a physically and morally deteriorated waterfront, and in the context of the 1960s' cultural revolution in all of its manifestations and implications, New York City's existing waterfront represented the wrong sense of place for a growing body of historic preservationists, the financial community, and nautical aficionados. However, good intentions alone do not guarantee a successful outcome in the process of historic preservation. Bricks and mortar, real estate

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<sup>330</sup> Ellen Fletcher Rosebrock, *South Street: A Photographic Guide to New York City's Historic Seaport* (New York: Dover Publications, 1974), v

<sup>331</sup> Peter and Norma Stanford, *A Dream of Tall Ships; How New Yorkers came together to save the city's sailing-ship waterfront* (Peekskill: Sea History Press, 2013), 277-78

<sup>332</sup> Leslie Fielder, *The Art of the Essay* (New York: Crowell Publishers, 1958), 259

and renovation, come at a price both political and financial. Supporters of South Street, fueled by memories and pride, would have to battle for their right to the port.

What groups identify and sanctify as their pasts becomes historical evidence about themselves.<sup>333</sup>

- David Lowenthal (1979)

“THIS GODDAM CRAZY BILL”

As the oldest district of one of the nation’s oldest cities, lower Manhattan and the area surrounding New York Harbor had become, by the mid-1960s, a neighborhood rich with commemorative sites. A look at the National Register of Historic Places lists Castle Clinton National Monument, originally called Fort Clinton and the site of the nation’s first immigration center, as a national historic site in October 1966. That same month Federal Hall National Monument, site of President Washington’s inauguration, was listed to the Register, as was the Statue of Liberty National Monument, Ellis Island, and Liberty Island. Earlier in 1966, the nearby U.S. Customs House announced its impending move from Bowling Green to the future World Trade Center, and the 1907 Cass Gilbert structure was named to the National Register. Following the 1965 formation of the City’s Preservation and Landmarks Commission under Mayor Wagner, lower Manhattan – site of the city’s earliest settlement - was slowly becoming an epicenter of public commemoration, bursting with the power of place.

In 1966, New York Senator Whitney Seymour Jr. introduced a bill to the State Senate that would create a State Maritime Museum in lower Manhattan. During his

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<sup>333</sup> David Lowenthal, “Age and Artifact,” in *Interpretation of Ordinary Landscapes*, (New York: Oxford Univ Press, 1979), 103

tenure as President of the Municipal Art Society, Seymour had noted with alarm the encroachment of the urban renewal bulldozer across the island of Manhattan and the trail of destruction left in its wake. In an article written for the *New York Times* in late 1963, Seymour had pleaded with the city to curb the bulldozer and spare at least some remnants of the Georgian and Greek Revival structures that had survived since the nineteenth century. Presaging historian Max Page's work on the creative destruction of Manhattan, Seymour cited capitalism's demands for an ever-increasing productive use of land as the reason behind the endless razing and rebuilding of the city's landscape. Of the buildings along South Street, Seymour wrote, "These reminders of the great sailing days are important because of their association with perhaps the most significant aspect of New York's history – its role as a port," and suggested the buildings might house a maritime museum.<sup>334</sup> Three years later, the newly elected junior senator introduced his bill for the creation of just such a museum.

Seymour's bill quickly passed both the Senate and Assembly, and was put before Governor Nelson Rockefeller for approval. Governor Rockefeller's brother, Chase Manhattan Bank Vice Chairman David Rockefeller, was strongly opposed to the maritime bill. David Rockefeller had founded the Downtown-Lower Manhattan Association in 1958, whose mission was to support the physical expansion of the financial district. When the D-LMA got word that "this goddam crazy bill"<sup>335</sup> had passed both houses, a flurry of protest was directed at the Governor's office. According to a *New York Times* article, David Rockefeller's personal appeal to the Governor contained such

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<sup>334</sup> The *New York Times*, "Plea to Curb the Bulldozer," Oct 13, 1963, p. 80

<sup>335</sup> Personal recollection of Whitney Seymour. New York Preservation Archive Project, interview with Whitney North Seymour Jr., by Anthony C. Wood. July 29, 2006  
<http://www.nypap.org/content/whitney-north-seymour-jr-oral-history-interview>



heated objection to the maritime museum that “those who saw the letter were surprised by the violence of the attack.”<sup>336</sup> President of the D-LMA Edmund Wagner’s own appeal to the Governor reveals the reasoning behind his organization’s opposition to the development of the Seaport area for museum purposes, and highlights the tensions between those who admired the last century’s nobility and those who admired the next century’s tax base.

STRONGLY OPPOSE SENATE [bill] 3524 AWAITING YOUR SIGNATURE. SENATOR SEYMOUR, WHO INTRODUCED THE BILL, WELL-INTENTIONED BUT ENTIRE CITY BLOCK IN LOWER MANHATTAN, TOGETHER WITH FULTON FISH MARKET AND ADJACENT PIERS, LAND AND WATERFRONT PROPOSED FOR SOUTH STREET MARITIME MUSEUM, COULD BE USED BETTER FOR NATURAL EXPANSION OF FINANCIAL AND INSURANCE COMMUNITIES. CITY WOULD BENEFIT GREATLY FROM ADDITIONAL REAL ESTATE AND BUSINESS TAXES THAT COMMERICAL STRUCTURE COULD PRODUCE. BILL IN APPARENT CONTRADICTION WITH CITY PLANNING COMMISSION PLAN FOR LANDFILL DEVELOPMENT AND DEPRESSED HIGHWAY ALONG EAST RIVER. MUSEUM PROPOSAL MIGHT CONFLICT WITH PLANS FOR RESTORATION OF FRAUNCES TAVERN BLOCK.<sup>337</sup>

Likeminded letters of protest from stakeholders in Manhattan real estate, the chairman of that competing historic preservation project at Fraunces Tavern, and a variety of corporate lawyers soon joined opposition from David Rockefeller and the Downtown-Lower Manhattan Association.

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<sup>336</sup> Ada Louise Huxtable, “Landmark Plan Stirs Wall Street Controversy,” *New York Times*, Dec 17, 1966

<sup>337</sup> Western Union Telegram from Edmund F. Wagner, President of DLMA to Gov. Nelson A. Rockefeller. June 10, 1966. Rockefeller Archive Center, Record Group IV 3B 24, D-LMA Projects South Street Seaport 1966. S 2.3, B167, F1594. Telegrams were routinely written in all capital letters.

At the root of this opposition were three words synonymous with real estate investment: location, location, location. A historic museum located in the financial district was fundamentally viewed as an affront to the “orderly and dynamic growth of lower Manhattan,”<sup>338</sup> and specifically as infringing upon the physical expansion of the financial industry in the years to come.<sup>339</sup> John Goodman, Executive Vice President of the D-LMA, argued on behalf of the downtown financial community, insisting the city would lose big in unrealized tax revenues if the nonprofit maritime museum were approved. As a nonprofit organization and therefore exempt from city real estate taxes, Goodman estimated a loss of \$30,000 per year to the city. On the other hand, Goodman argued, if the proposed maritime museum block was “developed to its best potential,” it could produce up to \$300,000 per year in property tax revenue for the city. Goodman further acknowledged the maritime museum project would be in direct competition with a museum block project already under development just steps from South Street, known as the Fraunces Tavern Block.<sup>340</sup>

Stakeholders at the D-LMA met with Senator Seymour in the hopes of reaching an amicable solution for the completion of two historic preservation projects on the table for development in lower Manhattan. Goodman regretted that a common ground proved elusive. Supporters of both the maritime museum and the Fraunces Tavern museum block

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<sup>338</sup> Letter from John B. Goodman, D-LMA to Robert R. Douglass, Esq. Counsel to the Governor. July 18, 1966. Rockefeller Archive Center, Record Group IV 3B 24, D-LMA Projects South Street Seaport 1966. S 2.3, B167, F1594

<sup>339</sup> South Street Maritime Museum (Schermerhorn Row), Summary of Concept. March 21, 1966. Rockefeller Archive Center, Record Group IV 3B 24, D-LMA Projects South Street Seaport 1966. S 2.3, B167, F1594

<sup>340</sup> Letter from John B. Goodman, Exec VP at DLMA to Robert R. Douglass, Esq. Counsel to Gov. Rockefeller. July 18, 1966 RAC, Record Group DLMA, Series 2, Sub-series 2.3 Projects South Street Seaport 1966, Box 167 Folder 1594

were equally determined to see their project's fruition. At South Street, supporters at this juncture were few, but included Senator Seymour, a grassroots cadre of seaport fans known as the Friends of the Seaport, shipping magnate Jakob Isbrandtsen, the editors at *Popular Boating* magazine, and the *New York Times*' architectural critic Ada Louise Huxtable. Support for the Fraunces Tavern museum block was more widely garnered across both civic and financial communities, and included the Sons of the Revolution, David Rockefeller and the Downtown-Lower Manhattan Association, real estate developers Atlas and McGrath, the City Parks Commission, the City Planning Commission, the City Landmarks Commission, the City Board of Estimate, and the Museum of the City of New York. Furthering the protest against Seymour's maritime museum legislation, a letter from one local real estate firm to Governor Nelson Rockefeller suggested if Senator Seymour insisted upon his "romantic museum," proving a complete disregard for the interests of "every knowledgeable, interested and responsible person who lives and works downtown," the museum might alternately be established north of Fulton Street, on less valuable real estate.<sup>341</sup>

Not content to allow his maritime museum to suffer at the hands of fraternal alliance, Seymour composed his own letter to Governor Rockefeller, in which he reiterated the importance of preserving New York City's maritime heritage and reaffirmed the economic benefits that could be reaped from the museum endeavor. "I know your brother is opposed to this legislation," wrote a seemingly defiant Seymour to

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<sup>341</sup> Letter from Sylvan Lawrence Company Inc. (Real Estate) to Gov. Rockefeller. July 19, 1966. Rockefeller Archive Center, Record Group IV 3B 24, D-LMA Projects South Street Seaport 1966. S 2.3, B167, F1594

the Governor, “and he probably recommended to you that you veto it. But I urge you to disregard him, and do the right thing and sign the bill.”<sup>342</sup>

The D-LMA was the sponsor behind the 1966 groundbreaking of the World Trade Center and beyond that massive project, had proposed a series of redevelopment plans for the area. In addition to commercial redevelopment strategies intended to revive the flagging financial center, the D-LMA was a primary supporter of the already in-progress Fraunces Tavern museum block restoration project, located a short walk from the proposed South Street site. David Rockefeller and the D-LMA, while vociferous in arguing for the commercial expansion of lower Manhattan’s valuable real estate market as the ultimate goal of the area’s redevelopment, nevertheless had plans of their own for heritage commemoration at Fraunces Tavern and the integration of a “usable past” in redevelopment of the financial district.<sup>343</sup>

#### FRAUNCES TAVERN

Plans to create a museum block surrounding Fraunces Tavern became public record in late 1963 when James Grote Van Derpool, Executive Director of the City’s Landmarks Preservation Committee, released a “Preliminary Proposal for the Development of the Fraunces Tavern Block as a Historic District” on November 26. The plans called for a total of eight buildings to be restored on their original locations, four buildings to be moved from Whitehall and Front Streets and restored on the museum

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<sup>342</sup> Personal recollection of Whitney Seymour. New York Preservation Archive Project, interview with Whitney North Seymour Jr., by Anthony C. Wood. July 29, 2006.

<sup>343</sup> Randall Mason refers to the search for a “usable past” as a remedy for the culturally disorienting effects of urban modernization during the Progressive Era. “Historic Preservation, Public Memory, and the Making of New York City,” *Giving Preservation a History*, 143

block site, and a reconstruction of the seventeenth century Dutch Stadt Huys. The restored block would house a maritime museum, a financial museum, a merchant's house museum, as well as the renowned Fraunces Tavern.

Rationales for the museum block project included the desire "to assure a worthy memorial to the early trading, shipping, banking, professional and family interests of the city," to "memorialize worthy chapters in the early life of our city," and to "add a warm humanizing element to the region which would commendably enhance the public image of downtown New York and the great business interests it represents."<sup>344</sup> Clearly, this project was a business venture meant to commemorate the city's commercial history, steeped as it was in the shipping and mercantile trades. The project commemorating the history of capitalism and free trade had the backing of David Rockefeller personally – coming from a family well-versed in the philanthropic arts and Colonial Era heritage commemoration - as well as the combined support of the D-LMA.<sup>345</sup> David Rockefeller, feeling the dis-ease associated with the urban crisis and mounting "societal ills," felt a personal and institutional responsibility "to help redress the legitimate social and economic problems that confronted the country."<sup>346</sup> Public commemoration at Fraunces Tavern of the memory and heroism of the nation's founding fathers corresponded nicely with Rockefeller's mandate to engage Chase Manhattan Bank and the downtown financial community in philanthropic and other cultural endeavors. In 1965, the year

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<sup>344</sup> "Preliminary Proposal for the Development of the Fraunces Tavern Block as an Historic District," Nov. 26, 1963, James Grote Van Derpool, Executive Director of the Landmarks Pres Committee of the City of New York. Rockefeller Archive Center, DLMA Projects, Fraunces Tavern 1963-1990. p. 1-2

<sup>345</sup> The reader is asked to recall our earlier examination of the Colonial Era revival in architecture, Chapter One, in which David Rockefeller's father, John D. Rockefeller, Jr., was the premier supporter of the Colonial Williamsburg historic preservation project in the early 1930s.

<sup>346</sup> D. Rockefeller, *Memoirs*, p. 214-215

before Senator Seymour introduced his maritime museum legislation, the City's newly formed Landmarks Preservation Commission granted landmark designation status to Fraunces Tavern, although this designation did not affect the entire museum block project's chance for success. The LPC's authority was still relatively new and meager and could not safeguard any surrounding properties, however the Sons of the Revolution's ownership of the Tavern provided a sense of assurance that its survival, if not that of the entire block, was secure.

While the D-LMA's opposition to Senator Seymour's legislation argued the "real purpose" of Seymour's bill was "to preserve a small group of rundown old buildings on the south side of Fulton Street now used for miscellaneous commercial purposes,"<sup>347</sup> plans for the Fraunces Tavern museum block were presented as a *scholarly project* spearheaded by the Museum of the City of New York's newly formed Downtown Museum, "in order to enrich the public appreciation of the history of the City of New York, of its early government, of its growth as a world center of commerce and finance, and of the character of its streets and buildings."<sup>348</sup> With estimated project costs at \$5,000,000, almost \$37,000,000 by 2015 standards, the project would include the relocation of four historically significant buildings currently residing at Front and Whitehall Streets.<sup>349</sup> So while the D-LMA presented the Fraunces Tavern museum block project as a scholarly endeavor dedicated to enhancing the public good, it derided

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<sup>347</sup> Letter from John B. Goodman, Exec VP at DLMA to Robert R. Douglass, Esq. Counsel to Gov. Rockefeller. July 18, 1966. RAC, Record Group DLMA, Series 2, Sub-series 2.3 Projects South Street Seaport 1966, Box 167 Folder 1594

<sup>348</sup> Capital Projects Analysis, Nov 9, 1966, MCNY. RAC, DLMA Series 2.3 Projects, Landmarks. Record Group IV 3B 24, Box 112, Folder 1207; Nov 1966-Dec 1967

<sup>349</sup> Bureau of Labor Statistics, Consumer Price Index inflation calculation

Seymour's Maritime Museum legislation as detracting from valuable real estate development better suited to the expanding financial community.

A series of early nineteenth century three- and four-story brick structures built in the Federal and Georgian styles had once been the elegant homes of some of the city's prominent merchant families. Located on the site of a proposed new Stock Exchange, these architectural remnants of the city's balmy Age of Sail - now in "crumbling, peeling shambles" - were threatened by the proposed widening of Water Street as part of the Stock Exchange Urban Renewal Plan. Commercial developers Atlas-McGrath owned the buildings in question and had agreed to donate the deteriorated structures and relocate them to the Fraunces Tavern block, once other - less desirable and architecturally significant - buildings currently occupying valuable space on the Fraunces block could be razed. McGrath did not shy away from displaying blatant skepticism over the intended move, telling the *New York Times*, "It's a joke to move that stuff, but some people think they can be preserved. When they're moved, they may fall apart and they may not."<sup>350</sup> A recreated version of the original Dutch Stadt Huys and the four merchant homes would join Fraunces Tavern and five additional properties owned by the Sons of the Revolution in the creation of a seventeenth-to-nineteenth century museum block conglomeration. This potentially dubious reconstruction, undertaken "from available documents," would create an "entire block, including its surrounding sidewalks and street lights [and]

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<sup>350</sup>The *New York Times*, "City Aides Fight For 4 Landmarks," by Edward C. Burks, Nov. 13, 1966 (p. 66)

provide a full scale, authentic and dramatic illustration of two-hundred years of New York history.”<sup>351</sup>

Not everyone felt the historic authenticity of Fraunces Tavern or its proposed museum block was a worthy project. To Ada Louise Huxtable, legendary architecture critic for the *New York Times*, the reconstruction of Fraunces Tavern amounted to “preservation gone wrong.” With her usual candor, Huxtable deplored what she saw as an act of historic fabrication, an increasingly prevalent situation in which reconstruction only served to diminish the value of the original. In one particularly scathing article, Huxtable characterized the ever-increasing propensity to destroy original buildings in favor of rebuilt imposters as “galloping restorationitis...Across the country the genuine heritage of the nineteenth century is still being razed to be replaced by elaborately rebuilt synthetic eighteenth-century stage sets more pleasing to the twentieth-century taste.” The originator of this horrendous disease, this galloping restorationitis, was none other than the Rockefellers’ very own Colonial Williamsburg, which Huxtable classified as a sham of historical merry-making, amounting to nothing more than “historical play-acting in which real and imitation museum treasures and modern copies are carelessly confused in everyone’s mind.”<sup>352</sup>

Citing the Fraunces Tavern museum block project as part of this insufferable malady, Huxtable claimed the museum block would require such a thorough reconstitution of the buildings, that “they will be scarcely distinguishable from Fraunces

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<sup>351</sup> Museum of the City of New York, “Memorandum Re Downtown Museum for Discussion at the Board Meeting on October 18, 1966. Rockefeller Archive Center, Record Group DLMA Projects: Marine Museums 1959-70, Series 2.3, Box 127, Folder 1321, p. 1

<sup>352</sup> Ada Louise Huxtable, “Lively Original U.S. Dead Copy,” *NYT*, May 9, 1965. To note: John D. Rockefeller Jr. was a principal champion and funder of Colonial Williamsburg; it was John D.’s son, David Rockefeller, who now supported the Fraunces Tavern museum block project.



Tavern, which is not an eighteenth-century building at all. The ‘landmark’ was built in 1907 virtually from scratch.” Hammering the final nails into the coffin, Huxtable challenged Fraunces Tavern “is not old, it is not authentic, and under no circumstances is this kind of thing preservation.”<sup>353</sup> A follow-up response in the form of a letter to the editor challenged Huxtable’s dismissal of Fraunces Tavern, claiming many of the Tavern’s original structures were in fact salvaged, and those parts that were rebuilt were “as authentic as research can make them.” Further, the letter argued *the significance of Fraunces Tavern was less in its architecture per se and more directly located in its association with George Washington*. Claiming the last word, Huxtable agreed that the present iteration of Fraunces Tavern might in fact contain some *associative* historical value, although the distinction between a true architectural remnant of history, and a restoration-reconstruction-fabrication, deserved serious consideration.<sup>354</sup>

The Fraunces Tavern Controversy of 1965 exposes a valid argument: while objects, including architectural structures, can serve as symbols of conscious or unconscious value systems and may constitute symbols of power or prestige, and while architectural styles have the ability to suggest societal ideals through their aesthetic design, at what point is an object or building rendered no longer *authentic enough* so as to compromise these very mechanisms at play? Does Fraunces Tavern’s “storehouse of memory”<sup>355</sup> retain its associative value if 80% of the interior and exterior construction has been rebuilt? What happens at 90%? Does the retention of the building’s original

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<sup>353</sup> Ada Louise Huxtable, “Lively Original U.S. Dead Copy,” *NYT*, May 9, 1965

<sup>354</sup> *The New York Times*, “Fraunces Tavern Controversy,” June 6, 1965

<sup>355</sup> Phrase “storehouse of memory” from historian Dolores Hayden, who examines the power of the built environment to hold historical and generational knowledge as “storehouses of memory,” in *The Power of Place; Urban Landscapes as Public History* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1997)

frame and support beams satisfy our totemic desires, or do we require that the original floorboards of the Long Room, upon which General George Washington bade his officers farewell, remain intact in order to absorb that intangible goodness and integrity from the earlier era? If, as philosopher-writer de Botton argues, the power of architecture lies in its ability to *suggest* a moral message or cultural ideal, how might the careful restoration or re-creation of the original structure alter that message?

The Downtown Museum of the City of New York, organized to orchestrate and direct the project, requested the City fund one-fifth of the total project cost *if* \$2,000,000 could be successfully raised from private sources. David Rockefeller had personally contributed \$50,000, about \$350,000 in 2015 dollars and a rather small drop in the bucket in terms of Rockefeller family wealth, in start-up costs. In addition, the DMCNY estimated an annual operating budget for the museum block at \$227,000 and requested the City provide \$127,00 of those annual funds, “based on the formula established for other museums.”<sup>356</sup> At a planning meeting in the Office of the Borough President of Manhattan on July 26, 1966 – one week before Governor Rockefeller would either approve or reject Senator Seymour’s bill for a state maritime museum to be located at South Street - the Fraunces Tavern museum block project received optimistic support from the Borough President of Manhattan, the City Planning Commission, the Landmarks Preservation Commission, Community Planning Board Number One, the Downtown Museum of the City of New York, the Park Department, the Downtown-Lower Manhattan Association, and the Sons of the Revolution.

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<sup>356</sup> Notes on Meeting of Tuesday July 26, 1966, Office of the Borough President of Manhattan on Proposed Downtown Museum of the City of New York. RAC, Record Group DLMA, Projects/Landmarks, Jan – Sept 1966, p. 1-3

Under the terms of its proposal, the Fraunces Tavern museum block would be designated a city park and operated as a museum by the Downtown Museum of the City of New York under the jurisdiction of the Department of Parks for administration and maintenance. The City's Capital Budget for 1967-68, under Mayor John V. Lindsay, included funds for the project and included \$1,350,000 in capital investment tethered to private funding secured from outside sources.<sup>357</sup> Supporters of the Fraunces Tavern project feared Senator Seymour's Maritime Museum plan would deplete fundraising opportunities and be in direct competition with the maritime and other house museums planned at the Fraunces site. MCNY's Chairman, Louis Auchincloss, composed his own letter of opposition to the South Street proposal.

While Seymour's vision for South Street conjured images of the lost days of nineteenth century sail, the Fraunces Tavern project presented an equally ennobling narrative of the patriotic Revolutionary War era. And while the South Street Seaport Museum would focus attention on interpreting the lives of tradesmen, stevedores, laborers, women, and Black Jacks, with Fraunces Tavern's exhibitions interpreting a more traditional historical narrative of the great men who led the young nation to independence, both visions ascribed to lower Manhattan a narrative steeped in personal and collective heroism. This narrative particularly alluring during a time when the nation's identity was challenged from abroad during a political and cultural race to win the Cold War, and challenged domestically amidst the growing dissent of the Civil Rights movement, anti-war protest, and counterculture challenges to the Establishment and status quo. What the Friends of the Seaport saw in their vision along the East River

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<sup>357</sup> "Memorandum Re Downtown Museum for Discussion at the Board Meeting on October 18, 1966. p. 4-5

seaport, Fraunces Tavern supporters conveyed through their own preservation project: each project located heroic memories in the physical landscape of the city as a means to foster civic identity and pride in a national heritage.

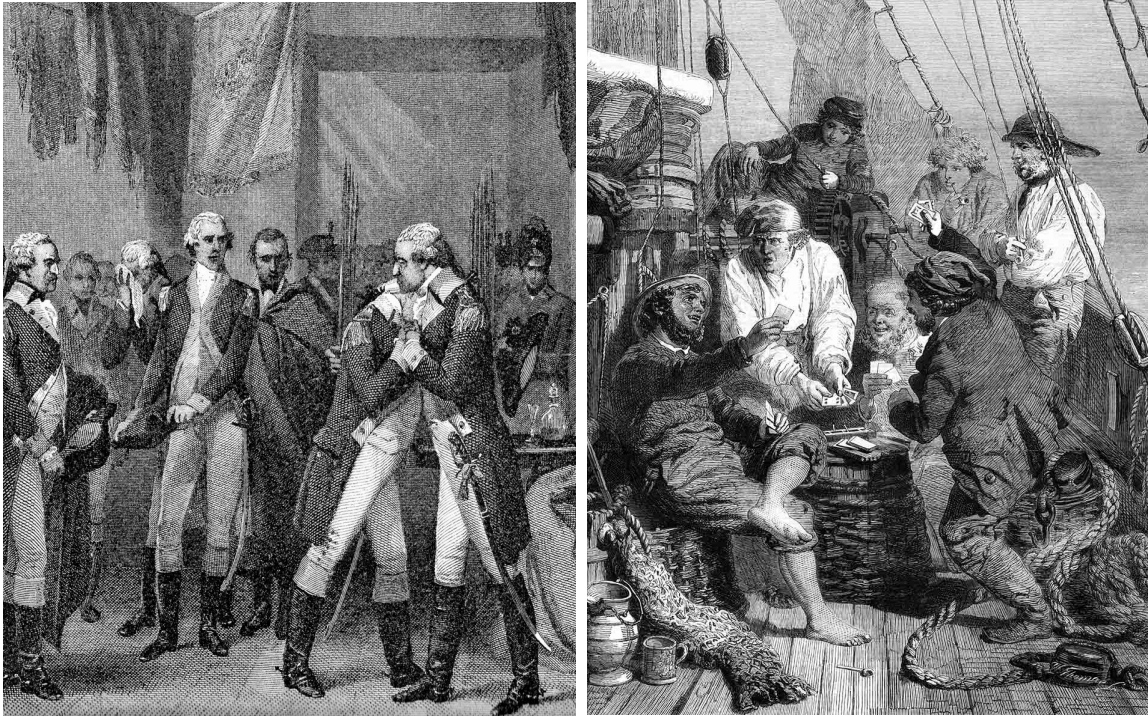
The D-LMA's primary objection to the Seymour legislation concerned the loss of commercial real estate and future tax revenues to the City with a nonprofit organization occupying valuable downtown property.<sup>358</sup> The organization was also concerned that the creation of a historic museum at South Street would prove redundant to its own plans to move forward on the Fraunces Tavern block and create competition among private funding sources.<sup>359</sup> Despite this opposition, Governor Nelson Rockefeller, steeped in a tradition of Rockefeller family philanthropy, approved the New York State Maritime Museum legislation on August 2, 1966 *after* Senator Seymour, rattled that the growing opposition to his legislation might result in its gubernatorial rejection, removed all wording for the appropriation of any public funds towards the maritime project.

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<sup>358</sup> "The Schermerhorn block would be in the area of the proposed east side hotel which was mentioned in the *New York Times* on Monday...A museum on valuable land, such as this, does not appear to be compatible with our plans for the best future development of lower Manhattan...Possibly we should be prepared to oppose this at whatever is the next step, either at the City or State level." Letter from John B. Goodman, Executive Vice President, DLMA to Mr. Morgan D. Wheelock, President, Braislin, Porter & Wheelock. June 7, 1966. See also "City would benefit greatly from additional real estate and business taxes that commercial structure could produce." Western Union Telegram from Edmund F. Wagner, President of DLMA to Gov. Nelson A. Rockefeller. June 10, 1966. Rockefeller Archive Center, Record Group IV 3B 24, DLMA Projects South Street Seaport 1966. S 2.3, B167, F1594

<sup>359</sup> Letter from John B. Goodman, Exec Vice President of D-LMA to Robert R. Douglass, Esq., Counselor to the Governor, July 18, 1966. Rockefeller Archive Center, Record Group IV 3B 24, D-LMA 2.3 Projects South Street Seaport 1966. S 2.3, B167, F1594. Also see D-LMA memo in which Warren Lindquist "expressed the firm view that further consideration of the Maritime Museum Project in the area of South Street and the vicinity of Fulton Street would seriously prejudice the prospects of the Fraunces Tavern redevelopment." Per memo from Crawford Wheeler to David Rockefeller, Warren Lindquist, John Goodman. June 16, 1966. Finally, see letter from MCNY Chairman Louis Auchincloss to Gov. Rockefeller, asking the Governor that if he should sign the Maritime legislation, "that you would initiate steps to coordinate the development of the South Street Museum with the Downtown Museum [Fraunces] so that the fund-raising would be non-competitive and indeed, coordinated in such fashion that the State funds could be matched against contributions to the two projects jointly." June 24, 1966. DLMA Series 2.3 Projects, Landmarks, 1965-1981. Record Group IV 3B 24, Box 112, Folder 1206; Jan-Sept 1966

Victory for Seymour's Maritime Museum legislation prompted the Friends of the Seaport to organize and focus on fundraising for ship restoration and real estate acquisition at South Street. Friends of the Seaport constituted an energetic grassroots movement, an entirely separate entity from the newly appointed Maritime Museum, although conceived with a shared purpose of maritime commemoration along the East River waterfront. Three months later on November 29, 1966, the Manhattan Community Planning Board Number One voted in favor of the Fraunces Tavern museum block project. With the City's pledge to allocate funds— funding the South Street project was *not* entitled to - and inspiration drawn from the “authentic and scholarly” restoration of Colonial Williamsburg as its guide, plans for the restoration of the Fraunces Tavern museum block forged ahead alongside development plans at the South Street Seaport. From the start, these competing plans for commemoration of the Age of Sail atop the pricey values of lower Manhattan real estate begged the question: how much heroic national identity and character can one city privilege over the riches of real estate development?



Competing visions of heroism. The first image is located in 1783, the second in 1861; both long removed from 1967 and commemorative projects at Fraunces Tavern and South Street, and both emanating from cultural landscapes themselves marked by strife and war. At the same time, both images represented, to supporters of the Fraunces Tavern museum block and the South Street Seaport Museum, a time steeped in ideals of personal and collective heroism.

“George Washington bids farewell to his trusted and dedicated officers at Fraunces Tavern,” Fraunces Tavern Museum (Left); J. Morgan, “The Storm At Sea,” originally published in *Illustrated London News*, Nov. 23, 1861 (Right)

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## GETTING BACK TO FUNDAMENTALS

In 1966, nautical aficionado Peter Stanford was writing ads for Beefeater Gin at the Madison Avenue agency of Hicks & Greist. His father was a trustee of the Mystic Seaport in Connecticut and had been commodore of the Cruising Club of America; *TIME* magazine had described the young Stanford as “a seadog before the age of two.”<sup>360</sup>

<sup>360</sup> “Tactically Logical Cruiser,” *TIME* magazine, Jan. 11, 1943, p. 52

Stomping around many of the same haunts frequented by Joe Mitchell at the old Fulton Fish Market, Stanford and his wife Norma had a personal affection for the seafaring life and its vanishing imprint on the urban landscape. Stanford, who characterized himself as “a conservative, rational, and outraged American,” nevertheless held fast to romantic ideals for a better future, a hearty appreciation for the democratic values of ancient Greek civilization, believed in the social reform legacy of the Progressive Era, and “questioned much of Progress- its mindless race forward.”<sup>361</sup> Conservative and idealist at once; much like the historic preservation movement itself.

In 1961, urban journalist and Greenwich Village resident Jane Jacobs published *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, a work widely regarded as spearheading the post-Modernist transformation in urban planning.<sup>362</sup> In a voice echoing Jacobs, Stanford recalls the cobbled streets and sloped-roof buildings around the aging seaport embodied a much needed and “more humane” scale than was evident in the rapidly multiplying barren plazas and stark skyscrapers of lower Manhattan. When a fellow nautical-buff alerted Stanford to Senator Seymour’s maritime museum legislation very recently passed into law by Governor Rockefeller, Peter and Norma arranged a meeting with the Senator at his downtown office. Seymour explained to the Stanfords the extent of the new legislation, which included the creation of the New York State Maritime Museum, allowed the state to acquire the buildings along Schermerhorn Row but did not

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<sup>361</sup> James M. Lindgren, *Preserving South Street; The Dream and Reality of a New York Urban Renewal District* (New York: NYU Press, 2014), 5

<sup>362</sup> “Post-Modernist” is not to be confused with the ubiquitous “postmodern” or “postmodernism.” “Post-Modernist” connotes the transformation across the 1960s and ‘70s away from the midcentury fascination with Modernist architecture and modern urban planning a la Le Corbusier’s *Radiant City*, towards an ideology of New Urbanism and smaller-scale urban planning and does not suggest the larger, complicated web known as “postmodernism.”

provide any funding for their acquisition or rehabilitation, and authorized a governing board which would seek funding to purchase the site and undertake all necessary renovations.<sup>363</sup>

Following this meeting, the Stanfords immediately organized the Friends of the Seaport, a separate grassroots organization created to support the development of Seymour's Maritime Museum and to expand the vision at South Street. It is important to note, this grassroots up-start was not directly tied to Seymour's Maritime Museum; the organizations would have separate missions and operating structures and the New York State Maritime Museum only ever really existed on paper. Within a handful of years, what remained of the State Maritime Museum's rather impotent board would be absorbed by the South Street Seaport, when a final bond measure to ensure its continued support failed to pass.<sup>364</sup> The primary purpose of the Friends of the Seaport was to tell the vernacular history of South Street in its hey-day, restore the vanished image of wind ships to the lower East River waterfront, and preserve the Federalist style buildings that lined the streets.<sup>365</sup> According to Stanford's vision for the Seaport, this historic district would encompass a working community of tradesmen, shops, and ship restoration activities, each contributing to the ambience of the seaport's cultural landscape and revitalizing the city's maritime heritage.

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<sup>363</sup> Stanford, *A Dream of Tall Ships*, 23-25

<sup>364</sup> Stanford would later describe the New York State Maritime Museum as "just another musty little museum in a corner." Peter Stanford, "We Could Do No Less than Respond with Loyalty," *Sea History* (Summer 1981), 7; Lindgren, 139 -141

<sup>365</sup> Peter Stanford, "One Man's View of the Emergence of New York's New Sea Museum," *Curator* Vol. 13, Iss. 4 (Oct. 1970), 271



The Friends' response to the proliferation of cement and steel superstructures transforming the landscape of Manhattan took a hearty cue from urbanist Jane Jacobs' sidewalk ballet and urban critic Lewis Mumford's writings on the city as a social construct. In this regard, and like Progressive Era preservationists before them, Seaport boosters harbored a belief that preservation of the physical and cultural landscape would foster a climate of civic engagement during an era of cultural dislocation, and also envisioned ways in which preservation might be integrated into the larger project of urban planning. Stanford equated the South Street Seaport with a modern Greek agora, a civic meeting space in which urban dwellers would gather in democratic discourse, where "our museum would remind people of this inspired and revived concept [the agora] and it might indeed serve as a seedbed for a revival of a more caring spirit."<sup>366</sup> Stanford and the Friends of the Seaport believed a community of maritime-related shops, museums, cafes, and working tradesmen would provide an economic benefit to the city. They envisioned a new urban future in which South Street would become an economic as well as aesthetic asset to the city, predicting, "real commerce and small shops and craft activities should do much to maintain colonial maritime life in [a contemporary context]."<sup>367</sup>

In addition to the physical preservation of Schermerhorn Row, Stanford was concerned with creating a viable economic asset similar to the economic successes realized by San Francisco's Ghirardelli Square revitalization project.<sup>368</sup> Following the

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<sup>366</sup> Stanford, *A Dream of Tall Ships*, 318

<sup>367</sup> Ibid, 19

<sup>368</sup> *South Street Seaport Museum; A proposal to recreate the historic 'Street of Ships' as a major recreational and cultural resource in the heart of New York City*, July 1967. In the proposal, Seaport founders cite the maritime restoration successes in San Francisco, in which "over \$20 million of private capital development went into the rehabilitation of the waterfront that followed the establishment of the

suggestion of City Commissioner of Marine and Aviation Herb Halberg, who advised Stanford, “get the Rockefellers on your side,”<sup>369</sup> Stanford composed a letter to Warren Lindquist at Chase Manhattan Bank, in which he requested the D-LMA’s (*read*: David Rockefeller’s) support of the Seaport plan. In this, Stanford argued for South Street’s role in the larger project of the financial district’s redevelopment, remarking “[The Seaport plan] does not subtract one inch of commercially valuable land for lower Manhattan. It simply enriches open space set aside in the Lower Manhattan Plan.”<sup>370</sup>

New York City however was not Mystic, Connecticut, or San Francisco’s Ghirardelli Square, two maritime preservation projects Stanford knew well.<sup>371</sup> The demands and challenges of one of the world’s largest cities presented financial realities unequalled in the seaport restoration communities Stanford loved. The vision for this seaport district would have to confront the unique demands created by the economic and political climate of mid-1960s Gotham, where lower Manhattan real estate was valued among the world’s priciest and the financial district was regarded as the Capital of Capitalism.

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museum and state historic park...visited by some 3 million tourists annually,” 9, 18. Rockefeller Archive Center, Record Group IV 3B 24, Series 2 D-LMA, Sub-series 2.3 Projects, South Street Seaport, 1969-1972. Box 167, folder 1595

<sup>369</sup> Stanford, *A Dream of Tall Ships*, 84

<sup>370</sup> Letter from Peter Stanford to Warren Lindquist, Chase Manhattan Bank, Aug. 25, 1967. Rockefeller Archive Center, Record Group IV 3B 24, Series 2 D-LMA, Sub-series 2.3 Projects, South Street Seaport, 1969-1972. Box 167, folder 1595

<sup>371</sup> Mystic Seaport is an invented 17-acre living history maritime museum on the coast of Connecticut. It was established in 1929 as a maritime historical association and served as a gauge as Stanford developed his own vision for the South Street Seaport Museum. Stanford sought greater authenticity at South Street. Mystic Seaport is indeed well-presented, and widely regarded as an expensive, family-friendly tourist destination, although critics often deride its artificial reconstruction.

“ONE YEARNS TO REARRANGE THE HODGE-PODGE AND PUT THINGS WHERE THEY BELONG”

The Friends of the Seaport needed the support of lower Manhattan’s financial community in order to gain favor with the City Planning Commission and the Board of Estimate and secure stewardship rights to the highly valuable real estate just east of the city’s financial district. This meant obtaining the support of David Rockefeller, the financier personally concerned with addressing the larger societal ills associated with the urban crisis and presently backing the Fraunces Tavern museum block project. Social consciousness aside, economic vitality in lower Manhattan was a priority for Rockefeller and the D-LMA, which had been actively working on a series of redevelopment plans for the expansion and support of the financial district for well over a decade. The expansion of lower Manhattan’s financial district was a serious obstacle confronting commemorative plans at South Street. In order to manifest the myriad aspirations for this commemorative landscape, in order for the revitalization of values and heroes and memories to see the light of day, the incessant needs of Manhattan real estate development demanded attention.

To understand the ideologies fueling mid-century urban renewal and the D-LMA’s vision for commercial revitalization in the 1960s, we have to look back to the early decades of the twentieth century, when emerging visions in urban planning characterized lower Manhattan, as well as downtown districts across the country, as a chaotic hodge-podge in need of systematic reorganization and “morally uplifting” architecture.<sup>372</sup> Historian Eric Darton explores the trajectory of modern urban planning, which has been heavily influenced by the prevailing vision of early twentieth century

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<sup>372</sup> Eric Darton, *Divided We Stand: A Biography of New York City’s World Trade Center* (New York: Basic Books, 2001), 28

urban theorists who demanded “the chaotic agglomeration of old structures... be demolished wholesale and the city rebuilt according to a vast, centralized plan.”<sup>373</sup> In the wake of the Progressive Era’s City Beautiful movement, which called for large, centralized architecture and the orderly configuration of urban space, The Regional Plan Association, through its *Plan for New York and its Environs*, recommended strategies for the recentralization of financial and commercial industries as well as the optimization of zoning and land use through more efficient and rational use of space.

In 1922, the Regional Plan Association was formed in New York City with the objective to create a comprehensive survey of the region. From 1927-1931, the RPA proposed several public works projects and land use strategies, including new highway patterns, bridges and tunnels, and skyscrapers with expansive street-level plazas in order to open up congested city streets. The RPA’s position was that misuse of land was the root of all the city’s problems, including the belief that the wrong sorts of buildings for the wrong sorts of purposes were occupying prime real estate in the city. The presence of industrial factories and tenement housing in the middle of prime real estate offended the sensibilities of the RPA, which argued, “Such a situation outrages one’s sense of order. Everything seems misplaced. One yearns to re-arrange the hodge-podge and put things where they belong.”<sup>374</sup>

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<sup>373</sup> Darton, 28

<sup>374</sup> Darton, 29-30. According to the RPA report, “Some of the poorest people live in conveniently located slums on high-priced land...A stone’s throw from the stock exchange, the air is filled with the aroma of roasting coffee...In the very heart of the ‘commercial’ city on Manhattan Island south of 59<sup>th</sup> Street, the inspectors in 1922 found nearly 420,000 workers, employed in factories. *Such a situation outrages one’s sense of order. Everything seems misplaced. One yearns to re-arrange the hodge-podge and put things where they belong.*” (my italics). The fact that the RPA found the aroma of roasting coffee an insult to the potential of the financial district is, in this age of Starbucks and the \$5 cup of coffee, ironic and amusing.

The modernization and rationalization of New York City's physical landscape during the 1930s and 40s followed RPA guidelines for commercial development and infrastructure improvements such as highways, bridges and tunnels. A major turning point in land use development came in 1949, with Title 1 of the American Housing Act. This "federal bulldozer" legislation authorized federally subsidized clearance of undesirable, underutilized, and undervalued land.<sup>375</sup> Robert Moses, the most infamous of urban renewal icons, "intended to use the powers of eminent domain, slum clearance, modern architecture, and rational city planning to sweep away the built environment of the nineteenth century and replace it with a new cityscape."<sup>376</sup>

Underscoring the political as well as economic motivations behind mid-century urban renewal, Historian Samuel Zipp reveals the political ideology behind the city's makeover during the cold war years. City Construction Coordinator Robert Moses and his supporters were interested not only in developing commercially profitable properties, but also "in clearing away this older urban world, they...hoped to give Manhattan a cityscape to match its growing global status and its emerging role as a symbol of American power in the Cold War. These paired concerns motivated a series of projects in the early 1950s all across the city."<sup>377</sup> Nineteenth century quaintness, however nostalgic or sentimental, had no functional place in the modern economy of the city.

Lower Manhattan's mid-century financial troubles date back to the Great Depression. The area experienced its first wave of skyscraper construction in the early

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<sup>375</sup> Darton, 65

<sup>376</sup> Samuel Zipp, *Manhattan Projects: The Rise and Fall of Urban Renewal in Cold War New York* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 5

<sup>377</sup> Zipp, *Manhattan Projects*, 162

twentieth century,<sup>378</sup> but the collapse of the nation's economy in 1929 left the financial district stagnant for the next two decades. By the end of World War II, over 80% of the buildings in lower Manhattan had been constructed prior to 1920, most neither fireproof nor modernized. As the district was littered with industrial manufacturing lots, produce and food markets, and fringe tenement housing, many banking and other financial institutions fled for more modern accommodations in Midtown, where construction and redevelopment had already gained momentum. As banks, law firms, and financial institutions moved uptown, an aggressive plan for lower Manhattan's redevelopment was seen as a critical factor in saving the district from further blight. When David Rockefeller announced plans in 1955 to build Chase Manhattan Bank's new headquarters near the Battery, a strategy for the future of lower Manhattan materialized.<sup>379</sup> In addition to its own superblock construction, Chase funded several other new downtown projects in accordance with the D-LMA's recommendations set forth in its 1958 report, the Lower Manhattan Recommended Land Use plan.

The 1958 plan, which would be known as the First Report in a series of four over the next fifteen years, presented an analysis of land use, traffic patterns and suggested physical improvements to the area. The D-LMA's series of reports did not suggest what form new development would take, rather the plans recommended optimum use of land

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<sup>378</sup> In her introduction to the reprint of *The Lower Manhattan Plan of 1966*, Ann Bittenweiser notes that roughly 25% of all buildings in the Wall and Broad Street areas had been razed and rebuilt during the 1920's, and that, curiously, "No remorse was expressed, however, for the loss of landmarks of the city's early skyscraper history." The reaction to the urban renewal schemes of the 1960's, then, must be viewed in the context of broader factors which characterize that era.

<sup>379</sup> Regarding Chase's decision to take the lead and build its headquarters downtown: "The financial community in lower Manhattan was unhappy with the crowded streets, poor public services, and antiquated buildings, and many had already taken steps to leave the area. Midtown Manhattan was the preferred destination for most... My personal view as that it was vital to keep the financial district intact in the Wall Street area and that Chase had to take the lead in the process." David Rockefeller, *Memoirs* (New York: Random House, 2003), 160

and resources. The physical design of downtown's makeover was left for future consideration. Critical to the report's recommendations was its assessment that areas surrounding the financial core of lower Manhattan were in a state of decay and deterioration, occupying valuable land that would be better served by direct support of the financial industry. The area just south of the Brooklyn Bridge, where the future South Street Seaport might emerge, was slated for middle-income residential development, intended to house financial sector employees as a "walk to work" locale.<sup>380</sup> Mayor Wagner and the City Board of Estimate quickly endorsed the plan, hailing it as much needed and long overdue. The D-LMA's Second Report, presented in 1963, reaffirmed its earlier recommendations for land use, adding that blight along the East River waterfront, from the Brooklyn Bridge to Battery Park, should be converted to a pedestrian esplanade.<sup>381</sup> This recommendation for recreational waterfront usage was not entirely dissimilar to Stanford's vision for a walk onto the piers amidst the open sky and waterfront.

The D-LMA's recommendations for land use and commercial development were given physical shape and form with the Lower Manhattan Plan of 1966. While four decades of regional planning and commercial construction had altered the landscape of lower Manhattan, many of the D-LMA's recommendations to expand the financial district and increase residential housing had yet to be realized. Proposed as a comprehensive redevelopment scheme that would support the growth of the financial

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<sup>380</sup> Downtown-Lower Manhattan Association, *Lower Manhattan Recommended Land Use*. 1<sup>st</sup> Report. DLMA First Report. S 2.3, B197, F1807. Record Group IV 3B 24; Box 197. DLMA Series 2

<sup>381</sup> Downtown-Lower Manhattan Association, *Major Improvements Land Use Transportation Traffic*. 2<sup>nd</sup> Report. November, 1963. DLMA 2<sup>nd</sup> Report, S2.4, B198, F1810. Record Group IV 3B 24, Box 198, DLMA Series 2.4 Bulletins & Publications

district with multiple residential complexes, pedestrian-only thoroughfares, altered traffic patterns and a recreational waterfront, this dynamic new vision, The Lower Manhattan Plan, was presented to the New York City Planning Commission. While Seymour's Maritime Museum and Stanford's Seaport district were in their fledgling stages, the financial community of lower Manhattan was eagerly awaiting the City's approval of the most expansive redevelopment plan to date.

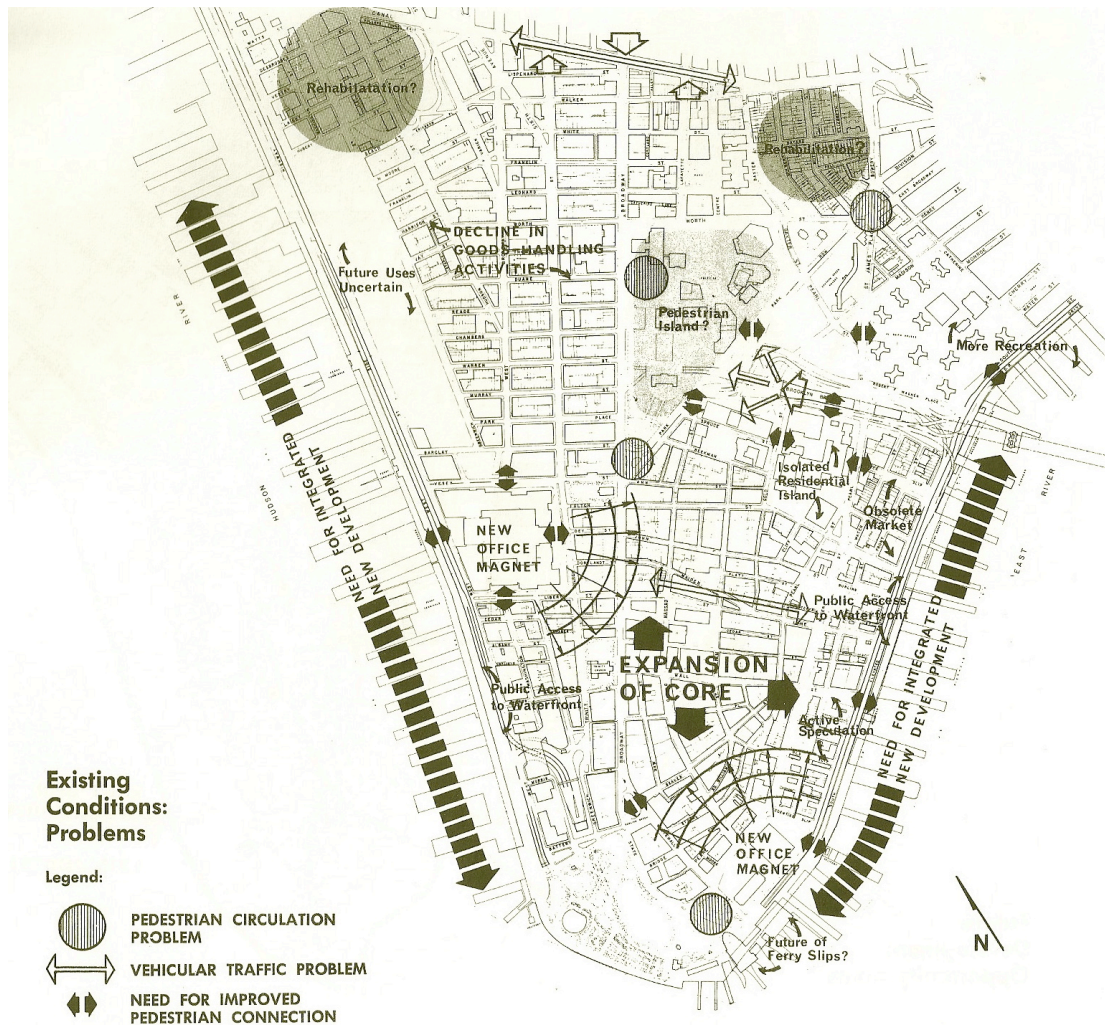
Echoing the earlier 1958 plan presented by the D-LMA, The Lower Manhattan Plan remarked on downtown's inability to compete with midtown's "rich diversity of facilities." Although the decade had seen a marked increase in office space downtown, employment in the area actually declined from approximately 400,000 in 1960 to 375,000 in 1965. This trend was startling, in light of the increase in office space that resulted from the creation of Chase Plaza and other modern skyscrapers that had been erected since 1960. By 1966, plans for the construction of the World Trade Center were well underway, in which an additional 7.6 million square feet of office space would soon become available. Dilapidated piers, elevated expressways cutting the city off from its rivers, inadequate parking, and poor use of space were unsightly detractors from the area's financial core. The plan proposed expansion of this business core in order to create a "strong physical impact on the area" and attract new businesses to occupy the World Trade Center as well as the current surplus of office space downtown. Critical to the Plan was the proposed creation of a desirable upscale housing market. Six waterfront residential clusters - to house 80,000 to 100,000 people - were designed, situated along waterfront plazas and connected by an esplanade.



Fulton Street was earmarked as the northernmost residential cluster along the East River, just south of the Brooklyn Bridge - the site of the proposed South Street Seaport Museum. All but two buildings in the proposed South Street Seaport district, which would receive its charter within months of the Lower Manhattan Plan's release, were designated in the plan as expendable, "Built prior to 1915, not fireproof, not modernized. These factors are considered as militating against its performance." None of the buildings in the proposed Seaport district was tagged for either short-term or long-term life expectancy. The plan suggested razing of the entire district so that a residential cluster to house approximately 10,000 new residents could be built.<sup>382</sup>

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<sup>382</sup> Carol Willis, ed., *The Lower Manhattan Plan: The 1966 Vision for Downtown New York* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2002), 25-27



From *The Lower Manhattan Plan of 1966*, “Existing Conditions: Problems.” This diagram illustrates suggested land use and expansion plans in the area surrounding the financial district. The South Street district is shown at the middle right, in the area marked “Obsolete Market.”<sup>383</sup> Copyright permission courtesy ©New York City Planning Commission. All rights reserved.

A careful reading of the report reveals that these urban planners were not averse to the *idea* of the area’s maritime heritage, once the old Fulton Fish Market moved to Hunts Point in the Bronx and cleared way for the new residential development. Despite its emphasis on commercial development and economic revitalization, local heritage and

<sup>383</sup> City Planning Commission, *The Lower Manhattan Plan of 1966*

civic memory were incorporated into the Lower Manhattan Plan's vision for a new urban landscape. Waterfront access and recreational usage, along with a revitalized maritime-inspired district displaying "drying nets and other maritime paraphernalia, and seafood sold from permanently-anchored fishing boats" would offer a distinct reference to the memory of the old seaport's role in lower Manhattan.<sup>384</sup> The plan proposed that the new residential cluster at Fulton Street might retain some links to the area's seafaring past through oyster bar cafes and "oysters sold from boats." While the plan called for removal of the seaport's outdated structures, its designers recognized the benefits of incorporating the old seaport's special character and sense of place into the new construction.<sup>385</sup>

The Lower Manhattan Plan's philosophy on land-use echoes earlier reports by the RPA, with its proposals for altered traffic patterns, the designation of specific "functional areas," and waterfront redevelopment. The City Planning Commission hailed the plan as "a bold guideline for the downtown renaissance;" planners and architects praised the plan as raising the bar on the aesthetics and functionality of urban redevelopment.<sup>386</sup> The plan had the support from key stakeholders in City government from its outset; the impact felt by the economic slump in lower Manhattan cannot be overstated. With declining employment statistics, a surplus of unoccupied office space and increasing competition with Midtown for commercial investment, lower Manhattan was seeking salvation. The area required a physical overhaul in order to attract new investors and increase the financial district's impact not only on New York City, but on the entire country. Warren

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<sup>384</sup> Willis, *The Lower Manhattan Plan*, 85

<sup>385</sup> Ibid, 75

<sup>386</sup> Huxtable, "City Gets Sweeping Plan for Rejuvenating Lower Manhattan," *The New York Times*, June 22, 1966

Lindquist, David Rockefeller's aide and fellow D-LMA member, stated what members of the financial community most certainly felt – that lower Manhattan was “the heart pump of the capital blood that sustains the free world.” Further, Lindquist felt it was the responsibility of the D-LMA to ensure that the financial community of lower Manhattan remain active in “the expanding commerce of the city – excuse me – of the country, and of the world.”<sup>387</sup> The Lower Manhattan Plan was meant to reposition the city's financial district as the epicenter of capitalism and promote a new vision of modernity in urban planning. Less awe-inspiring but by no means incidental, city officials foresaw job creation and increased investment as much-needed boons to the local economy.

#### HISTORIC PRESERVATION and MEMORY

The process of historic preservation is intimately tied to memory. However the influence of collective memory on urban development, while experiencing a resurgence during the 1960s, was not new to urban discourse at this time. The debate surrounding historic preservation and its implications on property rights can be traced to the pre-Civil War era, when America was very much preoccupied with nation building, westward expansion and manifest destiny. Historian M. Christine Boyer examines the nation's fundamental tendency to emphasize progress over preservation, and argues, “Anything that inhibited the free exchange of private property, its acquisition, enhancement, and subsequent resale at market value would as well hinder the country's development. In

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<sup>387</sup> John H. Mollenkopf, ed. *Power, Culture and Place: Essays on New York City* (USA: Russell Sage Foundation Publications, 1988), 175

consequence, there was little public interest in protecting historic properties from demolition: whatever stood in the path of progress could simply be wiped away.”<sup>388</sup>

The conflict and contention wrought by the Civil War caused many Americans during that time to look nostalgically to the past, to a mythical simpler time of the colonial period. During the mid-nineteenth century, upheavals associated with Civil War, industrialization, commercialization, immigration and urbanization, “there arose a nostalgic cry for all things colonial.”<sup>389</sup> Growing anxieties created by the restructuring of society manifested in a sentimental yearning for a collective memory that was itself a myth; an idealized conception of the past born from present-day anxieties about the changing political, economic and social landscape emerged. Early twentieth century Progressive Era reformists felt this yearning as well, as increased industrialization, immigration and the new social problems associated with an increasingly urbanized American society prompted a desire to incorporate vestiges of the physical past in the city’s modern push forward.<sup>390</sup>

Fast-forward to New York City, circa 1960, which experienced new anxieties fueled by urban renewal’s swift and sweeping changes to the physical landscape, cold war fears and the transition to a postindustrial economy. Upheavals - quite literally, city blocks were demolished, turned over, and created anew - and the fear of an uncertain future created an environment in which feelings of nostalgia and the desire to preserve if not re-create memories of the past were intensified. In the midst of urban renewal’s utter

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<sup>388</sup> Boyer, 386

<sup>389</sup> Boyer, 387

<sup>390</sup> For a detailed examination of Progressive Era preservation battles in New York City, see Max Page and Randall Mason, *Giving Preservation a History* (2004); and R. Mason, *The Once and Future New York; Historic Preservation and the Modern City* (2009)

chaos, the historic preservation movement functioned as a remedy to the swift pace of modernity and an appreciation for the smaller-scale of the nineteenth century cityscape.

Nostalgia, however, is not the sole motivating factor behind historic preservation. Historic sites serve as narratives of the toil on which early industry was founded. These exhibits and sites honor the enterprise and physical labor of men and women who quite literally laid the foundation for the industrializing nation. Collective memory is critical to the creation of community identity and solidarity and historian Diane Barthel contends, “preservation can help respond to this collective need, enabling people to view themselves not simply as individuals.”<sup>391</sup>

Peter Stanford’s early writings on the South Street Seaport Museum, in which he outlined his plans for the function and future of the museum district, evoke these same psychological and sociological implications of historic preservation. According to Stanford’s vision, the Museum would encompass a working community of tradesmen, shops, and ship restoration activities, each contributing to the maritime ambience of the seaport’s nineteenth century past. Stanford indicated the impact this new historic district might have on the city’s collective memory, pledging “The ships are gone, but they have left us proud memories, and if you come to walk down South Street today, turn in at Schermerhorn Row on Fulton Street, there you will find the offices of the South Street Seaport Museum where the story of the ships and the men who sailed them is being retold.”<sup>392</sup> Stanford’s determination to interpret the lives of ordinary men and women of the Age of Sail signaled a shift away from the traditional canon of the history of Great

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<sup>391</sup> Diane Barthel, *Historic Preservation: Collective Memory and Historical Identity* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1996), 154

<sup>392</sup> Peter Stanford, *A Walk through South Street in the Afternoon of Sail* (New York: South Street Seaport Museum, 1967), inside back cover

Men – the history portrayed in McKay’s study on South Street, for example, and the history interpreted in the Long Room at Fraunces Tavern – towards an appreciation for the vernacular history of ordinary folk who toiled and labored in a place that “was a seaport before it was a town.”<sup>393</sup>

The community of citizens and organizations concerned with the expanding disaster zone that had transformed lower Manhattan had several key supporters, including the Landmarks Preservation Commission and the Municipal Art Society. In 1965, Mayor Wagner established the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission and signed the city’s first Landmarks Preservation Act.<sup>394</sup> Several local organizations were in opposition to the LPA, including the Real Estate Board of New York, the Commerce and Industry Association of New York, and the Downtown-Lower Manhattan Association. A spokesman for the D-LMA had requested the Mayor reject the bill, citing that it was “complex, ambiguous in many respects and will certainly be difficult for a property owner to understand.”<sup>395</sup> Under the new law, a landmark was defined as a structure at least thirty years old, with historical and/or architectural significance to the city. The power of the commission was less in its ability to prevent an owner from demolishing his landmark property if he was intent on doing so, but rather to delay him, whereby an agreement could be reached for rehabilitation or renovation.<sup>396</sup> Many owners were far from pleased with the landmark status that was bestowed upon their properties and cited

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<sup>393</sup> Peter Stanford, “One Man’s View of the Emergence of New York’s New Sea Museum,” *Curator; a quarterly publication of the American Museum of Natural History*, Vol 13 Iss 4 (October 1970), 281

<sup>394</sup> By the time NYC had adopted its landmarks preservation law in 1965, it was approximately the 70<sup>th</sup> U.S. city to do so. Sherwin D. Smith, “The Great Landmark Fight,” *New York Times*, Mar 27, 1966

<sup>395</sup> Thomas Ennis, “Landmark Bill Signed by Mayor,” *The New York Times*, Apr 20, 1965

<sup>396</sup> Smith, “The Great Landmarks Fight,” *New York Times*, Mar 27, 1966

infringement of personal property rights as well as the inability to make the most optimal use of these properties. To this, however, Municipal Art Society member Arthur C. Holden replied, “To say they can do nothing unless they destroy a building is a palpable confession of impotence and intellectual bankruptcy.”<sup>397</sup>

The Municipal Art Society, a local preservationist group formed in 1892, appealed to the Landmarks Preservation Commission in calling for historic landmark designation of the Schermerhorn Row buildings on Fulton Street.<sup>398</sup> An active voice in preservation efforts long before the Commission was created to address these issues, the Art Society had cautioned the city and its citizens to keep “a watchful eye on any changes that would effect the esthetic (*sic*) possessions of New York, and, when necessary, our voices should be heard in combating any such attempts to destroy the cherished remembrances of the past.”<sup>399</sup> Several members of the Municipal Art Society, including Ada Louise Huxtable, were resolute about the necessity for adaptive re-use of the city’s many historic structures. These supporters encouraged architects to look at new ways to utilize city landmarks, including the old Merchant’s House and the Astor Library, because “you can’t make a museum out of every landmark.”<sup>400</sup> Landmark designation alone was not enough to save a structure from demolition or obsolescence; in order to keep these buildings viable and integrated within the fabric of the modern city,

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<sup>397</sup> Smith, “The Great Landmarks Fight,” *New York Times*, Mar 27, 1966

<sup>398</sup> Sloppy Louie’s restaurant remained in its location at the corner of South Street and Schermerhorn Row until it closed in 1998.

<sup>399</sup> Francis Keally, Past President of Municipal Art Society of New York, *Letters to the Times*: “Saving City’s Landmarks,” *New York Times*, Oct. 4, 1961. Note: Senator Seymour had briefly held the office of President of the MAS in 1965 before he resigned that post to run for the State Senate seat to which he was ultimately elected.

<sup>400</sup> Mark Hawthorne, “New Roles Urged for Landmarks,” *New York Times*, June 20, 1965



contemporary use and economic feasibility must be prime considerations. Stanford and Friends' plans for a multi-use commercial and residential mélange at the Seaport - in addition to the proposed Maritime Museum and ship restoration activities - envisioned the adaptive reuse of Schermerhorn Row and the surrounding buildings.

A feasibility study conducted by the New York State Historical Commission provided validation for the Seaport project, outside of its architectural merits as some of the finest remaining Federalist-style structures in the city. Arguing "adaptive usage of Schermerhorn Row is not only a feasible but also a most effective solution" to the question of land use in the district, the Commission cited recent preservation ventures in the redevelopment of Georgetown, District of Columbia and Newburyport, Massachusetts.<sup>401</sup> The report invoked Walt Whitman's reference to New York as the *City of Ships*, in this way recalling the glory of the city's maritime history and recommending that collective memory and local heritage play "one small part" in the redevelopment of one of the world's greatest cities. Most importantly, the report insisted Schermerhorn Row represented a "visible symbol of memory," critical in maintaining the public's sense of local and national heritage.<sup>402</sup>

As architecture critic for the *New York Times*, Pulitzer Prize-winning Huxtable provided readers with an often scathing commentary on the loss created by urban renewal's demands for orderly progression. Huxtable chronicled the bulldozer's progression across the island of Manhattan as if she were tracking General Sherman's

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<sup>401</sup> *The South Street Maritime Museum Proposal and The Preservation of Schermerhorn Row in New York City; A Feasibility Study for The New York State Council on the Arts*. By Frederick L. Rath, Jr. New York State Historical Association. Cooperstown, NY. March 10, 1966. Rockefeller Archive Center, Record Group IV 3B 24, D-LMA Projects South Street Seaport 1966. S 2.3, B167, F1594. p. 12

<sup>402</sup> *The South Street Maritime Museum Proposal...*, 12

March to the Sea. The *Times*' critic, credited for bringing the cultural impact of architecture into the public dialogue, reported that "the southern tip of Manhattan, the city's most famous face, looks like a disaster area,"<sup>403</sup> argued that the city had spent twenty years "of ruthless and indiscriminate bulldozing of Manhattan's most historic areas carried out with a single-minded insensitivity compounded about equally of bureaucracy and ignorance,"<sup>404</sup> and remarked that "it usually takes bomb damage or bulldozer public renewal to produce clearance and rebuilding on a comparable scale."<sup>405</sup> Huxtable was adroit at exposing the simple fact of economics in the urban renewal versus historic preservation game, challenging capitalism's demand for the productive use of land with her indictment, "The reasons [for demolition] are obvious. There are no profits in preservation."<sup>406</sup>

#### COMPETING VISIONS OF ROOTS AND PRIDE

Yes, the Seaport will bring new tourist money into the City and certainly, it will be a fitting memorial to the past. But to me that isn't the real point. The real point is that it will bring people something they need now as never before: roots and pride.<sup>407</sup>

-Harold Logan, Chairman of the Board, Grace Lines and Trustee of the South Street Seaport Museum (1969)

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<sup>403</sup> Huxtable, "Downtown New York Begins to Undergo Radical Transformation," *The New York Times*, March 27, 1967

<sup>404</sup> Huxtable, "Where Ghosts Can Be at Home," *The New York Times*, April 7, 1968

<sup>405</sup> Huxtable, "A New City is Emerging Downtown," *The New York Times*, March 29, 1970

<sup>406</sup> Huxtable, "Goodbye Worth Street: A New York Tragedy," *The New York Times*, Dec. 2, 1962

<sup>407</sup> Stanford, *A Dream of Tall Ships*, 377

The South Street Seaport Museum and the Fraunces Tavern museum block project were in the company of two smaller maritime-themed commemorative projects in lower Manhattan. Plans for a maritime museum in the old U.S. Customs House on Bowling Green had been proposed a few years previously. An article in the *New York Journal American* reports on the proposed use of the old Customs House as a maritime museum, once federal offices relocated to the World Trade Center. The site housed the original Fort Amsterdam, erected in 1626, and later welcomed the U.S. Government House in 1790, built for President George Washington and mere steps from Samuel Fraunces' Tavern. Following the relocation of the federal government to Philadelphia, the site became the home of the U.S. Customs House in 1800. The current Cass Gilbert design, built in 1907, represents a glorious example of the Progressive Era's City Beautiful movement and its Beaux-Arts architecture, in which "the building's beauty matches the importance of the world-wide commerce of New York." Reginald Marsh's painted murals upon the interior gilded rotunda are steeped in maritime lore and reflect the city's – and the nation's – maritime roots.

Although the U.S. Customs House received historic landmark designation status in 1966 as Federal Hall National Memorial, the future use of the site remained unclear. Plans for a maritime museum represented a civic project to commemorate the city's maritime history and protect whatever remained of the area's "seafaring atmosphere" before the urban renewal wrecking ball destroyed any last vestiges.<sup>408</sup> When Peter Stanford and the Friends of the Seaport got down to the business of raising support – both

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<sup>408</sup> *New York Journal American*; *New York's Largest Evening Newspaper* (Sat. Feb 19, 1966) "A Future Maritime Museum for the Greatest Harbor? Customs House – Grandeur, New York and the Sea." RAC, DLMA Series 2.3 Projects, Landmarks, 1965-1981. Record Group IV 3B 24, Box 112, Folder 1206; Jan-Sept 1966

human and financial – for the South Street Seaport Museum, Jeff Rogers of Columbia Lines reminded Stanford “we’ve been working for years on a maritime museum in the old Custom’s House.”<sup>409</sup> With support rapidly amassing for the South Street Seaport project, plans for the U.S. Custom’s House maritime museum disintegrated. Further, the Seaman’s Church Institute, that sailor-friendly organization founded in 1834 and provider of bed, board, and general welfare to sailors moving in and out of port, scrapped its own plans for a maritime museum by 1967 owing to “other well-known plans for redevelopment of lower Manhattan include a maritime museum.”<sup>410</sup>

Lower Manhattan, home of the financial district, could not support multiple maritime commemorative projects and yet all of these visions – from South Street to Fraunces Tavern to the U.S. Customs House to the Seaman’s Church Institute – sprung from an appreciation for the city’s earliest days as a port city, where:

Through the whole area one felt the presence of the harbor whose traffic had given birth to New York – a presence felt in its salt smell and the hoarse steam whistles of the tugs, freighters and ocean liners that churned the surrounding waters to a perpetual restlessness, as though the city itself were voyaging through the seaway that connected it to the world.<sup>411</sup>

With ideological and promissory financial support from both the City and the Downtown-Lower Manhattan Association, the Fraunces Tavern museum block project remained the most ominous hurdle to the Seaport plan. Raising the necessary funds to

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<sup>409</sup> Stanford, *A Dream of Tall Ships*

<sup>410</sup> Letter from Manhattan Borough President, Community Planning Board to David Rockefeller, Chairman D-LMA, Feb. 6, 1967. RAC, Record Group DLMA Projects: Landmarks, Nov 1966-Dec 1967

<sup>411</sup> Stanford, *A Dream of Tall Ships*, 69

undertake each project individually was a hefty toll; the success of simultaneous commemorative projects would tap even the deepest pockets of New York City's most philanthropic citizens. The city would not support two museum blocks mere steps from one another, no matter how great the need for heroic memory or a collective identity boost. John Pell, "scion on a Revolutionary War family" and Chairman of the Historic Sites Committee, warned Stanford he had a tough road ahead in trying to win over the support of David Rockefeller and, therefore, the downtown financial community, who "thought more of heroes of the American Revolution than the hard-driving sea captains who used their new freedom to make New York America's greatest seaport."<sup>412</sup> Memory and identity, like everything else in Gotham, comes with a price tag, and a hero is a very personal thing. . The consensus among preservationists as seemingly divergent as David Rockefeller and Peter Stanford lies in the *process* of revitalizing memories of heroism and strength, not in the particular individuals or campaigns designated for interpretation.

While plans for the Fraunces Tavern museum block and the South Street Seaport Museum both sought to commemorate American heroes of an earlier age, men of bravery and dignity and noble determination who represented a time when we were good, the brute fact remained clear: the acquisition and reconstruction of memory on pricey Manhattan real estate required sound financial support.

The D-LMA felt this growing rivalry emerging along South Street and questioned the financial feasibility of the Fraunces Tavern project in light of Governor Rockefeller's approval of Seymour's maritime legislation. In a memo from Warren Lindquist to David Rockefeller in July 1966, Lindquist acknowledges fundraising for the Fraunces Tavern

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<sup>412</sup> Stanford, 105

museum block would be “obviously and completely impossible” with viable competition at South Street.<sup>413</sup> The Downtown Museum of the City of New York also felt the inevitable financial pinch that would result from two similar museum block projects competing for philanthropic support downtown. Even as the Fraunces Tavern museum block project received strong support in the summer of 1966 from the Borough President of Manhattan, the City Planning Commission, the Landmarks Preservation Commission, Community Planning Board Number One, the Downtown Museum of the City of New York, the Park Department, and the Downtown-Lower Manhattan Association, the Office of the Borough President noted if the South Street project moved forward with its own plans for a state maritime museum, it would be “unlikely” that the Museum of the City of New York would remain interested in moving its maritime collections to the newly formed Downtown MCNY. Complicating the forward momentum of the Fraunces Tavern project, in December 1966 the D-LMA scrapped plans to move the four Atlas-McGrath properties from Whitehall and Front Streets to the Fraunces Tavern block, citing the structural impossibility of moving the houses intact.

In early 1967, the Downtown Museum of the City of New York was dissolved, due to lack of financial support from both public and private sources. While the City had earmarked capital and annual funds for the Fraunces Tavern project, this agreement required matching funds from private and foundational sources. With the South Street Seaport project moving full steam ahead, the D-LMA did not feel it would be possible to raise these necessary matching funds in light of competition at South Street. Warren Lindquist acknowledged “the unfortunate impact of the proposed South Street Maritime

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<sup>413</sup> Memo from Warren Lindquist to David Rockefeller, July 1, 1966. RAC, DLMA Series 2.3 Projects, Landmarks, 1965-1981. Record Group IV 3B 24, Box 112, Folder 1206; Jan-Sept 1966

Museum project on the Fraunces Tavern project from the standpoint of duplicating in a largely identical historical field of interest.”<sup>414</sup> When both the Fraunces Tavern and South Street Seaport Museum projects applied to the New York State Historical Trust for funding in 1967, Chairman John Pell advised the Fraunces project be downsized considerably, to include just the property of the Tavern itself and the other properties currently owned by the Sons of the Revolution. Citing the considerable increase in land values since the plan was originally proposed, the museum block project did not, in Pell’s opinion, appear financially feasible. Land values on the Schermerhorn Row block at South Street, however, remained less pricey, and might be developed with better success.<sup>415</sup>

#### THE SOUTH STREET SEAPORT MUSEUM EMERGES

The South Street Seaport Museum officially opened on May 22, 1967, National Maritime Day. Pete Seeger, controversial figure of the American Folk Music scene, was an early Friend of the Seaport. Currently building his own replica of a nineteenth century river sloop, Seeger performed an outdoor concert at the newly opened South Street Seaport during the summer of 1967. Active in the radical anti-war movement, Seeger had joined over 100,000 protesters in an April anti-war march from Central Park to the United Nations building. The demonstration was led by anti-war activist and child rearing specialist Dr. Benjamin Spock, the Black Panthers’ Stokely Carmichael, and Dr. Martin

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<sup>414</sup> DLMA internal memo, Dec 20, 1966. Rockefeller Archive Center, Record Group DLMA Projects: Marine Museums 1959-70, Series 2.3, Box 127, Folder 1321

<sup>415</sup> DLMA memo from Goodman to FILES re: Fraunces Tavern and South Street Maritime Museum Projects, Sept. 18, 1967. RAC DLMA Series 2.3 Projects, Landmarks. Record Group IV 3B 24, Box 112, Folder 1207; Nov 1966-Dec 1967

Luther King, Jr. During that demonstration, Seeger sang folksongs from atop a parade float. The *New York Times* reported that men burned their draft cards in Central Park, protestors marched with Vietcong flags, and at least one American flag was burned.<sup>416</sup> There were no such radical displays at this Seeger appearance however, and in his memoir, Stanford recalls three thousand people turning out to sing along with Seeger's songs of "protest and liberation" along the East River piers. This radical voice of the great American Folk Revival had become a "great friend" of South Street.<sup>417</sup>

After two years of maneuverings from both the Friends of the Seaport and city planners, negotiations over the proposed development of South Street as a historic museum district finally simmered. By December 1968, several key developments had taken place. First, the Lower Manhattan Plan had been approved by the City Planning Commission and had been hailed by city officials, commercial developers, the Downtown-Lower Manhattan Association, and the press as a promising lifeline for the still flagging downtown economy. Second, Mayor Lindsay had created the Office of Lower Manhattan Development to act as an organizing agent and liaison between the city and commercial developers in order to implement the Plan. Third, Governor Nelson Rockefeller had signed Senator Seymour's proposed legislation, creating the New York State Maritime Museum, although in response to David Rockefeller and the D-LMA's aggressive opposition to the legislation, Seymour had agreed, at the last minute, to omit wording of any/all public funding for the Museum. The D-LMA at last conceded, "Since plans for development of the South Street Seaport Museum appear to be progressing

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<sup>416</sup> Anderson, 164-5; Robinson, Douglas, "100,000 Rally at U.N. Against Vietnam War," *New York Times*, Apr. 16, 1967

<sup>417</sup> Stanford, *Dream of Tall Ships*, 157



steadily with substantial financial support from private sources, there is a reasonable basis for approval of this project,” and suddenly reversed its vocal two-year opposition to the Seaport plan.<sup>418</sup> Fourth, the South Street Seaport Museum, backed by the Friends of the Seaport and headed by Peter Stanford, had been granted a charter by the New York State Board of Regents.

Finally, the City of New York had designated the eleven-block area as a special urban renewal district within the Brooklyn Bridge Southeast Urban Renewal District, in which the Seaport Museum was named the unassisted (that is, no public funds would be spent) sponsor of that district. Under the terms of this sponsorship, the city would acquire properties under eminent domain, but the Museum would be responsible for raising funds and covering all acquisition costs of those properties. As in the case of the New York State Maritime Museum, the charter was granted by the state, but in neither case would public funds be directed towards the cultural organizations.

Amidst critics’ charges that the historic district would detract significantly from the Lower Manhattan Plan’s strategy for physical and commercial revitalization of the financial district, Stanford conceptualized a multi-use commercial and residential environment at South Street. Inspired by the maritime preservation work in San Francisco and Mystic, Connecticut, Stanford envisioned a working community with restored nineteenth century row houses occupied by a *mélange* of house museums, cafes, small shops and exhibitions. The *neighborhood* would be the museum, “a place where

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<sup>418</sup> D-LMA memo to members of the Executive and Planning Committee from John H.G. Pell, Chairman Historic Sites Committee Re: South Street Seaport Museum, May 21, 1968. D-LMA, Projects: So Street Seaport 1968, Series 2.3, Box 167, folder 1596

citizens could seek out and enjoy an important chapter of the heritage of their city.”<sup>419</sup>

Echoing Jane Jacobs, who observed that local residents and visitors are more likely to spend time on the streets when there is a mixed-use of shops, restaurants, commercial establishments, and upper-floor offices, the Museum’s earliest plans called for a lively street culture. “To keep the streets naturally alive is the essence of the restoration...Real commerce and small shops and craft activities should do much to maintain this kind of life in twentieth century terms.”<sup>420</sup> Stanford understood that a healthy neighborhood depends upon multi-functionality, and that the unique characteristics of the seaport district would encourage and sustain an animated street culture; indeed, commercial viability was integrated into South Street’s visions from the start. These expectations were heavily based on the economic success realized by San Francisco’s Ghirardelli Square waterfront restoration project earlier in the decade. Not simply concerned with historic preservation and a lively street scene, Stanford envisioned a “major economic stimulus in redevelopment.”<sup>421</sup>

Financially, the Seaport project appeared promising. Plans to sell the Seaport’s air rights to neighboring properties, as the Seaport would not build up beyond the height of its present structures, would provide real income to the organization. Neighboring developers would pay heavily for the transfer of air rights from the South Street district to their own construction projects. In addition, a large influx of lower Manhattan residents was anticipated, expected to invigorate foot traffic in the neighborhood and provide a

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<sup>419</sup> South Street Seaport Museum, *South Street Seaport: A plan*, 1

<sup>420</sup> Ibid, 15, 19

<sup>421</sup> Letter from Peter Stanford, Chairman Friends of the South Street Seaport Maritime Museum to John B Goodman, D-LMA. Dec 16, 1966. Rockefeller Archive Center, Record Group IV 3B 24, D-LMA Projects South Street Seaport 1966. S 2.3, B167, F1594

local source of patronage and consumer-based revenue. A projected 50,000 residents would soon call the neighborhood home, based on the approved Lower Manhattan Plan's proposal for residential development along the waterfront. This influx of residents would create active pedestrian traffic and support the Seaport's shops, restaurants and public events. A second residential complex, Battery Park City, was planned for the west side of lower Manhattan, expecting to house an additional 45,000 residents and providing future foot traffic to the entire area.

After a series of delays, both political and financial, Battery Park City was finally completed in 1985, but never yielded the kind of cross-town pedestrian traffic originally anticipated. Plans for the Manhattan Landing east side residential complex, a housing development spawned from D-LMA reports and the Lower Manhattan Plan, were approved by the City Planning Board but stalled during the city's recession in the early 1970s and never got off the drawing table.<sup>422</sup> This would prove a devastating blow to the Seaport's economic strategy, as the historic district was depending upon the strong residential base the new complex would bring to the area, and would have turned the sale of the Seaport's air rights into a real financial asset.<sup>423</sup>

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<sup>422</sup> Gene Gleason, "South Street Ain't What She Used To Be...Yet," *New York Times*, Jul 16, 1972

<sup>423</sup> Max Seigel, "Manhattan Landing Denounced by Three Borough Presidents," *New York Times*, June 23, 1972

## CONCLUSION

### “THE LATE SIXTIES’ DEFINITIVE SEQUENCE OF FEELINGS” REVISITED

It is obvious today that there is a tide that is running in favor of historic preservation... There is no indication that a saturation point in interest in the past has been reached; *indeed, the social, technological, and cultural revolution that we are experiencing in the United States today* can lead only to an expansion of that interest.<sup>424</sup>

- New York State Historical Association (1966)

In “The South Street Maritime Museum Proposal and The Preservation of Schermerhorn Row in New York City,” Frederick Rath Jr. and the New York State Historical Association state what has often been left out of the postwar-era historic preservation narrative: the effects of the cultural landscape- including social, technological, and political change – on the preservation and commemoration impulse of the 1960s. In seeking to humanize the modern urban landscape and our role in it, Peter Stanford underscored the value of understanding history, in that:

We have come to see the past not as a refuge but as a challenge... We find valuable things along the way: the pride men took in their work, and the respect that existed, as well as the danger. Can we be too advanced today to learn from all

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<sup>424</sup> Frederick L. Rath, Jr. & New York State Historical Association, “The South Street Maritime Museum Proposal and The Preservation of Schermerhorn Row in New York City; a Feasibility Study for the New York State Council on the Arts” (March 10, 1966) Rockefeller Archive Center, Record Group IV 3B 24, Series 2 D-LMA, Sub-series 2.3. p 12. Italics added.

of this? Let us begin, then, to learn from ourselves, from our own experiences on this globe.<sup>425</sup>

One purpose of understanding history is *to better understand and criticize our present society and circumstances*. By understanding our past, we gain critical knowledge and develop perspective on the present. In a sort of collective psycho-social-analysis, a growing knowledge of history – whether through traditional academic sources, material culture and artifact studies, or by reading the historical landscape – allows us to better understand and also criticize our present society.<sup>426</sup> In this very basic and therapeutic way, the resurgence of historic preservation during the 1960s created a mechanism from which to better understand and analyze that social-political-cultural landscape. The community of preservationists, financiers, and civic groups working to maintain a historic cityscape and create a commemorative landscape in the midst of social, technological, and political – *not simply physical* – change, engaged the larger public in the rebirth of historic preservation at that time because folks respond to the symbolic meanings imbedded in objects of material culture and architectural styles and responded to the meaning of the waterfront on the city's collective identity.

We care about *stuff*, about artifacts and architectural styles and music and ships, because these objects symbolize our often unspoken values and ideals. The manufacture of objects reflects something about the beliefs and values of the individual who made or

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<sup>425</sup> Peter Stanford, "One Man's View of the Emergence of New York's New Sea Museum," *Curator; a quarterly publication of the American Museum of Natural History*, Vol 13 Iss 4 (October 1970), 281

<sup>426</sup> Mark P. Leone & Barbara J. Little, "Artifacts as Expressions of Society and Culture: Subversive Genealogy and the Value of History" in Steven Lubar, W. David Kingery, eds. *History from Things; Essays on Material Culture* (Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1993), 162

used them. Favored objects *mean* something to us. Therefore, when we romanticize an artifact, or the more “humane scale” of a nineteenth century sloped-roof building, or the aesthetic lines of an unfurled schooner, we are declaring our own sense of style and values to the world. Historic preservation is ultimately about the preservation of artifacts, landscapes, and modes of living as manifested through these. Our attachments to things are heightened during moments of crisis; likewise, a return to history is heightened during moments of cultural dislocation.

This return to history and the imagined ideals of past generations occurs most often during moments of crisis, when stakeholders from various communities seek to regain a centered world upon which political, social, and moral foundations can be built. While the socio-political-cultural crisis of the 1960s was not entirely new - indeed, the nation has been sporadically racked with social, political, racial, and economic unrest and dissent from its earliest history – the rise of mass media in its myriad forms and ubiquity of coverage during the postwar era gave traction and fuel to voices of dissent in a manner never before seen. Mass media’s role in the interpretation and representation of what, in previous generations, may have remained local and seemingly isolated events, helped to generate a *crisis of cultural authority* on a national and even global scale.

Existing scholarship which examines the reemergence of historic preservation in the 1960s explains the impulse to preserve the historic urban landscape as a reaction against the physical reconfiguration of the city. The works of Sharon Zukin, Suleiman Osmon, Wanda Rushing, Diane Barthel, and James Lindgren locate the preservation impulse – itself a conservative process intent on retaining elements of the past – in the

context of a postwar liberal agenda reacting to the urban crisis.<sup>427</sup> Federal urban renewal policies in the 1940s, '50s and '60s attempted to address the myriad social and economic ills of the city with the physical razing and rebuilding of the urban landscape. These postwar liberal policies, in conjunction with the private developers who reaped financial benefits from razing “blighted” neighborhoods and building public housing projects and government centers in their place, fueled a sense of urgency amongst preservationists in the 1960s. However, by ignoring the richer and more complicated cultural landscape of the Sixties- one that exists far beyond the sphere of modernist urban planning, the urban renewal bulldozer, and the political alliances that facilitated these transformations – existing scholarship has missed a critical factor in the narrative of historic preservation at that time. While the urban crisis brewed in the 1960s, and while the bulldozer and wrecking ball threatened to eradicate remaining vestiges of the nineteenth century cityscape, the question for many Americans was not simply *what is wrong with our cities?* but fundamentally, *what is wrong with American society? What sort of people are we, we Americans?*

While recent scholarship from Sharon Zukin and Suleiman Osman has uncovered a search - among a certain educated and affluent demographic - for “authenticity” in the urban landscape, these studies explore the nostalgic impulse as one responding to a vanishing physical landscape and the effect this had on urban sociability.<sup>428</sup> Rising real estate prices and the search for more affordable and charming neighborhoods, a desire to escape the monotony of modernist urban and suburban planning, and dissatisfaction with

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<sup>427</sup> Preservation, or the verb “to preserve” means “to retain, to make lasting.” The process of preservation is, quite literally, a conservative process, as “conservative” means “having the tendency to conserve or preserve.”

<sup>428</sup> Zukin, *Naked City*, x, xii, 4-5, 11; Osman, *Brownstone Brooklyn*, 5, 9-10, 12, 14

political machines and their partners in private redevelopment add nuance to the conventional wisdom that explains postwar preservation as an amelioration to urban renewal in the age of the urban crisis. And yet the urban crisis - culminating in summer riots blazing through the nation's urban core in 1967 and '68, flophouses of hippie youth from Haight-Ashbury to Tompkins Square Park, anti-war protests in Central Park, student takeovers at Berkeley and Columbia, draft card burnings at Whitehall Street, and proliferating protests against the nation's racial, financial and political hierarchies across the country- indicate the crisis of the 1960s was much broader than simply one of urban crime rates and deindustrialization. This larger cultural landscape of the Sixties, its ubiquitous challenges to the political, financial, racial, and moral foundations of the country, gave birth to an "anguished scrutiny" surrounding the meaning of the most fundamental tenets of American society.<sup>429</sup>

As Zukin has argued, a search for origins is most prevalent "when identities are unstable."<sup>430</sup> The instability of the American cultural landscape in the 1960s demanded answers to the question: *what sort of people are we, we Americans?* For many, the answer to this question might be found in the preservation and commemoration of American origin stories, of myths, of a time when we were – in hindsight, at least - good. This dissertation examines the larger cultural landscape of the Sixties, of lower Manhattan's waterfront, and locates the preservation impulse in a richer and more complicated spatial-temporal landscape than existing scholarship has considered.

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<sup>429</sup> Isserman & Kazin, 5

<sup>430</sup> Zukin, xii



Historians Max Page and Randall Mason trace the history of historic preservation in America to the late nineteenth century, and uncover its roots in the social reform movement of the Progressive Era. Page and Mason argue we cannot look at the preservation impulse in isolation, but rather must understand its origins as part of a larger concern with social reform and as a response to change in the social landscape.<sup>431</sup> “Beleaguered by loss and change, we keep our bearings only by clinging to remnants of stability.”<sup>432</sup> “Horror at upheaval” and a “technophobic gloom” combine in a collective anxiety which renders *the past* especially comforting.<sup>433</sup> We must understand such concern for preservation as “a sign of cultural crisis.”<sup>434</sup> Page and Mason argue social reformers’ concerns for the social, educational, religious, and physical well-being of urban dwellers were part of the matrix in which the historic preservation flourished during the Progressive Era. Mason characterizes the preservation impulse at the turn of the century as a product of that era’s “cultural tensions.”<sup>435</sup>

Responding to tumultuous cultural changes and urban conflicts, as well as to society’s innate need for collective remembering, historic preservationists [of the Progressive Era] made subtle but critical urban interventions.<sup>436</sup>

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<sup>431</sup> Max Page and Randall Mason, *Giving Preservation a History*, 1,11

<sup>432</sup> Max Page and Randall Mason, 23

<sup>433</sup> Ibid, 24-25

<sup>434</sup> Randall Mason, *The Once and Future New York*, xxiii

<sup>435</sup> Mason, 237

<sup>436</sup> Ibid, 233

Seeking “to rescue preservation from its marginal position vis-à-vis scholarship on urbanism and urbanization,”<sup>437</sup> Page and Mason offer an important – and, until now, overlooked – edict for further analysis of the historic preservation impulse since the Progressive Era. That is: we must rescue the historic preservation movement from its relegation as a movement associated simply with *urbanism*. While historic preservation in the postwar era has been exhaustively explored as a response to urbanism and urban development, we must, as Page and Mason argue, read the preservation impulse of the 1960s as a sign of the “cultural crisis” of that decade.

The most recent work to come out on the history of the South Street Seaport Museum is James Lindgren’s *Preserving South Street; The Dream and Reality of a New York Urban Renewal District*. Lindgren’s concern is with the organizational start-up and strategic maneuverings required to both secure the eleven-block district just south of the Brooklyn Bridge as a museum district and then turn that victory into a sustainable historic preservation project and maritime museum. Lindgren’s comprehensive organizational history briefly alludes to the larger cultural climate of the late 1960s, asserting:

The tempest of the Sixties and Seventies set the Seaport’s context as racial tensions flared, construction workers beat antiwar protestors, countercultures blossomed, minorities and women spoke out, pollution became visible, and cultural alienation, political corruption, and physical degradation were palpable. Crises were everywhere.<sup>438</sup>

This dissertation actively engages in this matrix of cultural crises, arguing the crisis of the 1960s is *the* critical landscape from which preservation and commemoration

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<sup>437</sup> Mason, xxviii

<sup>438</sup> Lindgren, 79

of the Age of Sail emerged at South Street. How and why New York's old maritime district, the South Street Seaport, became an iconic symbol of roots and pride during this age of dissent developed from a confluence of wider artistic interest in New York's waterfront. Joseph Mitchell had been writing on the waterfront and the bottom of the harbor since the 1930s, his essays well known to New York literary audiences who might later help fund the South Street Seaport Museum. Malcolm Johnson's Pulitzer Prize winning expose "On the Waterfront" captivated New Yorkers when it ran in *The New York Sun* in late 1949; the drama had become a hugely popular Academy Award winning movie starring Marlon Brando just five years later. With Manhattan's West Side piers now the hotbed of shipping activity at the Port of New York, the aging East River waterfront was all that remained of the city's preindustrial maritime past. When Senator Seymour, Peter Stanford, and the Friends of South Street showed a personal interest in resuscitating the South Street Seaport district so that the city's – the nation's – maritime roots might "teach the slower rhythms of life... in a time of unrest in city streets and college campuses,"<sup>439</sup> they were tapping in to a much broader dissatisfaction with the existing cultural landscape. Historic preservation and heritage commemoration thus became a mechanism of amelioration and re-education during a time of cultural crisis. Alarm at the physical transformation of the city in the age of urban renewal is perhaps the most obvious explanation for the rise of urban historic preservation in the 1960s, but this concern was a symptom of a larger concern with the present crisis of fracturing and transformation in all of its forms.

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<sup>439</sup> Stanford, *A Dream of Tall Ships*, xxvi, xx

In remarking upon the Progressive Era's earlier historic preservation movement, historian Max Page states that it is only through a confrontation with the past where "the valuable lessons of earlier, *presumably more virtuous*, generations could be passed on."<sup>440</sup> Joseph Conrad's 1897 farewell salute captures this nostalgic and commemorative nod for a new generation almost three-quarters of a century later, when *the late sixties'* *definitive sequence of feelings* searched for its own responses to the troubling cultural landscape of the present.

*Goodbye, brothers! You were a good crowd. As good a crowd as ever fisted with wild cries the beating canvas of a heavy foresail; or, tossing aloft, invisible in the night, gave back yell for yell to a westerly gale.*<sup>441</sup>



View of lower Manhattan through the South Street Seaport's masts of ships.  
Photographed by this author, Robin Foster, 2010

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<sup>440</sup> Max Page, *The Creative Destruction of Manhattan, 1900-1940* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 129. Italics added.

<sup>441</sup> Joseph Conrad quote, cited in N-YHS, Guide to the Margot Gayle Papers 1959-2005, MS 241; Box 19: Stanford, Peter, *A Walk through South Street in the Afternoon of Sail* (New York: South Street Seaport Museum, 1967), 24

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Zukin, Sharon. *Naked City; The Death and Life of Authentic Urban Places*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2010.

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### EDUCATION

|  |                       |
|--|-----------------------|
| Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey - Newark |                       |
| Ph.D. American Studies                               | Sept. 2010 - May 2015 |
| Seton Hall University                                |                       |
| M.A. Museum Professions                              | Sept. 2008 - May 2010 |
| Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey          |                       |
| Graduate School, Anthropology                        | Sept. 1993 – May 1994 |
| New York University                                  |                       |
| B.S. Elementary Education                            | May 1989              |
| Dover-Sherborn Regional High School                  | June 1985             |

### PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Assistant Director, Museum of Early Trades & Crafts  
Madison, NJ. August 2014 – March 2015

Project Manager, Office of the Chancellor, Rutgers University-Newark  
Newark, NJ. Jan – August 2014

Interim Executive Director, New Jersey Council for the Humanities  
Trenton, NJ. June 2013 – January 2014

Independent Curator, “Bricks, Mortar, Memories and Pride: The James Street Commons  
Reconsidered,” Newark Public Library, Newark, NJ  
January 2012 – June 2013

Education Curator, Hoboken Historical Museum, Hoboken, NJ  
December 2010- September 2012

### PUBLICATIONS

“Battle of the Port; Memory, Preservation and Planning in the Creation of the South  
Street Seaport Museum,” *Journal of Urban History*, SAGE Journals (September 2013)

“American Tribal Style; Third Wave Feminism Shimmies Into Popular Culture,”  
*Jareeda; The Soul of Belly Dance, History and Culture* (Sutherlin: Oasis Press, 2014)