

Upstream Influence:
The Economy, the State, and Oregon's Landscape, 1860-2000

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A dissertation submitted in partial
fulfillment of requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

University of Washington

2013

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Program Authorized to Offer Degree:

History

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Abstract

“Upstream Influence: The Economy, the State, and Oregon's Landscape, 1860-2000”

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This dissertation examines the ways that people in Oregon mobilized the state apparatus linked to federal, state, and city governments. It traces their efforts at state mobilization across nearly a century and a half of economic and environmental change. Two shifting ideologies shaped Oregon and its landscape between 1860 and 2000. A producerist ideology assumed a rural label and an ideology centered on place assumed an urban label. The development of these twin ideologies hardened what had been contingent boundaries between city and country. That development enshrined in Oregon politics a division between urban and rural interests. This division was never simple and rarely involved clear urban dominance over a hinterland. Portland’s relationship with the rural Northwest and the distinction between urban and rural people and landscapes that shaped it were as much the product of rural ideology as urban power. Portland was subject to upstream influence.

Five episodes in Oregon and Northwest history support and explain this argument. This dissertation considers the role that global and national finance played in shaping the Northwest economy in the nineteenth century and the response that Northwest farmers made to economic elites. It details the effects of hinterland trade on Portland’s environment and examines the limited efforts that progressive-era reformers made to ameliorate those effects. It traces the

growth of the state during the New Deal by detailing the debates over and development of federal electrical power policy in the Northwest. The last chapters examine the ways Oregonians responded to environmental and economic change in the late twentieth century. These chapters provide an intellectual, economic, and political history of Oregon's land use planning system. They demonstrate that rural, urban, and suburban Oregonians supported land use planning as a way to protect the resource economy in the 1970s. That support waned only as the economy, particularly associated with timber production, changed after 1980.

*To
Becca
and to
my brothers*

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Stephen Crane's characters try to row to shore after a shipwreck in his 1897 story "The Open Boat." Crane says of the character who serves as the author's alter-ego, "there was this comradeship that the correspondent, for instance, who had been taught to be cynical of men, knew even at the time was the best experience of his life." With the shore in sight, I am reminded of Crane's story (and hopeful nobody pushes the metaphor too far by dying in the surf). Historians are, if not cynical, then awfully skeptical and attendant to nuance. And the humanities seem these days to be in rough seas. Yet the comradeship and, I would add, the generosity of my companions have made the past years profoundly meaningful. I am grateful for the company and the help at the oars.

John Findlay put my interests before his own. He read chapters and several versions of the complete draft with the thoroughness that his previous students warned me about. John returned comments quickly, moving through the sixty pages of chapter four in two or three days. He scheduled meetings and gave of his time and advice freely. And in 2012 he directed money from his research fund to support my work. John pushed me to tie chapters together and to think about the whole when I thought only about the parts. What strengths there are in the dissertation owe themselves to an effort to impress John and to respond to his comments. John is brilliant, funny, and a way better squash player than I.

I could not imagine a better dissertation advisor than John, but if I were to search, I would look toward Margaret O'Mara and Linda Nash. Linda and Margaret took time out of their summer breaks to read chapter drafts and slogged through the defensible draft on short notice.

Linda pushed me to develop my discussion of the state. Margaret suggested a slate of additional readings, each one of which helped me make the dissertation better. Thaisa Way read only the final product, but she read it closely, and saved me from countless errors of argument and expression. Julie Greene and Peter Boag, then at University of Colorado, set me on my course in graduate school. Bob Bonner and Annette Igra at Carleton College taught me more about history than anybody, including that I would enjoy eight years in the library studying it.

The staffs of the University of Oregon Special Collections, the Bonneville Power Administration Library, the Oregon State Archives, the Reed College archives, and the National Archives in Seattle made me at home. Cheryl Oakes and her colleagues at the Forest History Society recommended sources I would not otherwise have consulted and treated me to lunch in the five days I spent with them. I could not have written this dissertation and would not have enjoyed writing it so much without help from Scott Daniels at the Oregon Historical Society and Mary Hansen at the Portland City Archives and Records Center. Mary and Scott embody the best of the profession. Over several months I watched them greet archives veterans and newcomers alike with warmth, enthusiasm, and good advice. Scott helped me with maps. Mary cracked me up as she piled nuisance petitions on my desk.

The History Department at the University of Washington provided two quarters of fellowship during the writing and researching of the project. The support allowed me to travel to archives in Eugene, Portland, Salem, and Durham. The department also provided a quarter of Hanauer Dissertation Fellowship to make post-defense revisions leisurely. The Center for the Study of the Pacific Northwest funded travel in spring 2012. The Forest History Society's Alfred Bell fund paid for a trip to Durham in spring 2013. The Daughters of the Pioneers of Washington let me present my work when I received their Pacific Northwest History Scholarship in spring

2013. The Western History Dissertation Workshop funded a trip to University of New Mexico in spring 2013, where I received bracing comments on chapter two. All this support was generous and I was lucky to have it. During nine quarters of post-exams teaching, I was grateful to UAW Local 4121 for ensuring that teaching at the University of Washington covers the bills and leaves time to progress toward graduation. And I am grateful to the University of Washington's keen and hardworking students for keeping me on my toes and reminding me why I was doing what I was doing.

I cherish the friends I made in graduate school. I read more of Steve Beda's dissertation than he read of mine, mostly because he was foolish enough to leave one of his chapter drafts on his desk in our shared office. Still, Steve put up with three years of conversations (or monologues) about timber stumpage prices and electrical transmission policies. His rolling eyes kept the dissertation from being drier than it is. I promised Steve in a research trip together that he would have his own paragraph here. I think, though, that he must share it with his wonderful partner Jess Cronce and with Amanda, who is the best Beda.

Elina Galperin, Jacob Greenberg, and Michael Aguirre held late-night conversations with me about colonialism, liminality, and all sorts of other things not appropriate to recount here. Mary Anne Henderson taught me to beware the man. She also made two trips to Louisville not only tolerable, but fun. Tim Wright, Brian Schefke, and Wendi Lindquist did their level best to keep me humble. Jessica Shaw Chance and other Forest Service friends made me laugh so hard my gut hurt. Mountaineering friends, especially David Seidman, reminded me of life outside of graduate school, even if they did it by asking, "what are you going to do with that?" Tom Milac demanded daily status updates. Hannah and Bec Chapin, Greg Zwisler, and the rest of the Sunday dinner crew bucked me up and fed me. Soren Peterson, Michael Gonzales, and I left

Northfield to confront PhD programs at the same time. They answered their phones to give good advice and listen to bad advice.

Ian and Brendan McCurdy climbed mountains, ate pie, punched shoulders, and did other brotherly things. They are my fifth and sixth favorite brothers, though not necessarily in that order. Brother tradition requires me to leave the first four places open for anybody better who comes along. It is my great good fortune that Kayla Schott-Bresler and Natalie Gutlzer claimed two of the top spots. I tried to dissuade Kayla from joining me in graduate school, but am glad she did not listen. She brought Ian to Seattle and ate chocolate with me in the library. This dissertation is dedicated, in part, to my favorite brothers.

Diana Schott and Charlie Bresler let me stay in their Eugene apartment for months at a time. Lloyd Michener and Gwen Murphy put me up in Chapel Hill. My own parents, Chris and Hank McCurdy, welcomed me home for Portland research trips. They also sent north love, food, and even money. I started my PhD program the year my dad finished his. He read the entire final draft of my dissertation, doing a better job than I did with his. I am sure he will make up for the disparity by continuing to tell us all about British economic history at every gap in conversation. My mom always knew that this was something I could do, even when I did not. My parents shaped who I am and shaped the dissertation I wrote. I learned in early backpacking trips about old growth and on car trips about urban growth boundaries. I love and admire my parents more than they know.

Becca Michener and I met just as I was starting this research. She has done more than anybody to support it and me. I am grateful for her comments on chapters, often given as I let the clock tick closer to a deadline and way past her bedtime. And I am still working to make up the dishwashing deficit I ran in the summer of 2013. But Becca did so much more. She kept me

grounded, kept me laughing, and kept graduate school in perspective. She is the kindest, calmest, most beautiful person I know, and a good part of why these past years have been so meaningful and why I think that the best is still to come. For that and for reasons beyond count and expression, I dedicate this dissertation to her.

INTRODUCTION

UPSTREAM INFLUENCE

The history of Portland, Oregon's largest city, often turned on events beyond the city limits. From the outbreak of Indian wars in the 1850s to the preservation of fields and forests in the late twentieth century, Portlanders sometimes shaped the hinterland. But they often found their city affected by events that were as much beyond urban control as they were outside city limits. So it was on a hot July day in 1938. Thousands of people gathered alongside federal bureaucrats and the governors of Oregon, Idaho, and Washington. The crowd met on the banks of the Columbia, some eighty miles upstream from Portland. The river had rushed south out of the Canadian Rockies, across the Columbia Plateau, and into the Columbia River Gorge.

Downstream from the gathered crowd it slowed to pass its confluence with the Willamette River at Portland, the only major city on its banks. In the eyes of Portland boosters, the river carried wealth with all the rain and melted snow between its banks. The current pushed wheat barges and timber rafts downriver to Portland mills and trading houses. The boosters liked to think that with wealth came the power to determine the city's fate and to shape the rural Northwest to conform to an urban vision.

On that hot July 1938 day, power took a literal form that belied Portland's grasp on the region. Five years earlier, the Portland Chamber of Commerce had persuaded the federal government to build massive Bonneville Dam across the Columbia, just forty miles upriver from Portland. City elites hoped that the dam's concrete and steel would give them the means to draw new wealth from the river and the surrounding country. They dreamed of using electricity to

process the products barges carried down river. Technical wonders like rayon and aluminum would make the city into a new manufacturing center. But the boosters' dreams fizzled at the celebratory banquet forty miles upstream from the dam. The revelers met in nearly-hundred-degree weather to celebrate the arrival of an ocean-going ship at a 1,100 foot pier that the Port of The Dalles had built on dry land two years earlier. Now the new dam backed the Columbia up in a slack-water pool that lapped against the pier's pilings, making a sea port of The Dalles, nearly 190 miles from the ocean. Navigation was not the only upstream benefit the dam provided.

At eight o'clock in the evening J.D. Ross, the Seattleite charged with managing distribution of power from the dam, issued a radio order. Ross's command sent power coursing through lines on the river's bank. The transmission lines traveled upstream against the Columbia's current north and east away from Portland. Separate lines carried the energy across the river to North Bonneville on the Washington bank and four miles east to the small Oregon town of Cascade Locks. The river's first commercial power illuminated flood lights against the last hour of evening sun. Electricity coursed north and east partly because the communities of North Bonneville and Cascade Locks were close to the dam, but also because they fell within a channel carved by politics and ideas draining away from Portland. The federal bureaucrats who managed the dam's power believed it could do more good developing rural economies, bringing modern convenience, new population, and industry to small towns, than it could concentrating development at Portland. The bureaucrats relied on their backgrounds in anti-urban reform to direct power away from Portland. They also relied on political alliances with rural Northwesterners.¹

¹ "River to Drop for Saturday's Water Traffic," *Bonneville Dam Chronicle*, 8 July 1938, 1; "Sea Giant Docks at River Harbor," *Oregonian*, 10 July 1938, 1; Herbert Lundy, "River Colossus Rouses at Rites," *Oregonian*, 10 July 1938, 6; "Channel Improvements for the Columbia River," *Western Construction News and Highways Builder*, August 1938, 293.

Those rural Northwesterners carried on a seventy-year tradition of organized opposition to the influence of urban elites. The policies they advocated reflected the importance of the state in forming the relationship between Portland and the area the river drained. The state's importance was not new to the 1930s or to hydroelectric power, nor would it end there. The illumination of Cascade Locks and North Bonneville fell in the middle of a roughly 140 year period in which Northwesterners sought to mediate their region's relationship with the broader world economy. Portland's rural opponents traced their roots to a movement of farmers who sought to wrest their access to world markets from Portland capitalists. Before rural Northwesterners dreamed of cheap electricity, they demanded that government provide them with access to river and water transportation by building transportation networks and restraining corporations. In the decades after power flowed from Bonneville Dam, farmers and other Oregonians used the power of the state to shape the region in other ways. They called on it to provide them with manufacturing jobs. And they urged the creation of laws and regulations to insulate the price of farmland from bubbles in a newly speculative world economy. Each of these efforts shaped the landscape in Oregon and the Northwest.

This dissertation examines the ways that people in Oregon mobilized the state apparatus linked to federal, state, and city governments. They used government to mediate their relationships with other Oregonians and the region's relationship with the broader world economy. Two shifting ideologies shaped Oregon and its landscape between 1860 and 2000. One assumed a rural label and the other assumed an urban label. The development of these twin ideologies hardened what had been contingent boundaries between city and country. That development enshrined in Oregon politics a division between urban and rural interests. Oregonians were especially aware of this division in the late twentieth century when Portland

developed a reputation as a city that recast rural landscapes as urban amenities. But Oregon politics are not just the story of urban power. Portland's relationship with the rural Northwest and the distinction between urban and rural people and landscapes that shaped it were as much the product of rural ideology as urban power. Portland was subject to upstream influence.

STORY OF TWO IDEOLOGIES

The first set of arguments that shaped Oregon government and, later, federal policy in the state grew out of Oregon's settler politics of the 1850s. Farmers who framed the state's constitution saw themselves as preserving an ideal agrarian society in which hard work yielded rewards. When transportation monopolies with connections to state and federal government threatened that society in the 1870s, rural Oregonians responded by reasserting the tenets that wealth should be tied to productive labor and that society functioned best when this relationship was tightest. I refer to these tenets as producerism.

Producerism had a varied history. In the 1870s the state's Grange movement portrayed Oregon soil as needing human management in order to elevate the importance of farm work. Society's wealth depended on such work, Oregon farmers argued, and the state had an obligation to ensure that it was justly rewarded. The Grange sought to shape rural Oregon's relationship to the broader world. It aimed to wrest control of the relationship from the elite Portlanders they believed held it. The image of productive labor, especially labor in the hinterland that mixed sweat with soil or sawdust, proved powerful, even as its use shifted over the next century. Grangers controlled the image in the nineteenth century, but shared it by the 1930s with federal bureaucrats who sought to build an economy that revolved around farming. In the 1970s Oregon farmers joined urbanites in using the image to defend good farmland against a topsy-turvy world

economy that seemed to threaten the relationship between production and value. And in the 1980s timber companies claimed the image of productive work for their own ends, even as they fought over wages, benefits, and job security with the rural people who embodied the image of rural labor.

Producerism called on the state to ensure that work met its reward in the nineteenth century and that the economy rested on firm foundations of rural production in the twentieth century. It coexisted with another strain of Oregon political rhetoric for which the state was better known at the end of the twentieth century. In the 1960s and 1970s Oregonians congratulated themselves on and defended what they regarded as a sterling quality of life. The roots of their ideology were shallower than producerism's origins in the 1850s. The development of what I call the ethic of place and associated attempts to shape Oregon's economy with an eye toward preserving quality of life dated to the turn of the twentieth century. Portlanders objected to industrial activities that threatened their homes. Seeking to insulate themselves and the value of their property from the worst of the city's noise, smells, and dust, Portlanders developed an inchoate environmental ideology. Later in the century many Portlanders and others in the state broadened their perspective, seeking to protect the region as a whole from threats to the quality of life that they enjoyed. Urbanites preserved wilderness from clear cuts and recreational development, but most of all they defended open space from sprawling suburbs that threatened to despoil Oregon's landscape.²

Both producerism and the ethic of place sought to restrain capital, shaping the relationship between city and country to benefit Oregonians at the expense of elites both inside

² I am indebted to Matthew Klingle, *Emerald City: An Environmental History of Seattle* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2007) for "ethic of place." Pinpointing the origins of Oregonians' concern with environmental quality is tricky. This chronology grows out of research in chapter two and matches the standard accounting for the roots of modern environmentalism. See, for example, Robert Gottlieb, *Forcing the Spring: The Transformation of the American Environmental Movement* (Washington, DC: Island Press, 1993).

and outside of the state. Still, the two sets of arguments for mobilizing the state could hardly have been more different. Those who wielded arguments about the value of production built a movement based on class. Timber workers and farmers mobilized around their status as workers. Ironically, those who wielded class-based arguments sometimes failed to match their self-descriptions as humble producers. Oregon's nineteenth-century farmers relied, at least in part, on the labor of others. At the end of the twentieth century, farmers who owned vast spreads and employed migrant labor along with owners of multi-million-dollar timber companies found a use for producerist politics. Producerist arguments rested on the assumption that a just society required the state apparatus to favor producers, even when a clear-eyed appraisal might exclude some of the arguments' loudest proclaimers from the ranks of a class-based movement. Producerist arguments centered on class, even if the people and goals they served were not clearly tied to a single class.

Environmentalism was different. People who tried to protect Oregon's environment from pollution built a movement centered around the ethic of place. The irony here was that the class prejudices of those who advanced the ethic of place were at least as pronounced as the class views of those who articulated producerism. Early-twentieth-century urbanites argued that their neighborhoods, places that housed the dreams of young families, were worth protecting. They directed pollution toward the homes of the very poor, especially toward the lodging house district at the north end of downtown Portland. Late-twentieth-century environmentalists in Portland and its suburbs expanded their arguments to cover the state's fields, forests, beaches, and roadsides, regarding the environments beyond their neighborhoods as key emblems of quality in their lives. But, like their early-century counterparts, they also sought to protect their

neighborhoods, even when preserving environmental quality in their neighborhoods involved sacrificing the quality of more distant landscapes.

Each argument, meant to mobilize the state and the voters who held it accountable, envisioned a community. The farmers and timber workers (along with farm owners and timber company owners) who articulated a producerist basis for state action saw themselves as part of a narrow community of rural Oregonians, but also as part of a broader producer community not bound to a particular place. At its best, their self-conception allowed them to see the ways that the broader world of capitalism shaped their lives. They called on Oregon's and the nation's state apparatus to mediate their connections to the world market. Yet, their identity was as much negative as positive. Producers sought to define productive and independent labor against speculation, idleness, and radicalism. In contrasting their labor with speculation and idleness, producers helped create a political ideology that distinguished country from city. There was nothing natural about this distinction. The realities of urban and rural landscapes blend into each other even now. Separating them into neat ideological categories was a political project. The city proved to be a useful shorthand for decadence and abusive power, but the city that producers imagined was a heuristic that ignored those who sweated in city factories or dirtied their hands in urban truck gardens. Producers who erased heterogeneity within the city also ignored diversity in their own ranks. Grangers in the 1870s and farmers who called for state aid a century later excluded from the moral advantages of production those who did the hardest productive labor. In touting the labor of white Oregonians, they ignored the Chinese who cleared brush in the nineteenth-century Willamette Valley, the Latinos who harvested twentieth-century crops, and, at times, the timber workers who met in union halls to confront the state's largest corporations.

If producers created an identity around class that implied a geographical arrangement, environmentalists created an identity around geography that entwined with class.

Environmentally-minded urbanites throughout the twentieth century called on the state to protect particular locations from industry. Early in the century middle-class Portlanders defined their neighborhoods of single-family homes against parts of the city that they believed ought to bear the burdens of pollution. Later in the century Portlanders turned their attentions to rural lands they visited on weekends and during summer vacations. They ignored environmental problems poor Portlanders confronted in their daily lives. They also contrasted their ideal neighborhoods of lawns, single-family homes, and easy access to recreation with small timber-dependent towns on the one hand and dense cities of apartments and duplexes on the other. Their rhetoric was tied to descriptions of place. They had chosen to live in residential parts of the city in the early part of the century or had forsaken California or urban neighborhoods of transient residents for bucolic suburbs in the last quarter of the century. Urbanites, too, helped define city and country, especially in the late twentieth century when they positioned themselves as the defenders and beneficiaries of open space. Like producers, their efforts to mobilize the state were defined by exclusion. Urbanites excluded from their vision of environmental quality poor people they did not consider to be part of the community, ranging from lodging house dwellers in the early twentieth century to apartment dwellers and rural working people in the late twentieth century.

Both ideologies that Oregonians used to mobilize the state, producerism and the ethic of place, suffered from limits to their social vision. Yet there were important distinctions to be made between the two. Rural successes relied on broader political rhetoric that recognized production as the basis for the region's economy. Because they mobilized the state around class rather than specific location, producers offered more creative tools than environmentalists to

manage Oregon's relationship to the broader world economy. It was not until the late-twentieth-century economy came to rely less on production and more on finance that the producers' vision showed cracks.

GRAPPLING WITH THE STATE

This argument sits in broader debates about the nature of the state at national and local levels. I join other historians in seeing rural roots to the modern American state. Recent literature emphasizes the importance of problems in the rural economy and the political organizing efforts of rural people in drawing the attention of the national government. At points ranging from the end of the nineteenth century to the New Deal, rural people succeeded in mobilizing the state to protect their interests. At other times, the state grew with anti-urban reform arguments that saw particular value in rural living. Earlier histories focus on the national consequences, rather than regional effects, of rural visions, perhaps seeing the national scale as the higher bar over which to propel their arguments. They also hesitate to venture into the second half of the twentieth century, or they regard it as a mere extension of the New Deal, focusing on the lasting consequences of farm policy. My study of rural visions in state development differs by addressing rural influence over a long period of time and by addressing state formation at both the national and local levels.³

³ This is hardly a settled debate. There are strong arguments that the modern state's intervention in the economy and lives of citizens has urban roots. Daniel Rodgers, *Atlantic Crossings: Social Politics in a Progressive Age* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998) argues that reformers in eastern cities looked to counterparts in Europe to develop an agenda and municipal services to match that laid the groundwork for the New Deal. I admire Rodgers's argument, but note that its description of Progressivism ignores the West, a region that Progressives claimed as a stronghold. I also note that my study of Portland reveals weak municipal government and halting reform ideology in the period during which Rodgers sees the municipal precursors to a strong national state. A slew of twentieth-century histories also emphasize the power of national policies after World War II in shaping suburban and urban landscapes. Thomas Sugrue, *Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996); Margaret O'Mara, *Cities of Knowledge: Cold War Science and the Search for the Next Silicon Valley* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005). These histories emphasize the interaction of non-government actors in cities and suburbs with federal policy in shaping the postwar state. I

Focusing on the role of ideology in state formation entangles the argument about Oregon in other arguments about how best to conceptualize the state apparatus. Defining the state is a notoriously difficult task, made more complicated in this case by the need to discuss the state across what historians regard as several different periods of its formation. Historians whose work focused on the state in the 1980s responded to pluralist and neo-Marxian traditions growing out of social history that regarded the state as an instrument of either society or capitalism. Studies from the 1980s resolved to take seriously the inner workings of the state and to regard bureaucracy as a force in its own right, rejecting the notion that the state merely distributed benefits to interest groups or reified the interests of dominant classes. I sympathize with this approach. But I join others in observing that state-focused scholarship obscures the importance of civil society, where much of the ideology I discuss resides. Another approach grew out of cultural history that developed alongside the state-centered scholarship. In this view, the state is an ideological construct used to give meaning to various actions that people come to regard as those of the state apparatus. There is good reason to view the state as a product of shifting discourses. Doing so emphasizes the historical contingency of the state's roles and claims to legitimacy. Indeed, clarifying the distinction between state and private action was one of the

admire their arguments as well, but note the success of 1970s Oregonians wielding rural ideology in arresting the geographical decentralization unleashed by this interaction. For the rural origins of the modern state, see David Danbom, *Born in the Country: A History of Rural America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995, 2006); Elizabeth Sanders, *Roots of Reform: Farmers, Workers, and the American State, 1877-1917* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999); Sarah Phillips, *This Land, This Nation: Conservation, Rural America, and the New Deal* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007); Catherine Stock and Robert Johnston, eds., *The Countryside in the Age of the Modern State: Political Histories of Rural America* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001). Phillips notes the success of rural people in mobilizing the state, but also emphasizes the importance of anti-urban ideas in American reform tradition. I depart from Sanders, who sees rural influence as partly a product of urban workers' inability to forge effective political alliances with farmers. In Oregon, at least, producerism was often formulated to exclude urban allies. These histories tend to focus on the period before World War II. They also address predominately programs at the federal level, though Sanders and some of the essays edited by Stock and Johnston note local governments. The historical literature on rural influence in the late twentieth century and below the national level is a little sparser. Louise Dyble, *Paying the Toll: Local Power, Regional Politics, and the Golden Gate Bridge* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009) describes the institutional roots of rural dominance of the Golden Gate Bridge District. Debra Donahue, *The Western Range Revisited: Removing Livestock from Public Lands to Conserve Native Biodiversity* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1999) considers the lasting political prestige of ranchers in influencing state and national policy in the American West.

political projects of the period between the Civil War and the present. Still, that definition offers boundaries whose instability is not justified in this dissertation's focus on ideology more than discourse.⁴

Social scientists have recoiled from the risk of writing civil society out of the state. In the 1990s scholars offered ways to incorporate pressure from civil society into a state that also has an autonomous agenda. In Theda Skocpol's telling, the development of the peculiar form of welfare in the United States was a product of path-dependent bureaucratic choices and public response to government programs that operated in feedback loops. It was, in a different formulation, the product of state action interacting with popular resistance. In this ambitious thinking, articulated in John Walton's description of water conflict in California, each successive stage of state development incorporated both an autonomous state agenda and traditions of protest that remained embedded in the state, helping to shape its development. These descriptions of the state have the advantage of featuring change over time and emphasizing the importance of bureaucratic decisions without rendering them unassailable. Yet, these social science formations also imagine a structured, and even dialectical, interaction between civil society and bureaucrats. I hesitate to impose this set model on Oregon's complicated and diverse history.⁵

State apparatuses in Oregon worked in varied ways. During the nineteenth century the national and Oregon government relied on private actors to carry out government functions:

⁴ I see ideology as ideas that sought to mobilize centralized power, rather than ideas that themselves constituted diffuse power. For a discussion of the agendas of state-focused scholars and the traditions they reacted to, see Theda Skocpol, "Bringing the State Back In: Strategies of Analysis in Current Research," in Peter Evans, Dietrich Rueschemeyer, and Theda Skocpol, eds., *Bringing the State Back In* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 3-37. For the description of the state as a discourse, see Timothy Mitchell, "Society, Economy, and the State Effect," in George Steinmetz, ed., *State/Culture: State Formation after the Cultural Turn* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1999), 76-97.

⁵ Theda Skocpol. *Protecting Soldiers and Mothers: The Political Origins of Social Policy in the United States* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992); John Walton, *Western Times and Water Wars: State, Culture, and Rebellion in California* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992).

carrying mail, supplying troops, and transporting officials. Both federal and state government also blended into private actors, providing subsidies to fund railroad construction and providing political favors in exchange for bribes. The state worked similarly at the municipal level in the early twentieth century. City councilmen were closely associated with railroad corporations. City zoning regulations reinforced land use patterns already drawn by railroads and industrialists. The state worked more transparently in the twentieth century. The power of the state could be seen in Columbia River dams and in Oregon's comprehensive zoning of every acre of non-federal land in the state during the 1970s and 1980s. In addition to being projects that responded to rural ideology, these actions by the federal and state government represented the modernist apotheosis of state power. They were ambitious projects that organized the landscape and the economy while drawing attention to the state's legitimacy. Yet, the ambition and physical imprint of these state projects should not obscure the importance of the subtle state workings that accompanied them. Some bureaucratic decisions, such as rules governing the price of power generated at the dams, attracted ideological debate. Others, equally important, such as the judicial rulings that paved the way for Oregon's planning system, were made without immediate recognition of their importance. The state in Oregon operated both transparently and also in ways not immediately clear even to state actors.⁶

The people who influenced the state were also a diverse lot. The chapters that follow pay some attention to presidents, governors, and mayors, but focus on more unlikely state actors.

⁶ My observations about the subtle workings of the state in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries parallel Brian Balogh's observations about the hidden national state in the nineteenth century. Like Balogh, I see the state working through associations with private individuals and organizations. While Balogh sees a reification of the power of these private groups during the Gilded Age, I see meaningful efforts in producerist ideology to more clearly define the boundaries between public and private in ways that favor public over corporate interests. Brian Balogh, *A State Out of Sight: The Mystery of National Authority in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009). For a discussion of high modernism and its visible state projects, see James Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998); Odd Westad, *The Global Cold War* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

Bureaucrats play a prominent role, encouraging the development of steamboat networks in the 1850s, articulating ideas about regional planning in the 1930s, and writing zoning regulations in the 1970s and 1980s. There were also private citizens who meshed themselves into the bureaucratic state. Charity officers patrolled social boundaries in turn-of-the-century Portland. A chiropractor drafted a ballot initiative in 1930 that shaped industrial development in the state over the course of the rest of the twentieth-century. And Oregon environmentalists and their opponents developed reservoirs of expertise that they made available to legislators and bureaucrats. Each of these people articulated a vision of state power that spoke to either producerist ideology or to the ethic of place. And each of them was, in some way, a part of the state.

The trick, then, is to articulate a view of the state that incorporates ideology developed partly outside the state apparatus, that accounts for change over time, and that recognizes the heterogeneity of state. An adequate definition must also erect meaningful boundaries around the concept of the state. One method is simply to declare, as a recent work does, that we can see the state through its practices. In this view, the state is “what officials do.”⁷ This is true enough, and I would also add that officials carry to their jobs ideologies developed outside the state and that they draw on their backgrounds to create policies that take on a life of their own. These policies are autonomous. Yet they are not unassailable. The state responds to and is a product of ideology rooted in culture. This is, perhaps, a watered-down version of the model of the state offered by social scientists in the 1990s. It is also, however, an account of the state developed by historians who have revived the study of political economy in recent years, seeking to incorporate cultural history observations into their accounts. The state was powerful, but it incorporated policy-

⁷ Margot Canaday, *The Straight State: Sexuality and Citizenship in Twentieth-Century America* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009), 5.

makers not on the public payroll. It also responded to the culture in which it was situated, even as the ramifications of state policies helped to shape that culture.⁸

EXTENDING URBAN HISTORY

This account is not just about the state. It is also about the history of a city. I join others in expanding urban history beyond city limits. Urban historians have long recognized that suburbs are an important subject of study in their own right and play important roles in urban history. A recent article in the *Journal of Urban History* calls on historians of cities to expand the scale of their studies to include the regions within which cities sit. Andrew Needham and Allen Dietrich-Ward point out that by ignoring regional contexts, historians of urban expansion imagine cities that grow onto vacant land. Needham and Dietrich-Ward note that suburbs were as much part of rural histories as part of the stories of central cities. They call for historians to investigate the development of linkages between cities, suburbs, and rural areas. Needham and Dietrich-Ward remind historians that rural people helped shape metropolitan regions even as cities appeared to exercise power.⁹

⁸ I am particularly sympathetic to Louis Hyman's recognition that the details of policies created by political and economic elites (in his case, those related to finance) matter, but that they have "operated not in opposition to [cultural history's emphasis on] race and gender but through them." Louis Hyman, *Debtor Nation: The History of America in Red Ink* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2011), 7. Canaday, *The Straight State* makes a similar argument.

⁹ While not among the earliest works of suburban history, Kenneth Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985) and Thomas Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis* are influential. More recent works include Robert Self, *American Babylon: Race and the Struggle for Postwar Oakland* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003); Andrew Wiese, *Places of Their Own: African American Suburbanization in the Twentieth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004). For the current admonition to heed cities' regional contexts, see Andrew Needham and Allen Dietrich-Ward, "Beyond the Metropolis: Metropolitan Growth and the Regional Transformation in America," *Journal of Urban History* 35 (January 2010): 943-969. Needham and Dietrich-Ward's call for new research builds on an older call for historians of United States cities to heed the regional focus of historians of other countries. And it has provoked response, including an examination of the relationship between water infrastructure inside New York and the city's expansive hinterland aquifer. The older exhortation is Raymond Mohl, "City and Region: The Missing Dimension in U.S. Urban History," *Journal of Urban History* 25 (November 1998): 3-21. For response to Needham and Dietrich-Ward, see David Soll, "City, Region, and In Between: New York City's Water Supply and the Insights of Regional History," *Journal of Urban History* 38 (March 2012): 294-318.

Indeed, including rural history in studies of cities sows more potential than Needham and Dietrich reap. If one takes seriously the argument that the modern American state has rural roots, more is at stake in regional histories than descriptions of the lives and land that cities and suburbs consumed. The observation threatens to destabilize the power of cities over rural areas and to blur distinctions between urban and rural. Cities have existed in legal and bureaucratic worlds not entirely of their own making. They are, after all, creatures of state governments. In addition to heeding the state-building beyond city boundaries, regional urban history offers the observation that cities have often blended across faint boundaries into the countryside. Urban stories are often rural stories. Indeed, the boundaries between city and country in Oregon were not always as clear as they first appeared. Federal officials sometimes patrolled Portland, looking for Indians whom they thought had left reservations in Washington, Idaho, and Montana. At the turn of the century, Portland incorporated outlying areas, bringing farms within city limits. Both new and old residents of these areas kept livestock, sometimes crowding cows onto five-thousand-square-foot lots. On the other hand, the men and women who lived in the heart of downtown, crammed into boarding houses or catching naps in bars in the city's densest neighborhood, found themselves inscribed in city and charity reports as a rural problem imposed on the city.¹⁰

The distinctions here mattered to contemporaries, who tended to boil the region's complex politics down to simple assessments of the character of urbanites or rural people. This simplification, which described heterogeneous experiences both inside and outside the legal limits of Portland with one of two labels, often obscured the importance of class in the Northwest's interactions with the global economy. Portland elites who insisted in city documents

¹⁰ The observation that cities were legal creatures of states whose legislatures were not necessarily composed of urbanites has received some attention from legal scholars. See, for example, Lawrence Friedman, *A History of American Law* (New York: Touchstone, 1973, 2001), 400-403.

and charity reports that the poor men downtown were a rural problem convinced themselves that theirs was a universally prosperous city. They told themselves a lie that made it possible to overlook the desperate lives that prosperity depended on and helped beget. At the same time, farmers who sought to put rhetorical force behind their calls for a just society more attendant to the needs of producers found it politically convenient to contrast themselves with an artificially homogenous city. Their vision also ignored Portland's poor, while rendering all farmers as yeomen laboring in their own fields. In condemning Portland as a place whose moral weaknesses illuminated the country's moral strengths, farmers missed a chance to forge meaningful alliances with urban workers. Terms like urban and rural were historical constructions that simplified complex realities. I use them in the interests of convenience, but also attempt to reveal their historical fluidity.

Those who call for a regional history of cities point to a model in western and environmental history to guide further research. They have in mind William Cronon's *Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West*. Cronon's book deserves praise for gracefully explaining how the power of Chicago markets transformed lives and landscapes in the Midwest. Still, the model it offers is imperfect. Cronon and others who followed him tread paths marked by urban boosters in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, sometimes acknowledging their intellectual debts by noting the blazes as they pass. There are good practical and intellectual reasons to heed the boosters. Urban elites, after all, had the resources to distribute their views. The city directories, newspapers, and board of trade reports they produced survive to give historians evidence they need to describe economic history. The boosters are relevant for other reasons. Historians have found appealing their emphasis on the power of urban capital in the region. The booster vision has offered contemporary historians a useful counterpoint to older

histories of the West modeled in Frederick Jackson Turner's frontier thesis, which depicted the region as a rural venue for the development of rugged individualism. Indeed, historians have used the booster vision to emphasize the importance of cities to the region and to emphasize that some westerners exercised power over others. In doing so, they have rejected the normative assumptions of urban elites, looking askance at the power and wealth that boosters celebrated. Wrapped up in this rejection of booster goals, however, is a tacit acceptance of their model of urban power.¹¹

Historians have offered revisions to Cronon's model for two decades. A history of Seattle and its Alaskan hinterland introduces the importance of consumerism, while telling the story of urban connections from the perspectives of miners huffing it over Chillakoot Pass. A history of rural California emphasizes that in contrast with Cronon's mercantile economy, the relationship between city and hinterland was mediated by industrial production. Work on Denver contends that central cities interacted not just with rural areas, but with other cities. These interactions, in contrast with Cronon's vision of a weak state, depended on state power. A history of Wisconsin cities makes a similar claim about the importance of state power in advancing urban interests.

¹¹ For references to Cronon as a model, see Needham and Dietrich-Ward, "Beyond the Metropolis," 944; Mohl, "City and Region," 13; Joel Tarr, "Urban History and Environmental History in the United States: Complementary and Overlapping Fields," H-Net, <http://www.h-net.org/~environ/historiography/usurban.htm>. William Cronon explicitly contrasts the boosters with Frederick Jackson Turner, and declares, "the boosters saw more clearly than the historian" in emphasizing the power of cities to direct rural development. William Cronon, *Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West* (New York: Norton, 1991), 47-48. For a similarly expansive view of urban power, see Gray Brechin, *Imperial San Francisco: Urban Power, Earthly Ruin* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999). Carl Abbott, *How Cities Won the West: Four Centuries of Urban Change in Western North America* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2008) shows the tradeoffs that come with an argument that emphasizes the power that cities exercised in the region. When Abbott addresses the internal characteristics of cities, he heeds the effects of class and race on city neighborhoods, but when it comes to relating cities to the rural West, Abbott treats them as units that can be summed up neatly with references to a representative building, experience, or literary text. The result is a largely celebratory assessment of cities as purveyors of culture and guardians of environmental amenities.

The story of New York's interaction with the Catskill mountains decenters urban power and blurs the distinction between urban and rural by emphasizing migration.¹²

Each of these revisions is valuable, though none of them provides a clear model with which to frame city relationships with the hinterland in the era of a modern state with rural roots. It is worth noting that most of these histories confine themselves to the nineteenth century when the state was not yet fully formed. And indeed, Cronon's own story begins with Chicago in the 1830s and wraps up the action before the turn of the century while the modern state was still nascent. The modern state's absence from many hinterland histories is especially curious because the importance of an evolving state is also a part of the western American historiography to which these works contribute.¹³

Equally helpful in rethinking Cronon's description of urban power are the many histories that consider the unequal arrangement of power within cities. These histories explain that the state at various levels has shaped city neighborhoods, directing empowered populations and city services to some while directing other populations to neighborhoods that lacked basic services. Environmental historians have been particularly active in demonstrating the state's power to shape populations and environmental conditions in city neighborhoods. These environmental

¹² For Seattle and Alaska, see Kathryn Morse, *The Nature of Gold: An Environmental History of the Klondike Gold Rush* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2003). For San Francisco and California, see David Iglar, *Industrial Cowboys: Miller & Lux and the Transformation of the Far West, 1850-1920* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005). Denver and the Colorado plains are covered in Kathleen Brosnan, *Uniting Mountain and Plain: Cities, Law, and Environmental Change along the Front Range* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2002). For LaCrosse and Wisconsin, see Eric Moser, *Hinterland Dreams: The Political Economy of a Midwestern City* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011). For New York and the Catskills, see David Stradling, *Making Mountains: New York City and the Catskills* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2007). Matthew Gandy, *Concrete and Clay: Reworking Nature in New York City* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002) also provides an implicit rethinking of Cronon, emphasizing rural resistance to the expansion into rural areas of New York's water system.

¹³ The state has played an important role in a variety of western histories. See, for example, Walton, *Western Times and Water Wars*; Patricia Limerick, *The Legacy of Conflict: The Unbroken Past of the American West* (New York: Norton, 1987); Richard White, *"It's Your Misfortune and None of My Own": A History of the American West* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991); Donald Worster, *Rivers of Empire: Water, Aridity and the Growth of the American West* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985).

historians occasionally presaged calls of urban regionalists by looking beyond city boundaries to consider how life in the city and life in the country relate.¹⁴ I extend that incidental project by focusing on the interface between city and country.

LANDSCAPE IN PORTLAND AND OREGON

Historians of the relationship between cities and rural areas have devoted some attention to Portland and Oregon. William Robbins writes in a recent essay that the traditional view of cities dominating rural hinterlands explains much about the way power worked in the West and the relationship between the region and world capital. Robbins has produced a two-volume examination of Oregon's environment, in addition to other works framing the state's history. In these works, capital emanating from beyond the region shaped lives and landscapes in Oregon. The state apparatus frequently served the interests of distant capital in this telling. Robbins expresses sympathy for the labor movement, but ultimately describes few opportunities for Oregonians to challenge the havoc that the broader capitalist economy wreaked on the state. In contrast to Robbins, I emphasize the growth of the state in conjunction with the articulation of rural interests and describe a state bureaucracy with autonomous power and a logic of its own. I offer a view that, especially in the twentieth century, portrays capital as less omnipotent than Robbins sees it. More than that, the focus of this work is on the efforts that Oregonians made to negotiate their relationship with the very forces that Robbins sees as unassailable. My account

¹⁴ The classic work in urban environmental history is Andrew Hurley, *Environmental Inequalities: Class, Race, and Industrial Pollution in Gary, Indiana, 1945-1980* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995). More recent works include Andrew Isenberg, ed., *The Nature of Cities: Culture, Landscape, and Urban Space* (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2006); Craig Colten, *Unnatural Metropolis: Wrestling New Orleans from Nature* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2005). Martin Melosi, *The Sanitary City: Environmental Services in Urban America from Colonial Times to the Present* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000) describes the extension of city systems in the countryside, noting that in the twentieth century central cities have exerted power over suburbs through their control of hinterland water systems. Matthew Klinge, *Emerald City* also sees an environmental connection between city and country, noting the hazards that urban engineering hubris posed to rural people who lived near Seattle's mountain reservoir.

offers a clearer sense of how the state responded to the concerns Oregonians had with capitalism.¹⁵

Lawrence Lipin's discussion of urban workers and rural farmers in Oregon between 1910 and 1930 brushes more closely against the arguments I make here. Lipin contends that in the 1910s farmers and urban factory workers found political common ground in a producerist view of nature. In opposing state funding for roads designed for pleasure driving and in opposing fish and game regulations that served wealthy hobbyists, the two groups drew on a shared ideology that led them also to support Oregon's populists and to advocate for the single tax. Then in the 1920s workers gained access to cheap cars, and their view of nature changed as they took to the roads they had once opposed to fish and camp. With a new consumerist view of nature, workers loosened their earlier political bonds. Workers scuttled a promising alliance with farmers.¹⁶

There are two reasons that I do not expand Lipin's treatment of the 1920s forwards and backwards to encompass the period I discuss. The first is simply that my research does not line up neatly with the cleavage he notes in the 1920s. Nineteenth-century Oregon Grangers were skeptical of urbanites, but the twentieth-century Grange found common ground with urban labor in support of New Deal planning in the decade after Lipin's cleavage. Nor is it fair to say that the

¹⁵ Robbins's essay on hinterland relationships is William Robbins, "Town and Country in Oregon: A Conflicted Legacy," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 110 (2009): 54. The two-volume set is William Robbins, *Landscapes of Promise: The Oregon Story, 1800-1940* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1997); William Robbins, *Landscapes of Conflict: The Oregon Story, 1940-2000* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2004). Robbins is most pessimistic about Oregonians' success in negotiating their relationship with the broader economy in William Robbins, *Hard Times in Paradise: Coos Bay, Oregon* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1998). See also, William Robbins, *Colony and Empire: The Capitalist Transformation of the American West* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1994). These works have helped me to choose the areas I focus on in the pages that follow. Other helpful histories include E. Kimbark MacColl, *The Shaping of a City: Business and Politics in Portland Oregon 1885 to 1915* (Portland, OR: Georgian Press, 1976); E. Kimbark MacColl, *The Growth of a City: Power and Politics in Portland, Oregon 1915 to 1950* (Portland, OR: Georgian Press, 1979); E. Kimbark MacColl and Harry Stein, *Merchants, Money and Power: The Portland Establishment, 1843-1913* (Portland, OR: Georgian Press, 1988); Carl Abbott, *Portland: Planning, Politics and Growth in a Twentieth-Century American City* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1983). MacColl sees Portland politics as shaped by elites with connections to the city's largest corporations. Abbott sees politics as shaping the work of city planners.

¹⁶ Lawrence Lipin, *Workers and the Wild: Conservation, Consumerism, and Labor in Oregon, 1910-1930* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2007).

distinction that Lipin draws between consumerism and producerism explains Oregon politics in the decades following the 1920s. Loggers in the late twentieth century frequently touted their consumer relationship to nature, describing their pursuit of hiking and backpacking. And urbanites sought to protect farmers' ability to produce by restricting the kind of speculation in real estate that animated Henry George's single tax proposal, which aimed to fund government and punish speculation with a tax on the increase in property value. More than that, I have avoided labeling the ethic of place a consumerist ideology in opposition to producerist ideology. Urbanites articulated an ideology as fully-formed as that of producers, hoping to use place-based identity to mediate the region's relationship with capitalism. To describe Oregon environmentalists as consumers is to lump them in with twentieth-century purchasers of houses, cars, and experience whose politics were unarticulated and unacknowledged. They were more politically aware than historians have suggested most consumers were.¹⁷

The relationship between Portland and the rural hinterland provides a unique opportunity to examine developments that affected other places. The past century and a half's changes in the broader global economy have changed Oregon's landscape and the lives of its residents. In the nineteenth century the state exported raw materials, particularly gold and wheat to California and Europe. The trade and the transportation networks necessary to carry it involved Oregon in a broader global network of capital. Oregon firms sold stocks and bonds on national and international markets, engaging in complex financial deals that bound the state more closely to the world economy than either urban boosters or their rural opponents recognized. In the early

¹⁷ Lizabeth Cohen's *A Consumer's Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America* (New York: Vintage, 2003) sees promise in pre-war consumer movements that were organized and actively pursued social goals. The book sees less value in postwar consumerism, depicting it as a dominant ideology of which Americans were largely unaware as they created an ever-more unequal suburban landscape, responded to politics modeled on market segmentation, and regarded their relationship to government as one of consumers. For a history of consumerism's interference with political mobilization that parallels the story Lipin tells, see Michael Seidman, *The Imaginary Revolution: Parisian Students and Workers in 1968* (New York: Bergham Books, 2004).

and mid-twentieth century, the state's economy oriented more toward manufacturing. Manufacturing companies owned outside the region, especially in aluminum, and also, eventually, in timber, produced for global markets. In the late twentieth century the world economy shifted away from its reliance on manufacturing. Increasingly, profits were to be made in financial arrangements that disassociated value from production.

Though Oregon experienced economic changes that also affected other places, its experience was its own. The federal government's imprint on the state was light outside of its public lands. Oregon remained remarkably dependent on natural resource production late in the twentieth century. The Port of Portland was slow to adopt container shipping. It continued to ship in the late twentieth century the same agricultural products it had shipped in the nineteenth century. Even as the state began to shed its reliance on natural resources, it still rested its economic prospects on the quality of the state's land. It recast productive forests and fields as lures for mobile industries. That switch is one that many places were forced to make in the late twentieth century. But Portland was unique. The city's size and the relative success with which it made the transition from a lumber economy to an economy dependent on amenities both attracted outside attention and contributed to persistent conflict between the city and rural Oregon. These reasons alone would make Oregon a productive place to examine the power of a state called on to serve rural interests and the relationship between rural and urban interests. That the state has received this attention as the world becomes increasingly interconnected is all the more reason to study the way Oregonians managed their relationship with the global economy.¹⁸

¹⁸ On Portland's persistent hinterland connections, see Carl Abbott, "Regional City and Network City: Portland and Seattle in the Twentieth Century," *Western Historical Quarterly* 22 (1992): 292-322. For an example of Portland's recognition for quality of life, see Alexander Marshall, *How Cities Work: Suburbs, Sprawl, and the Roads Not Taken* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2000). In 2012 the *Guardian* joined a long list of papers to designate Portland a best place to live, in this case, one of the five best places in the world, along with Hamburg, Maui, Istanbul, and Tenerife. "The Five Best Places to Live in the World, and Why," *The Guardian*, 20 January 2012, <http://www.theguardian.com/money/2012/jan/20/five-best-places-to-live-in-world>.

The chapters that follow consider selected topics in detail, rather than aiming to cover all major developments in Portland's relationship with the Northwest. There are advantages and disadvantages to this case-study approach. Some topics central to environmental histories, such as outdoor recreation and wilderness politics, receive only tangential treatment. I hope that the selective treatment allows for the chapters to cover a wide range of time while also providing sufficient detail to understand the ways in which the state shaped the relationship between Portland and its hinterland.

Chapter One examines the development of producerist ideology in conjunction with the Northwest's connections to the world economy in the nineteenth century. It contends that physical networks of wheat and supplies carried on boats rested on a less-visible network of capital and state subsidies. The chapter shows how, as the Northwest economy came to rest on agricultural exports, farmers used their centrality to the economy to shape the market to their benefit. They called on state government to restrain the region's largest corporations and to ensure that society rewarded their work. Though they met with little success in creating meaningful regulations, rural producers succeeded in defining themselves against what they characterized as a decadent city and in establishing their concerns as the putative basis for state government.

Chapter Two focuses on urban experience between 1890 and 1930. It follows hinterland trade into the city, arguing that it exacerbated urban inequality. As the state's economy came to involve manufacturing hinterland products and as the city grew, factories and mills burdened the city's poorest residents with the dust, noise, and smells associated with hinterland trade. While rural people relied on producer rhetoric to restrain the state's largest corporations, urbanites were left to call on a weak municipal government to defend the quality of life in their neighborhoods.

They failed to wrest control of the city from railroads. They succeeded in creating an ethic of place that protected homeowners at the expense of the city's poorest residents.

Chapter Three examines the intersection of producerism with the growing federal bureaucracy. It shows how Portland's elites hoped to direct electricity from a New Deal dam project toward city industry. They met resistance from a growing federal bureaucracy that saw its role as ensuring rural development. The New Deal planners looked toward an economy that would continue to rely on agricultural production, bringing Grangers into government in order to plan for that economy. World War II complicated that vision, requiring the federal government to devote electricity to aluminum production. Still, when the war ended, most of the federal power from the Columbia River surged away from Portland.

If the first three chapters examine the early development of the state in the Northwest, the fourth and fifth chapters consider the ways that government shaped environmental conflict in the late twentieth century. Chapter Four details efforts that two different groups of rural producers made to adapt the state's economy to the increasingly flexible global capitalism of the late twentieth century. It shows that unionized timber workers sought to preserve their jobs by creating a more just world. They opposed the export of raw logs, but also sought to improve working conditions and wages in other parts of the world, taxing themselves to organize southern timber workers and raising concerns about safety in new timber-producing countries. As timber workers sought to moderate their connections to the market, farmers called on the state to smooth their access to markets by ensuring the longevity of the agricultural economy. They worked with urban environmentalists to implement a system of land use planning that ensured land would remain in productive farm use. The land use planning system, born of both producerism and the ethic of place, was Oregon's chief environmental accomplishment.

Chapter Five examines the disintegration of these efforts in the face of economic change. The recession of the late 1970s and early 1980s undermined producer arguments as lumber and wheat prices fell. Producers abandoned their expansive vision in favor of local and particularistic ones. Lumber workers saw their fortunes affected more by local politics than by global markets, and farmers sought to profit from the speculation and real estate development that they had previously opposed. At the same time, urban environmentalists increasingly opposed logging while also opposing the changes to urban neighborhoods that land use planning entailed. Without producer support, Oregon's late-century environmental reforms rested on an ethic of place that proved incapable of supporting them.

CHAPTER ONE

BUSHEL, BONDS AND BALLOTS: PRODUCERIST IDEOLOGY IN THE HINTERLAND, 1860-1890

Still a frugal man after twenty-six years stringing together the transportation networks that linked Portland to the rural Northwest, John Ainsworth chose a thin notebook for his memoirs. He expected to die before writing much. Doubling back to write on the reverse of the book's last pages, Ainsworth recounted successes that his grit and good sense had squeezed from a hard world. A poor Ohio childhood left him an orphan at age eleven. Years working as a grocer, piecing together uneven schooling, preceded a different sort of education as a steamboat pilot on the Mississippi and Ohio rivers. Then in 1850 the California Gold Rush lured him west. Ever cautious, Ainsworth avoided the gold fields in favor of San Francisco and the business connections it offered. His chance was not long in coming. Ainsworth traveled to Portland in 1851, carrying a minority share (bought with a loan from a California bank) in a one-boat steam navigation company and a contract to pilot the boat for the other owners. The next nine years were the slow accumulation of capital as he took an increasing share in boats he ran in lieu of full pay.

In 1860 Ainsworth united several companies operating on different stretches of the Columbia River. His new Oregon Steam Navigation Company expanded Portland's hinterland. Buoyed by government contracts and mining booms, Ainsworth and his partners sent steamboats across a portage at the Cascades rapids just upstream from Portland, east and north as far as Idaho and Canada. There were obstacles and setbacks, serious ones concerning Grangers and politicians, Ainsworth wrote in his memoirs. But the assiduity it took to keep a boat above the

waves of a wild river served him well. The company he piloted dominated hinterland trade for nearly twenty years, directing wheat and wealth down the region's largest rivers to Portland.¹

This was not a bad showing for a poor kid from Ohio, and Ainsworth did not mind saying so. He crafted his story around a moral to educate his children. He hoped that fatherly advice about “the low, but sure work of money at interest, on good security,” would teach his children, who already showed a worrying propensity for bad investments, something of the shrewdness that a hardscrabble childhood and a frontier life had taught their father.² But more than good advice on how to keep a nineteenth-century fortune sifts from his tale and from his less-honed daily diaries. For a man who claimed a dominant hand in establishing Portland as the metropolis of the nineteenth-century Northwest, Ainsworth did not spend much time in the city. He traveled a lot, and his travels reveal something about Portland and its connections to the Willamette Valley and the plains beyond the portage at the Cascades. There was the 1859 trip to San Francisco, where Ainsworth likely began discussions with the California owners of boats he intended to bring into the new company. The next year saw trips to the Cascades portages to negotiate with the rural portage owners. Ainsworth also traveled to The Dalles to meet with the local Indian agent, who had developed an increasingly profitable side business carrying government freight around and above Celilo Falls. Ainsworth incorporated the new company on 1 May 1860 at Vancouver, taking advantage of Washington Territory's incorporation statute (Oregon still lacked one), then carried the documents to The Dalles the following day.³

The presidency of a new company brought little chance for rest. Ainsworth was on the move again, traveling east to New York and Washington, D.C. in the winter of 1861. There he

¹ John Ainsworth, “Untitled Autobiography,” John C. Ainsworth Collection, Coll. 250, University of Oregon Special Collections, Box 1, Folder 4; Glenn Quiett, *They Built the West: An Epic of Rails and Cities* (New York: D. Appleton-Century, 1934), 344-345.

² Ainsworth, “Untitled Autobiography,” 30 March 1879.

³ John Ainsworth, “Diary, 1860,” 2 May 1860, John C. Ainsworth Collection, Coll. 250, University of Oregon Special Collections, Box 1, Folder 1.

secured contracts to ship government freight after meeting with the Secretary of War, the Secretary of the Interior, and the Commissioner of Indian Affairs. There would be other trips to San Francisco, another lobbying trip, business in the booming Idaho mines, and in 1872 a trip through San Francisco, Omaha, Chicago, and New York to Philadelphia, where Ainsworth sold a majority share of the company to Jay Cooke, the country's leading financier. Overseeing railroad construction for Cooke's company in the early 1870s, Ainsworth traveled frequently to Kalama, Tacoma, and other Washington Territory towns, leaving clerks in his office to handle a stream of incoming letters in his absence. In the middle of the 1870s there were still other trips to the new wheat-growing regions of eastern Washington to meet Grangers concerned about shipping rates.⁴

Ainsworth's travels show that trade did not flow in natural channels, as Portland's boosters would later claim. Plows, jugs of whiskey, and wheat, along with the trains and boats they traveled on, were only the physical manifestations of Northwest trade. The physical infrastructure relied on a financial infrastructure, extending well beyond the region. No less than the course of rivers and rails, bond issues and stock subscription lists, sometimes in Portland, but often in Europe or the East, connected the rural Northwest with a dominant city. Both physical and financial infrastructures relied on the efforts of profiteers and dreamers. They, in turn, relied on the state at the national and Oregon levels. The power of the state was interwoven with ideas and politics. In the nineteenth century the state supported the power of capitalists, subsidizing railroads and providing a framework for corporate finance. But there was little stable about the state's ideological foundation. Rural people developed an alternate vision of power, imagining a government, particularly in Oregon, that would serve their interests by preserving free enterprise

⁴ John Ainsworth, "Diary, 1861," 21 March 1861, John C. Ainsworth Collection, Coll. 250, University of Oregon Special Collections, Box 1, Folder 1; John Ainsworth, "Diary, 1865," John C. Ainsworth Collection, Coll. 250, University of Oregon Special Collections, Box 1, Folder 2; John Ainsworth, "Diary, 1872," 4 April 1872, John C. Ainsworth Collection, Coll. 250, University of Oregon Special Collections, Box 1, Folder 2; "Freight on the Columbia River," *Walla Walla Statesman*, 12 June 1875, 2.

and fostering market connections, while also controlling the power of capital. John Ainsworth was a central player in the story of Oregon's connections to the broader world. He and his partners shaped the region's relationship with distant capital, entwining government with their projects. Yet Ainsworth was an object of the story as much as an actor in it. He and his partners personified the urban power that stirred rural Oregonians to call for government to serve their interests.⁵

This chapter tells the story of Portland's nineteenth-century hinterland on three levels. It outlines the development of the physical infrastructure that drew gold and wheat into the city. It shows how that physical infrastructure relied on thickening networks of capital and state connections. And it demonstrates that ideological conflict shaped the way both physical infrastructure and the networks that supported it developed. As Portland benefited from trade in hinterland products, farmers sought to dissociate trade from Portland interests. They wielded arguments that cast their work as the basis of the region's wealth, calling on the state legislature to pass laws to guarantee them a level playing field and a fair share of the proceeds of their work. Farmers' mobilization behind these arguments sometimes came up short, but it succeeded in enshrining the contrast between city and hinterland in a lasting Oregon (and American) political ideology hostile to cities and speculation and favorable to rural labor and production.

ROADS, BOATS, AND SUBSIDIES

John Ainsworth remembered that the Portland he came to in 1851 "could boast more stumps than houses."⁶ The city had just incorporated, and its prospects were dim as it competed with other towns for trade with California miners. Oregon City, some dozen miles up the

⁵ My view of the interaction between state and capital in the nineteenth century is informed by Richard White, *Railroaded: The Transcontinentals and the Making of Modern America* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2011).

⁶ Ainsworth, "Untitled Autobiography."

Willamette River, was the center of government and society. The town of Milwaukie, halfway to Oregon City, seemed to be a promising commercial center at the head of navigation on the Willamette. Only recently had Portland wrested the federally-subsidized steamship connection to San Francisco from the town of St. Helens, some thirty miles downstream on the Columbia. If Portland could claim any natural advantage over the other towns in the region, it was that only a low pass through hills west of town and thirty miles of mud separated Portland's Willamette waterfront from the heart of the fertile Tualatin Valley.

It took territorial subsidies and federal contracts to save Portland from obscurity. Connecting the valley's farmers with the city's merchants required a plank road, and Portlanders set out to build one, lining up stock subscriptions in a territorially-chartered road-building company. Construction began with a community feast in the year Ainsworth arrived in the city, but finishing the road would not be a harmonious act of urban extension into the country. After securing commitments for \$35,000 in stock, the road company found a project manager in the territorial legislature's house speaker, William King. King was better at siphoning territorial subsidies away from the road than he was at collecting on the promises of Portland merchants. Even when the merchants did pay into the company, they sometimes paid with money they embezzled from the territorial government. King had no better luck leading his eighty workers in a battle against the mudslides that winter rains unleashed on the project. Construction soon ground to a halt, leaving only a tenth of the road completed and workers asking for wages King could not pay. Only an order four years later from the territorial supreme court secured from the delinquent Portlanders money necessary to finish the road. Amid the Portland intransigence, Tualatin Valley farmers claimed, fairly or not, to have saved the road company from ruin. The farmers got their connection to the city in 1857, six years late. Portland's early commerce with

surrounding farms traveled on a road whose cedar puncheons barely covered messy finances, unscrupulous use of territorial funds, ill will between merchants and farmers, and plenty of mud. It did not bode well for simple relationships between the city and the broader region.⁷

While they bickered over how to bring nearby wheat to market, Portland merchants stumbled into a more far-flung trade. A series of Indian wars, in southern Oregon in the first half of the 1850s and then in eastern Washington during the second half of the decade, provided Portland merchants with abundant government contracts. The wars led the federal government to develop commissaries in major cities, establishing Portland as the center of a network of government trade. The army pumped money into the regional economy, \$4,449,949 by 1857, creating an inflationary boom that spurred other business development. Portland merchants prospered. As the territory's Indian Agent, Joel Palmer, put it, "there is perhaps no portion of the United States where the opinion prevails more generally among the people that the treasury of the United States is a proper and legitimate object of plunder than in portions of this territory."⁸

The 1850s linked Portland's trade to federal war against Indians, first in the transportation of materiel and then in the supply of miners who chased gold after the gun smoke rose, provoking yet more Indian wars. By the late 1850s steamboats ran as far as The Dalles. At The Dalles, R.R. Thompson, a sheep rancher and Indian agent, ran bateaus to Fort Walla Walla, paying Indian sailors to transport government supplies. At the behest of the military, Thompson replaced his sailboats with steamboats, earning a contract to carry government freight at \$100 per

⁷ E. Kimbark MacColl and Harry Stein, *Merchants, Money and Power: The Portland Establishment, 1843-1913* (Portland, OR: The Georgian Press, 1988), 51-53; "Portland—How it Came to Be the Oregon Emporium," *West Shore*, August 1881, 204-205.

⁸ Quoted in Arthur Throckmorton, *Oregon Argonauts: Merchant Adventurers on the Western Frontier* (Portland: Oregon Historical Society Press, 1961), 186; Portlanders sometimes worried about the effect of wartime spending on the economy, thinking that it drew capital away from productive investment in infrastructure. Merchants chafed at the need to accept government scrip of uncertain value in payment for goods. Dorothy Johansen, "Capitalism on the Far-Western Frontier: The Oregon Steam Navigation Company" (PhD diss., University of Washington, 1941), 62; *The Portland Directory for the Year 1863* (Portland, OR: S.J. McCormick, 1863, 10; Throckmorton, *Oregon Argonauts*, 189-196.

ton. In 1858 Thompson's line extended the chain of steamboats running east from Portland to Wallula.⁹

The goods he carried followed a tortuous path. Several companies handled freight on three different sections of the Columbia River, each divided from the others by impassable rapids. Portlanders and their Californian partners owned boats that spewed wood smoke past forests of hemlock and Douglas fir, against a current hidden by the width and apparent calm of the lower river. Forty miles upstream the river spilled between walls of waterfall-laced basalt, down dangerous rapids at the Cascades. Portlanders with capital to lose allowed their steamboats to go no farther. Their crews tossed cargo to smaller boats that carried it to portages on both sides of the river. From there, for six miles, people and mules carried freight between the basalt and the hurtling river to where steamboats could again take the load on the Middle Columbia. In the course of twenty miles the mountains surrounding the river stripped clouds of their rain. Around each bend, Douglas fir gave way to ponderosa pine, and ponderosa to lodge pole pine, and finally to a world of grey water and blue sky split by brown hills. At The Dalles freight shifted again to animals that carried it more than a dozen miles. The path ended above Celilo Falls, where even salmon struggled against the river, risking Indian fisherman poised above the roiling water. Finally at the Upper Columbia, an arduous portage and a good hour's steam from firewood, freight traveled on Thompson's line with the westerly summer winds toward upriver army posts and Indian agencies. Each handoff slowed trade and offered a chance for a different company to claim profits.¹⁰

⁹ Johansen, "Capitalism on the Far-Western Frontier," 63-65; Quiett, *They Built the West*, 345; D.W. Meinig, *The Great Columbia Plain: A Historical Geography, 1805-1910* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1968, 1995), 209-210.

¹⁰ For background on the company and the river, see Johansen, "Capitalism on the Far-Western Frontier."

STEAM NAVIGATION AND PORTLAND'S HINTERLAND

It was these links that John Ainsworth united in a single company in 1860. Ainsworth first brought Portland steamboat operators together with the portage owners at the Cascades in the Union Transportation Company in 1859. He then negotiated with R.R. Thompson to extend the company's reach to the upper river. Thompson and his business partner agreed to put their boats and a portage around Celilo Falls into the company. The fourteen-mile portage and the pair's lucrative contract to carry government freight allowed them to dictate terms to Ainsworth and the other incorporators, who accepted their valuation of the property they contributed to the company and paid them a cash bonus to join. As with the plank road, rural people could claim much of the credit for the early transportation network that linked them to Portland. Ainsworth became the first president of the new Oregon Steam Navigation Company with twenty shares of its stock, but most of the ownership, at least 205 of the company's 345 shares, remained in the hands of rural people: Thompson, his partner, and owners of portages at the Cascades, men who lived in the rural Northwest, but aspired to circles in California and the East that wealth could open to them.¹¹

Government activity in the Northwest made the new company a quick success. Shortly after its incorporation, a series of mining booms developed in Idaho valleys. Wholly unable to supply themselves, miners depended on Portland for supplies. The company found customers at Oro Fino, along the Salmon River, in the Owhyee country, and near Boise. Beginning in 1861 it also secured a series of exclusive contracts to carry government freight upriver from Portland. Portland merchants shipped more goods upstream than could be transported over the portages,

¹¹Daniel Bradford, who controlled the most developed portage at the Cascades, commanded 115 of the company's 345 shares and still retained control of his portage independent from the new company. Thompson and his business partner, L.W. Coe, controlled ninety shares. Oscar Winther, *The Old Oregon Country: A History of Frontier Trade, Transportation, and Travel* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 1950), 231-234; Johansen, "Capitalism on the Far-Western Frontier," 76-77.

leading Ainsworth and Thompson to buy both banks at the Cascades and build a six-mile railroad on the Oregon side of the river. In control of the river where it cut through a narrow gorge and fell through the rapids, the company faced no competition. The Oregon Steam Navigation Company saw its business expand with the region's military needs and mining booms. By the end of the 1860s, the company pushed its operations into British Columbia and farther into Idaho. Company boats operated above the Canadian border on the Columbia and pack trains affiliated with the steamboats brought freight to within 125 miles of the Missouri River in Montana and to within 150 miles of Salt Lake City.¹²

In large part, the new company's service area was Portland's rural hinterland. Even as most of the city's trade was with farmers close at hand, in the Tualatin and Willamette valleys, the city celebrated the spread of its influence to the east. The city's 1863 directory advertised the travel networks that connected Portland to the rest of the Northwest. It was 391 steamboat miles to the mining town of Lewiston, on the confluence of the Snake and Columbia. From there, a traveler could take a wagon 83 miles to Oro Fino or a pack train 136 miles to Elk City or 120 miles to Florence City. A relatively short steamboat trip to The Dalles opened up travel to Montana's Powder River. By 1866 the directory advertised travel to Boise and to Fisherville in British Columbia. Benefiting from army contracts and a water route beyond the Cascades, Portland merchants faced little meaningful competition in the region. Boosters noted that the city's financial influence extended with transportation networks. As the city directory put it, "the citizens of Portland are foremost in coming forward to aid in such enterprises" that required either skill or capital in Oregon or Washington Territory.¹³

¹² Winther, *The Old Oregon Country*, 235-238; Johansen, "Capitalism on the Far-Western Frontier," 70; Ainsworth, "Untitled Autobiography," 55-67.

¹³ *The Portland Directory for the Year 1863* (Portland, OR: S.J. McCormick, 1863), 12, 14-16; *The Portland Directory for the Year 1866* (Portland, OR: S.J. McCormick, 1866), 26-31; Throckmorton, *Oregon Argonauts*, 70;

The authors of Portland's city directories were part of a nineteenth-century tradition of urban promotion. A band of professional publicists, elected officials, and professionals like clergymen, lawyers, and commission agents touted the accomplishments of cities from coast to coast. The boosters pointed to the refinement of urban business culture and the commercial reach of a city's trade. Predicting the fortunes to be made in selling to the hinterland and in brokering hinterland products was a way of building a sense of community among businessmen who might otherwise pursue only individual interests. It was also a way to attract business to the city. Portland's boosters pointed to the certainty of the city's success and to the particularly admirable way its businessmen blended energetic ambition with stolid conservatism. The boosters wrote and published prolifically. Their sources dominate the historical record, and their view of urban power and the distinctions they drew between city and country are easy to take for granted.¹⁴

Portland's business interests flowed with the boats, against the river's current carrying capital, credit, and supplies to the Columbia basin. Early boosters made the distinction between city and country seem natural, as they carved an identity for the city from the surrounding region. Urban merchants supplied skill and capital, while rural miners sent gold and orders for goods back downriver. But those distinct categories only appeared natural and stable. By 1871 Indians, perhaps displaced by a decade and a half of war and mining or merely seeking opportunity, had moved to the city, disrupting the tidy flows between the city and the world beyond the portage at the Cascades. Portlanders complained, as a Salem newspaper put it, that Indians "made trouble there by being drunk and disorderly." A federal agent, charged with "hunting up Indians," traveled to the city, arrested ninety-one natives, and sent them packing for the reservations they

James Tattersall, "The Economic Development of the Pacific Northwest to 1920" (PhD diss., University of Washington, 1960), 55.

¹⁴ Carl Abbott, *Boosters and Businessmen: Popular Economic Thought and Urban Growth in the Antebellum Middle West* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1981); Timothy Mahoney, "'A Common Band of Brotherhood': Male Subcultures, the Booster Ethos, and the Origins of Urban Social Order in the Midwest of the 1840s," *Journal of Urban History* 25 (July 1999): 619-646.

had supposedly left. The story did not make it into the city's booster literature, but this, too, was evidence of the city's hinterland: the vast majority of the arrested Indians were from beyond Oregon. Eighty-eight of the ninety-one "belonged" to reservations in Washington or Idaho territories. The analogs in the story matched more than the tributary territory the city claimed. The expulsion of supposedly hinterland Indians from Portland speaks to the role of state-sponsored violence in creating the city's hinterland in the first place. And it speaks to the instability of a distinction that centered power in cities and resources in the surrounding territory.¹⁵

Indeed, the Portland boosters' belief that concentrated capital distinguished the city from the rest of the Northwest rubbed against uncomfortable realities that threatened to erode the boosters' neat story. Wealth overlapped the divide between city and country unevenly. Miners in the Idaho gold fields paid dearly for their supplies, while local merchants joined Portlanders in marking up goods. Flour that sold for \$0.04 per pound in Portland cost miners \$0.60 in Boise. Shipping costs accounted for much of the increase, but overland packers between Walla Walla and Boise, not the Oregon Steam Navigation Company, claimed most of these. Idaho merchants marked up each pound of flour they received some sixty percent above the cost of purchase and shipping. The local profiteering was even more striking in sales of molasses. Seventy cents worth of molasses in Portland sold for \$6.04 at the mines, with local merchants claiming a markup of \$2.96, more than half the total price difference. Portlanders may have imagined wealth flowing downstream to pay for supplies, but profits were also to be made in the hinterland. In exchange for their share of the prices miners paid, Portland merchants were forced to extend favorable

¹⁵ Quoted in "State Record," *The Dalles Weekly Mountaineer*, 12 August 1871, 2.

credit to hinterland trading partners, often waiting months for payment, or risk missing out on the mining boom. Some in the hinterland found fortunes in trade with the city.¹⁶

Merchants were not the only hinterland residents to find opportunity in the inchoate distinctions and thickening connections between Portland and the rural northwest. The Oregon Steam Navigation Company's growth contributed to subsidiary industry along the Columbia, particularly in supplying the company with wood. Portland's trade ran on firewood, with each roundtrip between Celilo and Lewiston requiring fifty cords. So important was wood that the company listed "wood on hand" in its balance sheet along with "cash on hand." Geography shaped some of the importance that the company gave to wood. Forests give way to arid grasslands a few miles upstream from the portage at the Cascades. In the 1870s the company experimented with more efficient boilers and employees reported on the comparative fuel efficiency of different boats, but there was no getting around the fact that steamboats burned wood by the cord through hundreds of miles of grassland. From the 1860s on, the company carried above the Celilo portage all the wood that fueled its boilers, nearly three thousand cords a year. Moving wood by railcar was expensive and required muscle to load and unload, but this hassle paled in comparison to others the company confronted. In 1866 the Oregon Steam Navigation Company carried wood by pack train from Umatilla to power a new boat on the Snake. Portland's hinterland trade did not rely only on modern steamboats owned by the region's largest corporation, but also on the labor of mechanics, woodcutters, packers, and stevedores, in

¹⁶ Johansen, "Capitalism on the Far-Western Frontier," 90; Throckmorton, *Oregon Argonauts*, 260-261. The need to extend favorable credit in order to ensure hinterland trade lasted beyond the mining boom. Portland Board of Trade, *Report of the President and Secretary for the Year Ending July 31, 1879* (Portland, OR: A.G. Walling, 1880), 21.

Portland and The Dalles. Hinterland trade was more than finance; it was also work that enriched some while leaving others mainly with sore muscles.¹⁷

Still, the same chance of geography that allowed a monopoly on the river, offered ways for rural workers to turn hinterland trade to their own advantage. Wood contractors sprang up along the river, particularly near the Cascades, constructing wharfs and stacking thousands of cords of wood on them and the adjoining banks. The wood business developed a secondary market, with favored contractors buying from smaller suppliers and selling it to the company at a profit. So acute was the Oregon Steam Navigation Company's need and so secure the contractors' hold on the business, that company vice president Simeon Reed noted that "I learn that at many of the 'Wood Yards' along the river it is the custom to cut their wood short" and instructed employees not to accept cord wood any shorter than four feet.¹⁸ The Oregon Steam Navigation Company also faced problems at other points along its line, particularly at the portages. In the company's early days, when rural stockholders still held the portages independently, they pilfered goods that lined up there, compelling the urban shareholders to pay damages, sometimes reaching \$10,000 a month, to the shippers. Even after the Oregon Steam Navigation Company took control of the portages and built a railroad, it contended with employees who skimmed food shipments to feed Indians who lived with or near them. Reed complained that his employees "keep constantly about them a number of Squaws & their

¹⁷ S.G. Reed "The Columbia River and the O.S.N. Company," *Oregonian*, 12 April 1878, 1; "Memorandum of Wood on Hand," 1 January 1865, John C. Ainsworth Collection, Coll. 250, University of Oregon Special Collections, Box 5, Folder 2; "Resources of the Oregon Steam Navigation Company," 30 November 1869, John C. Ainsworth Collection, Coll. 250, University of Oregon Special Collections, Box 9, Folder 4; Winther, *The Old Oregon Country*, 247; Thomas Merry to J.C. Ainsworth, 17 January 1876, John C. Ainsworth Collection, Coll. 250, University of Oregon Special Collections, Box 7, Folder 8; Johansen, "Capitalism on the Far-Western Frontier," 192.

¹⁸ S.G. Reed to the Pursers, 16 July 1869, in *The Letters and Private Papers of Simeon Gannett Reed*, vol. 3 *Letters of Simeon Gannett Reed, 1868-1877* (Portland, OR: Works Projects Administration, 1940).

families” and asked a manager to investigate which employees had been purchasing less than the usual amount of food from a local trader.¹⁹

The same peculiarities of the Columbia River that allowed the company to exclude competitors led it to concentrate most of its operations in The Dalles, where county officials came to see the company as a source of revenue. Transshipment of goods and people across portage railways at the Cascades meant that after a long day of traveling, cargoes and passengers had to lay over in The Dalles. It was here that the company built its repair shops, swelling the population ten-fold in the eight years before 1864. Wasco County taxed many of the company’s boats and much of its rolling stock. The company paid more taxes to the county than the next twenty-three tax payers combined, and the county frequently increased the company’s assessment, its officials refusing corporate officers’ requests to travel to Portland to hammer out the equalization. Abstractions about hinterland trade and urban power masked a complicated enterprise. Labor spread along hundreds of river miles, as much as clever deployment of urban capital, produced the city’s trade network.²⁰

¹⁹ S.G. Reed to S.B. Jones, 28 May 1868, in *The Letters and Private Papers of Simeon Gannett Reed*, vol. 3, *Letters of Simeon Gannett Reed, 1868-1877* (Portland, OR: Works Projects Administration, 1940). Joel Hamilton to President OSN Co., 27 October 1874, John C. Ainsworth Collection, Coll. 250, University of Oregon Special Collections, Box 5, Folder 10; S.G. Reed to F.T. Dodge, 20 September 1868, in *The Letters and Private Papers of Simeon Gannett Reed*, vol. 3, *Letters of Simeon Gannett Reed, 1868-1877* (Portland, OR: Works Projects Administration, 1940); John Ainsworth, “Untitled Autobiography,” 55-56. It is unclear whether the company relied on Native labor. Thompson’s predecessor company had and there was a dense population of Natives at the Cascades, but there is no record of the Indians working for the company. For Indians at the Cascades, see Andrew Fisher, *Shadow Tribe: The Making of Columbia River Indian Identity* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2010).

²⁰ For the Dalles population, see William Robbins, *Landscapes of Promise: The Oregon Story, 1800-1940* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1997), 144. The company paid twice as much in taxes to Wasco County and The Dalles as it did to Multnomah County and Portland. “Annual Statement of Disbursements of Oregon Steam Navigation Company for Fourteen Months Ending November 30, 1869,” John C. Ainsworth Collection, Coll. 250, University of Oregon Special Collections, Box 9, Folder 4. See also, “Who Pays the Highest Taxes,” *The Dalles Weekly Mountaineer*, 12 September 1874, 2; S.G. Reed to Board of Equalization of Wasco County, 29 September 1868, in *The Letters and Private Papers of Simeon Gannett Reed*, vol. 3, *Letters of Simeon Gannett Reed, 1868-1877* (Portland, OR: Works Projects Administration, 1940); S.G. Reed to E.L Perham, 11 September 1868, in *The Letters and Private Papers of Simeon Gannett Reed*, vol. 3, *Letters of Simeon Gannett Reed, 1868-1877* (Portland, OR: Works Projects Administration, 1940).

Portland's Oregon Steam Navigation Company generated both profits and ill will. After earning a forty-eight percent return in its first year of operation, the stockholders decided to increase the company's capitalization to \$2 million. The Washington Territorial Legislature refused to approve the new capitalization, so in 1862 Ainsworth and his associates moved the company's legal headquarters to Oregon, organizing under the state's new general incorporation statute, a relatively recent method of providing industry with state support. By the middle of the 1860s, the value of the company's equipment and the dividends it issued reflected this increased capitalization. In 1864, the company counted more than half a million dollars in profits. The next year was better, with profits of \$667,835. The profits of the company would begin to fall off in the late 1860s, but the company still managed to provide its owners with an average annual return of roughly twenty-three percent over a period of nineteen years.²¹

The company developed its monopoly over Columbia Basin trade in cooperation with the federal government. Indeed, federal contracts and river improvements were instrumental in forging Portland's connections with its hinterland and in determining the form the connections would take over the course of two decades. The Oregon Steam Navigation Company won its first open-ended government contract shortly after John Ainsworth returned from his 1861 lobbying trip to Washington, D.C. That May an officer at Fort Vancouver agreed to ship government supplies exclusively with the company for the coming year. The agreement became perennial. Rumors circulated from the early 1860s to the Nez Perce war of the late 1870s about how much the company charged the army and the underhanded tricks it used to drain public coffers. A Washington paper reported that soldiers slept in the open, but paid the full cabin passenger rate.

²¹ Johansen, "Capitalism on the Far-Western Frontier," 92-93, 274; "Memorandum Book 1864-1865," John C. Ainsworth Collection, Coll. 250, University of Oregon Special Collections, Box 10, Folder 3; R.R. Thompson to D. Bradford, 15 June 1866, John C. Ainsworth Collection, Coll. 250, University of Oregon Special Collections, Box 7, Folder 12; Ainsworth, "Untitled Autobiography," 53. For changes in corporation law, see Brian Balogh, *A State Out of Sight: The Mystery of National Authority in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 309-351.

Some said the government paid the company \$400,000 a year, while other speculated the government contracts brought in far less. In reality, army shipments probably declined dramatically as a proportion of the company's revenues after the early 1860s. In 1869, government freight and passenger charges made up \$32,230 out of total revenues of \$701,029.²²

While federal contracts did not account for the bulk of the Oregon Steam Navigation's business, they did shape transportation on the Columbia. The owners of the company understood this when in 1874 they lost a mail contract to a competitor at The Dalles, a man named Moody. Moody's successful bid required him to build a steamboat to carry the mail. The contract was worth a paltry \$15,000 a year, but the Oregon Steam Navigation Company sent its vice president, Simeon Reed, to plead with the postmaster general. Reed understood that any government contract that the company won was a contract kept out of the hands of competitors, and he worked hard to deny Moody access to the federal largesse. Reed instructed Ainsworth to delay the materials, which needed to be shipped from Portland, necessary for Moody to build his boat. Then as Moody carried mail by land, canoe, and in smuggled cargo on an Oregon Steam Navigation Company boat, Reed set the company's Washington, D.C. lawyer to work getting the contract revoked.²³

Contracts were not the company's only relationship to the federal government. The company cooperated with the government informally in ways that blurred private action and

²² The company also managed to sell the government most of its livestock after building portage railways in the 1860s, netting some \$70,000. Ainsworth, "Diary, 1861," 13 May 1861, 29 May 1861; "Memorandum of Agreement," 13 May 1864, John C. Ainsworth Collection, Coll. 250, University of Oregon Special Collections, Box 5, Folder 2; Johansen, "Capitalism on the Far-Western Frontier," 84; Ainsworth, "Untitled Autobiography," 60; "Outrageous," *Washington Standard*, 25 August 1877, 4; "Local News Brevities," *Washington Standard*, 25 April 1879, 1; "Annual Income of the Oregon Steam Navigation Co. in Fourteen Months Ending November 30, 1869," John C. Ainsworth Collection, Coll. 250, University of Oregon Special Collections, Box 9, Folder 4.

²³ S.G. Reed to Ainsworth, 21 July 1874, John C. Ainsworth Collection, Coll. 250, University of Oregon Special Collections, Box 7, Folder 9; S.G. Reed to Ainsworth, 15 June 1874, John C. Ainsworth Collection, Coll. 250, University of Oregon Special Collections, Box 7, Folder 9; N.L. Jeffries to John Routt, 10 July 1874, John C. Ainsworth Collection, Coll. 250, University of Oregon Special Collections, Box 7, Folder 9.

state power. In the mid-1860s the government chose John Gates, the Oregon Steam Navigation Company's chief engineer, as inspector of boilers in the Northwest. The position called on Gates to inspect boats he helped maintain during his day job. He did both his private and public work on the Oregon Steam Navigation Company's boats, traveling up the Columbia to certify boilers the company likely needed him to oversee maintenance of anyway. As a perquisite, he billed the federal government for the cost of travel on his employer's boats. Gates must have enjoyed the easy money, and the company may have benefited from his power to regulate other steam-powered boats in the region.²⁴

The advantages of a close relationship with the Army Corps of Engineers were more tangible. The corps opened a Portland office in 1871, and quickly came to see the Oregon Steam Navigation Company as a source of intelligence about the Columbia. Its commanding officers routinely asked John Ainsworth which rapids on the Snake and Columbia he considered most in need of improvement. Ainsworth was happy to suggest rocks to be removed. The corps also relied on Ainsworth to report the value of goods and the number of people the company carried over the river so the corps could make a case to Congress for increased funding. When contracts were available, the Oregon Steam Navigation Company declared intent to bid on them. Neither senders nor recipients of letters saw this as untoward. As Simeon Reed put it in a note to the local commander, it just made sense: "As our company is more interested than anybody in the improvement of Snake River, it seems to me we ought to bid on the work."²⁵ What seemed above board to Reed struck rural Northwesterners, in the words of a Walla Walla paper, as a

²⁴ M.P. Deady to John Gates, 8 July 1864, John Gates Papers, Ax 36, University of Oregon Special Collections, Box 1, Folder 2; John Gates, "Mileage as Charged and Sent to Department," August 1866, John Gates Papers, Ax 26, University of Oregon Special Collections, Box 1, Folder 2.

²⁵ S.G. Reed to John Wilson, 7 May 1878, Records of the Office of the Chief of Engineers, Portland District, RG 77, National Archives and Records Administration Seattle, Entry 5, Box 27.

troubling appropriation of common resources to benefit “a monopoly that is crushing the people.”²⁶

A century and a half later, there are people who are clearly part of the state and people who are not. The judges and government attorneys, bureaucrats, and appointed officials who do the people’s business, fall within the state. Private actors, people whose labor brings returns to owners of capital or who pursue interests without the recognized consent of a broad swath of the population, sometimes influence the state, but for the most part, their purposes are not the recognized purposes of the state. In the mid-nineteenth-century Northwest, as actually in much of the country, modern state was only partially formed. Only recently, after all, corporations had served expressly public functions. Efforts to distinguish between public obligations and private gain were ongoing. Oregon’s 1862 statute on general incorporations and similar laws in other states were a start, but they not do enough to clearly separate the state from private actors.²⁷

Steamship company officers, judges, and fish commissioners still saw public and private interests as blending into one another. In a region lacking developed institutions, governments and the largest corporations seemed to have more in common than not. Perhaps this is why when the city of Portland needed cash in 1865, it accepted a loan from the Oregon Steam Navigation

²⁶ William Willingham, *Army Engineers and the Development of Oregon: A History of the Portland District U.S. Army Corps of Engineers* (Portland, OR: Army Corps of Engineers, 1983), 16-26; “That Appropriation,” *Walla Walla Union*, 31 January 1874, 2. See also, John Wilson to J.C. Ainsworth, 18 April 1876, John C. Ainsworth Collection, Coll. 250, University of Oregon Special Collections, Box 8, Folder 2; John Wilson to J.C. Ainsworth, 20 February 1877, John C. Ainsworth Collection, Coll. 250, University of Oregon Special Collections, Box 8, Folder 2; S.G. Reed to Frank Dodge, 12 August 1868, in *The Letters and Private Papers of Simeon Gannett Reed*, vol. 3, *Letters of Simeon Gannett Reed, 1868-1877* (Portland, OR: Works Projects Administration, 1940); J.C. Ainsworth to N. Michler, 2 July 1875, Records of the Office of the Chief of Engineers, Portland District, RG 77, National Archives and Records Administration, Seattle, Entry 5, Box 25; J.C. Ainsworth to John Wilson, c. 1876, Records of the office of the Chief of Engineers, Portland District, RG 77, National Archives and Records Administration Seattle, Entry 5, Box 27.

²⁷ The view that the state is little more than a common cultural understanding that some activities are coherently state-like relies on Timothy Mitchell, “Society, Economy, and the State Effect,” in George Steinmetz, ed., *State/Culture: State-Formation after the Cultural Turn* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1999), 76-97; Lawrence Friedman, *A History of American Law* (New York: Touchstone, 1973, 2005), 390-400. For public corporations, see William Roy, *Socializing Capital: The Rise of the Large Industrial Corporation in America* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997), 71-77, 83-97. For a more dyspeptic view emphasizing the culture of private and public corruption in post-Civil War America, see White, *Railroaded*; Balogh, *A State Out of Sight*.

Company for nearly \$5,000. And that is why when countless government officials and others who served the public as doctors and ministers, wrote to the company's central office requesting free passes, they appealed to the concern for the common good that they argued government and private corporations held in common. These men, and often their families, the arguments went, deserved free passes because they worked for the good of the region. They prepared Oregon's display at the 1876 Centennial Exposition, administered government in Washington Territory, or studied fish propagation on the Columbia. John Ainsworth and his partners approved the passes. It made sense to allow state functions to fill their boats. After all, payment for government freights littered their ledgers, and it would not do to antagonize the men who disbursed them. Portland's postmaster got a free pass for his daughter. Another pass went to a Brigadier General in the quartermaster's office. Relatives of army officers generally traveled for free.²⁸

The system of passes relied on the sense that corporate and common interests were aligned and that the Oregon Steam Navigation Company served the people in cooperation with and even in the role of the state. But it was a morally awkward business. Some writers felt the need to explain their requests as part of a pattern set by others. A newly appointed federal judge explained in his request for a pass that federal marshals and judges who had preceded him in office had always received passes. The United States attorney for Washington Territory requested a pass in light of his appointment, but then found himself in an uncomfortable position

²⁸ S.A. Clarke to President and Directors Oregon Steam Navigation Co., 9 January 1875, John C. Ainsworth Collection, Coll. 250, University of Oregon Special Collections, Box 5, Folder 8; H.B. Ferguson to J.C. Ainsworth, 12 April 1879, John C. Ainsworth Collection, Coll. 250, University of Oregon Special Collections, Box 5, Folder 9; Victor Full to J.C. Ainsworth, 11 January 1875, John C. Ainsworth Collection, Coll. 250, University of Oregon Special Collections, Box 6, Folder 5; George Cole to J.C. Ainsworth, 20 July 1876, John C. Ainsworth Collection, Coll. 250, University of Oregon Special Collections, Box 5, Folder 8; C.S. Sawtelle to OSN, 23 May 1878, John C. Ainsworth Collection, Coll. 250 University of Oregon Special Collections, Box 6, Folder 4; Johansen, "Capitalism on the Far-Western Frontier," 97.

with a judge who did not yet have one. He wrote back to Ainsworth, marking his letter as confidential, asking for a pass on behalf of the judge, and promising not to be “troublesome.”²⁹

Evidence that weighed against the supposed harmony between the public interest and the company was available for anybody who cared to look. John Ainsworth and Simeon Reed understood it. There were conflicts over taxes in Wasco County, where the company found itself pouring money into the state vessel, rather than draining it out. On the other side of the river, Ainsworth and Reed dealt with a Washington territorial legislature that disrupted company plans. After refusing to re-charter the company at a higher capitalization, the territorial legislature denied a charter to a portage railroad on the Washington side of the Cascades and even went so far as to dissolve Skamania County where the portage was located. The county had refused to allocate money for a road that might provide an alternative route around the Cascades. From Olympia’s perspective, the boundaries between county government and corporate interest were too porous, and only a larger county could function with state autonomy. The company depended on that porosity, using perquisites and probably bribes as wicks between purely state and purely private purposes. The partners sent Simeon Reed to Washington, D.C. to ensure that the boundaries between county government and the company did not harden. Reed managed to persuade friendly Congressmen to pass laws that confirmed the railroad charter and reversed Washington Territory’s dissolution of the county. His report from the legislative trenches smacked of self-satisfaction. Reed wrote to Ainsworth, “hereafter the Legislature of that Territory will be reminded that there is a ‘power above them.’”³⁰ At least in the 1860s, state actors blended easily into the Oregon Steam Navigation Company and the company cast itself as

²⁹ S.G. Wingard to J.C. Ainsworth, 26 May 1872, John C. Ainsworth Collection, Coll. 250, University of Oregon Special Collections, Box 6, Folder 1. See also, J.B. Allen to unspecified recipient, 17 April 1877, John C. Ainsworth Collection, Coll. 250, University of Oregon Special Collections, Box 5, Folder 7; S.G. Wingard to J.C. Ainsworth, 29 April 1872, John C. Ainsworth Collection, Coll. 250, University of Oregon Special Collections Box 6, Folder 4.

³⁰ Quoted in Johansen, “Capitalism on the Far-Western Frontier,” 137.

interchangeable with the state. Indeed, Reed did not specify whether that power above the Washington legislature was Congress or the Oregon Steam Navigation Company.³¹

Not surprisingly, monopoly forged with state assistance did not sit well with rural merchants and miners who depended on the company. The Oregon Steam Navigation Company earned a reputation for ungenerous business practices, even as its rates on freight from Portland to The Dalles fell from \$96 per ton to \$10 per ton. The company estimated tonnage with a measuring tape, calling forty cubic feet a ton. Rural consumers saw chicanery in the company's creative use of measuring tape, especially when it came to measuring farm equipment. To make matters worse, the company made few efforts to hide its status as a monopoly. By 1878 it refused to carry any freight over its portages that had traveled by any other line on any of the rivers that Oregon Steam Navigation Company boats plied.³²

METROPOLIS ON THE PERIPHERY

Powerful as the owners of the Oregon Steam Navigation Company were in Portland and its hinterland, they depended on capital markets in California and the East. Portland capital competed in the Idaho mines with money from New York and San Francisco. Indeed, Portland remained dependent on both cities, but especially San Francisco for supplies and investment. In the early 1860s many of the groceries that Portlanders shipped above the Cascades, including butter, onions, and potatoes, came up the coast from San Francisco. So few were Oregon's farm products that the arrival of a steamship full of imports was a major economic event. The balancing of accounts that it occasioned sent ripples through the local economy. Even when

³¹ Johansen, "Capitalism on the Far-Western Frontier," 133-137

³² Johansen, "Capitalism on the Far-Western Frontier," 85; Joseph Gaston, *Portland, Oregon: Its History and Builders* (Portland, OR: S.J. Clarke, 1911), 274; John Mitchell, "The Columbia River: Its Freedom Must be Established," 29 May 1878, in *Speeches in the United States Senate* (Unpublished), University of Oregon Special Collections, Oregon Collection, E 660.M5, vol. 2.

Portland shipped produce out, it did little credit to the city. The flour Oregon farmers produced always shipped through San Francisco, where it picked up the label “California Flour.”³³

Portland’s reliance on California left other traces in the historical record. By the 1870s, the *Willamette Farmer* carried a regular column detailing San Francisco markets. Its readers learned of prices and demand for wheat, hops, wool, and other crops in the Bay City. There were good reasons to be familiar with the California market. Of the ships that sailed from Portland and noted their destinations in 1866, the vast majority, 111 of 122 ships, turned south along the coast for San Francisco (10 went to Victoria and 1 went to Hawaii). It would be Californians who controlled the state’s first railroad in the late 1860s, and in the partially fanciful nightmares of both capitalists and farmers, Californians who controlled the state legislature. John Ainsworth worried in a letter to a fellow Oregon Democrat in 1869 that California interests wanted railroad magnate Ben Holladay elected to the United States Senate from Oregon. He paralleled the complaints of rural Oregonians when he lamented “the dangers we are constantly in from the influence of California.”³⁴

Portland was short on more than just goods for the mines. The Oregon Steam Navigation Company kept much of its money in the Bank of California during the 1860s. Even the Portland bank the company kept accounts with was hardly a home-grown institution. It was a partnership between a Portlander, William Ladd, who would become one of the owners of the Oregon Steam Navigation Company, and Charles Tilton of San Francisco. Portland’s reliance on the Bank of California was so pronounced that in 1875 when the bank temporarily closed its doors, Oregon’s

³³ There were mills in the Willamette Valley, but it is not clear whether all wheat left the state as milled flour. *The Portland Directory for the Year 1869* (Portland, OR: S.J. McCormick, 1869), 14; “Untitled,” *Oregon Farmer*, 1 January 1863, 1; “Untitled,” *Oregon Farmer*, 15 January 1863, 1; “A Word to Our Farmers,” *The Dalles Weekly Mountaineer*, 3 February 1870, 2; Throckmorton, *Oregon Argonauts*, 306.

³⁴ J.C. Ainsworth to Jesse Applegate, 22 September 1869, John C. Ainsworth Collection, Coll. 250, University of Oregon Special Collections, Letterpress vol. 1; “California Markets,” *Willamette Farmer*, 26 August 1871, 1; *The Portland Directory for the Year 1867* (Portland, OR: S.J. McCormick, 1867).

economy faltered. The bank closing came just before the annual harvest shipped, when credit was tightest, causing *West Shore* magazine to lament that Portland's "commercial relations with San Francisco are so intimate that whatever affects her markets or trade has its corresponding influence upon those of Portland."³⁵ Economic recovery depended on the California bank resuming business.³⁶

Eager not to be overwhelmed in their own region, the owners of the steamboat company used Portland as a hub for financial news, shaping flows of information between hinterland enterprises and capital markets and shaping the flow of capital through San Francisco and New York to the rural Northwest. And they harnessed the power of the state to quash competition and ensure business, sometimes harmonizing corporate interests with state functions to do it. The directors of the Oregon Steam Navigation Company sought to turn their isolation from larger capital markets to their advantage.

Both Simeon Reed, the company's vice president, and Daniel Bradford, the former owner of the Washington-side portage, flirted with the idea of offering stock on eastern markets and then manipulating the price. Reed proposed increasing the company's capitalization to \$5 million and then issuing a one percent dividend on that amount to drive up prices. Bradford's scheme was similar, if more elaborate. The company would defer repairs and issue dividends to inflate the stock. It would then cause dividends to evaporate, as it attended to deferred repairs. The stock's price would fall and the insiders would buy it back, preparing to perform the operation again. This was one of the patterns of American finance in the Gilded Age, and Bradford made clear his inspiration, saying in a letter from his new residence on the east coast, "we Know great Companies here will go & borrow money to make dividends the Announcement of which puts

³⁵ "Financial and Commercial," *West Shore*, October 1875, 7.

³⁶ "Oregon Steam Navigation Company Memorandum Book, 1864-1868," John C. Ainsworth Collection, Coll. 250, University of Oregon Special Collections, Box 10, Folder 3; Quiett, *They Built the West*, 344-345.

there Stock up 5, 10 or 15 per ct the inside Knowing ones sell large amnts of Stock.”³⁷ Reed’s plan may have been hatched in conversation with his brother, who had some familiarity with eastern stock markets. Reed retreated from his suggestion and other shareholders, who disliked Bradford, rejected his out of hand. As R.R. Thompson, the Indian agent who developed the upriver steamship line, reminded Bradford, they had gotten rich by virtue of a modicum of good sense and a fair amount of luck, “not because we were possessed of any inordinate amount of brains, for I have never before or at any time heard of any person sane or otherwise charge either of us with having more of that article than we needed.”³⁸ Under the circumstances, he suggested, Bradford ought to keep his head down and enjoy the fortune he had stumbled into.³⁹

The temptation to manipulate stock would soon trump humility. The principal shareholders in the Oregon Steam Navigation Company used and withheld information in order to lower the stock price. They let it be known that a boat they hoped to sell for \$450,000 could not attract buyers and that overland competition from San Francisco threatened profits. William Ladd, John Ainsworth, Simeon Reed, and R.R. Thompson then formed a pool to buy outstanding stock, using a Californian named Alvinza Hayward as their agent. The scheme benefited from the careful manipulation of knowledge about the company (there was a buyer for the boat after all) and Oregon’s anxieties about Californian influence. Bradford worried that Hayward represented broad California interests, and quickly sold all his shares. Other stockholders followed his lead. By the end of the 1860s, the four-person group held all of the company’s stock.⁴⁰

³⁷ Quoted in Johansen, “Capitalism on the Far Western Frontier,” 175.

³⁸ R.R. Thompson to D.F.[?] Bradford, 15 June 1866, John C. Ainsworth Collection, Coll. 250, University of Oregon Special Collections, Box 7, Folder 12.

³⁹ Johansen, “Capitalism on the Far-Western Frontier,” 170-172, 175, 177-182. For more on the use of information to manipulate stock, see White, *Railroaded*.

⁴⁰ Ainsworth, “Untitled Autobiography, 72-73.

The group gained control of the company at a difficult junction in its history. Portland merchants made their money sending upriver goods bought in San Francisco. The boats that carried them returned carrying little more than gold. In 1867 the state exported \$4,001,000 in gold, an amount that dwarfed the \$2,462,794 in all other products that producers sent outside the state. Portland depended on distant cities for capital, serving as a stopping-over place in a world of high transaction and shipping costs. The town prospered by accident of circumstance and by the shrewdness of its businessmen, who recognized an opportunity to channel New York and San Francisco goods and capital into hinterland trade. Isolation was a precarious basis for an urban economy. Improved technology, particularly the transcontinental railroad that brushed against the southern borders of the city's hinterland, threatened to smooth the friction that Portland's trade depended on. The promise of a different railroad, reliant on foreign capital, threatened to connect the Willamette Valley to California markets. Hinterland residents might cut Portlanders out of the trade and buy directly from larger and more distant cities. Portland's 1860s economy was also vulnerable to the dissipation of the Idaho mining booms. By 1870 the prospects of the Oregon Steam Navigation Company and its headquarters city looked dim. Ainsworth recounted to his children that as the Central Pacific opened trade to the Boise Basin, "the most profitable part of our river business was cut off, our business fell off more than one half."⁴¹

Averting the crisis would require changes in the structure of the city's relationship to the rural Northwest. Portland merchants responded to the end of the mining booms by forging connections between the region and global markets. Portlanders took advantage of increasing wheat production in the hinterland, tapping in the late 1860s and early 1870s fields east of the Cascades that in the previous few years had supplied miners. The Portland merchants began

⁴¹ *The Portland Directory for the Year 1869* (Portland, OR: S.J. McCormick, 1869), 7; Ainsworth, "Untitled Autobiography," 3 November 1878.

brokering wheat sales during a period of tumult in the global market. The Franco-Prussian War drove wheat prices up in Europe in the early 1870s and throughout the decade lowered shipping prices put productive Northwest wheat fields at a comparative global advantage. The first years of the 1870s were a pivot around which hinterland trade turned. No longer would boats carry their heaviest loads against the currents and no longer would Portland merchants make most of their money selling groceries and supplies upriver. Rather, the city would become a clearinghouse for hinterland products, connecting farmers to hungry consumers in Europe. As the mining boom waned, a new and heavier trade replaced upriver mining equipment with plows and downriver gold with wheat.⁴²

Oregon's transition to an economy based on wheat came quickly. Farmers sent the first wheat down river from Walla Walla in 1867. At about the same time Willamette Valley farmers plowed up more of the native prairies and drained wetlands, planting them to wheat and making it the valley's dominant crop. The new fields were immensely productive, particularly in the Palouse northeast of Walla Walla. Farmers there took advantage of well-drained soil that produced wheat with remarkably thin straw. Yields were reportedly between thirty-five and forty bushels an acre, a level of productivity that the average farm in the United States would not reach until the 1980s. Production increased dramatically both on the Columbia Plain and in the Willamette Valley during the 1870s, as Figure One and Figure Two show.⁴³

The increased wheat production may have changed the land. The flourishing market for farm produce certainly changed the way farmers thought about their fields. People who came to

⁴² Meinig, *The Great Columbia Plain*, 250; Tattersall, "The Economic Development of the Pacific Northwest to 1920," 173-174.

⁴³ David Johnson, *Founding the Far West: California, Oregon, and Nevada, 1840-1890* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 70; Throckmorton, *Oregon Argonauts*, 250; Meinig, *The Great Columbia Plain*, 233; National Agricultural Statistics Service, "National Statistics for Wheat," http://quickstats.nass.usda.gov/results/95D83E56-BCC6-3935-A058-9DA47D718FD9?pivot=short_desc; Johansen, "Capitalism on the Far-Western Frontier," 233

Oregon on the overland trail in the 1840s, 1850s, and 1860s saw nature through cultural lenses tinted by romantic views of the sublime. They lauded the aesthetic contrast between towering peaks and welcoming mountain valleys as they slogged west. When they arrived in Oregon emigrants continued to admire what they saw as the untamed fecundity of the land they settled. Farmers bragged that crops practically grew themselves. Thomas Kendall wrote of his garden in the Calapooia region of the Willamette valley that “it never received a stroke from either plough or hoe; everything flourished and produced finely.”⁴⁴ Such a comment may have reflected the actual condition of the soil. It may also have blended a belief in the power of nature with an understandable desire to impress the folks back home. In any case, the comment did little to suggest the value of farmers’ labor.⁴⁵

This view of nature’s abundance and farmers’ limited roles in ensuring it was short lived. By the 1870s farmers complained about the quality of Willamette Valley soil. David Newsom wrote in the *Willamette Farmer* that the valley’s oak savannahs were “second rate, and generally a clay subsoil, and rather sour and wild.”⁴⁶ It took real work to improve the land, a set program of cutting brush and burning it to build up the soil. Other farmers wrote to the newspaper with instructions for controlling weeds and rotating crops to stave off soil exhaustion. There was an increasing awareness of the need to spread manure on Willamette Valley farms. And there were worrying reports of declining yields. A farmer wrote to the *Willamette Farmer* in 1872 that a field he had planted for fifteen years had seen its wheat and barley yield drop from thirty bushels per acre to sixteen. By the end of the 1870s, the newspaper noted that this was the average yield

⁴⁴ Quoted in Peter Boag, *Environment and Experience: Settlement Culture in Nineteenth-Century Oregon* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 89.

⁴⁵ On the overland emigrants and romantic views of nature, see Devon McCurdy, “‘A Sight So Nobly Grand’: Work, Nature, and Culture on the Overland Trail” (BA thesis, Carleton College, 2005).

⁴⁶ David Newsom, “A Chapter of Items,” *Willamette Farmer*, 29 July 1871, 1.

valley-wide, but that “it is possible, by good management and cultivation of the right character at the right time, to secure 20 and perhaps 25 bushels average yield on all good farming lands.”⁴⁷

It is difficult to know how well the pages of the farmers’ newspaper reflected conditions on the land. Agricultural censuses did not report information necessary to calculate crop yields for 1860 or 1870. In 1880 the yield for wheat in the Willamette Valley was fifteen bushels per acre, but it increased over the next decade to hit twenty-one bushels per acre in 1890. It is also likely that plows had broken much of the valley’s sod only recently. The 1860 census revealed 800,227 acres of improved land, including both tilled fields and pastures, in Willamette Valley counties. By 1870, farmers had improved another 157,876 acres. The 1880 census revealed the effects of the new market in wheat. Farmers improved another 568,181 acres to bring the total improved acreage to 1,562,284 in the decade after 1870. Farmers reacted to the new market in wheat by bringing pasturage into row crop production, so the near doubling of improved land in twenty years probably understates the increase in tilled land. Some of this land may have been exhausted, but much of it was too newly cultivated to be low in nutrients. There is reason to think that the discussion about land reflected more than changes in the soil.⁴⁸

The articles on declining yields and the need to apply labor to land in the Willamette Valley shared column space with articles about scientific agriculture elsewhere. Especially in the late 1870s, the *Willamette Farmer* featured stories based on farming experiments beyond the Northwest. Oregon farmers may have joined others in touting the skill necessary to farm

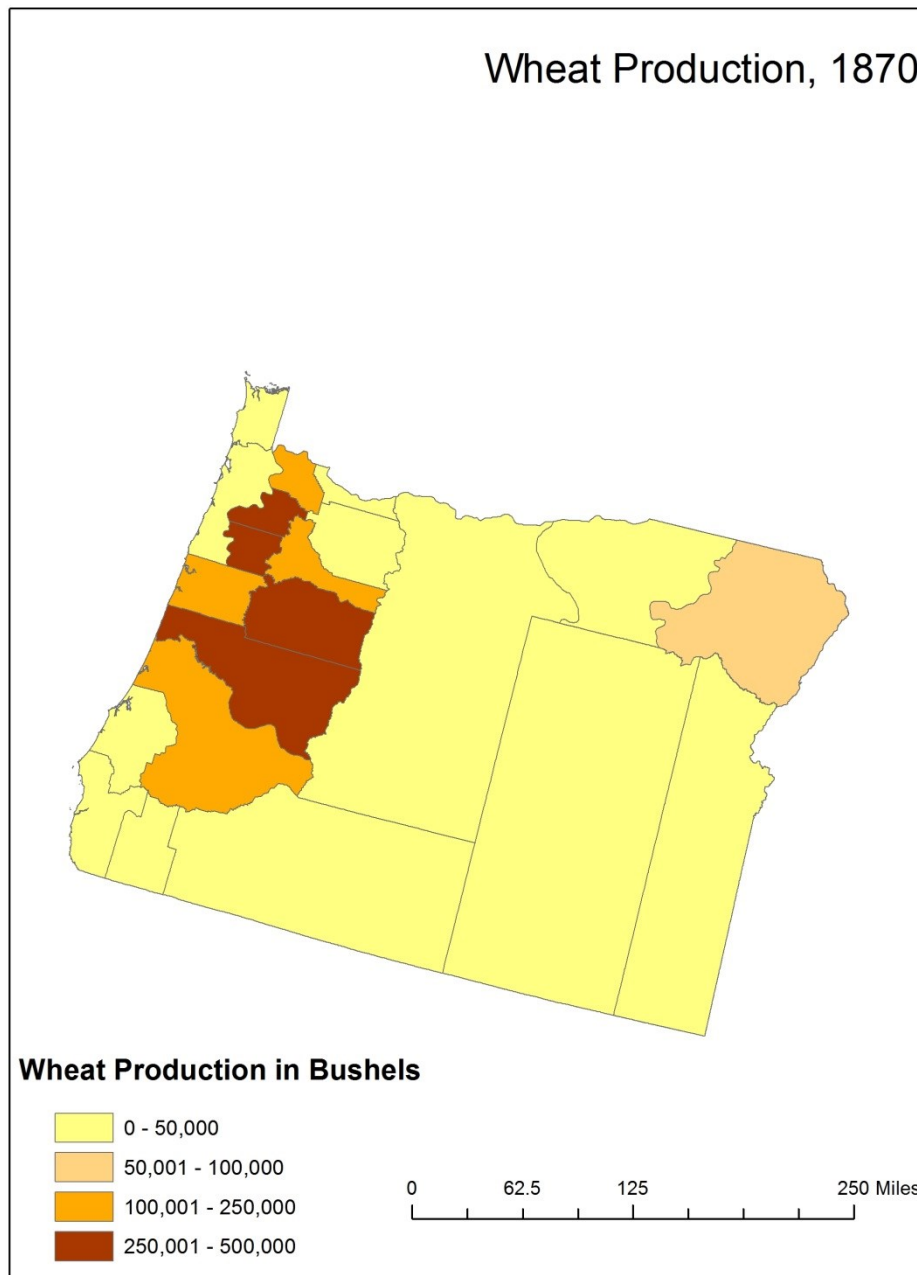
⁴⁷ “Proper Cultivation,” *Willamette Farmer*, 6 September 1878, 4. “Capital and Labor Applied to Land,” *Willamette Farmer*, 10 February 1872, 3; “Results of Vicious Farming,” *Willamette Farmer*, 27 April 1872, 2; “Early Cut Hay—Destroying Weeds,” *Willamette Farmer*, 12 August 1871, 1.

⁴⁸ There was a slight decline in corn yields between 1880 and 1890, which may be notable because corn removes nutrient from soil at a high rate. For the census data, see Superintendent of Census, *Agriculture of the United States*, vol. 3, *Eighth Census* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1864), 120; Superintendent of Census, *The Statistics of The Wealth and Industry of the United States*, vol. 3, *Ninth Census* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1872), 230; Census Office, *Report on the Productions of Agriculture as Returned at the Tenth Census* vol. 3, *Tenth Census* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1883), 130, 202; Census Office, *Report on the Statistics of Agriculture* vol. 5, *Eleventh Census* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1895), 381.

effectively. They may also have recognized political advantage in emphasizing the difficulty of farming. Paeans to the fertility of the valley did little to secure the farmer's status as an important contributor to society. If, on the other hand, the land could not produce by itself and needed careful and reasoned management of weeds and nutrients, then farmers were vital to the economic boom of the 1870s. This was a case farmers were eager to make in the 1870s. Writing about the land was one way to make it.⁴⁹

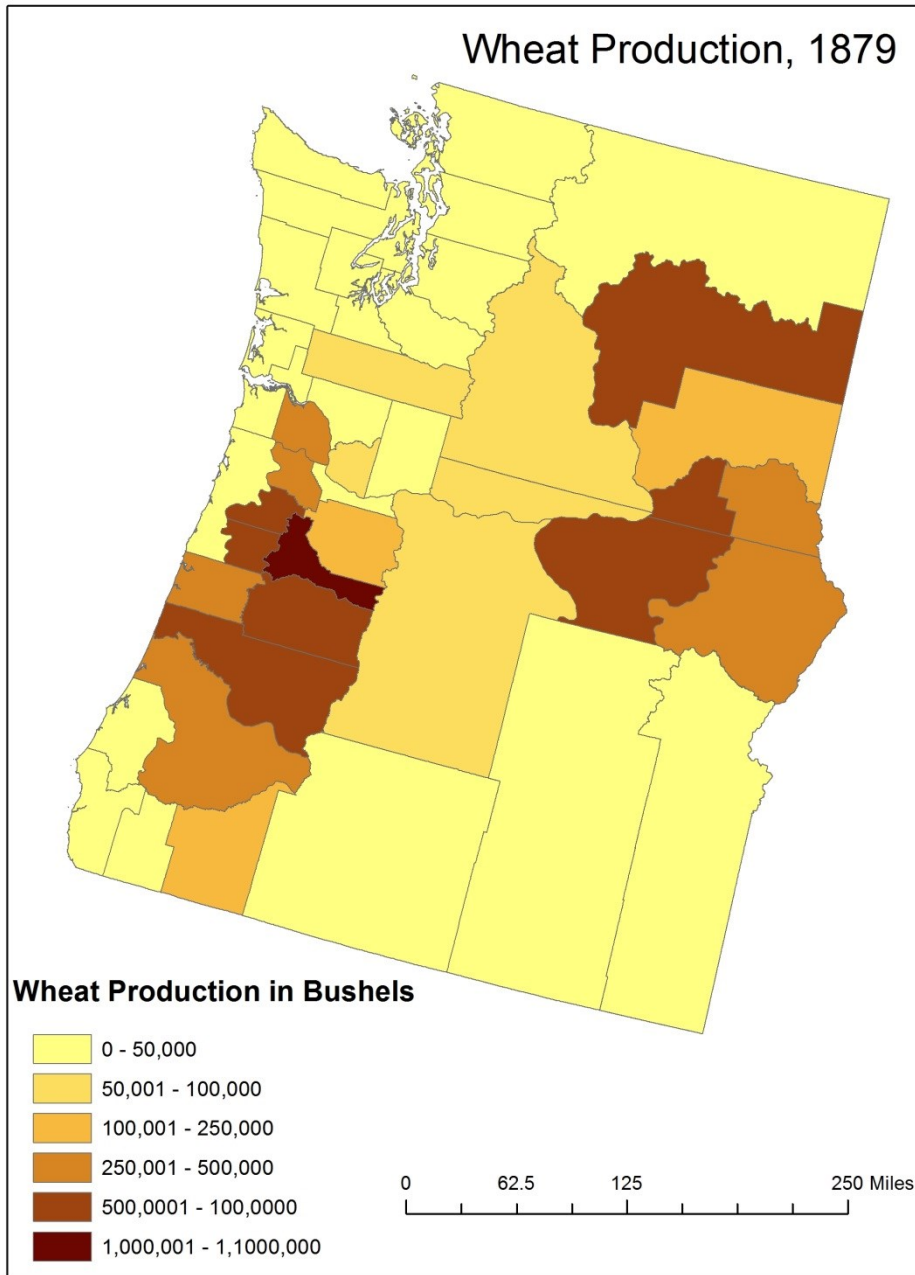
⁴⁹ For examples of stories on farming beyond the region, see "Summer Fallowing," *Willamette Farmer*, 16 May 1874, 6; "Preserve the Soil," *Willamette Farmer*, 29 March 1878, 2.

Figure One: Wheat Production, 1870⁵⁰



⁵⁰ Superintendent of Census, *The Statistics of The Wealth and Industry of the United States*, 230-231. The 1870 census did not provide wheat harvest statistics for Washington Territory.

Figure Two: Wheat Production, 1880⁵¹



⁵¹ Census Office, *Report on the Productions of Agriculture as Returned at the Tenth Census*, 130,138-139, 202, 210.

NORTHWEST FARMS AND THE WORLD

The new wheat cargoes put rural labor at the center of Oregon's political economy in a way that sales of supplies to miners had not. Portland's prosperity now relied directly on the sweat of farmers who sent their wheat down the Columbia and Willamette rivers. These farmers had long articulated a vision of the good life to secure to them and their children a just reward for their labor. In their thinking, well-functioning markets redeemed hard work and cautious competence, while punishing speculation and idleness. As supposed embodiments of the former, farmers were destined to prosper unless corruption and monopoly interfered. In a position of new economic importance after 1870, the region's farmers breathed new life into that vision, seeking to level the economic playing field by building a well-bounded state that would smooth market processes while stamping out corruption and unfair competition. The farmers, no less than the merchants and shippers they opposed, recognized that a porous state governed the relationship between city and country in the Northwest. As they leveraged their economic position into moral and political authority, farmers sought to recast their political and economic relationship with Portland, subordinating the city to the country. Their successes would be limited, but their assumptions about the role of production would endure. Portland's new economic success carried with it the seeds of limits on urban power.

Sacks of wheat piled up on wharves and in warehouses, exceeding the Oregon Steam Navigation Company's ability to carry them. What the company could carry changed the flow of its business. In the middle of the 1860s upriver and downriver freight had roughly balanced each other. That changed by 1875, when the company shipped 14,892 tons down the Columbia, roughly fifty percent more freight than it carried up. The 1876 harvest was larger still and the 1877 harvest doubled the previous year's. Trade on the Willamette was even more striking. In

1875, Willamette river steamboats carried less upriver freight than did boats on the Columbia. But downriver freight was more than three times as heavy at 49,699 tons.⁵²

There were other changes in the flow of Northwest trade in the 1870s. By 1873 fourteen canneries on the Columbia River sent canned salmon to England and other world markets. The trade amounted to twenty-five percent of Oregon's exports by the end of the 1870s. Like wheat production, salmon canning sparked an awareness of environmental consequences. Concerns about soil exhaustion served a political purpose whose veracity was belied by increasing yields per acre. Concerns about over-fishing were less political. Canning ramped up so quickly in the 1870s that Portland merchants began to worry that they would exhaust the fishery. In 1877 the Portland Board of Trade called on the legislature to halt the "wholesale destruction of the fish" and proposed a system of taxation to support hatcheries. The Board of Trade followed federal officials in worrying about declining salmon runs as fisherman used first horses on shore to pull linen nets closed and then, after 1879, fish wheels to harvest the fish.⁵³

Portland's connections to the world proliferated. The year after the first wheat came down through the Cascades portage from Walla Walla, Portland received its first shipment of goods directly from New York. The authors of Portland's city directory hoped that further imports that bypassed San Francisco would allow merchants to "extricate themselves from the embarrassing position of paying tribute to a city whose prosperity tends to retard the growth of

⁵² J.C. Ainsworth to John Wilson, c. 1876, Records of the Office of the Chief of Engineers, Portland District, RG 77, National Archives and Records Administration Seattle, Entry 5, Box 27; Frank Dodge to John Wilson, 18 June 1877, Records of the Office of the Chief of Engineers, Portland District, RG 77, National Archives and Records Administration Seattle, Entry 7, Box 1, Folder 1.

⁵³ Portland Board of Trade, *Annual Report with Statistics Showing Oregon's Exports, Trade and Commerce for the Year Ending July 31, 1877* (Portland, OR: A.G. Walling, 1877), 7; William Robbins, *Landscape of Promise*, 133-137. For an alternate view, emphasizing habitat destruction, more than harvesting, see Joseph Taylor III, *Making Salmon: An Environmental History of the Northwest Fisheries Crisis* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1999).

Portland.”⁵⁴ Portland’s steamship sailings that year showed that the city was developing connections independent of California. In 1868 Portland had the usual departures for San Francisco, Victoria, and Hawaii, but in addition to the New York sailing there was also a sailing for Santa Barbara and one for a port in Australia. Then in 1869 the first wheat ship directly from England sailed into Portland’s harbor. The next year another twelve ships followed it. Portland’s international trade boomed. In 1870 Portland sent cargoes directly to British Columbia, Hawaii, China, England and Uruguay. In 1871 trade increased again. The city now sent cargoes worth \$373,639 to England and increased its shipments to China and South America. The city’s annual trade with England amounted to more than all the money held on account in Portland banks. By the end of the decade, Northwest farmers would ship wheat through Portland to the British Isles in sacks they bought from Calcutta and Scotland. And they borrowed foreign capital to do it. Scottish capital funded farm mortgages after the middle of the 1870s. To foster these strengthening global connections and the city’s growing independence from San Francisco, merchants began to search for somebody to head a board of trade, hoping, with little sense of irony, to poach a Californian for the job.⁵⁵

By the middle of the 1870s, Portland’s fortunes and the fortunes of the Northwest farmers who shipped wheat through the city depended on Britain. As *West Shore* put it in 1875,

⁵⁴ *The Portland Directory for the Year 1869* (Portland, OR: S.J. McCormick, 1869), 12.

⁵⁵ *The Portland Directory for the Year 1869*, 12-13; Robbins, *Landscapes of Promise*, 99-103; Throckmorton, *Oregon Argonauts*, 308; *The Portland Directory for the Year 1870* (Portland, OR: S.J. McCormick, 1871), 11; *The Portland Directory for the Year 1872* (Portland, OR: S.J. McCormick, 1872), 16; Tattersall, “The Economic Development of the Pacific Northwest to 1920,” 279; Portland Board of Trade, *Report of the President and Secretary for the Year Ending July 31, 1879* (Portland, OR: A.G. Walling, 1880), 19; S.G. Reed to R.G. Sneath, 24 July 1869, in *The Letters and Private Papers of Simeon Gannett Reed*, vol. 3, *Letters of Simeon Gannett Reed, 1868-1877* (Portland, OR: Works Projects Administration, 1940); MacColl and Stein, *Merchants Money and Power*, 214; Margaret Holden, “The Rise and Fall of Oregon Populism: Legal Theory, Political Culture, and Public Policy, 1868-1895” (PhD diss., University of Virginia, 1993), 92. Lumber preceded wheat as a global export from Portland. The first lumber shipment to Hong Kong was in 1854, though regular outbound trade in lumber and inbound receipt of immigrants would not pick up until 1869. Thomas Cox, *Mills and Markets: A History of the Pacific Coast Lumber Industry to 1900* (Seattle: University of Washington, 1974), 74, 140-141.

Portland's wharves were "lined with the red flags and lean iron hulls of British vessels."⁵⁶ Economic winds from San Francisco still ripped through Portland, but now they swirled with distant effects of Britain's economy. In 1875, Portland's new board of trade described the Northwest economy as dependent on Britain's, noting that the price of wheat had been low there in the previous year, "and we in common with other wheat exporting countries, had in consequence to accept low prices for our exports of breadstuffs."⁵⁷ Four years later the board of trade blamed weak salmon prices on bad weather in England, which had kept British picnickers indoors, preventing them from eating the Columbia River salmon they would normally have enjoyed. Stories like this of the Northwest's connections to the rest of the world explained economic disruption with a frequency that should have disturbed the boosters. And indeed, the *Oregonian* and other papers repeatedly warned of the dangers of relying on a single crop. But Portlanders had a curious way of celebrating the doldrums, for they also testified to the city's role in the world, a role that was increasingly oriented toward export and increasingly played outside of the shadow of San Francisco.⁵⁸

Especially when they explained economic downturns after 1870, Portland boosters liked to imagine a world free from the problems that distance posed to trade. So integrated was Portland with the global market that the months Oregon wheat might spend in transit seemed merely to be an afterthought. The reality was more complex, especially from the perspective of hinterland farmers. The Oregon Steam Navigation Company was still unable to carry all the wheat that farmers produced near Walla Walla. Indeed, for all its connections to the global economy, parts of the Northwest remained strikingly isolated from Portland, let alone the

⁵⁶ Thomas Merry, "Oregon Shipbuilding," *West Shore*, May 1876, 1.

⁵⁷ Portland Board of Trade, *Annual Report with Statistics Showing Oregon's Exports, Trade and Commerce for the Year Ending July 31, 1875* (Portland, OR: A.G. Walling, 1875), 4.

⁵⁸ Portland Board of Trade, *Report of the President and Secretary for the year ending July 31, 1879*, 105-106.

broader world. Goods moved on the upper reaches of rivers according to seasonal fluctuations in water level that did not align with the periods of greatest need following the harvest. Sections of the Columbia River between Wallula and Portland froze each year, blocking the mail and all other shipments for between one and three months at a time. Urgent mail went into backpacks shouldered by hardy souls with a taste for slogging through chest-deep snow. Most goods simply backed up in The Dalles, waiting for the thaw. *The Dalles Weekly Mountaineer* complained in 1874 that “a trip to Chicago or St. Louis, from this point, is more practical, and safer, than would be a journey to Portland, only one hundred and ten miles distant.”⁵⁹ Viewed from the east side of the Cascades, winter weather was only part of the problem. The costs of transportation were not evenly spread across the Northwest’s global connections. Most came in the last hundreds of miles of transportation. The same Dalles newspaper contended that it cost as much to ship a ton of goods from New York or China to Portland as it did to forward that same ton from Portland to The Dalles. One trip seemed to justify the price by requiring a boat for three or four months. The last leg of the journey took only a day or so, and it seemed unreasonable for it to make up half the cost of transporting goods.⁶⁰

Rural Northwesterners found that financial instruments and advertised balances in ledger books moved across the region and the world with far less friction than did goods or accurate information about assets that were supposed to give money meaning. New financial underwriters issued bond and stock certificates that could be sold thousands of miles away from where tangible assets generated revenue. Money moved in telegraph lines that by 1864 connected Portland to Sacramento and later stretched up the Columbia. When the lines were down, as they

⁵⁹ “Closed Up,” *The Dalles Weekly Mountaineer*, 24 December 1874, 2.

⁶⁰ “Ice Bound,” *Walla Walla Union*, 6 February 1875, 2; “Arrival of United States Mail,” *The Dalles Weekly Mountaineer*, 25 January 1868, 1; “Transportation, Columbia River Route,” *The Dalles Weekly Mountaineer*, 6 September 1872, 2.

often were, there were always the backpacks of important mail carried through the snow. Money had a way of moving more quickly than information and far more quickly than the products that earned it. The two kinds of movement, wheat on boats through a sometimes-icebound river and money through wires and in first class mail, were linked, of course. Banks and bonds could only mask the problems different travel speeds posed to the linkage between abstract money and the material world; they could not eliminate it. Rural Northwesterners learned this lesson in the late 1860s and early 1870s as they championed railroads to smooth the problems and the attendant charges that came with water transportation. To the farmers who pledged their lands and their crops as payments on stock in them, railroads seemed like a solution to the strange combination of isolation and connection that joined Northwest farms to the rest of the world. Oregon farmers did not proclaim the early-nineteenth-century saw that railroads would annihilate time and space, but expected a subtler benefit. They hoped railroads would help their products catch up to quick-moving financial accounts. Unfortunately, the results were not as simple as the dream. Railroads were more than a potential solution to incongruity between abstract and concrete connections to the market. They were also a product of a world in which capital flowed more easily than wheat or even good information. Railroad financing would subject the Northwest economy and its farmers to uncertainty caused by fraudulent dealing.⁶¹

⁶¹ For Portland's communications, see Robbins, *Landscapes of Promise*, 113-114. For the problems posed by financial instruments outpacing information see, White, *Railroaded*, 68-69; Richard White, "Information, Markets, and Corruption: Transcontinental Railroads in the Gilded Age," *Journal of American History* 90 (June 2003): 19-43. For the role of financial underwriting, see Roy, *Socializing Capital*, 100-110. The disjuncture between information and financial instruments followed quickly on the heels of the telegraph, which made it feasible to invest in securities over distance. The potential consequences of misinformation increased after the Civil War as companies used underwriters to market their securities, removing investors another step from the assets marketed securities represented. Charles Geisst, *Wall Street: A History from Its Beginnings to the Fall of Enron* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 47-48, 73-74.

PROBLEM OF DISTANCE AND PROMISE OF FINANCE

Oregon's territorial legislature had chartered four railroads in a fit of optimism during 1853 and 1854. The first concrete steps toward railroad construction came a decade later. In 1863 merchants and farmers in Jacksonville, three hundred miles by pack train and steamboat from Portland, took stock subscriptions to survey a route and build a railroad connecting Rogue River farms to both Portland and California markets. Most subscribers to the California and Columbia River Railroad promised to contribute cash, but a third of the subscribers preferred to commit wheat, ranging between five and one hundred bushels. Wheat delivered hundreds of miles from the closest seaport would do more to build public support than to lay rails, so the company's organizers sought a state subsidy. The railroads blended their interests with the state on a scale that made slouches of John Ainsworth and the Oregon Steam Navigation Company. In violation of the state constitution, Oregon's legislature approved a one mill property tax to support construction. The tax was never assessed, but the incorporators had better luck in Washington, D.C. In 1866 Congress approved a land grant of twenty square miles per mile of track for a railroad through the Willamette Valley, instructing the Oregon legislature to vest the grant in a company of its choosing.

Rich with the promise of government aid, the organizers of the California and Columbia River Railroad moved the company to Portland. They rounded up new incorporators to firm up their connection to the state, drawing in a United States senator, a member of Congress, and a state supreme court justice, along with prominent Oregon businessmen, including the leading shareholders in the Oregon Steam Navigation Company. The company persuaded the legislature to guarantee interest on \$20,000 in bonds per mile of road completed, agreeing, in what must have seemed like a familiar arrangement to the Oregon Steam Navigation people, to provide free

telegraph services to the state, free transportation to state officials, and free freight on items to be displayed at the state fair. The legislature also designated the railroad, now called the Oregon Central, as the recipient of the federal land grant. The arrangement harkened back to a period in which corporations served explicitly public purposes, but the bond guarantees were cutting edge. Corporations had just discovered bonds, using a financial network developed by the federal government during the Civil War. Bonds quickly became the security of choice because their claim on assets and income made them more palatable than stock to distant investors.⁶²

These arrangements showed the physical infrastructure's reliance on financial networks and the state. A scheme to connect Rogue River farms to the ocean began with subscriptions of wheat, but required the participation of the Northwest's wealthiest men and state aid aimed at attracting outside capital. Incorporators of the railroad actively sought outside money and the expertise that came with it. Simeon Reed would later write to a New York company offering to pay transportation costs for investors who might consider putting money into a Willamette Valley railroad. The Oregonians lacked experience building railroads, and needed to get track laid before they could sell bonds to fund the rest of the line. They needed both money and "some practical Railroad men, with sufficient means and ability to put this enterprise in shape," Reed wrote, as he explained that a trip from New York to Oregon did not take as long as a New Yorker might suppose.⁶³ Reed was right to point to shrinking travel times in the late 1860s, but

⁶² James Gilbert, *Trade and Currency in Early Oregon: A Study in the Commercial and Monetary History of the Pacific Northwest* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1907), 92-94; Joseph Gaston, "The Genesis of the Oregon Railway System," *Oregon Historical Society* 7 (June 1906): 106-113; Gaston, *Portland*, 281-288; Henry Villard, *The Early History of Transportation in Oregon*, ed. by Oswald Villard (Eugene: University of Oregon Press, 1944), 2-3; H.W. Scott, *History of Portland Oregon: With Illustrations and Biographical Sketches of Prominent Citizens and Pioneers* (Syracuse, NY: D. Mason & Co, 1890), 267-270. For the novelty of bonds, see Roy, *Socializing Capital*, 110.

⁶³ Simeon Reed to Messrs. M.K. Jessup & Co, 9 July 1869, in *The Letters and Private Papers of Simeon Gannett Reed*, vol. 2, *Letters to Simeon Gannett Reed, 1864-1872* (Portland, OR: Works Projects Administration, 1940).

the distance between Oregon and capital markets created uneven obstacles that impeded information more than they slowed capital. This was also one of the lessons of the 1860s.

A confidence artist from California named S.G. Elliott instructed Oregonians in this lesson. Elliott arrived in Oregon in the mid-1860s, claiming to represent a possibly fictional eastern railroad tycoon named Albert Cook. Elliott convinced one of the Oregon Central incorporators that he could get a railroad built fast. The two men drummed up their own bevy of Oregon notables, including Governor George Woods, to incorporate a second Willamette Valley railroad. Hoping to secure the federal land grant to itself, the second company assumed the name of the first, becoming the second (and legally dubious) Oregon Central Railroad. The Oregonians then assumed a host of obligations in exchange for \$1 million in preferred stock (which functioned much like bonds) in their new company. They agreed to pay the mysterious Albert Cook \$5.25 million to construct 150 miles of railroad and provide it with rolling stock. The new company also agreed to give Cook a \$2 million stake in the enterprise. Three weeks later, Elliott persuaded the Oregonians to up their bet and agree to pay his Cook another \$12 million for an additional 210 miles of railroad. Elliott took his contracts and the first \$1 million in stock and left for California. There he produced an agreement conveying to himself Cook's interest in the scheme, paying his fictitious friend one dollar for several million dollars in railroad contracts. Elliott promptly sold half his stock to an unsuspecting California merchant at a steep discount, getting \$2,500 to fund a trip east, supposedly to buy rails.⁶⁴

The Oregon investors were left holding their promise to take on a pile of debt without much chance of getting a railroad. Recognizing that Elliott had taken them for a ride, they sold

⁶⁴ Villard, *The Early History of Transportation in Oregon*, 3-37; "The Holladay-Elliott Case: Recital of the Case and the Full Text of the Decision of the Supreme Court of Oregon," *Oregonian*, 19 July 1879, 1. Villard had a dog in this fight, and may have seen portraying the misdeeds of his predecessors in Oregon railways as a way to redeem his own sullied reputation as an honest dealer.

their part of the enterprise to Benjamin Holladay, a California stage coach operator who had made a bundle of money running government freight and mail before selling his line to Wells Fargo for \$1.5 million. Holladay gained a corporate name of uncertain validity and its attendant claim to a substantial government land grant. Using Elliott's worthless promises as security with Californians not in a position to evaluate them, Holladay took out loans to begin construction. In 1868 both he and the original Oregon Central began building south from Portland. Employing Chinese labor, Holladay built enough miles to vest the land grant on Christmas Eve 1869. With the land grant in hand, Holladay reorganized the company as the Oregon & California Railroad, sidestepping lingering questions about the legality of the original charter's duplicated name. On this semblance of value, he then issued \$10.5 million in construction bonds, which he sold primarily to German investors, who picked them up at a steep discount. Within two years Holladay had some 3,000 men at work building the railroad. Such were the uneven effects of distance in nineteenth-century Oregon. It was possible to spin a railroad out of little more than promises. Holladay relished his successes in doing so, living and politicking like a railroad baron. (Holladay started his own newspaper and allegedly admitted to spending \$35,000 in bribes for state legislators in 1868.) The problem was that he lacked much of a railroad or the income needed to pay the bonds and support the lifestyle. By 1873 Holladay had defaulted on his interest payments to the German bondholders, eventually allowing management to pass into German hands.⁶⁵

Trains brought connections to outside capital. The Oregon Steam Navigation Company responded to both the trains and the networks of investment they relied on. In 1872 John Ainsworth traveled to New York to sell the Oregon Steam Navigation Company to the Northern

⁶⁵ Villard, *The Early History of Transportation in Oregon*, 3-37. Holladay sued Elliott for misrepresenting the financial status of the company. The Oregon Supreme Court favored Elliott, finding that though he misrepresented the railroad's finances, he did not do so knowingly. "The Holladay-Elliott Case," 1; Gaston, *Portland*, 289.

Pacific Railroad. He then traveled to Philadelphia to meet with financier Jay Cooke, who had assumed partial ownership of the railroad in order to sell its bonds. Simeon Reed had forged connections with the railroad during an 1866 trip to Washington, D.C. where he befriended the railroad's lobbyist. Through the rest of the 1860s, Reed and his partners worried that an out-of-state railroad entering Oregon from the east would demolish their business. Seeing railroad development as inevitable, they resolved to earn as much money transporting construction materials as they could. The Oregon Steam Navigation Company owners anticipated that the Northern Pacific Railroad would be desperate to vest a land grant, and would find attractive the company's twenty miles of completed portage railways. If nothing else, the railroad would need to buy the portage at the Cascades in order to run a line down the Columbia. Ainsworth, Reed, and their partners planned to take profits as long as they could and then sell the rest of their shares at what they expected to be a favorable price. A partial sale to Cooke would execute both parts of the plan.⁶⁶

Ainsworth struck a good bargain in 1872. He sold three quarters of the company's stock for \$2 million in railroad bonds and notes from Jay Cooke. The railroad allowed the company to retain its name and management. The deal also made Ainsworth a director of the Northern Pacific Railroad with control of West Coast operations. The railroad selected Tacoma as its terminal site, leaving Ainsworth responsible for building a rail and steamship connection between Portland and the Puget Sound. The connection to national capital must have been intoxicating, as Ainsworth oversaw construction of a line between Tacoma and the Columbia and ran boats from Portland to the railhead. As a director of a railroad bound for Tacoma, Ainsworth's allegiance to Portland attenuated as his self-perception grew. Ainsworth saw

⁶⁶ John Ainsworth, "Diary 1872," 17 February 1872, 4 April 1872; Johansen, "Capitalism on the Far-Western Frontier," 133-143, 198-199, 213-216; Vincent Carosso, *Investment Banking in America: A History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1970), 15-28.

himself as reshaping Northwest geography. He wrote to Cooke in 1874 that Tacoma, where the railroad already owned land, “must eventually be one of the great commercial cities of the North West.”⁶⁷ Ainsworth predicted that Willamette Valley wheat would one day ship from Puget Sound.⁶⁸

Ainsworth was taken with his newfound status as a railroad director with “authority enough for a Roman proconsul.”⁶⁹ But Reed was cognizant of the risks that came with dealing in financial instruments that traveled more easily than the information that determined their value. He considered entering into a contract to build the Northern Pacific eastward from Puget Sound to Lake Pend Oreille, but the diminishing likelihood that the federal government would secure the bonds in the wake of the Crédit Mobilier scandal made him question their value. He asked his brother outside of Boston to test the market in Northern Pacific bonds by offering to sell \$9,000 worth. Reed ultimately decided against involving himself so thoroughly with the railroad. Rural Northwesterners sometimes matched Reed’s suspicion of the company’s involvement in the broader market. Shortly after the Oregon Steam Navigation Company’s sale to the Northern Pacific, *The Dalles Weekly Mountaineer* worried in the fall of 1872 that the steamship company was now owned by “a foreign [out-of-state] corporation, with no interest or sympathy with our people—its only object being gain.”⁷⁰

⁶⁷ J.C. Ainsworth to Jay Cooke, 13 February 1874, John C. Ainsworth Collection, Coll. 250, University of Oregon Special Collections, Letterpress vol. 4. This was not the only time Ainsworth showed a willingness to look beyond Portland. He suggested in 1878 that the railroad take the pass over the Cowlitz River, rather than travel down the Columbia, finding a route that would likely have avoided Portland altogether. J.C. Ainsworth to C.B. Wright, 11 June 1878, John C. Ainsworth collection, Coll. 250, University of Oregon Special Collections, Letterpress vol. 5.

⁶⁸ Note to Ainsworth, 8 January 1874, John C. Ainsworth Collection, Coll. 250, University of Oregon Special Collections, Box 10, Folder 9; “Untitled Resolution,” 11 October 1872, John C. Ainsworth Collection, Coll. 250, University of Oregon special Collections, Box 10, Folder 9;

⁶⁹ Note to Ainsworth, 8 January 1874.

⁷⁰ “Transportation, Columbia River Route,” *The Dalles Weekly Mountaineer*, 6 September 1872, 2. See also, William King to S.G. Reed, 24 November 1872, in *The Letters and Private Papers of Simeon Gannett Reed*, vol. 5, *Letters to Simeon Gannett Reed, 1868-1877* (Portland, OR: Works Projects Administration, 1940); S.G. Reed to Messrs. A.N. Reed & Co, 24 February 1873, in *The Letters and Private Papers of Simeon Gannett Reed*, vol. 7,

Gain was exactly the point, as the region's wealthy men saw it. As global capital opened up world markets, the Portland businessmen who shaped its entry into the Northwest described smooth flows of money. They understood the problems of distance and misinformation that often attended global investment, but found political reasons to downplay that friction in public. They posited, instead, a perfect market in which social and political efforts necessarily gave way to the needs of capital. Simeon Reed warned a Walla Walla correspondent that rural efforts to influence the shape of hinterland transportation would "drive capital out of the territory."⁷¹ Henry Villard, whom the German investors behind Holladay's railroad hired to oversee management of the project, justified the railroad's high rates by saying that the rate of return in the state was half the rate available in Europe. In his thinking, the Northwest's new global connections and future prosperity depended on voters and politicians creating an environment hospitable to capital and the men like him who managed it. If Oregonians obstructed this imaginary perfect market by regulating railroad freights, "not another dollar of outside capital for any public enterprise would find its way to Oregon during the lives of the present generation."⁷²

The Northwest's hinterland connections did not rely on the market alone, though. They also depended on continued acceptance of private and public interests sloshing into each other. Portland promoters of railroads recognized this, and explained that railroads would benefit producers at least as much as they would secure returns to investors. Portland's 1868 directory predicted that railroads would connect farmers to markets, growing the larger economy. When farmers prospered they bought more, invested in their farms, bought better stock, and hired more laborers. "All this improvement is divided with the mechanic, merchant, importer and carrier;

Letters of Simeon Gannett Reed, 1868-1877 (Portland, OR: Works Projects Administration, 1940). On the relationship between Northern Pacific bonds and the Crédit Mobilier scandal, see White, *Railroaded*, 65.

⁷¹ Simeon Reed to Messrs. Pain Bros & Moore, et. al., in *The Letters and Private Papers of Simeon Gannett Reed*, vol. 10, *Letters of Simeon Gannett Reed, 1877-1880* (Portland, OR: Works Projects Administration, 1940).

⁷² Villard, *The Early History of Transportation in Oregon*, 71-72.

and so the whole community is prospered because of the prosperity of the farm, where all our solid and enduring prosperity is founded,” the Portland boosters declared.⁷³ Such a pronouncement suggested the inevitability of Portland’s prosperity, hitching the city’s fate to increasing yields in the hinterland, but it also provided a justification for federal and state subsidies that drew from taxes in country and city alike in order to attract investors. To do this, the rhetoric offered farmers status as the creators of the region’s wealth, even as it asked them to pay freights that serviced bonds held by distant investors. Farmers would find ways to use this status to shape the arrangements of capital and state aid that it justified. They would make the relationship between city and hinterland a moral and political one as well as an economic one.

PRODUCERISM

In the 1870s, as farmers spurred growth in the Northwest by selling their crops abroad, they reinvigorated the classical republican political assumptions that prevailed in Oregon during the 1850s. Most of the framers of Oregon’s 1859 constitution had been former Midwestern farmers, seeking a competency for their families. They set Oregon politics in a rural mold that was hostile to wealth, speculation, and most corporations. In their thinking, Oregon was to be a land of composite family farms, growing their own food, but also buying and selling in a broader market. Business was acceptable insofar as it helped connect farmers to market. The state’s constitution proscribed the state or its municipalities from subsidizing or investing public money in any company. It went further in opposition to banks. The constitution not only prohibited the legislature from chartering a bank, but prohibited from operating in the state any institution that issued bills, checks, promissory notes, or certificates. The constitution was more welcoming of corporations. A majority of delegates overcame a vocal minority that wanted to subject

⁷³ *The Portland Directory for the Year 1868* (Portland, OR: S.J. McCormick, 1868), 8.

shareholders to unlimited liability for corporate debts. The majority pointed to existing corporations, which did socially useful work processing wool and other agricultural produce. In the end, the constitution allowed for limited liability incorporation, though it took the legislature several years and the initial loss of the Oregon Steam Navigation Company to Washington Territory before it passed the kind of incorporation statute that the constitutional convention envisioned.⁷⁴

The next decade saw the erosion of constitutional principles as mining booms disassociated Oregon wealth from farming and as government contracts, state subsidies, and outright corruption blurred the boundaries the constitutional framers aimed to erect between private interests and the state. Through the topsy-turvy 1860s, farmers never lost their sense that, as a speaker before a Portland farmers' interest group put it in 1860, they were "the bone and sinew of the country."⁷⁵ In the 1870s farmers began to articulate their centrality to society more forcefully. In 1870 the *Willamette Farmer* proclaimed that "all wealth is from the soil, and the rough-handed American farmer is the high priest of its production."⁷⁶ The legislature's duty was to honor farmers and grow the economy by passing laws favorable to agriculture, subsidizing processing facilities, publishing agricultural statistics and regulating freights. Indeed, according to a later edition of the *Willamette Farmer*, "the trade and importance of Portland, and all its accumulated wealth, have sprung from a commerce founded on labor and products of

⁷⁴ Johnson, *Founding the Far West*, 41, 181-183; *Organic and Other General Laws of Oregon: Together with the National Constitution and Other Public Acts and Statutes of the United States, 1843-1872* (Salem, OR: Eugene Semple, 1872), 92. Johnson argues that Oregon's classical republicanism insulated it from market turmoil that affected California and Nevada politics. He aptly describes the assumptions of Oregon's constitutional framers, but overstates the extent of the state's isolation, failing to recognize that its ties to the broader global economy and the efforts of local monopolies confronted Oregon farmers with nontrivial threats to the kind of world they aimed to set up.

⁷⁵ Quoted in Johansen, "Capitalism on the Far-Western Frontier," 110.

⁷⁶ "Farmers in Politics," *Willamette Farmer*, 27 January 1872, 4.

agriculture.”⁷⁷ The same paper assured farmers that their status as producers earned them political sway: “you should rule the earth, you have no need of kings, and emperors and aristocrats.”⁷⁸

Farmers knew what to do as rulers of the earth. Rural Northwesterners advocated producer republicanism that echoed the constitutional principles of the 1850s. Producers would shape society in order to ensure a fair field of economic competition in which careful and persistent manual work would yield results commensurate with effort. If work met its reward, the world would function well. As the *Oregon Farmer* had put it in 1863, in an ideal world, a farmer “can proceed to his labor with a consciousness that unless extraordinary emergencies intervene, he can reap a rich reward for all his toil.” This was good for society because an expectation of a fair reward would “stimulate his exertions, while his carefully matured plans will enable those exertions to conduce to the greatest possible results.”⁷⁹ Indeed, society depended on this parity between effort and reward. When reward came too easily by way of speculation, the *Willamette Farmer* declared nearly a decade later, “things begin to go at loose ends, fences to decay, orchards to die out.” The very work that furthered society ground to a halt in favor of “a speculating mood.”⁸⁰ Conversely, when hard work failed to produce the security that farmers deserved, society’s moral and economic base crumbled as children fled the farm, or at least the farmers argued. Labor was virtuous, but it lost its meaning without reward. As the *La Grande Mountain Sentinel* put it, “it is not a trait of true nobility to bring up children to thankless unrequited labor.”⁸¹

⁷⁷ “About Commerce,” *Willamette Farmer*, 25 September 1874, 4.

⁷⁸ “The Monopoly of the Law and Some Other Things,” *Willamette Farmer*, 10 January 1874, 4; “The Merchants and the Farmers,” *Willamette Farmer*, 13 November 1874, 4.

⁷⁹ “The New Year,” *Oregon Farmer*, 1 January 1863, 76.

⁸⁰ “Land Speculation” *Willamette Farmer*, 13 July 1872, 4.

⁸¹ “Granger’s Column,” *La Grande Mountain Sentinel*, 30 January 1875, 2.

Further assumptions cascaded from this belief that reward should come from labor and labor should produce reward. Farmers expected labor to develop the region and for society to sprout with plants in the field. They heralded the division of large Willamette Valley farms established under the Oregon Donation Land Claim Act as the settler generation passed land onto heirs. Smaller farms meant more productive farms, better able to support schools. Smaller farms also meant denser populations with towns, small factories, and churches to serve the farmers. There was more than parochial self-interest in these dreams of an increasingly social world borne of farmers' prosperity. Willamette Valley farmers advocated the development of other Northwest farming regions, expecting booming population in the Palouse to benefit the Willamette Valley, helping to ensure the development of small manufacturing operations to reduce the Northwest's reliance on imported goods.⁸²

Northwest farmers looked to the future when they celebrated the virtues of sweat and toil. Part of a burgeoning Grange movement after 1873, Oregon farmers joined other late nineteenth-century radicals in welcoming modernity. The national Grange grew out of an expanding state. Oliver Kelley, a former drugstore clerk, reporter, and telegraph operator, developed the idea in 1866 while on a United States Department of Agriculture fact-finding trip to the South. Kelley organized the Grange in Washington, D.C., drawing in civil servants and expecting that the head of his new organization would serve in the Department of Agriculture. The Grange shed its centralized structure to become a mass movement in the early 1870s. Local granges in Oregon and other states sought to shape farmers' interactions with the market through programs of cooperative buying and selling. This was hardly a return to the self-sufficient farm, but an attempt to make returns commensurate with the moral value of farm labor. The Grangers, like

⁸² "Small Farms or Large," *Willamette Farmer*, 14 August 1874, 4; "Large or Small Farms," *Willamette Farmer*, 3 February 1872, 4; "Patrons of Husbandry," *Willamette Farmer*, 10 January 1874, 4; "The Upper Country," *Willamette Farmer*, 10 July 1874, 10; "Encourage Home Manufactures," *Willamette Farmer*, 14 August 1874, 4.

the populists and labor activists who followed them in the next decade, sought modernity on their own terms, believing that they would prosper with good connections to an uncorrupted market that allowed them fair competition and a chance to negotiate from an equal footing.⁸³

By 1874, a year after its founding, the Oregon Grange, which included branches in Idaho and Washington, boasted 10,000 members spread across 240 local meetings. Men held the top offices, but women served in the state offices of Lady Assistant Steward, Ceres, Pomona, and Flora. The Walla Walla grange had a woman secretary. Records from the early-twentieth-century Washington Grange show that women exercised more influence than they did in other political organizations. Their participation reflected the fluidity of gender roles on farms where women and men did work interchangeably. Women in nineteenth-century Oregon may have played roles similar to the roles women would later play in Washington. In any case, the Grange movement was powerful in the Northwest. There were more granges relative to farming population in Oregon than in any other state in the nation. Washington Territory ranked second. Its members met in annual sessions and communicated with each other in Granger columns in small-town papers, especially Salem's *Willamette Farmer*.⁸⁴

⁸³ William Barnes, "Oliver Hudson Kelley and the Genesis of the Grange: A Reappraisal," *Agricultural History* 41 (July 1967): 229-242; Catherine Stock, *Rural Radicals: Righteous Rage in the American Grain* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1996), 64-67; Robert McMath, Jr., *American Populism: A Social History, 1877-1898* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1993), 20, 51-52; Mel van Elaterin, "Producers Dreams and the Dystopia of 'Wage Slavery' and 'Progress,'" *European Contributions to American Studies* 51 (February 2004): 79, 81-82; Charles Postel, *The Populist Vision* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 4. On labor republicanism, see Graham Cassano and Troy Rondinone, "The Persistence of Republicanism: Class War Talk American Style," *Labor Studies Journal* 35 (September 2010): 417-420.

⁸⁴ On the role of women in the Grange, see Marilyn Watkins, *Rural Democracy: Family Farmers and Politics in Western Washington, 1890-1925* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1995). For women's positions, see "Grange News," *Willamette Farmer*, 14 February 1874, 8; "Patrons of Husbandry," *Willamette Farmer*, 14 February 1874, 8; "Directory," *Willamette Farmer*, 14 March 1874, 4. In spite of Oregon's relatively populous grange movement, the national movement's 1870s legislative successes tended to come in Midwestern states. Granger laws in those states attempted to regulate railroad fares, inspiring Oregon Grangers, who managed similar successes only a decade later. Elizabeth Sanders, *The Roots of Reform: Farmers, Workers, and the American State, 1877-1917* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 105-106, 108.

An article about farmers and ocean freighters in an 1874 edition of the paper illustrated the role markets played in producer thinking. The article noted that farmers were developing a reputation for delaying the sale of their crops in order to learn more about prices in England as the shipping season progressed. The paper advised farmers to be fair in their treatment of shippers because the state's economy could not afford the risk that English boats would fail to return the next year. There was a market mechanism at work beneath the admonition, but one less impersonal than an invisible hand. Proper market function required participants to exercise restraint and acknowledge the needs of others. As the article put it, "there is a mutuality of interest that creates an indissoluble tie between capital and labor; between producer and consumer; between the people and the railroads and all other great agencies of transportation."⁸⁵ Farmers, the thinking went, should ensure that the businesses that served them earned profits. Indeed, even owners of railroads and steamship companies were entitled to "a fair return on the money thus invested," as another article in the paper put it.⁸⁶ A belief in markets was an outgrowth of a belief in labor. Capitalists deserved to earn some return, just as the farmer was entitled to "a reasonable profit on his year's work."⁸⁷

It was on these principles that Oregon farmers sought a developed Northwest with railroads and connections to market. The *Willamette Farmer* contended that railroads were necessary to bring population to Oregon and to give farmers a market for their products. They merited government aid "sufficient to induce the necessary capital to take hold and carry on the work," the paper argued.⁸⁸ That aid had to draw capital from safe investments in Europe with

⁸⁵ "The Demands of the Farmers," *Willamette Farmer*, 28 August 1874, 4.

⁸⁶ Ben Holladay vs. the Farmers and Workingmen," *Willamette Farmer*, 6 April 1872, 4.

⁸⁷ Grange sympathizers even celebrated the increasing wealth of Oregon and California banks in the mid-1870s. Oregon State Grange, *Organization and Proceedings of the Patrons of Husbandry*, (Salem, OR: E.M. Waite, 1874), 5; "Money Plenty," *Willamette Farmer*, 20 June 1874, 4; "Combinations," *Willamette Farmer*, 30 November 1872, 4. For background on the Oregon Grange, see Holden, "The Rise and Fall of Oregon Populism," 96-102.

⁸⁸ "All Important," *Willamette Farmer*, 6 November 1874, 10.

promises of higher rates of return than it could earn elsewhere. In this reckoning, the state needed railroads “much as animal life needs the circulation of blood,” and in order to get them the paper proposed excusing railroad property from taxation for twenty years.⁸⁹ The editors of the *Willamette Farmer* believed so thoroughly in the importance of outside capital to forging connections between Oregon farms and global consumers that they expressed sympathy for the German bondholders who hired Henry Villard to take over the Oregon & California Railroad, saying “the people of Oregon feel friendly to these unfortunate bond holders and will throw no unfair legislation in their way.”⁹⁰

The paper knew that Oregon’s development depended on connections to the outside world, but the *Willamette Farmer* did not concede the control that wealthy Portlanders thought the flexibility of global capital entitled them to. The paper sought to shape the form connections to world markets would take. Its contributors called for the development of the cheapest railroads possible, proposing one that would feature only a single rail in the middle to provide traction. Such a railroad might be cheap enough to build that transportation on it could be free, the paper speculated. In less fanciful moments, the *Willamette Farmer* called for narrow gauge roads as a cheaper alternative to standard gauge construction. And while the *Willamette Farmer* saw outside capital as instrumental to the realization of its development dreams, it also advocated restraining it with usury laws, casting “lynx-eyed money lenders” outside the sphere of republican virtue.⁹¹ If a state attendant to the needs of farmers could appropriately regulate interest rates, the paper argued in another article, then it was “lawful and just to establish maximum freighting rates for railroads, steamboats—or for rates in any other public business for

⁸⁹ “A General Railroad Bill,” *Willamette Farmer*, 16 October 1874, 4.

⁹⁰ “Railroad Changes,” *Willamette Farmer*, 31 July 1874, 4.

⁹¹ “Usury Laws,” *Willamette Farmer*, 4 July 1874, 4.

that matter.”⁹² In 1876 the Grange circulated 1,000 copies of a petition calling on the legislature to do just that.⁹³

PRODUCERISM AND HINTERLAND RELATIONSHIPS

In the mid-1870s the Grange took halting steps to shape the state’s hinterland trade. It supported government aid to clear rivers to spur competition on the Willamette and Columbia. When government engineers seemed too sympathetic to the steamboat interests, the Grange proposed to hire its own engineers. The *Willamette Farmer* supported this line of thinking by proposing state ownership of locks on the Willamette. The Grange also called for thickening connections to the rest of the world, promoting the display of Oregon produce at the 1876 Centennial Exposition and the publication in Europe of information about Oregon grain. The Grange favored the establishment of a cooperative buying and selling in bulk, cheaper farm implements, higher prices for grain, and the substitution of cash for credit. Associates of the Grange chartered a joint stock company and hoped to charter their own bank. For years the Grange proposed hiring an agent in Liverpool and hiring its own ship bound for Britain in order to smooth uneven flows of information that disadvantaged Northwest farmers. (The plan would allow farmers to watch European prices during the three months the ship was in transit so they could sell their crops at the market’s highpoint.) The Grange proposed these plans in its heady first years as membership boomed. By the late 1870s, though, the Grange businesses faltered under mismanagement and opposition from the established companies they sought to replace.⁹⁴

⁹² “Letter from Transportation Student,” *Willamette Farmer*, 25 July 1874, 1.

⁹³ Oregon State Grange, *Proceedings of the Third Annual Session of the Oregon State Grange Patrons of Husbandry* (Salem, OR: E.M. Waite, 1876, 16.

⁹⁴ Oregon State Grange, *Proceedings of the First Session of the Oregon State Grange of the Patrons of Husbandry* (Forest Grove: State Grange Bulletin, 1873, 1906), 19; “The Danger of Monopolies,” *Willamette Farmer*, 24 January 1874, 4; “The Canal and Locks,” *Willamette Farmer*, 13 October 1876, 4; “Letter from Transportation Student,” *Willamette Farmer*, 13 June 1874, 4; Oregon State Grange, *Proceedings of the Second Annual Session of*

In addition to pushing these positive political programs, the Grange took aim at companies they saw as a threat to their producer society. The efforts at regulating freights, at prohibiting corporate representatives from serving in the legislature, and at bringing the transportation network under state regulation all sought to break the power of the Oregon & California Railroad in the Willamette Valley and the Oregon Steam Navigation Company on the Columbia. These were, by Grange reckoning, grinding monopolies that by unfair business practices and untoward connections to the state had undermined the market, threatening producers and the development of the country that depended on them. In addition to subverting the market by oppressive combination and corruption, the Grangers argued, the companies were badly managed and reflected little real work, dangerously disrupting the connection between labor and wealth that undergirded a good farming society. In this thinking, as the *Baker City Bedrock Democrat* put it, all the owners of the Oregon Steam Navigation Company “had to do was stand, at each end of the route, and shovel the gold dust into their coffers with a scoop shovel. It is no wonder that they are now living in princely style, in palatial mansions, or making the tour of Europe; or that they give \$500 a year for a cushioned pew in one of the churches of Portland.”⁹⁵

Princely houses and comfortable church pews in Portland were the counterpoint to farm wealth borne of hard work. Portland was merely an outgrowth of farm production, suffering

the Oregon State Grange of the Patrons of Husbandry (Salem, OR: E.M. Waite, 1875), 7-8; Oregon State Grange, *Organization and Proceedings of the Patrons of Husbandry*, 9-10; Oregon State Grange, *Proceedings of the Ninth Annual Session of the Oregon State Grange of the Patrons of Husbandry* (Harrisburg, OR: Disseminator, 1882), 21. On uneven flows of information, see Morton Rothstein, “West Coast Farmers and the Tyranny of Distance: Agriculture on the Fringes of the World Market,” *Agricultural History* 49 (June 1975): 277-278.

⁹⁵ Quoted in Johansen, “Capitalism on the Far-Western Frontier,” 258-259. See also, “Reforms Suggested,” *Willamette Farmer*, 14 March 1874, 4; “Establishing Monopoly,” *Willamette Farmer*, 16 December 1871, 4; “Ben Holladay vs. the Farmers and Workingmen,” 4. This opposition to monopoly and those “who seek to live by others['] toil and escape the sentence imposed on mankind” survived the 1870s. Oregon State Grange, *Proceedings of the Eighth Annual Session of the Oregon State Grange of the Patrons of Husbandry* (Portland, OR: George Himes, 1881), 5.

recession when speculative bubbles pushed urban growth beyond what farmer prosperity could sustain. As the *Willamette Farmer* put it, “It is not healthy for a city to outgrow the country, for if it does the reaction must come.”⁹⁶ Cities also presented moral problems. Farmers’ sons grew up to be honorable businessmen, according to another writer in the *Willamette Farmer*, while “the sons of the city, learning its vices and following its fastness, became spendthrifts, and slunk away into its slums and hells and bagnies, and lastly dishonorable graves.”⁹⁷ The farmers were too harsh and too simplistic. Simeon Reed was, if the proportion of his remaining letters is any indication, a (very wealthy) farmer above all else, with an expertise in livestock breeding. More than that, the city the farmers imagined was as much artifice as reality. Its wealthiest residents boasted large houses and after 1867 congregated in elite social clubs, but many others lived more modestly and kept farm animals. The boundaries on the ground between city and country were not clearly marked. Even in the later nineteenth century, farms raised vegetables within a mile of downtown and wild fires still smoldered on the east side of the Willamette. These anti-urban screeds were not just a reaction to the relationship between Portland and its hinterland that railroads and steamboats had created in the preceding decade. They also helped create the distinction between city and hinterland as part of the ideology that farmers deployed to reshape that relationship to their benefit.⁹⁸

The Grange movement was strong enough in the 1870s to do more than shape the way people perceived city and country as distinct categories. Grange candidates comprised much of the 1874 legislature. The governor opened the legislative session with a speech that called on limits to corporate power, reminding the legislators that “you create corporations and you can

⁹⁶ “Prosperity of Oregon,” *Willamette Farmer*, 21 May 1875, 4.

⁹⁷ “The Monopoly of the Law and Some Other Things,” *Willamette Farmer*, 6 April 1872, 4.

⁹⁸ “Getting on in the World,” *Willamette Farmer*, 13 January 1872, 4; Paul Merriam, “Urban Elite in the Far West: Portland, Oregon, 1870-1890,” *Arizona and the West* 18 (Spring 1976): 41-52; Marie Wong, *Sweet Cakes, Long Journey: The Chinatowns of Portland, Oregon* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2004), 210; “A Trip Down the River,” *Willamette Farmer*, 3 August 1872, 4.

appoint and regulate their functions.”⁹⁹ The session considered criminalizing the issuance of free passes, establishing maximum freights, prohibiting rate discrimination, and requiring railroads to build fences along the tracks to prevent trains from killing livestock. This was enough to cause John Ainsworth to pay attention. He worried about a “‘communistic spirit’ that is spreading all over the land, coupled and backed up by cooperative unions and the Granger element.”¹⁰⁰ Particularly ominous was the state supreme court’s decision to uphold a \$16,000 judgment against the Oregon Steam Navigation Company in payment to a boy who lost his foot playing on a company wheat train at The Dalles. The jury had been “prejudiced against corporations as most jurys [sic] are,” and the justices upheld the verdict with an eye on securing reelection. Ainsworth agreed with the justices’ political calculation, if not their will. He wrote Philadelphia financier Jay Cooke, “I am inclined to think a conflict is near at hand between capital and labor.”¹⁰¹

Eyeing that conflict, the Oregon Steam Navigation Company kept in touch with correspondents who reported on the political situation in eastern Oregon. Ainsworth had a contact in an eastern Oregon Grange hall who worked against resolutions hostile to the company. The company agent was able to defeat “by two hours hard fight” a plan by Grangers at The Dalles to boycott merchants who shipped goods on the Oregon Steam Navigation Company boats.¹⁰² Records do not indicate what bound Ainsworth’s correspondent to the company, but Ainsworth remarked (though with distaste) in other letters that political alliances could be bought. Ainsworth’s distaste for bribery seemed limited in other instances, and he likely bribed

⁹⁹ “Governor’s Message,” *The Dalles Weekly Mountaineer*, 26 September 1874, 2.

¹⁰⁰ J.C. Ainsworth to Jay Cooke, 16 February 1874, John C. Ainsworth Collection, Coll. 250, University of Oregon Special Collections, Letterpress vol. 4.

¹⁰¹ The Grange was officially nonpartisan, but its goals involved it in electoral politics. J.C. Ainsworth to Jay Cooke, 16 February 1874, John C. Ainsworth Collection, Coll. 250, University of Oregon Special Collections, Letterpress vol. 4. See also, J.C. Ainsworth to Jay Cooke, 31 October 1874, John C. Ainsworth Collection, Coll. 250, University of Oregon Special Collections, Letterpress vol. 4; J.C. Ainsworth to C.B. Wright, 13 September 1874, John C. Ainsworth Collection, Coll. 250, University of Oregon Special Collections, Letterpress vol. 4.

¹⁰² E.L. Perham to S.G. Reed, 3 November 1874, in *The Letters and Private Papers of Simeon Gannett Reed*, vol. 3, *Letters of Simeon Gannett Reed, 1868-1877* (Portland, OR: Works Projects Administration, 1940).

legislators. Ainsworth also worked against Willamette Valley Grangers who started their own steamboat company. By this point Ainsworth and his partners controlled steamboat lines on the Willamette and owned the locks at Oregon City, which had been built with a state subsidy. He reduced rates and interfered with the Grange company's passage through the locks in order to drive competition into ruin, buying the rival company's assets at a steep discount two years later.¹⁰³

These strategies yielded results. The Grange won few political successes in the mid-1870s. Worse for Grange resolve, business failures and the suggestion that Grange members indemnify those associated with failed cooperative buying and shipping enterprises drove farmers from the organization. By 1878 membership had fallen to half its peak levels. Faced with intransigence from the Oregon Steam Navigation Company and those who thought increased regulation would drive capital from the state, Grangers in the legislature managed to get little legislation passed during the 1870s.¹⁰⁴

The early Grange claimed few outright successes, but its efforts shaped the relationship between Portland and the rural Northwest in lasting ways. Urban boosters accepted the Grange view that Portland's wealth depended on the countryside. The Portland Board of Trade welcomed immigration by "the farming classes" as fuel for the economy. It followed the Grange in favoring small farms and opposing speculation, noting that productive labor was the best way

¹⁰³ J.C. Ainsworth to C.B. Wright, 10 October 1874, John C. Ainsworth Collection, Coll. 250, University of Oregon Special Collections, Letterpress vol. 4; J.C. Ainsworth to Jay Cooke, 4 April 1876, John C. Ainsworth Collection, Coll. 250, University of Oregon Special Collections, Letterpress vol. 2. In 1878 Ainsworth received a letter from a state official who offered, in exchange for \$500, to defeat a bill in the state legislature that aimed to circumvent the portage railway at The Dalles, an offer that subsequent correspondence implies that Ainsworth accepted. Charles Ball to J.C. Ainsworth, 23 September 1878, John C. Ainsworth Collection, Coll. 250, University of Oregon Special Collections, Box 5, Folder 7; Charles Ball to J.C. Ainsworth, 8 October 1878, John C. Ainsworth Collection, Coll. 250, University of Oregon Special Collections, Box 5, Folder 7; Merriam, "Urban Elite in the Far West," 44-45; Jennings to Ainsworth, 7 October 1878, John C. Ainsworth Collection, Coll. 250, University of Oregon Special Collections, Box 5, Folder 10; John Ainsworth, "Untitled Autobiography," 30 March 1879.

¹⁰⁴ Oregon State Grange, *Proceedings of the Fifth Annual Session of the Oregon State Grange Patrons of Husbandry* (Salem, OR: E.M. Waite, 1878), 6; Holden, "The Rise and Fall of Oregon Populism," 172-179.

to increase the region's exports and "the only sure mode of adding permanence to our city's stability as the principal seat of commerce on the North Pacific coast."¹⁰⁵ Boosters emphasized Portland's reliance on real value in the hinterland in other ways, seeking to present the city as a safe place to invest. To its credit, the city had "no Board of Mining Stock Brokers, or demoralizing speculative combinations, to tempt merchants from their legitimate business, to involve young men in ruin, and to corrupt its citizens generally," the city directory claimed.¹⁰⁶ Had they read Board of Trade reports or city directories, Oregon's farmers would likely have disputed these empirical claims, but they would have recognized the assumptions that underlay them as the same ones that animated their political efforts. Portland boosters may not have responded directly to Grange republicanism, but their descriptions of the city revealed a problem in booster literature. It was rhetorically difficult to suggest the inevitability of urban wealth after the turn to wheat exports in the 1870s without also valorizing the hinterland farmers who produced grain. Even the boosters knew that it was labor, not nature and the sun's energy alone, that produced wealth.¹⁰⁷

Grange activities reshaped the relationship between city and hinterland in more concrete ways. The rural argument that the steamship lines on the Columbia and Willamette were monopolies opposed to the public interest threatened the close relationship that the corporations enjoyed with the federal officials and Oregon's political elite. Ainsworth and his partners sought to maintain the easy blending between state and private functions and benefit from producer ideology by changing their freight rates. The Oregon Steam Navigation Company reduced charges on productive freight, charging less for the upriver transportation of farm machinery,

¹⁰⁵ Portland Board of Trade, *Annual Report with Statistics Showing Oregon's Exports, Trade and Commerce for the Year ending July 31, 1877* (Portland, OR: A.G. Walling, 1877), 4

¹⁰⁶ *Samuel's Directory of Portland and East Portland for 1873* (Portland, OR: Geo. H. Himes, 1873), 29.

¹⁰⁷ Portland Board of Trade, *Annual Report with Statistics Showing Oregon's Exports, trade and Commerce for the Year Ending July 31, 1875* (Portland, OR: A.G. Walling, 1875), 3; Portland Board of Trade, *Report of the President and Secretary for the Year Ending July 31, 1879* (Portland, OR: A.G. Walling, 1880), 5.

livestock, and seeds. Both the Oregon Steam Navigation Company and Ainsworth's Willamette Transportation and Locks Company offered special rates for downriver shipment of farm produce. Walla Walla farmers could send wheat to Portland at six dollars per ton. These new rates sought to develop downriver shipments so boats did not return to Portland empty. They also reflected efforts to meet fixed costs with smaller margins and higher volumes. For all the practical reasons to reduce freights on farm produce, the company made sure to tie its decision to the producer rhetoric of the Grange. Simeon Reed wrote to a correspondent in aptly-named Grange City that the company could not reduce upriver prices for merchants without raising prices for farmers. He claimed that charging farmers more might make the company more money, "but our policy has been to protect the interests of the producer, and thereby induce the settlement of the country."¹⁰⁸ Regardless of the sincerity of Reed's statement, he and his Portland partners found it necessary to acknowledge the power of the Grange. Indeed, both the Oregon Steam Navigation Company and the Oregon & California Railroad offered attendees of the first annual meeting reduced passage to Salem. In the years following the conference, the companies found it necessary speak the language of producer republicanism.¹⁰⁹

The railroad and the steamboat company gained by adopting Grange assumptions, while looking for ways to turn producer rhetoric on its head. Henry Villard contended, for example, that his railroad served public interests by building bridges and by spending a substantial portion of its net income recruiting immigrants to the state. He countered threats that the legislature would regulate freights by asking "what other corporation, what other individual in this State

¹⁰⁸ S.G. Reed to R.P. Steen, 21 August 1877, in *The Letters and Private Papers of Simeon Gannett Reed*, vol. 10, *Letters of Simeon Gannett Reed, 1877-1880* (Portland, OR: Works Projects Administration, 1940).

¹⁰⁹ Johansen, "Capitalism on the Far-Western Frontier," 234, 255; "Reduced Freights," *Walla Walla Statesman*, 26 December 1874, 3; Simeon Reed to John Ainsworth, February 1870, in *The Letters and Private Papers of Simeon Gannett Reed*, vol. 2, *Letters of Simeon Gannett Reed, 1864-1872* (Portland, OR: Works Projects Administration, 1940); "State Grange Matters," *Willamette Farmer*, 11 September 1874.

makes such sacrifices for the public benefit?”¹¹⁰ The Oregon Steam Navigation Company’s rate reductions helped smooth relations with shippers east of the Cascades. The company’s officers met with Grangers from eastern Oregon and Washington to discuss fares in the spring of 1875. The meeting and the company’s efforts to accommodate the needs of rural Northwest shippers helped to extinguish what one of John Ainsworth’s correspondents called “the old fire of hate” that had previously burned against the company.¹¹¹

The Oregon Steam Navigation Company’s détente with shippers allowed for conversations about mutual interest. Individual granges sometimes asked the company to develop its service to better carry their freight or offered to build warehouses to store wheat where boats could collect it. A correspondent from Dayton, where the Grange had built a warehouse, confirmed the company’s public responsibilities, noting that “the reduction of freight charges and the building of a light boat have inspired our people with new hope and energy and they are looking forward to prosperity.” Company officers may have relished the political harmony letters like these evinced, but they also must have noted their coercive tone. That Dayton writer told Ainsworth that the prosperity of the country depended on the company’s honoring the needs of producers. Farms would only flourish if “we have transportation at rates that will leave us a portion of the profits of our labor with which to improve our homes and build up the country.”¹¹² The shared language of producer republicanism and regional development provided farmers with a reservoir of moral suasion and allowed them to gain material advantages. Farmers near Junction City in the Willamette Valley persuaded Henry Villard that they would soon have an immense amount of wheat to sell. Villard wrote to the German

¹¹⁰ Quoted in Villard, *The Early History of Transportation in Oregon*, 70.

¹¹¹ J.H. Kunzie to J.C. Ainsworth, 28 June 1875, John C. Ainsworth Collection, Coll. 250, University of Oregon Special Collections, Box 6, Folder 1. See also, “Freight on the Columbia River,” *Walla Walla Statesman*, 12 June 1875, 2.

¹¹² R.P. Steen to J.C. Ainsworth, 13 May 1876, John C. Ainsworth Collection, Coll. 250, University of Oregon Special Collections, Box 6, Folder 4.

investors, securing money to build another twenty miles of railroad. He found, though, that the farmers had gotten the better of him and his employers. The wheat crops were far smaller than farmers promised and not sufficient to justify the cost of the extension.¹¹³

Willamette Valley farmers were not the only ones to shape information to their advantage or to find that the Grange activism of the 1870s gave them a lever to move commerce. In the early 1870s, Jay Cooke found himself unable to interest European investors in Northern Pacific Railroad bonds and unable to duplicate his Civil War successes selling government bonds to small investors. Holding over \$5 million in Northern Pacific Railroad debt in 1873, Cooke loaned more money to the railroad, shoring accounts drained by spendthrift managers. The situation came to a head in the fall. As they always did, small town merchants and grain brokers withdrew money from local banks to pay farmers, causing their banks to pull money from regional banks to meet reserve requirements. The regional banks then withdrew money from national banks, which had loaned the money out to the country's biggest companies. Cooke's banks and his loans to the railroad sat near the top of this chain, and as letters drew his accumulated deposits out into the countryside, his banks collapsed. Cooke would eventually enter bankruptcy, his fall destroying expectations that the Northern Pacific Railroad would soon complete its transcontinental line to the Northwest. Farmers found their hopes dashed against a financial system that was better able, at least in the Northwest, to move money than the wheat it paid for.¹¹⁴

¹¹³ M.L. Barnes to J.C. Ainsworth, 30 March 1876, John C. Ainsworth Collection, Coll. 250, University of Oregon Special Collections, Box 5, Folder 7; George Hunter, et. al. to J.C. Ainsworth, 12 April 1876, John C. Ainsworth Collection, Coll. 250, University of Oregon Special Collections, Box 5, Folder 8; Villard, *The Early History of Transportation in Oregon*, 64.

¹¹⁴ White, *Railroaded*, 80-84; Richard Benschel, *Yankee Leviathan: The Origins of Central State Authority in America, 1859-1877* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990)265-268; Carosso, *Investment Banking in America*, 24-25.

The bankruptcy also posed a problem to the Oregon Steam Navigation Company partners, who held railroad bonds and notes from Cooke. The Portland investors found a way to turn to their advantage the differing ease with which money and information moved out of the Northwest. As creditors circled Cooke's bankruptcy estate, Cooke and the people he owed tried to ascertain the value of his Oregon Steam Navigation Company stock. On a spring 1874 trip to Philadelphia, Reed sensed opportunity in Cooke's distress. He wrote Ainsworth, telling him to stop issuing dividends. Ainsworth agreed, telling Cooke first of the political peril in Grange agitation and then of the need to reduce freight charges in order to stanch a mass exodus from the Columbia basin in the wake of the railroad's collapse. Ainsworth also refused to offer an assessment of the stock's value, but did suggest a willingness to buy it at a bargain price paid in nearly worthless railroad bonds. By February 1875, Ainsworth's intransigence was part of a coherent company plan. Reed explained the strategy to a New York business partner, asking him to get a hold of a list of people who had received the stock in payment for Cooke's debts. The company had plenty of money to issue dividends, Reed explained, "but the outsiders know nothing of this."¹¹⁵ The easterners needed only to know that the company had repairs to make and faced strident rural opposition. By summer a Philadelphia banker was buying up the company's stock for a pool led by Ainsworth. Ainsworth and his partners regained control of the company, paying twenty cents on the dollar to do it.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁵ S.G. Reed to Charles Tilton, 9 February 1875, in *The Letters and Private Papers of Simeon Gannett Reed*, vol. 7, *Letters of Simeon Gannett Reed, 1868-1877* (Portland, OR: Works Projects Administration, 1940).

¹¹⁶ S.G. Reed to Ainsworth, 15 June 1874, John C. Ainsworth Collection, Coll. 250, University of Oregon Special Collections, Box 7, Folder 9; J.C. Ainsworth to Jay Cooke, 31 October 1874, John C. Ainsworth Collection, Coll. 250, University of Oregon Special Collections, Letterpress vol. 4; J.C. Ainsworth to Jay Cooke, 30 November 1874, John C. Ainsworth Collection, Coll. 250, University of Oregon Special Collections, Letterpress vol. 4; J.C. Ainsworth to C.B. Wright, 19 February 1875, John C. Ainsworth Collection, Coll. 250, University of Oregon Special Collections, Letterpress vol. 4; J.C. Ainsworth to Jay Cooke, 22 June 1875, John C. Ainsworth Collection, Coll. 250, University of Oregon Special Collections, Letterpress vol. 5; J.C. Ainsworth to C.B. Wright, 19 February 1875, John C. Ainsworth Collection, Coll. 250, University of Oregon Special Collections, Letterpress vol. 4; S.G. Reed to E.W. Matthews, 20 September 1875, in *The Letters and Private Papers of Simeon Gannett Reed*, vol. 7, *Letters of Simeon Gannett Reed, 1868-1877* (Portland, OR: Works Projects Administration, 1940); Charles Barney

This was not the only way in which Ainsworth and his partners took advantage of Portland's isolation from financial markets. After the Oregon Steam Navigation Company owners bought the Willamette Transportation and Locks Company, they issued bonds in San Francisco. By 1878 some claims on interest payments were outstanding. The company worried that Miller & Lux, a large California cattle company and one of the bondholders, would try to collect from Ainsworth, the president of the company, as he traveled through San Francisco on his return from the East. Reed wrote to Ainsworth, urging him to keep his name off the train manifest, enter the city secretly, and stay with one of the Oregon Steam Navigation Company founders to avoid being served with a lawsuit. Two weeks later, Reed hit upon a different idea. Ainsworth would simply resign the presidency of the locks company. The directors would elect his son George in his stead, and he would deny any role in the company's governance and decline to be served with a lawsuit that his partners would then have to fight in a San Francisco court.¹¹⁷

This too was one of the ways in which Portland connected its rural hinterland to broader markets. The city exported more than wheat. Its businessmen also gathered information from the rural Northwest about Grange politics, the status of the transportation network, and the prospects of farming regions, and shaped it to their advantage for export to capital markets in San Francisco, the East, and Europe. The merchants, speculators, and conmen who saw the value in manipulating information took advantage of inefficiencies in the market for it. They recognized that in a region without a railroad connection to the East, reliable information about conditions on the ground traveled slowly, lagging far behind the financial instructions they mailed and

and Co. to J.C. Ainsworth, 19 July 1875, John C. Ainsworth Collection, Coll. 250, University of Oregon Special Collections, Box 5, Folder 7; Johansen, "Capitalism on the Far-Western Frontier," 223-227.

¹¹⁷ Simeon Reed to John Ainsworth, 23 February 1878, in *The Letters and Private Papers of Simeon Gannett Reed*, vol. 10, *Letters of Simeon Gannett Reed, 1877-1880* (Portland, OR: Works Projects Administration, 1940); Simeon Reed to John Ainsworth, 12 March 1878, in *The Letters and Private Papers of Simeon Gannett Reed*, vol. 10, *Letters of Simeon Gannett Reed, 1877-1880* (Portland, OR: Works Projects Administration, 1940).

telegraphed east and south. There was money to be made here, as the Oregon Steam Navigation Company partners demonstrated in their buyback of the stock from Cooke's creditors and in their manipulation of the Willamette Transportation and Locks Company's board of directors. Their ability to turn isolation to their advantage was precarious, though. The benefits of isolation rested on real turbulence in rural politics and an ability to control connections to the outside world that could not last forever. So as the 1870s came to a close, even as wealthy Portlanders prospered in the space between production and investment, the structures that kept the two worlds apart showed cracks.

PRODUCERISM AND NEW NATIONAL CONNECTIONS

In 1878 Henry Villard approached the Oregon Steam Navigation Company with an offer to buy the company and use its assets to build a railroad extending east from Portland. Unlike Cooke, Villard traveled from the East Coast to complete his Portland business. After a tour of the company's facilities and an examination of its books, Villard and Ainsworth arrived at a price. Perhaps thinking Villard could not raise the money, Ainsworth accepted \$100,000 in gold in exchange for Villard's option to buy an eighty percent share of the company for \$4 million. Villard traded on his reputation among New York financiers to raise money to buy the company and begin railroad construction along the Columbia. He set up the Oregon Rail & Navigation Company in Oregon and a holding company in New York to manage his railroad enterprise. By producing misinformation about the company's performance, Villard drove up the stock's price, solidifying his reputation as a financial expert. He then bought the Northern Pacific Railroad when it looked like it would threaten his transcontinental line extending east from Portland, famously raising \$8 million in a blind pool to gain control of the stock. Portlanders served on the

board of the Oregon Company, but power remained in New York hands, where most of the stock ownership resided, as Figure Three shows. Finding themselves overruled with ego-smashing frequency, the Oregon Steam Navigation Company partners stepped out of management.¹¹⁸

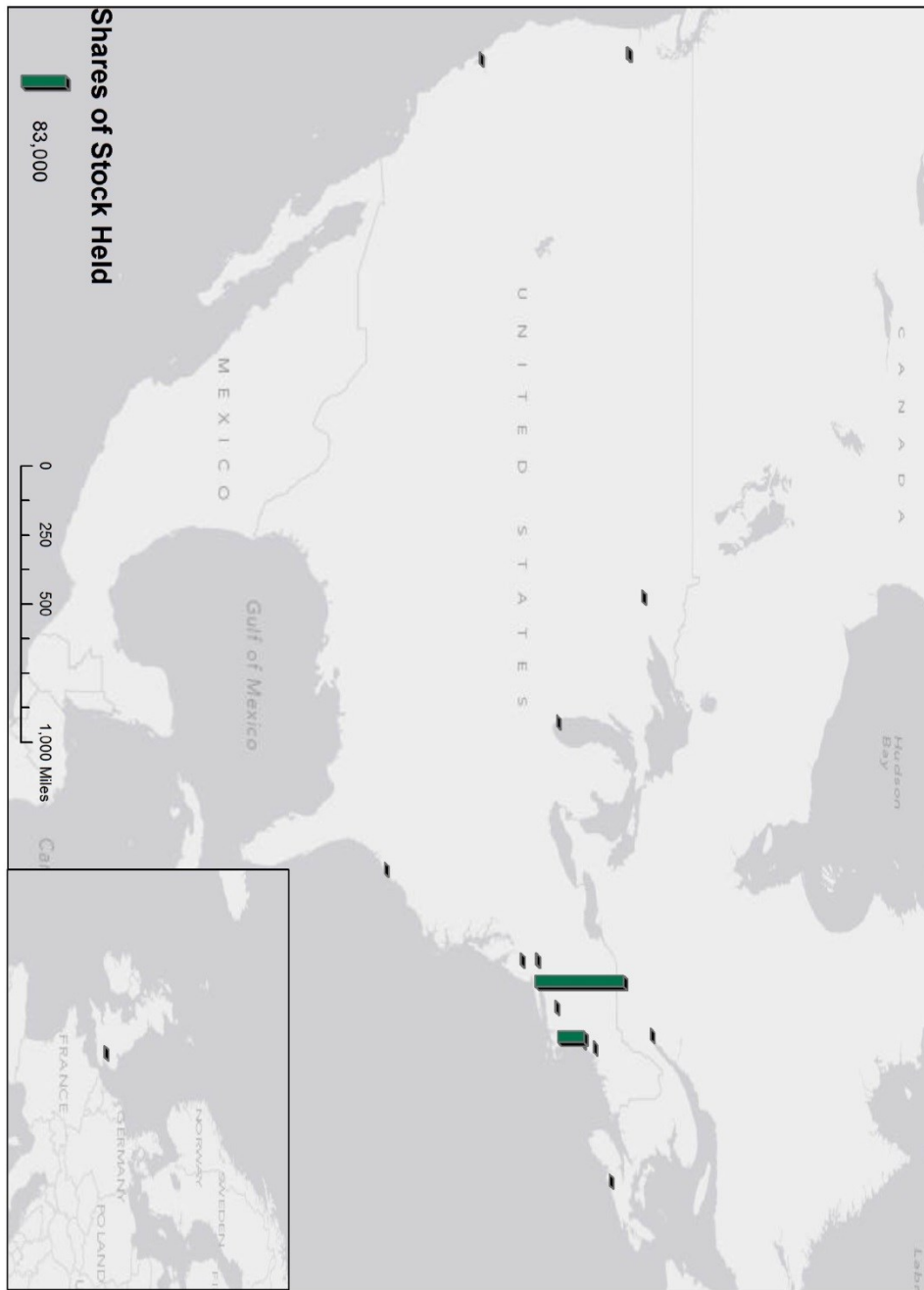
Portlanders expected the railroad to bring changes. Construction propelled a boom, pushing capital into the city and driving down interest. The Board of Trade looked forward to the secure hold on trade with Oregon, Washington, Idaho, and Montana that a railroad would give the city, but also anticipated difficult adjustments. The board instructed Portland businessmen that old practices would not survive the erosion of Portland's "insular position, with insular advantages and insular defects."¹¹⁹ Credit would have to become more regular and Portland businessmen would no longer be able to make windfall profits on big gambles. The city would assume a more mature economy, integrated fully with the rest of the country. Farmers, for their part, worried that the new company would serve the interests of distant capital. But they also saw promise in the construction of a transcontinental railroad, thinking that it would free rural merchants from obligations to deal with Portland and San Francisco wholesalers.¹²⁰

¹¹⁸ J.C. Ainsworth to C.B. Wright, 7 May 1879, John C. Ainsworth Collection, Coll. 250, University of Oregon Special Collections, Letterpress vol. 5; J.C. Ainsworth to Frederick Billings, 25 May 1879, John C. Ainsworth Collection, Coll. 250, University of Oregon Special Collections, Letterpress vol. 5; OR&N Co., "Minutes of Executive Committee," 2 July 1879, 21 October 1879, Union Pacific Company Records, Mss. 299, Oregon Historical Society, Box 85, vol. 1; Winther, *Old Oregon Country*, 299; White, *Railroaded*, 216-219; Geisst, *Wall Street*, 101-102; Henry Villard to J.C. Ainsworth, 9 January 1880, John C. Ainsworth Collection, Coll. 250, University of Oregon Special Collections, Box 8, Folder 3; Johansen, "Capitalism on the Far-Western Frontier," 274.

¹¹⁹ Portland Board of Trade, *Annual Report with Statistics Showing Oregon's Exports, Trade and Commerce for the Year Ending July 31, 1882* (Portland, OR: A.G. Walling, 1882), 9.

¹²⁰ Portland Board of Trade, *Ninth Annual Report of the Board of Trade* (Portland, OR: A. Anderson & Co, 1883), 9; "Our Railroad Interests, *Willamette Farmer*, 18 March 1881, 4; "Effect of Railroad Connection," *Willamette Farmer*, 6 July 1883, 4. Villard likely intended the out-of-state holding company to subvert an Oregon law prohibiting a corporation or its officers from owning both a steamship line and a railroad. Henry Villard to J.C. Ainsworth, 11 May 1878, John C. Ainsworth Collection, Coll. 250, University of Oregon Special Collections, Box 8, Folder 3.

Figure Three: Oregon Railway and Navigation Company Stock Ownership, 1885¹²¹



Oregon Railway and Navigation Company Stock Ownership, 1885

¹²¹ "List of Stockholders of the Oregon Railway and Navigation Co.," 18 May 1885, Union Pacific Railroad Co., Mss. 299, Oregon Historical Society, Box 94, Folder 11. The map includes 105,00 shares in the possession of the underwriting company in New York. It does not reflect 14,616 shares where the owner's location could not be determined.

Integration with national markets proved more traumatic than the boosters predicted. Local conditions aggravated the effects of a national recession. The city faced contraction when construction contracts dried up. Initial railroad rates allowed country merchants to buy from eastern suppliers, rather than shipping through Portland. The railroad recession coincided with a global drop in wheat prices. On top of all this, the legislature, responding to producerist calls, had passed a law taxing interest on loans, which boosters regarded as driving capital from the state. One out of twelve Oregon businesses failed in 1884. The downturn lasted for three years, but even before it was over, Portlanders worried that they had lost more than they had gained by surrendering the hinterland trade network to outside capital. Railroad officers promised city leaders that rate structures would allow Portland merchants to sell as far east as Missoula, but then declined to implement these favorable rates. Likewise, Portlanders had expected the railroad to bring independence from the British wheat fleet, but no wheat seems to have left Portland by rail in the 1880s. Nor did the railroad boost the inchoate lumber industry. Michigan lumber still found its way into buildings in southern Idaho, within a few hundred miles of the western Oregon mills. Worst of all, perhaps, the Northern Pacific Railroad stuck to plans from the 1870s to make Tacoma its West Coast terminus, building a line over the Cascade Mountains to the city in 1888. By the end of the 1880s the boosters' railroad excitement gave way to worries that the railroad would undermine Portland's supremacy in the Pacific Northwest.¹²²

¹²² Portland Board of Trade, *Annual Report of the Board of Trade of Portland, Oregon for the Year Ending July 31, 1881* (Portland, OR: Schwab & Anderson, 1881), 5, 9; *Portland City Directory, 1883* (Portland, OR: J.K. Gill, 1883), 29; Portland Board of Trade, *Ninth Annual Report of the Board of Trade*, 9-10; *Portland City Directory, 1885* (Portland, OR: R.L. Polk, 1885), 58; Portland Board of Trade, *Tenth Annual Report of the Board of Trade of Portland, Oregon* (Portland, OR: George Himes, 1884), 10-11, 16-17; Holden, "The Rise and Fall of Oregon Populism," 232; Board of Trade, *Eleventh Annual Report of the Board of Trade of Portland, Oregon* (Portland, OR: George Himes, 1885), 9; Abner Baker, "Economic Growth in Portland in the 1880s," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 67 (June 1966): 108-110; Thomas Cox, "Lower Columbia Lumber Industry, 1880-1893," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 67 (June 1966): 167-168, 170; Tattersall, "The Economic Development of the Pacific Northwest to 1920," 137.

If Portland boosters welcomed outside money in the early 1880s, rural Northwesterners lost their enthusiasm for the power of outside capital to transform the region. In 1882 the state Grange master reported that the Union Pacific and Central Pacific had overcharged the people of Oregon by more than \$3 million in freights bound eventually for the state. The Grange contended that when the Northern Pacific Railroad reached Portland, it would soon combine with other railroads, eliminating competition and driving up rates. It followed in the 1880s, as in the 1870s, that government regulation was the only way to keep freights low and ensure the republican dream that rewards would match effort in a society founded on labor. The Grange became more assertive. In 1886 the Grange called for full state ownership of telegraph and railroad lines, justifying its request by saying, “it is a conceded fact that labor produces all wealth and enjoys it the least in consequence of the various incorporated monopolies that grind them down to want and beggary.”¹²³ The following year, the Grange suggested that state-owned utilities might be modeled after the United States Post Office or after European state-owned railroads.¹²⁴

Weakened by its business failures in the 1870s and likely by the efforts that transportation utilities made to accommodate producer interests by expanding service and lowering prices, the Grange stood little chance of bringing Oregon’s railroads under state ownership, even as the recession of the 1880s spurred farmers to join again. The Grange still managed to influence hinterland connections. Outside investment entered a state economy shaped by laws that aimed to restrict capital and ensure that rural labor was fruitful. Steamboat operators were liable for treble damages in accidents they caused. Lenders faced a default interest rate of eight percent and a maximum rate capped at ten percent. An 1882 law gave

¹²³ Oregon State Grange, *Proceedings of the Thirteenth Annual Session of the Oregon State Grange of the Patrons of Husbandry* (Albany, OR: Burkhart & Pfeiffer, 1886), 59.

¹²⁴ Oregon State Grange, *Proceedings of the Ninth Annual Session of the Oregon State Grange of the Patrons of Husbandry*, 19-20.

loggers in lumber camps the right to put liens on logs they cut in order to collect wages due. In the first session after the transcontinental railroad reached Oregon, the legislature passed a series of laws regulating freights and railroad operations. Oregon laws allowed rural producers to determine where trains took on freight. If a warehouse within 150 feet of the main track had 300 tons or more of freight stored in it, the railroad was required to carry freight. The warehouse owner was responsible for grading the sidetrack and laying ties, but the railroad was obliged to provide rails. Oregon law also prohibited railroads from charging fares that discriminated against short hauls. The 1885 legislature capped rates at the present level, required that all rates be reasonable, that they be consistently charged, and that railroads not charge more for short distances than for long distances. The act prevented railroads from forcing produce and farm equipment to ship through Portland. To demonstrate compliance, railroads had to prepare annual reports for the state detailing forty-one specific pieces of information.¹²⁵

Rural people shaped the economy in other ways. In 1882 the legislature passed a law treating mortgages as taxable property. Creditors had to pay real property taxes to counties where they had loaned money, while farmers in these counties could deduct their debts from their property assessments. The system shifted the burden of taxation from indebted farming counties

¹²⁵ “An Act to prescribe the amount of damages in case of injury or destruction of property by persons in the conduct or management of a steamboat or other water craft,” *General Laws of the State of Oregon, Enacted by the Legislative Assembly at the Ninth Regular Session* (Salem, OR: State Printer, 1876), 20 October 1876; “An Act to Amend Sections 1 and 5 of Chapter 27 of the Miscellaneous Laws of the State of Oregon, as compiled by Matthew P. Deady and Lafayette Lane,” *The Laws of Oregon: and the Resolutions and Memorials of the Eleventh Regular Session of the Legislative Assembly Thereof* (Salem, OR: State Printer, 1880), 25 October 1880; “An Act to Protect Laborers in Timber and Logging Camps,” *The Laws of Oregon: and the Resolutions and Memorials of the Twelfth Regular Session of the Legislative Assembly Thereof* (Salem, OR: State Printer, 1882), 26 October 1882; “An Act requiring Corporations owning or operating any Railroad, in the State of Oregon, to make certain Annual Reports to the Secretary of State,” *The Laws of Oregon and the Resolutions and Memorials of the Thirteenth Regular Session of the Legislative Assembly Thereof* (Salem, OR: State Printer, 1885), 26 February 1885; “An Act to facilitate the Transportation of Freight by Railway,” *The Laws of Oregon and the Resolutions and Memorials of the Special Session of the Thirteenth Legislative Assembly Thereof* (Salem, OR: State Printer, 1885), 25 November 1885; “An Act to Regulate the Transportation of Passengers and Freight by Railroad Corporations,” *The Laws of Oregon and the Resolutions and Memorials of the Thirteenth Regular Session of the Legislative Assembly Thereof* (Salem, OR: State Printer, 1885), 20 February 1885; Holden, “The Rise and Fall of Oregon Populism,” 117-149, 318-319.

to capital-rich Portland and to out-of-state lenders. The new law, passed by a Granger-dominated legislature, also made it easier to tax financial assets by requiring mortgages to be registered. The law would meet defeat in Portland's Federal District Court in 1885, as would elements of the Grange's railroad regulation scheme, but some of the regulatory system remained. Oregon's state apparatus, pushed and prodded by producers, did not just favor capital by the 1880s.¹²⁶

If these laws sought to shape the operation of capital in Oregon, others explicitly established the relationship between Portland and rural producers. Farmers worried in the early 1880s that the city would not provide railroads with terminal facilities. Railroads wanted to build a terminus on a publicly owned levee in the city, ground that city government wanted to keep in the public domain. The *Willamette Farmer* reminded the city of the 1870s economic consensus: Portland depended on rural producers who, in turn, depended on access to market. The city "could not afford to act in a churlish manner to such an enterprise, and further, could not, or rather, should not, run counter to the interests of the country," the paper averred.¹²⁷ The *Willamette Farmer* made a similar argument in favor of running train tracks down Front Street, noting that a street railway would allow farmers to save two-and-a-half cents per bushel on shipments of wheat through the city. Portland should allow private tracks through its streets because "such facilities must redound to the benefit of the producer," the paper contended.¹²⁸ The legislature agreed. In 1880 it passed a law that conveyed Portland's public levee to the Oregon Railway Company, noting that otherwise the costs of unnecessary inefficiencies in the

¹²⁶ Holden, "The Rise and Fall of Oregon Populism," 117-149, 260-345.

¹²⁷ "The Public Levee," *Willamette Farmer*, 10 September 1880, 4.

¹²⁸ "Railroad Privileges," *Willamette Farmer*, 1 October 1880, 4.

transportation system “must be borne entirely by the producers of the State of Oregon.” The act also gave the railroad the right to lay a single track along or across city streets.¹²⁹

Rural producers had argued for decades that the Northwest economy depended on their labor. In order for that economy to work, they contended, labor had to produce a reward commensurate with effort. They argued that would happen naturally in a competitive world with smoothly functioning market connections. It seemed only natural that a region dependent on their labor should do all it could to encourage it by ensuring the market connections and level playing field necessary for farmers to succeed. There was more to rural ideology than this, though. Labor was not just an economic act; it was also a moral one. The sweat that farmers dripped into the soil entitled them to moral and political authority. It provided them with perspective that urban labor, and especially the idle accumulation of wealth, could not imbue. This was a powerful claim in a world that entwined state power and economic production. It threatened the comfortable relationship between state officials and corporate officers that had forged Oregon’s hinterland trade in the 1860s and 1870s. Rural voices called for hinterland connections that would serve them. Their relationship with Portland, they recognized, was not merely the product of wheat flowing downstream or even the efforts of urban merchants to gain control over their debts and their crops. Things less tangible than wood smoke and railroad iron shaped the relationship between city and hinterland. The wood and iron depended on networks of capital and on state aid. In the 1870s and 1880s both these things relied on ideas about how the economy should function and whom the state should serve. By casting their labor in opposition to the

¹²⁹ “An Act to Grant the Oregonian Railway Company, Limited, the Right of Way and Station Grounds over the State Lands, and Terminal Facilities upon the Public Grounds at the City of Portland,” *The Laws of Oregon: And Resolutions and Memorial of the Eleventh Session of the Legislative Assembly Thereof* (Salem, OR: State Printer, 1880), 22 October 1880.

morally suspect behavior of city residents, rural Northwesters aimed to define the contrast between city and hinterland to their benefit.

Rural people did not always achieve the successes they aimed for. Their agitation, for example, allowed Oregon capitalists to briefly retrench in the 1870s, regaining control over a business that producers hoped would expand into a transcontinental railroad connection. The legislative victories of the 1880s realized some of the dreams of the 1870s, but were modest compared to the rhetoric they supported. That rhetoric, though, even when short term results were wanting, had lasting effects. Rural folk, speaking through the Grange and small town papers, established common assumptions about labor and rural produce as the touchstones of Oregon politics. By the 1880s and 1890s even Portland boosters based their claims to urban importance on the backs of rural laborers and the fields they tilled. As the power of the state on the local and federal level grew in the twentieth century, it would base growth on the visions of producers.

There is much to admire in the successes that the Grange and the people it represented achieved. Organizing across scattered farms, grangers imagined alternatives to a market that deprived them of the fruits of their labor. They valued independent gain, while looking askance at surplus wealth and calling for denser relationships among people. The point of prosperous farms, after all, was to build communities robust enough to provide churches and schools. And they welcomed a changing world, hoping to shape it to their benefit, rather than keep it at bay. Still, there were flaws and contradictions in this vision. Hostility to monopoly shifted with surprising ease to skepticism of the state apparatus that producers expected to restrain it. And the

vision of a society that fostered productive use of land and family competencies made little room for those whose labor did not match the model yeoman farmer's.¹³⁰

In Oregon's republican rhetoric, farmers had made a productive country out of a wilderness that was "inhabited almost entirely by marauding bands of murderous savages." Labor, which *The Dalles Weekly Mountaineer* proclaimed "the first price, the original purchase money, that is paid for all things," had been key to this accomplishment.¹³¹ It also distinguished pioneers from the people they drove from the land. Oregon political culture embraced a Lockean view of property that undermined Indian land claims as out of proportion to the amount of land Indians could work. It was a short step from denying Indian labor to denying Indian political rights, as the *Willamette Farmer* vehemently did in the 1870s. If Indians worked too little in the view of the Northwest's producer republicans, Chinese laborers, many of whom laid the rails that farmers cheered, worked too hard and for too little. Politicians claimed that opponents brought Chinese labor to the region to undercut white labor and undermine the just reward that producers might expect for their efforts. *West Shore* magazine took it as a truism that Chinese laborers kept little of their money in Oregon, placing them on the wrong side of the republican concern for the development of the state. Oregon politicians also found republican grounds to oppose black emancipation and to reject the Fifteenth Amendment as the product of "an arbitrary majority of votes acquired by the power of the bayonet."¹³² By framing the political value of white labor in opposition to the deficiencies of Indian and Chinese labor, Oregon farmers perpetrated a brutal irony. Much of the labor that animated the state's economy, from building transportation

¹³⁰ Oregon State Grange, *Proceedings of the Seventh Annual session of the Oregon State Grange Patrons of Husbandry* (Salem, OR: E.M Waite, 1880), 6; "The Judge's Salary," *La Grande Mountain Sentinel*, 19 September 1874, 2.

¹³¹ "Another Letter from Plebe," *The Dalles Weekly Mountaineer*, 31 January 1874, 2.

¹³² "Senate Joint Resolution No. 30," *Joint Resolutions and Memorials of the State of Oregon enacted by the Legislative Assembly at the Sixth Regular Session* (Salem, OR: State Printer, 1870), 26 October 1870.

networks to clearing brush from Willamette Valley farms, was performed by people of color excluded from the political valorization of their work.¹³³

Likewise, the anti-urbanism that attended the Grange's rhetoric about the contrast between labor and speculation made it difficult for rural people to recognize that cities were home to more than idle speculators and grinding monopolists. As rural interests called for Portland to serve the country and advocated the erosion of public property in the city and the running of rails through city streets, they helped create an unequal urban environment. There were people in the city, people who did productive work, people who, sometimes because of their race or merely because of where they lived, found themselves on the outside of Oregon's producer ideology. By the end of the 1880s, the Grange's anti-urbanism extended beyond hostility to concentrated wealth. It resisted state efforts to help Portland's poor, lumping them in with the city's wealthy as a population to whom the rest of the state owed nothing. The Grange's arguments were parochial, as it pointed out that Portland had been able to issue non-taxable bonds, depriving the rest of the state of much-needed interest on the bonds. Because of this, the state Grange master abjured any societal responsibility for the poor. "If Portland would exhibit the energy and ability, and spend the money for her poor that she expends in trying to exempt the wealth of our state from paying taxes," he contended, "she would have but very few destitute persons within the limits of her corporation."¹³⁴

¹³³ "Senate Joint Memorial No. 4," *Joint Resolutions and Memorials of the State of Oregon Enacted by the Legislative Assembly at the Sixth Regular Session* (Salem, OR: State Printer, 1870), 19 October 1870; "Indians as Voters," *Willamette Farmer*, 4 December 1874, 4; "The Awful Outrage," *La Grande Mountain Sentinel*, 31 May 1873, 2; Johnson, *Founding the Far West*, 301; "Senate Joint Resolution No. 18," *Joint Resolutions and Memorials of the State of Oregon enacted by the Legislative Assembly at the Sixth Regular Session* (Salem, OR: State Printer, 1870), 17 October 1870; "Keep your Money in Oregon," *West Shore*, March 1876, 8; "Senate Joint Memorial No. 1," *Joint Resolutions and Memorials of the State of Oregon Enacted by the Legislative Assembly at the Tenth Regular Session* (Salem, OR: State Printer, 1878), 18 October 1878; Boag, *Environment and Experience*, 125; Holden, "The Rise and Fall of Oregon Populism," 89-90.

¹³⁴ Oregon State Grange, *Proceedings of the Sixteenth Annual Session of the Oregon State Grange of the Patrons of Husbandry* (Salem, OR: E.M. Waite, 1889), 42.

The Grange missed the point here by casting the chief divisions in the Northwest as between urban and rural people. To be sure, there were wealthy Portlanders who did business in the hinterland, but by the 1880s, much of the ownership of hinterland businesses was in out-of-state hands. (John Ainsworth himself left the city during the decade, dying near Oakland, California, in 1893, sixteen years after starting his memoirs.) A more powerful political response to capital required a recognition that urban and rural producers had more in common than not. Farmers lost by their prejudice against the city, but not as much as urban workers did. As the next chapter demonstrates, residence within city boundaries did not indemnify people from the hazards of a resource-dependent economy. And unlike rural producers, urban laborers, especially immigrants and people of color, did not have ready access to producer ideology to valorize their work or muster the state to their defense.¹³⁵

¹³⁵ “Death of Captain Ainsworth,” *Oregonian*, 31 December 1893, 4.

CHAPTER TWO

HINTERLAND TRADE IN THE CITY: URBAN INEQUALITY AND THE ETHIC OF PLACE, 1890-1930

The day before he died in January 1919, Henry Pittock asked to be placed in front of one of his mansion's windows, expressing, as his obituary put it, "friendship for the view that stretched away beneath the grounds."¹ Eighty-three-year-old Pittock owned much of what he saw, including Portland's principal newspaper, substantial downtown real estate, and local lumber and paper mills. His death would leave the largest estate an Oregon man had yet accumulated, wealth that had grown with the city he looked out on. No wonder Henry Pittock cherished the view of the city from his twenty-two room Italianate sandstone mansion. When he commissioned the house seven years earlier, Pittock chose a plot perched hundreds of feet above the city and insisted that the house feature huge plate glass normally installed only in department stores. On a clear day, the house's east-facing windows framed Cascade peaks seventy miles distant. And in the middleground, seemingly just beyond the dip of the mansion's lawn, lay downtown Portland and the east-side neighborhoods across the Willamette River. The mountains and the arc of the river across the edge of downtown marked the view as unique to Portland. But from the perspective of three miles, six hundred feet of elevation, and the money required to live in the city's finest home, much about Pittock's view seemed comfortably generic. The buildings formed a carpet of respectability, their density speaking to the prosperity and power of the city.²

¹ "Notable Life of Mr. Pittock Ends," *Oregonian*, 30 January 1919, 1.

² "Inventory Filed of H.L. Pittock Estate," *Oregonian*, 1 April 1919, 11; "Notable Life of Mr. Pittock Ends," 1; E. Kimbark MacColl and Harry Stein, *Merchants, Money, and Power: The Portland Establishment, 1843-1913* (Portland, OR: Georgian Press, 1988), 113, 184; Interview with Robert Peter Pittock Gantenbein, Portland, Oregon 25, August 1983 by Linda Dodds, in "Pittock Mansion Remembered," ed. by Linda Dodds, Daniel Crandall, Mrs. Andre Raynal (Unpublished, 1984), 163; Pittock also claimed the first recorded ascent of Mt. Hood. Jeff Thomas,

It must have been an intoxicating view, those buildings, and the wealth they represented, fading out into the countryside. It was possible to imagine that the city was as monolithic as the elevated view made it seem. One could imagine that the chief distinctions in the view were between city and country, between the carpet of respectable buildings and the fields and mountains beyond that provided the city with wealth. Henry Pittock knew better, though. Even as he enjoyed the view through his plate glass, Pittock understood that it masked realities about the city that made his fortune. Until 1912, Pittock lived downtown nine blocks from the Willamette River. Few clues remain to explain why Pittock left the city for his house on the hill. Perhaps he wanted a more impressive place for his scattered family to gather. Perhaps he recognized the real estate he lived on promised alluring income as a commercial block. Or maybe he tired of the irritations of living in the heart of a growing industrial city. Recent years had seen homes give way to commercial buildings and workshops, as Figure One shows. There were at least six small factories within two blocks of his downtown house. Pittock may have joined other Portlanders in lamenting the increased smoke that hung around downtown in the early 1910s. Or he may have become increasingly uncomfortable with his proximity to the poor who belied the city's image of universal prosperity. In any case, Pittock joined other wealthy Portlanders in leaving downtown for distant neighborhoods to the west and east. He left behind lodging house residents, immigrant laborers, prostitutes, and the polluted environments they lived in.³

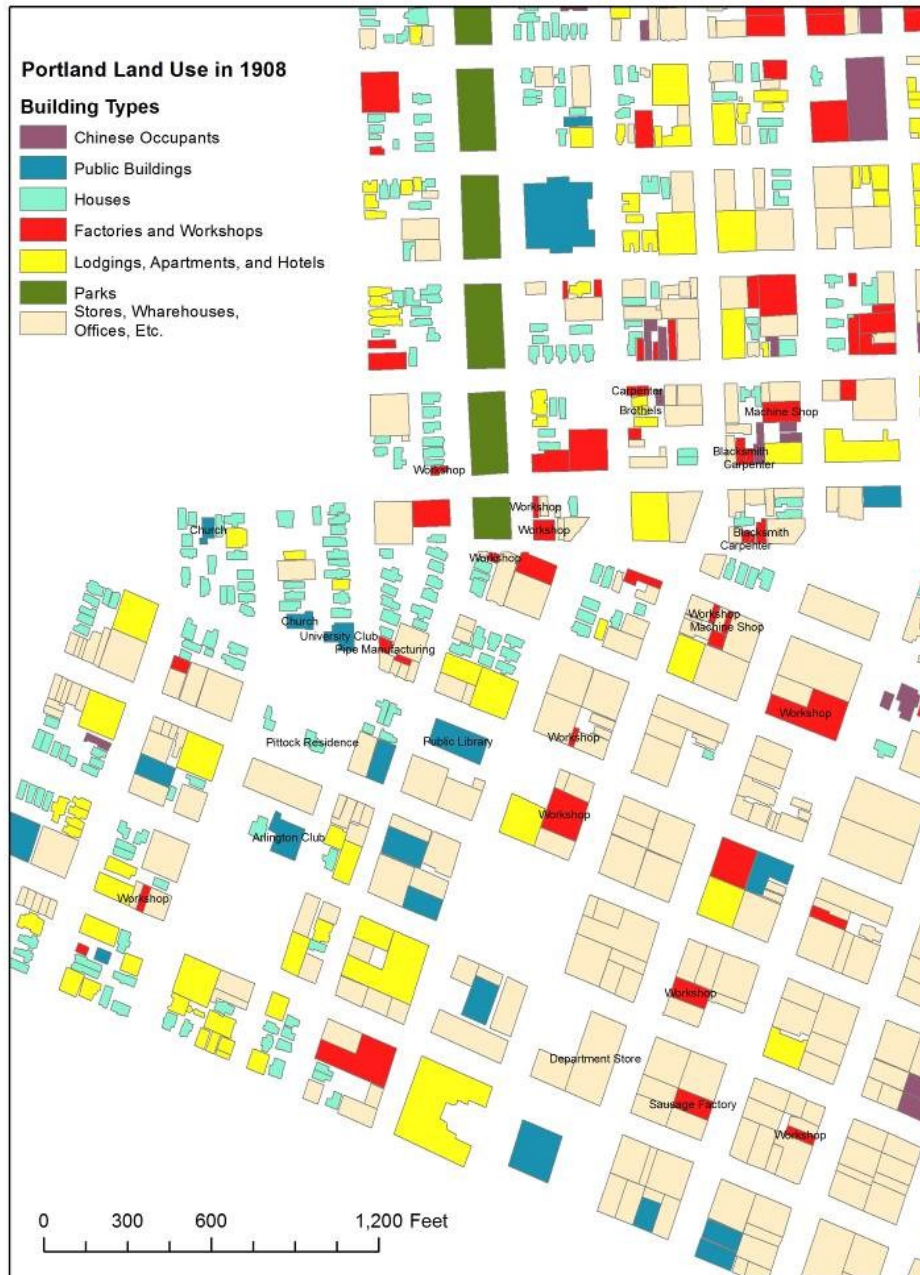
Oregon High: A Climbing Guide (Portland, OR: Keep Climbing Press, 1991), 23. Pittock called in a political favor to get a city water main run up the hill to his house. A reformer city councilman canceled the watermain contract when he discovered it. John Terry, "Oregon Trails: Important Labor Leader Fails to Garner Credit He's Due," *Oregonian*, 24 July 2005, A21; Donna Neary, "The Pittock Mansion, 3229 New [sic] Pittock Drive," *Public Historian* 32 (Fall 2010): 128-130.

³ Pittock did not leave a record of his decision to move. Neary, "The Pittock Mansion," 129. For the value of Pittock's downtown real estate, see "Notable Life of Mr. Pittock Ends," 1; Pittock's granddaughter speculates that he tired of living "down in that area" in "Interview with Elizabeth Cronin Meier," Portland, Oregon, 24 August 1983, by Linda Dodds, in "Pittock Mansion Remembered," ed. by Linda Brody-Dodds, Daniel Crandall, Mrs. Andre

This chapter examines Portland from the perspective of Pittock's first house in the heart of the city more than from the safe perch on a distant hill that he sought at the end of his life. It regards New York, the Palouse, and Cascade forests from the city streets. Railroads owned by New Yorkers and Bostonians were important shapers of urban land use. And the labor of rural producers in wheat fields and lumber camps melded with the urban environment as boats carried wheat through the city's harbor and sawmills spewed cinders into the city's air. Hinterland trade after 1890 meant industrial refinement of rural products in city neighborhoods. To city residents, hinterland trade was as much pollution as it was raw materials bound for brokerages. The chapter argues that the hinterland interwove with the city in ways that blurred the physical boundaries between city and country while darkening the lines that Portlanders drew between themselves.

Raynal (Unpublished, 1984), 87. Information about downtown geography comes from Sanborn Map Company, *Insurance Maps of Portland, Oregon* (New York: Sanborn Map Company, 1908), vol. i.

Figure One: Henry Pittock's Neighborhood in 1908⁴



⁴ Data from Sanborn Map Company, *Insurance Maps of Portland, Oregon*, 1908, vol. i.

Portland's story carries the details of the argument. It begins in 1890 with the first decade of post-railroad growth, continues through the early-twentieth-century development of new neighborhoods, and ends shortly after the city implemented its first zoning ordinance. The story shows that trade with the rural Northwest was a part of daily life in the city. Railroad corporations guided land use, byproducts of trade clouded Portland's skies and altered its landscape, and the promise of prosperity swelled the city's diverse working class. The interweaving of the hinterland with the city fueled growth, but also created environmental problems. Portlanders responded by building new neighborhoods segregated by race and class. Both middle-class reformers and working-class homeowners sought solutions to the city's environmental problems, but their calls for reform were based on a narrow ethic of place. Ensnared in residential neighborhoods distant from the worst of the city's problems, they based their calls for reform on a defense of the places they lived, defining them against city neighborhoods where pollution belonged. They developed a conception of the city that excluded from membership in their imagined community the underclass of lodging house residents who suffered the worst of Portland's problems in the first decades of the twentieth century.

This appraisal of Portland's history draws inspiration from descriptions of other industrial cities. Indeed, the disproportionate impact of pollution on people whose race or class excluded them from power is a standard story in environmental history. Portland's pollution and the racial segregation that emerged as smoke billowed from factories and sewage flowed into the Willamette established common experience with other cities. There were also ways in which Portland's experience differed. The scale of even Portland's largest saw mills paled in comparison to, for example, steel mills in the East or auto plants in Michigan. The owners of most Portland companies lived in the city, though increasingly in neighborhoods far from their

factories. It was mainly the railroads that cut through the city and owned industrial land along the river and the electrical companies that burned sawdust to fuel boilers that had distant ownership. Portland's inequality was contained in compressed space, but was no less pronounced for it.⁵

There is another way in which Portland was unique. It was the largest city in a state known for a powerful reform movement. In 1892, as Portland factories grew, more than thirty-four percent of Oregonians voted for the Populist presidential candidate. There was more to point to in Oregon's commitment to reform. The state passed a law in 1902 allowing citizens to place initiatives on the ballot and then considered initiatives on women's suffrage and the single tax. Within the city was a slate of reformers, like those in other cities, both inside and outside of municipal government: charity officers, city physicians, building inspectors, and clergymen. So it is with good reason that a recent book examining American progressivism chooses Portland as a case study. Robert Johnston argues that Portland's population of small businessmen constituted a radical middle class who "used their ideas about being middle class to fight for a fully democratic world."⁶ Johnston shows how the intellectual logic of Progressivism, hostile to concentrated power, could produce both calls for direct democracy and efforts to limit Catholic school attendance. Portland was home to colorful political characters ranging from anti-imperialist mayor Harry Lane to anti-vaccinationist activist Lora Little. These characters paint a vivid picture of the energy and contradictions of progressivism. Also valuable is Johnston's

⁵ For nearby examples, see Coll Thrush, *Native Seattle: Histories from the Crossing Over Place* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2008); Matthew Klinge, *Emerald City: An Environmental History of Seattle* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2007). The classic work here is Andrew Hurley, *Environmental Inequalities: Class, Race, and Industrial Pollution in Gary, Indiana, 1945-1980* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995). See also, Chad Montrie, *Making a Living: Work and Environment in the United States* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008), 91-112; Tom McCarthy, *Auto Mania: Cars, Consumers, and the Environment* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2007), 148-175.

⁶ Robert Johnston, *The Radical Middle Class: Populist Democracy and the Question of Capitalism in Progressive Era Portland, Oregon* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003), 16.

description, based on precinct voting records, of a class divide in Portland between wealthy neighborhoods west of downtown and new neighborhoods east of the Willamette.⁷

To find that Portland's progressives were fascinatingly complex is not to find that they were an effective political force in the city. This depiction departs from Johnston's for two reasons. The first is that I find persuasive the arguments of local histories. E. Kimbark MacColl's series of exhaustively researched books contend that Portland politics were dominated by railroad interests. The cadre of professionals who managed the Portland affairs of railroads foiled most efforts by city officials and reformers to make the city safer and cleaner. Portland's progressive mayors, including anti-imperialist Harry Lane contended with city councils beholden to the railroads. Portland reformers did not break the power of industry, and especially railroads, to shape the city during the progressive era. So the story I tell here is one of circumscribed reform efforts, where the documents the reformers produced are more interesting for what they say about the physical environment than for what they say about the intellectual agendas of progressives.⁸

The second reason for departure has to do with a divergent view of Portland's reform motive. I describe Portland's reformers more dyspeptically than Johnston does. Both small proprietors and employees of larger companies were concerned with preserving their status as homeowners. Their anti-corporatism coexisted with another brand of politics focused on place. In the city's early years when a jumble of class and ethnic groups lived close to each other, homeowners' concerns protected all Portlanders from environmental nuisances. In the first years

⁷ Johnston portrays compulsory attendance at public school as an anti-elitist project, seeks to separate the Ku Klux Klan from Portland progressives by portraying the KKK as anti-populist, but links Portland's progressives firmly to anti-vaccination efforts.

⁸ The trio of local histories is E. Kimbark MacColl, *The Shaping of a City: Business and Politics in Portland, Oregon 1885 to 1915* (Portland, OR: Georgian Press, 1976); E. Kimbark MacColl, *The Growth of a City: Power and Politics in Portland, Oregon 1915 to 1950* (Portland, OR: Georgian Press, 1979); MacColl and Stein, *Merchants, Money and Power*.

of the twentieth century, as wealthy, middle-class, and stable working-class families followed Henry Pittock out of downtown, they imagined their interests as separate from the poor people they left behind. Their environmental concerns protected their narrowly-defined neighborhoods but rendered invisible the city's larger problems in the industrial and lodging house districts in and near downtown. Portland's petite bourgeoisie may have been anti-capitalist, as Johnston says, but they, along with other homeowners, did not much care when capitalism burdened the city's poor with the worst of its pollution.

The result, even in a city and state known for progressive efforts, was limited reform that changed little about the patterns of land use and pollution that railroads set before the turn of the century. Industrialists who lived far from the river and railroad tracks might think of their city as exercising power over a hinterland. So too might the farmers who resented the prices they paid for goods that traveled through the city. But the people who suffered noise, dust, and smell in the city's poorest neighborhoods understood that city elites held power over them as much as over the hinterland. From their perspective, the relevant distinction was not between city and country, but between rich and poor. Unfortunately, this too was a conclusion that the city's reformers came to, as they sought to protect their neighborhoods from the poor as much as from nuisance. A great deal of conflict, not to mention pollution, lay beneath the view from Pittock's mansion.

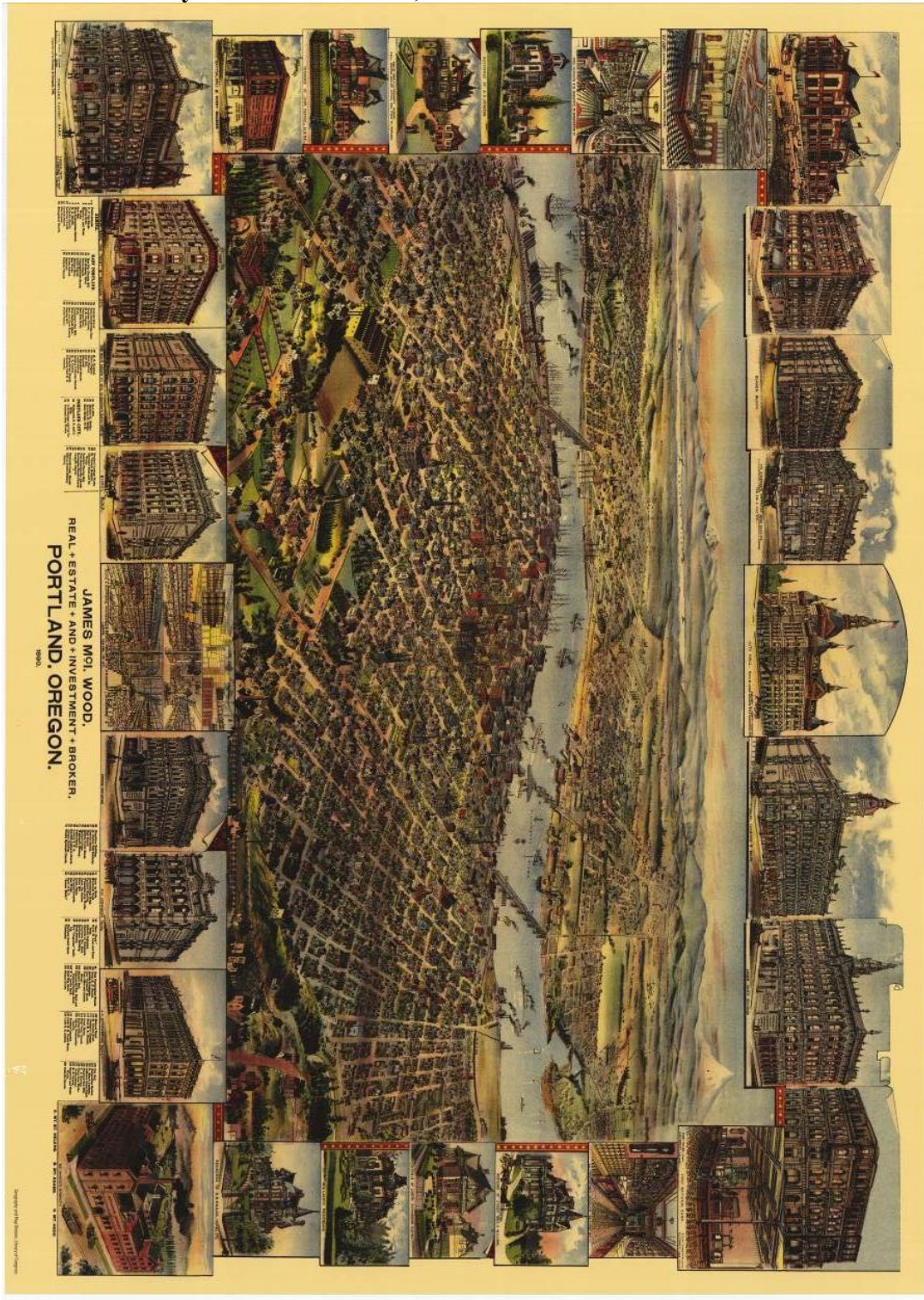
WEALTH OF HINTLERLAND TRADE

The carpet of buildings Pittock looked out on composed an image of the urban West made iconic by thousands of bird's-eye view maps. The maps were just going out of style as stonemasons cut the sandstone that framed Pittock's plate glass view, but for nearly half a century, urban bird's-eye views hung in the parlors of the middle class. They testified to the

prosperity of American cities that a small army of artists made their living depicting. Artists drew idealized cities with straight streets, prosperous trade, and respectable buildings. An 1890 image of Portland from a high point southwest of downtown, sponsored by a real estate broker, was one of the last bird's-eye drawings published of the city. It conveys the optimism of the genre. Ships line up against rows of docks and a compact downtown of tall buildings stands out against block after block of pleasant houses with leafy yards. Here and there church steeples rise precipitously above other buildings. Close-up pictures of three-story mansions and drawings of four- and five- story office blocks and government buildings frame the map, buttressing its message of urban riches.⁹

⁹ John Reps, *Views and Viewmakers of Urban America: Lithographs of Towns and Cities in the United States and Canada, Notes on the Artists and Publishers, and a Union Catalog of their Work, 1825-1925* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1984), 3. John Wood, "Portland, Oregon," 1890, Auditor's Historical Records, Accession A2004-002, Portland City Archives, M/1151; Several online copies of the image can be found, including here: <http://efiles.portlandoregon.gov/webdrawer/rec/2653715/>. For background on bird's-eye maps, see John Reps, *Views and Viewmakers of Urban America*, 3, 7, 10; John Reps, *Cities of the Mississippi: Nineteenth-Century Images of Urban Development* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1984), 15; Lisa Dorrill, "Illustrating the Ideal City: Nineteenth-Century American Bird's-Eye Views," *Imprint: Journal of the American Historical Print Collector's Society* 18 (Autumn 1993): 21-31. Further examples can be found in Carl Abbott, *How Cities Won the West: Four Centuries of Urban Change in Western North America* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2008).

Figure Two: Bird's-eye View of Portland, 1890



This view of Portland was not unique to 1890, nor was its expression confined to artists' brushes. In 1883 the magazine *West Shore* extolled the view of Portland from Robinson's Hill, near the perspective that the 1890 city view adopted. The magazine celebrated a "city, wrapped in the green mantle of her shade trees, all blending in a harmonious whole, save where here and there some tall spire or imposing structure thrusts itself above its fellows."¹⁰ The turn of a new century and the passing of bird's-eye views in favor of photography did little to cool the boosters' blush. Ray Stannard Baker told the readers of *Century Illustrated* that a visitor to Portland sees "a fine old city, a bit as it might be, of central New York." After all, the city had "acquired the momentum of stored riches and passed the stage of pioneer crudities."¹¹ Walter Hines Page echoed this description in 1905. For all its business bustle, he wrote, the city was pleasant. "They have beautiful homes, and the commonest cottage will bloom with rambling roses to the roof," he claimed. Hines attributed the wealth of Portland's commercial elite and the working-class residents of common cottages to its relationship to the rural Northwest. "Everybody seems to live well," he wrote, "the people you meet, the clubs that you are invited to, the hotel at which you stay—all of these give the impression of a people who live in a fertile land. The gardens of Walla Walla and of the Willamette Valley send a fruitful flavor over the region."¹²

Boosters and artists alike imagined a city that realized universal benefits by trading with its hinterland. Nature served the city. This had been the contention of the professional publicists, the writers of periodicals, city directories, and board of trade reports, of the earlier nineteenth century. The professional boosters were joined then and in the twentieth century by professionals and businessmen who saw their success as tied to the larger success of the city. The boosters'

¹⁰ "Portland: The Metropolis of the Pacific Northwest," *West Shore*, September 1883, 201.

¹¹ Ray Stannard Baker, "The Great Northwest," *Century Illustrated*, March 1903, 658.

¹² Walter Hines Page, "The Larger Coast Cities," *World's Work*, August 1905, 6501.

composition changed little at the turn of the century, but their message shifted. Earlier Portland boosters had touted the wealth of the city's hinterland. Now boosters increasingly added to that an emphasis on the pleasantness of life in the city. Ironically, this emphasis came just as increased industrial sullied the urban environment.¹³

The boosters were right about at least one thing: Portland was growing. The city built on expanding trade in the 1880s to increase its population and wealth. By 1890 Portland boosters proclaimed that the city's transportation connections and commercial facilities would help it to surpass San Francisco as the coast's leading city. "The tide of development has rolled to the North," the city's *West Shore* magazine proclaimed.¹⁴ Indeed, Portland's population grew from 17,577 in 1880 to 46,385 in 1890. The city's neighborhoods arrayed west of the Willamette reached a population density of 6,230 people per square mile in 1890. Ensuing decades saw even more rapid growth. Portland's population swelled to 90,426 in 1900. Only three other American cities grew faster. By 1910 207,214 people called the city home. Portland, representing half the state's industrial output, also benefited from dramatic growth in Oregon's industrial capacity. The state saw its industrial horsepower increase from 60,005 in 1899 to 81,348 in 1904 before more than doubling to 175,019 in 1909. As its population swelled and its factories churned, Portland burnished a reputation for wealth and a high percentage of millionaires. As *Pacific Monthly* put it, "few cities are wealthier in proportion to population."¹⁵

¹³ For a description of boosterism, see Carl Abbott, *Boosters and Businessmen: Popular Economic Thought and Urban Growth in the Antebellum Middle West* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1981), 4, 112.

¹⁴ "Untitled Editorial," *West Shore*, 3 May 1890, 546.

¹⁵ Rinaldo Minton Hall, "Portland, The Rose City," *Pacific Monthly*, June 1905, 370; MacColl, *The Shaping of a City*, 52-53, 112; Thomas Cox, *The Lumberman's Frontier: Three Centuries of Land Use, Society, and Change in America's Forests* (Corvallis: Oregon State University Press, 2010), 292; Bureau of the Census, *Thirteenth Census of the United States Taken in the Year 1910*, vol. ix *Population 1910* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1913), 487; Bureau of the Census, *Thirteenth Census of the United States Taken in the Year 1910*, vol. ix, *Manufactures 1909* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1912), 1019.

Much of the population growth after 1890 owed to the city's incorporation in 1891 of Albina and East Portland on the far bank of the Willamette. Both towns were younger than Portland. Their development represented the growing importance of industrial transformation of hinterland products more than the transportation and brokering that had fueled Portland's mid-nineteenth-century growth. The incorporation added the east side's modest population to Portland's own and provided the city with reserves of relatively flat farmland for real estate developers to turn into home lots, blurring the lines between the city and its hinterland. Portland's boosters predicted that their city would prosper from the formal addition of eastside mills and rail yards to the city limits. In the gory mixed metaphors of *West Shore* magazine, consolidated Portland gave "the state the vigorous heart it needs, wherewith to receive and redistribute the commercial blood supplied everywhere within its borders by the innumerable mouths of enterprise."¹⁶ The incorporation bound Portland more closely with the railroads and industrial plants that employed its workers and enriched its elite, but it also brought into the city limits the problems of company towns run for profit.

RAILROAD CITIES

East Portland grew as a railroad town, spurred by the development of Benjamin Holladay's Oregon & California Railroad. James Stephens, the cooper and ferryman who owned the East Portland townsite, was happy to sell railroad investors a right-of-way along the Willamette's bank in 1867. Before the railroad, Stephens's town site lacked prospects without an adequate harbor, wharves, or roads to farms in the Willamette and Tualatin valleys. The townsite sat on marshy land and spread up a slope cut with ravines. Stilts supported many of the buildings and city streets were elevated plank roadways. In the two years after the Oregon & California

¹⁶ "Untitled Editorial," *West Shore*, 21 February 1891, 121.

purchase, the population quadrupled and buildings spread down toward the riverside right-of-way. The new town incorporated in 1870 with 830 residents, including several doctors, lawyers, hoteliers, and shopkeepers. Steep costs from its expensive network of elevated roads retarded growth. Operating from a weak financial position and desperate for growth to fund its mounting infrastructure costs, the town, really a real estate gamble newly endowed with municipal powers, granted rail franchises with abandon, often failing to require payment for the privilege of running tracks through city streets and neglecting to add termination dates to ordinances authorizing the tracks.¹⁷

Albina, just to the north of East Portland, was also a creature of Oregon's large industrial corporations. The town had been platted in 1872 and developed a small commercial downtown, pleasant neighborhoods, and even a few mansions. During the 1880s Henry Villard's Oregon Railway & Navigation Company, successor to the Oregon & California, bought much of the town, particularly the area closest to the Willamette. By 1885 the company had filled in a pattern common in other western cities, buying nearly two miles of river front along with a huge rail yard. Its Albina holdings made the railroad (a creature of its New York and Boston stockholders) the largest property owner in greater Portland. Seeking proximity to water and rail transportation, Portland's elite followed the Oregon Railway & Navigation Company into Albina, building their largest industrial plants there. The new construction included a lumber mill and both the Portland Flouring Mills and the Pacific Coast Elevator. Wealthy and white residents fled before industry and the ethnically diverse laborers. With industrial and population growth came problems finding fresh water and managing sewage. Restrained by corporations that paid little in taxes and strained by the high cost of providing services along the east bank's uneven topography, neither

¹⁷ Leslie Scott, "Beginnings of East Portland," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 31 (December 1930): 355-356; MacColl, *The Shaping of a City*, 118, 124-125; Joseph Gaston, "The Genesis of the Oregon Railway System," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 7 (June 1906): 114.

town could afford the infrastructure that increased population demanded. Incorporation with Portland, which was laying a pipe to tap the pure water of the Cascades, offered a chance at comparatively flush city coffers and decent water.¹⁸

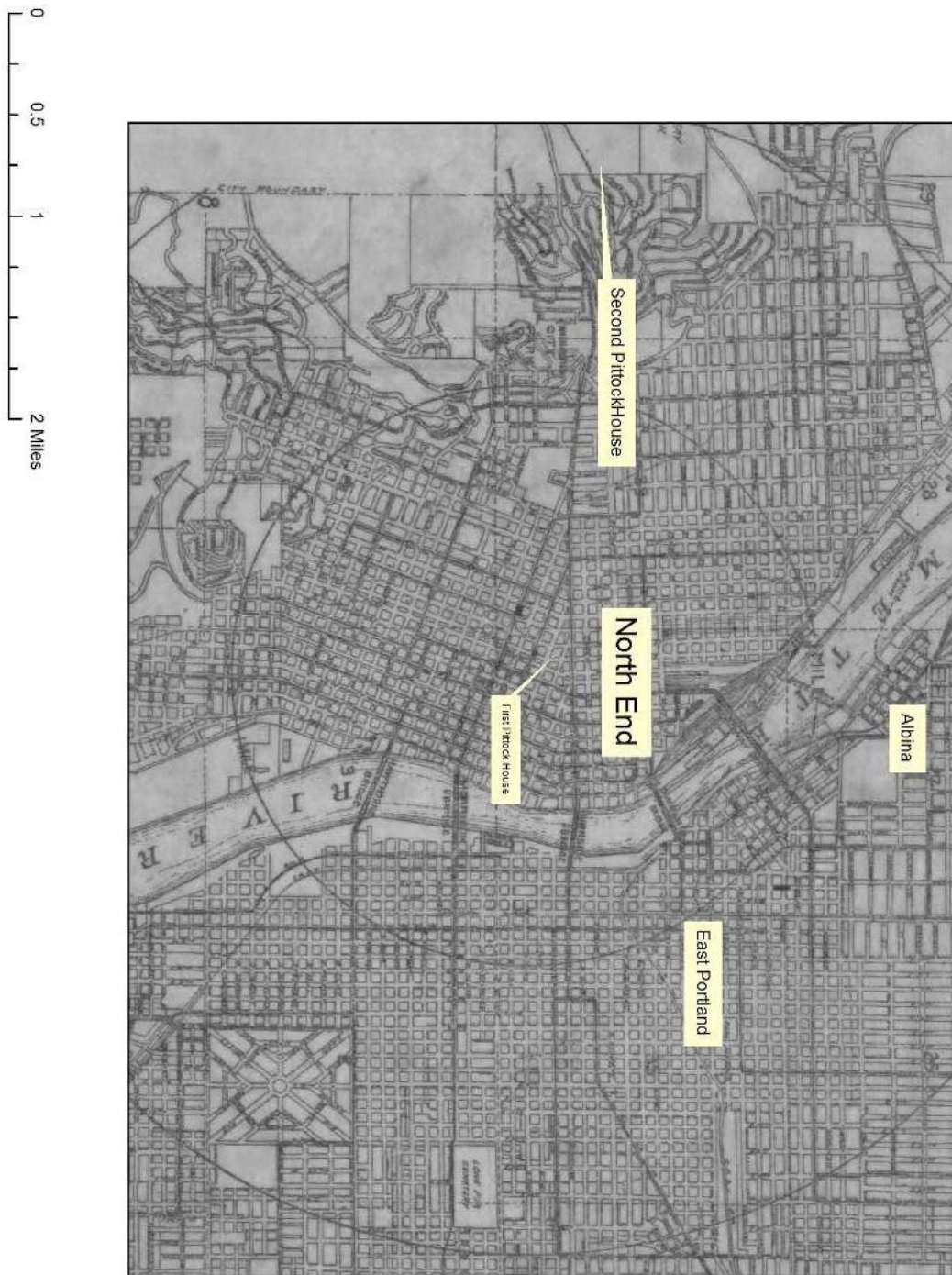
Portland, for its part, got more than additional population and room to expand. The location of much of the city's rail infrastructure on the east side of the Willamette outside the city limits had allowed Portland to externalize the costs of headlong industrial and population growth. After 1891 those problems fell within city limits, and solutions proved lacking. Without an adequate sewer system, east side residents relied on badly constructed privies that leaked into surrounding ground and drained toward riverside marshes. The city physician reported after the merger that city workers tried to drain some of the east side sloughs, but met with little success. The only solution, he explained, would be an expensive campaign to fill them in, a necessary project because "they have for years been the receptacle of privy vaults and filth of all description, and are certainly a menace to the general health of the people of the vicinity."¹⁹ Houses cropped up faster than the consolidated city could update the inadequate infrastructure. New privy vaults perforated the east side, even as the city put in two miles of new sewage pipes a year. Those who paid to connect their house to the sewer might live next to neighbors with a cesspool. City health officials found incidence of disease, particularly diphtheria, to be highest in the newly acquired neighborhoods.²⁰

¹⁸ County assessors in Oregon friendly with the railroads assessed track mileage at half the value that Washington assigned to it and slightly more than one-third the value that California gave it. MacColl, *The Shaping of a City*, 47, 130-131, 135-136, 217.

¹⁹ C.H. Wheeler to W.S. Mayson, c. 1892, Council Documents, Accession A2001-049, Portland City Archives, Box 53, Folder 2.

²⁰ C.H. Wheeler to Mayor, 1 January 1893, Council Documents, Accession A2001-049, Portland City Archives, Box 53, Folder 2; David Bealey to Mayor and Common Council, 1 January 1897, Council Documents, Accession A2001-049, Portland City Archives, Box 66, Folder 9; "Untitled Health Report," c. 1898, Council Documents, Accession A2001-049, Portland City Archives, Box 68, Folder 10.

Figure Three: Reference Map²¹



²¹ "Pittmon's Map of Portland," 1918, Auditor's Historical Records, Portland City Archives, M/1134.

The old east side towns' legal obligations proved even more enduring than their sewage filled bottomlands. The City of Portland inherited the commitments that Albina and East Portland made to the railroads. The old cities allowed railroads to run over their streets without also requiring them to contribute to their upkeep. Portland had taken in the old cities as a package, and was now stuck with the exploitative relationship the railroads had managed to forge. Nearly a decade after incorporation, as contractors dug sewage pipes into the ground and filled marshes, Portland mayor H.S. Rowe hoped that there was some way to renegotiate the old franchises "in which the rights which the public should have were overlooked, and only the interests of the companies and corporations receiving those franchises were considered."²² Cities and railroads both were corporations chartered by the state, but the former had a duty to care for the interests of citizens, rather than investors. Rowe was right to complain, but this was not a problem unique to new east-side neighborhoods.

Trains left their firmest imprint in the historical record as they screeched and clanged through the city's densely populated west side neighborhoods. It is tempting to think of trains as agents of urban prosperity. But doing so renders the trains, the products they carried, and the city that formed their hub as abstractions. It ignores their material consequences, the legal circumstances under which they ran through city streets, and the stock ownership that directed benefits to some people more than others. To understand Portland's relationship with the countryside, one must pay as much attention to the materiality of trains and their effects on neighborhoods and urban residents as to the products they carried.

Wealthy Portlanders joined with the eastern ownership of the Oregon Railway & Navigation Company in 1882 to form the Northern Pacific Terminal Company. The company

²² City of Portland, *Mayor's Message and Municipal Reports for the Fiscal Year Ending December 31, 1900* (Portland, OR: Schwab Bros., 1900), 19-20.

bought up land on the north end of downtown to serve as a rail yard and passenger depot. The terminal company and the railroads it served also secured from friendly city councils a host of franchises to run tracks over streets. By the end of the 1920s the city's annual report bore a list of more than 150 ordinances, dating back decades, granting railroads the right to operate on city streets or vacating public rights-of-way altogether in favor of rail yards. The ordinances provided the legal foundation for the interweaving of railroad trade with urban life. Early railroads laid tracks that protruded so far from Portland streets that other traffic could not travel on them. Later electric railways sometimes had shorts that shocked fire department horses as they tried to cross them. The Southern Pacific carried freight down Fourth Street in the heart of downtown until 1908, while several railroads used tracks they had been granted the right to lay in Front Street as a de facto switching yard, appropriating the north end of the street and rendering it useless for travel.²³

As the trains rumbled through town or idled in switching yards, they spewed what one Portlander remembered as “the interesting smell of smoke from coal burning in the locomotives.”²⁴ They were also noisy. In 1890 thirty-two people living near the Willamette on the north end of downtown called on the city to prohibit the Northern Pacific Terminal Company from gratuitously sounding steam whistles, a nuisance that “is becoming daily more and more aggravating and is no special benefit to anyone.”²⁵ So jarring were railroad sounds that

²³ Portlanders owned sixty percent of the stock in the terminal company, capitalized at \$5 million. Leading Portland investors were William Ladd, who made his money in banking and with the Oregon Steam Navigation Company; Henry Corbett, a merchant who built wealth in downtown real estate; and Henry Failing, a hardware merchant who became a banker, a U.S. Senator, a mayor of Portland, and a director of railroad companies. MacColl, *The Shaping of a City*, 17-37, 47; City of Portland, *Mayor's Message and Annual Reports for the Fiscal Year Ending November 30, 1927* (Portland, OR: City of Portland, 1927), 637-646; Petition to the Common Council, 13 August 1883, Council Documents, Accession A2001-049, Portland City Archives, Box 36, Folder 9; Harry Lane to Portland Railway Light & Power Company, 4 September 1907, Harry Lane Files, Accession A2000-003, Portland City Archives, AF/16545.

²⁴ Lawrence Pratt, *I Remember Portland* (Portland, OR: Metropolitan Printing Company, 1965), 30.

²⁵ Petition to the Mayor and City Council, 19 November 1890, Council Documents, A2001-049, Portland City Archives, Box 46, Folder 16.

memoirist Lawrence Pratt recalled them across sixty years as the loudest noises in a childhood spent in a downtown printer's shop. "Of all the noises the loudest for me was in the night when the Southern Pacific train ran alongside the building on Fourth Avenue when I was asleep and woke me with its roar and the clanging of its bell as it made the whole building tremble," Pratt remembered.²⁶ The noise of the trains brought other sounds as industry followed to locate near tracks and switching yards.

Historians of the West write extensively of the power that railroads exercised over rural landscapes. They bestowed access to markets on some towns, while bypassing others. Their sales of land granted by the government influenced settlement patterns and their rate structures and schedules made and broke the fortunes of small town merchants. Less remarked upon are the ways in which railroads affected geography within cities. Where railroads laid tracks or simply held land in reserve, factories followed. Portland's largest factories and mills cropped up along tracks and near its rail yards. By the end of the 1880s metalworking factories, a lumber mill, and various coal and oil storage facilities developed on the north end of downtown close to both the river and the Northern Pacific Terminal Company's rail yard. Lumber mills, metalworking shops, and flour mills developed near other rail yards in Albina and on the banks of the Willamette south of downtown. Other industries later located along the railroad tracks that cut through Sullivan's Gulch east toward the Columbia. When Portlanders complained in 1890 of the train whistles keeping them awake, the city requested quiet from the railways. Five years later, 257 downtown residents complained of noises that attended a growing industrial district. Steamboats, factories, and mills began blowing their whistles at 4:30 in the morning, waking residents who likely opened their windows to let night air in against the accumulated heat of summer days, and causing, as one of them put it, "serious annoyance, and in cases of sickness,

²⁶ Pratt, *I Remember Portland*, 10.

absolute danger.”²⁷ Residents of Portland’s industrial neighborhoods did not need to read booster literature to know that the city’s trade drew on a rural hinterland. They had other reminders in the sounds of the factories that grew up along the city’s transportation arteries.²⁸

HINTERLAND IN THE CITY

Indeed, signs of Portland’s connections to the hinterland were omnipresent, shaping the landscape of the city. By 1909 Portland was producing just over \$10 million of lumber each year. Some of the finished product remained in the city, incorporated into houses with low slung roofs and wooden accents that foreshadowed the Northwest’s distinctive architecture of later decades. Many of the boards sawed in Portland mills found their way out of the city, down the coast to California and across oceans to ports as distant as Hong Kong, Cape Town, and Buenos Aires. As the lumber-laden ships followed the Willamette’s current out of Portland, they left behind a city that melded with the finished products and detritus of so much milling.²⁹

²⁷ Petition to the Common Council, 7 August 1895, Council Documents, Accession A2001-049, Portland City Archives, Box 68, Folder 9.

²⁸ Historians have paid close attention to the way railroads shaped the relationship between cities. See Richard White, *Railroaded: The Transcontinentals and the Making of Modern America* (New York: Norton, 2011), 140-178; Robert Hine and John Faragher, *The American West: A New Interpretive History* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000), 408-409; D.W. Meinig, *The Shaping of America: A Geographical Prospective on 500 Years of History* vol. iii *Transcontinental America, 1850-1915* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998), 21, 252. The role that railroads played in shaping space within cities has received much less attention. John Stilgoe, *Metropolitan Corridor: Railroads and the American Scene* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1983) discusses the relationship between railroads and industrial areas, but focuses on suburbs. William Deverell, *Railroad Crossings: Californians and the Railroad, 1850-1910* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994) describes opposition that Californians offered to railroads as corporate entities and as physical structures. It sees them as having a violent impact on the lives of people who lived or worked around them. Railroads meant noise and industrial accidents. The book considers railroads from the perspective of workers and passengers, but discussion of trains’ impact is often generalized, not situated in a specific geography. For other noise complaints, see Charles Runyon to the Mayor and Common Council, 25 May 1907, Council Documents, Accession A2001-049, Portland City Archives, Box 93, Folder 10; Petition to Mayor Albee and Commissioners, 3 April 1914, Council Documents, Accession A2001-049, Portland City Archives, Box 131, Folder 12; Petition to the City Council, c. 13 July 1925, Council Documents, Portland City Archives, Reel 3308; Petition to the Common Council, 20 July 1904, Council Documents, Accession A2001-049, Portland City Archives, Box 82, Folder 7; A.L. Barbur to the Council, 20 August 1926, Council Documents, Portland City Archives, Reel 3308.

²⁹ Bureau of the Census, *Thirteenth Census of the United States Taken in the Year 1910*, vol. ix, *Manufactures 1909* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1912, 1033. For Northwest architecture, see Nancy McFadden, “House and Home in Portland, Oregon: A Study of Ordinary Houses in Some Southeast Portland Neighborhoods at

Before the 1910s Portland mills struggled to dispose of sawdust they generated. Some burned their waste or dumped it into the Willamette River or nearby creeks, where it floated with the current and then settled, suffocating fish, shoaling shipping channels, and flooding banks, to the detriment of residents who complained that the pooled water rendered their neighborhoods “sickly and unwholesome.”³⁰ Others used sawdust to fill in marshes between the mills and the river. By the end of the 1910s several acres of Portland rested on a base of discarded sawdust. The unstable land, formed with the products of hinterland trade, presented problems for city infrastructure and for Portlanders whose daily routines brought them onto filled land. The city engineer noted in 1900 a recurrent issue at an old mill site north of downtown that was composed of land filled with sawdust and scrap wood. The city had run sewer pipes through the site to reach the river. High water inundated the filled land early each summer, washing away the sawdust and scrap wood that supported and covered the sewer pipes, causing them to break. It was, perhaps, these problems that led some in city government to object in 1909 to Inman Poulsen, the state’s largest sawmill, dumping sawdust in a slough that the city intended to fill with gravel and dirt. The city failed to stop Inman Poulsen’s fill project. In the 1910s and 1920s it would be new uses for sawdust, more than effective regulation, that checked the expansion of the city’s mill sites into the river.³¹

the Turn of the Century” (University of Oregon, PhD diss., 1993), 120-121; George McMath, “Emerging Regional Style,” in Thomas Vaughan and Virginia Ferriday, eds., *Space Style and Structure: Building in Northwest America* vol. i (Portland: Oregon Historical Society Press, 1974), 341-351. For shipping locations, see City of Portland, *Mayor’s Message and Municipal Reports 1910* (Portland, OR: Schwab Printing Co., 1910), 416-418.

³⁰ Petition to the Common Council, c. 1885, Council Documents, Accession A2001-049, Portland City Archives, Box 39, Folder 13.

³¹ The Corps of Engineers urged the city to prohibit the dumping of sawdust into the river as early as 1880 G.L. Gillespie to Mayor, 9 December 1880, Council Documents, Accession A2001-049, Portland City Archives, Box 32, Folder 21. For problems with sawdust in the river, see also “Evidence to be in Photos,” *Oregonian*, 30 March 1910, 9. For the effects of sawdust on fish, see Klingle, *Emerald City*, 173; R. Peter Gills, “Rivers of Sawdust: The Battle Over Industrial Pollution in Canada, 1865-1903,” *Journal of Canadian Studies* 21 (Spring 1986): 85; Gilbert Allardyce, “The Vexed Question of Sawdust’: River Pollution in Nineteenth Century New Brunswick,” *Dalhousie Review* 52 (June 1972): 178. For sawdust fill and associated problems, see “Waste of Sawmills Now Being Compressed into Fuel,” *Oregonian*, 29 May 1921, 6; City of Portland, *Mayor’s Message and Municipal Reports for*

If sawdust was initially difficult to dispose of, scrap wood met a relatively strong demand as a source of home heating. By the turn of the century, most of the cord wood that could be easily carted into Portland had been cut. The wood hawkers in front of city hall sold wood they salvaged from the river. Others bought the bark and outer layers of wood that mills discarded when they squared logs. Houses maintained stacks of curing scrap lumber on the curb, much to the chagrin of city officials and boosters who thought the unsightly piles incongruous with Portland's aspirations to respectability. After the wood had been cured, cut to fit furnaces, and stacked in basements, its smells reminded Portlanders that the city's principal industry was a part of everyday life. At least one Portlander recalled a childhood "permeated with the resinous fragrance of newly sawed wood."³² In the first years of the twentieth century the city found ways to use sawdust for fuel as methods of burning it improved. During 1903, the city garbage crematory used 480 cords of slab wood and 1,094 loads of sawdust to stoke fires that consumed the city's trash. The city's Willamette River dredge also ran on sawdust. Early electric generating plants located near the city's mills to take advantage of the ready supply of cheap fuel. By the 1920s mills were selling sawdust and grinding up their waste wood. A fleet of trucks delivered the new hogged fuel to boilers in laundries, hotels, manufacturing plants, and houses. The new smell of sawdust rose from basements of those who shoveled it into hoppers on their furnaces.³³

1900, 101; "Poulsen is Arrested," *Oregonian*, 13 April 1909, 16; "Fill is Abandoned," *Oregonian*, 15 April 1909;" "Fill is Biggest Yet," *Oregonian*, 2 January 1910, 12. Mayor Harry Lane had Johan Poulsen arrested for dumping sawdust in a street right-of-way, but a city council friendly to business repealed the ordinance requiring that fill be composed of dirt and gravel. Poulsen claimed, to the mayor's incredulity, that his dumping was, in fact, a service to the city. For the use of sawdust fill elsewhere, see Klinge, *Emerald City*, 51; John Finger, "Seattle's First Sawmill 1853-1869: A Study of Frontier Enterprise," *Forest History* 15 (January 1972): 27.

³² Frederick Bracher, "How It Was Then: The Pacific Northwest in the Twenties: The House," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 85 (Spring 1984): 43.

³³ Pratt, *I Remember Portland*, 10; City of Portland, *Mayor's Message and Municipal Reports for 1900*, 19; "Untitled Editorial," *West Shore*, 25 October 1890, 163; A.O to H.R. Albee, 4 August 1913, H.R. Albee Files, Accession A2000-003, Portland City Archives, Box 8, Folder 9; Bracher, "How It Was Then: The Pacific Northwest in the Twenties: The House," 42, 44. Citizens routinely complained about the irritations caused by the transportation and sale of firewood; see, Banfield to A.K. Bentley, 27 September 1902, Council Documents, Accession A2001-049, Portland City Archives, Box 77, Folder 7; Frank Riggs to H.R. Albee, 13 October 1915, Council Documents,

Those who lived near Portland's wood-burning industrial plants probably preferred that the city relied more on wood for its power than on smoky coal. Still, as the city's industrial capacity grew in the first decades of the twentieth century, residents began to notice hazier skies. The president of the Portland Municipal Association, cereal mill manager D.A. Pattullo, wrote in 1911 of "a thick, black, sooty smoke of coal and oil [that] frequently hangs like a pall" over the city.³⁴ He may have had a fine nose for distinguishing wood smoke from the smoke of fossil fuels, but others in the city noted that the increasing number of factories and problems with wood-fueled boilers accounted for the problem. Wood cinders were light and tended to disperse, but wood-burning boilers operating under a forced draft threw out what the president of the local power company admitted was "a considerable quantity of cinders."³⁵ In any case, the problem seemed bad enough in the 1910s that some in city government tried unsuccessfully to get the city to adopt a smoke ordinance. The *Oregon Journal* supported calls for reform, noting in 1912 that any "dweller on the heights east or west of the city who is up early enough [can] note the brown clouds that envelope every morning, without exception, the business, and above all the factory district."³⁶

Accession A2001-049, Portland City Archives, Box 135, Folder 10; Petition to the Mayor and Commissioners, 18 January 1928, Council Documents, Portland City Archives, Reel 3309; Lucile McDonald, "A Vanished Neighborhood," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 84 (Summer 1983): 213-214. On uses of wood for industrial fuel, see City of Portland, *Mayor's Message and Municipal Reports for the Fiscal Year Ending December 31, 1903* (Portland, OR: Schwab Bros, 1903), 173; "Sawdust for the Portland," *Oregonian*, 16 March 1907, 16; Franklin Griffith to H.R. Albee, 1 June 1914, H.R. Albee Files, Accession A2000-003, Portland City Archives, Box 8, Folder 9; "Waste of Sawmills Now Being Compressed into Fuel," *Oregonian*, 29 May 1921, 6.

³⁴ President Portland Municipal Association to Mayor Rushlight, 28 December 1911, Council Documents, Accession A2001-049, Portland City Archives, Box 120, Folder 5.

³⁵ Franklin Griffith to H.R. Albee, 1 June 1914, H.R. Albee Files, Accession A2000-003, Portland City Archives, Box 8, Folder 9.

³⁶ "Smoke," *Oregon Journal*, 15 September 1912, section 2, 4. For air pollution in other cities, see David Stradling, *Smokestacks and Progressives: Environmentalists, Engineers, and Air Quality in America, 1881-1915* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002). For other *Oregon Journal* calls for reform, see "A Costly Nuisance," *Oregon Journal*, 28 March 1911, 8; "Consume Your Smoke," *Oregon Journal*, 29 February 1912, 8. For the city's industrial growth, fuel use, and problems with wood, see H.E. Plummer, "Report on the Smoke and Cinder Nuisance," 24 October 1924, Council Documents, Accession A2001-049, Portland City Archives, Reel 3308; "Waste of Sawmills Now Being Compressed into Fuel," 6. On the smoke ordinance, see Miss. M.C. Petersen to

Some of the city's problems with air pollution were widely dispersed. Restaurants with faulty stoves or laundries and apartment buildings with improperly fired boilers generated complaints. As the *Oregon Journal* noted, however, the worst offenders were the city's factories. Those who suffered most lived in the shadows of their smokestacks in downtown, south Portland, and Sullivan's Gulch. Later complaints came from developing industrial districts in St. Johns and Linnton. A lawyer living in south Portland joined others in complaining of being downwind from the city's largest lumber mills. He had just painted the tin roof on his house only to find it covered with cinders. "It is impossible to leave the windows open without everything inside being covered with dust," he wrote. The Doernbecher furniture factory near the Oregon-Washington Railroad & Navigation Company (successor to the Oregon Railway & Navigation Company) tracks in Sullivan's Gulch was a perennial source of aggravation. A nearby salesman reported in 1916 that soot from the factory "settles on the roofs, and when it rains, washes on the paint and gives anything but a clean appearance." Smoke from the plant also made it difficult to dry laundry outside and damaged the inventory of a radio shop.³⁷

Mayor and Members of the City Commission, 18 December 1913, H.R. Albee Files, Portland City Archives, AF/74062.

³⁷ For downtown complaints, see Petition to the mayor and common Council, 21 February 1900, Council Documents, Accession A2001-049, Portland City Archives, Box 72, Folder 10; A.S. Pattullo to H.R. Albee, 22 May 1914, H.R. Albee Files, Accession A2000-003, Portland City Archives, Box 8, Folder 9; A.E. Larimer to George Baker, 31 March 1924, Council Documents, Portland City Archives, Reel 3308; Petition to the City Council, c. 1899, Council Documents, Accession A2001-049, Portland City Archives, Box 70, Folder 18; Petition to the Mayor and Common Council, 21 February 1900, Council Documents, Accession A2001-049, Portland City Archives, Box 72, Folder 10; Petition to the Mayor, 17 August 1904, Council Documents, Accession A2001-049, Portland City Archives, Box 82, Folder 7; Petition to the Mayor, 17 August 1904, Council Documents, Accession A2001-049, Portland City Archives, Box 82, Folder 7; H.R. Biersdorf to Committee on Health and Police, 20 September 1904, Council Documents, Accession A2001-049, Portland City Archives, Box 82, Folder 7; H.R. Albee to Oregon Laundry Company, 3 June 1914, H.R. Albee Files, Accession A2000-003, Portland City Archives, Box 7, Folder 72. For Linnton, see Petition to the Mayor and City Council, 29 December 1925, Council Documents, Portland City Archives, Reel 3308. For St. Johns, see A.L. Barbur to the Council, 29 October 1926, Council Documents, Portland City Archives, Reel 3308. For the Doernbecher Plant, see A.L. Barbur to the Council, 23 March 1928, Council Documents, Portland City Archives, Reel 3309; H.E. Plummer to Smoke Prevention Committee, 9 October 1933, Air Pollution Committee Files, Smoke Prevention Committee, AF/10745; Ormond Bean to G.F. McDougall, 21 September 1933, Air Pollution Committee Files, Smoke Prevention Committee, AF/10745.

The first systematic study of the problem waited until the 1950s. In 1952 the state Air Pollution Authority surveyed Portland's air quality. It found that the city's industries contributed more to its pollution than residents' cars and that Portland's frequent temperature inversions prevented industrial air pollution from dissipating. By this point, factories had begun to move outside of the central city toward Linnton, east Multnomah County, and Vancouver, Washington, but evidence literally piled up that the worst pollution in the city was downtown amid the lodging houses and cheap hotels that housed the city's poorest workers. The state found that, in an average month, twenty-one tons of particulate settled out of the air over each square mile of downtown. In the worst months, thirty-eight tons per square mile fell on downtown streets and buildings. What was true in the 1950s after industry had dispersed was also likely true of the early century. Downtown was the city's most heavily polluted neighborhood.³⁸

In earlier decades Americans had hailed smoke as a sign of progress and prosperity. The letterhead of some Portland companies featured smoke billowing from factories and columns of smoke adorned the Willamette in the 1890 bird's eye view of the city. Indeed, the haze that could be seen from the hills and the dust that fell out of the air onto city streets were byproducts of the city's wealth. That wealth was unevenly distributed, and as the city grew and neighborhoods changed, the byproducts of wealth production were also maldistributed, falling most heavily on the city's poor in downtown lodging houses. The more population and industry boomed with the hinterland trade, the more unequal the city became. Portland looked less and less like the image of uniform prosperity and respectability that the boosters depicted.³⁹

³⁸ "LA Smog Warning to Portland," *Oregon Journal*, 16 September 1955; "Portland Air Proves Dusty," *Oregonian*, 24 June 1955; "Report on Air Pollution in Portland," *Portland City Club Bulletin*, 27 May 1955, 381-396.

³⁹ On smoke, see Stradling, *Smokestacks and Progressives*.

CITY NEIGHBORHOODS

Understanding this maldistribution requires understanding something of Portland's neighborhood development. The city under the increasingly polluted skies of the 1910s differed from the less-populated and less-polluted Portland of 1890. Wealthy Portlanders of the nineteenth century built their mansions on and near Park Street, nine blocks from the Willamette. The district was comfortably residential, but isolated from the commercial and industrial heart of the city by only a few blocks of houses. Until Henry Pittock left the city, his housekeeper served dinner five blocks from the Southern Pacific tracks on Fourth Street. By the 1890s some observers pointed to distinct neighborhoods, but these developed relatively slowly. The editor of Pittock's *Oregonian*, Harvey Scott, described an increasingly segregated city in 1890, writing that the district near the river was "raw and wholly utilitarian, not a shingle or pile ever having been set for beauty of symmetry."⁴⁰ Up the gentle slope above the river sat middle-class neighborhoods, Scott wrote, while the wealthy established themselves above Sixteenth Street, where "there is so little crowding, the sun and sky have such complete access that one is much impressed with the general air of elegance and taste."⁴¹ The situation on the ground was more complex than Scott allowed. His boss, after all, still lived downtown, well below Sixteenth. But even in Scott's stylized description of city neighborhoods, the city's elite lived less than a mile from the docks and mills that created their wealth.

Several of the city's wealthy lived closer to industry than even Pittock did. In 1890 some members of the elite Arlington Club lived on Third and Fourth Streets in the district that Scott described as entirely utilitarian. The area would become the city's skid row district in first decade of the twentieth century and would become the new heart of Chinatown in the 1910s, but

⁴⁰ Harvey Scott, *History of Portland, Oregon with Biographical Sketches of Prominent Citizens and Pioneers* (Syracuse, NY: D. Mason & Co., 1890), 430.

⁴¹ Scott, *History of Portland*, 431.

in 1890 these categories had yet to solidify. Nor did the mansions that Scott delighted in describing exist to the exclusion of more modest homes. Some of them cast shadows over a Chinese colony at Eighteenth and Burnside Streets. Chinese laborers hired by the city to install a culvert under Burnside Street had settled there on the banks of Tanner Creek in the 1880s, developing truck gardens that spread over twenty acres. The city's wealthy began to displace the Chinese when they built an expansion of the Multnomah Amateur Athletic Club over part of the gardens in 1893. Still, as late as 1900 shacks with slanted roofs adapted from the vernacular architecture of southern China stood within easy view of Portland mansions.⁴²

The fire insurance maps that the Sanborn Company produced for Portland in 1889, distilled in Figure Four, provide a more nuanced description of the city's neighborhoods than Harvey Scott's sketch. They show a city with roughly defined zones, but also one in which a jumble of uses fell within short two-hundred-foot blocks from each other. Single-family houses dominated the area west of Fourth Street. Below Fourth, the north end of downtown saw lodging houses and some single-family homes crowded up against a saw mill, small factories, and fuel storage tanks and sheds. The south end of downtown looked slightly different from the north end. There, industrial uses were less common. Commercial buildings and the warehouses of the city's commission merchants occupied most of the blocks below Fourth Street. Nestled among them were several buildings that the Sanborn mapmakers designated as Chinese, including laundries, lodging houses, and a variety of businesses. The largest groups of lodging houses were across the street from a lumber mill, junkyards, blacksmiths' shops, and factories. The poor men who lived in them suffered the hazards and inconveniences of a noisy working city, but they did not bear them alone. The city's wealthy lived only a few blocks away. Henry Pittock and his

⁴² Chris Sawyer, "From Whitechapel to Old Town: The Life and Death of the Skid Row District, Portland, Oregon" (PhD diss., Portland State University, 1985), 121; MacColl, *The Shaping of a City*, 13; Marie Wong, *Sweet Cakes, Long Journey: The Chinatowns of Portland, Oregon* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2004), 211-215, 226.

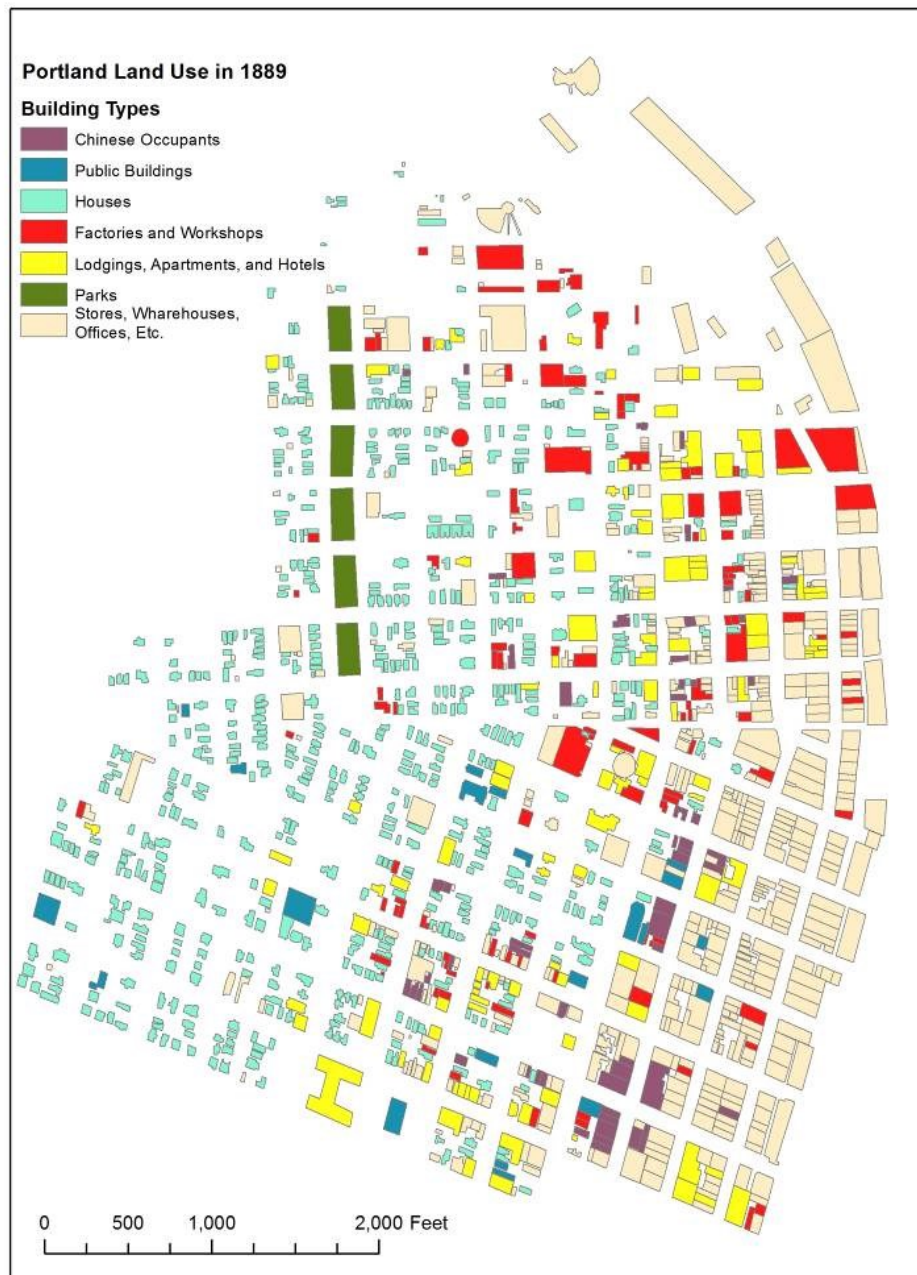
family, for example, lived within four blocks of several metal working shops, two brothels, several Chinese businesses, a handful of lodging houses, a sausage factory, and a mattress factory, which likely emitted a smell as it processed animal hair for stuffing. Many of the biggest factories were outside of downtown to the south and to the east in Albina, but in 1889 Pittock and Portland's elite lived within an easy walk of many of the industries that made them wealthy.⁴³

Change came slowly, but by the time the Sanborn Company mapped the city again in 1908, Portland's neighborhoods were more clearly defined. Figure Five shows that downtown blocks south of Burnside had begun to shake off their earlier mixed use, as office buildings cropped up. Only one block had been wholly dedicated to offices and stores in 1889; now there were several blocks without industrial or residential use. The new map also showed that the city's wealthy had developed exclusive institutions in the southwest corner of downtown, building a new Arlington Club building in 1892 and a University Club in 1897 three blocks apart. Several theaters and large hotels had gone up within five blocks of the Pittocks' house, filling lots where Chinese businesses, a sausage factory, and metal working shops had once stood. On the north side of Burnside, changes were just as stark. Single-family houses gave way to brothels on Fourth Street. Large blocks of Chinese businesses displaced other houses. Social workers began to cater to the down-and-out from offices on Fourth Street. Industry's imprint on the north end of downtown also deepened. The downtown lumber mill expanded, as did the Portland Gas and Coke Company.⁴⁴

⁴³ Sanborn Map Company, *Insurance Maps of Portland, Oregon* (New York: Sanborn Map Company, 1889), vol. i.

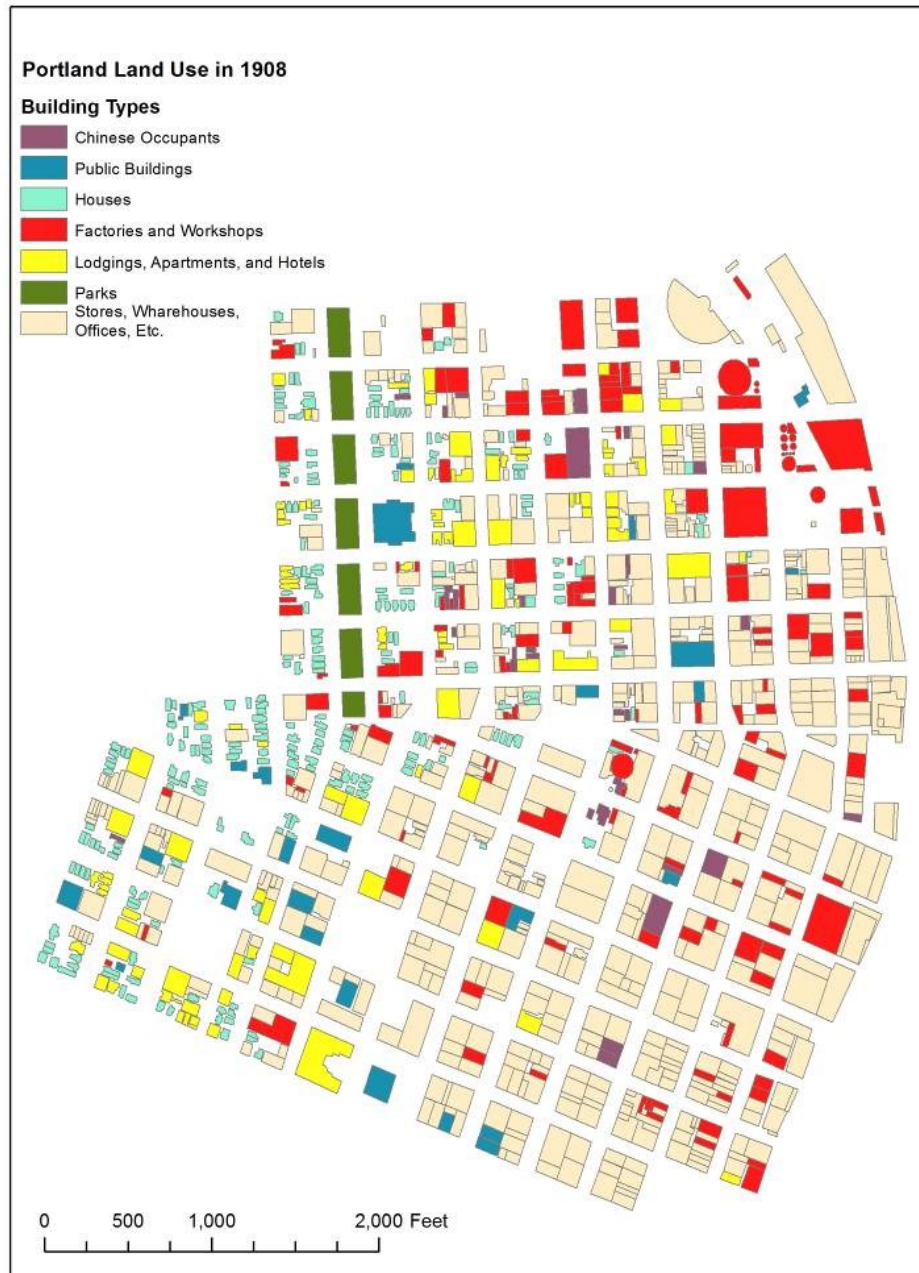
⁴⁴ Sanborn Company, *Insurance Maps of Portland, Oregon*, 1908, vol. i. Comparing Sanborn maps comes with challenges. The 1889 map provided more information, specifying which commercial buildings housed restaurants, for example. The mapmakers may have missed some industrial buildings by labeling them as stores. They may also have missed multifamily housing in single-family houses subdivided into apartments. Some Sanborn labels, particularly of hotels, mask a wide variety of uses. Kim Keister, "Charts of Change," *Historic Preservation* 45 (May 1993): 42-49, 91-92; Sawyer, "From Whitechapel to Old Town," 93-96, 102.

Figure Four: Building Uses in 1889⁴⁵



⁴⁵ Data from Sanborn Company, *Insurance Maps of Portland, Oregon*, 1889, vol. i.

Figure Five: Building Uses in 1908⁴⁶



⁴⁶ Data from Sanborn Company, *Insurance Maps of Portland, Oregon*, 1908, vol. i.

The changes downtown were relatively subtle in comparison to the changes in the city's broader social landscape. As industry grew in south Portland, the north end of downtown, and Albina, those who could afford to move found houses in new neighborhoods, leaving their poorer neighbors to live amid the sources of the city's growing air pollution problem. Johan Poulsen and Robert Inman, for example, spent the 1890s in identical Victorian houses near their workers just southeast of the mill that bore their name, but as their business became Oregon's largest sawmill, Inman and Poulsen both sought new neighborhoods. Each moved away from the mill in the years after 1900. Street cars made new neighborhoods accessible, allowing the development on the east side of middle-class and wealthy districts that were miles from downtown and from the industrial uses that early east Portlanders had lived with. Street cars also made accessible new neighborhoods to the west in the hills above downtown, but these were relatively small and exclusive compared to the vast expanses of east Portland. In 1910 the city issued building permits for only 132 houses west of the Willamette, but saw the construction of more than 3,000 houses east of the river. As Figure Six shows, distance from downtown nuisances was a major selling point in new developments.⁴⁷

A 1912 city vice commission report illustrated the new separation between the city's rich and poor. The report sought to expose the complicity of property owners in the city's prostitution trade by documenting the prevalence of commercial sex in 547 of the city's lodging houses, apartment buildings, and hotels. The authors, several pastors, three criminal justice reformers (including the city's first female probation officer), and a Reed College professor, declared the vast majority of the multi-family buildings they surveyed "immoral."⁴⁸ The tenor of the report matched this conclusion with descriptions of the north end as an "uncleanly, lowbred, vicious lot

⁴⁷ MacColl, *The Shaping of a City*, 54; McFadden, "House and Home in Portland, Oregon," 82-83.

⁴⁸ Vice Commission, *Second Report of the Vice Commission of the Mayor and City Council of the City of Portland, Oregon on Certain Aspects of the Commercialization of Vice* (Portland, OR: City of Portland, 1912).

of human beings.”⁴⁹ Seeking to cajole the city’s wealthy into policing the buildings they owned, the commission mapped the locations of the several hundred buildings it investigated. Putting aside the commission’s judgments about immorality, which it said afflicted both wealthy and working-class districts alike, it is possible to see the arrangement of different housing types. Lodging houses were most prevalent within ten blocks of the Willamette, but spread twenty blocks from the river in a narrow corridor along Burnside. Some apartment buildings were mixed among the lodging houses, but most apartment dwellers lived separately from residents of cheaper lodging houses.⁵⁰

More striking than these subtle divisions is the clear separation between lodging houses and the residences of the people who owned them. Historian E. Kimbark MacColl has reconstructed part of the list that the Vice Commission destroyed in 1912. From MacColl’s list, fifteen individual owners of buildings or officers in companies that owned buildings can be identified in the 1912 Portland City Directory. Of the fifteen, as shown in Figure Seven, only four lived within a mile of the Willamette River and only one lived in a neighborhood with several lodging houses. Several of the landlords lived in the elite neighborhoods of the 1890s, but seven had moved to new wealthy neighborhoods in the hills above downtown or on the east side of the river. The wealthy were not the only Portlanders to flee downtown. City directories reveal that sawmill workers, some railroad employees, and clerks found new homes in east-side neighborhoods.⁵¹

⁴⁹ Vice Commission, *Second Report of the Vice Commission*, 34.

⁵⁰ To protect the reputations of prominent property owners (and perhaps to avoid publishing a buyers’ guide to commercialized sex) the commission mapped the locations without streets for references, but the map can easily be referenced to underlying geography. The authors of the report were L.L. Levings, H.J. McDevitt, W.G. MacLaren, David Morrison, John Stevenson, S.A. Brown, H.M. Patton, Delmer Trimble, Arthur Wood, Millie Trumbull, and William Biddle. Kimbark MacColl presents a hand-drawn approximation for other purposes in MacColl, *The Shaping of a City*, 406-407.

⁵¹ MacColl, *The Shaping of a City*, 405, 408.

Figure Six : Advertisement Contrasting Rose City Park with Downtown Neighborhoods⁵²

**Shanties, Shacks,
Saloons and Slums**

Never Can Invade THIS
PART of Portland

**The Choice Residential
Section Lying
in the North-
eastern Part of
the Rose City**

BUILDING RESTRICTIONS

**ROSE
CITY
PARK
DISTRICT**

PROTECTION FOR HOMES

**SECLUDED RESIDENCE ENVIRONMENT
IS ALWAYS ASSURED IN AND AROUND**

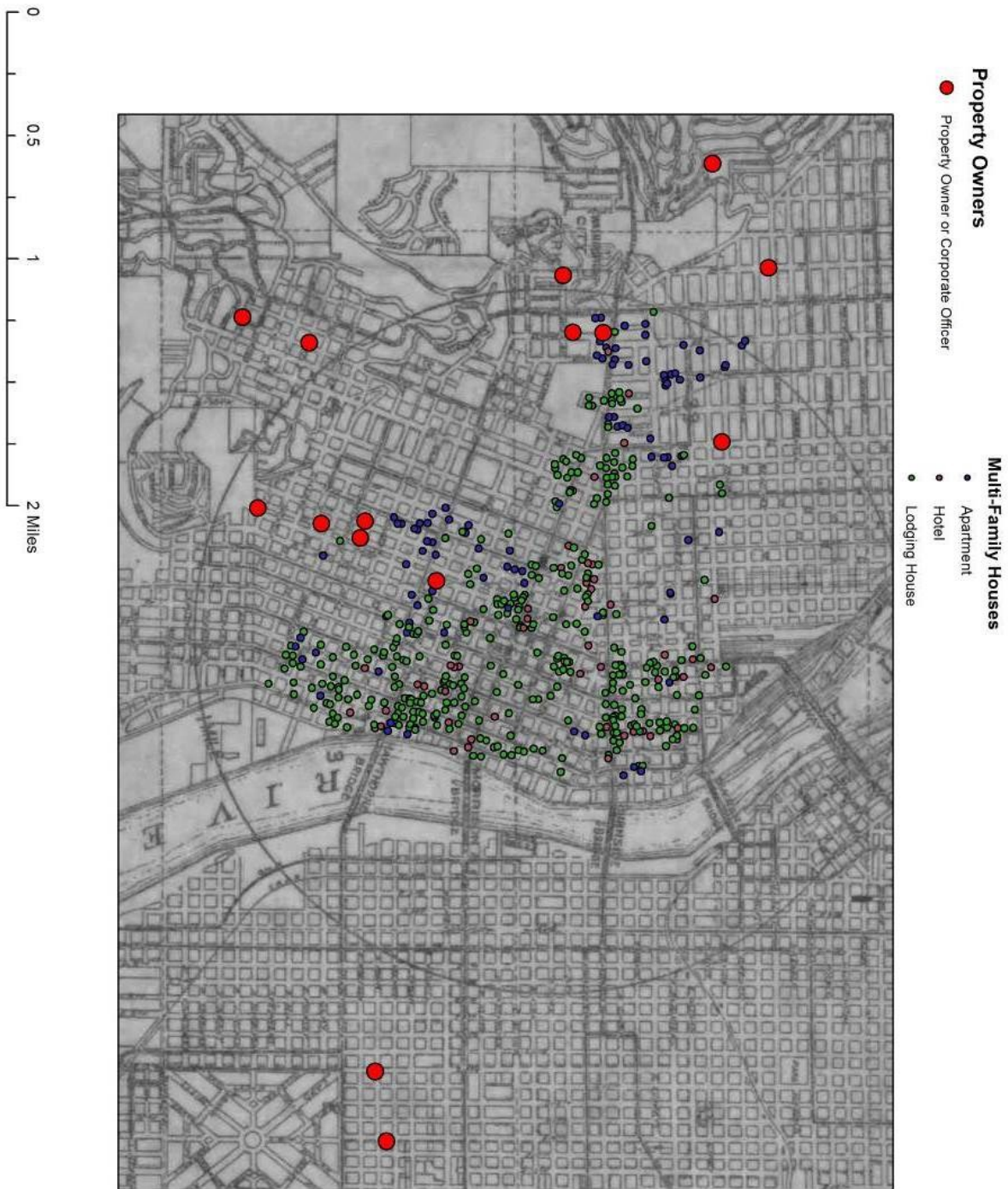
ROSE CITY PARK

Lots \$450 Up, Easy Payments Ask About Our Rebate-to-Builders Plan

HARTMAN & THOMPSON Chamber of Commerce
BRANCH OFFICE Rose City Park

⁵² "Advertisement," *Oregonian*, 21 March 1909, 9.

Figure Seven: Multi-Family Housing and Residences of Building Owners⁵³



⁵³ Data from Vice Commission, *Second Report of the Vice Commission*; MacColl, *The Shaping of a City*, 405, 408; and 1912 *City Directory*.

As Portland's population grew and spread into distant neighborhoods, city residents faced environmental problems associated with city government's inability to develop infrastructure to keep pace with growth. Residents of new neighborhoods contended with landslides and overgrown brush, particularly poison oak, on vacant lots. In 1906 the east side of Portland lacked a police station and a street cleaning barn. Parts of the east side also lacked water connections and adequate sewerage. Residents of some new neighborhoods lived in shacks on their lots until they could save the money to build permanent houses. These temporary residences often lacked toilets, sinks, or connections to cesspools, let alone sewers. The situation was particularly bad in the working-class Brooklyn neighborhood, which covered three square miles near the Southern Pacific rail yard southeast of downtown. The neighborhood lay on low ground with a high water table, making it difficult to sink cesspools to the proper depth. In the winter, shallow cesspools overflowed and mixed with water that drained from surrounding neighborhoods. Residents suffered the smell of sewage seeping into their basements. The city delayed bringing a sewer system to the neighborhood for years, even as the problem featured prominently in city reports. Still, Plumbing Inspector William Hey and Health Commissioner J.P. Menefee admired the home-owning ambitions of Brooklyn residents. The city began work on a sewer system in 1909, draining Brooklyn's waste into Willamette River⁵⁴

⁵⁴ Edward Pierce to H.R. Albee, 5 June 1914, H.R. Albee Files, Accession A2000-003, Portland City Archives, Box 8, Folder 9; Joe Roberts to L.V. Jenkins, 2 June 1926, Council Documents, Accession A2001-049, Portland City Archives, Reel 3308; City of Portland, *Mayor's Message and Municipal Reports for the Fiscal Year Ending December 31, 1906* (Portland, OR: Unknown, 1906), 184, 200; City of Portland, *Mayor's Message and Municipal Reports for 1900*, 196; City of Portland, *Mayor's Message and Municipal Reports for the Fiscal Year Ending December 31, 1901* (Portland, OR: Schwab Bros., 1901), 179-180; City of Portland, *Mayor's Message and Municipal Reports for the Fiscal Year Ending December 31, 1902* (Portland, OR: Schwab Bros., 1902), 164; City of Portland, *Mayor's Message and Annual Reports for the Fiscal Year Ending December 31, 1905* (Portland, OR: Unknown, 1905), 199; William Hey to mayor and City Council, 20 May 1908, Council Documents, Accession A2001-049, Portland City Archives, Box 99, Folder 8. For background on the Brooklyn neighborhood, see McFadden, "House and Home in Portland, Oregon," 82.

WILLAMETTE RIVER SEWAGE AND LODGING HOUSES

As the city managed pollution in new neighborhoods, it burdened the lodging house district near the Willamette that also experienced the heaviest industrial pollution. Oil drums, sawdust, and old machinery lined the river's banks, but pollution also grew out of city policy. In the process of confronting environmental problems in other parts of Portland, the city contributed to the worsening of conditions along the river. Garbage that had once littered streets throughout the city or had been dumped in vacant lots made its way to a Front Street crematory. Most of the sewerage pipes that the city laid through east-side neighborhoods drained into the Willamette where the refuse of new neighborhoods flowed from the east bank, meeting effluent from old sewers draining from the west. The sewers carried human and animal waste to the river, but they also channeled industrial waste and detritus that accumulated in the city's streets. The city's street cleaners pushed, by one estimate, "hundreds of tons of sand, dust, ashes, clinkers, ground up concrete, etc." into storm drains every day.⁵⁵ The river also connected Portland to its rural hinterland and to distant markets, and as pollution flowed into it, trade suffered.⁵⁶

By 1910, more than 200,000 Portland residents produced waste that obstructed hinterland trade. Until 1913 the city had no way of providing water from its Bull Run system to ships docked in the harbor, and ships were expected to take drinking water directly from the Willamette. The river's sewage load also hindered navigation. In 1906 the acting harbor master reported to the mayor that a bar of sludge extended 600 feet into the river at the outflow of the Tanner Creek sewer just north of downtown. A steam boat ran aground on the bar. The city would have to use its dredge to clear the sewage. The problem lasted for decades. By the 1930s

⁵⁵ William Woodruff to Port of Portland Commission, 22 April 1912, Council Documents, Accession A2001-049, Portland Archives and Records Center, Box 120, Folder 5.

⁵⁶ Frederick Bracher, "How It Was Then: The Pacific Northwest in the Twenties," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 85 (Summer 1984): 167.

the river carried so much sewage that fish lowered into it died in a matter of minutes for lack of oxygen. Boats' propellers disturbed filth that had settled into holes in the riverbed.⁵⁷

The effects on trade were only part of the problem of channeling so much of the city's pollution into the river. The Willamette separated the most residential neighborhoods from its central business district. Some of the problems the river presented were longstanding and quotidian. Boats moving between different docks in the city frequently blocked ferry lines across the river, causing delays that lasted as much as an hour in the 1890s. As commuters took to new drawbridges in the twentieth century they found that steamboat traffic trumped the schedules of the automobiles and streetcars. Efforts to keep the bridges down for an hour each morning and each evening so that workers could cross in and out of downtown met the intransigence of steamboat operators and their allies in the Corps of Engineers. Portland's commuters could exact only the promise that the steamboats would try to coordinate bridge openings and not cause streetcars unnecessary delays. The problem shifted some as automobile traffic played an increasing role in commutes. By the 1920s three quarters of the city's population lived on the east side. Freight tracks on the east side of the river and interurban tracks on the west side hindered commuters' car access to bridges.⁵⁸

In the first decades of the twentieth century, as the river became too polluted for swimming, Portlanders regarded pollution problems as more pressing than the inconvenience of industrial traffic. City officials and property owners called for the area around the river to be

⁵⁷ B.H. Smith to Harry Lane, 1 February 1906, Harry Lane Papers, Accession A2000-003, Portland City Archives, AF/65642; City of Portland, *Mayor's Message and Municipal Reports for the Year 1913* (Portland, OR: Unknown, 1913), 111; "Sewage Disposal Act: A Report by the Section on Legislation and Elections," *Portland City Club Bulletin*, 30 September 1938, 57.

⁵⁸ Harbor Master to Mayor and Common Council, 1 April 1895, Council Documents, Accession A2001-049, Portland City Archives, Box 62, Folder 10; "To Close Draws," *Oregonian*, 11 February 1905, 10; "Rivermen Say No," *Oregonian*, 10 February 1905, 14; "Rule for Draws," *Oregonian*, 15 March 1905, 14; Olaf Laurgaard, "Portland Waterfront Development," c. 1923, Olaf Laurgaard Papers, Ax 18, University of Oregon Special Collections, Box 1, Folder Waterfront 1923.

cleaned up, and by the early 1920s they pointed to the district just west of the river as one of decrepit buildings and declining property values. The blighted district was also one of Portland's most densely populated neighborhoods. And mobile professionals and skilled laborers had left it one of the city's poorest. At the end of the 1920s half of all buildings north of Burnside and below Fourth Street were in use as lodging houses. The lodgers lived in warehouses partitioned into windowless cubicles with chicken wire ceilings and in converted single-family homes. Until a city ordinance prohibited it in 1910, the neighborhood's population was buoyed by people living in houseboats, many of whom, the harbor master complained, were "ex-convicts, river thieves, and prostitutes" who clogged the harbor as they fought and dumped their sewage directly in the water while otherwise posing a menace to good order.⁵⁹

The houseboat residents did not burden the rest of the city's population. They suffered the worst of the city's water pollution. The pollution was not confined to the river's channel. Many of the city's sewers, particularly privately constructed ones that drained out of industrial buildings along the water, did not reach the river's edge. Instead, they drained effluent onto the ground, as much as seventy feet shy of the water. City physician C.H. Wheeler identified the problem in 1890, pointing out that the organic matter flowing from the pipes provided a food source for rats. The situation, he wrote, was "detrimental to the health of those persons whose occupation compels them to live a greater portion of their time in the vicinity" of the filth.⁶⁰ One solution was to flush the area under the docks with the city's firefighting equipment. That was only a temporary fix, though, and the problem of rats feeding on sewage endured. As the city warily eyed a bubonic plague epidemic in San Francisco in 1906, Portland Mayor Harry Lane, a

⁵⁹Harry Lane to the City Council, 21 October 1907, Council Documents, Accession A21001-049, Portland City Archives, Box 92, Folder 4; City of Portland, *Mayor's Message and Municipal Reports for the Year Ending November 30, 1921* (Portland, OR: City of Portland, 1921), 118; Harbor Master to Mayor and Council, 31 December 1909, Council Documents, Accession A2001-049, Portland City Archives, Box 108, Folder 9.

⁶⁰C.H. Wheeler to Mayor, 7 September 1892, Council Documents, Accession, Accession A2001-049, Portland City Archives, Box 53, Folder 2.

doctor, decried the conditions under the docks, saying that the sewage seeping into the ground and the decaying timber of the docks “baffles description.”⁶¹ Lane installed a new city health officer. Esther Pohl was the second woman to graduate from University of Oregon Medical School and a reformer. Worried that the plague would spread up the coast, Pohl offered a bounty on rats and hired crews to shovel the muck. Like her predecessor, Pohl worried that those who worked along the waterfront bore the worst of the pollution problem.⁶²

The waterfront neighborhoods faced a more pressing problem from the sewage pipes that actually reached the waterline. For much of the year those pipes drained smoothly into the river, but they met the water’s edge at a low elevation and were not equipped with pumps to prevent backflow. In periods of high water caused by springtime rain and snow melt, the river flooded the pipes, causing sewage to wash back into downtown basements and utility conduits. There the effluent mixed with seepage from soil saturated by the rising waters. Moving goods out of basements and setting up pumps became an annual ritual in the area below Fifth Street. The pumps could not return the floodwater and sewage into the backed-up sewer pipes, so effluent pumped out of basements and manholes ran down the streets back toward the river. Property values near the water declined between 1910 and 1920, as Figure Eight shows. In the early 1920s, leading businessmen and the city engineer recognized the economic problems this presented. In 1929, after several years of lobbying by downtown building owners, the city moved forward with a massive public works projects to keep sewage out of basements and surrounding

⁶¹ Harry Lane to the City Council, 21 October 1907, Council Documents, Accession A 2001-049, Portland City Archives, Box 92, Folder 4.

⁶² Lane also appointed Sarah Evans as market inspector. Evans also noted the pollution problems and their proximity to the city’s food supply. Evans was born in Pennsylvania and educated in Maryland. She followed her steelworker husband to South Dakota in the 1870s, where she began collecting Indian artifacts. She moved to Portland in 1894, where she was active in health and literacy movements. “Leona Nichols,” Sanitation and Free Public Libraries Pioneered in Oregon by Sarah Evans,” *Oregonian*, 16 November 1947, C6. E.C. Pohl to the Mayor and Board of Health, 6 November 1907, Council Documents, Accession A2001-049, Portland City Archives, Box 92, Folder 4; E.C. Pohl to the Mayor and Board of Health, 3 September 1907, Council Documents, Accession A2001-049, Portland City Archives, Box 92, Folder 4; “Dr. Esther Lovejoy,” *Oregonian*, 15 November 1967, C7.

soil. Nearly three million dollars bought a new concrete seawall to replace the old wooden docks. It also paid for the installation of an intercepting sewer and pump house, which drained the 425 acres in downtown that had flooded each spring. The city planned to recoup the money from increased property taxes in a special assessment district.⁶³

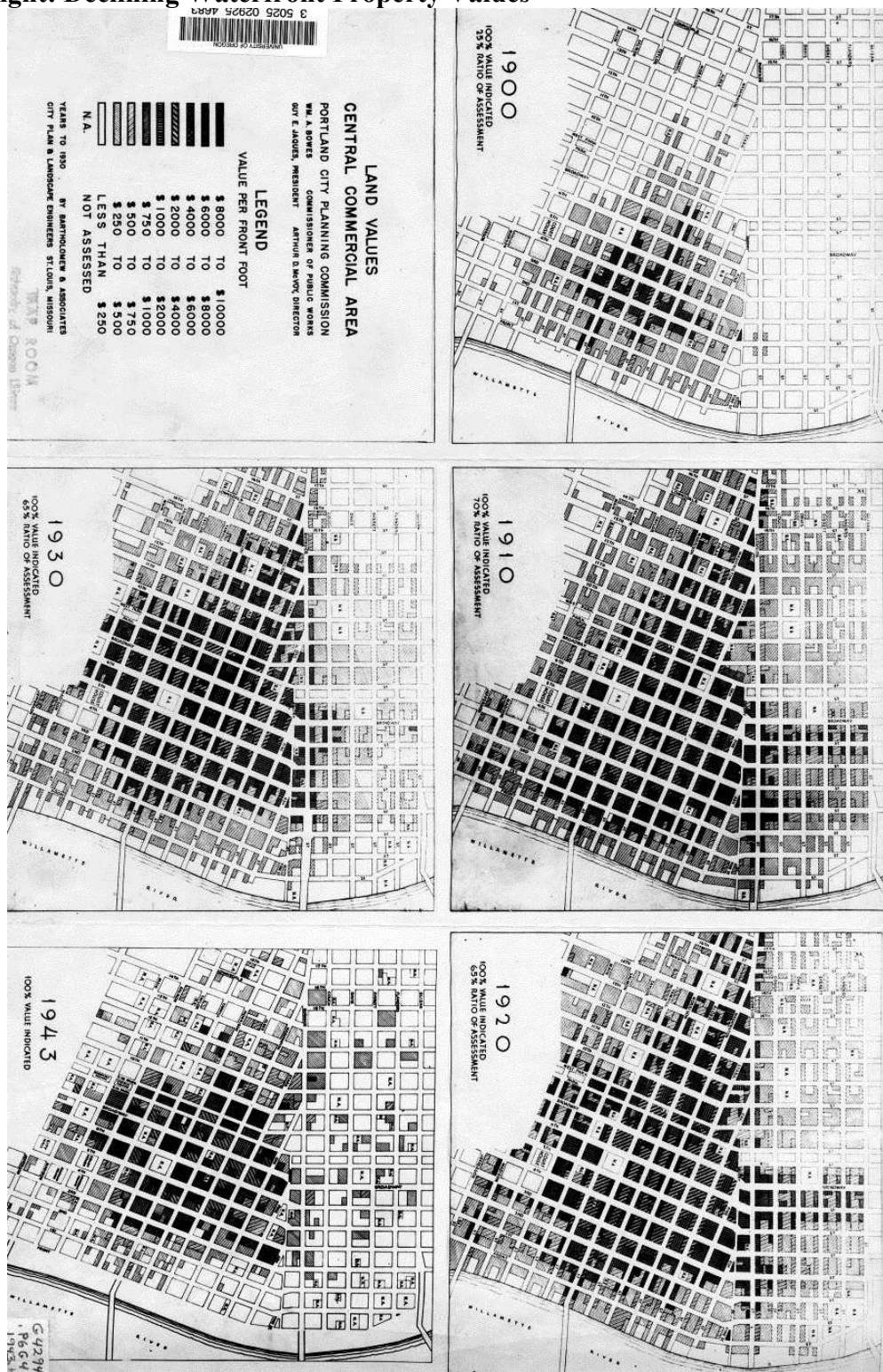
City officials and reformers who surveyed health and housing saw sewage differently in other parts of the city. They regarded inadequate sewerage in the Brooklyn neighborhood and other parts of the east side as a public health problem and something worth addressing for the sake of the respectable people who had made the “highly commendable” effort to establish homes outside of downtown and had proved up their stakes in suburban living by raising animals.⁶⁴ City engineer Olaf Laugaard and health officers also worried about people who commuted into downtown and the threat that epidemics originating there might pose to the city at large. The residents of the lower blocks of downtown, though, attracted much less civic sympathy. As sewage ran each spring through the streets of the city’s poorest and most densely-populated neighborhood, city officials and civic leaders worried primarily about the problems for trade and the downward pressure that the sewage problem placed on property values. Laugaard’s reports on the problem read as if the buildings affected were largely vacant or non-residential commercial buildings. It was economics more than health that would eventually motivate the city to address the problem.

⁶³ O. Laugaard, “Treatise on the Design, Test & Construction of the Front St. Intercepting Sewer and Drainage System in Portland, Oregon,” 1933, Portland City Archives and Records Center, 16-06-26/1; Board of Consulting Engineers, “Report on the First Unit of the Proposed Waterfront Development,” 21 November 1924, Olaf Laugaard Papers, Ax 18, University of Oregon Special Collections, Box 1, Folder Waterfront 1924; Glenn Laugaard, “The Seawall Project,” c. 1928, Olaf Laugaard Papers, Ax 18, University of Oregon Special Collections, Box 2, Folder Waterfront 1927-1932; Letter from E.E. Merges, c. 1923, Olaf Laugaard Papers, Ax 18, University of Oregon Special Collections, Box 1, Folder Waterfront 1924.

⁶⁴ “A Housing Investigation in Portland, Oregon,” 1918, Housing Authority of Portland, Accession A2012-003, Portland City Archives, Box 1, Folder 2.

This elision of the interests of downtown residents was one of the consequences of Portland's growth and the social segregation that attended it. As the wealthy, professionals, and skilled laborers left industrial neighborhoods, they came to associate the people who still lived there with the degraded environments that surrounded them. This was especially true of downtown's north end. Charity officers, mayors, chiefs of police, and residents of new neighborhoods saw people who lived there as ne'er-do-wells inflicted on the city from outside. Portland's environmental problems and the influence that railroads owned by distant investors exerted in the city challenged early-century reformers inside and outside of municipal government. As they tried to grow the power of city government to protect the urban environment, reformers found that their prejudice against poor Portlanders so neatly aligned with mental maps of the city that it limited their ability to enact meaningful reform. Reformers and homeowners were content to direct pollution to neighborhoods near railroad tracks, where it tended to gravitate anyway, persuading themselves that they owed no care for the people who lived in them.

Figure Eight: Declining Waterfront Property Values⁶⁵



⁶⁵ Harland Bartholomew & Associates, "Land Values: Central Commercial Area," 1943, University of Oregon Historical Map Collection.

POOR PEOPLE IN REFORMERS' PORTLAND

One-fifth of Portland's 207,214 residents in 1910 had been born abroad and another quarter had at least one foreign-born parent. The foreign-born lived in every neighborhood, but they were not evenly distributed across the city. Census data show that the largest concentration of foreign-born residents lived in industrial neighborhoods downtown, north of the center, and in the neighborhoods around Albina. Many of the city's African American residents lived near the rail yards in the north end and Albina. The vast majority of the city's Chinese residents lived downtown within a few blocks of the river, making up nearly a quarter of the 1910 population of the city's third ward. The result was racial chaos in the eyes of some Portlanders. Researchers working for the 1912 Vice Commission saved their fiercest condemnation for buildings managed by Japanese or Greek immigrants that also housed Swedes, African-Americans and Italians. If class accounted for much of Portland's social segregation in the early twentieth century, it overlapped with race. Non-whites and the foreign-born worked disproportionately in the city's industrial and transportation centers and, unlike some of their white and native-born coworkers, they lived close to their jobs. African and Asian Americans were also excluded from a smattering of developments in Portland's new neighborhoods by racially restrictive covenants.⁶⁶

⁶⁶ The number of foreign-born is likely higher than the census enumerated because the Bureau of the Census reported only foreign-born whites, putting the city's 7,217 Asians, many of whom were likely born abroad, in a separate category. Bureau of the Census, *Thirteenth Census of the United States Taken in the Year 1910*, vol. ix, *Population 1910*, 520, 523. For a description of ward boundaries, see "Precinct Boundaries and Polling Places for Primary Election," *Oregonian*, 6 May 1905, 11. Descriptions of Portland's ethnic demographics are in Wong, *Sweet Cakes, Long Journey*; Tim Hills, "Oregon Places: Myths and Anarchists: Sorting out the History of Portland's White Eagle Saloon," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 101 (Winter 2000): 520-529; William Toll, "Black Families and Migration to a Multiracial Society: Portland, Oregon, 1900-1924," *Journal of American Ethnic History* 17 (Spring 1998): 46, 49, 54-55. For reformers, see Vice Commission, *Second Report of the Vice Commission*, 34, 39. The precise role that racially restrictive covenants played in Portland is difficult to evaluate. Others have done the hard work of combing through deeds to find evidence that early-twentieth century developments in Seattle commonly used racially restrictive covenants. See, Seattle Civil Rights and Labor History Project, "Racially Restrictive Covenants," <http://depts.washington.edu/civilr/covenants.htm>. In Portland, restrictive covenants seem to have become more common during the post-1905 building boom and some of these restricted use of property to whites

City officials could ignore the plight of downtown residents because they did not consider them to be part of the public they served. Municipal elections, after all, were in May, when the poor had supposedly left for their hinterland jobs. By the turn of the century, downtown, particularly its north end closest to the railroad terminal, was seen as a hardscrabble place dominated by itinerant laborers, barkeeps, and prostitutes, many of whom were regarded as socially dangerous immigrants. Hayes Perkins, a young harvest hand from Coos County, described his 1898 arrival in downtown with a characteristically dramatic note in his diary: “From First St. to Seventh, from Glisan to Burnside, there is nothing else but the underworld. It is as wide open as the sun is at noon, and no one tries to disturb it.”⁶⁷ As the city became more socially segregated in the decades after 1890, city health officers and charity groups increasingly set downtown residents apart from the rest of the city. Like members of the 1912 Vice Commission, health officers and charity leaders pointed to racial differences and itinerant status among residents of downtown neighborhoods to suggest that the problems that afflicted downtown grew inevitably from the deficiencies of residents. These were neighborhoods made unlivable by the outsiders who congregated there, in the thinking of powerful Portlanders, not areas that bore a disproportionate share of the social and environmental costs that attended hinterland trade and the city’s sewer infrastructure.

Health officials blamed diseases, such as typhoid and diphtheria, on gaps in the city’s sewage system and spent resources exterminating rats that fed beneath docks on the Willamette during the bubonic plague scare of 1906 and 1907. But the city saw other diseases as external problems carried in by troublesome migrants from foreign ports and the inland towns of the

and servants. See, David Hart, “The Process of Neighborhood Development: The Role of Restrictive Covenants in the Development of Residential Neighborhoods” (MUS thesis, Portland State University, 1991), 52, 73, 100. For restrictive covenants that focused on lot size and minimum prices, rather than the race of inhabitants, see McFadden, “House and Home in Portland,” 89, 115.

⁶⁷ Hayes Perkins, “Here and There: An Itinerant Worker in the Pacific Northwest, 1898,” *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 102 (Fall 2001): 371.

Northwest. C.H. Wheeler, Portland's first city physician, warily eyed Chinese residents. He worried in 1892 that "the water closets of these people are the filthiest on Earth."⁶⁸ Six years later health commissioner J.P. Menefee reported that he had "caused much filth to be removed and many changes in the sanitary condition" to be made in Chinese-occupied buildings and in the vegetable gardens they tended west of downtown.⁶⁹ Wheeler also kept a close eye on a cholera epidemic in Southern China in the early 1890s, writing to port officials on the east coast to inquire about the intended destinations of Chinese passengers on arriving boats. The health commissioner warned in 1898 that the city's status as an important shipping city "brings us in contact with ships arriving from all ports of the globe; and knowing that there is more or less of smallpox always existing in the Oriental and other foreign countries, we should be prepared for any emergency that may arise."⁷⁰

The city persisted in seeing smallpox as a problem imposed on it by outsiders. Sanitary practices of the city's Chinese population and diseases from distant places worried health officials. So did a downtown population that city officials saw as largely itinerant and separate from the community. The health commissioner reported in 1900 that much of the city's susceptibility to smallpox came from its trade connections, saying that infected people were "bound to drift into the city from along the river or from interior towns."⁷¹ The next year, he reported that eighty percent of the city's smallpox had been contracted outside the city limits and brought into the city by infected people. And while Americans elsewhere saw tuberculosis as an urban problem, Portland health officials regarded it as a rural problem impinging on the city.

⁶⁸ C.H. Wheeler to W.S. Mayson, c. 1892, Council Documents, Accession A2001-049, Portland City Archives, Box 53, Folder 2.

⁶⁹ Health Commissioner, *Annual Report for the Year Ending December 31, 1898* (Portland, OR: Multnomah Printing Company, 1899), Council Documents, Accession A2001-049, Portland City Archives, Box 68, Folder 11.

⁷⁰ "Dr. C.H. Wheeler Dies at His Home," *Oregonian*, 1 November 1935, 16; Health Commissioner, *Annual Report for the Year Ending December 31, 1898* (Portland, OR: Multnomah Printing Company, 1899), Council Documents, Accession A2001-049, Portland City Archives, Box 68, Folder 11.

⁷¹ City of Portland, *Mayor's Message and Municipal Reports for 1900*, 197.

They worried about the threat that contaminated milk from outlying dairies posed to the health of city residents. And because the city's densest neighborhoods were filled with people the city saw as rural itinerant laborers, the specter of outside diseases carried by people who could "run in on us, and spread the germs" haunted health officials.⁷² The problem of disease seemed to owe to the backwardness of distant ports or the small towns of the hinterland. People who suffered from disease seemed to constitute a problem from outside the city.⁷³

According to the Walla Walla city council, Portland's manner of handling contagious disease caused at least one death and fueled resentment across eastern Oregon and Washington. Nineteenth-century city officials sent a man with well-developed smallpox symptoms up the Columbia to Walla Walla, "scattering the seeds of death as he came," rather than isolating and treating him in the city.⁷⁴ Twentieth-century Portland made strides and had a health board and pest houses for quarantines. Yet, some classes of disease in the city, and particularly diseases that were commonest among poor populations in cramped quarters, seemed to city doctors to be the problem of some other place. As late as 1921 Portland left itself open to criticism that it had ignored the plight of tuberculosis patients. A representative of the Oregon Tuberculosis Association wrote in *The Survey* that the city's hospitals were inadequate to care for its tuberculosis patients because "it seems to be the general opinion of city health workers that the resident tuberculosis patient eventually dies outside of the city."⁷⁵ That was not the case,

⁷² City of Portland, *Mayor's Message and Municipal Reports for 1902*, 149.

⁷³ City of Portland, *Mayor's Message and Municipal Reports for 1901*, 178.

⁷⁴ W.G. Lanford [Walla Walla] to Mayor and City Council, 8 February 1883, Council Documents, Accession A2001-049, Portland City Archives, Box 36, Folder 1.

⁷⁵ Robert Osborn, "Tuberculosis in Portland," *The Survey* 47 (November 1921): 219.

however. The vast majority of tubercular Portlanders did not return whence health officials liked to believe they had come. They died in the city, at home.⁷⁶

The establishment view that many health problems were really hinterland deficiencies inflicted upon the city was even more pervasive in discussions of unemployment and poverty in Portland. Even as boosters touted the city's wealth, Portland housed many poor people, particularly in the north end of downtown. Poverty cut an especially noticeable figure in the city during economic downturns in 1893 and 1914. Hungry and shoeless men could be seen on the streets, and some poor people turned to stealing meals from restaurants to feed themselves. City officials established an employment bureau during the 1893 depression that put unemployed men to work on city projects. Other jobs programs employed people cutting wood for sale to wealthier residents. In 1914 the city established a public shelter that housed 900 men a night at a building that had been used for religious revival meetings. The shelter competed with a slightly smaller one run by the Unemployed Union, a group thought to have ties to the IWW. Charities also provided meals and small grants to allow people to travel to stay with family or find work.⁷⁷

Both city officials and charities operated under the assumption that poverty was largely a seasonal problem, exacerbated by winter layoffs in rural resource jobs, that brought to the city people who did not belong there in the first place. City government aimed to keep the problem outside Portland's city limits. A city ordinance criminalized vagrancy, subjecting it to as much as three months in jail. The city's definition of vagrancy targeted what the city council perceived to be the typical north end resident. A vagrant was anybody who by "common fame" was known to

⁷⁶ The city was slower to develop capacity to treat tuberculosis than smallpox, perhaps because treatment took longer or because the less-contagious disease was less likely to spread to middle-class neighborhoods. Osborn, "Tuberculosis in Portland," *The Survey*, 219

⁷⁷ Dmitri Palmateer, "Charity and the 'Tramp': Itinerancy, Unemployment, and Municipal Government from Coxe to the Unemployed League," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 107 (Summer 2006): 232; MacColl, *The Shaping of a City*, 99-105; Sawyer, "From Whitechapel to Old Town," 194-200, 279-282; To the Honorable Mayor and Council of the City of Portland, 1 August 1913, H.R. Albee Files, Portland City Archives, AF/76749.

be idle, begging, loitering about downtown, sleeping in barns, associating with prostitutes, or “every person who habitually roams from place to place without any lawful business.”⁷⁸ The city would occasionally enforce the ordinance to convey the message that Portland was not a comfortable place to ride out the winter. Police also arrested men who sought same-sex sexual companionship in the north end as part of their campaign to harass residents they saw as apart from the community. Arrests for sodomy and other same-sex sexual acts fell disproportionately on immigrants and north-end residents.⁷⁹

Mayor George Williams worried, however, that months in jail might be insufficient to deter cold and hungry men from remaining in the city. He believed that sentencing people convicted of minor offenses in municipal court to labor on the city’s rock pile would provide Portland with the protection it needed from impoverished men. Williams told the city in 1903 that “this rockpile has a salutary effect in keeping hobos and tramps and people of that description away from the city, as they are generally afraid to go where they would be compelled to work for a livelihood.”⁸⁰ The chief of police agreed, complaining that north end residents “have no fear of arrest, as imprisonment in jail affords them what they consider comfort, with two meals each day and a room to sleep in, kept comfortably warm.”⁸¹ The next year the chief developed an even more aggressive stance toward the poor. He brought people arrested for vagrancy in front of the morning police roll call and asked them to account for themselves.

⁷⁸ City of Portland, *Charter and General Ordinances of the City of Portland, Oregon in Force April 15, 1910* (Portland, OR: City of Portland, 1910), 460.

⁷⁹ Sawyer, “From Whitechapel to Old Town,” 234, 282-283, 308; Peter Boag, *Same-Sex Affairs: Constructing and Controlling Homosexuality in the Pacific Northwest* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 45-86.

⁸⁰ City of Portland, *Mayor’s Message and Municipal Reports for 1903*, 28.

⁸¹ City of Portland, *Mayor’s Message and Municipal Reports for 1903*. 189.

Evidently the people he arrested did not find the prospect of jail as appealing as the chief supposed they did. The majority of them declared that they were en route to another city.⁸²

City charities were even less sympathetic to the poverty in the north end than was city government. Perhaps no Portlander was more influential in shaping elite views of the north end than Thomas Strong. Strong was a cantankerous lawyer, who used his position at the head of the omnibus Associated Charities to attack the morality of the people he was charged with helping. He was among a group of ministers and other leading professionals who sought to root out corruption in the police force during the 1890s. He saw the police department as controlled by the “pimps, morphine fiends and vile and corrupt men and women” who used their positions in the vice economy of the north end to buy political offices. Using the nineteenth-century term that served as both a geographical and moral description of the north end, Strong had declared in 1895 that “Whitechapel must be destroyed” and the police force replaced with honest men.⁸³

Strong never lost his distaste for the neighborhood or its residents, and presented his Associated Charities as an alternative to earlier charities that he regarded as too compliant to the immediate needs of the poor. “Nine-tenths of our Modern Charity is really unnecessary, One-Half of it does injury instead of good,” Strong declared in a typical 1910 screed. Since its founding in 1888, the Associated Charities had brought order to the chaos of a hodgepodge of several too-liberal charities by helping only those who truly deserved help. He was proud that the charity had helped 35,000 people, but comforted himself that the charity had done right by not helping all. “Those who perished did so from inherent depravity or inherited weakness and not from immediate necessity,” Strong proclaimed. “They had at least had a fighting chance given

⁸² City of Portland, *Mayor's Message and Municipal Reports for the Fiscal Year Ending December 31, 1904* (Portland, OR: Schwab Bros., 1904), 195-196.

⁸³ Thomas Strong to the Committee of 100, c. 1895, Thomas Nelson Strong Papers, Mss. 2382, Oregon Historical Society, Box 1, Folder 1. Portlanders evoked London's commercial sex district, which saw a rash of murders in the years before the name stuck in Oregon. See Judith Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight: Narratives of Sexual Danger in Late-Victorian London* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).

them in the World,” he reasoned. Strong, the man the Portland establishment had charged with helping its poor, brought more than social Darwinism to his distaste for the task at hand. Like city health officials, he also saw the poor as a problem apart from the city. The city’s poor were merely part of a “motley band of vagabonds” that wandered the Pacific Coast, men who “make common protest against any useful labor and boycott it as far as they can.”⁸⁴ Strong believed that these men retarded Portland’s growth and his Associated Charities cooperated with the city in expelling them. The organization routinely sent the down-and-out on winter train rides to hinterland towns like Yamhill and Wallula.⁸⁵

Though they share none of Thomas Strong’s normative assessment of Portland’s impoverished, contemporary historians share his sense that the poor were part of a regional band of bindle stiffs, mostly single men who wandered from place to place linking the rural and urban Wests. To be sure, there are good reasons to assume that many of the poor in Portland’s north end traveled between summer jobs in the hinterland and winter belt-tightening in the city. There were eighteen employment agencies in Portland, filling jobs across the region. Rural workers had to come to the city, often just to secure jobs near their point of origin. Job seekers may have spent time in the city between gigs. They also rode out periods of unemployment there. Oregon’s wheat harvests demanded a ready supply of temporary labor. Seasonal unemployment was also high in many Oregon industries, especially those that relied on forest resources. The difference between Oregon’s employment crest and trough in 1909 was striking: Oregon manufacturing employed 23,354 wage-earners in January, but payrolls swelled to 30,978 the following September. The timber industry alone laid workers off for an average period of 130 days. When

⁸⁴ Thomas Strong, “Associated Charities of Portland, Oregon: 1910 Address of the President,” 1910, Thomas Nelson Strong Papers, Mss. 2382, Oregon Historical Society, Box 1, Folder 3.

⁸⁵ Secretary to J.P. O’Brien, 4 November 1910, Public Welfare Commission Files, Oregon State Archives, Box 102, Folder 1; Secretary to William McMurray, 24 December 1910, Public Welfare Commission Files, Oregon State Archives, Box 102, Folder 1.

the harvest was over and the snows closed logging camps and idled fishing boats, workers may have sought camaraderie and comfort in the city.⁸⁶

It is difficult to say how many of Portland's poor were interlopers from the hinterland who made their ways upstream and into the valleys and mountains once good weather brought opportunity. Census data were not collected to reveal itinerancy and enumerations often skipped over the poorest workers. So historians must glean information about life histories from government and charity records. As much as the structure of Portland's economy pointed to itinerancy, it is important to remember that other broad trends limn a different picture. Portland was a quickly growing city that broadcast its wealth in a nation that sent more and more farm children to towns and cities each year. Some seemingly itinerant workers may have entered the city to settle down; others may have lived there for years before bad luck and hard times eroded their status. In assuming otherwise, historians have deepened grooves well worn by the boosters' stories, rendering some urban poverty as essentially non-urban and reinforcing a distinction between city and country that speaks only to urban wealth. These assumptions also reinforce a sense of western exceptionalism that maintains that cities in the region were free of the permanent poverty that existed in eastern cities.

Indeed, hints that the story was more complex surface in charity documents. Some Portlanders saw poverty as a more permanent fixture of the urban landscape than did city officials and those who worked with Thomas Strong in the Associated Charities. In 1904

⁸⁶ For descriptions of itinerant labor in the West, see Carlos Schwantes, "The Concept of a Wagerworker's Frontier: A Framework for Future Research," *Western Historical Quarterly* 18 (January 1987): 39-55; Peter Boag describes seasonal flows of population, but does not assume that all or even most residents of the north end were there only for the winter. Boag, *Same-Sex Affairs*, 15-86. Recent research in Frank Higbie, *Indispensable Outcasts: Hobo Workers and Community in the American Midwest, 1880-1930* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2003) presents a picture of itinerant labor that does not foreground aimless wandering, but suggests that itinerant laborers followed seasonal patterns, migrating between cities, family farms, and jobs they held year-after-year. For information on Portland, see Arthur Evans Wood, "A Study of the Unemployed," *Reed College Record* 18 (December 1914): 9, 10, 13-15, 23; Edwin Anders, "Employment Agencies in Portland," *The Survey* 32 (July 1914): 400; Sawyer, "From Whitechapel to Old Town, 4-5, 364-365.

members of the First Presbyterian Church brought a settlement worker to Portland, following the lead of reformers in England and larger American cities. Valentine Prichard was a Massachusetts-born kindergarten teacher who had come West to recuperate from tuberculosis and had taken up reform work. After a brief stint in the city that started in 1898, she returned to Portland to establish the People's Institute in the north end. Like other reformers, Prichard worried about the north end's racial diversity and the problems it posed for urban order, but unlike many of her colleagues, Prichard saw the problems as permanent and quintessentially urban. She saw through the stereotype that the city's poor were all men who could work if they wanted. Prichard's People's Institute offered "educational, industrial, social, medical, religious and friendly aid" to women and children.⁸⁷ It ran a free clinic in cooperation with the University of Oregon Medical School, worked to establish playgrounds in the north end, and offered classes in housekeeping and clubs for women and children. It eventually established branches outside the north end to serve poor people in Albina and south Portland.⁸⁸

Other charities also focused on families rather than single men. In 1915 charity jobs cutting firewood went first to men with families. The head of one of the woodcutting camps, which employed as many as a thousand people, reported that camp residents represented a wide variety of trades and that many had lived in Portland for several years. Even Thomas Strong's Associated Charities acknowledged that Portland's poor were not all single men. Strong noted in 1908 that the preceding winter had seen an increase in the number of women and families that

⁸⁷ People's Institute, "Outline of the Work of the People's Institute," c. 1917, People's Institute: Portland—Charities, Vertical Files, Oregon Historical Society.

⁸⁸ "Interview with Miss Prichard, July 8, 1942, as told to Mr. Allan East," People's Institute: Portland—Charities, Vertical Files, Oregon Historical Society; Valentine Prichard, "Settlement Work," c. 1918, Hattie Valentine Prichard Papers, Mss. 1446, Oregon Historical Society, Box 2, Folder 25.

People's Institute, "Social and Civic Work," c. 1918, People's Institute: Portland—Charities, Vertical Files, Oregon Historical Society; Margaret Thompson, "Youth—Adults—All Have Their Fling at Sports in Portland," *Oregonian*, 10 June 1945, Magazine 2; Valentine Prichard, "People's Institute and Portland's Free Dispensary," *The Spectator*, 24 December 1921, 9, 17; Valentine Prichard, "A Resume of the Work of the People's Institute for Fourteen Years," c. 1917, Hattie Valentine Prichard Papers, Mss. 1446, Oregon Historical Society, Box 1, Folder 1.

the Associated Charities cared for. And as Strong's charity worked to channel the poor back to the countryside it believed produced them, evidence accumulated in Associated Charities files that many of its cases did not originate in the hinterland. Some Portlanders it sent to work rural jobs had no experience doing them.⁸⁹

A writer from the Willamette Valley town of Middleton complained that the man the charity sent to work on his farm was not up to snuff. On his first day, the man slept until breakfast, split a little firewood, and then failed to harness a horse, confessing that he had no idea how to do it. He told some in the farm family that his trade was in installing safes and others that he was a painter. He said that if he stayed on, he would expect to return to Portland once a week. The family sent him packing, asking for a worker more suited to farm life. Another farm family specified in its request for a man to do odd jobs like "getting in wood, looking after barn, chickens, etc. with occasionally outside work on the farm" that it expected to receive "a person who prefers a farm to the city."⁹⁰

These were not isolated incidents. In the winter of 1915 the Abaqua Lumber Company in Woodburn sought to man a logging camp and mill in Central Oregon with unemployed Portlanders. A company official explained to the Associated Charities that the camp shut down when lumber prices sank too low to pay workers adequately. The company would be happy to reopen the camp if Portland's unemployed could be had cheaply. The company requested skilled labor, saying "unskilled labor is worthless."⁹¹ The Associated Charities had 900 unemployed men under its care, but could not find any experienced timber workers for the job. Perhaps there

⁸⁹ Bess Owen, "Fighting Unemployment and Destitution in Portland," *The Survey* 34 (April 1915): 52; Thomas Strong, "Associated Charities: 1908 President's Address," 1908, Thomas Nelson Strong Papers, Mss. 2382, Oregon Historical Society, Box 1, Folder 3.

⁹⁰ Mary Buffington to Madam, 6 April 1898, Public Welfare Commission Files, Oregon State Archives, Box 102, Folder 6.

⁹¹ Abaqua Lumber Company to Associated Charities, 19 February 1915, Public Welfare Commission Files, Oregon State Archives, Box 102, Folder 5.

were experienced fallers and millworkers in the bunch who were loath to depress wages in the industry or resented the lumber company's admonition that "the fact they are working cheaper will not warrant them to do less work."⁹² Or perhaps the unemployed were not the experienced timber workers that Portlanders imagined them to be and the company hoped they were. In any case, a charity facing a crisis of supposed hinterland unemployment that was motivated to export the problem could not meet the request. It had only inexperienced labor on offer.⁹³

Interviews with the unemployed in the winter of 1914 suggested that they represented diverse backgrounds. Reed College professor Arthur Wood led students into the city's homeless shelter to interview 447 randomly selected people. Wood was a 1906 Harvard graduate who had served on the city vice commission and would later teach at University of Michigan. The study he and his students conducted sought to disabuse Portlanders of the notion that there was something unpredictable about winter unemployment or that the unemployed had only their own turpitude or recklessness to blame for their predicaments. Wood reported that in some ways the unemployed he interviewed fit the itinerant stereotype. Most were unmarried young men in their twenties and thirties. But much about the men Wood interviewed did not fit the image of itinerant labor drawn in city documents and charity reports. The unemployed in 1914 were not people afraid of work or even those who had failed to get a start in life. Of the 447 interviewees, roughly half were in skilled trades. Only 145 reported themselves as mere laborers. Another 73 worked in unskilled trades.⁹⁴

Some of the unemployed likely came to Portland to spend down their stake only to find that it was insufficient to pay expenses until good weather opened hinterland jobs. But a

⁹² Abaqua Lumber Company to Associated Charities, 19 February 1915.

⁹³ Associated Charities to Abaqua Lumber Company, 25 February 1915, Public Welfare Commission Files, Oregon State Archives, Box 102, Folder 5.

⁹⁴ Wood, "A Study of the Unemployed," 19-23.

substantial number saw their moves to the city as more permanent. Three quarters of Wood's interviewees said they came to Portland looking for work. Eighty-four men told Wood's students that they came to "better their condition" or that they were drawn to the city by boosters' descriptions. Wood remarked that commercial clubs, government promoters, and railroads had all drawn to Oregon "workingmen who have nothing to offer but their labor, and who, in spite of warnings in the pamphlets, are misled."⁹⁵ Wood was not alone in concluding that many of the unemployed chased promises of a chance at self-sufficiency. The State Federation of Labor also blamed boosters for drawing so many jobseekers to Oregon, citing "Wholesale distribution of highly colored and untruthful advertisements of the state; speculating in land values; advertising of logged-off and arid lands as baits for the unwary; home seeker's excursions, etc."⁹⁶

Other information that Wood collected lent credence to the possibility that the unemployed were permanent residents. Wood reported where the thirty-nine recent arrivals he interviewed who came to Portland with more than \$200 in their pockets had lived most recently. Only ten of them came from the rural Northwest or Alaska. The rest came from beyond the region or from the Northwest's large cities. Many of them had worked urban rather than rural jobs. Cooks from Salt Lake City, Montreal, Ottawa, and San Francisco found themselves hard up in the city's homeless shelter. Machinists, a mechanic, and an engineer came from Chicago, New York, and Pittsburgh. Seattle sent a boilermaker, a candy maker, a marine fireman, and two miners, men who by dint of accident, sickness, or bad luck found themselves living in the old Gipsy Smith Tabernacle, saved from the streets by pressure that the Unemployed League put on the city to house them. Their residence in the tabernacle, more than their backgrounds or intentions, allowed city leaders to imagine them as apart from the city. The neighborhood they

⁹⁵ Wood, "A Study of the Unemployed," 23.

⁹⁶ "Panacea for Idle Army Hard to Find," *Oregonian*, 19 February 1914, 4.

lived in was noisy. Tons of soot settled out of the air each month. Sewage ran down the streets each spring. These pollutants were the unfortunate byproducts of the city's profitable hinterland trade and of the growth that it had sparked. And, in the imaginations of the city leaders, so too, were the people who lived downtown.⁹⁷

AN ETHIC OF PLACE AND THE LIMITS OF REFORM

Few records remain to indicate what the poorest Portlanders thought of the downtown conditions they lived in. The steady stream of remonstrances to the city council about industry in the north end dried to a trickle when wealthy, middle-class and working-class Portlanders found other places to live. Working-class Portlanders in neighborhoods of single-family homes still aimed to shape the environments in which they worked and lived, hoping to keep noxious industry away from their homes and to avoid working conditions that exposed them to danger and disease. In 1918, as the city considered writing a zoning code, it surveyed managers of 215 businesses. Slightly more than half told the city that it would hurt their business to be located near “factories for bone or fat boiling or making soaps, candles, fertilizer, glue or chemicals, a slaughter house, tannery, tallow chandlery, gasoline or oil storage tanks, or a crematory.”⁹⁸ Most respondents did not elaborate on their reasons, but many of those who did hinted at the efforts working-class people made to shape the environments they worked in. Representatives of a variety of industries, including ship building, metal working, and lumber, predicted that the smells and dangers that noxious industry posed would “drive men away from work if it was to be had in other places” or “would decrease the efficiency of our force by creating disagreeable

⁹⁷ Wood, “A Study of the Unemployed,” 29; “Food Unequally Divided,” *Oregonian*, 18 January 1914, 15.

⁹⁸ Portland City Planning Commission, “Zoning and City Planning for Portland,” June 1919, Planning Archival, Accession A2012-006, Portland City Archives, Box 18, Folder 7.

working conditions.”⁹⁹ Workers also acted directly, petitioning the city council to limit the smoke emitted near sawmills in Linnton. By the 1930s they insisted that lumber companies rinse sewage off of logs stored in the Columbia Slough before they would handle them.¹⁰⁰

The efforts of these workers to shape their environments suggest that hinterland trade did not flow smoothly into Portland; it relied on the muscles and skills of porters, millworkers, railroad laborers, and river pilots. Workers in the hinterland economy owed their livelihoods to Portland’s trade in and processing of rural products. Each railroad employee depended on the transportation of cattle to slaughter and each lumber mill worker depended on the rail and river network that brought logs into the mills. Dependent though they were on Portland’s economy functioning as the boosters hoped it would, working people were not automatons in its service. Petitions to the city council are rife with examples of people calling for some modification to an urban environment shaped by hinterland trade. City directories reveal that signatures below complaints about smoke, noise, and smell came from the very people whose work shaped Portland’s relationship with the countryside.

Some workers in the hinterland trade asked the city to limit secondary industries not closely related to their own jobs. Both men and women signed petitions, individually and as couples. Several employees of lumber mills joined their neighbors in objecting to a northwest Portland mattress company, whose steam cleaning of a ton of animal hair a week emitted “a very

⁹⁹Portland City Planning Commission, “Zoning and City Planning for Portland,” June 1919; Charles Cheney, “Housing Survey Committee Report #1,” 1918, Planning Archival, Accession A2012-006, Portland City Archives, Box 18, Folder 7.

¹⁰⁰ Among the few examples of downtown boarders petitioning the city is a request that the city prevent a refrigerator factory at First and Salmon Streets from emitting excessive smoke. Petition to the Mayor, 17 August 1904, Council Documents, Accession A2001-049, Portland City Archives, Box 82, Folder 7. For smoke in Linnton, see Petition to the Mayor and City Council, 29 December 1925, Council Documents, Accession A2001-049, Portland City Archives, Reel 3308. For working conditions on the Columbia Slough, see Phil Muthersbaugh to W.D.B Dodson, 9 January 1936, Portland Chamber of Commerce Records, Bx 170, University of Oregon Special Collections, Box 20, Folder Columbia River Slough; East St. Johns Shingle Co to Portland Chamber of Commerce, 26 May 1936, Portland Chamber of Commerce Records, Bx 170, University of Oregon Special Collections, Box 20, Folder Columbia River Slough.

disagreeable odor.”¹⁰¹ Residents of south Portland, including a cement contractor, a paint dealer, and foreman with a street railway company, asked the city to abate a nuisance from a shoddy factory, which “throws out clouds of dirt which make it almost impossible to live in that vicinity.”¹⁰² These petitions are evidence that Portland’s industrial workers saw their city as more than an extension of its trade (and their employment). It was also a place to live, and when trade interfered with the quality of their neighborhoods, some Portlanders sought to restrain industry, even industry that supported their jobs. Twenty-five residents of Albina complained about “a most noxious effluvia arising” from a nearby slaughterhouse.¹⁰³ Signatures came from workers in the Portland Flouring Mills and drivers with a shipping company. A porter, the wife of a laborer in a lumber company, a sail maker, and the wives of two carpenters joined their neighbors in complaining about a lumber company that kept them awake nights by piling wood. Railroad employees joined millwrights and a stickerman in a lumber mill in seeking a halt to blasting by the Oregon Water Power & Railway Company in southeast Portland.¹⁰⁴

These efforts by the city’s laborers, tradesmen, and clerks to limit the impact of hinterland trade on their lives were part of their contribution to Oregon’s broad effort at progressive reform. At the state level, reformers, many of whom were middle-class Portlanders, remade the democratic process. In a statewide vote in 1902, Oregonians amended the constitution to include provisions for an initiative and referendum system, realizing an old populist dream of building an avenue around the corporate-dominated legislature. Two years

¹⁰¹ Health Officer to Committee on Health and Police, 2 July 1901, Council Documents, Accession A2001-049, Portland City Archives, Box 75, Folder 6. For the petition, see Petition to the Mayor and Common Council, 1 May 1901, Council Documents, Accession A2001-049, Portland City Archives, Box 75, Folder 6.

¹⁰² Petition to the Mayor and Council, 9 April 1906, Council Documents, Accession A2001-049, Portland City Archives, Box 88, Folder 12.

¹⁰³ Petition to the Mayor and Common Council, 25 September 1897, Council Documents, Accession A2001-049, Portland City Archives, Box 67, Folder 7.

¹⁰⁴ Petition to Mayor Albee and Commissioners, 3 April 1914, Council Documents, Accession A2001-049, Portland City Archives, Box 131, Folder 12; Petition to the City Council, 8 February 1910, Council Documents, Accession A2001-049, City Archives, Box 110, Folder 6.

later Oregon adopted a direct primary system that ensured the popular election of United States senators. In 1908 the state adopted a procedure to recall elected officials and a corrupt practices act to publicize campaign finances. In the years that followed Oregonians would champion popular interests in the face of corporate power, passing a worker's compensation law in 1913 and regulations on working conditions for women in 1914. These reforms, no less than the objections of carpenters to noise from a lumber mill and railroad workers to the hazards of railroad construction near their homes, were part of an effort to restrain corporate power in Oregon.¹⁰⁵

Portland voters also sought to rein in corporate interests in the city by electing Harry Lane mayor in 1905. Lane, who would go on to represent Oregon in the United States Senate seven years later, was a doctor popular for providing free medical care to his poor patients. He won election with strong support from middle-class wards with progressive voting records on the east side of the Willamette. Two years later he would win reelection without carrying a single ward on the west side. In office, Lane challenged political orthodoxy, calling for the city to stop deporting vagrants and suggesting that every second street on the east side be torn up and planted as a park. Lane also developed a reputation for holding city contractors to account for their work. Lane was most active in his opposition to what he saw as corporate exploitation of public resources. He advocated charging higher water rates to industrial customers, reversing the earlier practice of providing water to big users at a discount. Lane also sought to renegotiate the relationship between the city and the railroads, arguing with increasing frustration that "the property of the people belongs to them alone, and their rights are as sacred as are those of the individual and under no circumstances should they be parted with without due and careful

¹⁰⁵ Johnston, *The Radical Middle Class*, 119-126.

consideration of the value for which they are exchanged.”¹⁰⁶ Lane managed to persuade voters to pass a referendum requiring the city to put all future franchises to a popular vote.¹⁰⁷

Lane’s opposition to the railroads’ appropriation of public space led him into other political battles. He called for public ownership of tracks along the river so that the city could coordinate the passage of all trains. Lane persuaded the city council to ban freight traffic and steam locomotives from the Southern Pacific tracks running through Fourth Street, leading the railroad to route trains around the city, rather than through it. In 1906 Lane won a picaresque victory against the railroads. The city had long tried to get the Northern Pacific Terminal Company to sell land for a fire station north of downtown. The company was willing to lease the city land, but would not sell it outright. Lane managed to secure land for the city when he discovered that the company was running tracks over city streets from the Steel Bridge to its depot without the benefit of a franchise. Lane positioned policemen with sledgehammers next to the tracks and called the terminal company to inform them that the only railway into the depot was illegally constructed. The terminal company showed a new willingness to sell. Lane would have to be content with victories more symbolic than truly significant. He was unable to break the power that railroads exercised in the city. Over the mayor’s veto, the city council allowed the Spokane, Portland & Seattle Railroad to excavate a trench and build tracks across the residential St. Johns district, paying the city only for the cost of the land it dug up and for the construction of four bridges across the cut.¹⁰⁸

The spirit of reform that Harry Lane brought to the mayor’s office would not end with his tenure. Nor would consistent defeat of reform efforts. Through the 1910s Portland reformers

¹⁰⁶ City of Portland, *Mayor’s Message and Municipal Reports for 1906*, 36.

¹⁰⁷ Johnston, *The Radical Middle Class*, 32, 55; MacColl, *The Shaping of a City*, 324-325; City of Portland, *Mayor’s Message and Municipal Reports for 1906*, 26; City of Portland, *Mayor’s Message and Municipal Reports for 1905*, 31.

¹⁰⁸ City of Portland, *Charter and General Ordinances of the city of Portland, Oregon in Force April 15, 1910*, 475-476; MacColl, *The Shaping of a City*, 329-334.

tried, with limited success, to make the city cleaner, safer, and more attentive to the public interest. The city developed a system of public docks to wrest control of its shipping from the railroads, but this did more to secure lower rates for business than it did to return the river to the public. Other efforts were similarly limited. Mayor H.R. Albee kept up a correspondence with the city's factories, inquiring about their smokestacks and the ways they fired their boilers in an effort to reduce the smoke they spewed into the city's air, but made few concrete demands. City engineers worried about the safety of streets crossed at grade by railroad tracks. The city began to separate grades in the middle of the decade, undertaking a million dollar project to create railroad crossings below street level. In the late 1910s and 1920s city officials stepped up these efforts to protect the city's residents from the effects of its trade by advocating for an enhanced building code and zoning ordinance, but this too had a limited effect.

Reform groups, including Valentine Prichard's People's Institute, lambasted horrendous conditions and called for improved housing in the early 1910s. Their concerns found political voice during World War I when the federal government pressured the city to address its housing problems or risk losing its share of war industry. A 1918 study, authored in part by Jessie Short, a Reed College math professor educated at Beloit and Carleton colleges, revealed problems across several city neighborhoods and fretted that "there are many districts where life cannot be maintained properly and where children, if they survive in spite of the unhealthful conditions will be physically and morally subnormal, being handicapped as individuals in the race of life."¹⁰⁹ The city council responded by passing a new building code that enhanced fire protection requirements, mandated space for airflow between buildings, and prohibited basement apartments. But like earlier attempts to rein in the power of railroads, these reform efforts failed

¹⁰⁹ "A Housing Investigation in Portland, Oregon," 1918, Housing Authority of Portland, Accession A2012-003, Portland City Archives, Box 1, Folder 2.

in the face of opposition from the business community. The new building code coincided with an economic downturn. Convinced that regulations bore responsibility for the sluggish building economy, the city council revised the code in 1919, establishing an advisory committee to issue variances for particular projects. Three years later that committee declared that it would no longer issue variances on a case-by-case basis, but would only require builders to meet a less-stringent set of standards set out by the Chamber of Commerce. The city's progressive building code stood, but builders understood that they need not adhere to it.¹¹⁰

City reformers were more successful in implementing a zoning ordinance, but the ordinance did more to enshrine current neighborhood uses than it did to reorganize the uneven distribution of environmental problems across the city. Members of the planning commission, which included bank president J.C. Ainsworth (son of John Ainsworth), architect A.E. Doyle, city engineer Olaf Laurgaard, and furniture company president Ira Powers, saw a zoning ordinance as a way to protect property interests more than as a tool to provide residents with a quality environment. Any ordinance would offer homeowners assurance that noxious industry would avoid established neighborhoods, but more importantly, it would allow industry to flourish without the annoyance of residential complaints. The City Planning Commission noted in 1919 that "one of the present drawbacks to industries in Portland is undoubtedly that they are trying in most parts of the city to exist in neighborhoods and under conditions controlled by residence ideas and requirements."¹¹¹ The hassles that mixed use presented made Portland industry uncompetitive in the national market, the planners thought. The solution would be to zone areas of the city where industrial use would predominate. Commissioners recognized that

¹¹⁰ Lester Vanetta, "Continuation of the Report of the Study of the Operation of the Housing Code Advisory Board," August 1928, Jessie M. Short Papers, Mss. 1804, Oregon Historical Society, Box 1, Folder 5.

¹¹¹ City Planning Commission, "Zoning and City Planning for Portland," June 1919.

some residential buildings would be grandfathered into these new industrial zones, but predicted that “they will eliminate themselves in time.”¹¹²

The city first contemplated a system proposed by Charles Cheney, a Berkeley graduate and Ecole-des-Beaux-Arts-educated California planning consultant. Cheney’s plan would have established eight zones to accommodate various uses and another four zones for different building heights. Voters rejected Cheney’s plan in a narrow election in 1920. Ultimately, Portland settled in 1924 on a simpler system of four zones. There would be a zone for the exclusive use of single-family homes in the city’s wealthy neighborhoods in the hills above downtown and in the up-scale east-side neighborhoods. In anticipation of an ever-growing population, much of the rest of the city would be open to either single-family or multi-family homes. Newly reclaimed bottomlands north of downtown and near Swan Island would be reserved for heavy industry. Everywhere else, including land adjacent to street car routes, land near Sullivan’s Gulch, and all of downtown, would be open to commercial, residential, and most manufacturing uses.¹¹³

The new zoning map closely tracked the locations of existing industry, as Figure Nine shows. The two zones that allowed industrial use neatly encompassed every existing industrial plant in the city. Sawmills, furniture factories, slaughterhouses, and metalworking shops had sought land along railroads and river ways, so to a great extent, railroad land grants and purchases in the nineteenth century continued to shape the city in the twentieth century. In fact, nearly all the land that the railroads owned in Portland fell within one of the two industrial zones. This included not only land next to or underneath factories, but swaths of undeveloped land north

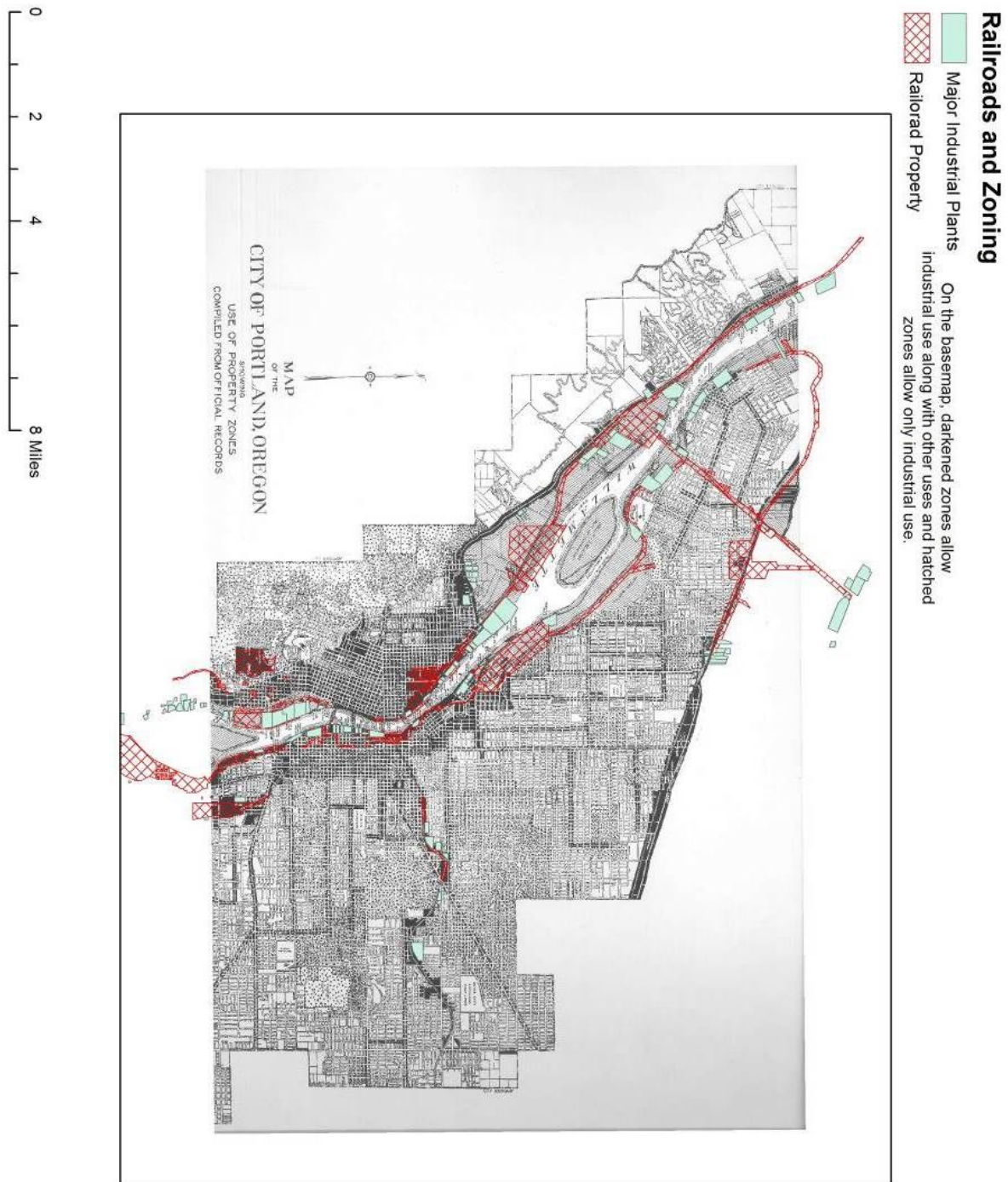
¹¹² City Planning Commission, “Zoning and City Planning for Portland,” June 1919.

¹¹³ Carl Abbott, *Portland: Planning, Politics, and Growth in a Twentieth-Century City* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1983), 79-92; Lloyd Keefe, “History of Zoning in Portland, 1918 to 1959,” August 1975, <http://www.portlandoregon.gov/bps/article/147441>; City of Portland, “An Ordinance Dividing the City of Portland into Four Districts,” Ordinance 45614, 24 September 1924, City Recorder Council Ordinance, Portland City Archives, D/54674, online copy at <http://efiles.portlandoregon.gov/webdrawer/rec/2844351>.

of downtown. Industrial zoning even covered most of a plot of hilly land southwest of downtown. The Oregon-Washington Railroad & Navigation Company recognized the land was useless for industrial development. In 1917 it had donated a substantial chunk of it as a new campus for the state medical school. Outlining zones hostile to industry would have required an act of municipal power unrealistic in a city so beholden to railroads and industry. After more than two decades of reform, Portland's zoning ordinance merely confirmed patterns its railroad town predecessors had sketched in their grants of franchises to city streets. More than a weak city government kept Portland from enacting meaningful zoning. Most of the city's home-owning middle class and working class lived outside of the permissive zones, many of which were dominated by lodging house residents.

More than chance railroad purchases in the nineteenth century and the flow of industry toward transportation corridors gave meaning to Portland neighborhoods. Portlanders helped to define the city's industrial and residential districts, even as they objected to the smoke that they produced and voted for politicians who promised to defend their streets from the greed of railroads. People who could afford to live in new neighborhoods marked some areas as primarily industrial in the last decade of the nineteenth century and first decades of the twentieth by moving out. They left Albina, downtown, and south Portland for new developments farther from the river and the train tracks. Wealthy, middle-class, and working-class Portlanders in neighborhoods of comfortable houses (though often without adequate sewer connections) increasingly defined their homes and themselves against industrial districts and the people who still lived there.

Figure Nine: Zoning, Railroad Property, and Industrial Plants¹¹⁴



¹¹⁴ Data comes from Portland City Planning Commission, “Map of the City of Portland, Oregon Showing Use of Property Zones,” 1927, Oregon Historical Society, G4294.P6G44 1927 .P6; Charles Cheney, “Railroad Owned Property,” in *General Report on City Planning and Housing Survey of Portland, Oregon* (Portland, OR: City of

In letters to the city, Portlanders who lived outside of the old industrial neighborhoods policed the boundaries of residential respectability, aiming to keep the human and environmental costs of hinterland trade where they supposedly belonged. The residents of distant neighborhoods sometimes complained about weeds and mud escaping from vacant lots or objected to the city's decision to locate pest houses near them. For the most part, though, the duty of defending residential sanctity fell to those who lived in marginal neighborhoods just beyond the industrial center. Residents there sought to keep noxious uses at bay, but may also have recognized that their social and political status as members of the community depended on the status of their neighborhoods. Railroad employees, a logger, and an iron worker living in Stephen's Addition in southeast Portland called for the destruction of a building that had become "a resort for hoodlums and tramps who commit nuisances within its walls."¹¹⁵ Residents of nearby Caruthers Street complained that a neighbor's cow kept them up all night, but augmented their argument against the offending cow by worrying that the barn "in the winter time has been a rendezvous for tramps."¹¹⁶

If undesirable people should be kept out of their neighborhoods, Portlanders knew where undesirable industry or animals should be located. When residents near downtown complained that a coffee roaster on Fifth Street had no smokestack and spread smelly smoke twelve blocks through their neighborhood, they hoped that the city could cause it to be moved to the riverfront where such industry belonged. Another resident of south downtown objected in 1907 to a planing mill on Fifth Street, saying "this is a residence neighborhood and no place for that kind

Portland, 1919), Planning Archival, Accession A2012-006, Portland City Archives, AF/172084; Commission of Public Docks, "Industrial Map: Portland, Oregon," 1919, Auditor's Historical Records, M/10951.

¹¹⁵ Petition to the May and Common Council, 18 April 1899, Council Documents, Accession A2001-049, Portland City Archives, Box 72, Folder 10.

¹¹⁶ Petition to the Mayor and Members of the Common Council, 17 August 1904, Council Documents, Accession A2001-049, Portland City Archives, Box 82, Folder 7.

of business.”¹¹⁷ A salesman living in southeast Portland objected to Portland becoming a “big, unsightly, ill-smelling, city of noisy fowl and nondescript chicken-ranchers.”¹¹⁸ He noted that wealthy neighborhoods had unwritten prohibitions against chicken ownership, but suggested that laws be written to regulate ownership between Twelfth and Forty-Eighth Streets.¹¹⁹

Most petitions stated the contrast between their neighborhoods and others obliquely by suggesting neutral sounding ordinances that limited some industries or uses to legally-defined areas. Others were more explicit about the respectability of their neighborhoods in contrast with other places. A woman who signed her 1902 letter of protest to Mayor George Williams as “a mother and a taxpayer,” suggested that industry belonged either in Albina or beyond the city limits. In any case, she wanted the city to prevent the construction of oil tanks across the river from downtown and the resulting “terror” of “having our pretty neighborhood spoiled and our property values lessened after years of toil and self-sacrificing to build our houses here in East Portland.” Her neighborhood, she reminded the mayor, was “not Albina nor has it ever been Albina.”¹²⁰

A petitioner named Nettie Butler, whom the city directory described as the wife of a clerk, asked the city to remove scavengers’ barns from her neighborhood, perhaps to relieve her from the smells the barns emitted and the ignominy of living next to people who did that sort of work. North Irvington, she wrote, “is a very beautiful Addition composed principally of

¹¹⁷ Charles Runyon to the Mayor and Common Council, 25 May 1907, Council Documents, Accession A2001-049, Portland City Archives, Box 93, Folder 10.

¹¹⁸ A.J. Martin to Mayor and City Commissioners, 23 June 1914, Council Documents, Accession A2001-049, Portland City Archives, Box 131, Folder 12.

¹¹⁹ Petition to the City Council, c. 1899, Council Documents, Accession A2001-049, Portland City Archives, Box 70, Folder 18; Petition to the Mayor and Council, 2 January 1907, Council Documents, Accession A2001-049, Portland City Archives, Box 93, Folder 10; H.K. Arnold to W.S. Mason, 3 May 1892, Council Documents, Accession A2001-049, Portland City Archives, Box 53, Folder 2; H.R. Albee to M.B. Marcellus, 9 September 1913, H.R. Albee Files, Accession A2000-003, Portland City Archives, Box 2, Folder 45. Petition to the Health Committee of the Council of the City of Portland, c. 1908, Council Documents, Accession A2001-049, Portland City Archives, Box 99, Folder 8.

¹²⁰ A Mother and Taxpayer to George Williams, 14 August 1902, Council Documents, Accession A2001-049, Portland City Archives, Box 77, Folder 7.

workingmen's homes and during the ten years I have resided here has made wonderful progress" as barns and shacks gave way to respectable houses. Butler hoped that the paving of nearby streets would finally push the neighborhood into full respectability, but found the scavengers to be particularly resilient in their desire to stay.¹²¹

Butler's rhetoric suggested that scavengers belonged elsewhere, perhaps in an addition that was not quite so beautiful. Like other petitioners, she tried to set her neighborhood apart as a place too respectable for uses that were more properly suited to areas beyond the city limits or to the degraded industrial parts of the city. Her argument protected her home, but it also helped legitimize an arrangement of environmental and social conditions that made it possible for those who benefited most from Portland's hinterland trade and industrial economy to live separately from its effects. It was a reasonable argument for a woman hoping to insulate her daily life from the annoyances of the "dirt, smell and flies" of scavengers' barns and to enhance the value of a house that may have constituted most of her family's net worth and stake in a society separate from the poorer Portlanders who made their homes in hotels and boarding houses across the river. Butler's rhetorical strategy, perhaps dashed off without much thought in a letter to the city, was reasonable, but also risky. The city sent building inspector H.E. Plummer, a Minnesotan who had gotten his start engineering grain storage tanks, to investigate. He reported that the houses on the block were, as Butler said, well-kept and valuable. Butler's own house was "a very nice residence," but the neighborhood already contained a number of stables used by scavengers. "This is largely a scavenger neighborhood," he reported. The boundaries Butler tried to draw

¹²¹ Nettie Butler to the Mayor and City Council, 1 February 1915, Council Documents, Accession A2001-049 Portland City Archives, Box 135, Folder 8.

between herself and those who should bear the environmental burdens she hoped to shift were clearer to her than to city decision-makers.¹²²

Nettie Butler was not alone in having her petition for abatement of noxious smells and annoying noises rejected. The city routinely ignored petitions like Butler's. As the city implemented zoning, city commissioner A.L. Barbur rejected petitions in neighborhoods near industrial districts. Barbur had grown up on Willamette Valley farms before coming to Portland and working as an accountant. He was a champion of efficiency who reordered Portland's chaotic system of street addresses and squeezed efficiencies out of city departments. In the 1920s he oversaw a city department that rationalized Portland's land uses as it ruled on nuisance complaints. A soap manufacturer was allowed to stay in south Portland because it had recently improved its sewer connection even though its cooking of rancid meats emitted a "foul and poisonous odor."¹²³ The city allowed a marble works on Fourth Street to continue using an air hammer that kicked up "great clouds of dust which permeate the entire neighborhood."¹²⁴ Like the scavengers' barns that bothered Butler, a packing house was allowed to remain in east Portland because it had been there for eighteen years. The city also declined to act on noise complaints about the M & M Woodworking plant in Sullivan's Gulch, finding that its annoyances were normal for a manufacturing operation. By 1926 the city found that the Multnomah Metal Works in south Portland emitted smelly smoke as it burned rubber fittings on old batteries, but declined to act, noting that the plant was located in an industrial zone.¹²⁵

¹²² H.E. Plummer to R.G. Dieck, 15 July 1915, Council Documents, Accession A2001-049, Portland City Archives, Box 135, Folder 8; "Plummer is In," *Oregonian*, 9 March 1910, 12.

¹²³ Petition to Abate a Nuisance," 24 July 1925, Council Documents, Accession A2001-049, Portland City Archives, Reel 3308.

¹²⁴ Petition to the City Council, c. 13 July 1925, Council Documents, Accession A2001-049, Portland City Archives, Reel 3308.

¹²⁵ John Mann to the Council, 17 March 1926, Council Documents, Accession A2001-049, Portland City Archives, Reel 3308; A.L. Barbur to the Council, 20 August 1926, Council Documents, Accession A2001-049, Portland City

In 1924 the city drew its zoning map, giving legal protection to geographical patterns that had been developing for decades and that Portland homeowners and city government had long recognized. The geographical segregation of the city into industrial districts, boarding houses, middle and working-class homes, and wealthy neighborhoods was just beginning when an artist drew his 1890 bird's-eye view map of Portland. It became starker in the following decades as industry grew in the neighborhoods closest to land that railroads had gobbled up in the 1860s, 1870s, and 1880s. With industrial growth and a booming population came increased pollution of the city's air and water. Those who benefited most from Portland's industry and trade with the hinterland sought distance from the worst of the city's pollution and from the homes of its working class. Few went as far from Portland or achieved the elevated perspective on it that Henry Pittock did, but they established neighborhoods in the hills above downtown and across the river. From those neighborhoods, the problems of downtown's industrial north end and Albina lacked immediacy. The people who lived there were no longer neighbors, or even a part of the imagined community of the city. They were seen as people as degraded as their environments and their problems were seen as abstractions, superseded by declining property values.

To be sure, there were efforts at reform. Some Portlanders tried to break the power that railroads exercised over their city by returning streets to public ownership. Others pushed city government to act on their behalf against polluting industry or threatened not to work for employers that subjected them to dangerous environmental conditions. Much of the city's progressive reform, though, based on an ethic of place, did little to disrupt the boosters' vision of the city as one composed entirely of pleasant homes. Even as they tried to make their

Archives, Reel 3308; A.L Barbur to the Council, 18 December 1926, Council Documents, Accession A2001-049, Portland City Archives, Reel 3308. "Barbur Born in Polk Area," *Oregonian*, 22 November 1941, 8.

neighborhoods cleaner or safer, Portlanders continued to reinforce the geographical distinctions limned by railroads in the nineteenth century and given meaning by the residential choices of Portlanders with options to make them. The ethic of place demanded that industry stay in a few well-defined neighborhoods or beyond the city limits. It put more constraints on the poor than it did on capital. Portland industrialists would face a more serious challenge from a resurgence of producerism with federal backing in the 1930s than they did from the efforts of Portland reformers.

By the time a dying Henry Pittock looked out at Portland in January 1919, railroad property ownership, geographical expansion, residential choices, and a municipal government unable or disinclined to control the effects of market choices had made a city that was most comfortably viewed from afar. On the city streets, it was clear that the hinterland was interwoven with the city in the form of broken sewer pipes supported by low-quality sawdust fill, smoke from mill waste used as fuel, and laborers who sought both winter comfort and long-term opportunity in the city. Indeed, so interwoven were city and country, that Portlanders could not exercise power over the rural Northwest without also exercising power over one another.

CHAPTER THREE
NEW DEAL PLANNING
AND THE EMPOWERMENT OF THE RURAL NORTHWEST

Portland General Electric's annual report for 1948 featured a map titled "Heart of an Empire." Along the northern edge of the map flowed the Columbia River, adorned with dams. There was Bonneville, on tidewater upstream from Portland, and Grand Coulee and Rock Island, on the river's Washington stretch. The map showed McNary Dam under construction, just downstream of the river's curve westward to form the border between Oregon and Washington. None of the company's own dams on tributaries to the Columbia, let alone the steam generation facilities that still produced much of Portland's electricity, made it onto the map. Perhaps they did not signal as surely as did massive dams on the Columbia that prosperity was the natural destiny of the city and the power company that lighted it. The Columbia provided the power company with dramatic imagery, in any case. "For more than 1200 miles the mighty Columbia flows through the rich Pacific Northwest to the sea," the caption read. It turned generators that powered industry, brought electricity to farms, and lighted homes. The river provided irrigation for crops and passage for boats taking wheat and timber to market. As the Columbia flowed south and west out of the Canadian Rockies and through the wheat fields of the Northwest toward Portland, so too, the power company argued, did the river's benefits. Portland General Electric announced that its 2,300 square-mile service area lay at "the center of population and trade, the industrial and commercial heart of the vast hinterlands which lie behind it."¹

¹ Portland General Electric, *1948 Annual Report* (Portland, OR: PGE, 1948), 11. Puget Sound Power & Light's Rock Island Dam became the first generating project on the Columbia when it was completed in 1933, five years before Bonneville and nine years before Grand Coulee.

The power company's annual report incorporated booster assumptions polished by nearly a century of rhetorical extravagance. As in the nineteenth century, ideas and politics shaped the relationship between city and country at least as much as did products carried on barges and railroad cars. Until the 1930s the state that those ideas built was relatively anemic. Nineteenth-century farmers had achieved some success pushing the state legislature to regulate transportation to ensure that farmers' access to markets. Portlanders had forged an ethic of place to persuade municipal government to mediate their experiences of the industrial economy, but their ideological efforts were less ambitious and met with less success. The state would grow substantially during the 1930s, driven by federal spending and the expansion of the federal bureaucracy. In Oregon these bureaucrats would consider the ethic of place in creating regulations to manage New Deal dam projects. They found a version of the producerism of the nineteenth century more powerful, however, and built a federal regulatory presence in the region on the basis of rural ideology.

This chapter argues, against the message of Portland General Electric's annual report, that the rise of the New Deal state weakened Portland's dominance over its rural hinterland. As the federal government embraced new roles in the region, building dams and electric transmission lines, it reshaped the Northwest's political geography. The New Deal state relied on Northwesterners recently enlisted as federal bureaucrats to direct new agencies and oversee projects previously beyond the federal scope. Those bureaucrats took direction from politicians and responded to local opinion, but they also relied on their own beliefs in the anti-urban reform ideas of the 1920s and 1930s to make decisions. The bureaucrats followed public intellectuals and the Roosevelt administration in looking to rural areas for economic and social stability. Like nineteenth-century republicans, they regarded farm production as a moral and a material

contribution to the nation. Wielding new ideas about an increasingly abstract national economy, the New Dealers believed that a farm economy that rewarded producers could support the nation's manufacturing sector. This thinking put farmers at the heart of the region's political economy.

This was a rural vision, but it was not the exclusive province of rural people. Oregon farmers found urban allies in the 1930s in factory workers and in reformers who drew inspiration from the New Deal. They also benefited from the sympathy and cooperation of bureaucrats sympathetic to the ideas around which farmers had long organized. These included academics in eastern urban universities who found their way into government in Washington, D.C., as well as long-time residents of Northwest cities, including the head of Seattle's municipal electric company and the editor of one of Portland's leading newspapers.²

² For the importance of rural interests to the modern state, see Catherine Stock and Robert Johnston, eds., *The Countryside in the Age of the Modern State: Political Histories of Rural America* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001); Sarah Phillips, *This Land, This Nation: Conservation, Rural America, and the New Deal* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007); David Danbom, *Born in the Country: A History of Rural America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995, 2006). For the history of an agency in a similar time period that also favored rural interests, see Louise Dyble, *Paying the Toll: Local Power, Regional Politics, and the Golden Gate Bridge* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009). This chapter also relies on literature on power planning in the Northwest. Richard White, *The Organic Machine: The Remaking of the Columbia River* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1995), 59-88 provides suggestive ideas about the role of planning, particularly by Lewis Mumford, in shaping the river and its valley. Two dissertations study in detail many of the topics I cover here. Eve Vogel, "The Columbia River's Region: Politics, Place, and Environment in the Pacific Northwest, 1933-Present" (PhD diss., University of Oregon, 2007) considers the role of planners in shaping the BPA. Wesley Dick, "Visions of Abundance: The Public Power Crusade in the Pacific Northwest in the Era of J.D. Ross and the New Deal" (PhD diss., University of Washington, 1973) discusses the politics of public power. Other helpful studies are Gus Norwood, *Columbia River Power for the People: A History of Policies of the Bonneville Power Administration* (Portland, OR: Bonneville Power Administration, 1981); Michael Blumm, "The Northwest's Hydroelectric Heritage," in *Northwest Lands, Northwest Peoples: Readings in Environmental History*, ed. by Dale Goble and Paul Hirt (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1999), 264-294; Philip Funigiello, *Toward a National Power Policy: The New Deal and the Electric Utility Industry, 1933-1941* (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1973), 174-225; Herman Voeltz, "Genesis and Development of a Regional Power Agency in the Pacific Northwest, 1933-1943," *Pacific Northwest Quarterly* 53 (April 1962): 65-76; Harry Stein, "Fighting for Aluminum and for Itself: The Bonneville Power Administration, 1939-1949," *Pacific Northwest Quarterly* 99 (Winter 2007/2008): 3-15. I learned of Paul Hirt, *The Wired Northwest: The History of Electric Power, 1870s-1970s* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2012) after drafting this chapter.

BUILDING A DAM FOR PORTLAND INDUSTRY

All of this was in the future in March 1932 when the Army Corps of Engineers submitted to Congress a long report on flood control, navigation improvement, and power development in the Columbia Basin. The Corps of Engineers' report called for the construction of ten Columbia River dams, ranging from Grand Coulee to Warrendale, near Portland. The report set off a contest among regional interest groups to influence the order of dam construction.

Washingtonians called for construction of a high dam at Grand Coulee, while some in eastern Oregon argued that a dam at the Umatilla Rapids would provide the best combination of irrigation and cheap power. Portland's Chamber of Commerce promoted dam construction at Warrendale and The Dalles, thinking that the construction of these dams so close to Portland before the others would "unquestionably result in giving industrial supremacy to the Portland district."³

The chamber moved quickly to line up support for dam construction on the lower Columbia. By the end of 1931, several months before the release of the Engineers' report, Portland's commercial elite looked with satisfaction on a list of resolutions urging river development that included twenty-seven Oregon farm organizations and another twenty-seven

³ Letter to Amedee Smith, 21 October 1931, Portland Chamber of Commerce Records, Bx 170, University of Oregon Special Collections, Box 5, Folder Columbia Valley Development Committee. See also William Robbins, *Landscapes of Promise: The Oregon Story, 1800-1940* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1999), 274; Vogel, "The Columbia River's Region," 38-39; "Taken from editorials in East Oregonian," 15 December 1931, Portland Chamber of Commerce Records, Bx 170, University of Oregon Special Collections, Box 5, Folder Columbia Valley Development Committee. This chapter benefits from several studies of the formation and policies of the Bonneville Power Administration. Steven Kahn, who was a public power activist before becoming an information officer for the BPA, hired Guthrie to provide a soundtrack for a promotional film. See *The Columbia*, VHS, directed by Gunther von Fritsch (1948; Medford: Oregon Video Archives, 1993); John Gold, "Roll on Columbia: Woody Guthrie, Migrants' Tales, and Regional Transformation in the Pacific Northwest," *Journal of Cultural Geography* 18 (1998): 83-97; Robert Clark, *River of the West: Stories from the Columbia* (New York: Harper Collins, 1995), 250-307; Harry Menig, "Woodie Guthrie: *The Columbia* and the B.P.A. Documentary: *Hydro*," *Film & History* 5 (May 1975) 1-10; Robert Carriker, "Ten Dollars a Song: Woody Guthrie Sells his Talent to the Bonneville Power Administration," *Columbia Magazine* 15 (Spring 2001): 32-36.

chambers of commerce from Oregon towns. The Oregon interests were joined by a smattering of groups in Washington and Idaho. The long list of organizations gave the Portland plans the appearance of public consensus. The real force behind the Portland lobby for dam construction, however, was exercised in closed meetings. The Chamber of Commerce, successor to the city's nineteenth-century Board of Trade, solidified its alliance with the city's private utilities by proposing that power from any dams be turned over to them for sale. The utilities, in turn, helped strengthen the relationship that rich Portlanders since John Ainsworth and his partners in the Oregon Steam Navigation Company had enjoyed with the Army Corps of Engineers. Portland General Electric's Franklin Griffith and Pacific Power & Light's Paul McKee made Colonel Thomas Robins, Corps of Engineers division commander, their frequent guest at the Arlington Club, where he mingled with the city's political and economic notables. The city's prospects brightened when Franklin Roosevelt, who had given a 1932 campaign speech in Portland calling for Columbia River development, won the November election and took office the following March.⁴

Members of the Portland Chamber of Commerce included Portland General Electric's Griffith and J.C. Ainsworth, the banker son of the Oregon Steam Navigation Company founder. The chamber promoted what it saw as Portland's business interest, filling the role of earlier boosters. The group was politically conservative. Even as its members hoped to benefit from Roosevelt's dam proposal, they were deeply skeptical of the New Deal. The chamber's political representative was William Daniel Boone Dodson, an Arkansas-born California rancher who

⁴ To be sure, Portland's business elite was not sympathetic to the New Deal, but saw promise in the government boon. Columbia Valley Development Committee, "Minutes of Meeting," 19 November 1931, Portland Chamber of Commerce Records, Bx 170, University of Oregon Special Collections, Box 5, Folder Columbia Valley Development Committee; "Meeting Notes," 22 November 1933, Portland Chamber of Commerce Records, Bx 170, University of Oregon Special Collections, Box 16, Folder Bonneville Dam Power Factor; E. Kimbark MacColl, *The Growth of a City: Power and Politics in Portland, Oregon 1915 to 1950* (Portland, OR: The Georgian Press, 1979), 556.

came to Portland in 1890. His Portland career was varied. It included work in a brewery, in a law office, and for the chief of police. Dodson served in the Spanish American War, where he worked as a newspaper correspondent. After the war he edited a Baker City newspaper. Dodson got into politics working for Oregon Senator Charles Fulton in 1905. In 1917 he became the general manager of the Chamber of Commerce. In 1933 the chamber promoted him to executive vice president and sent him to Washington, D.C. as a fulltime lobbyist. Dodson and the chamber would find allies in Portland officials, the business community, and other establishment civic groups like the City Club. In the years ahead, they would meet opposition from the Grange, labor groups, and the federal government's growing cadre of planners and bureaucrats.⁵

Other Portlanders had spent time in the capital, hunting railroad subsidies and government contracts, but Dodson was likely the first to make a career of attracting federal largesse. Dodson found a sympathetic ear in Oregon Senator Charles McNary. The Republican senator gave the chamber's lobbyist a desk in his office and the occasional use of his official stationery. It was no wonder that Dodson would later be described as "Oregon's 'third senator.'"⁶ McNary's help proved critical later in the year when appropriations were made for construction at Grand Coulee, but not for any dam close to Portland. Grasping for a dramatic gesture, McNary and Representative Charles Martin, a Portland Democrat, interrupted their summer breaks and paid Roosevelt a personal visit. As Martin would recount in a story he used to propel himself to the governor's office in 1934, the two sat in the office of Roosevelt's personal secretary until they got an unscheduled meeting with the President. They then used an advance copy of an Army Corps of Engineers report on the feasibility of a dam at Bonneville (the dam site at

⁵ The Chamber of Commerce had surveyed its prominent members on their confidence in the New Deal, and found that the overwhelming majority either claimed to have lost confidence or never to have had any in the first place. F.M Byam to Creighton Hill, 27 May 1935, Portland Chamber of Commerce Records, Bx 170, University of Oregon Special Collections, Box 14, Folder Babson's Confidential Survey. For Dodson, see "Dodson Noted for His Zeal in Behalf of Oregon Affairs," *Oregonian*, 27 June 1950, 19.

⁶ "Dodson Noted for His Zeal in Behalf of Oregon Affairs."

Warrendale had been deemed too unstable) to get Roosevelt to commit to \$36 million in initial construction. Portland's business elite had used its connection with a powerful federal bureaucracy and had drawn on the kind of clout that got their lobbyist not just access, but office space, with the state's most powerful senator. They regarded it as a great political victory coming after a hard-fought effort. When news reached Portland that construction would go forward at Bonneville, the city's leading businessmen celebrated in the streets.⁷

The Chamber of Commerce's hold on the dam seemed relatively secure as staffers coordinated special trains for businessmen to visit the construction site and got to work on a never-to-be-held world's fair to promote the dam. Bonneville was to be a relatively large dam backing up a pool seventy-two feet deep. It would span the river at Bradford Island, with the dam's spillway extending north of the island to the Washington shore and its powerhouse connecting the island to Oregon. The dam's locks would be the largest of their kind. Plans called for the immediate installation of two turbines, generating 43,200 kilowatts each, with eight more to follow as demand for electricity increased. Costs would mount to more than \$83 million before work was done.⁸

A Portland company began clearing the dam site shortly after Roosevelt announced the project. By December 1933 workers had constructed parts of the massive timber coffer dams necessary to deflect the river before excavating the spillway's foundation. Then high waters

⁷ Dick, "Visions of Abundance," 127-131, 142-199; MacColl, *The Growth of a City*, 439-441; "Untitled Speech by President of Portland Chamber of Commerce," 16 November 1937, Portland Chamber of Commerce Records, Bx 170, University of Oregon Special Collections, Box 15, Folder Bonneville Administration Staff; Letter to Nan Wood Honeyman, 15 July 1937, Portland Chamber of Commerce Records, Bx 170, University of Oregon Special Collections, Box 15, Folder Ross Appointment.

⁸ E.R. Wiggins and Clarence Porter to Portland Business Interests, 5 March 1934, Portland Chamber of Commerce Records, Bx 170, University of Oregon Special Collections, Box 15, Folder Bonneville Dam Excursion; Walter May to Executive Committee, 31 March 1936, Portland Chamber of Commerce Records, Bx 170, University of Oregon Special Collections, Box 15, Folder Bonneville Dam Dedication; William Willingham, *Water Power in the "Wilderness": The History of the Bonneville Locks and Dam* (Portland, OR: US Army Corps of Engineers Portland District, 1987); William Willingham, *Army Engineers and the Development of Oregon: A History of the Portland District U.S. Army Corps of Engineers* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1983), 95-104.

washed out the coffer dam. The Corps of Engineers decided to move the main dam more than half a mile downstream to a site that test bores indicated would better withstand the vibrations as the river crashed down the spillway. Contractors dredged the riverbed, and then floated timber cribs over the south half of the main channel and weighted them with boulders until they sank into place. Metal plates attached to the cribs pushed the river to the right as pumps worked to keep the riverbed dry while workers laid foundations for half the main dam. Then contractors built coffer dams to protect the north half of the main channel. The process was repeated for the construction of the powerhouse, the fish ladder, and the locks.⁹

Portland boosters and state officials were keen to capitalize on their political victory in getting the dam approved. After winning the governorship, Charles Martin pressed for more contracts to go to Oregon companies rather than companies with California or Nevada owners. Oregonians would lose the best contracts, but Martin could take some solace in out-of-state companies' reliance on local materials and labor. Cement for the dam came by rail from Portland, where it was mixed in a specially-built plant with sand dredged from the Willamette River and the Columbia Slough. Most construction workers at the dam site came from Oregon's Multnomah County. Some lived in bunkhouses at the site, ate their share of the 1,500 meals prepared each day in the commissary, and enjoyed movies in the theater built for the camp. Others found rooms in nearby towns or commuted from Portland, making the Columbia River Gorge Highway treacherous when shifts changed.¹⁰

⁹ "War Department Speeds Construction on Bonneville Power and Navigation Project," *Western Construction News and Highways Builder*, January 1934, 23; "Main Spillway Dam Location at Bonneville Shifted Downstream," *Western Construction News and Highways Builder*, April 1934, 118-120; G.E. Bjork, "The First Year at Bonneville," *Western Construction News and Highways Builder*, November 1934, 352-359.

¹⁰ David Billington and Donald Jackson, *Big Dams of the New Deal Era: A Confluence of Engineering and Politics* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2006), 161; Willingham, *Water Power in the "Wilderness"*, 26; "The First Year at Bonneville," *Western Construction News and Highways Builder*, November 1934, 352-359; "Bonneville Power and Navigation Project," *Western Construction News and Highways Builder*, June 1934, 181-192; Hugh

Boosters recognized that dam construction was a boon to the depressed Oregon economy, but thought that the dam's electricity was the real prize. Before the federal government undertook dam projects in the Northwest, the region had a loose network of 155 commercial water power plants that were capable of producing 1,400,000 kilowatts of power. Bonneville Dam was expected to begin providing another 430,000 kilowatts in 1937 or 1938 and Grand Coulee was to have a capacity of 1,890,000 kilowatts in the early 1940s. Together, the two dams would nearly triple the region's hydroelectric capacity and provide twice as much power as the entire planned output of the Tennessee Valley Authority. The future promised a world buzzing with electricity. And the first two dams were just the beginning. Northwest boosters fondly repeated that there were 275 billion kilowatts of undeveloped hydroelectric power in the United States, and that fully 41% of the nation's hydropower potential could be found in the Columbia Basin. Portland already used twice the nation's average rate of electricity per capita, with the bulk going to industrial plants, but future potential was dizzying. Because the region contained only about 3% of the nation's population, the power potential amounted to 32,628 kilowatts per person, more than twenty-four times the amount available in the rest of the country. The Chamber of Commerce expected the benefits of Grand Coulee to go to Washington cities, but Bonneville's earlier completion date would give Oregon more hydropower than Washington for several years, and would give Portland a head start at increased industry.¹¹

Scott, "Reminiscence: Hugh A. Scott on Bonneville Dam and the Boom Era," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 88 (Fall 1987): 265-272; "Why the Hurry?" *Bonneville Dam Chronicle*, 12 September 1935, 4.

¹¹ The new dams would start with only some of their generators in place, with the expectation that more would be added as demand increased. National Resources Committee, *Regional Planning, Part 1, Pacific Northwest* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1936), ix; Samuel Moment, "Memoirs of an Economic Missionary," Samuel Moment Collection, Bonneville Power Administration Library; D.C. Henry, *Report of the Bonneville Commission on Matters Relating to Bonneville Power Development* (Salem: State of Oregon, 1934), 10; Richard Neuberger, *Our Promised Land* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1938, 1939), 86-87; Richard Neuberger, "J.D. Ross: Northwest Dynamo," *Survey Graphic*, December 1938, 586; W.D.B. Dodson to Lytle Brown, 9 August 1933, Ralph Hamilton to Marshall Dana, 6 March 1936, Pacific Northwest Regional Planning Commission Records, RG 187, National Archives and Records Administration Seattle, Box 15, Folder Power Bonneville Dam.

The Portland Chamber of Commerce thought city elites would easily capitalize on early access to electricity. In their view, government kilowatts would augment the city's existing natural advantages, allowing businessmen to leverage the city's old hinterland trade networks into a new position as the preeminent manufacturing center on the West Coast. The Columbia provided Portland with a river connection to the ocean and the markets beyond it, the Chamber of Commerce proclaimed. Most alluring was the proximity of the new dam to the city. None of the other planned dams were close to a deep-water port or to a population of ready workers. As a geologist consulting with the Corps of Engineers described Portland's situation, "the lower Columbia River Valley has almost a perfect economic setting."¹² The Chamber of Commerce cited the same advantages, regarding them as "God-given."¹³

PORTLAND BOOSTERS FOR CITY POWER

By the mid-1930s the Chamber of Commerce, the City Club, the Corps of Engineers, the state government, and most of the city council agreed that the vast majority of the dam's power would be used to create an industrial district in and around Portland. The changes the boosters had in mind for the city were dramatic. Portland had few large industrial plants. There were only four businesses in the entire state that employed more than 1,000 people. Though industry affected many city residents, its footprint on city lots was relatively light. Heavy industry accounted for only 3.9% of the city's developed land area. Portlanders who dreamed of industry expected all of this to change. Lobbyist W.D.B. Dodson let the Corps of Engineers know that

¹² Edwin Hodge, "Bonneville Power and an Iron Industry," in *Proceedings of the Third Pacific Northwest Regional Planning Conference*, (Portland, OR: Pacific Northwest Regional Planning Commission, 1936), 85.

¹³ "Suggested Memorandum for the Exchange of Views with Secretary Ickes," Portland Chamber of Commerce Records, Bx 170, University of Oregon Special Collections, Box 15, Folder Bonneville Construction 1937. Portlanders used much the same rhetoric in 1938 when they opposed the appointment of Seattleite J.D. Ross as administrator of the dam project. Letter to Nan Wood Honeyman, 15 July 1937; A. Woodbury to Harold Ickes, 29 July 1937, Portland Chamber of Commerce Records, Bx 170, University of Oregon Special Collections, Box 15, Folder Ross Appointment.

Portland could rival industrial developments in the Soviet Union, particularly the “colossal affair” at Dnieper, where a massive government dam spurred industry.¹⁴ In 1934 the legislature’s Bonneville Commission issued a divided report. The majority faction agreed with the Chamber of Commerce. Its wealthy members included Amedee Smith, a past president of the Portland Chamber of Commerce and head of Willamette Iron & Steel; Henry Corbett, a real estate investor with interests in insurance and utilities; D.C. Henry, an engineer; and L.F. Allen, a state legislator. This four-person majority reported in 1934 that “if Bonneville power is properly used it may be the means of starting an era of marvelous development” in the state.¹⁵

As they speculated about how best to fit electricity into the harness of future industry, the Portland boosters revealed conservatism as they guessed at markets and unexploited sources of some raw materials. They imagined an export economy that would load ships and trains with trees turned into rayon by Columbia River power. The economy would differ little in structure from the one that loaded those ships with trees made into boards by sawmills running on steam generators. Exports would continue to drive the economy of the boosters’ dreams. Although the Chamber of Commerce and its allies talked of Portland’s natural advantages, they knew that the city faced obstacles in attracting these industries. The Northwest was far from markets and sources of raw materials. Cheap power would be the region’s primary enticement, but power costs accounted for a relatively small portion of the cost of making most things. The industrial center that Portland boosters hoped to call into being would have to take on specific characteristics. It would need to rely, at least in part, on raw materials close at hand: cellulose

¹⁴ W.D.B. Dodson to Lytle Brown, 9 August 1933.

¹⁵ Henry, *Report of the Bonneville Commission*, 6. For Portland’s industrial profile, see Robert Johnston, *The Radical Middle Class: Populist Democracy and the Question of Capitalism in Progressive Era Portland, Oregon* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003), 51-73; Census Bureau, *1930 Census of Manufactures* vol. III *Reports by States* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1933), 435. “Land Use Inventory for Portland Completed,” *Portland City Club Bulletin*, 8 January 1937, 119; C.I Grimm quoted in Fred Lockley and Marshall Dana, “More Power to You” (Portland: The Oregon Journal, 1934), 87; *Capitol’s Who’s Who for Oregon, 1936-1937* (Portland, OR: Capitol Publishing, 1937).

from Northwest trees, minerals from Wyoming and Montana, and perhaps alumina from Utah. The city would need to provide favorable access to industrial land to reduce costs further. Above all, the boosters would need to attract energy-sucking industries that might consider the cost of power in choosing plant locations, and it would need to make sure that the cost at Portland was as low as it could be.¹⁶

For the dream to become reality, nothing could interfere with the promise of huge blocks of cheap power. Many Portlanders thought of benefits to household users as they eyed the dam, but the Chamber of Commerce and allies in city government pushed aside their desires. No electricity could be made available to the public to drive down rates or allow for electric cooking and heating, and no electricity could be used for pumping in irrigation projects. In fact, the ideal industrial plant would purchase the dam's entire output and run its own lines into the Columbia River Gorge so that the federal government could get to work on the next dam. That prospect seemed to materialize in the summer of 1935 when Bohn Aluminum Company offered to buy the dam's entire output and promised "a chemical city wherein more than 5000 workers will dwell and [support] a dozen laboratories for chemists to work in."¹⁷ The company only awaited the announcement of a power rate and the government's agreement to sell it the dam's entire output. Portland boosters were enthralled. Portland Mayor Joseph Carson, Jr. announced the next month that Bonneville power had to be sold as quickly as possible to heavy industry and that the Corps of Engineers was "prepared to build us another power plant for the purpose of furnishing electricity to the public."¹⁸

¹⁶ Henry, *Report of the Bonneville Commission*, 15-19; Raymond Miller, "Untitled Report," Portland Chamber of Commerce Records, Bx 170, University of Oregon Special Collections, Box 15, Folder Bonneville Construction 1937; Lockley and Dana, "More Power to You", 87; "Columbia River Development Committee Submits a Progress Report," *Portland City Club Bulletin*, 23 March 1934, 3, 6; Henry, *Report of the Bonneville Commission*, 13-14; Raymond Miller, "Untitled Report."

¹⁷ Herbert Lampman, "Entire Output of Dam Sought," *Oregonian*, 1 August 1935, 1.

¹⁸ "Power Sale to be Issue, Says Mayor Carson," *Bonneville Dam Chronicle*, 12 September 1935, 1.

This excitement was born of fear as much as hope. The Corps of Engineers and its Portland friends were anxious to head off the notion that Columbia River development was a boondoggle that, in the words of one critic, involved “dumping hundreds of millions of tax dollars, mainly contributed by the East, into one remote corner of the country for the benefit, at present, of about one percent of people.”¹⁹ Power sales would have to recuperate with interest the portion of the dam’s cost attributable to electrical generation. Portland boosters hoped to erase any doubt that the power would sell in order to ensure further federal development. Likewise, their allies in the Army Corps of Engineers hankered for the prestige and future appropriations that came with successful projects.²⁰

The Portland Chamber of Commerce and Oregon’s leading politicians wanted heavy industry for reasons that went beyond their desire for future dams. The boosters’ plans revealed their assumptions about the economy and regional development. The Portland elite believed in the economic primacy of industrial production. In their view, manufacturing created its own employment, which then created demand for manufactured goods. As W.D.B. Dodson wrote to Governor Martin in 1937, increased production could lift Oregon and the nation out of the Depression. Power would be the key to increased production, and it was only by dedicating all electricity to industry that “we can ever realize further development of this power and get therefrom the opportunities for work and increased population and increased wealth for all our people.”²¹ People and markets would follow industry, the Chamber of Commerce maintained.

Many in state government thought along these lines. The majority report of the Bonneville Commission had imagined that a few huge factories would send economic benefits

¹⁹ Jim Marshall, “Dam of Doubt,” *Colliers*, 19 June 1937, 82; see also, Walter Davenport, “Power in the Wilderness,” *Colliers*, 21 September 1935, 10-11, 56-67.

²⁰ On the institutional agenda of the Corps of Engineers, see Marc Reisner, *Cadillac Desert: The American West and Its Disappearing Water* (New York: Penguin, 1986, 1993).

²¹ “Suggested Memorandum for the Exchange of Views with Secretary Ickes.”

cascading through the rest of the economy. With the arrival of big producers lured by cheap power, its majority wrote, “other inter-dependent industries will start up, payrolls will be created, all lines of business will feel the vitalizing effect and the entire population will be benefited.”²² This vision of economic growth relied on power rates low enough to offset the cost of shipping aluminum, chemicals, or rayon yarn to distant markets. The boosters knew that the power of the water rushing through the Columbia promised low rates, but only if it was managed in a particular way. This plan was not neutral; it would require some to bear disproportionate sacrifices.

Factories took precedence over home heat or better lighting. More worrying to boosters than the demands of consumers with newly-installed electric appliances was the threat that the state’s rural areas would pull power away from Portland industry. Only thirty percent of Oregon farms had exchanged lanterns for light bulbs in the early 1930s. The rate compared unfavorably with Washington, where power lines reached sixty-two percent of farms. In Oregon and most other states, private power companies were unwilling to extend lines into areas without the population density to make them profitable. Farmers could not afford the \$2,000 or so it cost to bring electricity a mile. Even when they did manage to connect their farms to the grid, rural customers paid much higher rates than did their city cousins. These disparities loomed large in regional politics. The Oregon Grange championed electrification of the 38,500 farms beyond the end of the power lines. Farmers hoped that cooperatives and public agencies would serve them better than the state’s private companies. In 1930 they had convinced voters to approve an amendment to the state constitution that permitted the creation of People’s Utility Districts. Farmers and proponents of PUDs looked hopefully to the Columbia, thinking that it would assure the success of public power and rural electric lines. Their gaze crossed that of the Portland

²² Henry, *Report of the Bonneville Commission*, 22.

boosters, who looked to the huge industrial complexes they hoped to grow on the banks of the river near Portland.²³

Portland boosters also worried that rural customers would not bear the full cost of the electricity they consumed. The Chamber of Commerce's allies in state government estimated that power could be sold to companies willing to build their own transmission lines for \$14.25 per kilowatt year (the unit price equivalent to about 8,766 kilowatt-hours that power managers used to discuss mass sales of electricity). Electrical generation accounted for roughly a third of the total cost of selling power. Buying rights-of-way and building transmission towers added costs, as did accounting for the electricity lost through transmission over a long distance. If long-distance transmission lines were built, Portland boosters reasoned, the customers they connected to the dam would chip away at the power blocks available to entice industry. Worse still, if the costs of transmission were included in the accounting of rates at the dam, the system-wide price of power would rise to \$19.50 per kilowatt-year, above the rate likely to attract new industry. In order to keep prices low enough to power industrial development, state officials hoped to charge distant communities for the cost of transmitting power to them. This would preserve Portland's natural advantage of proximity to the dam at tidewater and would protect the political labor of its boosters. State officials expected power to sell cheaply at the dam site and Portland, but expected to charge more for transmission to distant consumers, as Figure One shows. Electricity would sell for 3.64 mills per kilowatt-hour at Portland substations (marketers discussed consumer prices in kilowatt-hours and mills, equivalent to one-tenth of a cent). Bonneville power in Heppner

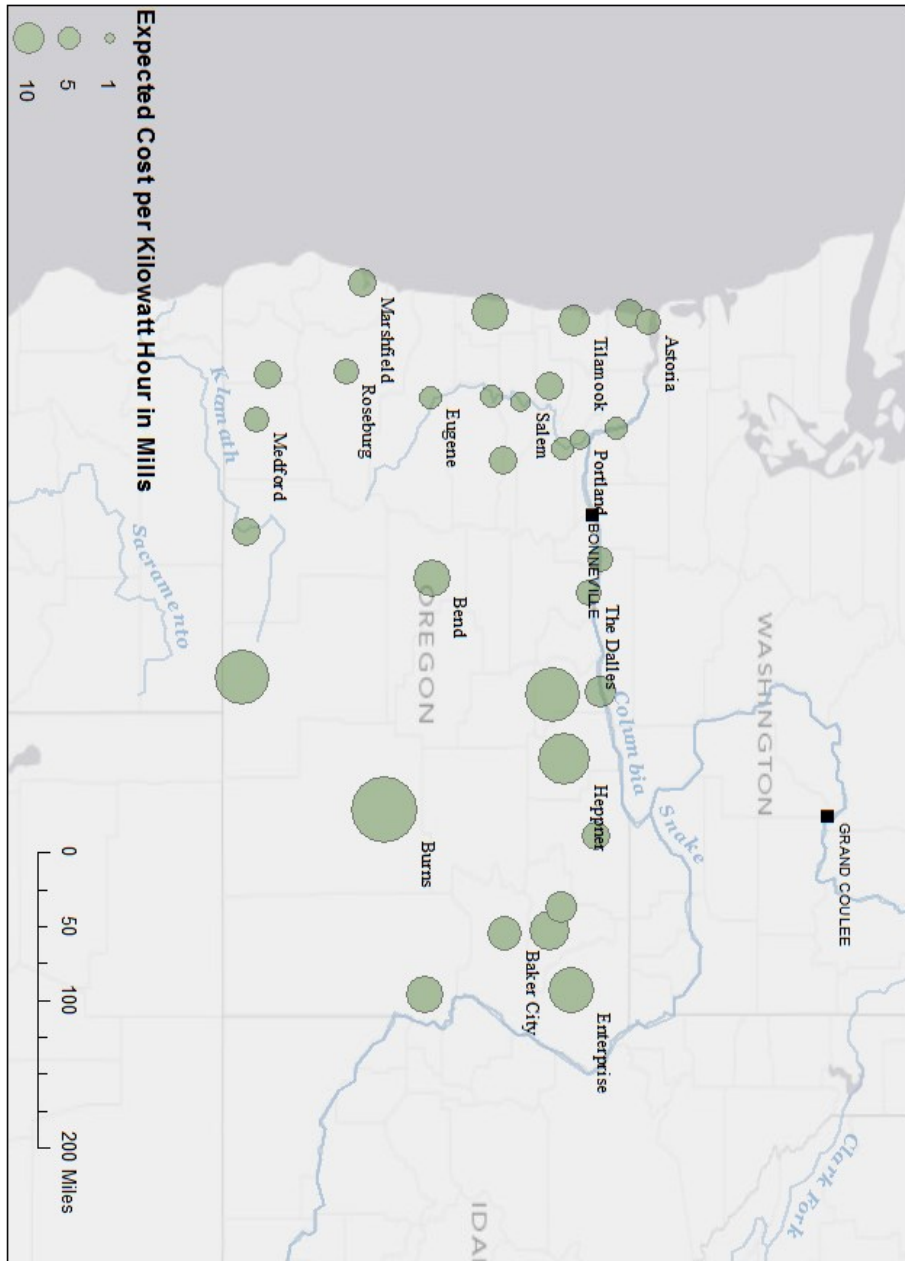
²³ In Oregon PUDs are People's Utility Districts; in Washington they are Public Utility Districts. Washington's massive power projects relatively far from the cities they served had left urban systems with capacity to dispose of and miles of transmission lines between cities and distant dams that had to be built anyway. David Nye, *Electrifying America: Social Meanings of a New Technology, 1880-1940* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1990), 287-335; H.V. Carpenter, "Power Development and Marketing," in *Proceedings of the Second Northwest Regional Planning Conference* (Portland, OR: Pacific Northwest Regional Planning Commission, 1934), 62; Neuberger, *Our Promised Land*, 28.

would go for 27.33 mills per kilowatt-hour and power in Burns, more than 200 miles from the dam would sell for 42.48 mills, well over ten times the cost in Portland. Factories would avoid hinterland locations in favor of better rates in Portland and hinterland customers would be priced out of using too much of the Columbia's electricity.²⁴

In Chamber of Commerce memoranda and in state reports, urban factories depended on rural underdevelopment and restraints on increased electrification of urban households. Consumers and farmers would have to wait their turn if Portland was to develop into an industrial center capable of using Columbia River power. In embracing the view that industrial production drove economic growth and the corollary view that rural interests needed to be suppressed in the interests of recovery and development in the city, Portland boosters and Oregon planners found themselves at loggerheads with two of the central assumptions of the New Deal state they had called on to build the dam. Portland's political connections would provide little defense against the twin beliefs in government circles that industrial development depended on consumer health more than investment and that urban power was one of the country's great ills. Both these beliefs promised to empower consumers and farmers at the expense of industrialists.

²⁴ Oregon State Planning Board Advisory Committee on Power, *A Study of Wholesale Costs of Bonneville Power* (Salem: State of Oregon, 1935), 15, 17.

Figure One: Oregon State Planning Board Rate Projections²⁵



²⁵ Data from Oregon State Planning Board Advisory Committee on Power, *A Study of Wholesale Costs of Bonneville Power*, 15.

BUREAUCRATS AND IDEOLOGY

In the early 1930s as the Depression worsened, candidate Franklin Roosevelt and many of the people he would bring into his administration imbibed popular and academic views on the importance of consumption to the broader economy. In contrast with the Portland boosters, New Dealers saw helping consumers, rather than bringing new industrial plants online, as the best way to improve the economy. They envisioned stimulating a decentralized economy, one that would scatter production across the countryside. Roosevelt told the Commonwealth Club during a campaign stop in San Francisco that the task at hand was not one of building industrial plants, but of administering the economy, and in particular, “meeting the problem of underconsumption.”²⁶ A full embrace of Keynesian principles lay on the far side of the steep 1937 recession, and in fact, some of the New Deal’s most important programs, especially Social Security, took money out of the consumer economy. Still, the New Deal’s early farm policy regarded farmer-driven consumption as a key to economic recovery. This bore some similarity to the consumer-focused economic planning that would grow out of the late New Deal and post-war period, but it also privileged rural production.²⁷

Before 1937 the loudest proponents of a consumer-based recovery were agricultural economists, who believed that the industrial economy depended on the buying power of American farmers. Rexford Tugwell, who moved from a faculty position at Columbia University to the Department of Agriculture in 1933, believed that the Depression had resulted from overproduction and under-consumption as businesses held on to profits, rather than passing them

²⁶ Quoted in Brinkley, *The End of Reform: New Deal Liberalism in Recession and War* (New York: Vintage Books, 1995), 70.

²⁷ Brinkley, *The End of Reform*, 65-85; Lizabeth Cohen, *A Consumers’ Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America* (New York: Vintage, 2003, 2004), 54-56; Daniel Rodgers, *Atlantic Crossings: Social Politics in a Progressive Age* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), 435-437.

along to consumers in the form of lower prices or to workers as higher wages. This cycle of capital accumulation in business had hit farmers particularly hard. Farm prices dropped relative to manufactured goods throughout the 1920s, and Tugwell attributed the slowing of factories to the inability of farmers to buy industrial goods. Tugwell's views struck a chord with Roosevelt, who considered himself a gentleman farmer and expert on rural life. In addition to the president's support, Tugwell had in the Department of Agriculture the tools of one of the strongest and oldest arms of federal domestic power. Over more than forty years, the department had built a mass of data, connections with industry and with state governments, and a network of extension agents. Drawing on the institutional assets of the Department of Agriculture and responding to a perceived need to boost farm spending, the administration framed farm aid as a step toward broader economic recovery through increased consumer spending. Roosevelt signed the 1933 Agricultural Adjustment Act during his first hundred days in office, aiming to increase farmers' income by providing price support loans and incentives to take land out of production. The bill's full title was, fittingly, "An Act to Relieve the Existing National Economic Emergency by Increasing Agricultural Purchasing Power."²⁸

Increasing the profitability of the farm economy was more than a good way to lift all economic boats on a tide of farm spending. New Deal policy makers lived in an intellectual and political world that resembled the world that Oregon farmers had tried to create in the 1870s and 1880s. Oregon farmers had drawn on the national Grange movement in an attempt to inject their values into state government. The Grange's business failings and the intransigence of corporate power limited their successes. Similar views found a place in government with New Dealers who

²⁸ Phillips, *This Land, This Nation*, 3, 65-72, 76; William Leuchtenburg, *Franklin D. Roosevelt and the New Deal, 1932-1940* (New York: Harper & Row, 1963), 72-75; Rodgers, *Atlantic Crossings*, 449-451; David Kennedy, *Freedom from Fear: The American People in the Great Depression* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 202.

looked skeptically at cities and factories, while believing that virtuous wealth could be found in farmers' fields and rural enterprises. Bureaucrats in the young administration saw both political advantage and real value in elevating the social status of the countryside. Their hostility to cities placed them in a long Jeffersonian political tradition, but they needed to look back only as far back as the 1920s and early 1930s to the Country Life Movement, the Catholic Agrarians, and the Southern Agrarians to see organized political and intellectual movements advocating the return of population to rural areas.

The southern agrarians were intellectuals at Vanderbilt University who in 1931 published *I'll Take My Stand*. The Catholic Agrarians drew on a base in the Midwest to found a rural life conference in 1923. Both groups decried industrialism and commercialism. The southerners contrasted commercialism with what they described as a community-minded ideal South rooted in rural tradition (they glossed over the racial violence), while the Catholics worried that concentrations of urban wealth augured a future of exploitative capitalism or socialism that made no room for religion. With this in mind, the 1934 National Catholic Rural Life Conference called for the government to expand the farm population, returning to the land "as large a portion of the unemployed in our cities, and of the several types of stranded, tenant farmers in the country as have the desire and ability to settle permanently on small farms."²⁹ The agrarians shared with a decades-old back-to-the-land movement the assumption that the strength of rural areas lay in their rejection of urban amenities and values.³⁰

²⁹ Quoted in Edward Shapiro, "Catholic Agrarian Thought and the New Deal," *The Catholic Historical Review* 65 (October 1979): 591.

³⁰ For the southern agrarians, see Paul Murphy, *The Rebuke of History: The Southern Agrarians and American Conservative Thought* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001); David Danbom, "Romantic Agrarianism in Twentieth-Century America," *Agricultural History* 65 (Autumn 1991): 5. For the Catholic Agrarians, see also Paul Conkin, *Tomorrow a New World: The New Deal Community Program* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1959), 25. On the back-to-the-land movement, see Danbom, "Romantic Agrarianism in Twentieth-Century America," 4; Richard White, "Poor Men on Poor Lands: The Back-to-the-Land Movement of the Early

Another strand of thought also saw rural living as an antidote to urban problems, but aimed to make rural society and economic life more tenable in the modern world by rendering it more efficient, commercial, and mechanized. Modernization envisioned by the Country Life movement was especially attractive to planners, who saw in rural areas the potential to mix the best of modern production with the values-instilling qualities of rural life. Benton MacKaye, Lewis Mumford, and other urban planners came together to form the Regional Planning Association of America in 1923. They hoped to spread the benefits of industrial development across the landscape. The planners and the agrarians were joined in the 1920s by enthusiasts for rural life and development ranging from Henry Ford with modernist plans for factories that would employ part-time agricultural labor to the authors of a host of guidebooks instructing city dwellers on how to escape modernity and return to the land.³¹

The economic crisis of the 1930s provided proponents of rural living with both signs of hope and calls to action. Even as some 2.5 million farm families sought relief, and 40,000 farmers a year lost their land, observers cheered a temporary reversal in the long trend of migration from country to city. As rural areas gained population at the expense of cities in the first years of the 1930s, a writer in the *Atlantic Monthly* proclaimed in 1933 that “more log cabins are being built in the United States than at any time since Abraham Lincoln.”³² The byzantine system of acreage reductions, parity prices and crop loans that would eventually survive court challenges in the late 1930s and early 1940s would be the New Deal’s most well-

Twentieth Century: A Case Study,” *Pacific Historical Review* 49 (February 1980): 105-131; David Nye, *Electrifying America*, 304-307.

³¹ Paul Sutter, *Driven Wild: How the Fight Against Automobiles Launched the Modern Wilderness Movement* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2002), 142-193; Danbom, “Romantic Agrarianism in Twentieth-Century America,” 6; Philips, *This Land, This Nation*, 31; Neil Maher, *Nature’s New Deal: The Civilian Conservation Corps and the Roots of the American Environmental Movement* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 29-30; Conklin, *Tomorrow a New World*, 23-24; Mark Luccarelli, *Lewis Mumford and the Ecological Region: The Politics of Planning* (New York: The Guilford Press, 1995).

³² Quoted in Conklin, *Tomorrow a New World*, 28.

known contribution to rural political economy, but in the early 1930s, as New Dealers looked to the agrarians and the more-practical Country Life movement for inspiration, their ambitions stretched beyond supporting crop prices. The New Deal's first hundred days saw not only the adoption of a farm support program, but money in the National Industrial Recovery Act for a program to speed the resettlement of rural America.³³

During the 1930s the federal government oversaw construction of some one hundred planned communities designed to make rural life sustainable and to bring city folk to the countryside. The programs, housed first in the Department of the Interior and the Federal Emergency Relief Administration, and after 1935, in the Department of Agriculture, rested on elaborate theories about rural development. Bureaucrats understood that farming alone could not sustain the sizeable population they hoped to lure out of the nation's cities. It made little sense to bring more farmers into a market already flooded with surplus crops. In any case, reformers hoped to return sub-marginal farmland to pasture in the public domain. Land retirement posed problems of its own, creating a rootless rural population that might drift toward cities. To avoid the dual problems of surplus crops raised by urbanites who had just taken to the land and lengthening unemployment lines (and increasing radicalism) in cities swamped by displaced farmers, bureaucrats borrowed from the Country Life Movement a vision of rural industry and modernization.³⁴

Farms would come to depend on rural factories, which would be made more humane by their attachments to the soil. M.L. Wilson, a Montana professor of agriculture who headed the Department of the Interior's Subsistence Homestead Division, emerged as the leading proponent

³³ William Johnson, "Rural Rehabilitation in the New Deal: The Ropesville Project," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 79 (1976): 279; M.L. Wilson, "Decentralization of Industry in the New Deal," *Social Forces* 13 (1934-1935): 593.

³⁴ Conkin, *Tomorrow a New World*, 7, 76-82, 113; Richard Kirkendall, *Social Scientists and Farm Politics in the Age of Roosevelt* (Columbia: Missouri University Press, 1966), 94-95; Wilson, "Decentralization of Industry in the New Deal," 596.

of this dispersed industrial development. Wilson proposed several varieties of planned communities, ranging from garden commuter suburbs to farming operations located on good land to towns that blended farming with part-time industrial employment. Wilson imagined towns with spacious lawns and an acre or two for each family to grow their own fruits and vegetables. Factory work would be available, but working hours would be short, affording residents plenty of spare time to “experience some of the enjoyment which comes from working with nature.”³⁵ Along with that enjoyment, the part-time factory workers would benefit from a more healthful diet, grow much of their own food as a cushion against bouts of unemployment, look forward to an old age on their mini-homestead, and “utilize their increasing leisure time in more uplifting and more cultural activities.”³⁶

Wilson’s ideal town was more dream than reality, and with good reason. The Subsistence Homestead Program spent only a part of the money allotted to it building communities, mostly in the South. By the end of the 1930s, Wilson and his political and intellectual allies found themselves on the outer edges of power as others in the Roosevelt administration edged away from plans to make the world anew. These programs and the ideas that underlay them were more romantic efforts at turning back the clock than they were realistic responses to crisis in an increasingly industrial and urban economy. Only under the sway of ideological commitment to anti-urbanism was it possible to imagine that solutions to the current crisis lay in sending farm children back from the cities. Moreover, it is hard to see how simultaneously increasing farm production and decreasing the urban need for food could prompt the growth necessary to revive the industrial economy. But the fervency of the belief matters more than its validity here. In the valorization of rural life and work that informed federal policy lay the seeds of government

³⁵ Wilson, “Decentralization of Industry in the New Deal,” 598.

³⁶ Wilson, “Decentralization of Industry in the New Deal,” 598. See also Conkin, *Tomorrow a New World*, 98; Kirkendall, *Social Scientists and Farm Politics in the Age of Roosevelt*, 23.

efforts to empower rural areas and check the power of cities. This was not precisely the vision of Oregon farmers who sought political recognition of their labor. The bureaucrats were more concerned with creating an ideal middle landscape than they were with elevating farmers. For their part, Oregon farmers of the nineteenth century had not much trusted government and would have recoiled (as did many contemporary farmers) from the bureaucratic vision of resettlement. But there was some commonality in the pro-rural and anti-urban nineteenth- and twentieth-century visions. Those pro-rural assumptions found their ways into other federal programs, particularly the Tennessee Valley Authority.³⁷

Congress created the TVA in May 1933 to bring economic development to one of the poorest regions in the country. Like the Northwest, the Tennessee Valley produced raw materials, and lacked the economic resilience and high wages that refining and manufacturing might have provided. Congress charged the Tennessee Valley Authority's three-person board with duties ranging from flood control to power development and economic uplift. The TVA's first board of directors was composed of Arthur Morgan, Harcourt Morgan, and David Lilienthal. While Lilienthal spent much of his energy defending the TVA's public power, the other two directors worked on building a middle landscape. The two feuded over the TVA's direction, but each shared assumptions about rural life with M.L. Wilson and other New Deal reformers. Arthur Morgan saw the authority's primary goal as land improvement and retirement, and thought that decentralized industry could provide employment to workers dislocated by government evictions. Harcourt Morgan was less willing to disrupt farming, but saw similar value in decentralized industry, particularly if it processed or preserved agricultural products. The TVA gave a prominent public face to ideas about rural development and the connection

³⁷ On the middle landscape archetype, see Leo Marx, *The Machine in the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964).

between decentralized industry and the health of the agricultural economy that pervaded New Deal policy.³⁸

The Tennessee Valley, where one government dam already stood, was the New Deal's great experiment in regional planning. Federal planners in the Northwest and the academics whom they consulted looked to the Tennessee Valley Authority for inspiration and shared the social vision of its directors. They saw projects like Bonneville Dam as part of a plan for a more stable economy that balanced urban power with rural development. Rich Portlanders and their allies in state government saw the structure rising on a dry patch in the middle of a surging river as a boon to heavy industry and to their city's role in the region. But the state power that made the dam possible grew along with ideas and assumptions antithetical to the boosters' dreams. The strongest currents of New Deal thought regarded the gap between rural and urban incomes as the country's chief economic and social woe, hoped to revitalize rural areas with better land use and increased population, and saw decentralized industry as the key to accomplishing these goals. A long tradition of anti-urbanism and Jeffersonian veneration of middle landscapes added volume to these currents. Portland boosters thought of Bonneville Dam as their structure in their river, but it was at least as much buffeted by the ideas of the New Deal as the waters of the Columbia.

NEW DEAL PLANNING IN THE NORTHWEST

New Deal planning began in the Pacific Northwest with the appointment of Marshall Dana as advisor to the Public Works Administration. Dana was born in Ohio. He worked on newspapers there and in West Virginia and Missouri before coming to Oregon in 1909. In Oregon he served as editor of Portland's daily *Oregon Journal*. He developed a reputation as a conservationist "who could bring tears to a squirrel's eyes when talking about the charred

³⁸ Phillips, *This Land, This Nation*, 80-107.

aftermath of a forest fire.”³⁹ Dana won election in 1932 as the first president of the National Reclamation Association. He also served as the regional chairman of the Public Works Administration. Dana was charged with bringing planners from Washington, Oregon, and Idaho into discussions about how best to coordinate federal projects that affected more than one state. Dana and his colleagues developed plans for the Northwest and for the electricity from Bonneville Dam that won them allies in the Grange and among urban New Dealers. Their plans put them at loggerheads with the Portland Chamber of Commerce, most state and city officials, and Portland’s business community.

Marshall Dana and his cadre of academics and federal bureaucrats met informally until the National Industrial Recovery Act provided funds for the creation of the Pacific Northwest Regional Planning Commission. The commission added Montana to its purview, along with Oregon, Washington, and Idaho. It oversaw a boom in planning activities as each state developed a planning commission and cities followed suit. The regional planning commission set up an office in Portland under Dana. Roy Bessey, a Brooklyn-born engineer and World War I veteran with government experience dating back to the digging of the Panama Canal, provided the planning commission’s technical expertise. It held its first planning conference in Portland in 1934, choosing other cities in subsequent years. The conferences attracted bureaucrats from state and federal agencies, Chamber of Commerce representatives, academics, and a handful of independent engineers. Though the regional planning commission had Portland offices and a Portland chair, Washington was quicker than any of the surrounding states to fund its planning activities and contribute to regional planning. Oregonians were reluctant to commit money to

³⁹ “Late Editor Known for Conservation Efforts,” *Oregonian*, 25 June 1966, 15.

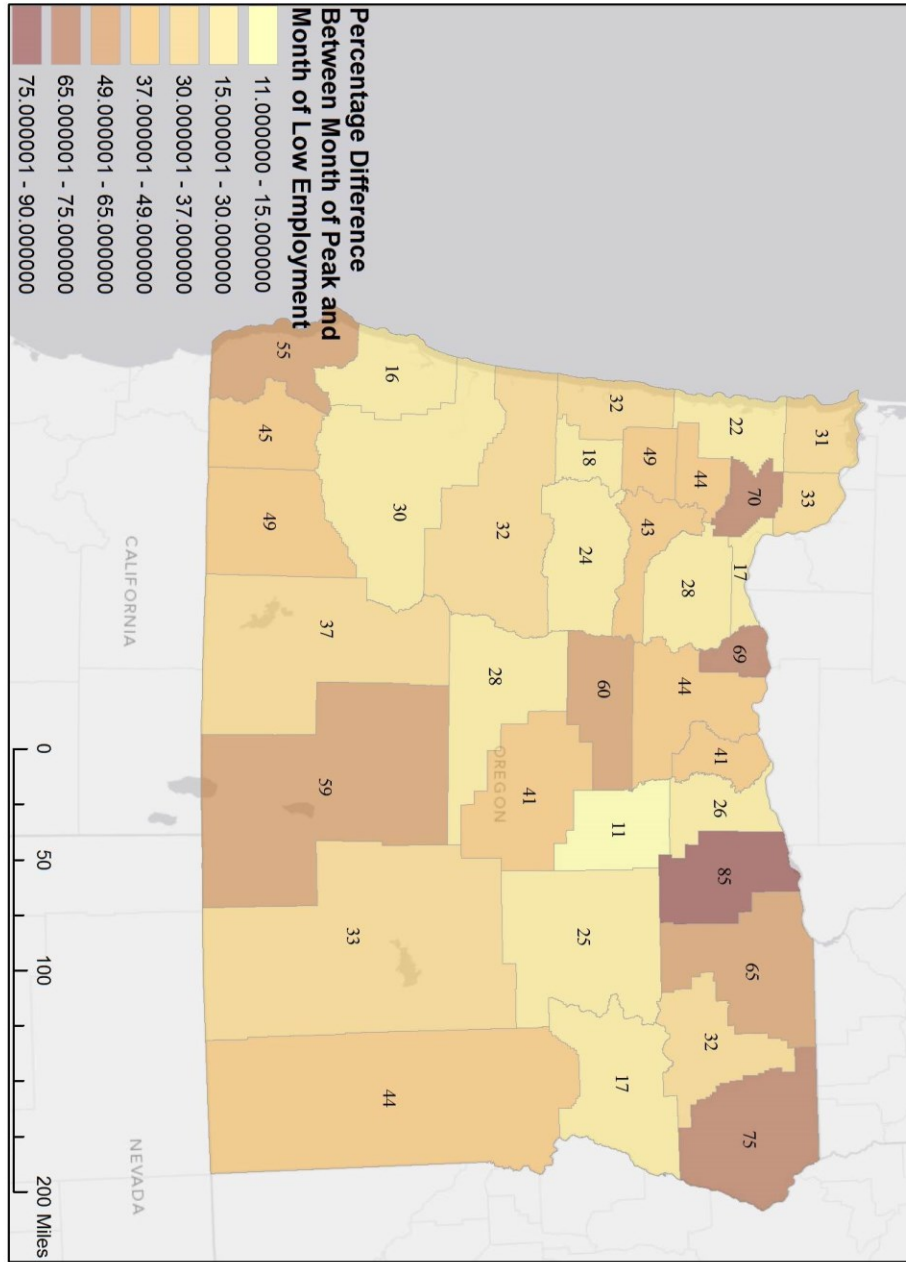
planning and when Oregon set up a planning board it tended merely to represent the electrical dreams of the Chamber of Commerce.⁴⁰

Dana, Bessey, and the academics and bureaucrats they worked with hoped to use electricity from the Columbia River to change what they saw as an exploitative regional economy. The four northwest states exported an average of \$123 million a year more than they imported during the 1930s. The trade balance was positive only because the region exported timber. Its manufacturing economy was weak. The Northwest shipped in \$222 million a year more in manufactured goods than it sent out. Transportation costs and financial services also pulled money outside the region. Most of the exports balancing this drain were forest and farm products. In Oregon, forest products made up 53.6% of the state's exports beyond the Pacific Northwest, with farm and animal products making up 28.3% and 13.3%, respectively. Fully 95% of the state's exports relied directly on what planners increasingly regarded as finite resources. The resource-dependent economy forced seasonal layoffs on roughly one-third of Oregon workers. As Figure Two shows, the seasonal rhythms of the economy hit some counties particularly hard. The Pacific Northwest Regional Planning Commission sought solutions to the problems of extractive industry, while contending that the Northwest would have to diversify its economy and build manufacturing capacity.⁴¹

⁴⁰ "Panama Canal, BPA Planning Figure Dies," *Oregonian*, 29 July 1980, D6; Richard Lowitt, *The New Deal and the West* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1984, 1993), xiv; David Coe, "Realms of Nature, Spheres of Interest: Environmental Policy in the Pacific Northwest, 1932-1952" (PhD diss. Stanford University, 1993), 7; Robbins, *Landscapes of Promise*, 274, 277; *Capitol Who's Who for Oregon*; Vogel "The Columbia River's Region: Politics, Place, and Environment in the Pacific Northwest, 1933-Present," 26-97; Dick, "Visions of Abundance," 164; Norwood, *Columbia River Power for the People*, 55; Roy Bessey, "Planning and the Conference," in *Proceedings of the First Pacific Northwest Regional Planning Conference* (Portland, OR: Pacific Northwest Regional Planning Commission, 1934), 19; Charles Thomas, "In Behalf of the State of Oregon," in *Proceedings of the First Pacific Northwest Regional Planning Conference* (Portland, OR: Pacific Northwest Regional Planning Commission, 1934), 25.

⁴¹ Roy Bessey, *The External Trade of the Pacific Northwest* (Portland, OR: Pacific Northwest Regional Planning Commission, 1942), 1, 10, 67-68; Oregon State Planning Board, *A Study of Industrial Employment in Oregon* (Salem: State of Oregon, 1938).

Figure Two: Seasonal Unemployment in Oregon⁴²



⁴² Data from Oregon State Planning Board, *A Study of Industrial Employment in Oregon* (Salem: State of Oregon, 1938), 20.

A moribund national housing market drove demand for lumber down during the 1930s, but even as mills stood idle, planners looked ahead to a time when lowland private timber supplies would run out. They may have had the image of Portland's lodging house district in mind when they predicted increasing social dislocation as timber jobs became harder to find and the move to higher and snowier elevations lengthened the period of winter unemployment. They also foresaw economic catastrophe as parts of the economy dependent on timber shrunk. The problems were decades old. Foresters believed that owners of private land were trapped in a vicious cycle they attributed to the high property taxes charged on valuable timber stands. The foresters contended that tax bills led timber owners to log fast, flooding the market, and reducing their profits. Smaller profits in a flooded market drove other owners to default on their property taxes, driving up the tax rate on those still paying, which, in turn, caused further overproduction. Foresters may have overstated the importance of property taxes, which mattered less than the cost of capital, but few owners left trees standing for long or took precautions against fire or insect damage. Losses due to logging, fire, and disease amounted to 18.5 billion board feet a year in 1929, dramatically outpacing the estimated 4 billion board feet a year of estimated growth in accessible timberland. With some luck and plans to replace old growth with quicker-growing young stands, planners hoped to increase the growth rate, but it was unlikely to match the rate of loss.⁴³

⁴³ C.J. Buck, "Economic and Social Significance of Sustained Yield Forest Management," in *Proceedings of the Third Pacific Northwest Regional Planning Conference* (Portland, OR: Pacific Northwest Regional Planning Commission, 1936), 51-52; Thomas Munger, "Problems of Forest Land Ownership and Use," in *Proceedings of the First Pacific Northwest Regional Planning Conference* (Portland, OR: Pacific Northwest Regional Planning Commission, 1934), 66; Pacific Northwest Regional Planning Commission, *Pacific Northwest Forest Resources: Problems and Program for Conservation and Utilization* (Portland, OR: Pacific Northwest Regional Planning Commission, 1937), 2-3. For mill closures, see Lowitt, *The New Deal and the West*, 138-140; Carlos Schwantes, *The Pacific Northwest: An Interpretive History* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1989, 1996), 383. For the costs of credit, see Richard White, *Land Use, Environment, and Social Change: The Shaping of Island County, Washington* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1980, 1992), 101-104.

Timber on public lands did not seem to offer a solution to the waning supplies on private land. As a Pacific Northwest Regional Planning Commission report put it, “much of its industrial value is questionable on account of relative quality and inaccessibility.”⁴⁴ Within a few decades, planners expected the problem to move beyond unstable employment to affect other areas of the economy. Timber products accounted for two-thirds of the region’s freight. What little manufacturing existed in the Northwest mostly supplied logging and milling equipment. Planners predicted that as timber supplies waned, regional banks would be hit by losses, as would producers of food and clothing. Mill towns would lose population. Farmers would lose their local market. A tax crisis would wrack towns that struggled to pay fixed infrastructure costs. Better land use, tax reform, and more intensive management were necessary, but planners contended that the best way to insulate the Northwest against such a downturn would be to develop industries that had a high ratio of labor costs to material costs. The region had to stop bleeding timber.⁴⁵

Problems in the timber industry made industrial development important, but the needs of farmers shaped the planners’ ideas about the form that new development should take. Farmers in the Northwest had seen their incomes fall along with national agricultural prices, and planners saw the situation in the Northwest as especially dire. The region’s low population meant that much of what its farmers produced competed against falling commodity prices in world markets. There were also environmental problems to contend with, as years of intensive cultivation

⁴⁴ Pacific Northwest Regional Planning Commission, *Pacific Northwest Forest Resources*, 15.

⁴⁵ Pacific Northwest Regional Planning Commission, “Outline: Seasonality in Washington-Oregon Industries,” Pacific Northwest Regional Planning Commission, RG 187, National Archives and Records Administration Seattle, Box 115, Folder Seasonality; Roy Bessey, “The Economic Assets, Possibilities and Problems of the Pacific Northwest,” in *Proceedings of the Third Pacific Northwest Regional Planning Conference* (Portland, OR: Pacific Northwest Regional Planning Commission, 1936), 14; C.J. Buck, “Forest and Industrial Planning,” in *Proceedings of the First Pacific Northwest Regional Planning Conference* (Portland, OR: Pacific Northwest Regional Planning Commission, 1934), 81; Northwest Regional Council, *Men and Resources: A Study of Economic Opportunity in the Pacific Northwest* (Portland, OR: Northwest Regional Council, 1941), 29; Pacific Northwest Planning Commission, *Pacific Northwest Forest Resources*, 19-20, 150-151.

contributed to erosion on much of the region's farm land. The influx of Dust Bowl migrants made the shortage of good farmland especially pressing. Between 1930 and 1937, Oregon officials estimated that 115,000 migrants had entered the state. More than half went to cities. Many of the migrants had farming experience, but skipped over the state's rural areas because they could not find farms. Even when migrants did find soil to till, their Midwestern eye for land quality often drew them to cut-over land. The land was well-watered, but its nutrients had been hauled out in felled trees, and cut-over land was ill-suited for crop production.⁴⁶

Dana, Bessey, and most participants in the Northwest Regional Planning Commission hoped dams would solve these problems. Some of the benefits would be incidental to power development, and would accrue to Northwest farmers regardless of the routes that transmission lines from Bonneville Dam took or the rates that were charged for power from the lines. A minority of the state's Bonneville Commission, composed of John Lewis, a lawyer and engineer who promoted public power in the legislature; George Joseph, a public power advocate who would run for governor; and James Hazlett, a state senator from Hood River, saw improved navigation as the dam's primary benefit to the region. Farmers would incur fewer costs in exporting their wheat crop. There was talk of the Columbia becoming a series of slack-water pools, extending to the Canadian border.⁴⁷

Other benefits depended on electricity running to rural areas. Electricity could make a litany of farm tasks easier. Pumps could be run without refueling. Refrigerators could keep

⁴⁶ The outlook for wheat farmers was especially bad because between half and two-thirds of the market for Northwest wheat was overseas. Bessey, "The Economic Assets, Possibilities and Problems of the Pacific Northwest," 14; Lowitt, *The New Deal and the West*, 138-140; Charles McKinley, "Five Years of Planning in the Pacific Northwest," in *Proceedings of the Fifth Pacific Northwest Regional Planning Conference* (Portland, OR: Pacific Northwest Regional Planning Commission, 1939), 19-20; White, "Poor Men on Poor Lands," 115-116.

⁴⁷ John Lewis, James Hazlett and George Joseph, "Minority Report: Market for Bonneville Power," in *Report of the Bonneville Commission on Matters Relating to Bonneville Power Development* (Salem: State of Oregon, 1934), 42; Multnomah Civic Club, *The Development of Portland and the Entire Northwest through Transmission and Distribution of Bonneville Power* (Portland, OR: Multnomah Civic Club, 1936), inside cover.

produce fresh. Other schemes were more ambitious. Planners envisioned a network of twenty factories spread across the region that would manufacture fertilizer for worn-out farm land. The production would rely on nearby mineral sources and would be ideally suited to power output varying with river flow because equipment could be stopped and started with little loss of efficiency. Electricity would power irrigation pumps to water fields from the plains of eastern Washington to the Willamette Valley. Planners also dreamed of using power to revolutionize the kind of agriculture that Northwest farmers practiced. The minority report of Oregon's Bonneville Commission contended that electricity could be used to heat soil in greenhouses and to dry fruits and vegetables. Planners looked ahead to a new agricultural age, more efficient and carefully planned than the present, that would promise prosperity to farmers and the cities they supported. Here, in new form, was the nineteenth-century idea that farms supported the city. In this thinking, farms deserved political support, in part, because cities would only prosper if farmers did. Marshall Dana mused that with modern farming techniques and the application of electricity to agricultural problems, the region's population would swell, and Portland would "pass beyond the one million mark."⁴⁸

Population was not an idle concern for Dana and other planners. The economic development that would offset the region's reliance on thinning forests and worn out farms depended on population growth. Franklin Roosevelt told an audience of 5,000 people at a 1934 speech at Bonneville that the federal government was spending money in the Northwest far out of proportion to its population because it was expected to accommodate many more people. Increased population would build a local market for farm produce so that farmers could raise

⁴⁸ Nye, *Electrifying America*, 293; Lockley and Dana, "More Power to You", 70, 77, 95; H.K. Benson, "Power in the Chemical Industries," in *Proceedings of the Third Pacific Northwest Regional Planning Conference* (Portland, OR: Pacific Northwest Regional Planning Commission, 1936), 88; Lewis, "Minority Report: Market for Bonneville Power," 40; Roy Bessey to Marshall Dana, 25 March 1935, Pacific Northwest Regional Planning Commission, RG 187, National Archives and Records Administration Seattle, Box 31, Folder Planning Willamette Valley.

diverse crops for a stable market, rather than relying on wheat and fruit for export. The 1930s' low birth rates meant that the population growth that planners thought was necessary for the region would depend on the enticement of the Northwest's quality of life. The region had to offer modern conveniences to attract participants in a rural economy. Power lines would draw people from outside the region to electrified farms and to homes with electric heat.⁴⁹

Population would also provide a market for the manufacture of industrial goods that participants in the Pacific Northwest Regional Planning conferences saw as the best way of weathering the impending timber crash. In making this argument, Marshall Dana, Roy Bessey, and their allies embraced pro-consumption economic assumptions that would become a part of the late New Deal. The trick to economic development, they contended, was not increasing production, but providing markets. These markets would consist of rural producers. The planners found allies among the minority of the state legislature's Bonneville Commission. The commission's minority report made this view clear: if life in the region were comfortable enough, consumers would flock to the region and "industry will naturally follow population."⁵⁰ Other planners agreed. As H.V. Carpenter, the Dean of Engineering at Washington State College, put it the same year, the Northwest's thinly spread population put a damper on economic growth. "The little manufacturer here who manufactures some specialty has little chance for success," he wrote. "As we begin to fill in that void, the little fellow will begin to

⁴⁹ Dick, "Visions of Abundance," 142; Pacific Northwest Regional Planning Commission, *Preliminary Statement Regional Development Plan* (Portland, OR: Pacific Northwest Regional Planning Commission, 1940), 239; E.F. Banker, "In Behalf of the State of Washington," in *Proceedings of the First Pacific Northwest Regional Planning Conference* (Portland, OR: Pacific Northwest Regional Planning Commission, 1934), 24; Blair Stewart, "Population Trends in the Pacific Northwest," in *Proceedings of the Third Pacific Northwest Regional Planning Conference* (Portland, OR: Pacific Northwest Regional Planning Commission, 1936), 73. In federal expenditures per capita, Oregon ranked tenth in the nation, Washington ranked thirteenth, Idaho ranked fifth, and Montana ranked second. Schwantes, *The Pacific Northwest*, 386.

⁵⁰ Lewis, "Minority Report: Market for Bonneville Power," 25.

succeed and we may come somewhere nearer to the ultimate proportion of industry to agriculture here in the Northwest which would make us a real going concern,” Carpenter continued.⁵¹

Five years later, when Lewis Mumford prepared a report for the Pacific Northwest Regional Planning Commission, he sounded a similar note. The challenge of regional development, Mumford argued, was not in attracting new industries, but in ensuring the purchasing power of people in the region so there would be a market for industrial products. Mumford went on to propose a planning authority for the Columbia that would spread development into greenbelt towns and build new communities for people moving into the region, rather than allowing population and factories to concentrate at Portland. To planners who thought the region’s environmental problems and economic instability grew out of its reliance on timber and farming practices that ruined the land, industry was necessary to insulate the economy against the shock of looming crises. Proper industry would produce for nearby markets more than for export beyond the region, so it could not precede markets for its products. It would have to follow on the heels of population growth. And population growth meant more farmers. Planners regarded decentralized development in the hinterland as the best way to grow the region’s population, while also providing employment to farmers and timber workers laid off during the winter. They adapted the New Deal’s ideas about rural development to fit the Pacific Northwest. In so doing, they allowed ideology to cloud their vision at least as much as M.L. Wilson and his colleagues in the Department of the Interior had.⁵²

Only people enthralled with the virtues of rural life and the centrality of farms to an economy could believe that it would be possible to increase farm purchasing power by increased sales to a local market made up of more (part-time) farmers. Planners in the Tennessee Valley

⁵¹ H.V. Carpenter, “Power Development and Marketing,” 62.

⁵² Mumford, *Regional Planning in the Pacific Northwest*, 6, 16-18. See also White, *The Organic Machine*, 65-69.

pointed to over-worked land and sought to reduce the number of farmers and to rehabilitate the land. Their vision for the South depended on dislocation. Planners saw the Northwest differently. Here was a region full of fertile land, yet unfarmed, that needed only water from dams to make fields blossom and electricity to make a life on the farm attractive. Disaffected urbanites could move to this land, improving their own lives and the economy, but also justifying federal expenditures out of proportion to the Northwest's present population. In effect, the planners imagined an economy of farmers selling food to workers in rural factories who also grew food. (Exports might play a role, but the local market was considered more stable.) Somehow these farmers would make enough money to buy stuff made in factories by workers jettisoned from the shrinking timber industry, who would also grow food. Federal bureaucrats asked few of the sacrifices from Oregon farmers that they asked of farmers in the South. And in return, they offered electricity. It was a great deal, if improbable. Nineteenth-century Grangers would have appreciated the plan's focus on the farming economy. They would also have welcomed the population growth that the planners envisioned. The Grangers would likely have balked at the idea that they should grow food largely for consumption by other farmers, though. They had, after all, recognized that the Northwest economy could not grow turned in on itself.

In spite of its practical limitations, the farm-based and decentralized economy proved an intoxicating idea. Lewis Mumford was not alone in calling for decentralized industrial development in line with the developments imagined by M.L. Wilson and Rexford Tugwell. One engineer developed an elaborate plan to use power from Bonneville Dam to convert Columbia River water to hydrogen, which could then be piped to the region's rural communities more efficiently than electricity could be transferred by wire (and had the advantage that it could be stored for later use). The result, he predicted, would be a new population of ten million people,

six million of whom would work in industry. “The more quickly these ten million people can be put upon a self-sustaining basis the sooner will the confidence of the whole Nation be restored,” he concluded.⁵³ With less imagination, but a more realistic chance of making his vision a reality, Franklin Roosevelt warned that the region’s big cities “could grow unhealthily at the expense of all the smaller communities of which they form logical centers. Their healthiest growth actually depends on a simultaneous growth of every smaller community within a radius of a hundred miles.”⁵⁴ Richard Neuberger, who would later represent Oregon in the Senate, but spent much of the 1930s championing the New Deal in newspapers and magazines, imagined a future rich in new industry that would be spread across the land. New factories, he wrote, “will not be clustered like pup tents around the massive dam. They will be spread out in dozens of small communities.”⁵⁵

Marshall Dana and the planners he organized thought there were virtues to spreading the benefits of power throughout the region. There were also risks to allowing it to concentrate near the dam. Bonneville Dam straddled the Columbia as it cut some eighty miles through a gorge in the Cascades. Dozens of streams fell hundreds of feet over sheer basalt cliffs within a stone’s throw of the dam. Portland promoters began selling sightseeing trips up the gorge in the 1880s. In the 1910s Portlanders had supported the construction of a scenic highway, modeled after the road around Lake Geneva, and had purchased land for parks to provide destinations and waysides for motorists. In the 1920s the Portland Chamber of Commerce promoted the Columbia River Gorge as one of Portland’s chief attractions. The chamber’s view of the gorge changed abruptly in the early 1930s, when industrial sites near the dam became the key to boosters’ plans

⁵³ Farley Clark to Marshall Dana, 2 April 1936, Pacific Northwest Regional Planning Commission Records, RG 187, National Archives and Records Administration Seattle, Box 48, Folder Power Production.

⁵⁴ Quoted in Neuberger, *Our Promised Land*, 120.

⁵⁵ Neuberger, *Our Promised Land*, 119.

for Portland's growth. Portland promoters anticipated that factories would line the river's banks as it coursed between the cliffs and the waterfalls.⁵⁶

PLANNING AND THE ETHIC OF PLACE

The Pacific Northwest Regional Planning Commission responded to the prospect of factories in the gorge by articulating an ethic of place. Commission members worried that industrial development in the Columbia River Gorge would spoil a landscape worth more for its potential to attract tourists than for its value as industrial land. Roy Bessey argued that “the Gorge, as a recreational and scenic area, has distinctly commercial values” that contributed to what he claimed was a \$100 million industry.⁵⁷ A consultant to the State of Oregon speculated that an economy relying on tourism would be more equitable than one based on big industry. He wrote to Marshall Dana that money from tourism “will largely go to our farmers and workers, and will enable Oregon to properly support the larger population which we hope to have in future years.”⁵⁸ The Pacific Northwest Regional Planning Commission presented these views in a report on development in the gorge. The report, authored by Portland architect John Yeon, spoke of “the economic values involved in the conservation of scenic and recreational resources” and worried that allowing factories into the gorge would draw population and urban living to a pristine environment, contributing to a view “over slag heaps and iron roofs, and all the

⁵⁶ Carl Abbott, Sy Adler, and Margery Post Abbott, *Planning a New West: The Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area* (Corvallis: Oregon State University Press, 1997), 4-5, 28-32; Lawrence Lipin, *Workers and the Wild: Conservation, Consumerism, and Labor in Oregon, 1910-1930* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2007), 37-42

⁵⁷ Roy Bessey, “Memorandum,” 18 May 1936, Pacific Northwest Regional Planning Commission, RG 187, National Archives and Records Administration Seattle, Box 37, Folder 1936; see also, National Resources Committee, *Regional Planning*, 23.

⁵⁸ A.S. Burrier to Marshall Dana, 14 June 1935, Pacific Northwest Regional Planning Commission Records, RG 187, National Archives and Records Administration Seattle, Box 33, Folder 7650.

miscellaneous jumble required by heavy chemical or metallurgical processing plants.”⁵⁹ The report did not call for factories to be excluded from the Gorge entirely, but proposed a rate structure that would encourage factories to locate farther from the dam and called for design restrictions to minimize factories’ effect on the scenery.

For all their worry about the effects of development near Bonneville, planners and bureaucrats did not give much thought to how the dam itself would affect the river. Fishing was Oregon’s third largest industry in the 1930s, but it fell well behind forestry and agriculture. The Oregon Fish Commission estimated in 1930 that the annual salmon harvest amounted to \$10 million. Some 4,500 Oregonians worked as fishermen in 1930, but part time work and cannery work may have swelled the fishing labor force to as many as 10,000 people. Oregon canneries sold less than \$3 million in fish in 1933, making up only a small portion of the state’s \$174 million industrial economy. Canned fish accounted for a similar portion of Washington’s economy. Jobs in the industry were similar to unstable employment in agriculture and forestry, and incorporated a long period of fall and winter unemployment. Much of the work was concentrated in communities excluded by prejudice from the mainstreams of regional politics. Indians (who were likely not included in the state’s economic estimates) fished at sites in the gorge and European immigrants gravitated toward a commercial fishery at Astoria. Perhaps that is why one student of the industry remarked that “only those directly associated with the salmon fishing and packing industry are aware of its importance ... or comprehend even in a small way the great number of people dependent upon it for a livelihood.”⁶⁰

⁵⁹ Columbia Gorge Committee, *Columbia Gorge: Conservation and Development* (Portland, OR: Pacific Northwest Regional Planning Commission, 1937) 11, 17.

⁶⁰ Elizabeth Wyland, “The Columbia River Fishermen’s Protective Union,” *Commonwealth Review* 12 (January 1931): 382, passim. See also Neuberger, *Our Promised Land*, 200; Northwest Regional Council, *Men and Resources*, 35; Lowitt, *The New Deal and the West*, 158; Census Bureau, *Biennial Census of Manufactures 1933* vol. iii part 1 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1935).

It fell to conservationists and commercial fishermen, not planners, to raise what *Newsweek* referred to as a “protesting clamor.”⁶¹ Native Americans also protested the dam’s effect on their treaty rights to fish at customary locations. Under these pressures, plans for fish passages that were expected to cost less than a million dollars in 1934 grew in ambition and price tag as design and construction moved forward. By 1937 the anticipated price for the fish passages brushed up against \$7 million. The sizeable outlay gave observers a misplaced confidence in the ability of technology to mitigate the dam’s effect on the fishery, leading some to see factories, rather than the dam, as the primary threat to fish. Richard Neuberger wrote that salmon “will never come up the Columbia again if there are new Pittsburghs where the river penetrates the ramparts of the mountains.”⁶² Given the optimism the dam inspired and the relatively small economic and political clout of the fishing industry, those who opposed Portland boosters’ schemes to turn the Gorge into an industrial zone staked their arguments more on tourism than fish. As Samuel Lancaster, who designed the Columbia River Highway, later put it, “the value of this scenic beauty is worth many, many times what the value of the fish is.”⁶³

OREGONIAN RESPONSE TO PLANNING

In 1935 Marshall Dana and Roy Bessey conveyed the thinking of Pacific Northwest Regional Planning Commission to the National Resources Committee, chaired by Secretary of the Interior Harold Ickes. The committee’s report and accompanying statements from the Pacific Northwest Regional Planning Commission, published the next year, reviewed the economic

⁶¹ “Dams and Dollars Broaden the Federal Sovereignty,” *Newsweek*, 11 October 1937, 9.

⁶² Neuberger, *Our Promised Land*, 134.

⁶³ “The Bonneville Project Hearing at Portland, Oregon, March 18, 1938,” BPA Collection, Bonneville Power Administration Library, Box C, Folder BPA 223 1938. James Lichatowich, *Salmon Without Rivers: A History of the Pacific Salmon Crisis* (Washington, DC: Island Press, 1999), 182-183 provides background on state officials’ efforts to enhance design for fish passages. On the optimistic view that dams would not harm fish runs, see Wesley Dick, “When Dams Weren’t Damned: The Public Power Crusade and Visions of the Good Life in the Pacific Northwest in the 1930s,” *Environmental Review* 13 (Autumn/Winter 1989): 113-153.

assumptions underlying New Deal planning in the Northwest as they articulated ideas that would eventually find legislative backing. Power development would promote the decentralization of industry, pushing it out of traditional centers in cities. Development in the Northwest would draw a larger population to the region and boost its economy, but it would also bring consumer abundance in the form of increased buying power and living standards. The report also stressed the need to restrain the political power of cities, saying that local rivalry posed “the greatest menace to effective regional action in the Pacific Northwest.”⁶⁴ Planning could not shape the economy if the benefits of Bonneville flowed chiefly to Portland or power from Grand Coulee went primarily to Spokane. The National Resources Committee contended that “a wise federal policy will insist, therefore, that the benefits of its regional investment shall be spread as widely as is economically possible through the region.”⁶⁵ This outlook pointed to several policy recommendations, each of which contradicted the preferences of Portland boosters. The national committee endorsed the Pacific Northwest Regional Planning Commission’s calls for a federal corporation to manage power sales at Bonneville Dam. The corporation would work closely with planners to shape the region’s economic development. It would not distribute electricity directly to consumers, but would transmit it to wholesale buyers, such as utility companies and industrial plants. The proposed corporation would give preference in sales to utilities serving homes and farms. It would also adopt a uniform rate throughout the region in order to discourage the concentration of industry in the fragile Columbia River Gorge or in power-hungry Portland.⁶⁶

The National Resources Committee’s recommendations that electricity flow away from Portland increased the ire of boosters skeptical of the New Deal. Portland’s boosters and their

⁶⁴ National Resources Committee, *Regional Planning*, ix.

⁶⁵ National Resources Committee, *Regional Planning*, xiii. On the writing of the report, see Vogel, “The Columbia River’s Region,” 102-106.

⁶⁶ National Resources Committee, *Regional Planning*, xix, 10-15.

political allies found the connections they used to win appropriations for the dam were insufficient to secure its electricity for the city. The Portland Chamber of Commerce initially tried to convince Marshall Dana to renege on the Pacific Northwest Regional Planning Commission's recommendation that a new government corporation manage the dam. Chamber of Commerce President Ralph Hamilton wrote to Dana, "certainly the primary concern of you gentlemen and all organizations is to prevent the possibility of Bonneville energy coming into production next year and then lying idle."⁶⁷ When that strategy did not work, city elites reiterated arguments they had developed in response to New Deal planning. Private power companies contended that they did an adequate job of serving rural customers. Pacific Power & Light's agricultural specialist claimed that Oregon and Washington "taken together probably represent the most highly electrified rural area in the world based on farm population per square mile."⁶⁸ Portland General Electric touted its willingness to extend lines to rural customers, even when it was not profitable to do so.⁶⁹

The city's leaders and cooperative state officials also defended their vision of an industrial center. They claimed that the Northwest did not have the resources to supply factories large enough to mar its scenery or diminish the region's standard of living. The Chamber of Commerce, the Portland City Club, and the state contended that consumers could never use much of the dam's power and that consumer spending could not lead to broader economic

⁶⁷ Ralph Hamilton to Marshall Dana, 6 March 1936, Pacific Northwest Regional Planning Commission, RG 187, National Archives and Records Administration Seattle, Box 37, Folder Portland Chamber of Commerce.

⁶⁸ D.B. Leonard, "The Farm Market for Power," in *Proceedings of the Third Pacific Northwest Regional Planning Conference* (Portland, OR: Pacific Northwest Regional Planning Commission, 1936), 83; "The Bonneville Project Hearing at Portland, Oregon, March 18, 1938."

⁶⁹ Pacific Northwest Regional Planning Commission, RG 187, National Archives and Records Administration Seattle, Box 37, Folder Portland Chamber of Commerce; "Rural Electrification Described," *Portland City Club Bulletin*, 9 September 1938, 45.

growth without “priming impetus” from heavy industry.⁷⁰ If an attempt was made to divert power to any but industrial uses or to reserve power for public utilities, the city’s boosters reiterated, the Northwest would lose potential development to dam projects in Canada and Russia where rates were cheaper. Governor Charles Martin retreated from his earlier request that Roosevelt fund construction of power lines in the state in order to advance rural electrification. Now the governor wrote to Dana that “the area proximate to Bonneville dam should not be denied the advantages inherent to proximity.”⁷¹ Martin had been less diplomatic at a public meeting a month earlier, when he threw the National Resources Committee report on the ground, yelling, “to Hell with their report.”⁷² (The remark was hardly Martin’s most extreme that spring. In March he endorsed a plan to euthanize the vast majority of the inmates in the state’s psychiatric hospital in order to shave \$300,000 off the state budget.) Meanwhile, Portland’s friends in the Army Corps of Engineers prepared to install transformers at the dam that were suitable only for stepping up voltage for short distance transmission.⁷³

As Portland boosters and their allies in state government fumed about the threat that New Deal planning posed to their dreams of industrial supremacy, other Oregonians celebrated dispersed electricity’s potential to recast the relationship between city and hinterland. The

⁷⁰ V.B. Stanberry to R.F. Bessey, 6 August 1936, Pacific Northwest Regional Planning Commission Records, RG 187, National Archives and Records Administration Seattle, Box 37, Folder Columbia Basin Report.

⁷¹ Charles Martin to Marshall Dana, 8 June 1936, Pacific Northwest Regional Planning Commission, RG 187, National Archives and Records Administration Seattle, Box 37, Folder Columbia Basin Report.

⁷² Quoted in Vogel “The Columbia River’s Region,” 126.

⁷³ Oregon State Planning Board, *Policies for Obtaining Greatest Benefits from Bonneville Power* (Salem: State of Oregon, 1938), 7; “Progress Report Frowns on Blanket Rate for Bonneville,” *Portland City Club Bulletin*, 22 May 1936, 11; “The Bonneville Project Hearing at Portland, Oregon, March 18, 1938”; Charles Martin to Franklin Roosevelt, 29 April 1935, Pacific Northwest Regional Planning Commission, RG 187, National Archives and Records Administration Seattle, Box 31, Folder Planning Willamette Valley; “Bonneville Report Urges Immediate Legislation,” *Portland City Club Bulletin*, 5 June 1936, 18; Telegram from General Markham to Colonel Robbins, 26 May 1937, Portland Chamber of Commerce Records, Bx 170, University of Oregon Special Collections, Box 15, Folder Bonneville Construction 1937; W.D.B. Dodson to Arthur Farmer, 28 May 1937, Portland Chamber of Commerce Records, Bx 170, University of Oregon Special Collections, Box 15, Folder Bonneville Construction 1937; Charles Carey to Marshall Dana, 14 January 1936, Pacific Northwest Regional Planning Commission, RG 187, National Archives and Records Administration Seattle, Box 37, Folder 1936. On Martin, see Robert Burton, *Democrats of Oregon: The Pattern of Minority Politics, 1900-1956* (Eugene: University of Oregon Press, 1970), 70.

Oregon State Grange had long supported rural electrification and the formation of publicly-owned utilities. In 1930 the Grange had convinced voters to approve a constitutional amendment drafted by Albert Slaughter, a chiropractor and Grange executive committee member. The amendment provided for the formation of People's Utility Districts. In 1932 the Grange expanded its footprint in Oregon utility law, convincing voters to approve another amendment creating a new state hydroelectric commission and authorizing the state to build transmission lines. As Bonneville Dam rose from the river bed, the Grange stepped up its efforts to ensure that the dam's electricity would flow to homes and farms. The Grange pressed the state to exercise its power to build transmission lines. It also sought allies in the labor movement, solidifying connections with the Oregon State Federation of Labor. The Grange's State Master Ray Gill told a labor convention in 1934 that the Grange intended to frustrate those "prominent citizens of our metropolis [who] have stated that they believe power generated at Bonneville should be largely allocated to Portland for industrial purposes." Gill continued, saying, "the people living in what some Portland citizens sneeringly call the 'cow countries' will reap no direct benefit from Bonneville dam" unless the state built transmission lines.⁷⁴ The group's efforts to get the state into the power business failed in the mid-1930s, first in the state legislature and then in a 1934 ballot initiative.⁷⁵

The Grange's public power efforts failed in other ways. Both Oregon and Washington had approved legal structures for the formation of public utilities the same year. Washington's Public Utility District law led to the creation of twenty-nine PUDs by the end of the 1930s, with fifteen in 1935 alone. Oregon, on the other hand, managed to get up and running only four

⁷⁴ "State Master Speaks at Labor Convention," *Oregon Grange Bulletin*, 5 September 1934, 2.

⁷⁵ "Oregon Must Provide Own Transmission Lines," *Oregon State Grange Bulletin*, 5 September 1934, 1; "State Power Bill and State Hydro-Electric Temporary Administrative Board Constitutional Amendment," *Portland City Club Bulletin*, 30 October 1936, 94; Dick, "Visions of Abundance," 193.

PUDs. Washington public power advocates benefited from a long tradition of public efforts to generate and sell electricity, led by successful systems in Seattle and Tacoma. Oregonians could point to fewer successes, though Eugene and smaller cities like Forest Grove had public systems. Oregon proponents of public power also faced legal obstacles of their own making. Albert Slaughter modeled the Grange's power amendment on the state's legal framework for creating districts for irrigation, schools, and fire-fighting. The law that emerged created a cumbersome process for creating PUDs. Those hoping to create a PUD in Oregon first had to collect voter signatures on a petition that they presented to the state's Hydroelectric Commission, which determined whether the project was technically feasible. After receiving approval, the proponents submitted another petition asking for an election to be held. If a majority of voters within the district approved its creation, the district still had to be validated in court. Even after jumping the hurdles necessary to create a district, Oregonians found PUDs difficult to operate. The law constrained them from issuing bonds backed by future revenue, and public power advocates had to hold another election seeking voter approval for general obligation bonds. This left them in a poor bargaining position should they attempt to purchase existing distribution networks. Private utility sellers could demand the full bond issue or ask a price beyond the limit set in the bond election, forcing costly condemnation procedures.⁷⁶

The 1936 National Resources Committee report gave the Grange hope. Grangers welcomed the apparent willingness of the federal government to do what the state would not in building transmission lines to rural areas. The Grange's rhetoric and arguments matched the

⁷⁶ Oregon PUDs were on the coast in Tillamook and Lincoln Counties, and along the Columbia in Columbia and Wasco Counties. Norwood, *Columbia River Power for the People*, 50, 96. There were also a number of cooperatives formed with loans from the Rural Electrification Administration. Everett Davis, "Rural Oregon Lights Up," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 80 (Fall 1979): 323-328. Steven Shufro, "The Failure of the Oregon Public Power Movement" (BA thesis, Reed College, 1966), 33; Emerson Schmidt, "Public Utility Districts for Oregon," *Commonwealth Review* 12 (July 1930): 279; Albert Slaughter, "How to Organize People's Utility Districts," *Oregon Grange Bulletin*, 5 December 1937, 1; "Power Districts: An Emerging Device for Low Cost Electricity," *Yale Law Journal* 60 (1951): 492; Richard Neuberger, "Bonneville," *New Republic*, 25 May 1938, 72.

language of the bureaucrats they aimed to support. The Grange's G.W. Thiessen told a conference on power distribution at the University of Oregon that there were risks to allowing industry to concentrate in cities where it would exploit labor and contribute to the rise of radical politics. Thiessen explained that spreading industrial development throughout the region, as the New Deal planners recommended, was a better use for electricity: "we feel that industrial centers should be kept to a minimum and this power distributed so that the industries can build up in the towns of the surrounding communities where employees will become an asset and a part of the community instead of a liability."⁷⁷ The state's farmers, he explained, wanted an increased population to sell produce to, but preferred stable small town markets to urban markets "where vice, immorality, and Communism thrive."⁷⁸ Thiessen concluded that Portland's Chamber of Commerce and private power interests were on the wrong side of a movement for social change: "the use of electricity has come to a point where it is a social necessity and the time of large profits will soon be a thing of the past."⁷⁹

The Grange cast its positions as anti-urban, but disputes over power distribution and industrial development did not always pit urbanites against rural folk. If some in Portland opposed the planners and claimed Bonneville Dam for city industry, others let it be known that city elites did not speak for them. In the first decades of the twentieth century, Portland neighborhoods on the east side of the Willamette had developed a political outlook that was often hostile to wealthy Chamber of Commerce members. Groups in this political tradition had not always been able to shape city politics or to adequately restrain industrial pollution during the preceding decades, but now federal involvement in the region gave them a way to oppose

⁷⁷ G.W. Thiessen, "The Grange Program for Bonneville Power Distribution," in *University of Oregon Commonwealth Service Series Conference on Distribution of Bonneville Power* (Eugene: University of Oregon, 1937), 39-40

⁷⁸ G.W. Thiessen, "The Grange Program for Bonneville Power Distribution," 39.

⁷⁹ G.W. Thiessen, "The Grange Program for Bonneville Power Distribution," 40; see also G.W. Thiessen, "The Grange Program for Bonneville Power Distribution," *Commonwealth Review* 19 (May 1937): 71-72.

industry in the city. Some Portlanders looked favorably on New Deal planning and mobilized in favor of using the dam's power to advance public power agencies and to enhance consumers' living standards.⁸⁰

Members of the Multnomah Civic Club, whom Chamber of Commerce leaders considered to be “nuts,” agreed with the minority in the state's Bonneville Commission that Portland could not prosper at the expense of the hinterland.⁸¹ They saw a close connection between the success of public utilities and distribution of electricity to the hinterland. The minority of the Bonneville Commission had argued that the primary use for power should be home heating in Portland, and that only a public utility could offer rates low enough to make electric space heating practical. In this scheme, the interests of Portland consumers and hinterland residents coincided. In order to balance Portland's wintertime demand for electricity, it would be necessary to extend power lines into rural areas to provide summertime use running irrigation pumps. The Multnomah Civic Club agreed in a 1936 report dedicated to Franklin Roosevelt. Lead author John Lewis had also helped write the minority report for the Bonneville Commission. He contended in both reports that power should be used to improve directly the quality of life of people in the Northwest. Though it expressed a willingness to sell power to factories, the Multnomah Civic Club was firmly in favor of public distribution of electricity and contended, echoing the nineteenth-century producers, that “it is obvious that Portland cannot prosper unless its adjoining back country is prosperous.”⁸² The Multnomah Civic Club looked

⁸⁰ Johnston, *The Radical Middle Class*.

⁸¹ Arthur Farmer to W.D.B. Dodson, 27 April 1937, Portland Chamber of Commerce Records, Bx 170, University of Oregon Special Collections, Box 15, Folder Bonneville Construction 1937.

⁸² Multnomah Civic Club, *The Development of Portland and the Entire Northwest*, 1.

hopefully toward legislation growing out of the National Resources Committee's recommendations as a boon to public power and dispersed development.⁸³

The Multnomah Civic Club was joined by other radical and progressive Portland groups. The Municipal Progressive Political Club saw the public takeover of Portland electric companies and the development of a regional power agency as part of a broader program that included increased rights for labor and more effective relief programs. Like the Multnomah Civic Club, the Municipal Progressive Political Club saw urban prosperity as depending on a healthy rural economy. Members argued that the federal government should build another dam at The Dalles to cut barge and rail rates by seventy-five percent, saving hinterland farmers some \$10 million a year on freight charges. They were joined in calls for rural solidarity by the Portland section of the Communist Party, which called for public power as part of a "farmer-laborer" platform that also included planks for an enhanced social safety net and better protection of civil liberties.⁸⁴

The Multnomah Civic Club and the Municipal Progressive Political Club wrote arguments that bound city and country together in a quest for public power available for consumer use, but the group that would lead the movement for socially-conscious power planning did more. The Oregon Commonwealth Federation was led by its president Stephenson Smith and its secretary Monroe Sweetland. Smith was a University of Oregon professor. Sweetland was a native Oregonian who had gone to Cornell for law school. He was a socialist before World War II, but would later guide the liberal wing of Oregon's Democratic Party,

⁸³ Lewis, "Minority Report: Market for Bonneville Power," 39-40; Multnomah Civic Club, *The Development of Portland and the Entire Northwest*, 13-15, 24; Multnomah Civic Club, "Franchise of the Northwestern Electric Company," 15 July 1937, Oregon Commonwealth Federation Papers, Bx 33, University of Oregon Special Collections, Box 17, Folder People's Utility Districts.

⁸⁴ Municipal Progressive Political Club, "A Re-Declaration of Independence for the People of Portland," Police Historical/Archival Investigative Files, Accession A2001-074, Portland Archives and Records Center, AF/161702; Portland Section Communist Party, "Voters of Oregon Your Welfare Demands You Act on These Issues," Police Historical/Archival Investigative Files, Accession A2001-074, Portland Archives and Records Center, AF/157466.

opposing Japanese internment and advocating a lowered voting age. Sweetland was active in Oregon politics until a failed 1998 campaign for the state senate.⁸⁵

Stephenson and Sweetland forged an alliance between rural and urban proponents of public power. The organization had grown out of the State Federation of Labor's efforts to create a farm-labor party alternative to the state's conservative Democratic Party. Labor activists and Grange members formed the group in late 1936 and held their first official meeting in April of the following year. Its officers would come to include university professors, representatives from a variety of Congress of Industrial Organizations unions, the Farmer's Union, and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. Grangers, including the state master and the editor of the *Oregon Grange Bulletin*, were active in the organization, but the state organization withheld official recognition in deference to its friends in the State Federation of Labor, who considered the Oregon Commonwealth Federation to be a Communist front. The federation embraced a smorgasbord of political goals aimed at elevating workers and producers, including assuring farmers the cost of production, establishing a one-house state legislature, increasing protections for unions and civil liberties, and embargoing shipments of war materials to fascist nations. Its chief aim in the 1930s, however, was to advocate for public power and the creation of a Columbia Basin Authority.⁸⁶

Electric power provided an ideal platform on which to unite "liberals from farm and city," as an Oregon Commonwealth Federation newsletter put it.⁸⁷ The Commonwealth Federation made arguments similar to those of New Deal planners, tying power management to

⁸⁵ Dave Hogan, "Monroe Sweetland, Prominent Democrat," *Oregonian*, 12 September 2006, B4.

⁸⁶ Richard Neuberger, "Progressive or Red?" *Oregonian*, 13 November 1938, 88; "Federation Elects Heads," *Oregonian*, 11 December 1939, 20; Jill Hopkins Herzig, "The Oregon Commonwealth Federation: The Rise and Decline of a Reform Organization" (MA thesis, University of Oregon, 1963), 8, 11, 13, 33; Dick, "Visions of Abundance," 212-220; Burton, *Democrats of Oregon*, 84-88.

⁸⁷ "OCF Caravan Will Visit Dam on Sunday," *Oregon Commonwealth Federation News*, June 1937, Police Historical/Archival Investigative Files, Accession A2001-074, Portland Archives and Records Center, Accession A2001-074, AF161702.

more than just low consumer prices. The federation explicitly compared a Columbia Basin Authority to the Tennessee Valley Authority, saying, “it means the opening of the vast ‘Inland Empire’ to commerce, the saving of our forests, the preservation of our fertile soil from floods and erosion, the reclamation of our arid lands, the bringing of the comforts of electricity to farms and homes and shops.”⁸⁸

EMPOWERING THE RURAL NORTHWEST

As farmers and Portlanders of radical and progressive stripes defended the agenda of the New Deal planners against Portland elites and state government, Congress considered a slew of proposed laws to shape the region’s electrical grid. Between 1935 and 1938, there were thirty-eight bills introduced to Congress seeking to structure management of the dam. Initial legislation considered the creation of a powerful Columbia Valley Authority, modeled after the Tennessee Valley Authority, which would coordinate development in the region and manage power from Bonneville and Grand Coulee. Oregon’s Senator Charles McNary responded with a bill that would leave management of the dam in the hands of the Army Corps of Engineers, and require the Engineers to charge rates that varied with transmission distance so that Portland would see most of the new development. Unsurprisingly, Washington’s Congressional delegation and eastern Oregon’s Representative Walter Pierce, a fierce advocate for public power, who had ridden the support of the Ku Klux Klan to the governor’s mansion in 1922 before winning election to Congress, objected to the McNary bill. Pierce proposed the creation of an agency,

⁸⁸ Oregon Commonwealth Federation, “Join the Oregon Commonwealth Federation in Supporting the Columbia Basin Authority Bill,” Oregon Commonwealth Federation Records, Bx 33, University of Oregon Special Collections, Box 11, Folder Bonneville Projects 2. The federation reproduced arguments from an earlier advocacy group called the People’s Power League, which had presented democratic control of electricity as a necessary protection against the instability of the region’s resource economy. The People’s Power League had announced in a 1936 flyer that “with timber fast being stripped from our hills, the power of our streams is the last great resource left to the people of our State.” “The People’s Power League,” Police Historical/Archival Investigative Files, Accession A2001-074, Portland Archives and Records Center, AF 16173.

much like the corporation the Pacific Northwest Regional Planning Commission recommended, that would manage the dam's power for the benefit of rural areas and public agencies. In 1937 Franklin Roosevelt brokered a compromise bill that placed the management of the dam and locks with the Army Corps of Engineers and created a temporary government agency to sell the dam's electricity. Roosevelt hoped to create a more permanent and extensive agency later. The bill was introduced in June and passed the House and Senate in July and August.⁸⁹

The Bonneville Project Act charged an administrator under the supervision of the Secretary of the Interior with managing the transmission and sale of the dam's electricity in order to repay the federal treasury for construction costs attributable to power generation (as opposed to flood control or navigation). The law conferred on the administrator the power to set rates and decide whether they would be uniform throughout the transmission area or would vary based on distance from the dam. The law also gave the administrator broad powers to build an agency. He could hire staff and laborers, buy equipment, and build transmission lines. There were, however, significant limits on these discretionary powers. The administrator had to give preference to public bodies and cooperatives in sales of electricity. In order to allow public utilities and cooperatives time to form and to build or buy distribution networks, the administrator also had to reserve for sale to public bodies until the start of 1941 half the power generated at the dam. If

⁸⁹ Michael Blumm, "The Northwest's Hydroelectric Heritage: Prologue to the Pacific Northwest Electric Power Planning and Conservation Act," *Washington Law Review* 58 (1982-1983): 198; Charles McKinley, *Uncle Sam in the Pacific Northwest: Federal Management of Natural Resources in the Columbia River Valley* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1952), 157-160; Paul Pitzer, *Grand Coulee: Harnessing a Dream* (Pullman: Washington State University, 1994), 235-236; Funigiello, *Toward a National Power Policy*, 175-190; Voeltz, "Genesis and Development of a Regional Power Agency in the Pacific Northwest," 68; Vogel, "The Columbia River's Region," 106-108, 129-134; Dick, "Visions of Abundance," 174-179.

private companies wanted to buy more than half the dam's power, the administrator would have to let water spill through the dam rather than selling them more than their maximum share.⁹⁰

Franklin Roosevelt chose J.D. Ross, the long-time manager of Seattle City Light, to head the new agency. Ross was an outspoken advocate of public power who had earned a reputation for defeating business interests in Seattle. He was also a personal friend of Roosevelt's and had served on the Securities and Exchange Commission. Portland business leaders were appalled that what was to be their city's main advantage over the Puget Sound would rest in the hands of a Seattleite immersed in the New Deal planning concepts that the city's boosters had dedicated so much energy to opposing. The Chamber of Commerce tried to scuttle Ross's appointment with a letter-writing campaign to the state's Congressional delegation, but their efforts failed in the face of widespread enthusiasm for Ross in rural Oregon and among Portland progressives. The chamber's manager complained that newspapers gave as much attention to supporters of public power as to business interests. By October, the Chamber of Commerce's lobbyist, W.D.B. Dodson, had to apologize to Senator McNary for misleading him about the extent of Portland opposition to Ross. Dodson wrote that the city was buffeted by "so many cross currents in respect to the Bonneville administrator's job that it has kept me almost completely bewildered."⁹¹

Ross got the job and surrounded himself with Grange leaders and other public power advocates as he began work on a transmission network and a rate schedule. He planned to connect the dam to Portland, but also to run a transmission line to Grand Coulee, forming the

⁹⁰ "An Act to Authorize the Completion, Maintenance, and Operation of Bonneville Project for Navigation, and for Other Purposes," in *First Annual Report of the Bonneville Administrator* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1939, 65-69. The bill was codified as 16 USC 832.

⁹¹ W.D.B. Dodson to Charles McNary, 8 October 1937, Portland Chamber of Commerce Records, Bx 170, University of Oregon Special Collections, Box 15, Folder Bonneville Administrator Correspondence. See also, W.R. May to W.D.B. Dodson, 20 August 1937, Portland Chamber of Commerce Records, Bx 170, University of Oregon Special Collections, Box 15, Folder Bonneville Administrator. For Ross's biography, see Dick, "Visions of Abundance," 224-302.

backbone of a regional power grid. The tasks were overwhelming. Transmission lines went up on a shoestring budget only after Ross made a personal request to the president for funds. Planning proved just as difficult as construction. Information on the likely demand from public customers was hard to come by, and the BPA lacked the technical staff necessary to find the information it needed to plan the distribution network. The BPA would later write well-researched reports surveying dispersed industrial sites, but in the late 1930s it turned to public utility districts, municipal power companies, and cooperatives, some of which were not yet in operation, for a sense of the direction that power planning should take. Ross hoped that the public utilities would join together into what he and others called a public power chamber of commerce, promoting decentralized industry across the Northwest. The public utilities, for their part, were unable to provide much information, and looked to Ross for leadership.⁹²

Lacking information on which to base his rate schedule, Ross planned a political tour through the rural Northwest, inviting, as Richard Neuberger put it, “ranchers, cowpunchers, trappers, and sheepherders to come down out of the hinterlands and give him their views on the power question.”⁹³ Ross held public hearings in a series of small towns, before returning to Portland to present the city with a hinterland consensus in favor of uniform rates and a preference for powering homes and farms before factories. Farmers took advantage of the new agency’s solicitousness, turning out to extol the importance of electricity to their lives and to decry Portland’s industrial ambitions. Electricity thrilled a public ownership proponent from

⁹² W.D.B. Dodson to B.B. Arnell, 25 January 1938, Portland Chamber of Commerce Records, Bx 170, University of Oregon Special Collections, Box 15, Folder Bonneville Administration Staff. Much of BPA’s early staff was on loan from Seattle City Light. Others were activists such as Carl Thompson, who had been President of the Public Ownership League of America and a member of the Oregon Commonwealth Federation. See Norwood, *Columbia River Power for the People*, 106; Carl Thompson to Monroe Sweetland, 4 January 1940, Oregon Commonwealth Federation Records, Bx 33, University of Oregon Special Collections, Box 11, Folder Bonneville Projects; Herzig, “The Oregon Commonwealth Federation,” 64. On the challenges Ross faced, see “Ross to Bonneville,” *Business Week*, 16 October 1937, 58. For the BPA’s staff and relationship with public utilities, see Moment, “Memoirs of an Economic Missionary,” 52.

⁹³ Neuberger, “Bonneville,” 72.

Idaho's Payette Valley. "It is better than all the magic we have ever read about," he told the Boise hearing as he imagined a relationship between city and hinterland that drew resources from near Portland out into farms. The power, he suggested, would revolutionize life in rural areas: "a child can move a lever and those thousands of horsepower that were at Bonneville an instant ago become present now to do our work."⁹⁴ Opinions in the hinterland were not uniform. Idaho irrigation projects depended on selling incidental power at high rates in order to offer farmers good prices on water, so many in Idaho wanted transmission lines to stop short of the state line. Salem and Walla Walla residents, though, shared the Payette Valley farmer's enthusiasm.⁹⁵

When Ross's hearings arrived in Portland, he found private power company representatives who opposed uniform rates, but he also heard from Grange activists who saw the rate hearings as an opportunity to hitch their ambitions to the assumptions of New Deal planning. G.W. Thiessen, who served on the Grange's Executive Committee and had also been president of the Farmer-Labor Association of Oregon, made the case for "building up the community as a whole, in place of one gigantic industrial center."⁹⁶ He went on to say that the region would develop more quickly if the hinterland developed ahead of the city. Thiessen's fellow Grange member and former Socialist candidate for governor, Albert Streiff, was even more direct in framing advocacy for uniform rates as opposition to urban dominance. Streiff echoed his nineteenth-century Grange predecessors when he told Ross's hearing that "Portland is essentially a trading center. It makes its profit, not on producing wealth, but on the exchange of products

⁹⁴ "Bonneville Project Conference," Boise, Idaho, 14 March 1938, BPA Collection, Bonneville Power Administration Library, Box C, Folder BPA 223 1938.

⁹⁵ "Bonneville Project Conference," Boise, Idaho, 14 March 1938"; "The Bonneville Project Hearing at Salem, Oregon, March 10, 1938," BPA Collection, Bonneville Power Administration Library, Box C, Folder BPA 223 1938; "The Bonneville Project Hearing at Walla Walla, Washington, March 16, 1938," BPA Collection, Bonneville Power Administration Library, Box C, Folder BPA 223 1938.

⁹⁶ "The Bonneville Project Hearing at Portland, Oregon, March 18, 1938.

that have already been produced.”⁹⁷ The actual producers, farmers and small manufacturers in the hinterland, Streiff said, had contributed to the building of the dam and now deserved to reap its benefits.⁹⁸

A lot had changed since farmers in the 1870s and 1880s made similar arguments. They now worked with a federal apparatus that operated more autonomously and more jealously guarded the boundaries between private and public interest than had the nineteenth-century state legislature. The farmers got their wish. Ross proposed and the Federal Power Commission approved a rate that favored rural areas. Power within fifteen miles of the dam would cost \$14.50 per kilowatt year to purchasers who provided their own transmission lines to the bus bar, the part of a dam that conducts electrical current into a transmission system. Power carried on government lines would sell to any wholesale purchaser within the agency’s service area for \$17.50. The rates were a gift to rural Oregon, but the flat rates were higher than Portland boosters had hoped that city businesses would pay. *Business Week* reported that competing cities uttered “a big sigh of relief” when they saw the new rates.⁹⁹

The agency elaborated on its reasons for setting the rate in meetings with the city’s businessmen. John Fisher, the agency’s general counsel, told Portland’s East Side Commercial Club that the Bonneville Project opposed selling the dam’s power to a single aluminum company. It found little merit in Portland businessmen’s dreams of “a great Pittsburgh here on the banks of the Willamette, with giant smokestacks poised against the hills, and thundering steel plants spewing forth tons of molten metal.” The government had not invested tens of millions of

⁹⁷ “The Bonneville Project Hearing at Portland, Oregon, March 18, 1938.”

⁹⁸ “Albert Streiff,” *Oregonian*, 7 May 1971, 12.

⁹⁹ The rates were higher than Portland boosters hoped even though the BPA used favorable accounting that held the administrator responsible for recouping only \$11.7 million of the anticipated \$68.6 million cost of the dam. “Bonneville Blues,” *Business Week*, 9 July 1938, 41. For the Federal Power Commission’s accounting of the dam’s costs, see Leon Fuquay, “In re Bonneville Project, Columbia River, Oregon-Washington,” 8 February 1938, in *First Annual Report of the Bonneville Administrator* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1939), 69-70; “U.S. Power Policy,” *Business Week*, 6 November 1937, 49-50.

dollars to benefit “a great monopoly,” he noted in language that resonated with more than sixty years of Grange agitation. Instead, he explained, the power would promote the region’s agricultural economy by developing the hinterland. Fisher’s explanation of power policy evoked New Deal planners and the Grangers and Portland progressives who supported them. “Cheap power will mean irrigation of hundreds of thousands of acres, a new haven for refugees from the Dust Bowl of the Middle West,” Fisher dreamed. He went on to elaborate that “the settling of extended regions east of the Cascades will mean prosperity to all of the cities of the Northwest; it will mean happiness to innumerable families.” Some power would go to industry, perhaps fifteen or twenty percent of the dam’s output, but even this would serve the region’s agricultural interests. Fisher mentioned talks with a chemical plant interested in making sodium chlorate, a weed-killer.¹⁰⁰

J.D. Ross died in 1939. The Northwestern University professor and Illinois power regulator who succeeded him was more bureaucrat than radical. Paul Raver would sign the industrial customers, especially those who produced aluminum, that Ross eschewed, but he would not jettison the agency’s reform tradition. Raver’s agency advertised official neutrality on questions of public power, but worked behind the scenes to advance the reform agendas reminiscent of the Pacific Northwest Regional Planning Commission. Samuel Moment, a newly-minted PhD who joined the renamed Bonneville Power Administration as an economic planner in 1940, remembered that he and his colleagues were on the front lines of “the political and economic war between the public power program of Bonneville and the private ownership of the investor-owned utilities.”¹⁰¹ As Oregon held elections to set up public utilities in Portland and a

¹⁰⁰ John Fischer, “What Bonneville Power Can Mean to the Business Men of the Northwest,” 12 January 1939, Portland Chamber of Commerce Records, Bx 170, University of Oregon Special Collections, Box 15, Folder Bonneville Administration Staff.

¹⁰¹ Samuel Moment, “Memoirs of an Economic Missionary,” 66.

variety of small towns, Bonneville employees stayed late, working off the clock to print leaflets in favor of public power on the agency's mimeograph machines. Their activities drew accusations that they had violated the Hatch Act, and public power opponents claimed that employees had distributed more than 80,000 pamphlets urging the creation of public utilities. Portland's progressives and Oregon's farmers had new allies, paid by the federal government, in their effort to restrain the city's corporations.¹⁰²

With Northwest public utilities slow to establish themselves and water flowing over the dam without turning generators, Raver agreed in 1939 to sell a third of the dam's power to the Aluminum Company of America, a leading figure in an oligopolistic industry. Even then, the agency continued to tout the importance of agriculture and decentralized industry to the region's economy. "Irrigation will provide new farm employment which will require additional employment in service industries," Raver told a Portland radio audience in 1940 before going on to evoke the New Deal bureaucrats' dreams for a regional market born out of increased farm population. That development, he said, "will increase our local markets and allow us to make more of the things we now buy elsewhere—clothing, household equipment, food products, machinery."¹⁰³ Cheap power would also attract big aluminum and chemical plants, but these would sprout smaller processing industries spread across the region. Raver's predictions were more than rhetoric.

The Bonneville Power Administration worked to ensure that population and power would flow to the hinterland. The agency's second annual report carved the Northwest into sub-regions that cut across state boundaries and predicted different population growth for each over the

¹⁰² Samuel Moment, "Memoirs of an Economic Missionary," 66-70; "Public Power Loses," *Business Week*, 25 May 1940, 36-37.

¹⁰³ "Paul Raver, "The Public Power Program of the Bonneville Power Administration," 1 May 1940, Oregon Commonwealth Federation Papers, Bx 33, University of Oregon Special Collections, Box 17, Folder People's Utility Districts.

coming decade, as figure three shows. The area from Portland to the coast would grow by twenty percent, along with the Willamette Valley and Central Oregon. The report predicted a fifteen percent population increase in the Puget Sound, Montana, Idaho, and eastern Oregon, but the most dramatic changes would be in the Yakima Valley and around the Grand Coulee, where the 1950 population would be as much as fifty percent higher than the 1939 population. To encourage population growth and provide new residents with power, the agency planned to disperse massive amounts of power across the region. Figure Four shows that an area stretching from Grays Harbor to the southern Willamette Valley could expect to receive substantial additional electricity, but the biggest changes would be in eastern Washington and western Montana.¹⁰⁴

Samuel Moment was among a cadre of planners who worked on site surveys for industrial plants, to provide industry with concrete information about plant locations outside of Portland's orbit. With war imminent, these site surveys served defense purposes, providing plans to squirrel factories away from concentrated air raid targets. As the Pacific Northwest Regional Planning Commission described them, they also carried forward the New Deal dream of widespread regional development. They were "pointed towards the widest practicable decentralization of industrial activity in the interests of a well-distributed regional growth, and the maintenance of good living conditions for workers."¹⁰⁵ The regional planners thought that within a decade the region's industries would be much more widely scattered. More than fifty

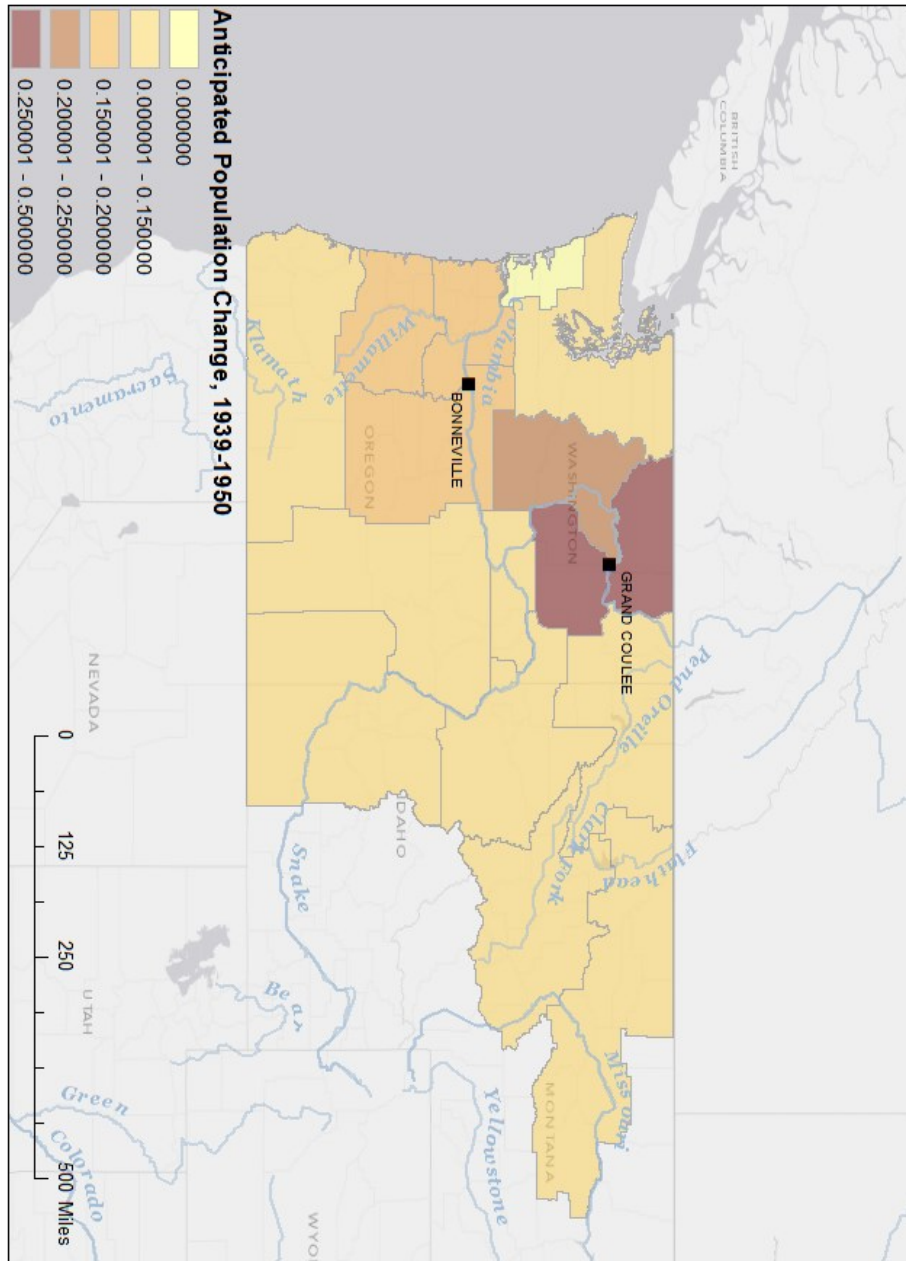
¹⁰⁴ Bonneville Power Administration, *Second Annual Report of the Administrator of the Bonneville Power Administration* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1940), 25.

¹⁰⁵ Pacific Northwest Regional Planning Commission, *Preliminary Statement Regional Development Plan* (Portland, OR: Pacific Northwest Regional Planning Commission, 1940), 256.

years later, Moment had reason to remember of the early 1940s that “we were part of the Roosevelt spirit.”¹⁰⁶

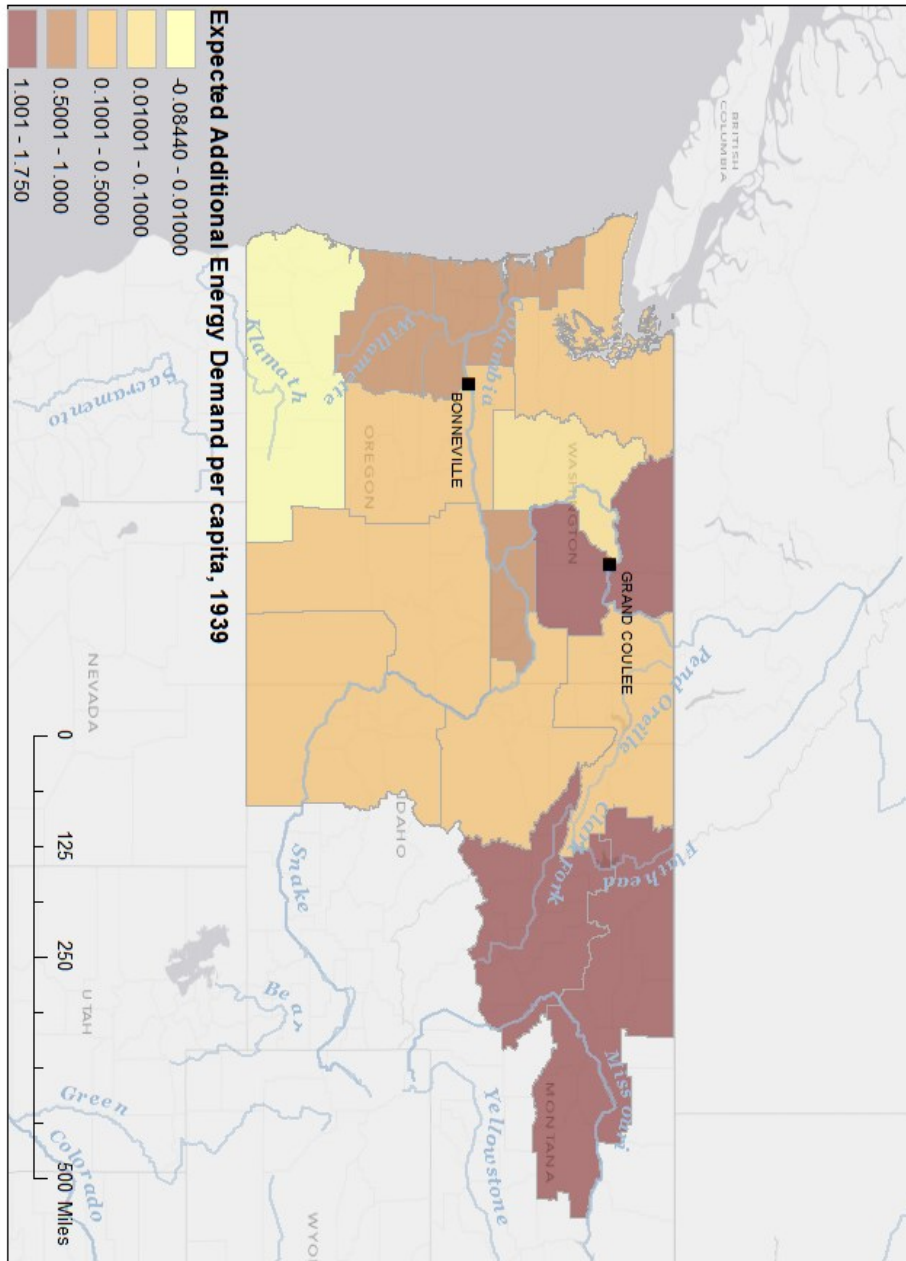
¹⁰⁶ Samuel Moment, “Memoirs of an Economic Missionary,” 77. On site surveys, see McKinley, *Uncle Sam in the Pacific Northwest*, 180; Eve Vogel, “The Columbia River’s Region,” 155-157.

Figure Two: BPA Population Projections¹⁰⁷



¹⁰⁷ Data from Bonneville Power Administration, *Second Annual Report*, 25. This figure includes an adjustment to correct an arithmetic mistake in the original data table.

Figure Four: BPA Power Demand Projections¹⁰⁸



¹⁰⁸ Data from Bonneville Power Administration, *Second Annual Report*, 25.

Bonneville Power Administration attitudes toward industrial development changed during the war, but did not show the abandonment of reform that Portland boosters hoped to see. Within seven months of Pearl Harbor, two-thirds of the Northwest's productive capacity had been thrown into the war effort. By 1942, war industries and federal facilities drew ninety-two percent of the system's electricity. So heavy were the demands of war industry that in 1942 Bonneville had to interrupt power it had agreed to sell to a Portland private utility. Radio stations went off the air, elevators stopped, and trolleys ground to a halt. By 1944, the Aluminum Company of America's Vancouver plant used more electricity than the entire city of Portland. Wartime demands, particularly in aluminum smelting, gave the new temporary agency a calling and assurance of longevity and brought some prosperity to the Northwest. *The Saturday Evening Post* noted in 1943 that aluminum was a "magic word in Oregon and Washington these days."¹⁰⁹

Encouraged by its wartime success, the Bonneville Power Administration began to use industrial development, more than agriculture and irrigation, to justify its policies. In 1941 Raver proclaimed the Northwest the next Pittsburgh of light metals. Raver was unsuccessful in efforts to attract rolling and extrusion plants to the Northwest, and few of the industries associated with aluminum smelting developed in the region. Even at their peaks, the Northwest's World War II aluminum plants employed only 6,000 people, a number out of proportion to the amount of power they drew. Still, the agency worked to shape the aluminum industry's imprint on the Northwest, pushing the industry to conform to the planners' social agenda. Under agency pressure, the Defense Plant Corporation built several smaller aluminum plants across the Northwest, rather than one large plant near Portland. The Bonneville Power Administration's

¹⁰⁹ Frank Taylor, "The White Elephant Comes into Its Own," *Saturday Evening Post*, 5 June 1943, 26. See also National Resources Planning Board, *Pacific Northwest Region: Industrial Development* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1942), vi; Norwood, *Columbia River Power for the People*, 124; Blumm, "The Northwest's Hydroelectric Heritage," 203; "The Undermining of Public Power," *New Republic*, 17 May 1954, 5; "City Services Disrupted by Power Breaks," *Oregonian*, 27 November 1942, 1; MacColl, *The Growth of a City*, 558.

economic planners hoped that the construction of several plants would allow smaller companies to challenge the Aluminum Company of America's near-monopoly after the war. As the agency's chief planner, Ivan Bloch, would later recall, "the Portland business community felt we rascals at BPA were spoiling its game to locate everything in Portland."¹¹⁰

In later decades the agency would still offer incentive rates to irrigation projects, noting that "agriculture is an industry vital to our region," but it would also encourage the development of industries that New Deal planners had looked at skeptically.¹¹¹ Much of the agency's postwar capacity would go to industrial plants, such as aluminum smelters, that bought massive blocks of power directly from the BPA. The agency's position on public power, however, would see fewer changes. As the agency warmed to industrial power sales it increasingly found its reform mission in close adherence to the Bonneville Project Act's public preference clause. Its continued skepticism of private power led the agency to disfavor Portland (and Oregon) development, in spite of some concessions to the city's dreams for big industrial plants. Figures Five and Six show that the majority of the system's power would flow away from Portland to the Puget Sound and Spokane and also to rural parts of the Northwest. The power flowed in channels carved not just by the Bonneville staff's commitment to power reform and obligation to heed the Bonneville Project Act's preference for public customers. Its currents were also shaped by differences in the public utility movement in each state. The Oregon People's Utility District amendment had restrained the state's public power activists relative to their Washington counterparts. Without a series of successes to draw on, the movement was susceptible to negative advertising by the private utility companies. The movement reached a critical juncture in 1940. Private utility rate-

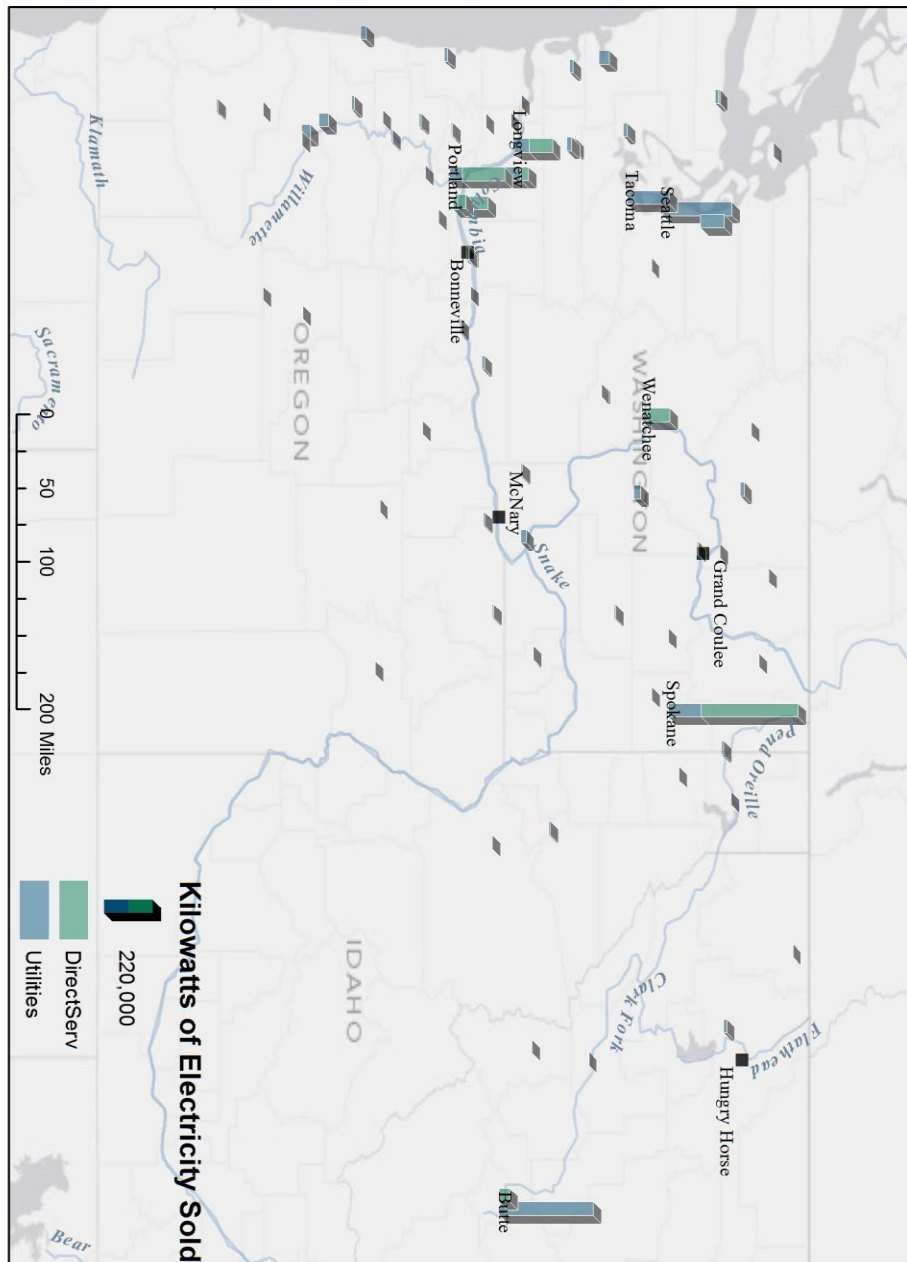
¹¹⁰ Quoted in MacColl, *The Growth of a City*, 564. See also Paul Raver to David Simpson, 30 June 1944, Portland Chamber of Commerce Records, Bx 170, University of Oregon Special Collections, Box 15, Folder Bonneville Dam 1942-1945; McKinley, *Uncle Sam in the Pacific Northwest*, 183; Taylor, "The White Elephant Comes into Its Own," 27; Moment, "Memoirs of an Economic Missionary"; Harry Stein, "Fighting for Aluminum," 6.

¹¹¹ Bonneville Power Administration, *Bonneville Power Administration Annual Report 1985* (Portland, OR: BPA, 1985), 4.

cuts and a massive industry advertising campaign that confused the distinction between public and private power by reminding voters that investor-owned utilities were publicly regulated preceded the May election. Voters rejected most of the ten PUDs on the ballot across the state, including one in Portland. Oregon's public power movement would not again be as strong as it was in the 1930s and the hoped-for public customers for Bonneville power were few and far between. The failures meant that most power sold on a preferential basis went to Washington, rather than Oregon.¹¹²

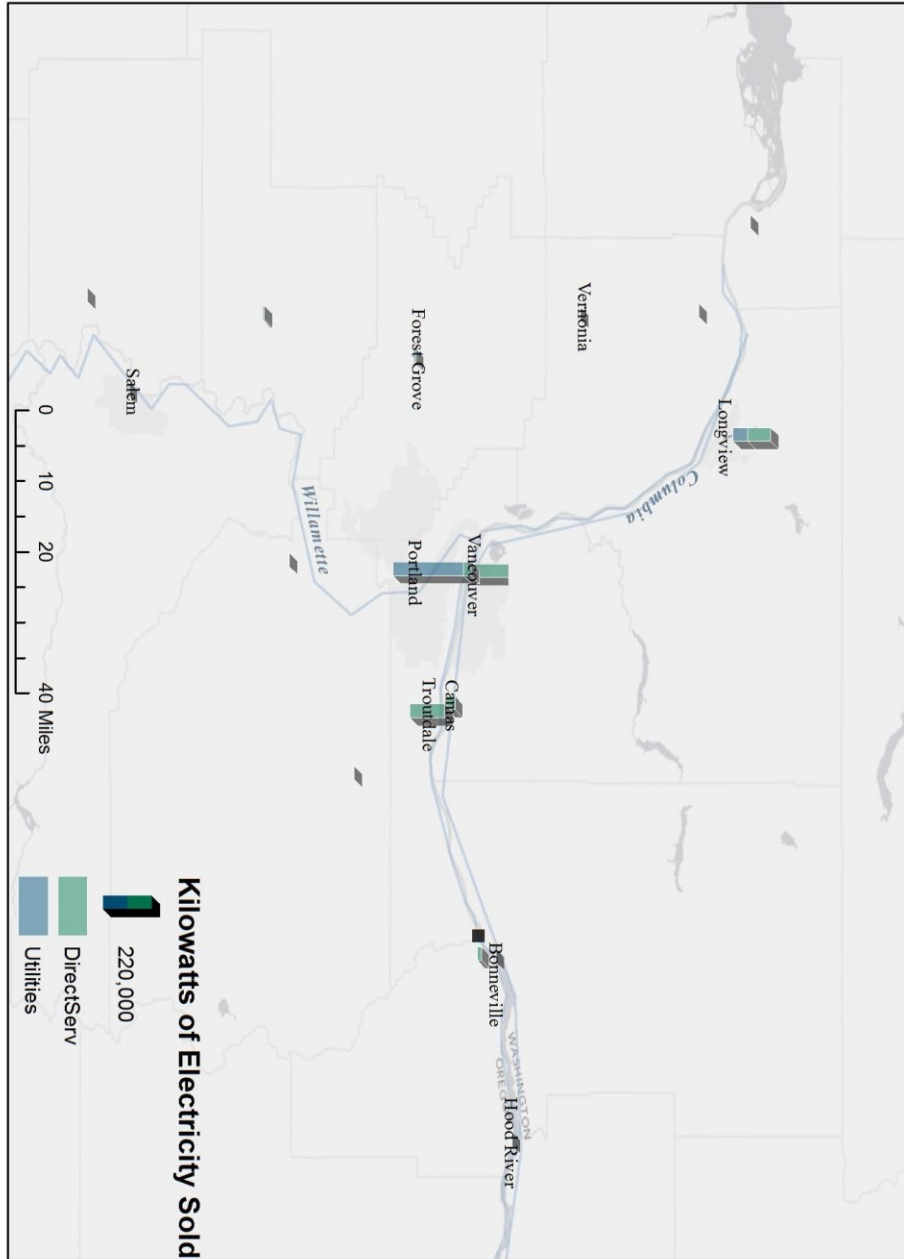
¹¹² Portland General Electric Company, *1940 Annual Report* (Portland, OR: PGE, 1940), 3.

Figure Five: Bonneville Power Sales to Utilities and Direct Service Industries in 1953¹¹³



¹¹³ Data from Bonneville Power Administration, “Bonneville Power Administration Generation and Sales Statistics Calendar Year 1953,” BPA Collection, Bonneville Power Administration Library.

Figure Six: Detail of Power Sales in Portland Area in 1953



As Oregon voters rejected public power, the Bonneville Power Administration began working with private utilities in the state. In the early 1940s Portland General Electric became one of the agency's biggest customers, but the agency would only sell it uninterruptible (or firm) power on day-long contracts, leaving the private utility vulnerable to drops in river flow. In 1942 Bonneville oversaw the creation of the Northwest Power Pool, uniting the generating capacity of the region's private and public utilities in an effort to spread power loads across streams with different periods of peak flow. The cooperation indicated some acquiescence in the persistence of private power. Still, Bonneville Power Administration staff continued to work behind the scenes in favor of public power. In 1946 when Northwestern Electric and Pacific Power & Light, Portland's two smaller power companies, sought to merge, the agency filed an unsuccessful objection with the Federal Power Commission, arguing that Pacific Power & Light's system was "honeycombed" with public agencies nearly ready to distribute power.¹¹⁴ The Bonneville Power Administration's staff also reassured and continued to coordinate strategy with public power advocates. Power manager William Dittmer wrote to the superintendent of Seattle City Light in 1945 that the agency's contracts with Portland General Electric required the private company to sell its equipment to any public body organized within its service area.¹¹⁵

This was a hard line that the Bonneville Power Administration found increasingly easy to hold. Portland General Electric came to depend on the BPA even as the agency developed other customers and grew less reliant on the company. PGE initially purchased interruptible (or non-firm) power from the Bonneville Power Administration on one-year contracts. Access to federal power from the Columbia River allowed the company to delay investment in new generating

¹¹⁴ "Brief of the Bonneville Power Administrator in the matter of Northwestern Electric Company and Pacific Power & Light Company," Lee, Dorothy McCullough Subject Files, Portland City Archives and Records Center, AF/71986.

¹¹⁵ Paul Raver to Chesley Brazil, 21 February 1945, Paul Raver Papers, UP 708, University of Oregon Special Collections, Box 6, Folder Confidential Memoranda; William Dittmer to E.R. Hoffman, 17 January 1945, Paul Raver Papers, UP 708, University of Oregon Special Collections, Box 6, Folder Confidential Memoranda.

equipment. Because the Columbia River's period of peak flow did not coincide with high water months on the Clackamas River, where PGE owned dams, it relied on the BPA to avoid firing its hog-fuel-burning steam plant on the east side of the Willamette, just across from downtown. The plant burned a mountain of saw dust and other waste from the city's lumber mills (promotional pictures showed a local hiking club scaling it), likely contributing to the downtown area's growing air pollution problem. So when the plant sat idle Portlanders benefited from lower power rates and cleaner air. As the power supply tightened during and after World War II and low river flow forced the company to fire its steam plant, Portland General Electric worried about its access to Columbia River power. True to its promise to public power advocates, Bonneville Power Administration only offered PGE long-term power sale contracts with provision that PGE sell generating and transmission equipment to any public utility created within its boundaries at a price and time determined by the Bonneville Power Administration. The private utility struck that provision, which it claimed was illegal, from the contract, and then tried to get a court to hold the Bonneville Power Administration to the altered contract. The company and the agency were embroiled in legal conflict through the end of World War II. Only in 1947 did the agency settle into the policy of selling firm power to private utilities.¹¹⁶

Public power advocates continued to lobby for the creation of a more powerful regional Columbia Valley Administration, but their efforts failed before increasing skepticism of reform that allowed conservative opponents inside and outside of the region to paint the creation of multipurpose government bureaucracies as a threat to liberty and constitutional government. Portland General Electric hailed the 1952 election of Dwight Eisenhower to the presidency as “a

¹¹⁶ Portland General Electric, *Power for Victory: 1941 Annual Report* (Portland, OR: PGE, 1941); Portland General Electric, *Firepower on the Fighting Front: 1942 Annual Report* (Portland, PGE, 1942); Portland General Electric, *Year of Victory: 1945 Annual Report* (Portland, OR: PGE, 1945); “BPA Will Sign Contracts with Five Major Utilities,” *Oregonian*, 28 August 1947, 7.

return to constitutional government by law rather than government by men.”¹¹⁷ Eisenhower and his administration did not disappoint the company. He named Douglas McKay, a former Republican governor of Oregon, as his Secretary of the Interior. McKay wasted little time in putting an end to Bonneville’s efforts at regional planning, sending an undersecretary to announce the changed policy at Portland’s Arlington Club, where Governor Charles Martin and officers from the Corps of Engineers had hobnobbed with power company presidents. In 1953 McKay directed the Bonneville Power Administration to sign twenty-year contracts with several private companies, including Portland General Electric. The government also encouraged private companies to build new dams, laying what it hoped would be the groundwork for increased cooperation between the Bonneville Power Administration and utilities.¹¹⁸

Eisenhower’s election spelled changes for the Bonneville Power Administration and its connections to New Deal planning. Yet policies made in the 1930s continued to shape the region’s development. In 1950 the Bonneville Power Administration earned more of its revenue from public utilities than from private companies. Their share would only grow. Five years later, even after BPA approved twenty-year contracts with private utilities and Portland General Electric drew 78% of its power from the Columbia Rivers system, BPA sold 37% more electricity to public utilities than to private companies. Of its total power sales, 73% went to Washington, with its strong public utility system, while Oregon drew less than 25% of the system’s power.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁷ Portland General Electric Company, *Annual Report 1952* (Portland, OR: PGE, 1952), frontispiece.

¹¹⁸ Voeltz, “Genesis and Development of a Regional Power Agency in the Pacific Northwest,” 71.

¹¹⁹ Public utilities contracted for more electricity in 1950 and paid for what they agreed to buy, but private utilities still drew more from the system because they were able to maintain a higher load factor. Bonneville Power Administration, *Report on the Columbia River Power System 1950* (Portland, OR: Bonneville Power Administration, 1950); Bonneville Power Administration, *Report U.S. Columbia River Power System 1955* (Portland, OR: Bonneville Power Administration, 1955); “Washington Forces Power Issue,” *Oregonian*, 10 April 1954, 10.

The uneven distribution of benefits between Oregon and Washington contributed to economic stultification south of the Columbia. Oregon's smaller economy grew at roughly the same rate as Washington's, but Washington diversified its manufacturing base in ways that Oregon did not. In 1933, when dam construction began, lumber accounted for roughly one-third of the value that industry added to each state's economy. In 1947 lumber still made up one third of the value added of Washington industry, but had grown to account for more than half of what industry added to the Oregon economy. In 1954 even after Eisenhower's election marked a retreat from the New Deal's power policies, Washington's lumber sector accounted for only 16% of the value that industry added to the economy, while sawmills and loggers represented 44% of the value added in Oregon. Power policy was not alone in shaping the differences. Timber supplies in each state mattered, as did the success Washington Congressmen had in bringing Cold War defense spending to the state. Later public investments in infrastructure and higher education would also make Washington's economy more versatile and less timber-dependent than Oregon's. Still, the failure of Oregon to embrace public power and attract the federal government's electrical largesse did little to diversify the state's economy.¹²⁰

The stakes grew in later decades, even as the policies distributing power remained relatively stable. New dams stretched upstream from Bonneville, reaching into Canada. Each of the new dams added to the system's capacity. An upstream storage treaty between the United States and Canada evened the river's flow, maximizing generation at older dams. The Columbia was as much state project as it was natural river, and with each subsequent development politics mattered more than before. Those politics directed power away from Portland, and with the

¹²⁰ Census Bureau, *United States Census of Manufactures 1954* vol. iii *Area Statistics* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1957), 136-3, 136-7, 146-3, 146-8; Census Bureau, *Biennial Census of Manufactures 1933*; Carl Abbott, *Regional City and Network City: Portland and Seattle in the Twentieth Century*, *Western Historical Quarterly* 23 (August 1992): 293-322.

failure of public power initiatives in Oregon, away from the state as a whole. New Deal power policy aimed at developing public power and rural economies could not bear sole responsibility for the divergence in the economic profiles of Washington and Oregon, but it played a role. Oregon entered the second half of the twentieth century more dependent on natural resource production than Washington. That dependence, a part of Oregon politics since the 1870s, would continue to shape the state.

CHAPTER FOUR

SHAPING THE LAND TO SAVE THE ECONOMY IN THE 1970s

Sometime in 1969, half a continent away from Oregon's mills and mountains, the state's economy began to change. Somebody, probably a trader for a large construction company, bought the first contract on the Chicago Mercantile Exchange for the future delivery of plywood from the Northwest. A month later futures contracts could be had for lumber delivered from the region. The Chicago Mercantile Exchange and its predecessors had been selling futures contracts for more than a century, but trades in the late 1960s and early 1970s were different. The exchange began to market its first non-agricultural futures products, branching out into currency and interest rates futures and reviving a long-dormant market in oil futures. As it developed new products, the volume of trading swelled. This was a brave new financial world demanding explanation. The January 1970 issue of *Forest Industries* relayed the concept to those not familiar with the niceties of wheat grades and frozen pork bellies. "Futures markets are not substitutes for the cash market in plywood," the magazine instructed. Rather, "they offer a way of transferring risk."¹ Fewer than two percent of contracted boxcar loads of plywood or lumber would actually be hooked to trains and carried. Instead, when contracts came due, buyers would arrange with sellers to collect on the difference between the price of the contract and the prevailing market price.²

¹ William White and Vincent Conway, "Futures Trading Can lessen Risk in Plywood Mart," *Forest Industries*, January 1970, 40.

² The contracts specified that lumber could also come from California, Nevada, Alberta, and British Columbia. Contracts for all commodities on the exchange grew from 13.6 million trades in 1970 to 33 million in 1976. William Cronon, *Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West* (New York: Norton, 1992); Craig Pirrong, "Energy Derivatives," in Robert Kolb and James Overdahl, eds., *Financial Derivatives: Pricing and Risk Management* (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2010), 126; Graeme Guthrie, *Real Options in Theory and Practice* (New York:

The pages of the timber industry trade journal brought to Oregon news slowly becoming apparent in other sectors. The world economy was changing. In the late 1960s and 1970s, the global economy abandoned a system of production in rich countries that relied on cooperation among corporations, unions, and the state. In the United States, this system had bolstered consumer-driven economic growth by using redistributive tax policies, government spending, and protection for unions to keep wages high. Manufacturing defined the economy and ever-increasing productivity in that sector kept inflation at bay. As productivity fell off in the 1960s and 1970s, however, the long period of prosperity came to an end. Economic growth flagged, and the regulated systems of high wages and benefits that had supported and also relied on it collapsed. Inflation surged, even as economic growth stagnated. Workers and governments found themselves in a new world, largely created by corporations. It was less stable than the one that preceded it, unmoored from the familiar patterns of an industrial economy.

A century after Oregon farmers inscribed the value of productive labor in Oregon politics, both rural and urban Oregonians met the topsy-turvy economy of the 1970s with a renewed commitment to the value of farm production and forest labor. This chapter argues that both rural folk and urbanites saw protecting production as a way of buttressing the region's economy and quality of life. City and country spoke a common language in the 1970s. Wielding producerism and the ethic of place, Oregonians met threats posed by an increasingly speculative economy that disassociated land values from what it could produce. There were tensions and their efforts were not universally successful, but cooperation between urbanites and rural people yielded the state's most ambitious attempts to shape Oregon's landscape and economy.

Oxford University Press, 2009), 349; Jerry Markham, *A Financial History of the United States*, vol. III, *From the Age of Derivatives to the New Millennium, 1970-2001* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2002), 43.

Expressions of each ideology bore similarities to politics in preceding decades. Producerism still aspired to manage Oregon's connection with the global economy in ways most favorable to rural producers. And the ethic of place still saw political identities and goals as centered around location more than class. The ideologies were also the products of their time, differing from their expression in previous decades in ways beyond producerism's softening of its skepticism of urban allies. The producerism of earlier decades had been forward-looking. Rural people recognized change as inevitable and welcomed it, while trying to ensure that the railroads and dam projects that were its agents served them. In the 1970s, even as producerism mobilized the state in new ways, it was fundamentally conservative, aiming to preserve an idealized past. The ethic of place was also nostalgic, but also increasingly coherent. Its proponents saw themselves as shaping the state for the better more than simply protecting their own neighborhoods.

The stories of two industries reflect this argument. Timber and agriculture intersect in the following narrative when they touch on free trade and land use. Both timber workers and farmers saw threats in distant capital and pursued limited alliances with urban environmentalists who also opposed what they saw as capital's exploitation of the Northwest environment. Yet in the 1970s these stories remained largely separate. Oregon farmers in the 1970s spoke more of their contributions to a broader economy and less of the value of their labor than had farmers in the 1870s. Their changed rhetoric reflected an increasing awareness of the economy as an independent force in society, a sum that could not be broken up neatly into the labor of individuals. It also reflected a changed labor regime in which people who called themselves farmers hired others to work the soil. Timber workers, on the other hand, especially those in unions, spoke of the value of their labor more than their industry's contribution to the state's

economy. Men and women whose livelihoods depended on time cards understood that their industry was no unified whole.

Their strategies for managing the changes that capital inscribed on the landscape differed. Farmers relied on state and county government to protect them from real estate developers and suburban neighbors. The threats they faced were global in origin, but an adequate defense against them could be staged entirely within the state's borders. Timber workers, on the other hand, regarded their chief threat as coming from employers who knew they could move production to new forests when the Northwest's trees were gone, and logged with an eye toward current profits rather than future stability. Timber workers found it hard to gain the ear of state and federal agencies friendly to their employers. There was a global problem with limited local solutions.

Farmers also benefited from closer alliances with urban environmentalists who saw beauty in row crops that they could not see in clear cuts. By allying with urban environmentalists, Oregon farmers found new power. The political alliance with environmentalists that they built on shared support for productive use of land created the nation's first state-wide system of land zoning. The system preserved open space for urban environmentalists and protected land for farmers from suburban encroachment and speculative fluctuations in value. It emerged as one of the state's most powerful interventions in Oregon's economy, shaping the landscape and directing investment. So the decade provided triumphs to farmers, who were really farm owners, that it denied to timber workers.

This is also the story of Oregon's cities and suburbs. It is the story of young men and women, newly graduated from college, who made their professional careers promoting the ethic of place. In 1970s Oregon men received paltry salaries to do environmental lobbying. The men relied on a network of unsalaried women volunteers equally important to the state's

environmental movement, though less visible. The state's environmental movement also relied on urbanites and suburbanites for whom environmentalism was a passion pursued on the margins of other careers, people who moved to the state to attend school or take professional jobs and sought to preserve what they saw as magical about their new home. Portland was still the center of urban Oregon and the seat of its major environmental groups, but the movement was also a product of its suburbs and smaller cities. Yet the suburbanites (often women) who made up the broader United States environmental movement were not the only force behind Oregon's environmental politics. Farmers, loggers, and mill workers were at least as important, and in the pages that follow, they take a leading role. All of this was in the future when the 1970s began with worrying economic changes.

UNSETTLING ECONOMIC CHANGE

Those with access to capital responded to and helped usher in the changing economy in two ways. They poured money into financial instruments newly unleashed from government regulation. And they took advantage of loosened trade regulations and improvements in telecommunications and shipping to move factories away from their traditional locations close to natural resources and markets. In addition to profits from moving factories, vast amounts of money could now be made on financial deals not tied to concrete production. Companies that produced tangible goods and services found more of their profits in financial instruments. Traders in Chicago could profit on fluctuations in lumber prices without risking splinters from actual boards. Places like Chicago, London, and New York with existing professional infrastructure stood to gain in this new economy. In the parlance of geographers, the economic changes reduced the importance of space because fax machines and container shipping made it

possible to produce goods and provide services from anywhere in the world. At the same time, the unique qualities of a particular place became increasingly important to its economic future. Cities competed for jobs in new sectors and for factories now loosed from geographic constraints. Tax credits, favorable regulations, and access to skilled or low-wage workers were their currency. Silicon Valley grew as a technology industry germinated by access to capital and university researchers, educated workers and lax usury laws drew Citibank out of New York City to Sioux Falls, South Dakota, and non-unionized workers attracted manufacturing to the South.³

Oregonians understood that the changing economy affected their state. The first set of changes had to do with developments beyond the state's borders that shaped employment in Oregon. The growth of timber production outside the Northwest threatened the region's timber economy. Weyerhaeuser had been buying land in the South since World War II, but the development of the southern timber industry picked up in the 1970s as people came to see the region as a more productive tree-growing area and a better source of cheap labor than the Northwest. By the middle of the decade, half of the company's landholdings were in the South and it planned the largest plant it had ever built for Columbus, Mississippi. Timber companies also looked abroad with increasing frequency in the 1970s, eyeing rapid timber growth rates and cheap labor in Asia and South America. While Northwestern timber workers faced layoffs,

³ David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Cultural Origins of Change* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell), 294-295; Charles Waldheim and Alan Berger, "Logistics Landscape," *Landscape Journal* 27 (2008): 219-246; Judith Stein, *Pivotal Decade: How the United States Traded Factories for Finance in the Seventies* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010); Jefferson Cowie, *Stayin' Alive: The 1970s and the last Days of the Working Class* (New York: The New Press, 2010); Greta Kippner, *Capitalizing on Crisis: The Political Origins of the Rise of Finance* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011); Daniel Rodgers, *Age of Fracture* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University press, 2011), 8-9, 41-76. On economic changes in specific places, see Margaret O'Mara, *Cities of Knowledge: Cold War Science and the Search for the Next Silicon Valley* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005), 97-141; Louis Hyman, *Debtor Nation: The History of America in Red Ink* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2011), 244-247; Hal Rothman, *Devil's Bargains: Tourism in the Twentieth-Century American West* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1988); William Robbins, *Hard Times in Paradise: Coos Bay, Oregon* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1988, 2006).

Weyerhaeuser's southern employees worked extra shifts. The stable timber economy of the 1950s and 1960s sloughed jobs and production to the South in the 1970s.⁴

The second set of changes could be seen on the state's landscape. Timber companies logged some land with abandon, while managing other land for value not related to lumber. Central Oregon's Brooks-Scanlon company recognized in the 1970s that, as *Forest Industries* put it, "a substantial amount of [its] holdings were better suited for land development than timber management." The timber company spun off a land development business called Brooks Resources. Foresters from the timber company met with real estate developers to determine how to log land to make attractive home sites. The company aimed to leave soil relatively undisturbed, to use natural openings as staging areas for downed trees, to cut stumps short, and to log five or six years ahead of plans to carve land up into real estate subdivisions. As the trade journal put it, "the purpose of development logging, then, is to make the land more attractive to home buyers [rather] than improve it silviculturally."⁵ Development on timberland was still relatively sparse in the early 1970s, but what timber companies dabbled in some farmers embraced wholesale, selling land to developers who built suburban subdivisions.

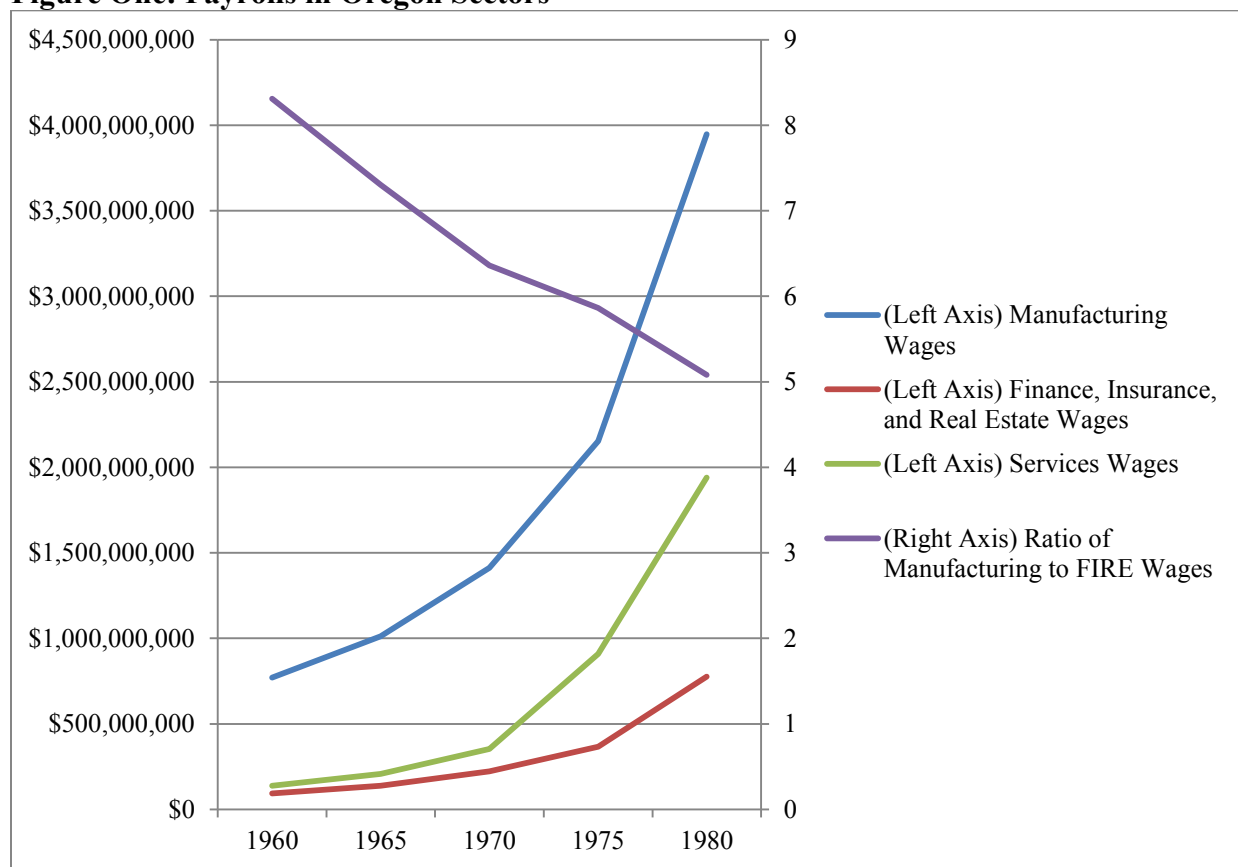
These problems loomed larger in news magazine coverage of them than they did in broader business practices. Employment in wood products during 1970 was less than in 1960, but turned up again during the ensuing decade. And manufacturing continued to dominate Oregon's economy, even as its importance declined relative to finance, insurance, and real estate. Figure One shows that though there was no dramatic sea change, Oregonians had reason to take note. They noted especially that the sales and changed management weakened the connection

⁴ "The Green Boom for Forest Products," *Business Week*, 25 May 1974, 90-96; Robert Hess, "Tropical Hardwood Operations Valuated for Success Factors," *Forest Industries*, October 1970, 36-38; "I Think That I Shall Never See..." *Forbes*, 15 July 1974, 18-21; "Southern Story Told to Region 3 Members," *International Woodworker*, 21 April 1976, 8.

⁵ William Davis, "Expanding Operations Result in New Logging Concept," *Forest Industries*, March 1971, 40.

between land's productive value and its market value, making previously productive land more valuable as residential real estate. Suburban expansion proceeded apace in the late 1960s and early 1970s, driven by industrial growth on the fringes of cities, federal funding for highways, and the echoes of mortgage insurance rules that subsidized construction in racially homogenous neighborhoods. Americans had long worried about suburbs, but in the late 1960s they started to worry about a particular kind of suburb.⁶

Figure One: Payrolls in Oregon Sectors⁷



⁶ Kenneth Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 190ff; Thomas Sugrue, *Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005); Adam Rome, *The Bulldozer in the Countryside: Suburban Sprawl and the Rise of American Environmentalism* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001); O'Mara, *Cities of Knowledge*, 35-36.

⁷ Employment Division, *Oregon Covered Employment and Payrolls by Industry, County, and Month: 1969* (Salem: State of Oregon, 1970); Employment Division, *Oregon Covered Employment and Payrolls by Industry, County, and Month: 1977* (Salem: State of Oregon, 1979); Employment Division, *Oregon Covered Employment and Payrolls by Industry and County: 1980* (Salem: State of Oregon, 1982)

LAND AS NATURE AND COMMODITY

Across the country what *Forbes* called “a nationwide army of dentists, dockworkers and doughnutmakers” sought to beat stock market returns by buying land in new subdivisions.⁸ They often bought sight-unseen using installment contracts. Oregonians joined other Americans in worrying about recreational subdivisions like the ones that Brooks Resources was developing near Bend. In 1972 the state Department of Revenue found 160,000 acres of recently-created subdivisions in the state. It estimated that 1,000 unregistered land promotion schemes were operating in Oregon. Like land promoters elsewhere, those in Oregon sold lots distant from roads and without access to water and sewer systems. The *Oregonian* suggested that many of the buyers of rural subdivisions were “land-hungry Californians,” but thought Oregonians might also be vulnerable to the appeal of risky land investments.⁹ As one appraiser described the state’s share in the national raw land boom, “there are land developments in Oregon that will never be truly developed in our lifetime. The land will be sold and resold many times on speculation.”¹⁰

Oregonians in the Willamette Valley and near recreation areas worried about more than land prices. They also worried about the environmental consequences of headlong development. The central coast seemed especially vulnerable, with the town of Lincoln City emerging as a shamble of condominiums, high rises, amusements parks, industrial and municipal pollution and

⁸ “Has the Land Boom Crested?” *Forbes*, 15 June 1974, 32.

⁹ Leo Leightner, “Many ‘Paradises’ Never Will Bloom,” *Oregonian*, 4 November 1973, 1F.

¹⁰ Leightner, “Many ‘Paradises’ Never Will Bloom,” 4F. The land was often too far from services to be worth much, and a number of buyers cut their losses, leaving developers who duped them holding both the land and all the monthly payments they had set in. Stan Federman, “The Great Oregon Land Boom: There’s Plenty that Real and Wonderful and True Here, but State’s Natural Magnetism also Attracts Profiteers,” *Oregonian*, 4 November 1973, 1F; “There are Many Investment Opportunities, but That’s Not to Say that Roses Grow Everywhere,” *Oregonian*, 4 November 1973, 4F; Charles Little, *The New Oregon Trail: An Account of the Development and Passage of State Land-Use Legislation in Oregon* (Washington, DC: The Conservation Foundation, 1974), 11. The Oregon conversation was part of a larger national discussion of land sales. “How Western Union Speculates in Land,” *Business Week*, 8 June 1974; “Smart Money Moves into Land,” *Business Week*, 9 June 1973, 96; Jerome Eden, “Land Fever: A National Epidemic,” *Field & Stream*, July 1972, 54-55, 105-106; Robert Cahn, “Land in Jeopardy: There’s No Such Thing as a Free Lunch,” *Christian Science Monitor*, 17 January 1973, 9; Jeffrey Madrick, “Still Harvesting Profits from Farmland,” *Business Week*, 16 February 1976, 74.

shocking highway clutter.”¹¹ Other coastal developments strained municipal sewerage systems. The state counted thirty-four streams of raw sewage flowing across its ocean beaches.¹²

While recreational subdivisions inscribed speculation on Oregon’s landscape, more sophisticated methods of real estate investment marked the broader economy. Investors flocked to real estate investment trusts, or REITs, in the early 1970s. REITs allowed investors to purchase shares in funds that held real estate, generally office buildings, shopping malls, and vacation developments, but also timberland. In Oregon REITs funded Portland-area housing and shopping mall projects. Stock market returns began to level off in the 1960s, but REITs provided investors with more than an eleven percent annual return over the course of the decade. The market for the new investment vehicles ticked up even further around the time that middle-class Americans got swindled into buying lots in subdivisions. Between 1968 and 1970, banks and investors founded fifty-eight new REITs nationwide. The market claimed \$1 billion in assets in 1968, but six years later had reached a value of \$20 billion. So hot were REITs that in 1973, *Business Week* encouraged small investors to put their money into the trusts. Then the market collapsed in the face of rising inflation. The REITs had made loans to builders who went bankrupt as construction costs rose. The trusts, in turn, had drawn on their own credit, usually relying on short term paper that required them to refinance their debt every few months. As interest rates climbed, the REITs were unable to stay afloat. By the end of 1974, they had lost between 80% and 90% of their peak value. And as they teetered, banks that had spawned them and loaned to them suffered.¹³

¹¹ Little, *The New Oregon Trail*, 11

¹² Little, *The New Oregon Trail*, 15.

¹³ There was similar turbulence in the commodities market. Su Han Chan, John Erickson, Ko Wang, *Real Estate Investment Trusts: Structure, Performance, and Investment Opportunities* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 18-19; Ralph Block, *Investing in REITs: Real Estate Investment Trusts* (Princeton, NJ: Bloomberg Press, 1998), 111; Markham, *A Financial History of the United States*, 18, 44-46; “Small Investors Can Play Too,” *Business Week*, 9 June 1973, 97; Andrew Gunnoe and Paul Gellert, “Financialization, Shareholder Value, and the

New real estate subdivisions signified more than environmental degradation. They, like the new futures market in lumber and plywood, also indicated a changed and unstable economy, increasingly dependent on speculation and complex investment techniques rather than on production. In popular memory, Oregonians responded with force first to environmental destruction. The memory contains elements of truth, but it does not tell the whole story. Much of the story focuses on the ethic of place. Oregon elected a loquacious former television commentator to serve as governor from 1967 to 1975. Tom McCall blended a knack for fiery phrases with a reputation for building bipartisan support for environmental reform. In 1970 his Economic Development Division changed the title of its promotional magazine from *Grow with Oregon* to a less heady *Oregon Quality*. The next year, McCall famously told a national television audience not to move to Oregon. In an interview on CBS, McCall warned off new residents, saying, "Come visit us again and again. This is a state of excitement. But for heaven's sake don't come here to live."¹⁴ Voters swamped his office with congratulatory letters.¹⁵

McCall's Oregon saw an efflorescence of environmental politics. The year after the governor took office, the Oregon Environmental Council formed, hiring Portlander Larry Williams, the state's first paid full-time lobbyist for the environment, at the end of 1969. In 1974

Transformation of Timberland Ownership in the US," *Critical Sociology* 37 (May 2011): 265-284. For the role of REITs in Oregon, see "The Shape of Things to Come [Advertisement]," *Oregonian*, 23 May 1971, RE9; "Firm to Buy Store Interest," *Oregonian*, 3 August 1971, A13; "Portland Mall Attracts Cleveland Investment," *Oregonian*, 13 September 1972, A37. Oregon property would become increasingly enmeshed in national and global markets, even after the boom in office construction collapsed. By the end of the decade, Oregon realtors would note that many of downtown Portland's office buildings were owned by outside capital. Anthony Bianco, "How Outsiders are Buying Up Downtown," *Willamette Week*, 29 January 1979, 9.

¹⁴ Gene Maudlin, "Gov. McCall Praised for Stout Stand to Keep Oregon for Oregonians," *Oregonian*, 11 February 1971, 12.

¹⁵ For information on McCall, see Brent Walth, *Fire at Eden's Gate: Tom McCall and the Oregon Story* (Portland: Oregon Historical Society Press, 1994). McCall's charisma and penchant for rhetoric won his views a place in Oregon's political language. Even after the governor had been out of office for more than thirty years, politicians compared themselves to him and Oregon voters still wondered why none of those politicians seemed to measure up to the myth they evoked. "General Elections Voter's Guide: House District 32," *Oregonian*, 27 October 2004, B2; Brent Walth, "McCall Never Looked So Good. But Let's Move On," *Oregonian*, 5 November 2006, E1; James Sinks, "Is the Golden Age of Politics Over?" *Bend Bulletin*, 24 September 2006.

the Oregon Wilderness Coalition (later the Oregon Natural Resources Council) formed to advocate for wilderness designations. Buoyed by a rising environmental movement, McCall facilitated needed reforms. He helped push through a law that guaranteed the right of Oregonians to cross private property to reach ocean beaches. He championed an effort to clean up the Willamette River, choked since the turn of the century with sewage and industrial waste. He persuaded the legislature to pass a law drafted by the Oregon Environmental Council that required a deposit on soda and beer bottles.¹⁶

Still, many of McCall's efforts were rhetorical. McCall brandished his most enduring phrases against subdivisions on formerly productive timber and agricultural land. Leaning over the podium in front of the opening session of the 1973 Oregon Legislature, McCall surveyed the state's environmental successes to date. "These are reflections of the determination of Oregonians to win quality in their lives," the governor intoned in an accent that grew out of a childhood split between Massachusetts and an eastern Oregon ranch. "It means that after earning a living we have a living that is worthwhile." McCall then went on to identify threats to that quality of life: "Sagebrush subdivisions, coastal 'condomania,' and the ravenous rampage of suburbia in the Willamette Valley all threaten to mock Oregon's status as the environmental model for the nation." The state needed land use planning, he argued in a phrase that would make its way into countless books on suburban sprawl, to protect it "from grasping wastrels of the land."¹⁷

¹⁶ Walth, *Fire at Eden's Gate*; Larry Williams, "OEC's Early Years: A Personal View," *Earthwatch Oregon*, 20th Anniversary Issue, 1988, 4-5. The law was later overturned, but replaced with a judicially recognized commonlaw right to beach access.

¹⁷ State of Oregon, *Journals of the State and House of the Fifty-seventh Legislative Assembly* (Salem: State of Oregon, 1974), J312, J313. For an explanation of the function of Oregon's system of land use planning, see Little, *The New Oregon Trail*; H. Jeffrey Leonard, *Managing Oregon's Growth: The Politics of Development Planning* (Washington, DC: The Conservation Foundation, 1983); Gerrit Knaap and Arthur Nelson, *The Regulated Landscape: Lessons on State Land Use Planning from Oregon* (Cambridge, MA: Lincoln Institute of Land Policy, 1992); Carl Abbot, Deborah Howe, and Sy Adler, eds., *Planning the Oregon Way: A Twenty Year Evaluation*

McCall presented land use planning as an outgrowth of his admonition to potential visitors that they not turn their vacations into permanent relocations to the state. In his rhetoric, planning was a way to protect the state's quality of life from economic development and population growth, but also a way to use pristine public beaches and open fields to lure the right kind of development. As McCall put it a few months later in an interview with the *New York Times*, "it doesn't really hurt me that we've lost a factory, or three or four, because in a very few years there will be a queue of applicants stretching miles into the distance because we will have preserved the environment—the only thing that really matters."¹⁸ From the perspective of several decades, it is possible to read into McCall's rhetoric a grander intent. Oregon looks like a state that recast forest and fields as amenities to attract businesses that relied on educated and creative workers who demanded a sterling standard of living. The 1970s looks like a move away from resource production.

Focusing on McCall, however, obscures much of the story. Oregon politics had long privileged rural production. The state's economy had relied on its agricultural sector since the 1870s. Nearly a century later, when McCall sat in the governor's office, agriculture had surrendered its place at the top of Oregon's economy to the timber industry, but still the state relied on productive work in nature. Environmentalists increasingly pointed to the shortcomings of the timber industry, but few in the state were willing to regard nature primarily as a consumer commodity to attract a skilled workforce. In spite of McCall's rhetoric, Oregon's response to the economic changes of the 1970s was not to forsake production for a new economy of amenities. Rather, state bureaucrats, farmers, and environmentalists sought to deflect economic currents that

(Corvallis: Oregon State University Press, 1994); Robert Liberty, "Planned Growth: The Oregon Model," *Natural Resources and Environment* 13 (1998): 315-318, 356ff; Richard Judd and Christopher Beach, *Natural States: The Environmental Imagination in Maine, Oregon, and the Nation* (Washington, DC: Resources for the Future, 2003), 167-203; Peter walker and Patrick Hurley, *Planning Paradise: Politics and vision of Land Use in Oregon* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2011).

¹⁸ David Bird, "Gov. McCall Seeks to Curb Oregon's Growth," *New York Times*, 7 May 1973, 31.

threatened to disassociate land value from productive use. The environmental innovation of the 1970s was more backward-looking than progressive.

Forty years earlier Oregon farmers had found political opportunity in national conversations about the value of rural life. During the 1930s federal bureaucrats and planners had sought a return to an imagined past of bucolic farms and dispersed rural population. In the Northwest, they used electrical power as a tool to resurrect this past, directing much of the electricity from New Deal dam projects out into the countryside. Intellectual and policy currents in the 1970s responded to environmental problems unimaginable to the reformers of the 1930s, but pundits in the 1970s shared the earlier concern for the health of rural places. As farmland gave way to suburbs, Americans mourned the land taken out of production. In the 1950s houses, lawns, and curvilinear streets sprouted on a million or so acres of farmland each year. By the 1970s, the nation's appetite for farmland had grown, and combine harvesters gave way to lawnmowers on some three million acres in 1972. Large as these numbers sound, suburban growth affected a relatively small portion of the nation's total farmland. But perceptions mattered. Suburbs ate farmland as increasing mechanization allowed little opportunity for the children of farmers to stay on the spread. As farm children continued their twentieth-century moves to cities, Americans worried that their country was losing its agrarian grounding.¹⁹

This was why real estate speculation worried writers in national magazines, perhaps more so than other financial practices. Speculation ran afoul of a tradition (that in Oregon traced its roots to the 1850s and 1870s) that land should be productive, rather than commoditized and

¹⁹ While suburban expansion did not threaten the vast majority of the nation's farms, it did threaten particular crops. The majority of the country's dairy cows and vegetable and fruit fields were close to cities. Rome, *The Bulldozer in the Countryside*, 123; "Land Use: The Rage for Reform," *Time*, 1 October 1973, 94. Jess Krannich, "A Modern Disaster: Agricultural Land, Urban Growth, and the Need for a Federally Organized Comprehensive Land Use Planning Model," *Cornell Journal of Law and Public Policy* 16 (2006): 58; Susanne Freidberg, *Fresh: A Perishable History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009), 197-234; Tom Daniels and Deborah Bowers, *Holding Our Ground: Protecting America's Farms and Farmland* (Washington, DC: Island Press, 1997), 24.

traded abstractly. Peter White complained in the pages of *National Geographic* that investors developed land solely for the tax benefit of deducting from income the cost of mortgage payments, property taxes, and depreciation on buildings. The problem, White explained, was that the financial maneuver “pushes up land values, which to working farmers may mean abruptly higher [property] taxes—often the difference between continuing to farm or being squeezed out.” If the use of land for abstract financial gain could hurt farming, so too could its use as a suburban amenity. A Wyoming rancher complained to White about urban professionals who bought country houses: “they pay \$1,500 or \$5,000 for an acre, put a picture window on it, it’s worth it to them. If I buy an acre and it’s ‘ten-acre’ land—it takes ten acres of it to sustain a cow for a month—it’s worth \$25.”²⁰ *National Geographic* was not alone in noting the dissociation of land value from production value. An editorial in *Horticulture* magazine put the issue more succinctly. It lamented that the United States was no longer an agrarian society where “the productivity of land or use value is the criterion for its assessment and taxation.”²¹ The concern was widely shared, and by 1973, the vast majority of states gave preferential tax treatment to farmland, even at the expense of higher property taxes for urban homeowners.²²

Indeed, concern with speculative land investment lay behind a spate of laws and legislative proposals. Hawaii passed a 1961 law to protect pineapple plantations. Massachusetts, Wisconsin, Florida, and New York all passed laws in the 1960s limiting building in sensitive areas. Vermont and Maine both sought state control over some local development decisions in 1970 laws. Riding a wave of reform in the states, Washington Senator Henry Jackson decried land use decisions that resided with those “whose interests were selfish, short-term and private” as he introduced a national land use planning bill to encourage states to establish planning

²⁰ Peter White, “This Land of Ours—How Are We Using It?” *National Geographic*, July 1976, 24, 45.

²¹ Warren Colby, “Farmers are Society’s Unpaid Landscape Gardeners,” *Horticulture*, April 1974, 49.

²² “Now Another Stumbling Block for Land Developers,” *U.S. News & World Report*, 29 October 1973, 77.

agencies.²³ Jackson's legislative ally, Arizona Representative Morris Udall, put a finer point on the issue. He lamented declining environmental quality "just for the benefit of a few speculators" and raged that land should not be "merchandized in Eastern cities like deodorants or magazine subscriptions with bonus prizes of silverware, green stamps, or small appliances for early bird buyers."²⁴ To Udall and his allies, the market, and especially the increasingly unrestrained market of the early 1970s, did an insufficient job of accounting for the environmental and social costs of development. The law he and Jackson proposed made it out of the Senate in 1972 and again in 1973, but met continued resistance in the House of Representatives. National land use planning would never become law, but for several years in the early 1970s, it made part of public discussion a proposition that would have rung true to Oregon farmers of the nineteenth century: there was something profoundly disturbing about land as a financial commodity divorced from the value of the crops it could grow.²⁵

That view found continued support among rural producers in the late twentieth century. During the late 1960s, trade policy unfavorable to American workers, lagging worker productivity, and new opportunities provided by container shipping eroded the nation's dominance of global manufacturing. In 1971 the United States ran its first trade deficit in the twentieth century. There was much handwringing about the country's role in the world, a role thrown into further doubt in 1973 when the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries cut exports to the United States to protest aid to Israel. Oil, manufactured goods, and foreign credit flowed into the United States, reversing the traditional balance of trade. Raw material

²³ Quoted in Dennis Farney, "The Unsolved Problems of Land Use," *Wall Street Journal*, 2 February 1973, 8.

²⁴ Quoted in Cahn, "Land in Jeopardy," 9; see also, Morris Udall, "Land Speculation: Investment in Future or Downpayment on Dust," *Field & Stream*, December 1972, 66.

²⁵ Rome, *The Bulldozer in the Countryside*, 227-228; Jack Kartez, "Planning Preservation: Issues in Implementing Oregon's Agricultural Land Preservation Policy in the Willamette Valley" (MA thesis, University of Oregon, 1976), 5; Morris Udall, "Land Use: Why We Need Federal Legislation," *Brigham Young Law Review* 1 (1975): 17; Noreen Lyday, *The Law of the Land: Debating National Land Use Legislation, 1970-1975* (Washington, DC: Urban Institute, 1976).

production was a rare exception to the overall economic decline. Oregon farmers had benefited in the nineteenth century from changes in the world economy that made Northwest wheat more valuable. In the late twentieth century, as the country's share of global manufacturing declined, producers of raw material again benefited from world and domestic demand for grain and wood.²⁶

PRESTIGE OF PRODUCTION IN A NEW AGE

As the traditional economy of production and export faltered, those who worried about trade deficits and United States power looked to natural resource production for solutions to a variety of problems. Promoters of the timber industry touted the export of logs and lumber as a way to close the trade deficit. Lumber production also seemed like a plausible component to a solution to the urban crisis, and lumber companies promoted their role in helping to improve housing stock. The National Forest Products Association cast itself as helping builders “provide housing where it is desperately needed.”²⁷ By the end of the decade the trade group would attempt to link its production goals to the goals of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. Timber executives took two dozen leaders of the organization on a tour of a logging operation, congratulating themselves on providing “a real eye-opener for many of the urban blacks.”²⁸ Farming offered similar benefits. American farmers were more productive than ever in the 1960s and 1970s. Farming grew to account for one fifth of the country's exports.

Those exports promised diplomatic influence. Secretary of Agriculture Earl Butz spoke in 1974

²⁶ Stein, *Pivotal Decade*, 38, 79-85; Daniel Sargent, “The United States and Globalization in the 1970s,” in Niall Ferguson, et al., eds., *The Shock of the Global* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010), 56-61.

²⁷ Ralph Hodges to George Cheek, 19 July 1978, National Forest Products Association Records, Mss. 3395, Forest History Society, Box 207, Binder 1978.

²⁸ “Speakers Discuss Timber Management Crisis,” *PAPIR: Paper and Pulp Industry Review*, May 1974, 5, 12; Ralph Hodges to Philo Gregg, 19 July 1978, National Forest Products Association Records, Mss. 3395, Forest History Society, Box 207, Binder 1978.

of the “food weapon” that the United States possessed to offset the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Country’s oil weapon.²⁹ The irony was that agriculture offered some insulation against the vicissitudes of the global market, but it also owed its success to the very global connections that most troubled those who sought redemption on the farm.³⁰

Economic growth in the developing world created new markets for American food and lumber. Then in 1971 Richard Nixon allowed the dollar to float against world currencies, prompting a steep decline in its value that made American exports more attractive on world markets. American timber companies increased their sales to Japan, where economic growth fueled demand for raw logs and for paper pulp. Bad weather in other world granaries drove up demand for American wheat. In 1972 Nixon concluded a grain deal with the Soviet Union. Farmers sold wheat to the Russians at world prices, but received a government subsidy that brought their take in line with what they would have received on the domestic market. Prices shot up as reserves in government warehouses diminished. Wheat sold in 1974 for twice what it had two years earlier. Corn prices tripled. Butz encouraged farmers to plant fence-row-to-fence row, telling them to “get bigger, get better, or get out.”³¹ Farmers got bigger, taking out loans to buy new land and equipment.³²

²⁹ Quoted in Sandra Batie and Robert Healy, *The Future of American Agriculture as a Strategic Resource* (Washington, DC: The Conservation Foundation, 1980), 6.

³⁰ Robert Coppedge, “Lumber Leads Oregon’s Industries,” *Cooperative Extension Service Economic Review of Agriculture*, 1 July 1970; Tim Lehman, *Public Values, Private Lands: Farmland Preservation Policy, 1933-1985* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995), 60; Batie and Healy, *The Future of American Agriculture as a Strategic Resource*, 2.

³¹ Quoted in David Danbom, *Born in the Country: A History of Rural America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995, 2006), 252.

³² M. Patricia Marchak, *Logging the Globe* (Quebec, McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1995); Jeffrey Madrick, “Still Harvesting Profit from Farmland,” *Business Week*, 16 February 1976, 74; Paul Conkin, *A Revolution Down on the Farm: The Transformation of American Agriculture since 1929* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 2008), 131-132; Danbom, *Born in the Country*, 251-252; Stein, *Pivotal Decade*, 105; Michael Perelman, “Efficiency in Agriculture: The Economics of Energy,” in *Radical Agriculture*, ed. by Richard Merrill (New York: Harper Colophon Books, 1976), 71.

The global economy boosted both logging and farming, but there were clear differences between the two industries. Timber companies were among the Northwest's largest businesses. Organized unions of timber workers ensured that Oregonians recognized that timber was an atomistic industry. The interests of stockholders and corporate officers were not the interests of millworkers and tree fellers. On the other hand, people still regarded farming as an individual or family enterprise. In doing so, they overlooked the fact that ninety-five percent of Oregon's agricultural workers were Latinos. Farm workers confronted Oregon laws aimed at keeping them invisible that did not operate on timber workers. A 1963 state law prevented anybody who was not a regular employee of a farm from picketing it. In 1971, as Oregonians extolled the virtues of the agricultural economy, the state legislature passed a law aimed at heading off farm worker organizing. With the threat of the California grape boycott in mind, the legislature restricted the right of agricultural workers to strike and orchestrate boycotts. It also required farm worker organizers to register with the state. Tom McCall would veto this bill, but the state continued to push farm workers to the margins of political power. Two years later, the Oregon's new collective bargaining law excluded farm workers from its protections. Like Willamette Valley farmers in the last century who employed Chinese labor to do the most physically demanding farm jobs, the farmers who employed Latino labor falsely presented themselves as laborers and owners both and their industry as a unified whole.³³

The result was that Oregon's farms met with acclaim that labor conflicts and environmental suspicions denied to the timber industry. Timber workers and environmentalists suspected corporate interests. Both linked the timber industry's export program to a lean future. Environmentalists worried that timber companies eyed previously untouched parts of national

³³ Lynn Stephen, *The Story of PCUN and the Farmworker Movement in Oregon* (Eugene: University of Oregon Department of Anthropology, 2001), 8-10.

forests as they quickly liquidated timber on private land for domestic production and log exports. The International Woodworkers of America newspaper also worried about quick cutting on private land, especially when the logs were exported raw. The paper contended that “log exports have contributed to serious overcutting on private forest lands.” Logs cut and shipped abroad provided few domestic jobs in exchange for depletion of the resource. The union predicted that if cutting proceeded apace, the industry would shed 54,000 jobs by the year 2000. The result would be dislocation for workers, but increased profits that industry executives would use to invest “in low wage/cheap timber areas such as Central and South America, the Pacific islands and Asia.”³⁴ Buffeted by criticism, the timber companies emerged as threats to the state’s economic health. Moral suasion rested with workers. In Oregon’s political imagery the industry was more important as a provider of jobs than a generator of wealth.

Farming, on the other hand, seemed to contribute directly to the state’s wellbeing. State government looked enthusiastically to unlimited growth in its number two industry. The director of the Oregon Department of Agriculture, Irvin Mann, Jr., hailed the relaxation of federal acreage controls imposed on participants in the federal government’s system of crop loans as “one of the biggest economic steps forward that this country has taken in all its history.”³⁵ He predicted further price increases as the United States resumed trade with China in the wake of Nixon’s 1972 visit. China, Mann related, had countless wheat mills idled by the Communist takeover in 1949. These were about to rumble back to life, and when they did, it would be Oregon white wheat, especially suited to noodles, that they would process. So promising was

³⁴ “Labor & Log Exports\$,” *International Woodworker*, 16 April 1975, 4.

³⁵ Irvin Mann, Jr., “American Wheat and the World,” *Oregon Agri-Record*, September 1973, 5.

Oregon agriculture that companies with no relationship to food got in on the game. By the mid-1970s, Boeing grew more than 8,000 acres of irrigated crops.³⁶

The immediate past lent credence to predictions for a rosy future. Farm values rose during the early 1970s. The total value of Oregon farmland in 1969 had been \$2.7 billion. In 1974 it stood at \$4.5 billion. Buoyed by high land prices and growing income, Oregon farmers, like those in other states, invested in land, machinery, and buildings. The value of the average farm shot up from \$93,135 in 1969 to \$170,145 in 1974. Growing farms sizes and values would have worried nineteenth-century observers that power was becoming concentrated and that farmers would be unable to turn all their acreage to production to grow the economy. In the late twentieth century, however, growing farms indicated the health of the traditional economy of production. The state's farms grossed just over \$531 million in 1969, but brought in more than \$1 billion in 1974. Nearly half that income was from the Willamette Valley. The valley was a major producer of vegetables for the national market, but high grain prices led farmers to take land out of vegetable production and sow wheat. New wheat fields, bad weather in eastern Oregon, and the success of new wheat varieties bred especially for the valley helped make 1973 a banner year for Willamette Valley wheat. The valley's farms produced half the state's crop.³⁷

PRODUCERIST ALLIANCES

The Willamette Valley did more than produce half the state's wheat crop and some forty percent of its total agricultural produce. It also housed the vast majority of its population, and saw Oregon's steepest population growth, as Figures Two and Three show. Along with other

³⁶ Coppedge, "Agriculture is Number 2"; Mann, "American Wheat and the World," 5; John Markoff, *Agribusiness in Oregon: A Preliminary Study* (Portland, OR: OSPIRG, 1976).

³⁷ Bureau of the Census, *1974 Census of Agriculture*, vol. i, part 37 (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Commerce, 1977), xiii, section 2; "Wheat...and the Valley," *Oregon Agri-Record*, September 1973, 8.

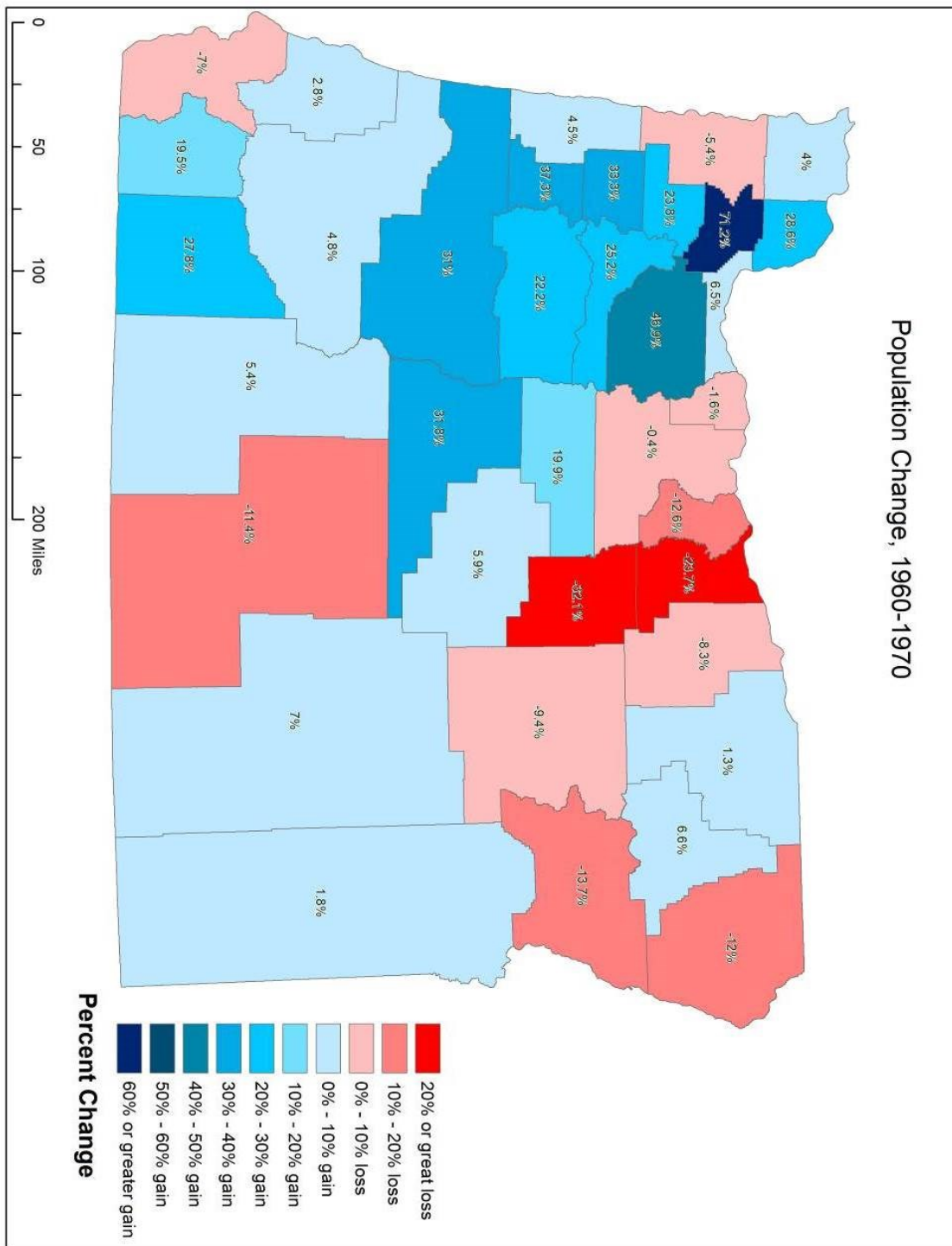
states, Oregon had tried to strike a balance between farming and development by providing farmers with favorable property tax assessments. After 1961 farms in self-created exclusive farm use zones were valued according to their present use in agriculture, rather than their market value as sites for housing. These zones did not obligate their beneficiaries to keep land in farming, though, and farmers used them to bide their time before developing property. While farmers enjoyed a property tax shelter, Oregon lost farms at an alarming rate. In 1964 there were 39,757 farms in the state. By the decade's end more than 10,000 farmers sold out. By 1974 the number of farms dropped further to 26,753. Part of this had to do with an increase in the size of the average farm, but it also reflected lost acres. In 1973 Oregon's farmers enjoyed the best agricultural economy in a generation, but still, they farmed two million acres less land than they had ten years before. Losses were most pronounced in the Willamette Valley, as Figure Four shows. In 1973 alone, the valley lost 30,000 acres of farmland to housing developments. And as the population grew and land fell out of production, the unemployment rate crept above the national average. People were moving to the valley faster than its economy could provide them with jobs.³⁸

The state's two largest industries, agriculture and timber, faced challenges in the early 1970s. The timber industry stood to shed jobs in the years ahead as companies logged their land too quickly, sold raw logs abroad, and planned to invest profits in production outside the region. Acres more than jobs were at risk in the farming economy as suburbs encroached on wheat and vegetable fields. Each of these threats was the product of economic changes that rocked the world's rich countries. Capital demonstrated increasing flexibility in its ability to seek

³⁸ National Agricultural Statistics Service, *1997 Census of Agriculture*, vol. i, part 37 (Washington, DC: United States Department of Agriculture, 1999), 10; Knaap and Nelson, *The Regulated Landscape*, 132; Matthew Slavin, "Irreconcilable Differences: Economic Development and Land Use Planning in Oregon," in Carl Abbott, Deborah Howe, and Sy Adler, eds., *Planning the Oregon Way: A Twenty Year Evaluation* (Corvallis: Oregon State University Press, 1994), 74.

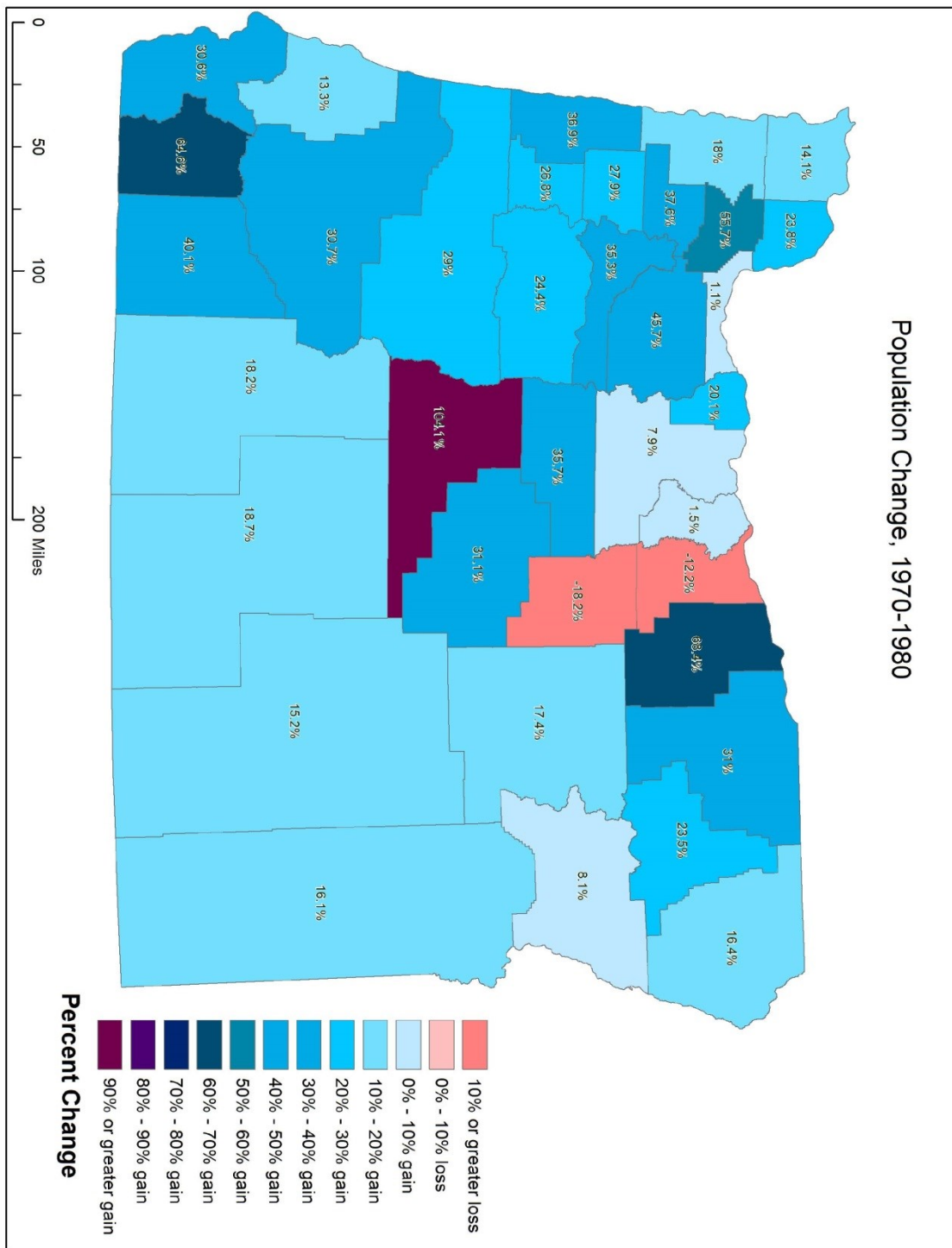
investment outside regions of traditional production. And land values loosened from their moorings as financial value came to matter more than production value. It was happenstance that the very changes that threatened Oregon's traditional economy put producers in a powerful rhetorical position. As the global market demanded more American food and as expanding suburbs that threatened farmers called for more lumber, farmers and loggers found themselves in a position to shape the state to their benefit. Farmers made their arguments from the fields, speaking of the moral value of production and the farm economy, while timber workers made theirs from union halls where they spoke the language of class and jobs. Each focused on a different threat and offered different solutions. Farmers would reap the greater harvest for their efforts, persuading the state to develop a comprehensive system of land use planning.

Figure Two: Population Change in Oregon Counties, 1960-1970³⁹



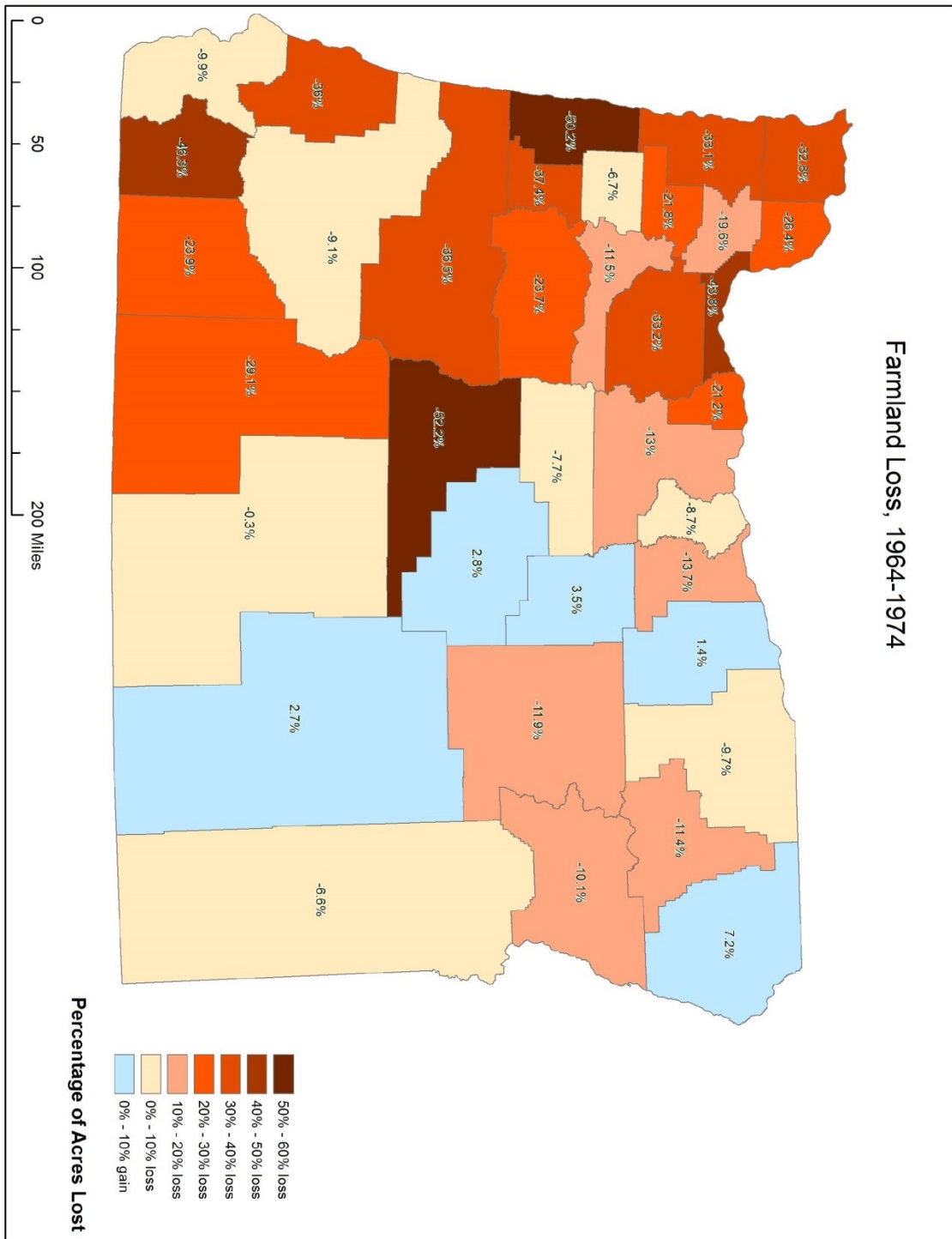
³⁹ Bureau of the Census, *1970 Census of Population*, vol. I, part 39 (Washington, DC: US Department of Commerce, 1974), 16-19.

Figure Three: Population Change in Oregon Counties, 1970-1980⁴⁰



⁴⁰ Bureau of the Census, *1980 Census of Population*, vol. I, part 39 (Washington, DC: US Department of Commerce, 1982), 7.

Figure Four: Farmland Loss in Oregon Counties, 1964-1974⁴¹



⁴¹ Bureau of the Census, *1974 Census of Agriculture*, vol. i, part 37, ii-1.

The Oregon Grange, representing small farmers and rural non-farmers, played a smaller role than it had in past political movements. The producerism that grew out of the nineteenth century had changed. The Grange still advocated some economic issues, hoping to ensure that farmers earned a just reward for their early mornings and hard labor. It advocated an initiative with backing from unions that would limit corporate ownership of farmland in Oregon. The Grange also continued to support public power. Oregon producerism had long been hostile to centralized power, willing to countenance such power when it served Grange purposes, as in regulating transportation in the 1880s or promoting rural electrification in the 1930s. Suspicion of the state when it exercised centralized power was an undercurrent of rural thought, but in the late twentieth century, hostility to government became at least as much a part of Grange politics as restraint of capital. That hostility helped lay the groundwork for the marginalization of the Grange on land use issues and the increasing importance of other rural interests represented by prominent individuals, the Farm Bureau, and issue-specific groups.⁴²

Among the individual activists were Cliff and Lois Kenagy. The Kenagys farmed strawberries in Linn County in the Willamette Valley. In 1963 they watched houses go up across the fence from one of their fields. Conflicts with their new neighbors mounted, requiring the purchase of new equipment to keep irrigation water out of suburban yards. When a developer began buying up more neighboring farms, the Kenagys decided something had to be done. They both thought more was at stake than the inconvenience of picky neighbors. The Kenagys were Mennonites who believed their faith demanded stewardship of the land. “God had given it to us for a purpose, and the purpose is to provide food. It’s for everybody. God didn’t come down here

⁴² W.C. Harris, “State Master’s Comments,” *Oregon Grange Bulletin*, 19 July 1976, 4; “Get Those Petitions Signed! Harris Urges Fast windup,” *Oregon Grange Bulletin*, 7 June 1976, 1.

and give it to certain individuals,” Cliff Kenagy told an interviewer decades later.⁴³ Motivated by land ethics as much as economics, Lois and Cliff went door-to-door and convinced their neighbors to form an exclusive farm use zone to keep out further development.

While the Kenagys were responding to immediate developments in the Willamette Valley, Ted Sidor was waging a more abstract fight in the state’s northeast corner. Sidor had been a Linn County farmer, but after graduating from Oregon State University, he landed a job with the agricultural extension office in eastern Oregon’s Union County. He developed a slideshow about sprawl and talked the county commissioners into creating a planning commission. In the mid-1960s he and a local farmer sat on the commission and managed to get much of the county zoned for exclusive farm use.⁴⁴

Most famous of Oregon’s farmer advocates in the 1960s and 1970s was Hector Macpherson. Macpherson also hailed from fast-changing Linn County, where he operated a dairy. Like the Kenagys, Macpherson saw nearby fields taken out of food production to grow houses in the 1960s. His new neighbors complained about noise, flies, and loose cows. One couple asked him to refrain from spreading manure on fields near a church in the week before their wedding. Macpherson came to believe that fertile land should be reserved for farming and that houses should go on land good for little else. Enough people thought like Macpherson that in 1969 Oregon passed an inchoate planning law, demanding that counties and cities write comprehensive plans that protected farmland and quality of life. The law offered no money to assist plan writing, however, and carried only the toothless threat that the governor would step in to plan for counties and cities not up to the task. Most counties called the governor’s bluff. Still,

⁴³ Cliff and Lois Kenagy, interview by Clark Hansen, 14 August 1995, SR 2641, cassette recording, Oregon Historical Society.

⁴⁴ Hector Macpherson, in 1000 Friends Roundtable, interview by Carl Abbott and Deborah Howe, 14 December 1992, SR 1056-1058, transcript, Oregon Historical Society.

the law came out of the legislature's Interim Agriculture Committee, and the increasing importance of farming promised a brighter future for these efforts. With that promise in mind, Macpherson ran for and won a seat in the 1971 legislature.⁴⁵

Real estate was entwined with Oregon's state apparatus, and it made sense to look to county commissions and the state legislature to shape its meaning with zoning and special tax assessments. Timber workers faced a problem equally complex in the increasing flexibility of their employers' capital. Trade and timber harvests were also inseparable from the state. Harvests on private land were regulated by state laws and by regulations promulgated by a state Board of Forestry, while Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management policy shaped harvest on federal land. International agreements and the tax code shaped trade in lumber and logs. Yet, timber workers confronted problems farmers did not face. The solutions to a decentralizing industry were not geographically bounded in the way that land use was. And policy makers in the Board of Forestry, Forest Service, and Bureau of Land Management were more closely allied with owners than with workers.⁴⁶

Union timber workers earned a base wage of \$3.44 an hour in the United States and \$3.72 an hour in Canada in 1972. That compared favorably with the \$2 an hour that timber workers in the South earned. As the timber industry looked to southern timber plantations and mills, the International Woodworkers of America recognized it faced a difficult organizing challenge in the

⁴⁵ Before running for the legislature Macpherson persuaded the Linn County Chamber of Commerce to lobby for the creation of a county planning commission. He then served on the commission. Walker and Hurley, *Planning Paradise*, 41-48; Little, *The New Oregon Trail*, 9-11. Planning in the state predated 1969. The legislature granted cities the power to zone in 1919 and 1923 laws. In 1947 it allowed counties to establish planning commissions to deal with postwar growth exploding out of city limits. State officials worried about the threat suburbs posed to farming as early as 1951. William Robbins, *Landscapes of Conflict: The Oregon Story, 1940-2000* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2004), 284-286.

⁴⁶ Christopher Klyza, *Who Controls the Public Lands: Mining, Forestry, and Grazing Policies, 1870-1990* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996); Paul Hirt, *Conspiracy of Optimism: Management of the National Forests Since World War Two* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1994). The state forester during this period developed a reputation for catering to industry representatives. When he retired in 1979, he sent a resume and an offer of his services to the leading representative of owners' interests. J.E. Schroeder to Ralph Hodges, 7 November 1979, National Forest Products Association Records, Mss. 3395, Forest History Society, Box 207, Binder 1979.

South. The region was distant from its membership base and politically hostile to unions. The union's *International Woodworker* newspaper explained that in an increasingly dispersed industry, it was more important than ever to organize beyond the Northwest. "We MUST make a firm commitment to organizing, particularly in the Southern United States," the paper proclaimed, saying, "every un-organized operation there jeopardizes the hard-won gains of Woodworkers" in the Northwest and Canada. More than that, the working men and women in the Northwest's mill towns owed something to others "exploited by greedy, multinational corporations." A key tenet of trade unionism was the recognition that "those southern workers are our Brothers and Sisters."⁴⁷ With this understanding of the geography of capitalism, Northwest members donated to organizing efforts in the region and later voted overwhelmingly to tax themselves to provide southern organizers with regular support. They won some victories in the South, pulling wages up and getting an employer-funded health plan in some mills. Still, the union was up against a tradition of low wages and disenfranchised workers. Wages in the South remained lower than in the Northwest, the union powerless to eliminate the incentives that drove mills out of Northwest towns.⁴⁸

Timber workers' global challenge was even more intractable, and responses were mostly rhetorical. The union consistently opposed what it saw as trade regulations that were too loose, testifying before federal commissions and rallying its members. It opposed timber harvests in developing countries where it said corporations took advantage of weak harvest regulations, low tax rates, and loose export regulations. It also opposed the export of raw logs, arguing that the practice of shipping raw logs off of private and public land depleted resources and denied jobs to

⁴⁷ International Officers, "Still a Long Way to Go," *International Woodworker*, 19 October 1977, 1.

⁴⁸ Steve Conway, "How Labor Views Industry Manpower and Productivity," *Forest Industries*, April 1972, 34-37; "Southern Story Told to Region 3 Members," *International Woodworker*, 21 April 1976, 8; "Region 3 Convention Approves Southern Organizing Funding," *International Woodworker*, 22 March 1978, 1; "Weyerhaeuser Strike Ends," *International Woodworker*, 16 June 1976, 8.

mill workers. The union called for an end to tax policy that allowed raw logs to be exported at a tax advantage over processed timber. They were successful in winning a ban in 1968 on the export of raw logs harvested on federal land, but could not persuade Congress to prohibit their export from private land. Nor could the union persuade Congress to strengthen its definition of milled timber.⁴⁹

Working people and farmers found allies in their defense of traditional production threatened by a changing world economy. As farmers and timber workers made the case for the importance of resource production in the region, Oregon's counter culture also embraced the centrality of productive work in nature and rural values. Between 1965 and 1975 people from the Bay Area and other urban centers founded some 100 communes in Oregon. Many were based in southern Oregon. Others were on the outskirts of Eugene and Portland. The commune members embodied diverse attitudes toward drugs, religion, and sexuality, but they espoused a shared belief in the moral importance of work. As a *Life* magazine article explained about an Oregon commune, members "regard chopping wood, planting seeds and washing clothes as acts of creative meditation which contribute as much to the spiritual wellbeing of the workers as to the good of the commune. They say that hard work strips them of their city frustrations."⁵⁰ Bob Carey, one of the founders of an Oregon commune, explained that work in nature was central to the communal experience. Echoing *Life* magazine, he said, "We need shelter, we need the water developed, we need our garden. It gives you an inner strength to be your own feeder."⁵¹

⁴⁹ "International Trade & Multinational Forest Corporations," *International Woodworker*, 21 April 1976, 4; "Johnson Outlines IWA Position on Trade," *International Woodworker*, 16 July 1975, 4; "Close 'Loopholes' in Log Export Law, IWA Urges USFS," *International Woodworker*, 10 April 1974, 1; Jean Daniels, *The Rise and Fall of the Pacific Northwest Log Export Market* (Portland, OR: USFS Pacific Northwest Research Station, 2005), 28; Michael Pebworth, "Evergreen Struggle: Federal Wilderness Preservation, Populism, and Liberalism in Washington State, 1934-1985" (PhD diss., University of Oregon, 2003), 239-243.

⁵⁰ "The Commune Comes to America," *Life*, 18 July 1969, 21.

⁵¹ Richard Fairfield, *Communes USA: A Personal Tour* (Baltimore: Penguin, 1972), 107; James Kopp, *Eden within Eden: Oregon's Utopian Heritage* (Corvallis: Oregon State University Press, 2009), 135-149; Beverly Brown, *In*

One did not need to forsake the city to find value in rural work. *Rain*, a journal of appropriate technology that grew out of a program at Portland State University, supported preserving small-scale agriculture and promoted farmers' markets as a way "to make small farmers visible once again."⁵² The journal's politics became increasingly libertarian by the end of the 1970s, but its writers would have found common ground with 1930s liberals who looked to rural areas for solutions to social problems. Like those planners, participants in the Northwest's counter culture, in their magazine articles and moves to communes, sought solutions to economic and social change in a decentralized society of rural values. Even as they rejected the New Deal state, members of the Northwest's counter-cultural technology movement promoted rural virtues in articles about agriculture, wood stoves, and self-sufficiency. As one writer in the magazine, a participant in Seattle's Tilth, put it, "life divorced from the land is somehow fragmented, incomplete, lacking the sense of stability and purpose that accompanies a land-based experience."⁵³ Another writer lamented that "there are very few people in this country today who know the steps and calls for all the square dances, or who have been to a barn-raising, or who can card and spin wool, or cure venison, or who remember the words and tunes of our traditional music."⁵⁴

This sort of cultural affinity for rural values set the stage for urban political support of rural projects. When Hector Macpherson got to the Senate he found allies in metropolitan chapters of the League of Women Voters, who since the early 1960s had argued that suburban sprawl was a source of governmental inefficiency. The recently formed Oregon Environmental

Timber Country: Working People's Stories of Environmental Conflict and Urban Flight (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1995), 6.

⁵² "Food Distribution and Marketing," *Rain*, January 1977, 12-15.

⁵³ Becky Deryckx, "Land," *Rain*, February/March 1977, 8.

⁵⁴ "Endangered Skills," *Rain*, January 1977, 7. See also, Becky Deryckx, "Land," *Rain*, February/March 1977, 8; E.F. Schumacher, "On Land Speculation," *Rain*, February/March 1976, 3; "The Right Wing and A.T.: The Possibility of Mutual Aid," *Rain*, January 1978, 20; Judy Gordon, "Letter to the Editor," *Rain*, June 1978, 13.

Council, with offices in Portland, also supported land use planning as a way to preserve open space. City people concerned with open space, government efficiency, and their quality of life expressed their hopes for a more livable city by touting the value of farming to the state.

Likewise, some rural Oregonians began to talk of the importance of quality of life along with their economic interest in keeping the farm economy healthy. Popular support for land use planning earned Macpherson assistance from the governor's office and from Ted Hallock, a Portland powerbroker in the state Senate.⁵⁵

In 1972 the state commissioned a report on development in the Willamette Valley that articulated the link between agriculture and quality of life in urban Oregon. San Francisco landscape architect Lawrence Halprin wrote that "prime agricultural land, clean air and water, vast forests, abundant power ... all combined to produce a highly desirable way of life in majestic surroundings." Development threatened this idyll, though. By the year 2000, Halprin predicted, incorporated cities would cover a fifth of the valley's floor. When garbage dumps, parks, airports, roads and reservoirs were added to the tally, half the valley would be out of agricultural production. As fewer farmers tilled the land, supporting businesses would close, making it harder for those who still farmed to buy equipment. The best jobs in a new economy would go to people who moved to the valley from beyond the state, leaving native Oregonians on unemployment rolls. In order to preserve both open space and quality of life, Halprin argued, the practicability and profitability of farming had to be maintained.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ The Portland chapter of the Oregon League of Women Voters first took on sprawl in a 1957 memo that pointed to the high cost of extending services to sparsely populated developments on the edge of the metropolitan area. Three years later a chapter from suburban Beaverton published a report on sprawl called *The Tale of Three Counties, One Metropolitan Community*. The group called for the creation of a regional government to manage growth in Portland and its suburbs. Members promoted the idea on government study committees in the early 1960s. Jennifer Stevens, "Feminizing the Urban West: Green Cities and Open Space in the Postwar Era, 1950-2000," (PhD diss., UC Davis, 2008), 70-76.

⁵⁶ Lawrence Halprin & Associates, *The Willamette Valley: Choices for the Future* (Salem, OR: Willamette Valley Environmental Protection and Development Planning Council, 1972), 16, 40.

Halprin's report both reflected and helped form urban views of farming. The state paid for it to be published with colorful drawings and for copies to be distributed to schools and libraries. State employees repackaged the ideas in Halprin's report into a slideshow accompanied by audio that they called "Project Foresight." State employees took it up and down the valley, playing it wherever they could find a group to watch and listen. They reached some 20,000 people in meetings and countless more in a television airing of the presentation, cementing together ideas about farming and those about quality of life.⁵⁷

The farmers' urban allies were selective in their choice of environmental challenges. They could just as easily point out, as *Rain* did in 1975, that Oregon's resource production economy was itself an environmental problem. The October 1975 cover of *Rain* carried a picture of a Portland sawmill belching smoke into the haze over the Willamette River. The ironic caption read "This magazine is published in the most livable city in the U.S."⁵⁸ Less remarked upon were the patterns set in the early part of the century and in the city's post-war planning that directed populations of color toward the worst of its industrial pollution. At the same time that Portlanders and suburbanites looked to environmental problems on farmland just beyond the suburbs, they ignored lasting problems in North Portland, a neighborhood that city officials regarded as dominated by African American residents. During rain storms, sewage treatment plants there spilled combined sewage and storm water into the Columbia Slough. The effluent mixed in the slack water with industrial detritus from lumber companies and slaughterhouses that processed the materials urban Oregonians were so concerned about. The rural origins of those materials received far more attention than their urban consequences, especially when they rested

⁵⁷ Robert Logan, Lawrence Lucas, Ernest Ankrum, *The Oregon Land Use Story* (Salem: State of Oregon, 1974), 8.

⁵⁸ "Untitled Cover," *Rain*, October 1975.

disproportionately on the poor people and people of color who sometimes supplemented food budgets by fishing in the slough.⁵⁹

When Oregonians articulated an ethic of place they, like the Portlanders who sought to keep noxious industry away from their neighborhoods at the turn of the century, created a community based on exclusion. Early Portlanders developed a narrow ethic of place that sought to keep pollution where it belonged, in the backyards of people without the political or economic power to oppose it. Well-to-do Oregonians in the late twentieth century saw themselves as part of a broader community, not explicitly tied to class. They thought the good sense they had showed in abandoning the east coast and California for Oregon in the 1950s and 1960s (or the even better sense shown by being born in the state) distinguished them from those who sought to move to Oregon in the 1970s. Oregonians who spoke of quality of life in the 1970s spoke primarily of the need to limit immigration to the state, especially immigration from California. Like others who moved to beautiful places, they saw themselves as natives and sought to limit further immigration. And they overlooked the social landscape in favor of the physical one.⁶⁰

To the extent that any reality underlay the threat that Oregonians saw to the south, it had to do with economics. California's economy had loomed over Oregon's since the 1850s. While earlier Oregonians worried about the state's industrial and financial power, Oregonians in the 1970s worried about the consumer power of Californians who ventured north. In 1973 per capita income in California was \$5,944, while Oregon's was nearly a fifth lower at \$5,109. Californians could bring not only their higher accumulated wages north, Oregonians worried, but they could also bring capital from selling their old homes in the state's red-hot real estate market. The

⁵⁹ For the Columbia Slough and the observation that Portland's land use proponents ignored racial plight by focusing on rural nature, see Ellen Stroud, "Troubled Waters in Ecotopia: Environmental Racism in Portland, Oregon," *Radical History Review* 74 (1999): 65-95.

⁶⁰ For the attitudes of what one author calls neo-natives, see Rothman, *Devil's Bargains*.

typical California home fetched \$23,100, giving potential emigrants sway over the Oregon housing market, where the median home price was only \$15,400.⁶¹

Most of Oregon's rumbling about quality of life was less concrete than per capita incomes and median home prices. Many Oregonians worried most about the population growth that immigration from California would bring. The *Oregonian* reported an informal poll in 1969 that revealed widespread suspicion of outsiders, especially those south of the Siskiyou Mountains. The state's partisans, many of whom had driven over those same mountains to settle there, chuckled about the James G. Blaine Society, which was dedicated to "various graceful, poetical, vague, and sinister means of discouraging overpopulation in Oregon."⁶² They advertised the state bird as the mosquito and the state animal as the earthworm. They joked that Oregon should require visitors from the other forty-nine states to present passports and visas. Grizzly bears might be reintroduced along the borders and somebody should construct a tunnel under Oregon to channel Californians directly into Washington. And, of course, they lauded Governor Tom McCall for his efforts to discourage immigration. News of a poll that indicated six million Californians wanted to flee their declining quality of life and saw Oregon as the best refuge made its way into the *Oregonian* newspaper and even into a report issued by state government. The reality was more modest. Californians accounted for less than half of the recent immigration to the state. And in any case, kvetching about crowded Cascade trails and California license plates in worsening urban traffic made for a jejune political program.⁶³

⁶¹ Bureau of Economic Analysis, "Annual State Personal Income and Employment," <http://www.bea.gov/iTable/iTable.cfm>; U.S. Census Bureau, "Historical Census of Housing Tables: Home Values," <http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/housing/census/historic/values.html>; Stuart Jones, "Oregon's Many Faces," *National Geographic*, January 1969, 101.

⁶² Quoted in Adrien Gamache, et al., *Land Use Regulations in Oregon: An Evaluation* (Lake Oswego, OR: Applied Economics, 1981), 7.

⁶³ Harry Bodine, "Oregonians Like State, Each Other, But Hope Outsiders Will Stay Home," *Oregonian*, 17 August 1969, A23; Peter Barnes, "Oregon for the Oregonians," *The New Republic*, 20 March 1971, 10-11; Vic Petroff, *Implementing the LCDC Goals and Guidelines: High Hopes, Painful Realities* (Boulder, CO: Western Interstate

It is difficult to say who believed most fervently in the threat of California. By 1980, the Oregon Environmental Council pointed to a membership that was middle-aged. Three quarters of its members had finished college and half had done graduate work. The vast majority were registered Democrats. They were also generally not natives of Oregon. Only a quarter of Oregon Environmental Council Members had been born in the state. Most had come at some point before the mid-1960s, and may have hoped to prevent others from following them. If this data could be extrapolated back to the 1970s, it would fit characteristics of politically-vocal slow-growth proponents elsewhere. Yet it would be a mistake to cast population growth worries as purely urban or liberal concerns. The clearest changes in the state were in subdivisions in rural counties. Rural people may also have looked askance at Californians. In any case, California jokes featured in the *Oregonian*, the state's largest newspaper. They also played in articles about the state in national magazines.⁶⁴

Farmers who hooked their goal of preserving the agricultural economy to rhetoric about quality of life helped turn preserving the state's environment into a meaningful policy agenda. Farmers recognized the advantage in joining the two sets of politics. A farmer from the Willamette Valley town of Amity wrote to the legislature to criticize the damage speculators had done to the economy and to the valley's environment: "Oregon has long existed as a rural farming state, but its continued existence as such is threatened by land developers for the profit they can take." He went on to say, "I don't see how further divisions of our farmland can improve the quality of life. Such speculation can only serve a few people."⁶⁵ Rancher A.F.

Leckie wrote a couple of years later to say that it was necessary to preserve ranching in Central

Commission for Higher Education, 1975), 6; Logan, Lucas, Ankrim, *The Oregon Land Use Story*, 4; Leonard, *Managing Oregon's Growth*, 5.

⁶⁴ For the demographic profile of the environmental group, see "The Longer You Live Here," *Earthwatch Oregon*, March/April 1980, 2-3. For "neo-natives" elsewhere, see Rothman, *Devil's Bargains*.

⁶⁵ Bill Cattvall to Senator Meeker, 9 February 1973, 1973 Legislature Records, Senate Environment and Land Use Committee, Oregon State Archives, Box 59, Folder 5.

Oregon's Wheeler County "to maintain the flavor of our county." The problem, he elaborated, was that land values were shooting up and were increasingly tied to the land's carrying capacity for houses, rather than its ability to feed and water cattle. A vacation house next to a stream or spring might take a thousand acres out of production. Leckie spoke to the value of planning as a way to preserve jobs in traditional industries: "Timber and grazing of livestock were and still are our most important industries, and we need land use planning that is realistic, sensible, and considered, yet does not allow a few to destroy what the rest of us want so dearly to preserve."⁶⁶ This ability to use environmental language was central to farmers' success. Land that farmers saw as economically important, urbanites regarded as beautiful open space.

Timber workers and environmentalists had a less warm relationship. Eyeing clear cuts, Oregon's environmentalists advocated for wilderness that would have removed some timber land from production. Timber workers, especially in the International Woodworkers of America and the Western Council of Lumber Sawmill Workers, had turned out in the 1950s and the first part of the 1960s to support wilderness in hearings. They hoped to preserve a long-term reserve of timber, but they also used rhetoric that resonated with other wilderness advocates. Al Hartung, the International Woodworkers of America president, defended the preservation of old growth in Washington's Olympic National Park, saying that "such things are irreplaceable" and that they could provide enjoyment to a great many people. Hartung also defended the inclusion of merchantable timber in the Forest Service's Three Sisters Wilderness Area in the mid-1950s.⁶⁷

Union support for wilderness designations attenuated in the late 1960s and 1970s. Wilderness advocates used the 1964 federal Wilderness Act to expand designated protected areas beyond the Forest Service's list of wild areas. Oregonians debated specific wilderness

⁶⁶ A.F. Leckie, "Planning in Wheeler County," in Joint Legislative Committee on Land Use, *Final Report* (Salem: State of Oregon, 1976), 87, 86.

⁶⁷ Pebworth, "Evergreen Struggles," 130, 121-158.

designations, especially in the French Pete area, a lowland old growth valley in the mountains east of Eugene. Still, the timber conflicts of later decades were not born overnight. Much of Oregon's timber industry relied on cutting on private land during the 1970s. And the Forest Service's slow work on its series of Roadless Area Review and Evaluation documents left some wilderness debates suspended during the middle of the decade. This left both environmentalists and timber workers to turn their attention to the trade and production practices of large timber companies. And in criticism of those practices, timber workers and environmentalists found some common ground, if not an actionable program.⁶⁸

Oregon environmentalists did not confine their demands to wilderness preservation. They also promoted an economic platform. In 1970 forty demonstrators led by the University of Oregon's chapter of Students for a Democratic Society disrupted Weyerhaeuser recruitment. A political science major told reporters, "We attacked Weyerhaeuser for what it's doing in terms of its international operations, specifically in underdeveloped countries, and also because of the effect that its operations are having not only around the world but domestically on the environment." The students envisioned an "industrial democracy" where people who worked for companies and lived in surrounding communities would make management decisions.⁶⁹

⁶⁸ The history of wilderness is one of environmental history's most developed literatures. Roderick Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1965) is the classic work. Paul Sutter, *Driven Wild: How the Fight Against Automobiles Launched the Modern Wilderness Movement* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2002) details the origins of the Wilderness Society. Mark Harvey, *Wilderness Forever: Howard Zahniser and the Path to the Wilderness Act* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2005) provides a detailed legislative history. Recent scholarship examines the implementation of the wilderness act more than its ideological origins. Kevin Marsh, *Drawing Lines in the Forest: Creating Wilderness Areas in the Pacific Northwest* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2007) and James Turner, *The Promise of Wilderness: American Environmental Politics Since 1964* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2012) are excellent histories of the post-1964 period. Some labor groups opposed wilderness during the 1970s, particularly in construction trades. Ralph Hodges to William Sidell, 2 January 1980, National Forest Products Association Records, Mss. 3395, Forest History Society, Box 207, Binder 1980. Groups that represented owners' interests presented wilderness as a threat. Dick Poskansy, "President's Address," in *Responsible Resource Renewal: Official Proceedings of the Oregon Logging Conference*, Eugene, Oregon February 1972, 5.

⁶⁹ David Pease, "Would You Want Your Son to Work for an Imperialist?" *Forest Industries*, April 1970, 36.

Oregon's mainstream environmentalists did not talk about industrial democracy, but they painted timber companies with a similar brush. Larry Williams, the executive director of the Oregon Environmental Council, told a United States Senate committee that mill owners more than wilderness designations threatened Oregon jobs. He lambasted owners for "gloating over the number of jobs they have removed from the market through automation."⁷⁰ The Oregon Environmental Council also offered some opposition to the export of raw logs. In a letter to Congress in 1973, the group objected to treating log sales as capital gains, saying it encouraged the export of raw logs and "when we export materials, including logs ... we export most of the jobs with it."⁷¹

The International Woodworkers of America agreed with the environmentalist assessment that trade policy and automation mattered more than wilderness designations. Union president Keith Johnson contended that "by nearly everyone's measure, corporate forest lands in the Pacific Northwest are being harvested too rapidly."⁷² He predicted that within fifteen years private forest lands would be completely cut over. Log exports were a big part of the problem. In the late 1970s he described them as the chief threat that the industry faced. Management hoped workers would worry about wilderness, he noted, but arguing about wilderness rather than log exports was "like fighting over the crumbs when someone else is eating the cake."⁷³

The union's commitment to issues other than wilderness led it to support Oregon Representative Jim Weaver's bid for reelection. The union's newspaper advised members that an

⁷⁰ Larry Williams, "Oregon Omnibus Wilderness Bill S. 1384," 25 October 1976, Oregon Environmental Council Records, Mss. 2386-1, Oregon Historical Society, Box B5, Folder 11.

⁷¹ Thomas Guilbert to John Duncan, 22 March 1973, Oregon Environmental Council Records, Mss. 2386-1, Oregon Historical Society, Box B40, Folder 1. See also, Larry Williams to Mark Hatfield, 27 February 1973, Oregon Environmental Council Records, Mss. 2386-1, Oregon Historical Society, Box B40, Folder 1; Jeffrey Foote, "Statement of Oregon Environmental Council Before the Federal Price Commission on Lumber Prices," 8 August 1972, Oregon Environmental Council Records, Box B40, Folder 1.

⁷² "Johnson Outlines IWA Position on Trade," *International Woodworker*, 16 July 1975, 4.

⁷³ Keith Johnson, "Stop Job Export," *International Woodworker*, 15 June 1977, 1.

opponent with support from right-to-work organizations was attacking Weaver for his position on wilderness. Though the union opposed wilderness by this point, it supported Weaver because he was a strong friend to labor. “We may disagree with him [on wilderness], but it’s an honest disagreement,” the paper reported, “if he got defeated it would be a disaster and a disgrace.”⁷⁴ The Woodworkers were also willing to use environmental arguments to oppose unrestrained international trade. In 1978 the union opposed a Weyerhaeuser export facility where the Nisqually River flows into Puget Sound for what it called “environmental reasons,” noting that the area was one of the few unspoiled estuaries on the west coast.⁷⁵

In spite of their intersecting goals, timber workers and environmentalists found it difficult to influence the state and federal agencies that could have helped them bend logging practices to their advantage. Few Oregon politicians or federal bureaucrats opposed the interests of timber companies in the 1970s. Environmentalists complained during the 1970s that Forest Service officials dodged meetings with them. Federal and state agencies failed to notify the Oregon Environmental Council and the Sierra Club when hearings were scheduled about timber issues. The state Board of Forestry proved particularly intransigent. In 1972 when the board contemplated new forest practices rules, it prevented activist Anne Squier from participating in a hearing. The Associated Oregon Industries trade group had reprinted the state board’s draft rules

⁷⁴ “Jim Weaver: A Friend in Need,” *International Woodworker*, 27 September 1978, 8.

⁷⁵ “WeyCo Export Center Opposed by Region 3,” *International Woodworker*, 22 December 1978, 1, 3. See also, “Convention Adopts Forestry, Wilderness Policy,” *International Woodworker*, 16 November 1977, 5; Keith Johnson, “Whose Renewal Resource?” *International Woodworker*, 20 July 1977, 1. There were other signs that rural Oregonians joined urbanites in opposing the actions of the timber industry. Residents near the McKenzie River, a region dependent on timber harvests, sought a buffer zone along the river to protect scenery. McKenzie Guardians, “Number of People Involved,” c. 1970, Oregon Environmental Council Records, Mss. 2386, Box 20, Folder 2; William Berry to Bruce Grefrath, 17 November 1970, National Forest Products Association Records, Mss. 3395, Forest History Society, Box 192a, McKenzie River. The Eastern Oregon Veterans Club sponsored a wilderness workshop sponsored by the Wilderness Society in 1970. Marilyn Cripe to Larry Williams, 18 April 1970, Oregon Environmental Council Records, Mss. 2386, Oregon Historical Society, Box 20, Folder 3. The Oregon Environmental Council had at least one unemployed timber worker offer “to devote some time and what knowledge I have of the timber business toward furthering environmental protection in Oregon.” Jim Rogers to Oregon Environmental Council, 13 February 1975, Oregon Environmental Council Records, Mss. 2386-1, Box B40, Folder 4.

with its own comments and revisions. The state board conducted the hearing on the basis of the Associated Oregon Industries reprinting. There were limited copies and industry representatives did not distribute a copy of the revision proposals to Squier and other environmentalists, leaving them to listen without the ability to participate as board members referred to page numbers on the Associated Oregon Industries draft. The rules that came out of the process were vague guidelines, qualified with references to practicality and economic feasibility.⁷⁶

Timber company power was strong even in Portland. In 1970 the city concluded a sweetheart deal with the Western Wood Products Association, leasing several acres of a city golf course to the group for construction of a forestry center to present “convincing information, new knowledge and understanding of an industry.”⁷⁷ When the Sierra Club objected to the use of city land for industry propaganda, the city council merely passed its letter along to the industry group for an answer. Environmentalists also balked at management of the city’s Forest Park. A civic group composed of industrialists influenced park management. The group, which included timber industry representatives, saw the park as a place “to grow, harvest and sell wood products” and as “a wonderful opportunity to let the citizens of Portland see what logging is like.”⁷⁸ The city also acquiesced to logging in its Bull Run watershed in the Cascades, even as

⁷⁶ Tom McCall generally did not oppose timber company priorities. Among prominent Oregon politicians, Bob Packwood and Jim Weaver were willing to oppose timber companies. Brock Evans to Stewart Brandborg, et al., 13 April 1972, Oregon Environmental Council Records, Mss. 2386-1, Oregon Historical Society, Box B40, Folder 1; Brock Evans to Federal Price Commission on Lumber Prices, 14 August 1972, Oregon Environmental Council Records, Mss. 2386-1, Oregon Historical Society, Box B40, Folder 1; Lawrence Williams to Henry Baldrige, 26 May 1970, Oregon Environmental Council Records, Mss. 2386-1, B9, Folder 10; J.E. Schroeder to Lawrence Williams, 9 June 1970, Oregon Environmental Council Records, Mss. 2386-1, Box B9, Folder 10; Larry Williams to Stevie Remington, 31 July 1974, Oregon Environmental Council Records, Mss. 2386, Oregon Historical Society, Box 17, Folder 26; Anne Squier to J.E. Schroeder, 24 February 1972, Oregon Environmental Council Records, Mss. 2386, Oregon Historical Society, Box 4, Folder 30; Marsh, *Drawing Lines in the Forest*, 110-111; Robbins, *Landscapes of Conflict*, 179-181, 185-187.

⁷⁷ Western Forestry Center, “Introducing You to the Western Forestry Center,” c. 1971, Oregon Environmental Council Records, Mss. 2386, Oregon Historical Society, Box 17, Folder 26.

⁷⁸ Martin Davis to Neil Goldschmidt, 27 October 1972, Oregon Environmental Council Records, Mss. 2386-1, Oregon Historical Society, Box B40, Folder 1

concerns mounted in the middle of the decade that logging threatened water quality by contributing to fire risk and erosion around the reservoirs that supplied the city.⁷⁹

DEVELOPING A SYSTEM OF PLANNING

Farm-related policy proved a more welcoming arena in which to grow the state apparatus and manage Oregon's economy. When state senators Hector Macpherson and Ted Hallock developed their comprehensive land use planning law in the 1973 legislature, they convened representatives of timber, agriculture, manufacturing, and home building industries, along with city and county government and environmental groups. The interest groups hammered out a compromise that would extend state authority over all non-federal land in Oregon, eroding the autonomy of local and county governments. (The system would also grow the planning profession in Oregon, but in 1973 city governments saw it as a threat.) In doing so, the new law would provide the state and activists who influenced it unprecedented sway over the economy and landscape. Those effects were in the future, though, and the new law passed first the Senate and then the House with overwhelming support from legislators in the Portland area and in Willamette Valley farm counties. The law's importance to the state's economic and environmental future, as well as its role in opening state government to citizen participation,

⁷⁹ Larry Williams to Bill Williamson, 9 December 1970, Oregon Environmental Council Records, Mss. 2386, Oregon Historical Society, Box 17, Folder 26; "The Hoyt Pitch and Putt Course," 27 October 1970, Oregon Environmental Council Records, Mss. 2386, Oregon Historical Society, Box 17, Folder 26; "Forest Park Eyed as Timber Management Lesson," *Earthwatch Oregon*, November 1972, 14-15; "Bull Run: Clean Water or Clear-Cut?" *Earthwatch Oregon*, January/February 1976, 8-9; Rick Harmon, "The Bull Run Watershed: Portland's Enduring Jewel," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 96 (Summer/Fall 1995): 242-270a; Roy Wilson, "Cooperation and Conflict in a Federal-Municipal Watershed: A Case Study of Portland, Oregon," *Environmental History Review* 16 (Autumn 1992): 75; "City Official Says Bull Run Logging Not Harming Water," *Oregonian*, 28 July 1973, B6; Doug Babb, "The Big Run on Bull Run," *Willamette Week*, 29 November 1976, 2.

became fully apparent only in the months after its passage. The law's provisions and the legal context that governed it merit some attention.⁸⁰

The new land use planning law's fifty-eight sections divided responsibility between state and local government. The law established a seven-member Land Conservation and Development Commission (that Oregonians would soon call LCDC) and a state agency to provide it with staff support. The LCDC had the power to issue permits for "activities of statewide significance," such as the expansion of water and sewerage infrastructure.⁸¹ This was regarded at the time as the law's greatest expansion of state power. But the law also charged the LCDC with holding hearings to write goals and guidelines to shape county planning. Cities and counties would be required to write comprehensive plans in accordance with these goals and submit them to Land Conservation and Development Commission review. This power to shape county plans would centralize planning authority and would prove to be more important than the review of significant developments.⁸²

Much of the work of translating Oregonians' concern with farmland preservation and livability would fall to courts and to the LCDC. The legal landscape was changing even as the legislature debated the bill. In March 1973 the Oregon Supreme Court gave new weight to comprehensive plans and charged planning commissions with new responsibilities. The court held that hearings before planning officials were quasi-judicial and had to follow basic

⁸⁰ Walker and Hurley, *Planning Paradise*, 50; Little, *The New Oregon Trail*; Walth, *Fire at Eden's Gate*, 360-361; Memo from Richard Cohan, 10 August 1972, Oregon Environmental Council Records, Mss. 2386, Oregon Historical Society, Box 21, Folder 25; Abbott, Howe, and Adler, "Introduction," xiv.

⁸¹ Oregon Senate, *Relating to Land Use; Creating New Provisions*, 1973 Legislature, S.B. 100, <http://www.oregon.gov/LCD/docs/bills/sb100.pdf>.

⁸² The law also provided for the establishment of a joint legislative committee that was to monitor the plan and to prepare recommendations for a program to compensate landowners who saw the use of their land restricted by the new law. The state legislature also passed companion bills providing for the recapture of ten years' deferred taxes when farmland was developed and introducing new requirements for subdivisions. Mark Greenfield, John Mills, *A Citizen's Guide to Land Use Decision-making: A "How To" Handbook for Participants in Land Use Proceedings* (Portland: 1000 Friends of Oregon, 1985); Oregon Senate, *Relating to Land Use; Creating New Provisions*; Henry Richmond, "From Sea to Shining sea: Manifest Destiny and the National Land Use Dilemma," *Pace Law Review* 13 (Fall 1993): 340-341.

procedural rules. The court's opinion also set a high bar for planning officials to meet before they could approve development not contemplated in zoning ordinances. Planners had to be satisfied that any variance met a public need and that issuing a variance for a particular property was the best way to meet that need. The more significant the development that a variance would allow, the more certain planners had to be that it met these standards. In short, once they had written a zoning code, county officials had to follow it. The court addressed planning again in 1975, subordinating zoning ordinances to the county plans subject to Land Conservation and Development Commission review. Developers were entitled to build according to uses laid out in a comprehensive plan even if the ordinances created under the plan did not allow building. These court decisions made determining goals and assessing county plans the LCDC's most important function.⁸³

The Land Conservation and Development Commission developed its land use goals and guidelines in 1974. Some 10,000 Oregonians congregated in high school gymnasiums and community centers across the state to talk with each other and with members of the LCDC about the way that they wanted the program to work. How closely anybody listened at these meetings is difficult to say, but they gave an air of popular support to the technical language of state planners. Fourteen goals emerged from those hearings. Some were procedural. One of the goals acknowledged both the rhetorical importance of rural resources in state politics and the power of the timber industry by calling for continued production of wood fiber on forest lands. Other goals called for the preservation of environmental quality and open space and the provision of

⁸³ Krannich, "A Modern Disaster," 82-83; *Fasano v. Washington County*, 507 P.2d 23, Oregon Supreme Court (1973); *Baker v. City of Milwaukie*, 533 P.2d 722, Oregon Supreme Court (1975); Nelson and Knaap, *The Regulated Landscape*, 137. In 1977 the legislature clarified that once the LCDC acknowledged a comprehensive plan, the plan could be implemented without further reference to the goals. This provision gave counties an incentive to get plans acknowledged quickly. It also raised the stakes of LCDC acknowledgement decisions. Leonard, *Managing Oregon's Growth*, 25; Edward Sullivan, "The Legal Evolution of the Oregon Planning System," in *Planning the Oregon Way: A Twenty Year Evaluation*, ed. by Carl Abbott, Deborah Howe, Sy Adler (Corvallis: Oregon State University Press, 1994), 53.

affordable housing. The two most important were the linked goals of restraining urban growth and preserving farmland. With these two goals, planners hitched the system to broader concerns about production and speculation. As the goals laid the groundwork for a system that would proscribe development on nearly all of the state's rural land, they drew on the cultural valorization of rural areas and resource production to do it.⁸⁴

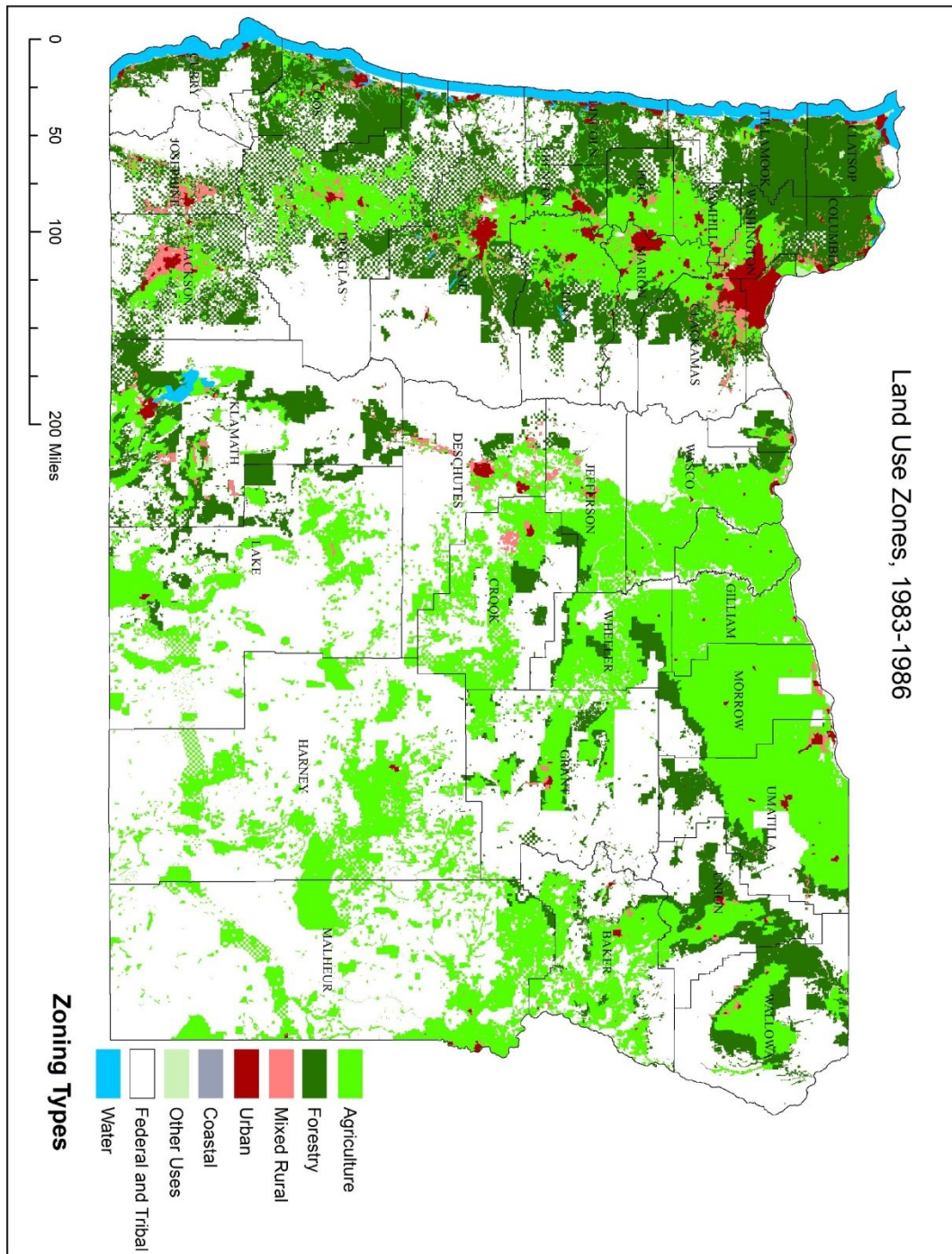
The program revolved around the goal stating that “agricultural land shall be preserved and maintained for farm use.”⁸⁵ Indeed, in the program's first years this and the goal protecting timber production were the only ones enforced by the Land Conservation and Development Commission. The agricultural goal called for minimum lot sizes in farm zones and excluded most non-agricultural uses from them. Only houses that were necessary for the management of a farm and did not take good land out of production would be allowed. Definitions mattered in such a sweeping provision, and the LCDC struggled with how to define “agricultural land.” By the middle of the 1980s counties conforming to state goals would exclude non-agricultural development from more than ninety percent of the state's private land, as Figure Five shows.⁸⁶

⁸⁴ Rural residents contended that the meetings afforded little opportunity for real participation. There were also suggestions that reports issued about the meetings did not accurately reflect the views expressed there. Stafford Hansel, in 1000 Friends Roundtable, interview by Carl Abbott and Deborah Howe, 14 December 1992, SR 1056-1058, transcript, Oregon Historical Society. The fourteen original goals were citizen involvement; land use planning (detailing procedures); agricultural lands; forest lands; natural resources, scenic and historic areas, and open spaces; air, water and land resource quality; areas subject to natural hazards; recreational needs; economic development; housing; public facilities and services; transportation; energy conservation; and urbanization. In 1975 and 1976 the LCDC adopted additional goals surrounding the Willamette River and coastal preservation. Land Conservation and Development Commission, *Statewide Planning Goals and Guidelines* (Salem: State of Oregon, 1974).

⁸⁵ Land Conservation and Development Commission, *Statewide Planning Goals and Guidelines*, 4.

⁸⁶ Joint Legislative Committee on Land Use, Final Report, 7-8. Some of the accepted uses in farm zones included churches and golf courses. Uses would be limited as enforcement of farm provisions became more stringent in the 1980s. Beginning in 1985, for example, building permits for farmhouses could only be issued to applicants who filed a farm management plan to demonstrate that the house was part of a bona fide commercial operation. Pease, “Oregon Rural Land Use,” 165.

Figure Five: Land Use Zoning Types, 1983-1986⁸⁷



⁸⁷ Agriculture and forest zones are generally exclusive use, allowing only buildings necessary to advance resource production. Most of the state's housing development is contained within urban zones. Data from Oregon Land Conservation and Development Department by way of ESRI ArcGIS Online. For a similar map, see also, William Loy, ed., *Atlas of Oregon* (Eugene: University of Oregon Press, 1976, 2001), 86-87.

Senate Bill 100 had referred to “prime farm lands for the production of crops” in its discussion of farmland.⁸⁸ The United States Department of Agriculture defined prime as land whose soil, topography, and access to water made it well-suited for growing crops. Much of the state’s land was too hilly to be prime and, in any case, maps were not readily available to distinguish prime farm land from land that was not. So the LCDC focused on soil chemistry, relying on maps and classifications made by the Soil Conservation Service. This meant extending the definition of agricultural land to any land in western Oregon on which field crops could be grown and in eastern Oregon to land that could not support crops, but could support grazing. If soil chemistry made farming or ranching at all possible in an area, planners were to allow no uses that might threaten the agricultural economy.⁸⁹

The emphasis on protecting the resource economy also informed the new system’s treatment of urban land. Cities were required to draw a line to “separate urbanizable land from rural land.”⁹⁰ If farms were to be saved from suburbs, cities would have to change. They would have to develop fully within their boundaries before looking to farms and fields beyond the urban growth boundary. It was especially important to prevent the cropping up of houses here and there in ways that might preclude dense development in the future. Land use change, the goal on cities stated, should be orderly, requiring a quick transition from open fields to dense neighborhoods. Those neighborhoods would be planned to take as little good land out of production as possible, steering away from protected soil classes. This was the idea, but the

⁸⁸ Oregon Senate, *Relating to Land Use; Creating New Provisions*.

⁸⁹ Land Conservation and Development Commission, *Statewide Planning Goals and Guidelines*, 4; Richard Benner, “Marginal Lands and the E.F.U. Reforms,” Oregon Land Use Conference, Northwestern School of Law, 18 February 1984, 1000 Friends of Oregon Records Accession 08-053, University of Oregon Special Collections, Box 88, Folder Oregon Farmland Protection. There were eight Soil Conservation Service classifications. Farmland was considered to be anything up to class four in western Oregon and up to class six in eastern Oregon. The extension of protection up to class six east of the Cascades indicates just how expansive their definition of farmland was. The goals allowed for exceptions to these designations when county plans demonstrated that local circumstances made the designation unreasonable. Leonard, *Managing Oregon’s Growth*, 18-19.

⁹⁰ Land Conservation and Development commission, *Statewide Planning Goals and Guidelines*, 8.

LCDC recognized that cities were complex entities, and there were other goals to consider. The commission hedged its urban growth boundary requirements. Those boundaries had to balance farmland protection against the need to provide affordable housing as population expanded. The Land Conservation and Development Commission directed planners to consider likely population growth to the year 2000. The result was a set of guidelines that sought to protect farmland, but left cities latitude in fulfilling their part of the bargain.⁹¹

In the middle of the 1970s Oregon had hung flesh on the skeleton of a plan to shape development in the state. Decisions made outside the legislature proved at least as important as those made in its committees. The groundwork for the plan was laid by a farmer who immersed himself in the politics of planning, but support for planning did not end at the barnyard fence. Farmers found ready allies in urbanites. Both farmers and quality-of-life liberals attached their goals to those on the other side of the state's urban-rural divide. Tensions between these sets of goals were unacknowledged in the early and mid-1970s as implementation of the plan favored farmers. The quality-of-life crowd wanted open space and the satisfaction that came with living in a still-rural state, but they also wanted single-family homes, large lots, and lack of urban density that fueled the very sprawl they hated. The administrative goals that would define the land use program heeded these vague concerns by speaking to the need for clean air and water, open spaces, and recreational opportunities. But the plan's legal functioning allowed no such vagueness. It demanded specificity that could be enforced against counties and cities. The state's commercial farmers had such a specific agenda in the protection of the agricultural economy.

⁹¹ Land Conservation and Development Commission, *Statewide Planning Goals and Guidelines*, 8. As goals developed, the legislature considered a compensation program for those who saw the value of their property decline as a result of planning decisions. The legislature considered creating a fund that would tax people who received windfall increases in value due to planning decisions in order to compensate those whose land values declined. The creation of such a fund posed logistical problems, and the legislature in 1976 declined to set up a compensation program. Joint Legislative Committee on land Use, *Final Report*, 35-36.

The legal weight of the system would rest on this goal above the others. Suburbs would be kept out of the fields and population would be directed toward increasingly dense cities.

PRODUCERISM AND PLANNING

Quality-of-life liberals did not initially understand that the plan would turn on the needs of farmers, but those on the inside understood this clearly. Among the insiders was Henry Richmond III, a thirty-two-year-old graduate of the University of Oregon Law School. Born in Yakima, Richmond was the son of a Bonneville Power Administration official. Inspired by Ralph Nader, Richmond had incorporated the Oregon Student Public Research Interest Group while still in law school. In 1975 he left OSPIRG to found 1000 Friends of Oregon with Tom McCall, then in the last months of his governorship. The group aimed to fund a close watch over the implementation of the state's land use planning program. Membership grew quickly. The group's newsletter circulation mushroomed from 2,500 in 1975 to 16,000 three years later. Richmond enlisted Oregon's political elite to sit with McCall on the board of 1000 Friends of Oregon, bringing the president of the regional electric company, newspaper publishers, and the wife of a sitting governor to the cause of planning.⁹²

With an agenda of preserving farmland, 1000 Friends of Oregon enmeshed itself in the state's legal and bureaucratic functions in ways that groups seeking to influence timber politics could only dream of. Attorneys associated with the group taught classes on land use planning at the state's law schools. They led training sessions for lawyers and for city and county officials. In 1978 lawyers at 1000 Friends of Oregon edited the state bar association's practice book on land use. The group's most important role, though, proved to be in court rooms and in hearings

⁹² Walker and Hurley, *Planning Paradise*, 69; Ronald Buel, "1,000 Friends Nudges Planners," *Willamette Week*, 6 August 1979, 4; 1000 Friends of Oregon, *A Report to the Members of 1000 Friends of Oregon* (Portland: 1000 Friends of Oregon, c. 1979).

before the LCDC. Few local governments were willing to take land use issues to court, so it fell to 1000 Friends of Oregon to explore the borders of the program by filing appeals. Even when the group did not file a formal appeal, it often submitted commentary to the LCDC. By the late 1970s, the group claimed credit for “most of the precedent-setting court and LCDC decisions which have clarified and strengthened Oregon’s farmland preservation policies.”⁹³ Even as late as the mid-1980s, government officials had taken developers to court only six times to flesh out the meaning of the program. 1000 Friends of Oregon, on the other hand, had provided free legal services to hundreds of people who opposed particular development projects. They won ninety percent of their cases.⁹⁴

As 1000 Friends of Oregon built its influence in land use politics, it took up the mantle of preserving farmland and ensuring that the state encouraged economically productive land use. In 1976 and again in 1978, 1000 Friends of Oregon worked with others to head off initiative challenges to the program. Business and labor groups that supported planning told voters in 1976 that “Oregon’s wealth is in the land.” Land use planning helped keep Oregon forests in production, that year’s voter pamphlet proclaimed, and “land use planning is a positive force in working toward full employment in Oregon.”⁹⁵ Hector Macpherson warned that a repeal of his Senate Bill 100 “would serve the interests of a few land speculators.” Livability would suffer, Macpherson went on, as homeowners lost the ability “to protect property values against the

⁹³ 1000 Friends of Oregon, *A Report to the Members of 1000 Friends of Oregon*, 13.

⁹⁴ Court decisions construed standing in land uses cases broadly, allowing anybody who testified at a local hearing to appeal the decision from that hearing. Until 1979, appeals could be taken to circuit court or to the LCDC. To relieve a backlog, the legislature then created a Land Use Board of Appeals. Decisions it makes pertaining to goals are referred to the LCDC. Parties may appeal its decisions to the state Court of Appeals. 1000 Friends of Oregon, *A Report to the Members of 1000 Friends of Oregon*; Kartez, “Planning Preservation,” 150; Henry Richmond, “From the Director,” *Landmark*, Fall 1984, 2; Leonard, *Managing Oregon’s Growth*, 20-25.

⁹⁵ Committee for Jobs and Sound Development, “Argument in Opposition,” in Secretary of State, Official Voters’ Pamphlet General Election, November 2, 1976 (Salem: State of Oregon, 1976), 34.

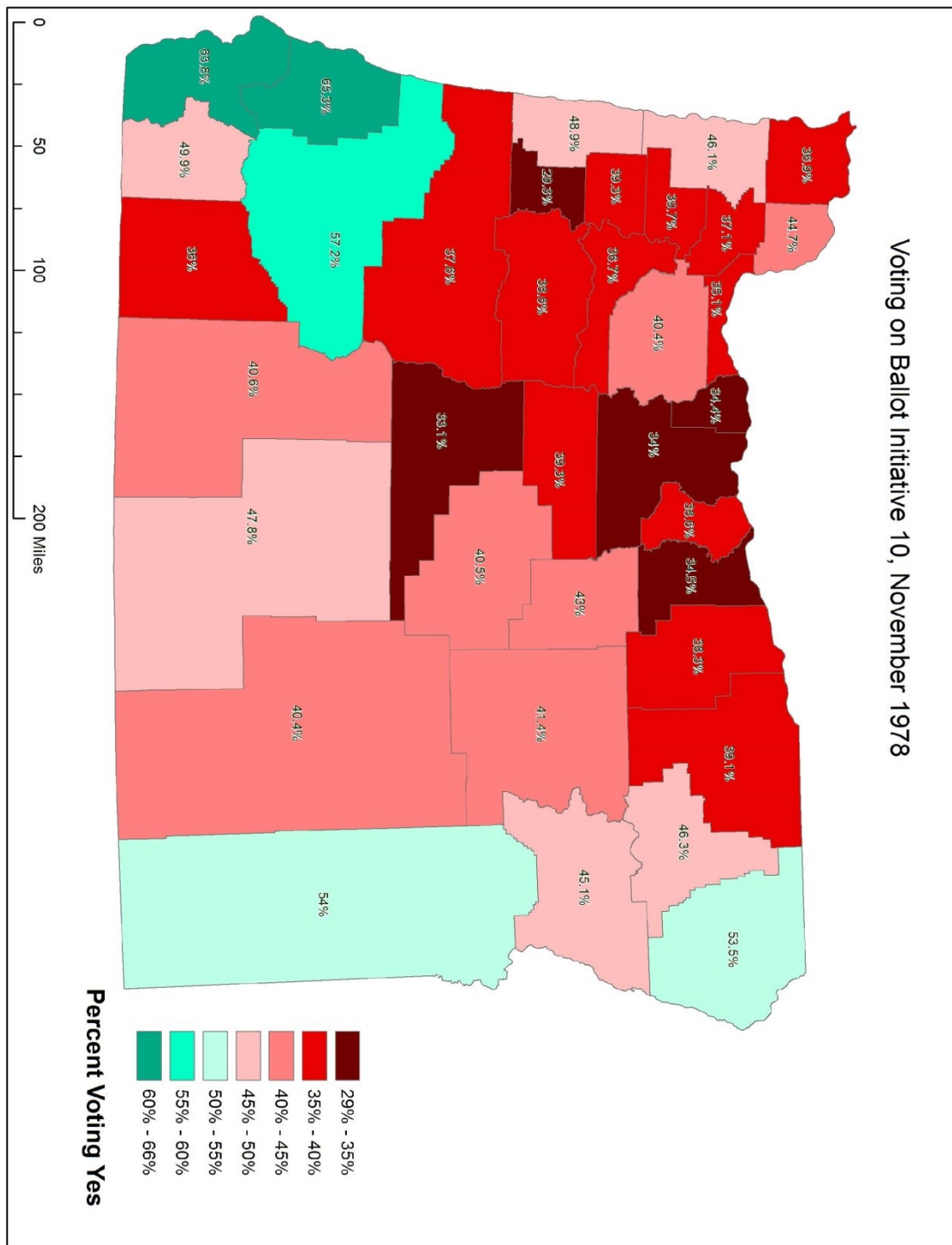
blight of mismanaged growth.”⁹⁶ Two years later he again warned that if an initiative overturned Oregon’s planning goals, “it’s our livelihood that’s lost.”⁹⁷ Voters rejected both initiatives soundly, and did so with substantial support in both urban and rural areas. In 1976 Portland voters strongly supported planning, but so too did voters in all Willamette Valley counties and ten of the counties east of the Cascades. The 1978 measure lost in all but five of Oregon’s counties, as Figure Five shows. Rural and urban Oregon found common ground in support of a program that promised both livability and protection of traditional industry.⁹⁸

⁹⁶ Hector Macpherson, “Argument in Opposition,” in Secretary of State, *Official Voters’ Pamphlet General Election, November 2, 1976* (Salem: State of Oregon, 1976), 35.

⁹⁷ Farmers and Ranchers Against Measure 10, “Argument in Opposition,” in Secretary of State, *Official 1978 General Voters’ Pamphlet* (Salem: State of Oregon, 1978), 65.

⁹⁸ Justin Fuller, “A Statistical Analysis of Oregon’s Land-Use Ballot Initiatives” (MA Thesis, Oregon State University, 2008), 29, 30.

Figure Six: Voting by County on Ballot Initiative 10, November 1978⁹⁹



⁹⁹ Oregon Secretary of State, Official Abstract of Votes, *General Election November 1978* (Salem: State of Oregon, 1978), 42; For a similar map, see also, Fuller, "A Statistical Analysis of Oregon's Land-Use Ballot Initiatives," 30.

Meanwhile, 1000 Friends of Oregon continued to promote the state's agricultural economy. Richmond told a Portland newspaper in 1979 that Oregon's agricultural produce was worth \$1 billion a year: "Some 85 per cent of our farm goods are shipped outside the state, and the only reason we can do that is because of the high yields on these lands. For the sake of our economy, we've got to prevent these class one and two agricultural lands from being developed."¹⁰⁰ Richmond pursued the same agenda behind the scenes, recruiting farmers to sit on the board of 1000 Friends of Oregon. Several months before his newspaper interview he had also asked Governor Victor Atiyeh to appoint to the LCDC a Hood River County planning commissioner because her father had been a rancher and she was an orchardist. "This background would bring a valuable outside-the-Willamette-Valley perspective on agricultural questions from a county that relies heavily on agriculture," Richmond wrote.¹⁰¹ Two years later he would celebrate "solid commercial operators" who showed up at a legislative hearing to say that predictable planning allowed them to plan long term investments on their farms. That "one of them looked like a silo that needed a bath" was all the better.¹⁰²

The alliance that the Portland-based lawyers forged with farmers was striking in a state that had seen a century of conflict between urbanites and rural producers. Richmond and his staff at 1000 Friends were the sorts of urban professionals that farmers in the 1870s had defined themselves against. There had been the possibility of alliances across city boundaries in the 1930s, but the radicalism of the urbanites who looked for farm allies did not always sit well with rural folk. It is striking that farmers and environmentalists cooperated in the 1970s amid disputes

¹⁰⁰ Buel, "1,000 Friends Nudge Planners," 4.

¹⁰¹ Henry Richmond to Victor Atiyeh, 29 May 1979, 1000 Friends of Oregon Records, Accession 05-021, University of Oregon Special Collections, Box 32, Folder LCDC Appointments.

¹⁰² Henry Richmond to Tom McCall, 1 April 1981, 1000 Friends of Oregon, Accession 05-021, University of Oregon Special Collections, Box 32, Folder Unlabeled; "Outline of Remarks by Blair Batson, Coordinator 1000 Friends of Oregon Farmer Advisory Committee," 11 December 1997, 1000 Friends of Oregon, Accession 08-053, University of Oregon Special Collections, Box 50, Folder Speeches 1997 FAC.

over timber harvests and a growing concern among urban Oregonians about use of pesticides. Urban environmentalists in 1000 Friends of Oregon and the Oregon Environmental Council stood to gain from the cooperation, tying their programs to the prestige of farmers and to their real contribution to the economy. And the environmentalists, particularly in 1000 Friends of Oregon, genuinely believed in the importance of farm production. This belief was not confined to a narrow interest group. A 1978 poll that 1000 Friends of Oregon commissioned in Portland, Salem, Eugene, and Medford revealed that farm preservation was central to support for planning. Farm preservation was the leading reason the 64% of urban voters who supported planning gave to explain their support. And support for farm preservation extended beyond those who favored Oregon's current system of planning. A full 82% of those surveyed favored keeping subdivisions off farmland.¹⁰³

Farmers also stood to gain by allying with environmentalists. The support of urban legislators was necessary to pass land use planning. And the rhetorical importance of farming to the system would help protect the continuation of dusty and noisy farm practices. This was a new strategy for the state's farmers. Previous debates about production had pitted rural folk against urbanites. In the 1870s farmers contended that production only took place in farms outside of Portland and in the 1930s planners argued that socially beneficial industrial production could not stray far from the soil. In each of these debates rural people asked Portlanders to give something up: franchises on city streets, wealth drawn into city companies, or electricity that could attract industrial jobs to the city. In the 1970s the debate was more about preserving the past than hailing the future. At stake was not where production belonged, but the value of production in the first place. In the unstable economy of the 1970s, farmers and urbanites suspicious of the

¹⁰³ Oregon Attitudes, Inc., "A Survey on Attitudes towards Land Use Planning and Ballot Measure 10," 1000 Friends of Oregon Records, Accession 05-021, University of Oregon Special Collections, Box 71, Folder Untitled.

changes they saw around them found more common ground that they had before. The alliance required sacrifices only from developers

This is not to say that all urbanites and all farmers were united in support of land use planning. The strongest early opposition to land use came from people who opposed the expansion of state government. While the bill was being debated in the legislature, some Oregonians had written to say that they saw it as having “every indication of a giant step toward a communistic state government.”¹⁰⁴ Another writer claimed that Cuba had taken similar steps during the revolution. To a few people, land use planning confirmed conspiracy theories they had about an expansion of government that they thought was being planned in a particular building on the University of Chicago campus. Others had more rational concerns, worrying about changes planning would make to property values. Realtors were concerned that planners would “price the average working man out of the [housing] market.”¹⁰⁵ Others feared planning would reduce the price of land. Jim Allison formed the Oregon Rural Landowners Association, calling planning “the biggest land grab since our great-grandparents took this land away from Indians.”¹⁰⁶ Opposition cut across urban and rural Oregon. Allison himself lived in Hillsboro, the seat of a rapidly developing county in the Portland metro area. Members of his organization needed only to own two acres. And Allison had no qualms about recruiting support from those with more tenuous claims to rural life. He collected most of the signatures in support of ballot measures in opposition to urban planning in the state’s big cities.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁴ John Weber to Committee on SB 100 Land Use Planning, 1973 Legislature Records, Senate Environment and Land Use Committee, Oregon State Archives, Box 59, Folder 6.

¹⁰⁵ B.J. Rogers, “Portland Board of Realtors Speech,” 6 February, 1974, Oregon Environmental Council Records, Mss. 2386, Oregon Historical Society Library, Box 21, Folder 24; B.J. Rogers, “Testimony before the Senate Environment and Land Use Committee,” 1973 Legislature Records, Senate Environment and Land Use Committee, Oregon State Archives, Box 59, Folder 6.

¹⁰⁶ Quoted in Little, *The New Oregon Trail*, 17

¹⁰⁷ Ruby Nichols to Silverton Citizen, 5 October 1972, 1973 Legislature Records, Senate Environment and Land Use Committee, Oregon State Archives, Box 59, Folder 5; Kenneth Alexander to Senate Committee on Environment and

These concerns would begin to matter more in the 1980s. Questions about the size of government, but especially about the losses that some landowners suffered as planning decisions made their land unavailable for development, would gain a foothold in Oregon politics. But these concerns could threaten the planning regime only after the alliance between urbanites and rural people that had given birth to it weakened. The weakening of the bonds that held urban and rural Oregon together in a common project is the story of the 1980s and 1990s.

There were harbingers of that story in the 1970s. Strong as the alliance between urban and rural Oregon was, it rested on unstable foundations. The 1970s were an unusually prosperous decade for American farmers, and when other grain-producing regions increased production and the United States ended its wheat sales to the Soviet Union, prices fell. The economic interests that held farmers to the program began to attenuate. Farm investment could not produce forever the rate of return it did in the 1970s. The backward-looking scheme for economic stability seemed less workable to farmers after the 1970s. Some farmers would see development as an attractive option when farm profits fell again.

The alliance also depended on a healthy forest economy during the 1970s. The strength of the rural economy and the strength of union politics hostile to corporations had ensured that

Land Use, no date, 1973 Legislature Records, Senate Environment and Land Use Committee, Box 59, Folder 5, Oregon State Archives; "Landowners Plan Action to Fight Bill," *Oregonian*, 27 December 1972, B10; Jack Munro, "Signers Sought for Land Use Amendment," *Associated Oregon Industries News Digest*, May 1976, 5. Even groups that sought to overturn the Oregon system of planning had to recite the importance of protecting farmland from speculators. Opponents focused criticism not on the system's purpose, but on the power that the system vested in unelected officials. The power to set planning goals properly belonged to the legislature, they contended. In 1976, the Grange lent support to the ethos behind the program when it railed against "land speculators looking for quick profits." Peter Wiley, "Last Ditch Stand for Family Farmers," *Oregon Grange Bulletin*, 21 June 1976, 4. At election time, the Grange explained that it supported planning in general, but opposed the form it took in Oregon: "We are now paying for the willy-nilly suburban development that has resulted in the urban sprawl that is gobbling up thousands of acres of our state's prime farm land each year. We know that good planning is essential." "Let's Start Fresh," *Oregon Grange Bulletin*, 18 October 1976, 4. The problem, the Grange explained, was the "dictatorial attitude" of the directors who oversaw the system. Similar opposition to a "dictatorial system of government" would animate opposition to planning in 1978. "Reasons for Oregon Citizens 'Yes,'" 1000 Friends of Oregon Records, Accession 05-021, University of Oregon Special Collections, Box 71, Folder Ballot Measure Explanations. See also, "Urban Sprawl Eats Farmland," *Oregon Grange Bulletin*, 4 September 1978, 1; Peter Wiley, "Last Ditch Stand for Family Farmers," *Oregon Grange Bulletin*, 21 June 1976, 4.

discussions about timber and discussions about farmland preservation remained largely separate in the 1970s. As the rural economy began to suffer, the prosperity that had helped keep those two discussions apart crumbled. Tension between rural and urban people increased during the recession that hit the region in the early 1980s. By the end of the 1980s it would be impossible to discuss land use planning without also discussing limits on the harvest of federally-owned timber.

Perhaps astute observers should have seen these fractures in the bulwark that producers and environmentalists erected against the economic changes of the 1970s. Other weaknesses were less apparent. Oregon's seemingly fresh environmental ethic in the late 1960s and 1970s had historical antecedents in the Portlanders who sought to exclude noxious uses from their neighborhoods at the turn of the twentieth century or to prevent factories from despoiling scenery in the Gorge during the 1930s. These early Portlanders were complicated people who used environmental arguments instrumentally, concerned as much with restraining others as with restraining pollution. Those who took comfort in the strength of urbanites' environmental convictions in the late 1970s, believing that they grew out of a pressing need to confront what Tom McCall had called "the grasping wastrels of the land," would have done well to look to the past.

Like earlier Portlanders, the environmentalists of the 1970s relied on the rhetoric of place. The arguments that it allowed proved thin. Oregonians, perhaps especially the well-educated relative newcomers who swelled the ranks of the Oregon Environmental Council, believed that their state was something apart from others, especially from fast-paced California. They looked with pride to the small-town atmosphere that prevailed even in cities, to open spaces, and to the state's scenery. There were contradictions in these visions of Oregon's sterling

quality of life, but few in the 1970s recognized them. A survey of Willamette Valley residents found that most thought preserving farmland should be the first priority of government. Three quarters of valley residents wanted to see limits on growth. These same valley residents, however, envisioned making few changes to the way they lived in order to preserve farmland. They expected to continue living in single family homes. Even as they spoke of keeping cities away from farmland, the valley's residents espoused hostility toward urban life. A majority of valley residents agreed that "everyone should have the right to live in the country."¹⁰⁸ Oregon's vision of the good life was essentially suburban, even as Oregonians recognized suburbs as a threat to the quality they valued.¹⁰⁹

Indeed, strong support for action to maintain quality of life came from areas of the state where contradictions in the tenets of livability were most stark. Those who lived in suburbs, occupying houses most recently built on farmers' fields, spoke more strongly against growth than did central city residents. When the state sponsored meetings to discuss planning goals in 1974, suburbanites turned out more frequently than Portlanders. Perhaps the contradictions coming out of those meetings should be unsurprising. Oregonians thought that the primary goal of land use planning should be to "preserve prime agricultural [and] ranch lands." Containing sprawl also ranked near the top of the list. At the same time, workshop participants valued the kind of life that could only be had outside of dense cities. They touted "rural aspects of

¹⁰⁸ Robert Logan, *Inroads Toward Positive Land Use Management: A Land Value Adjustment Proposal* (Salem: State of Oregon, 1974), 2.

¹⁰⁹ Environmentalists shared these suburban assumptions. The Oregon Environmental Council's Martin Davis hoped to get the state to develop "amenity standards." Residents would have easy access to open space, would face little traffic, and would live with enough space to allow for dedicated pedestrian paths. Davis's amenity standards imagined a suburban existence, albeit one that provided for public transportation and low income housing. No wonder that suburban Oregonians rated their quality of life higher than did urbanites or rural residents. "Testimony Presented before the Land Conservation and Development Commission, Salem, Oregon," 2 February 1974, Land Conservation and Development Commission Meeting Notebooks, Accession 96A-26, Oregon State Archives, Box 1, Folder Feb 1974; Louis Harris and Associates, *The Public's View of Environmental Problems in the State of Oregon* (New York: Louis Harris and Associates, 1970), Oregon Environmental Council Records, Mss. 2386, Oregon Historical Society, Box 3, Folder 17; Oregon Land Conservation and Development Commission, *A Report on the First Series of "People and the Land Public Workshops"* (Salem: State of Oregon, 1974).

community,” “low density population,” “small town environment” and “lack of crowding” near their homes.¹¹⁰ They could not have it all, and when they eventually faced the choice, many quality-of-life liberals followed Portlanders before them in using the ethic of place as a way to defend their own narrow interests.

But as the 1970s closed, the consensus looked strong. For a decade or more, some of the tensions between the producer vision and the ethic of place fell away. Together, urbanites concerned with place and rural people proud of what they produced met the challenges of the world economy. They found value, or at least utility, in the ideology of people on the other side of city limits. Drawing from each other’s ideologies, urban environmentalists and some farmers and timber workers came to reasonable conclusions about the nature of economic changes that were not always easy to understand. Sometimes, in achieving only weak regulation of logging on private land or in hoping that the federal government would limit log exports, they failed to enact meaningful reform.

But within Oregon’s geographical boundaries they developed, temporarily at least, workable strategies to manage the changes the new economy wrought on the land. In doing so, they developed a realm of state government arguably more powerful than any other and helped to ensure that its methods and outlook were pluralistic, beholden to people and activism more than to economic power. In their best moments, they saw the land use planning system as a way to manage the state’s relationship with late-twentieth-century capitalism. That relationship was volatile, though, and the system that Oregonians used to shape it was fragile.

¹¹⁰ Oregon Land Conservation and Development Commission, *A Report on the First Series of “People and the Land Public Workshops,”* 2.

CHAPTER FIVE
ECONOMIC CHANGE, POPULATION GROWTH,
AND THE OREGON STORY, 1980-2000

A month before the November 1982 election, Tom McCall gave the last great speech of his life. The former governor had terminal cancer and, as he put it, “a lot of it.” He told a crowd gathered at an event sponsored by 1000 Friends of Oregon that stress induced the cancer’s spread. “Yet stress is the fuel of the activist,” McCall said as he moved to his emotional crescendo. “This activist loves Oregon more than he loves life,” McCall proclaimed, “I know I can’t have both very long. But the trade-off’s alright with me. But if the legacy we helped to give Oregon and which made it twinkle from afar—if it goes, then I guess I wouldn’t want to live in Oregon anyhow.”¹ The threat to that legacy came in the form of a steep recession that threw into question the reforms of the preceding decade. Oregon voters considered a ballot initiative that would have gutted the state’s system of land use planning by making legally binding land use goals merely advisory. Opinion polls put the ballot measure within striking distance of a November victory.

To head off the challenge, McCall’s speech made land use planning about more than the alliance of farmers and environmentalists that had doggedly defended the state’s economic base against speculative land valuation. It cast attacks on planning as a threat to the ethic of place that the state had forged to privilege quality of life over development. The speech was a dramatic defense of what McCall sometimes called the Oregon story. The dying man’s plea for the state to

¹ Quoted in Larry Hilderbrand, “McCall’s Message Clear: Hold Tightly to Livability,” *Oregonian*, 10 October 1982, C2.

live up to an idealistic vision of itself marked a turning point in the state's economy and environmental politics.²

Fifty-five percent of voters turned down the challenge to the system. Many in Oregon credited McCall's speech with the environmental victory. When McCall died in early 1983, Oregonians flooded his hospital room with sympathy cards celebrating the ethic of place he had inscribed in Oregon politics. His widow, Audrey McCall, gave the cards to 1000 Friends of Oregon, hoping that the sentiments in them could somehow prolong McCall's influence in land use politics. She got her wish. The land use planning system would outlast McCall, even as it came to rest more squarely on his legacy. Supporters would speak in coming years more of quality of life than of economic stability. McCall's support had saved the program in 1982, but it also exposed its weaknesses. Urban and suburban voters heard McCall's appeal more clearly than rural voters. For the first time, voter support for planning was strongest in Multnomah County. As Figure One shows, broad swaths of eastern and southern Oregon voted to overturn the system. The Grange and Cattlemen's Association had supported gutting the system, while members of the Oregon Wheat Grower's League and the Farm Bureau split between support and opposition.³

McCall's Oregon story and the concern with quality of life that it entailed wobbled in the decades ahead. Oregonians had not defined with any precision what they meant by quality of life. Implicitly, though, some had in mind a suburban existence that featured single family

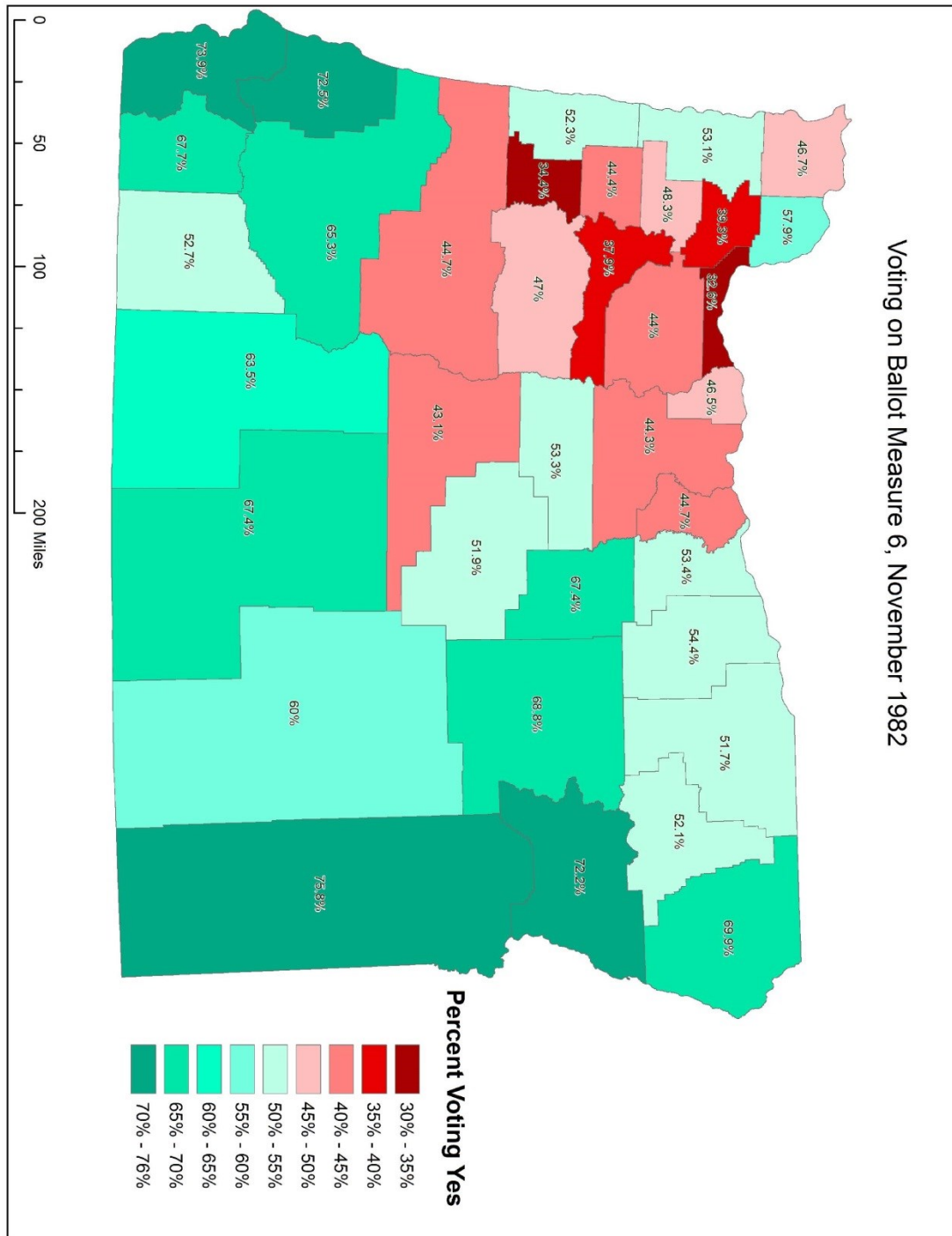
² Hilderband, "McCall's Message Clear," C2; Brent Walth, *Fire at Eden's Gate: Tom McCall and the Oregon Story* (Portland: Oregon Historical Society Press, 1994), 460-461

³ The sympathy cards are in 1000 Friends of Oregon Records, accession 05-021, University of Oregon Special Collections, Box 32. For the importance of McCall's speech, see Walth, *Fire at Eden's Gate*, 460-461; Robbins, *Landscapes of Conflict: The Oregon Story, 1940-2000* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2004), 299-300. For the 1982 election, see Gerrit Knaap and Arthur Nelson, *The Regulated Landscape: Lessons on State Land Use Planning from Oregon* (Cambridge, MA: Lincoln Institute of Land Policy, 1992), 144; William Robbins, *Landscapes of Conflict*, 299; "Farm Mood Unsure on '6': Ballot Effort to Abolish LCDC Keeps Rural Residents at Odds," *Eugene Register Guard*, 29 October 1983.

homes, light traffic, and plenty of nearby open space. The system Oregonians had created sought to distinguish urban from rural, eroding the blending between the two categories that Oregonians who had initially supported the system valued.

This chapter explains the increasing division between urban and rural Oregon that the 1982 election portended. It argues that the origins of that divide lay in economic changes during the 1980s that led both urban and rural Oregonians to rethink their commitment to farmland and timberland preservation. As popular support for preservation of resource land waned, support for the state's system of land use planning came to rest more fully with the urban and suburban voters who articulated a concern for their quality of life, seeing farmland as open fields and timberland as forests. Even as the program's political viability rested on its association with quality of life, its legal functioning continued to ensure the viability of the state's resource economy. The contradictions between the program's function and reasons Oregonians supported it endangered the environmental consensus of the 1970s. The legal imperative to protect the resource economy required increased density in cities and suburbs, anathema to many Oregonians who thought the program would protect their quality of life.

Figure One: Voting on Ballot Measure 6⁴



⁴ Oregon Secretary of State, *Official Abstract of Votes, General Election November 1982* (Salem: State of Oregon, 1982), 30; For a similar map, see, Justin Fuller, “A Statistical Analysis of Oregon’s Land-Use Ballot Initiatives” (MA Thesis, Oregon State University, 2008), 31.

The stories of timber and farming frame this chapter, as they did the last. Those stories, largely separate in the 1970s, became entwined in the 1980s and 1990s. Both farmers and timber workers suffered in the recession of the early 1980s. Urban and suburban Oregon recovered from the recession, adding jobs in new sectors and seeing home prices increase with Oregon's reputation for a sterling quality of life. Rural Oregon suffered longer, and as the economic contrasts between urban and rural areas sharpened, farmers and timber workers could define their prospects against those of urbanites. Timber workers and farmers came to perceive another common plight in government regulation. Farmers who hoped to develop their land, or simply to subdivide it for their children to build houses on, met obstacles in Oregon's stringent land use system. Timber workers explained lost jobs by pointing to Congress's designation of 715,876 acres of Oregon wilderness in 1984 and to the enforcement of the Endangered Species Act, especially, after 1991. One set of regulations was federal and the other state, but in the 1980s and 1990s rural Oregonians regarded both as urban projects that interfered with rural livelihoods.

The government role in land use planning was clear enough. To comply with state law, county comprehensive plans prohibited development on some ninety percent of the state's non-federal land. This chapter traces reaction to those restrictions. Regulation's role in the decline of the Northwest timber industry is harder to pinpoint. The following narrative does not foreground federal wilderness designations or protection of the spotted owl as other accounts of the period do. Changes in the economic structure of the timber industry were at least as important as wilderness or the spotted owl in shaping the industry's fate. Large timber companies continued their 1970s programs of investment in the South and abroad, moving production outside of the Northwest. Those changes entwined with federal policies that involved issues not as iconic as wilderness or the spotted owl. Timber industry lobbyists rightly considered laws governing bids

for Forest Service contracts to be more important than wilderness designations to logging's future in the region. The following account focuses more on interaction between federal policy and economic change in the 1980s than on the spotted owl controversy of the 1990s.⁵

As timber workers and farmers came to believe that they faced similar problems, the ways in which they discussed producerism began to change. The producerism of the 1970s was woven of two different strands. Farmers had touted the importance of production to the state's economy, while timber workers had emphasized the importance of labor solidarity. Both had cast themselves against distant owners of capital, either real estate developers or managers of large timber corporations. This producerism allowed and even sought urban allies. Some timber workers and farmers would continue to describe their labor in those terms in the 1980s and 1990s. Increasingly, however, timber workers and farmers embraced a more strident producerism that cast itself against what it described as clueless urbanites unaware of their reliance on the labor of rural workers. This was the producerism of most of Oregon's political history, one that homogenized the city and imagined the chief divisions in the state to be geographical.

If the language of producerism shifted in the 1980s, the ethic of place remained remarkably consistent. Oregon urbanites and suburbanites continued to defend what they considered to be the unique qualities of their state, pointing to the availability of low-density, quasi-rural living. Urban Oregonians contrasted their quality of living to that of Californians. As Oregon's land use regulations channeled more population into urban and suburban neighborhoods, a strain of the ethic of place dormant during the 1970s became more prominent. Middle-class Portlanders at the turn of the twentieth century had excluded poor people, and

⁵ For the history of wilderness in the region, see Kevin Marsh, *Drawing Lines in the Forest: Creating Wilderness Areas in the Pacific Northwest* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2007). For the spotted owl, see William Dietrich, *Final Forest: The Battle for the Last Great Trees of the Pacific Northwest* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1992, 2010).

especially those who lived in apartments and boarding houses, from the civic community. Even as they advocated for cleaner environments for themselves and their children, they directed environmental problems into neighborhoods of lodging houses and factories. They saw exclusion of poor people from their neighborhoods as a way to define themselves against other Portlanders. In the 1980s and 1990s urbanites and suburbanites sought to exclude apartment-dwellers from their neighborhoods. While some displayed the classism of their turn-of-the-century predecessors, urbanites also wrapped their opposition to multi-family housing in their description of Oregon as a special place. Dense neighborhoods of apartments and townhomes evoked what they saw as California's diminished quality of life.

This story speaks to ironies in broader changes in the late-twentieth-century economy. Scholars of the late-twentieth-century economy contend that amenities attractive to skilled workers can fuel economic growth. Historians of the American West pay particular attention to this phenomenon, sometimes labeling it the creation of a "new West." Scholars of the new West point to two parallel developments fueled by the region's quality of life. Small towns in the interior West found economic opportunities in the transition from an economy based on resource production to one based on the sale of lifestyles and tourism. Tourism had long been a part of the West, but in an economy less constrained by distance, growth took off in places like Bend, Oregon and St. George, Utah that were able to sell an image and amenities to match. The region's big cities also saw growth, and scholars marvel at the creativity and cultural trend-setting in western cities. Portland draws its share of wonderment, and in some ways the city slipped neatly into a new role as a livable place that attracted the density of skilled and creative

workers to become a minor center of skilled manufacturing and creative services in the new economy.⁶

An irony inhered in Oregon's planning system as it came to be identified with the interests of urbanites and with towns successful in the new economy. If Oregon, and particularly Portland, became darlings of a post-industrial economy focused on technology, service, and finance, those were not attentions the Oregonians of the 1970s who constructed the system had been eager to attract. They implemented land use regulations in order to stave off those changes and preserve an economy based in production. In the 1990s when that system appeared most effective at turning Portland into a center in the post-industrial economy, attracting laurels from outside the state, political support for it inside Oregon reached its nadir. Both rural residents, who reacted against the increasing economic divide between their lives and the lives of urbanites, and suburbanites, who objected to the increased population that came with economic growth, turned against the program. Those who looked to Oregon as an exemplar of the new West or saw its planning as a model failed to recognize the state's success as historically contingent and fragile.

⁶ Allen Scott, "Creative Cities: Conceptual Issues and Policy Questions," *Journal of Urban Affairs* 28 (2006): 9-10; Trevor Barnes and Roger Hayter, "'The Little Town That Did': Flexible Accumulation and Community Response in Chemainus, British Columbia," *Regional Studies* (1996): 647-663; Richard Judd and Christopher Beach, *Natural States: The Environmental Imagination in Maine, Oregon, and the Nation* (Washington, DC: Resources for the Future, 2003), 235; William Robbins, *Colony and Empire: The Capitalist Transformation of the American West* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1994), 193, 195; Earl Pomeroy, *The American Far West in the Twentieth Century* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2008), 399-402; Hal Rothman, *Devil's Bargains: Tourism in the Twentieth-Century American West* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1998); Carl Abbott, *How Cities Won the West: Four Centuries of Urban Change in Western North America* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2008), 10-11; Richard Florida, *The Rise of the Creative Class: And How It's Transforming Work, Leisure, Community, and Everyday Life* (New York: Basic Books, 2002, 2004), xxi.

ECONOMIC CHANGE IN THE 1980s

Explaining how rural and suburban support for Oregon's planning system weakened requires an understanding of the national and local economy in the early 1980s. A few days before the 1982 election on land use planning, John Hentsze, a farmer on 350 acres near Junction City, spoke to Eugene's *Register Guard* newspaper. He told a reporter that "When LCDC [Land Conservation and Development Commission] and all the planning started I was in favor, but the closer you get to the age of retirement the more freedom you want to dispose of what you own."⁷ Hentsze was not alone in raising questions about retirement. Other rural landowners complained that the system would prevent them from selling their farms to fund retirement or from building a house on their land to provide rental income in their old age. Speculation and development of farmland had been politically unpopular in the 1970s. That farmers like Hentsze referred to land as a retirement investment suggested changes in the ways that people saw what in the 1970s they referred to as speculation, but in the 1980s thought of as investment.⁸

A decade of inflation made Americans more comfortable with investment as they tried to beat paltry returns in their savings accounts. Americans invested only \$1.7 billion in money market accounts in 1974. Eight years later those funds managed more than \$200 billion. And Americans did not limit themselves to money market investments. Deregulation of brokerage accounts facilitated the middle class's shift into stock market investing. Charles Schwab made stock trading available at prices middle-class Americans could afford. In 1975, Schwab had 2,000 clients. Four years later his company oversaw 70,000 accounts. Other investment houses

⁷ "Farm Mood Unsure on '6'".

⁸ Joseph Donovan, "Letter to the Editor," *Oregonian*, 7 July 1981, B6; Kathie Durbin, "Land-Use Plan Barely Passes," *Oregonian*, 24 June 1980, B4. For a similar view of farmland as a retirement investment north of the Columbia, see Ken Kane, "Farming: A Harrowing Struggle," *Oregonian*, 23 April 1984, B4. In the early 1980s the view that farms should fund retirements was common enough that supporters of land use planning addressed it directly. Julie Tripp, "Farmers Urge Vote Against 6," *Oregonian*, 15 October 1982, C2. Earlier news coverage, in contrast, saw farm retirements as a problem for the industry. Janet Goetze, "Law Seeks Land Use Controls," *Oregonian*, 7 December 1975, F2.

followed Schwab into the broader market, developing products that further connected Americans to financial markets. Merrill Lynch offered customers a debit card linked to their brokerage accounts. The card allowed customers to borrow against the value of their investments, turning everyday purchases into bets on the value of stocks.

Americans did not instantly become day traders, but the financial products spoke to a changed view of investment, driven by economic change. At the end of the 1970s, companies moved away from defined-benefit retirement plans, pushing employees into newly-created 401(k) tax shelters. Twenty-six million employees had participated in defined-benefit retirement plans in 1975, while only 11 million participated in defined-contribution plans. By 1985 participation in 401(k) plans had grown dramatically, and there were more Americans in defined contribution plans than in defined benefit plans. Defined benefit plans had insulated the fortunes of participants from market fluctuations. The move to defined contribution plans normalized the market, making it an intimate part of financial planning for a growing share of the population. The changes in retirement practices were attended by changes in thinking about home values. As wages stagnated in the early 1980s, people looked to the value of their homes to underwrite the rising standard of living they had become accustomed to. By the mid-1980s banks were spending half their advertising budgets promoting variable-rate home-equity loans, and the results were palpable. Although only four percent of homeowners carried a home equity loan, eighty percent knew that they existed. What had seemed morally suspect a decade before seemed commonplace in the 1980s.⁹

⁹ Bruce Schulman, *The Seventies: The Great Shift in American Culture, Society and Politics* (Cambridge, MA.: De Capo Press, 2002), 137-140; “401(k) Plans: A 25-Year Retrospective,” *Investment Company Institute Research Perspective* 12 (2006): 3, <http://ici.org/pdf/12-02.pdf>; Louis Hyman, *Debtor Nation: The History of America in Red Ink* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2011), 237.

While the middle class increasingly attached its livelihood and savings to the market by banking on growing value in stocks and houses, academics and politicians sought explanations and policy justifications in the abstract power of the market. Economists moved away from macro-economic explanations to emphasize the calculations that underlay individual and firm economic activity. Areas of economics that had required broad contextual understanding seemed to reveal themselves to those wielding pat models that quantified individual choices and aggregated them into market functions. Lawyers studied game theory and philosophers and political scientists thought about rational choice models. The new assumptions about markets found political champions in those who advocated deregulation and tax cuts.¹⁰

Oregon was both a part of these changed assumptions and affected by them. As inflation soared, Jimmy Carter appointed Paul Volcker to chair the Federal Reserve Board of Governors. Volcker aimed to preserve the value of capital by beating inflation at all costs. He drove interest rates up, causing unemployment to spike and economic growth, particularly in the housing market, to sputter and fall. Dependent on selling natural resources, particularly to home builders, Oregon's timber-heavy economy dove more deeply than the national economy into recession. The state's farming economy also lost the steam it had built up during the 1970s. Weather improved in the world's other grain-growing regions and the United States halted grain sales to the Soviet Union to protest its invasion of Afghanistan. Oregon farm revenues topped \$1.6 billion in 1982, nominally more than the \$1 billion Oregon farms brought in eight years earlier when a booming farm economy buoyed support for farmland preservation. This was a period of high inflation, though, and the real value of Oregon's farm economy had shrunk some twenty percent. Oregon's larger economy had also grown before recession hit, fueled by expansion in

¹⁰ Daniel Rodgers, *Age of Fracture* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University press, 2011), 41-76; Jefferson Cowie, *Stayin' Alive: The 1970s and the last Days of the Working Class* (New York: The New Press, 2010), 261-312.

service jobs and government payrolls. Farming was neither as profitable nor as important to the state's overall economy as it had been a decade earlier.¹¹

Portland's *International Woodworker* likened the timber industry's fluctuations to changes in the weather in 1981. Dick Spohn, the editor of the union paper, wrote that Oregonians "have just as much control over their economic future as they do over tomorrow's weather."¹² Spohn saw the industry roiled by changing interest rates, fluctuating timber supply and corporate decisions. Corporate decision-makers also described volatility in the industry with reference to the weather. Eugene's Bohemia Inc. employed members of the International Woodworkers of America and the Lumber and Sawmill Workers Union. In 1985 company president Loran Stewart used a similar metaphor before an industry trade show in Portland. "Our current business climate is loaded with strong and weak fronts and many freak jet-streams," Stewart said before noting that "we lumber and plywood producers are caught in unpredictable turbulences."¹³ Stewart blamed environmental regulations and timber withdrawals, but he also saw behind the industry's woes a national shift away from production toward what he called the "hamburger economy" of services. He noted that labor costs in the Northwest were nearly double what they were in the South and that Canadian firms paid less for their publicly-owned timber than did American companies.

Each assessment, labor's and industry's, contained elements of truth. The industry faced a supply problem of sorts in the 1980s, but it was not as simple as corporate spokespeople made it out to be. The year that Stewart spoke in Portland saw the most cutting on Oregon's national

¹¹ National Agricultural Statistics Service, *1997 Census of Agriculture*, vol. i, part 37 (Washington, DC: United States Department of Agriculture, 1999), 10; Employment Division, *Oregon Covered Employment and Payrolls by Industry, County, and Month: 1977* (Salem: State of Oregon, 1979); Employment Division, *Oregon Covered Employment and Payrolls by Industry and County: 1982* (Salem: State of Oregon, 1983).

¹² Dick Spohn, "'Something' Must Be Done, But What?" *International Woodworker*, 26 May 1981, 8.

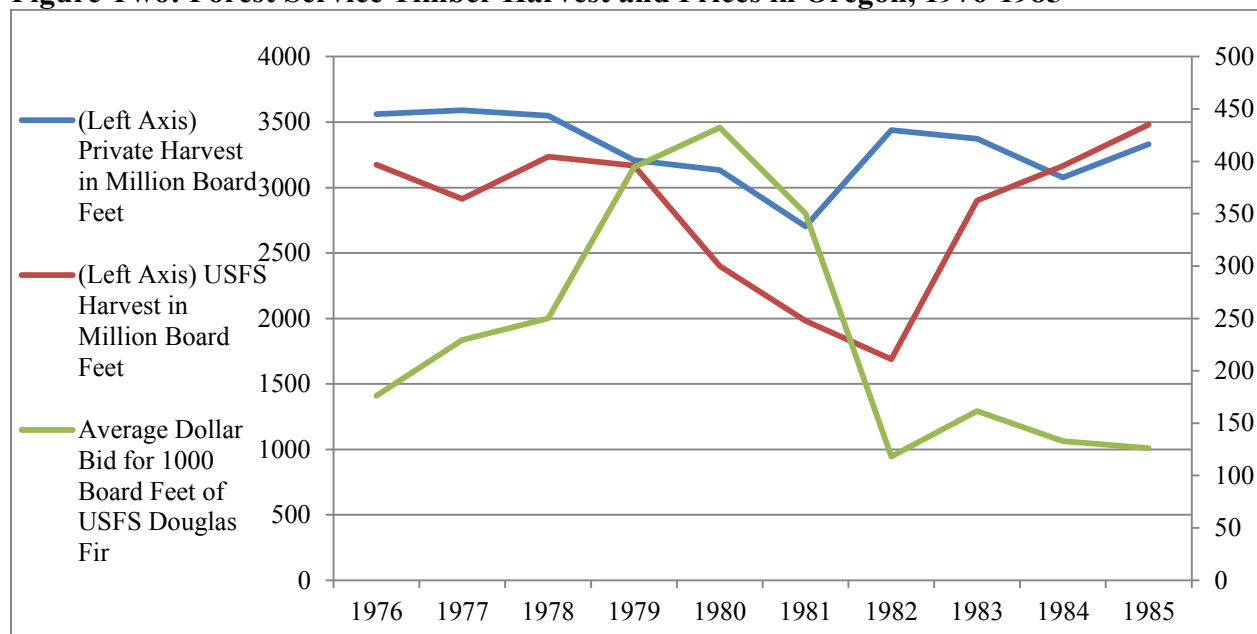
¹³ Loran Stewart, "Turbulence and Change, An Industry Legacy," Forest Industries Clinic & Machinery Show, 21 March 1985, Forest Service Collection, Forest History Society, Drawer F6.5

forests in a decade, in spite of a law the year before that doubled the state's wilderness acreage. Stewart could point to slack supply during the early 1980s, but this had more to do with timber prices than it had to do with environmental regulations or wilderness withdrawals. During the boom years of 1979 and 1980 timber companies had bid up the price of Forest Service Douglas fir west of the Cascades to \$432.30 per thousand board feet, as Figure Two shows. Timber companies entered into contracts to log the timber within three to four years (depending on the contract) and pay for it when they logged. As interest rates climbed and home building fell off, the price of finished lumber dipped below the price of standing timber. Companies were stuck with obligations to log soon and pay the earlier high prices when they cut.

The Northwest's timber companies bided their time as best they could, while the National Forest Products Association lobbied the Forest Service and Congress to relieve timber companies of their obligations and allow them to rebid contracts at recession prices. The industry was so committed to winning the right to renegotiate contracts that they were willing to use wilderness as a vehicle for favorable legislation. Timber companies and the National Forest Products Association supported passage of a bill in the House of Representatives in 1982 that would have designated more than a million new acres of Oregon wilderness because they thought the bill could be amended in the Senate to also allow for the renegotiation of contracts. Timber harvests picked up again in 1982, as companies logged new contracts they had bid after the price crash, but it was not until 1984 that Congress relieved companies of their obligations under earlier contracts.¹⁴

¹⁴Congress also passed a wilderness law in 1984 that designated 715,867 acres of Oregon wilderness. Dennis Muraoka and Richard Watson, "Improving the Efficiency of Federal Timber Sale Procedures: An Update," *Natural Resources Journal* 26 (1986): 69-76; Oregon Environmental Council, "Oregon's Future Timber Supplies: An Environmental Perspective," 15 September 1981, Oregon Environmental Council Records, Mss. 2386-1, Box B29, Folder 5; "Questions and Answers on Timber Contract Legislation," April 1983, National Forest Products Association Records, Mss. 3395, Forest History Society, Box 207, Binder 1983; "Termination Topics," 6 May 1983, National Forest Products Association Records, Mss. 3395, Forest History Society, Box 207, Binder 1983; Debra

Figure Two: Forest Service Timber Harvest and Prices in Oregon, 1976-1985¹⁵



Canadian firms, meanwhile, did not face the same problems that American timber companies confronted during the recession. Contracts to buy government timber in Canada tied the price of standing timber to the price of the finished lumber, insulating Canadian loggers against swings in the market. Transportation costs were also lower in Canada, helping mills in British Columbia and Alberta ship to large markets in the eastern United States more cheaply than Oregon and Washington producers. Canadian timber increased its share of the American homebuilding market.¹⁶

The timber contract problems, the downturn in housing, and the increased competition from Canada contributed to a decline in Oregon’s timber economy. Paper and lumber mills, idled by the recession and the high stumpage prices, laid off twenty-eight percent of their workforce

Warren, *Harvest, Employment, Exports, and Prices in Pacific Northwest Forests, 1965-2007* (Portland, OR: USFS Pacific Northwest Research Station, 2007), 1, 3-4, 7-8, 15; Ralph Hodges, “Remarks at the Annual Convention of Associated Oregon Loggers,” 14 January 1983, National Forest Products Association Records, Mss. 3395, Forest History Society, Box 209, Folder Speeches and Presentations.

¹⁵ Warren, *Harvest, Employment, Exports, and Prices in Pacific Northwest Forests, 1965-2007*, 1, 3-4, 7-8, 15.

¹⁶ Andy Brunelle, “The Changing Structure of the Forest Industry in the Pacific Northwest,” in Robert Lee, et. al., eds., *Community and Forestry: Communities in the Sociology of Natural Resources* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1990), 108-109.

between 1979 and 1983. The overall statistic masked differences between categories of firms. During the 1970s the Forest Service had set aside some timber for firms with fewer than 500 people, arresting an industry trend of consolidation. The recession hit these firms hardest because they were most dependent on federal timber. And because they could not afford to retool with efficient equipment, small firms could least afford to pay premiums on that timber. Large firms with modern equipment and ample private timber to mill, faced fewer immediate problems. They could export logs to Japan and used exports across the Pacific as a way to avoid the high costs of transporting lumber from the Northwest overland to the east coast. These firms also cast the widest nets in their investments, seeking the returns that cheap timber and labor could generate in other regions. During the 1970s they had built large new mills in the South, a trend that culminated with Georgia-Pacific's move from Portland to Atlanta in 1982. By 1985 Georgia-Pacific still owned 467,000 acres of timberland in the Northwest, but owned far more land, 3,672,000 acres, in the South. Large companies looked beyond the American South, buying timber and building mills in the southern hemisphere, where technological advances and new tree strains made it possible exploit fast-growing tropical hardwood forests. Managers and technical employees found jobs running new mills, but manual workers lost jobs as the industry drained out of the Northwest.¹⁷

Timber workers experienced the early 1980s recession as a time of layoffs, foreclosures, and repossessions. Timber companies with adequate reserves and mills in other regions used it as

¹⁷ Warren, *Harvest, Employment, Exports, and Prices in Pacific Northwest Forests, 1965-2007*, 7-8; National Forest Products Association, "Reducing Japan's Trade Barriers to Wood Products: A Billion Dollar Potential," National Forest Products Association, Records, Mss. 3395, Forest History Society, Box 207, Binder 1983; Brunelle, "The Changing Structure of the Forest Industry in the Pacific Northwest," 112-115; Edward Weeks, "Mill Closures in the Pacific Northwest: The Consequences of Economic Decline in Rural Industrial Communities," in Robert Lee, et. al., eds., *Community and Forestry: Communities in the Sociology of Natural Resources* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1990), 127-128; Kathleen Sharp, "A Regional Report: The Pacific Northwest, An Exodus from the Timberlands," *New York Times*, 16 June 1985, A17; M. Patricia Marchak, *Logging the Globe* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1995), 1-17.

an opportunity to win concessions from unions. Louisiana Pacific confronted its union with a wage cut and a new two-tier wage structure, prompting a strike that resulted in the decertification of the union. In 1985, even as the industry recovered, Weyerhaeuser closed a mill when unions resisted a proposed wage cut. It then used the credible threat of closure against union locals at other mills. In 1986, even as harvests returned to the pre-recession levels, several employers reduced wages four dollars per hour and sought concessions that would have set benefits back to their levels in 1959.¹⁸

A quarter of the lumber mills operating in 1976 had closed by 1982. The mills were not evenly distributed across the state. There were some sixty-two small towns where timber made up eighty percent or more of the total manufacturing workforce. The economic dislocation affected rural Oregon disproportionately. Median family income in Multnomah County in 1980 was only two percent higher than the state median (the county was home to 3,324 lumber workers and another 2,162 paper mill workers). The state's unemployment rate had been relatively consistent across urban and rural areas before the 1980s. Economic fortunes diverged in the state's timber recession. Unemployment in Harney County, which had seen a big mill closure, reached thirty percent. Public services in timber counties relied on payments from the federal government for timber harvested in lieu of property taxes on public land. They also relied on an excise tax on the value of logged timber that replaced property taxes that would otherwise be assessed against standing trees on private land. Pulled down by poor economic prospects, most Oregon counties lost population in at least one year between 1980 and 1985.¹⁹

¹⁸ Ben Craig and John Pencavel, "The Behavior of Worker Cooperatives: The Plywood Companies of the Pacific Northwest," *American Economic Review* 82 (December 1992): 1083-1105; John Foster, *Ecology Against Capitalism* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2002), 122; "Pacific Northwest Employers Trying to Turn Back the Clock on Wages, Benefits," *International Woodworker*, 21 April 1986, 1; "Weyco Strike Ends: Willamette, Champion Demands Rejected," *International Woodworker*, 14 August 1986, 1.

¹⁹ Edward Weeks, "Mill Closures in the Pacific Northwest," 129-130; Employment Division, *Oregon Covered Employment and Payrolls by Industry and County 1980* (Salem: State of Oregon, 1980.), 157.

More than that, the layoffs in the timber industry came with psychological adjustments. When the recession began timber workers made \$1.44 for every dollar the average Oregon worker made. A worker in a union mill enjoyed twelve paid holidays and as much as four weeks of paid vacation per year. Timber workers could congratulate themselves on having landed good jobs. As Roslyn Sellers, an office worker in Medford, recalled, “I remember being proud that my dad worked in a mill.” She went on to say, “I thought, I’m going to find me a guy that works in a mill, and I’ll be with somebody that makes money.”²⁰ For many, timber jobs were also personally rewarding, giving workers an identity tied to their skill and capacity for production. For loggers, especially, timber work was physically demanding and intellectually stimulating. The constant threat of injury entitled loggers to a sense of mastery over a complex and high-stakes environment. Losing such a job meant more than losing income, a house, or a boat. It meant losing a place in a community and what seemed to be a secure grasp on a dream of economic security. Demand for psychological services increased in timber towns along with demand for emergency food.²¹

The downturn in Oregon’s timber and agricultural economy had complicated causes that lay beyond the Northwest. The state’s farmers sold on a world market that saw declining prices as other farming regions ramped up production. Loggers could trace their woes to peculiarities in the sales of federal timber, high interest rates, and production in other regions. Economic winds generated outside the state had long buffeted Oregon’s rural producers. Responding to their lack

²⁰ Quoted in “Interview with Roslyn Sellers,” in Beverly Brown, *In Timber Country: Working People’s Stories of Environmental Conflict and Urban Flight* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1995).

²¹ Michael Hibbard, “Community Beliefs and the Failure of Community Economic Development,” *Social Service Review* 60 (June 1986): 185; Brunelle, “The Changing Structure of the Forest Industry in the Pacific Northwest,” 107; Clayton Dumont, Jr., “Loggers and Radical Environmentalists: Cultural Struggles in Timber Country,” (PhD diss., University of Oregon, 1991), 15-16, 30; William Robbins, *Hard Times in Paradise: Coos Bay, Oregon* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1998), 153-165. For analogous descriptions of the dislocation caused by timber job losses in the late 1980s and early 1990s, see Beverly Brown, *In Timber Country: Working People’s Stories of Environmental Conflict and Urban Flight* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1995); Dietrich, *The Final Forest*.

of control over the global economy, rural producers sometimes attacked both distant capital and wealthy Portlanders. In lambasting Portlanders in the nineteenth century or in the early twentieth century rural people overlooked the real economic disparity among Portlanders, defining the city as an outgrowth of its wealthiest citizens.

In the 1970s the strength of the rural economy had muted the rural producers' criticisms of Portland. At the same time, Portlanders had looked with appreciation on agriculture as a contributor to the state's economy and as a bulwark against speculative valuation of land. As the rural economy suffered in the 1980s the economic restraints involved in wilderness politics and in land use planning appeared more threatening. Oregon's rural residents in the 1980s followed their predecessors in resisting both Portlanders and distant capital. In lumping Portland with distant capital, they made oversights similar to the early Grangers, seeing the city as monolithic.

RURAL RESPONSES TO RECESSION

The International Woodworkers of America was slow to change, initially meeting economic dislocation with the anti-capitalist rhetoric they had used in the 1970s. The union invoked the preceding decade's hostility to speculation and the increasing flexibility of capital investment. It criticized Weyerhaeuser for closing plants, saying that the company had stripped wealth from the hills of the Northwest and channeled it into mills in the South and abroad. In the union's estimation, the natural wealth of the region had "gone into disposable diapers, real estate and financial institutions."²² The union blamed companies for environmental degradation, saying, for example, that Louisiana-Pacific "cut every available stick of timber" near Tillamook before shuttering a mill. "Some call it cut-and-run," the paper noted, "others call it rape-and-

²² Keith Johnson, "Destroying Some Myths," *International Woodworker*, 23 July 1986, 1.

ruin.”²³ The union sought legislation to prevent abrupt plant closures, asking the Oregon legislature to take action against an industry that “gerrymanders money and raw materials around for their own benefit and don’t give any thought at all to the people whose lives are often destroyed.”²⁴

Congress considered laws in the late 1970s and early 1980s that would require companies closing a plant to provide adequate notice to employees, establish severance pay, and provide government assistance to employee cooperatives seeking to reopen closed plants. Congress held a spate of field hearings on the topic in 1980, but ultimately failed to act. The Oregon legislature considered seven plant closure bills in 1981 after the federal legislation failed. The leading Oregon bill proposed to require plants to give one year’s notice of closures or layoffs, to hold businesses responsible for up to a year’s severance pay, and to commit state support to community groups and employees who hoped to buy a closed plant. The proposed state law would also have required closing plants to open their books to communities and employees. The backers of Oregon legislation contended that the social consequences of disinvestment were externalities that, like environmental impacts, companies should be forced to pay for. They noted also that decisions that affected Oregon towns were increasingly being made in distant boardrooms by people who had never seen the mills they were closing. The state efforts had union support, but failed in the face of concerns that the law would discourage new businesses from locating in the state.²⁵

Even as the union continued to criticize capital through the 1980s, its attitude toward urbanites gradually shifted. In the early 1980s the *International Woodworker* saw the entire state

²³ “L-P to Tillamook: We Don’t Owe You a Thing,” *International Woodworker*, 27 May 1983, 8.

²⁴ “Region 3 Will Seek Protection from Plant Closures in Contract Talks,” *International Woodworker*, 29 February 1980, 1.

²⁵ Leslie Kay and Kevin Griffin, “Plant Closures: Assessing the Victims’ Remedies,” *Willamette Law Review* 19 (1983): 199-227; Phil Keisling, “The Politics of Plant Closures,” *Willamette Week*, 16 March 1981, 1, 8, 10; Phil Keisling, “Shutdown: Why the Mills are Leaving Town,” *Willamette Week*, 9 March 1981, 1, 3, 7-8.

as a victim of the recession. It criticized the Federal Reserve Board for raising interest rates. The rate hikes had not only subjected half the industry's workforce to layoffs and reduced shifts, the union contended, but they had also denied Portlanders jobs and adequate housing. The paper noted that the city suffered from "children turned out into the streets because there is no food in a home" and that it had the fourth highest crime rate in the country.²⁶ By the end of the decade, however, the old belief in a common interest had evaporated. Faced with new threats in the listing of the spotted owl as an endangered species, the union's criticism of industry harvest levels subsided. The union paper addressed environmentalism with restraint, but a regular cartoon strip in the union paper pitted loggers against environmentalists and somebody in the union created a bumper sticker that read, "Save a logger, eat an owl."²⁷ A retired member wrote in to criticize the paper's coverage of non-union workers' activism against environmental restrictions. The paper had failed to recognize conflict between environmentalists and workers as "convenient disputes, which, by accident or design, drive animosity and suspicion between natural allies." The letter noted that "companies enjoy the battling between voices which oppose their practices."²⁸

Changes in the membership of the union went along with changes in its political positions. With each year the union paper's circulation shrunk, its membership ranks drawn down by layoffs in the industry. Over the course of the decade, the union lost half its members. The Canadian industry diverged from the industry in the United States. Cheap crown timber and lower transportation costs put Canadian union members in a more stable position. In 1987 the international split into two national unions. By the mid-1990s the American union had only

²⁶ "Fed Bureaucrats Confronted in Meeting," *International Woodworker*, 11 February 1982, 8.

²⁷ "Owl Controversy Striking a Nerve," *Klamath Falls Herald and News*, 13 April 1989.

²⁸ Crawdad Nelson, "Letter to the Editor," *Woodworker*, 14 April 1989, 4. For the union's response to the spotted owl, see "Forest Products Unions Form Coalition on Timber Supply," *Woodworker*, 18 August 1989, 1; "Timber Supply Was the Issue at Timber Labor Coalition Rally," *Woodworker*, 15 September 1989, 1.

20,000 remaining members. They voted to dissolve, merging into the International Association of Machinists in 1994.²⁹

As the union's influence diminished, owners and non-union labor spoke most clearly on behalf of the industry. These groups saw explicit contrast between rural and urban interests. Richard Hanlin, president of the owner-dominated Oregon Logging Conference, told the group in 1979 that loggers produced building material necessary to meet one of the three basic human needs. Their production pitted them against environmentalists, who fit into three categories. There were affluent urbanites who lived in wooden houses, but did not understand the need for wood. There were politicians in Washington, D.C. who "want to slow down the wealth-generating machine of our society." And there were environmentalists who did not "need the comforts of a modern wood home" or even "soap and water." In Hamlin's estimation, they "don't contribute a thing to the betterment of our society."³⁰

Owners of timber companies used producerist rhetoric and the image of their workers to advance their own interests. Even as companies shed employees and invested in labor-saving equipment, Ralph Hodges, the executive vice president of the National Forest Products Association, made the phrase "the forest products industry, its workers, and its dependent communities" a boilerplate of his correspondence in the early part of the decade.³¹ The 1980s saw the creation of a number of lobby groups sympathetic to owners' interests. Industry activists founded Oregonians for Food and Shelter in 1980 and quickly developed a membership of 18,000 people recorded in a computer database that included members' Congressional and

²⁹ "Message to Members," *Woodworker*, 19 May 1989, 2-3; "International Executive Board Ok's Vote; IWA-USA Convention Set for May 19-20," *International Woodworker*, 28 April 1987, 1; Peter Sleeth, "Woodworkers Union Takes Vote on Merger," *Oregonian*, 26 January 1994, B2.

³⁰ Richard Hanlin, "President's Address," *Oregon Loggers Care: Official Proceedings of the Oregon Logging Conference* (Eugene, February 1979), 4.

³¹ Ralph Hodges to John Melcher, 18 November 1982, National Forest Products Association Records, Mss. 3395, Forest History Society, Box 207, Binder 1981; Ralph Hodges to John Melcher, 18 November 1982, National Forest Products Association Records, Mss. 3395, Forest History Society, Box 207, Binder 1982.

legislative districts. The group relied on donations from timber companies, chemical companies, and the Oregon Wheat Growers League. The focus on basic necessities indicated a larger emphasis on the value of rural production to society and the broader economy. Another of the early 1980s timber groups put the issue more bluntly. Betty Denison, president of Oregon Women for Timber, told loggers that they differed from environmentalists. “They consume and you produce,” she told the small operators and big company executives who sat in the crowd at the Oregon Logging Conference. “They are parasites and you are creators. They have been brought up in remote cities, unaware of the need for basic resources, unaware that their comfort and affluence is paid for not just with their desk jobs, but ultimately by the sweat of your brow,” she continued.³² Denison and others helped create a unified timber industry image that smoothed over class conflict and obscured ongoing labor negotiations. In this view, the chief distinctions in Oregon were between country and city, not between the board room and the shop floor.

This was the rhetoric of the nineteenth-century Grange, stripped of its hostility to concentrated wealth and imbued with corporate backing. The language was similar, but its use had changed dramatically. By the end of the decade other industry-sponsored groups joined the campaign against environmental restrictions. Workers of Oregon Development, Timber Resources Equal Economic Stability, Oregon Lands Coalition, Save our Sawmills, Communities for a Great Oregon, and the Yellow Ribbon Coalition were among the groups friendly to industry. Mills gave workers paid days off to attend rallies and gave direct donations to some groups. The workers repaid their corporate sponsorship with more than anti-urban rhetoric. Workers in industry groups developed a reputation for hostility to unions. In 1989 log trucks that crossed union picket lines around Roseburg Forest Products flew yellow ribbons, the symbol of

³² Betty Denison, “Learning Loggers Live—But What Does it Mean?” *Learning Loggers Live: Official Proceedings of the Oregon Logging Conference* (Eugene, February 1980), 33.

one of the prominent timber groups. By the start of the 1990s the image of union labor had been replaced with one of independent loggers squeezing value from nature, often hostile to workers who logged for big corporations. *Seattle Times* correspondent William Dietrich captured the image succinctly in 1992, describing loggers who prefer to work independently because “the harder and more skillfully they work, the more they get paid.” “There is justice in that,” Dietrich offered, helping to paste an image of independent labor over an international industry that increasingly paid workers bromides to compensate for declining wages and benefits.³³

ENVIRONMENTALIST RESPONSES TO RECESSION

For their part, environmentalists did not abandon the consensus of the 1970s overnight. The environmental lobby and legal services group that formed in the wake of the 1973 development of Oregon’s system of land use planning worked hard to preserve alliances with rural producers. 1000 Friends of Oregon helped farmers still sympathetic to land use restrictions form Agriculture Against 6 to fight the 1982 ballot initiative aimed at gutting the system. The urban lawyers in 1000 Friends of Oregon made available their database of members, arranged media contacts, helped to plan a march, and even wrote flyers. Those flyers made familiar arguments about the importance of farming to Oregon’s economy. They contended that each person working on a farm created jobs for five other Oregonians and that agriculture provided stability to an economy rocked by inflation and recession. “Oregon’s statewide land-use program keeps speculation pressure off farm land, so that land prices reflect the value of its agricultural productivity,” the farmers argued.³⁴ The group made the visual case in a march through downtown Portland, asking participants to “bring a sign from your farm operation, or a basket of

³³ Dietrich, *Final Forest*, 39.

³⁴ Agriculture Against 6, “Save Farms: No on Measure 6,” 1000 Friends of Oregon Records, Accession 05-021, University of Oregon Special Collections, Box 71, Folder Agriculture Against 6.

nuts, vegetables, sheaf of wheat, or whatever is a symbol of your farm.”³⁵ The symbols mattered, for the group aimed to establish itself as the true voice of productive agriculture. As the group’s director, who ran a 5,000-acre family farm, put it, “the only farmers you find for the [repeal] measure are the losers. They want to be able to butcher the land up.”³⁶ Against steepening odds and falling farm prices, planning activists continued to promote their vision of a state that harvested its wealth from the land.³⁷

The efforts of 1000 Friends of Oregon to defend the productive economy did not stop with farms. Unlike many environmentalists, the planning advocates saw value in logging. In the early 1980s the group rightly noted that “for over a century forestry has been Oregon’s biggest industry, its biggest employer.”³⁸ The group continued to advocate for commercial timber operations into the late 1980s and 1990s. In 1989 Henry Richmond was skeptical of the new western economy’s arrival in Oregon. Unlike the planners of the 1930s, Richmond did not see tourism as a likely basis for a just economy. The payoff from the technology and tourism industries, Richmond explained in the group’s magazine, “is smaller than many assume.”³⁹ Lumber jobs paid better than jobs pumping gas and making beds, Richmond wrote. When timber workers moved into lower-paying jobs the state’s economy suffered. The trick, both 1000 Friends of Oregon and state officials agreed, was to preserve the forest economy. In the late 1980s as loggers’ access to federal land became more precarious, 1000 Friends of Oregon hoped

³⁵ “Notice of Agricultural Motorcade event with Tom McCall,” 1000 Friends of Oregon Records, Accession 05-021, University of Oregon Special Collections, Box 71, Folder Agriculture Against 6.

³⁶ “Farm Mood Unsure on ‘6’: Ballot Effort to Abolish LCDC Keeps Rural Residents at Odds,” *Eugene Register Guard*, 29 October 1982.

³⁷ On the connections between 1000 Friends of Oregon and Agriculture Against 6, see Mary Kyle McCurdy to Staff, 11 October 1982, 1000 Friends of Oregon Records, Accession 05-021, University of Oregon Special Collections, Box 71, Folder Agriculture Against 6; Richard Benner to Mary Kyle McCurdy, 17 September 1982, 1000 Friends of Oregon Records, Accession 05-021, University of Oregon Special Collections, Box 71, Folder Unlabeled.

³⁸ Robert Liberty, “Forest Lands for Forest Uses,” *Landmark*, 1983, 17.

³⁹ Henry Richmond, “Nonindustrial Forest Lands: The Key to Slowing Oregon’s Economic Decline,” *Landmark*, 1989, 5.

effective management of private woodlots would keep mills sawing. In 1998 the planning group would attract the ire of other environmental groups by opposing a ballot measure to prohibit clear cutting on private and state lands. 1000 Friends of Oregon explained that the measure would make logging unprofitable, leading woodlot owners to sell to developers.⁴⁰

The Oregon Environmental Council was less consistent in its adherence to the consensus of the 1970s. The group continued to oppose the interests of distant timber company owners, criticizing them for mismanaging private lands to risk a timber famine. The council noted in 1981 that timber corporations had “liquidated old growth as rapidly as possible, skimmed off profits, and reinvested them either in other businesses or in other regions.” The council also noted that workers were “paying the highest costs for past mismanagement of private lands.” The Oregon Environmental Council upbraided Congress and the state legislature for failing to pass plant closure legislation that would provide workers with “training for new jobs, severance benefits, and work opportunities.”⁴¹ These statements suggested sympathy for timber workers, even as they expressed skepticism about timber’s continued role in the state’s economy.

Other Oregon Environmental Council positions spoke to an increasing willingness to remake an economy not dependent on natural resource production. This willingness distinguished the group from 1000 Friends of Oregon. The group’s newsletter noted in 1979 that 14 million visitors came to Oregon in the preceding year, helping to make tourism the state’s third largest industry. The newsletter contended that some forests would be more valuable to the state for their beauty than for their potential to provide wood fiber. Following this line of thinking, the group echoed 1930s liberals in opposing the construction of factories in the

⁴⁰ C. Russel. Beaton and Thomas Hibbard, *Task One: Status of the Land Resource Base* (Salem: State of Oregon, 1991), 3, 45; “1000 Friends of Oregon Announces Opposition to Measure 64,” 24 September 1998, 1000 Friends of Oregon Records, Accession 08-052, University of Oregon Special Collections, Box 75, Folder Measure 64.

⁴¹ Oregon Environmental Council, “Oregon’s Future Timber Supplies: An Environmental Perspective,” 15 September 1981, Oregon Environmental Council Records, Mss. 2386-1, Box B29, Folder 5.

Columbia River Gorge. Their moral calculation was simplistic: “surely the people who live in the Gorge deserve a decent livelihood, but development that alters the natural setting and beauty of the Gorge is not the way to provide for them.”⁴² The groups, whose members, by its own estimation, were “uniformly well-educated” and “generally white collar,” continued to envision a state economy free from resource production.⁴³ Jim Owens, the group’s president in the mid-1980s, saw the state’s nascent computer industry and wineries as proof of the success of Oregon’s environmental management. The new economy would be in Tektronix, Floating Point Systems, Mentor Graphics, and Sokol Blosser Winery. By the end of the 1980s, as timber groups touted the industry’s importance to the state, The Oregon Environmental Council showed its frustration. Gil Sharp, a Hood River attorney, wrote in a 1987 edition of the group’s newsletter that “one of my pet peeves is the obligatory use of the words jobs and economic development in political and editorial circles.”⁴⁴ In this thinking, protecting the environment was a duty of government, but providing for economic growth and full employment, liberal projects of the postwar era, were not common responsibilities.

The Oregon Environmental Council’s vision of a state economy reliant on tourists and high-tech workers drawn to the state by unspoiled mountains and a pristine Columbia River Gorge evoked Tom McCall’s paeans to a state worth living in. In their thinking, by turning down some industries, the state would have its pick of others. But they sought to protect mountain vistas wider than their social visions. It was not at all clear in the 1980s that jobs in new industries could replace jobs in the timber industry. Jobs in tourism typically paid minimum wage. Jobs in electronics, which tended to go to new residents, rather than those displaced from traditional industries, did not match wages in the timber industry during the early 1980s. It was

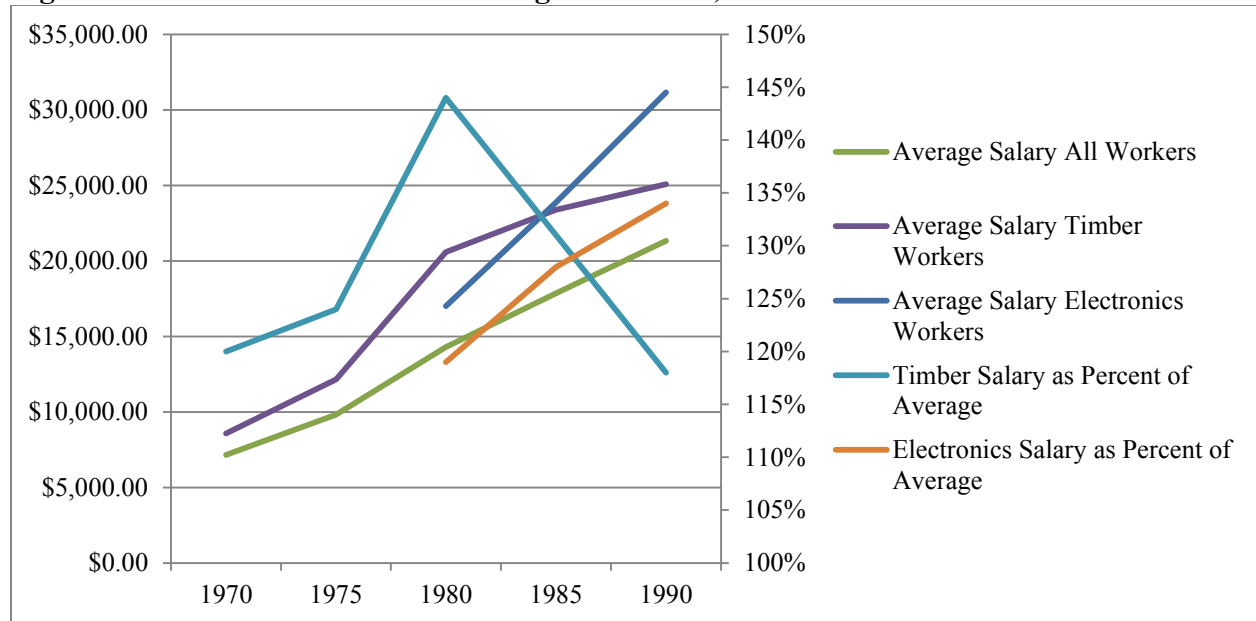
⁴² “14 Million Tourists Can’t be Wrong,” *Earthwatch Oregon*, April/May 1979, 5.

⁴³ “The Longer you Live Here,” *Earthwatch Oregon*, March/April 1980, 2-3.

⁴⁴ Gil Sharp, “From the Chair,” *Earthwatch Oregon*, Winter 1987, 14.

only in 1984, as timber wages declined relative to other state workers, that electronics workers made more than timber workers. It would not be until 1990 that electronics workers commanded the kind of wages that timber workers had enjoyed in 1980. And even in 1990, the electronics industry employed fewer than half the 64,371 workers still employed in a weakened timber industry. In any case, there were no programs to retrain timber workers with classroom skills needed in electronics jobs. Environmentalists who offered tourism and electronics as potential replacements for the timber industry must have padded their calculations with a lot of hope.⁴⁵

Figure Three: Relative Salaries of Oregon Workers, 1970-1990⁴⁶



Architects of the planning system and its defenders in 1000 Friends of Oregon hoped to preserve the state’s traditional economy and keep housing out of fields and forests. The goal linked the state’s environmental health to the health of its economy. It was also unrealistic. The survival of the rural productive economy depended on more than an adequate land base. It was

⁴⁵ Oregon Labor Market Information System, “Covered Employment and Wages,” <http://www.qualityinfo.org/olmisj/CEP>.

⁴⁶ Oregon Labor Market Information System, “Covered Employment and Wages,” <http://www.qualityinfo.org/olmisj/CEP>. There are no data available for Oregon’s Electronics Industry in 1970 and 1975.

also subject to changes in the state's larger economy and to technology that obviated the need for manual workers. As early as 1966, the state's Department of Employment had predicted that timber would play an increasingly small role in Oregon's economy. A report prepared for the State Board of Forestry in 1976 predicted that overcutting of private lands would lead to an overall harvest reduction in western Oregon beginning in 1985. By the year 2000, the report predicted, the overall cut would have declined twenty-two percent from its average level between 1968 and 1973. The same report expected timber employment to decline by as much as twenty-five percent. Oregon's natural resource industries could simply not absorb the state's growing body of workers. In 1970 when reformers worried about the security of the natural resources industries, the state's unemployment insurance program counted 567,707 employed workers. By 1980 the number had nearly doubled to 1,016,027 and the percentage of wages earned in farming, food production, mining, and timber work had fallen from 18.74% to 13.23% of the total in all industries. By the end of the 1980s the workforce had increased again to 1,236,243. Wages in resource work made up only 9.94% of the 1990 wages paid in the state. To be sure, Oregon was remarkably successful at preserving productive farm and timber land, but the 1970s dream of a future economy reliant on resource production could not sustain growth in demand for jobs.⁴⁷

Visions of a new economy and visions of a resource-based economy each suffered from different problems caused by wishful thinking. Timber groups and supporters of planning both failed to grapple with the widely recognized problem posed by the exhaustion of timber on private lands. Timber advocacy groups pinned their hopes on logging federal land that

⁴⁷ Department of Employment, *Technological Change and Its Impact on the Oregon Labor Force* (Salem: State of Oregon, 1966), 20; John Beuter, et. al., *Timber for Oregon's Tomorrow: An Analysis of Reasonably Possible Occurrences* (Corvallis: Oregon State University School of Forestry, 1976), viii-ix; Oregon Labor Market Information System, "Covered Employment and Wages," <http://www.qualityinfo.org/olmisj/CEP>.

environmentalists hoped to preserve to attract industries less directly dependent on the state's natural resources. Meanwhile, 1000 Friends of Oregon saw hope for the timber economy in small woodlots. Those who wrote for the Oregon Environmental Council hoped beaches and forests would attract new business without attracting too many new residents. Though advocates of each vision disagreed with each other, they shared the common assumption that a sustainable economy depended on appropriate use or nonuse of land. Both sets of economic visions relied on the notion that there was something special about Oregon's landscape, as a producer of materials or as a lure for a knowledge-based economy. This was a provincial conceit, but an easy assumption to make in a region that Northwesterners and others closely associated with natural resources. It was also an assumption that made it harder to see alternative levers with which to move the economy. Oregon developed a reputation for progressive environmentalism at the same time that its school and infrastructure funding lagged behind Washington's. More than that, each of these visions was myopic, depending on low population growth either to preserve the economic importance of resource extraction or to ensure the unmarred appeal of the state's undeveloped fields and forests.⁴⁸

POPULATION GROWTH AND DENSITY

As population growth weakened the economic girders of Oregon's environmental consensus of the 1970s, it also threatened the assumptions urbanites made about the relationship between the rural environment and their quality of life. The state's land use planning regulations had directed population growth and new housing into urban areas in order to keep them out of

⁴⁸ For the identification of the Northwest with resources, see John Findlay, "A Fishy Proposition: Regional Identity in the Pacific Northwest," in David Wrobel and Michael Steiner, eds., *Many Wests: Place, Culture, and Regional Identity* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1997), 37-70. For Washington's economic growth in the second half of the twentieth century, see Carl Abbott, "Regional City and Network City: Portland and Seattle in the Twentieth Century," *Western Historical Quarterly* 23 (August 1992), 293-322.

farmland. It was not until the late 1970s that cities developed plans to accommodate more density. These plans were shaped by legal action brought by 1000 Friends of Oregon lawyers intent on ensuring cities accommodated more density. The group challenged a plan for the Portland metropolitan area in 1977, pushing for more multi-family housing and reduced lot sizes. 1000 Friends of Oregon also won a 1978 ruling from the Land Conservation and Development Commission against Beaverton's decision to impose a six-month moratorium on construction permits to stave off the need to deal with population growth. The group then convinced the suburb of Milwaukie to abandon a plan to follow Beaverton's lead with a moratorium of its own. The group also ensured that small towns would see multi-family housing. It opposed the City of St. Helens's decision to consider apartments only as a conditional use, Durham's attempt to cap multi-family density at four units per acre, and Lake Oswego's plan to keep density at a similarly low 10.7 people per acre. In the face of suburban efforts to shirk their role in farmland preservation, 1000 Friends of Oregon and the Land Conservation and Development Commission gave meaning to planning goals aimed at directing into cities and suburbs the population growth that Oregonians, rural, suburban, and urban, bemoaned as a threat to their quality of life.⁴⁹

Facing clear administrative guidelines, Portland and its suburbs planned for a marked increase in density. In 1978 voters in three counties surrounding Portland gave new powers to regional government. The new Metropolitan Service District, or Metro, prepared an urban growth boundary and comprehensive plan in 1980. The boundary plan envisioned changes in the arrangement of density in the metropolitan area. Multi-family zoning would become gradually less dense in order to draw middle class residents to apartment complexes. At the same time,

⁴⁹ Michael Alesko, "Board Oks Portland Urban Growth Boundary," *Oregonian*, 24 February 1978, B5; 1000 Friends of Oregon, *A Report to the Members of 1000 Friends of Oregon* (Portland: 1000 Friends of Oregon, 1979?), 19-22. On the persistence of population growth concerns, see Randal O'Toole, *How Fast Should Oregon Grow* (Portland, OR: OSPIRG, 1979), 1; Peter Walker and Patrick Hurley, *Planning Paradise: Politics and Visioning of Land Use in Oregon* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2011), 65; H. Jeffrey Leonard, *Managing Oregon's Growth: The Politics of Development Planning* (Washington, DC: The Conservation Foundation, 1983), 16-18.

single-family houses would sit on smaller lots to slow the metropolitan area's expansion into surrounding fields. Before the plan's adoption, planners expected 160,000 new housing units to fill vacant land in the region, most sitting on 10,000 square foot lots. The new comprehensive plan aimed to squeeze 310,000 units into the same area. The greatest opportunities to increase density lay in unused lots in the suburbs, and the plan called for more change in the suburbs than in the central city.⁵⁰

As Metro contemplated higher density for the region, the City of Portland wrestled with how best to cram more residents into its neighborhoods. In the late 1970s city planners proposed a comprehensive plan that promised to leave basic neighborhood characteristics intact while increasing density in parts of the city with easy access to public transportation. There would be zoning changes to allow for denser development, particularly on the city's east flank. The city also anticipated allowing townhome construction and the retrofitting of large homes to include rental units. The changes that Portland and Metro envisioned would not materialize during the 1980s. The urban growth boundary encompassed 129 square miles of vacant land in order to accommodate future growth without a run-up in home prices. The slow economic and population growth of the recession decade would ensure that few of the changes the various comprehensive plans envisioned would be noticeable until into the 1990s. Still, some Portlanders and their

⁵⁰ Metro's plan grew out of one proposed by the earlier body, the Columbia Region Association of Governments (CRAG), that 1000 Friends of Oregon challenged in court. The group kept CRAG from instituting its expansive boundary, but exhausted its legal options by 1979 when Metro went forward with the similarly loose boundary. Carl Abbott and Margery Abbott, "A History of Metro," May 1991, http://library.oregonmetro.gov/files/abbott-a_history_of_metro_may_1991.pdf; Henry Richmond, "Political Cop-Out," *Willamette Week*, 6 August 1979, 13; Michael Alesko, "Growth Boundary Debate Aired," *Oregonian*, 15 September 1979, C2; Metropolitan Service District, *Urban Growth Boundary Findings* (Portland, OR: Metro, 1980), 4; Rick Gustafson and Cory Kirkpatrick, "Let's Get On With It," *Willamette Week*, 6 August 1979, 13; Ethan Seltzer, "It's Not an Experiment: Regional Planning at Metro, 1990 to the Present," in Connie Ozawa, ed., *The Portland Edge: Challenges and Successes in Growing Communities* (Washington, DC: Island Press, 2004), 54; Carl Abbott, *Portland: Planning, Politics and Growth in a Twentieth-Century American City* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1983), 258.

suburban neighbors responded with hostility to the changes the land use planning system proposed for their neighborhoods.⁵¹

Portlanders had a history of defending the quality of life in their neighborhoods. In the early part of the twentieth century they had petitioned the city to keep noxious industry from their homes, using their status as home owners to give their requests weight. They would make similar arguments in the 1970s and 1980s, contending that home owners in pleasant neighborhoods deserved consideration from the city that renters did not. The 1970s and 1980s would give these arguments new dressing, not available to the Portland petitioners of the early century. The ethic of place that Oregonians had developed in the 1970s augured against population density, imagining a suburban environment and, as it turned out, a social world to match. An article in Portland's *Rain* magazine explained some of the moral force suburban living had in Oregon. Tom Bender, an editor of the magazine and a green architect, advocated smaller houses, but resented government intrusion in density patterns. "We wring our hands too much over prime agricultural land lost to suburbia," Bender contended. There was real value in the suburbs, he implied, because suburban gardeners producing for their own families could actually "increase food output per acre" over commercial farms.⁵²

Not all urban and suburban Oregonians were willing to go so far in dismissing the importance of agricultural lands, but many agreed with Bender's view that there was value in suburban living. They made these assertions even as Portland's suburbs grappled with environmental and infrastructural problems that belied their claims to providing a high quality of life. Half of Washington County's roads remained unpaved in the late 1970s and Clackamas

⁵¹ Bureau of Planning, *Proposed Comprehensive Plan: Goals and Policies* (Portland, OR: City of Portland, 1979), B-1; Metropolitan Service District, *Urban Growth Boundary Findings*, iii.

⁵² Tom Bender, "Suburban Renewal," *Rain*, April 1978, 7. For a similar view, see Judy Gordon, "Letter to the Editor," *Rain*, June 1978, 13.

County had a problem with septic tanks oozing their contents to the land's surface. Still, suburbanites were hostile to planning that would constrain geographical expansion to areas with adequate infrastructure. They considered open space, light traffic, and neighborhoods composed of homeowners to be part of the quality of life they had rallied to defend in the 1970s.⁵³

Happy Valley, to Portland's southeast, was a case in point. Suburban activists founded the city in 1965 to fight off annexation to Portland. The city sprawled over 1,450 acres, but its 1980 population stood at only 1,440 residents. In the late 1970s the mayor had surveyed nearly all the town's 416 households. He reported that 356 of the households he called on wanted to keep the town rural, while only 21 wanted to increase density to urban levels. The city submitted its required comprehensive plan to the state, planning for future housing densities of between 2 and 2.5 units per acre. The Land Conservation and Development Commission rejected Happy Valley's plan, saying that the city's closeness to Portland required it to prepare for 6 units per acre. Residents of Happy Valley were not alone in their desires to slough off the obligation to assume more urban density that came with the goal of protecting farmland.⁵⁴

Other suburbanites shared Happy Valley's hesitations about increased density, particularly when it threatened to bring renters into their neighborhoods. A resident of Cedar Mills, west of Portland, worried about changes to the social homogeneity he enjoyed: "Apartment dwellers conjure up images of police making frequent calls in the middle of the night, and of split families," he told a reporter.⁵⁵ In nearby Garden Home an activist explained her opposition to apartments as an outgrowth of her quality-of-life liberalism: "We wanted to

⁵³ Ronald Buel and Gordon Oliver, "Portlanders Crowd the Road to Exurbia," *Willamette Week*, 25 July 1977, 3.

⁵⁴ Katherine Keene, "LCDC and Happy Valley: Is the Stalemate Resolved?" *Oregon Realtor*, May 1982; Stan Federman, "Opposition Expected to Urban Designation," *Oregonian*, 23 October 1978, B2. A similar set of controversies brewed in the Damascus area of Clackamas County after 1993. Walker and Hurley, *Planning Paradise*, 162-173.

⁵⁵ Quoted in Phil Keisling, "Land: Fighting Over Its Best Use," *Willamette Week*, 7 August 1978, 21.

maintain our quality of life here; we didn't want more density."⁵⁶ As the urban and suburban implications of farmland preservation became clearer, opponents of the planning system took heart. A realty trade magazine proclaimed about the Happy Valley situation that higher densities "will shock some urbanites who have historically supported the state's role in land use planning because they thought it was only for agricultural land protection programs."⁵⁷

Neighborhood activists in Portland joined suburbanites in opposing dense and economically mixed neighborhoods, even as they cultivated for their city a reputation for progressive politics. During the 1970s Portlanders had defeated modernist urban renewal projects and had revitalized their downtown, bringing shoppers into the central city. Neil Goldschmidt, a young legal aid lawyer who became mayor in 1972, brought neighborhood associations into city government, creating an office to provide them with staff support and channel their recommendations "on any matter affecting livability of the neighborhood" to city bureaucrats.⁵⁸ Together the neighborhood activists and city government built a park in place of a six-lane waterfront road separating downtown from the Willamette River. They also repurposed federal freeway construction money to build a light rail line. The city's reputation for livability rested on these accomplishments and on the inclusive political culture that had generated them, and commentators looked to Portland's system of public involvement for solutions to problems in other cities.⁵⁹

⁵⁶ Quoted in Keisling, "Land," 21.

⁵⁷ Keene, "LCDC and Happy Valley," 10.

⁵⁸ Quoted in Steven Johnson, "The Transformation of Civic Institutions and Practices in Portland, Oregon, 1960-1999" (PhD diss., Portland State University, 2002), 102.

⁵⁹ The rebuffed renewal project came on the heels of one in southern downtown. The rebuffed project aimed to replace mixed use zoning in northwest Portland with a hospital campus and a freeway extension. The Northwest District Association formed in response to the plan and received city recognition in 1969. In 1975 the city adopted a plan for the neighborhood that allowed for a variety of home prices and for mixed-use zoning. Portland's 1972 Downtown Plan directed public transit into a bus mall and reduced parking opportunities in order to encourage bus ridership. The city, county, and state responded to public concern over the route a proposed freeway would take through eastside neighborhoods by lodging formal opposition to its construction in 1974 and 1975. Construction of the light rail line began in 1981. Abbott, *Portland*, 173-174, 197-199, 216, 222-223, 255-276; Carl Abbott, *How*

When city officials drafted a comprehensive plan for Portland they sought feedback on their goals. The responses they received showed the limits to Portlanders' commitments to progressive urban planning. Activists cared about general environmental quality, but also favored "quiet neighborhood[s]." This meant low-density housing. The city conducted interviews in 450 randomly-selected homes, and found that 57% of Portlanders wanted to preserve single-family homes in their neighborhoods. Opposition to dense development was strongest in the very regions of the city that planners hoped to rezone for density, neighborhoods four or five miles from downtown. The plan met resistance throughout the three and a half years that planners worked on it, with meetings erupting into what the *Willamette Week* called "open rebellion."⁶⁰

Some residents mirrored the worst in their early-century predecessors, aiming to preserve home values and what they saw as the social benefit of homeownership. In joining a long tradition of Portland neighborhood activism, they also made themselves a part of late twentieth-century liberalism's concern for homeownership. A representative of the affluent Grant Park Neighborhood Association told city planners that allowing townhomes in her neighborhood would change the feel of the place: "all the homes tends [sic] to be in the Tudor Country style

Cities Won the West: Four Centuries of Urban Change in Western North America (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2008), 203-204; Bradshaw Hovey, "Making the Portland Way of Planning: The Structural Power of Language, Stories from Community Planning, 1969-2001" (PhD diss., University of Washington, 2003), 1-2, 121-155; Mark Bello, "Urban Regimes and Downtown Planning in Portland, Oregon and Seattle, Washington, 1972-1992" (PhD diss., Portland State University, 1993), 26-52; Johnson, "The Transformation of Civic Institutions," 99-102; Matthew Witt, "Dialectics of Control: The Origins and Evolution of Conflict in Portland's Neighborhood Associations" (PhD diss., Portland State University, 2000), 96-102; Jeffrey Berry, Kent Portney, and Ken Thomson, *The Rebirth of Urban Democracy* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 1993); Robert Putnam and Lewis Feldstein, *Better Together: Restoring American Community* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2003), 241, 246-247. Most authors see Portland's participatory system as a great success, but some have seen neighborhood groups as obstructive. Amalia Alarcon de Morris and Pal Leistner, "From Neighborhood Association System to Participatory Democracy: Broadening and Deepening Public Involvement in Portland, Oregon," *National Civic Review* 10 (2009): 48; Hovey, "Making the Portland Way of Planning," 285-286.

⁶⁰ Kathie Durbin, "Citizens Rebel against Planners' Tactics," *Willamette Week*, 30 January 1978, 11; Comprehensive Planning Section, *Draft Summary and Analysis of Citizen Response Data for the Comprehensive Land Use Plan* (Portland, OR: City Bureau of Planning, 1978), Neil Goldschmidt Archival Papers, Accession A-2000-017, City of Portland Archives and Records Center, Folder AF/11014; Michael Alesko, "Comprehensive Plan Abolishment Pushed," *Oregonian*, 24 July 1980, C7, Abbott, *Portland*, 203-204.

and that's the general area.... It's single family housing."⁶¹ This sort of argument was not confined to affluent neighborhoods. Like Portlanders seventy years earlier, residents of working class neighborhoods sought to mark the differences between their neighborhoods and those less respectable. A representative from the Beaumont-Wilshire neighborhood worried that zoning to allow irregularly-shaped lots would create "a rental transient type of neighborhood."⁶² Others mimicked their suburban counterparts. A resident of the sprawling Bridlemile neighborhood made the same point more politely: "It's almost an axiom in housing, as the density increases, the stability goes down."⁶³ Across various neighborhoods, activists made arguments similar to Clyde Brumell of the Oregon Homeowners Association, who told planners, "we believe your plan makes for tenants and serfs, not free citizens."⁶⁴

Opponents of the plan could rely on more than the budding property rights movement or the city's tradition of separating rental districts from owner-occupied homes. They were part of Portland's neighborhood revolution, people who had honed their political skills challenging top-down planning and modernist urban projects in the late 1960s and early 1970s. They lived in the neighborhoods that historian Carl Abbott labels "progressive Portland."⁶⁵ These activists spoke of neighborhood livability. They were the people who supported statewide land use planning, but when that planning involved an apartment building or a line of townhouses down the street, they

⁶¹ "Verbatim Transcript of the Public Hearing before the City Planning Commission on the Proposed Comprehensive Plan for the City of Portland," 11 September 1979, in Portland City Planning Commission, *Comprehensive Plan Public Hearings*, Portland City Archives and Records Center, 28.

⁶² "Verbatim Transcript of the Public Hearing before the City Planning Commission on the Proposed Comprehensive Plan for the City of Portland," 11 September 1979, 37.

⁶³ "Verbatim Transcript of the Public Hearing before the City Planning Commission on the Proposed Comprehensive Plan for the City of Portland," 20 September 1979, in Portland City Planning Commission, *Comprehensive Plan Public Hearings*, Portland City Archives and Records Center, 20.

⁶⁴ "Verbatim Transcript of the Public Hearing before the City Planning Commission on the Proposed Comprehensive Plan for the City of Portland," 9 October 1979, in Portland City Planning Commission, *Comprehensive Plan Public Hearings*, Portland City Archives and Records Center, 14. On the importance of homeownership to twentieth-century liberalism, see Robert Self, *American Babylon: Race and the Struggle for Postwar Oakland* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003).

⁶⁵ Carl Abbott, *Portland: Urban Life and Landscape in the Pacific Northwest* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001), 80.

did not think of farmland saved from suburban expansion. Instead, they cracked open volumes of the city's planning code, looked at infrastructure maps, and drew on a decade's experience in activism to swarm public meetings.

They dusted off the rhetoric of the 1970s, using arguments about California and population growth against planning. Ronald Bailey, who lived near Lewis and Clark College, wrote to the city's chief planner that only Portland's livable single-family neighborhoods kept the metropolitan area from sprouting suburbs to match Los Angeles's. If lot sizes were too small, the city would "force people out into the suburbs to get more space," he wrote.⁶⁶ Another southwest Portlander warned planners that he had left the Bay Area to get away from ugly and crowded treeless neighborhoods. "That's one aspect of California living that I really would not want introduced into Portland," he opined.⁶⁷ In a show of just how malleable the rhetoric of livability could be, Lloyd Keefe, who as previous director of planning for the city had authored some of the modernist proposals that sparked Portland's neighborhood revolution, came out against the plan. "The denser a city gets, the less livable it gets," he told his replacements in the planning department.⁶⁸ Portland's plan would make the city unlivable, sending young families packing for the suburbs.⁶⁹

There was support for increased density, particularly in inner northwest Portland, the city's densest neighborhood and one with a high proportion of renters, but their views were in the minority. Even the city's planning commission dreaded the population growth that would

⁶⁶ Ronald Bailey to Tracy Watson, 7 May 1979, Comp Plan Support Documents, Accession 7706-04, Portland City Archives and Records Center, Box 1/1/1979-12/31/1980.

⁶⁷ "Verbatim Transcript of the Public Hearing before the City Planning Commission on the Proposed Comprehensive Plan for the City of Portland," 20 September 1979, 12.

⁶⁸ "Verbatim Transcript of the Public Hearing before the City Planning Commission on the Proposed Comprehensive Plan for the City of Portland," 20 September 1979, 26.

⁶⁹ In 1967 Keefe had supported an attempt to clear a multi-ethnic neighborhood south of downtown to make way for housing projects. He later authored some of the proposals for Northwest Portland that gave rise to the Northwest District Association's opposition to modernist planning. Abbott, *Portland*, 183; Hovey, "Making the Portland Way of Planning," 122.

fuel density. One of its members told an audience in southwest Portland, “I think each of us would like to keep Portland exactly the same size that it is now, but obviously that’s not within anyone’s power to do.”⁷⁰ This shared hostility to growth squared with fear of change, particularly change originating from California. That fear had drawn many Portlanders to land use planning in the early 1970s. It had served as an effective rallying cry in that decade, helping to unite urbanites, suburbanites, and farmers. But administering the system that the alliance produced required stepping outside the Manichean opposition of livability and growth that was so much a part of the ethic of place in the late twentieth century.⁷¹

The city council approved the new comprehensive plan in 1980, in spite of opposition. A group called Neighbors for Neighborhoods attempted to refer the plan to voters, who they thought would share their distaste for urban crowding, but ran into trouble collecting necessary signatures. The economic foundations of land use planning had been poured into improbable forms that required extractive industry to continue to support a growing work force, even as resource production became more mechanized. Both the economic ideas that supported the program and the cultural prejudices that lent it political support depended on stasis. The planning regime had, after all, been a reaction to both population growth and a changing economy. Those changes could not be held at bay forever. Ideas built on opposition to change proved brittle in the 1980s as the rural economy changed and metropolitan Portland confronted the prospect of increased density. Still, the changes the decade brought were halting. Relatively slow population growth and ample vacant land kept density low in and around Portland. And after the recession of the early 1980s, the timber economy improved.

⁷⁰ “Verbatim Transcript of the Public Hearing before the City Planning Commission on the Proposed Comprehensive Plan for the City of Portland,” 20 September 1979, 29.

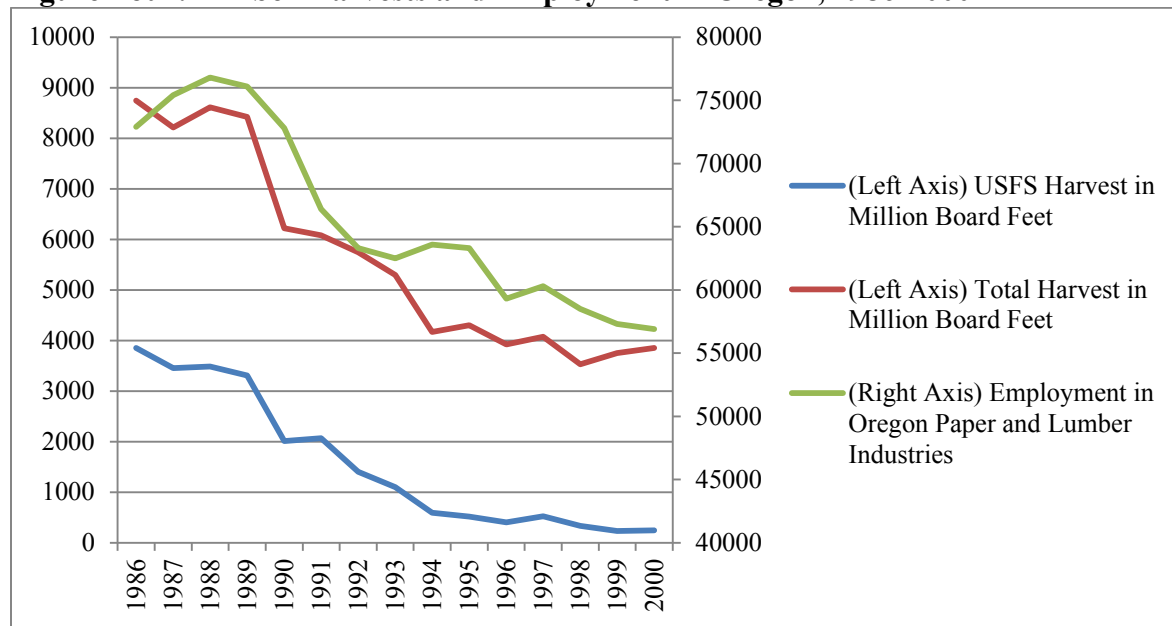
⁷¹ “Verbatim Transcript of the Public Hearing before the City Planning Commission on the Proposed Comprehensive Plan for the City of Portland,” 11 October 1979, in Portland City Planning Commission, *Comprehensive Plan Public Hearings*, Portland City Archives and Records Center, 15, 24; Patty Mantia, “A Neighborhood of Porch Sitters,” *Willamette Week*, 12 July 1976, 13.

ACCELERATED CHANGE IN THE 1990s

During the 1990s the pace of change in Oregon accelerated. The decade saw population growth, a booming economy, and changes to the legal landscape of logging. In 1991 a federal judge in Seattle rejected the Forest Service's plan to manage the habitat of the northern spotted owl. The spotted owl is a charismatic bird with striking eyes and an eerily human call. Its preferred habitat is old growth forest, and a nesting pair requires hundreds of acres of it. Federal district court Judge William Dwyer's 1991 decisions, finding Forest Service management plans for owl habitat inadequate, effectively foreclosed old growth logging in national forests west of the Cascades. A 1994 timber summit, presided over by Bill Clinton, allowed for the resumption of cutting in some west-side old growth while maintaining old growth harvests east of the Cascades. Still, the annual harvest on Forest Service land dropped precipitously. The spotted owl decision and timber summit agreement coincided with changing attitudes within the Forest Service. Agency employees started to recognize that the timber harvests of the preceding decades were unsustainable and rested on flawed assumptions about regeneration. They responded also to public concerns about below-cost timber sales that amounted to subsidies to the timber industry. As Figure Four shows, harvests on national forests declined from 3.85 billion board feet in 1986 to 245 million board feet in 2000. Harvests on private land remained relatively consistent, helping offset the decline in Forest Service sales, but employment in Oregon's timber and paper industry dropped from 72,900 in 1986 to 56,900 in 2000.⁷²

⁷² Paul Hirt, *A Conspiracy of Optimism: Management of the National Forests Since World War Two* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1994), 266-292; "Time for a Little Prestroika," *Economist*, 10 March 1990, 28; Warren, *Harvest, Employment, Exports, and Prices in Pacific Northwest Forests, 1965-2007*, 1, 3-4, 7-8, 15.

Figure Four: Timber Harvests and Employment in Oregon, 1986-2000⁷³

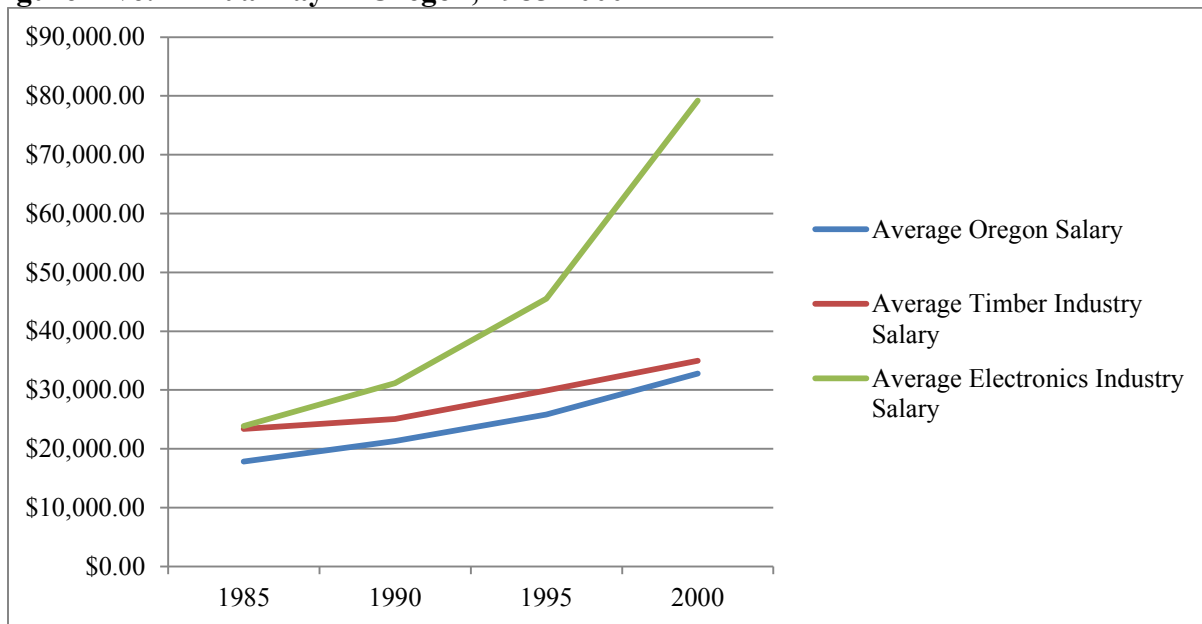


Changes in the industry were not limited to decreasing harvests and payrolls. The nature of the industry changed. Log exports diminished, contributing to an increase in the number of industry workers per million board feet harvested. Some mills did fairly well during the 1990s, but small mills without the capital to retool and process second-growth timber closed. Wages in the industry increased in the last fifteen years of the century, but they did not increase as quickly as the average wage in Oregon. The contrast between timber wages and wages of electronics workers was especially stark. In 1985 the two sets of workers earned roughly the same amount, but over the course of the next fifteen years, as Figure Five shows, pay for electronics workers would increase to more than double the pay of timber workers.⁷⁴

⁷³ Warren, *Harvest, Employment, Exports, and Prices in Pacific Northwest Forests, 1965-2007*, 1, 3-4, 7-8, 15.

⁷⁴ Richard Haynes, "Contribution of Old-Growth Timber to Regional Economies in the Pacific Northwest," in Thomas Spies and Sally Duncan, eds., *Old Growth Forests in a New World: A Pacific Icon Reexamined* (Washington, DC: Island Press, 2009), 86-88; Oregon Labor Market Information System, "Covered Employment and Wages."

Figure Five: Annual Pay in Oregon, 1985-2000⁷⁵



As employment in the wood products industry declined, timber workers gained access to federally-funded jobs programs. Some programs offered career counseling, teaching timber workers, whom policy makers worried lacked skills writing resumes and filling out applications, how to apply for work in other fields. Other jobs programs taught former loggers to do ecological restoration work. Neither program was especially successful. Former loggers lacked the capital to turn new skills in restoration into businesses, and industries such as electronics that offered high wages were largely closed to former timber workers without technical educations. Timber workers who found work in other industries generally did service work for little pay.⁷⁶

Rural prospects defined by unemployment and cuts to public budgets dependent on timber revenues contrasted with broader economic growth. Portland and its suburbs saw the lion's share of economic growth, especially in the new and increasingly lucrative electronics and

⁷⁵ Oregon Labor Market Information System, "Covered Employment and Wages," <http://www.qualityinfo.org/olmisj/CEP>.

⁷⁶ Steven Daniels, Corinne Gobeli, Angela Findley, "Reemployment Programs for Dislocated Timber Workers: Lessons from Oregon," *Society & Natural Resources* 13 (2000): 135-150; Robert Lee and Mathew Carroll, "Occupational Community and Identity Among Pacific Northwestern Loggers: Implications for Adapting to Economic Changes," in Robert Lee, et. al, eds., *Community and Forestry: Communities in the Sociology of Natural Resources* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1990): 107-124.

computers industry. The wage gap was accompanied by a gap in home prices. The urban and suburban economic boom drove up the price of real estate. The increase was likely amplified by the metropolitan urban growth boundary's regulation of the available supply. Meanwhile, prices in rural areas lagged.⁷⁷

The economic changes of the 1990s saw the formation of a new relationship between city and country. Portlanders had long looked to the state's rural areas for recreation, taking sightseeing trips to the Columbia River Gorge in the nineteenth century and hiking in newly designated wilderness areas during the 1970s. This recreation depended on the contrast between rural and urban space. But in the 1990s, Portlanders experienced the contrast between urban and rural space from within the city. The urban growth boundary's constriction of available vacant land began to change the city. At the end of the decade, residential high rises went up in a reclaimed industrial district north of downtown. More were planned on a brownfield to the south. Home prices rose in historically poor, ethnically diverse neighborhoods in the city's northeast. Forced by the urban growth boundary to remain in the city, Portlanders spent more remodeling their homes during the 1990s than residents of almost any other city in the country.⁷⁸

In discussions of Oregon's appeal, the state's rural areas came to define and shape the city itself. Writers marveled at the clear line Portlanders had drawn around their city. As urban planner Alexander Marshall wrote, the undeveloped rural landscape "is as much a part of Portland and its success as its bustling downtown."⁷⁹ Indeed, it was Portland's regulated relationship with surrounding fields and forests that made it an antidote to the urban blight and

⁷⁷ Oregon Labor Market Information System, "Covered Employment and Wages." On property values, see Walker and Hurley, *Planning Paradise*, 318.

⁷⁸ James Kunstler, *The Geography of Nowhere: The Rise and Decline of America's Manmade Landscape* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1993), 200ff; Deborah Howe, "The Reality of Portland's Housing Market," in Connie Ozawa, ed., *The Portland Edge: Challenges and Successes in Growing Communities* (Washington, DC: Island Press, 2004), 187.

⁷⁹ Alexander Marshall, *How Cities Work: Suburbs, Sprawl, and the Roads Not Taken* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2000), 163.

homogenous suburbs that writers found in other American cities. Urban planning luminary Jane Jacobs pointed to Portland as a success, noting its parks, waterfront commercial district, remodeled older buildings, and public transportation network. An article in the *Nation* reported that “town planners, city officials, environmentalists and neighborhood activists from all over the country are drawn to Portland.”⁸⁰ As Portland’s urban growth boundary received increasing national attention, a local cottage industry developed to celebrate it. The boundary that had originally sheltered farms from suburban expansion became a symbol of the city in a mystery novel, a painting, photographs, poetry, and a song. The song is titled, with more verve than catchiness, “Urban Growth Boundaries Can’t Stop My Love (I’ll Go Out to Gresham for You).”⁸¹ (The object of the singer’s affection should be skeptical; Gresham sits inside Metro’s urban growth boundary.)⁸²

Rural Oregonians did not necessarily read the mystery novel or hear the song, but the symbolism of the growth boundary around the state’s largest city was not lost on them. William Hagenstein, who had been the executive vice president of the Industrial Forestry Association, a local trade group, told an interviewer in 1990 that the current situation reminded him of a lesson from ancient history: urban people kept rural people “in a kind of economic bondage. They’d give them just enough bait to have the food supplies coming into the city.”⁸³ Hagenstein’s view was not universal, but as timber companies tucked notices into pay envelopes explaining that

⁸⁰ Reprinted as Jay Walljasper, “Portland’s Green Peace: At Play in the Fields of Urban Planning,” in *Urban Planning*, ed. by Andrew Cavin (New York: H.W. Wilson, 2003), 57.

⁸¹ For lyrics, or better, to listen to a sample, see Ian Doescher, “Urban Growth Boundary Can’t Stop My Love,” http://www.creswelldoescher.com/portland/Boundaries_Lyrics.html.

⁸² Robbins, *Landscapes of Conflict*, 305-306; Bill Steigerwald, “City Views,” *Reason*, June 2001, <http://reason.com/archives/2001/06/01/cityviews/singlepage>; Carl Abbott and Joy Margheim, “Imagining Portland’s Urban Growth Boundary: Planning Regulation as Cultural Icon,” *Journal of the American Planning Association* 74 (2008): 197.

⁸³ “Forestry’s Advocate: William D. Hagenstein,” Oral history Interview conducted by Elwood Maunder and George Morgan, July 1992 and Harold Steen, October 1992 (Durham: Forest History Society, 1995), Oregon Historical Society SR 3611.1.

environmentalists were to blame for industry woes or delivered the message in letters announcing lay-offs, workers saw urban political power behind the plight of rural Oregon.⁸⁴

Rural workers had reasons other than pressure from employers to see a divide between urban and rural interests. During the late 1980s, Earth First! developed a reputation for spiking trees, driving hidden pieces of metal into their trunks. The group claimed to be careful to spike above the reach of loggers' saws and to warn timber companies when it had spiked a stand so that the company could x-ray logs before milling them. The idea was to force lumber companies to spend money in order to protect equipment and employees when milling old growth timber, but the nuance was lost amid worries that loggers would be maimed when their saws hit metal. The Earth Liberation Front used similar tactics during the 1990s. Other tensions between urbanites and rural workers were more prosaic. Some rural towns gentrified in the 1990s, as employment declined, pricing rural residents out of houses and changing the face of communities they thought they knew. As one Hood River log truck driver put it, "If there are no jobs, the windsurfers will buy up all the houses."⁸⁵

Rural and suburban conservatives quickly stepped into the breach they saw between rural and urban Oregon. A lawyer named Bill Moshofsky and a farmer and politician named Frank Nims formed Oregonians in Action in 1989. Moshofsky had spent the early 1980s fighting against plant closure legislation as vice president of Georgia-Pacific. A representative of the

⁸⁴ Not all workers abandoned their earlier anti-corporate stances. "Interview with Vera and Chuck Carter," in Beverly Brown, *In Timber Country: Working People's Stories of Environmental Conflict and Urban Flight* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1995), 89; Foster Church, "Workers are Wondering: 'Will it Be Me?'" *Special Report to the Oregonian*, 29 November 1990, 20; William Street, "Ecology is not a Four Letter Word," *Woodworker*, 20 May 1990, 8. For employer activism, see Dumont, "Loggers and Radical Environmentalists," 114; Foster Church, "Living in a Time of Passionate Convictions," *Special Report to the Oregonian*, 29 November, 1990, 23.

⁸⁵ Jeanie Senior, "Big Trucks Carry Timber Workers' Protest on Spotted Owl Issue through Hood River," *Oregonian*, 3 May 1989. A spiked tree caused a northern California mill accident that killed a worker, but the tree was not spiked by an environmental activist. Dumont, "Loggers and Radical Environmentalists, 83-84. For more on Hood River, see Jason Pierce, "The Winds of Change: The Decline of Extractive Industries and the Rise of Tourism in Hood River County, Oregon," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 108 (Fall 2007): 410-431.

corporate shuffling that had crippled small-town economies, he was an unlikely spokesperson for rural discontent. But the 1990s replaced memory of disinvestment with concerns about government regulation, and Nims and Moshofsky found a reception for their brand of politics. They drew on some of the objections to planning as an overextension of government power that had simmered in the 1970s and 1980s, but expanded their message to fit the changed circumstances. They played on the growing sense that the planning system and environmental regulations on logging were linked, producing illogical or unfair results. In addition to challenging land use planning, the group opposed environmental regulation of logging. As the two built networks of planning experts to lobby for changes in the state legislature and to challenge elements of the state's planning system in court, they cultivated and drew on rural disaffection that regarded planning as just one of many urban projects imposed on rural Oregon. Oregonians in Action won the support from the Grange, the Oregon Cattlemen's Association, and some parts of the Farm Bureau.⁸⁶

Rural disaffection and resistance to environmental regulation was clear in the Clackamas County Farm Bureau's 1994 proposal for an "Urban (Portland) Management Practices Act." The Farm Bureau's satirical resolution noted that "urban Oregon has increasingly been involved in 'solving' rural Oregon's problems." Now the farmers would take a stab at solving some of Portland's problems. Portlanders would no longer be allowed to keep dogs and cats as pets because they were nonnative species. Wolves and cougars would be reintroduced and allowed to roam Portland streets. The Farm Bureau suggested that Portlanders adjust to be more

⁸⁶ Phil Keisling, "Shutdown!," *Willamette Week*, 2 March 1981, 2; Walker and Hurley, *Planning Paradise*, 18, 139, 261. For the belief in the 1990s that planning was unfair, see Charles Hales, "Mr. Benner Goes to Salem ... But You're Going Along for the Ride," *Building Industry Journal*, November 1991; Arlie Dickie, interviewed by Clark Hansen, 28 November 1995, SR 2622, transcript, Oregon Historical Society; Shirley Deardorff, interviewed by Clark Hansen, SR 2628, transcript, Oregon Historical Society. For Oregonians in Action's comparison of land use and logging regulations, see "OIA President Testifies Regarding Spotted Owl," *Looking Forward*, July/August 1991, 4; "The Bill of Rights, Justice Thomas, and the Collapse of the Soviet Union," *Looking Forward*, January/February 1992, 1; "Whose Rights," *Looking Forward*, May/June 1996, 13.

accommodating to tourism, proposing “a ban on residents of Portland from using the arterial freeways/streets so that tourists and out-of-towners can get into and out of Portland easier.” If these proposals had analogues in recent changes in the management of the rural environment, others spoke to changes in the state’s economy. 1000 Friends of Oregon and the state’s planners no longer received credit for their concern with the productive economy. The Clackamas County farmers dreamed of a sawmill erected in Portland’s waterfront park, which the city named for Tom McCall. There would also be chicken laying houses and pig finishing buildings “as a Pungent reminder as to what the NUMBER ONE industry in Oregon is.”⁸⁷ That farming and timber were important to the state’s economy were articles of faith upon which the planning system had been built. That a county farm bureau saw the importance of resource production as a point of disagreement suggested how much popular conceptions of planning had come to rest on an urban and suburban ethic of place.

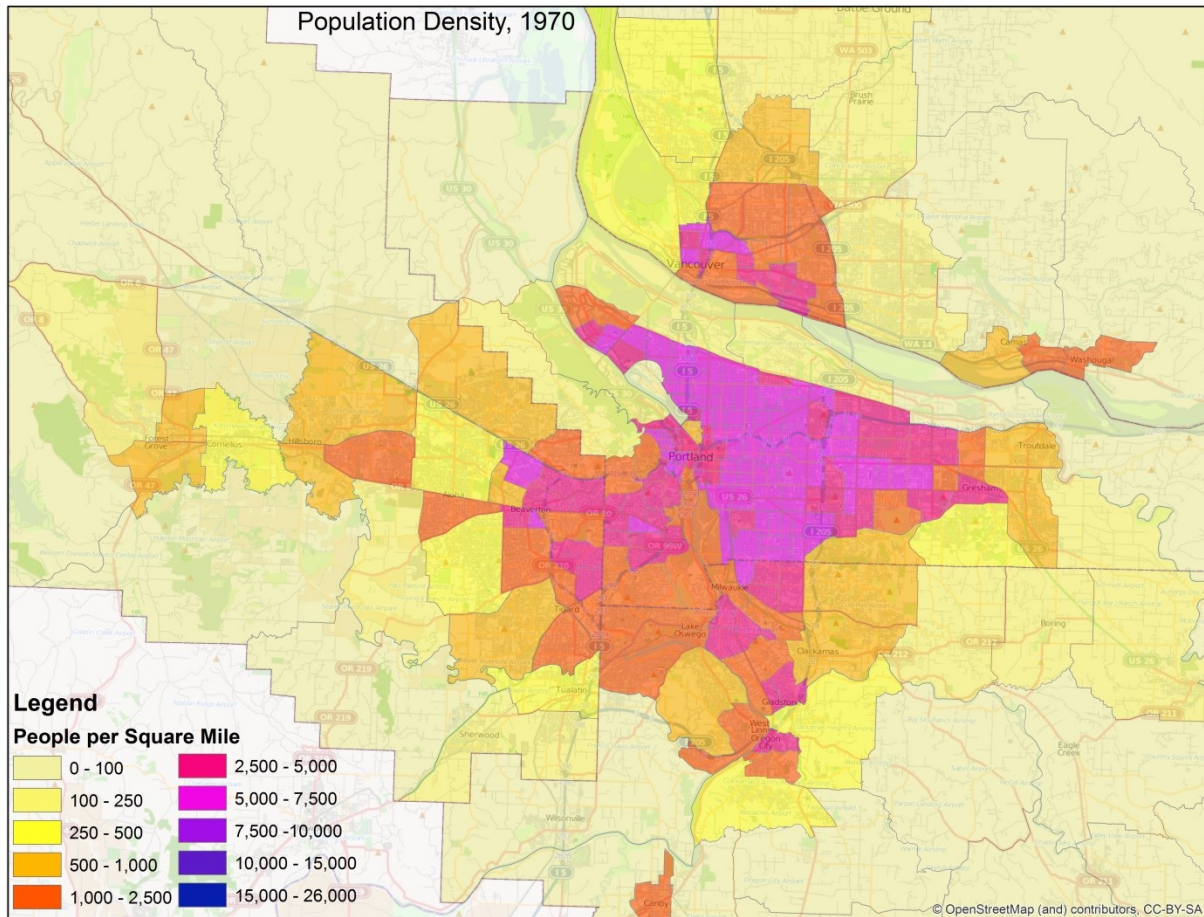
That ethic of place was increasingly fragile in the 1990s. The disgruntled Clackamas County farmers, themselves residents of a wealthy suburban county, might have looked to suburban neighbors, more than to other rural producers, for support. By 2000 Portland added 176,502 residents to the 382,619 people who called the city home in 1970. In the 1970s and 1980s annexation of surrounding communities helped account for the increase. In the 1990s, though, the city added 44,351 new households without adding much new land. The look of neighborhoods changed as three-story townhouses dwarfed older single-family homes and houses with prominent garages were squeezed onto small lots. Close-in and affluent residential neighborhoods saw little change, but less affluent neighborhoods and those distant from

⁸⁷ The Clackamas County Farm Bureau’s resolution was picked up by the *Oregon Spectator*, a conservative monthly based in Oregon City, and then reprinted by property rights activists Oregonians in Action as “The Lighter Side: Farm Bureau’s Idea for Land Planning,” *Looking Forward*, July/August 1994, 9.

downtown saw gentrification and increased development. Similar changes happened in the suburbs, particularly those to the west and east, as Figures Six, Seven, Eight, and Nine show.⁸⁸

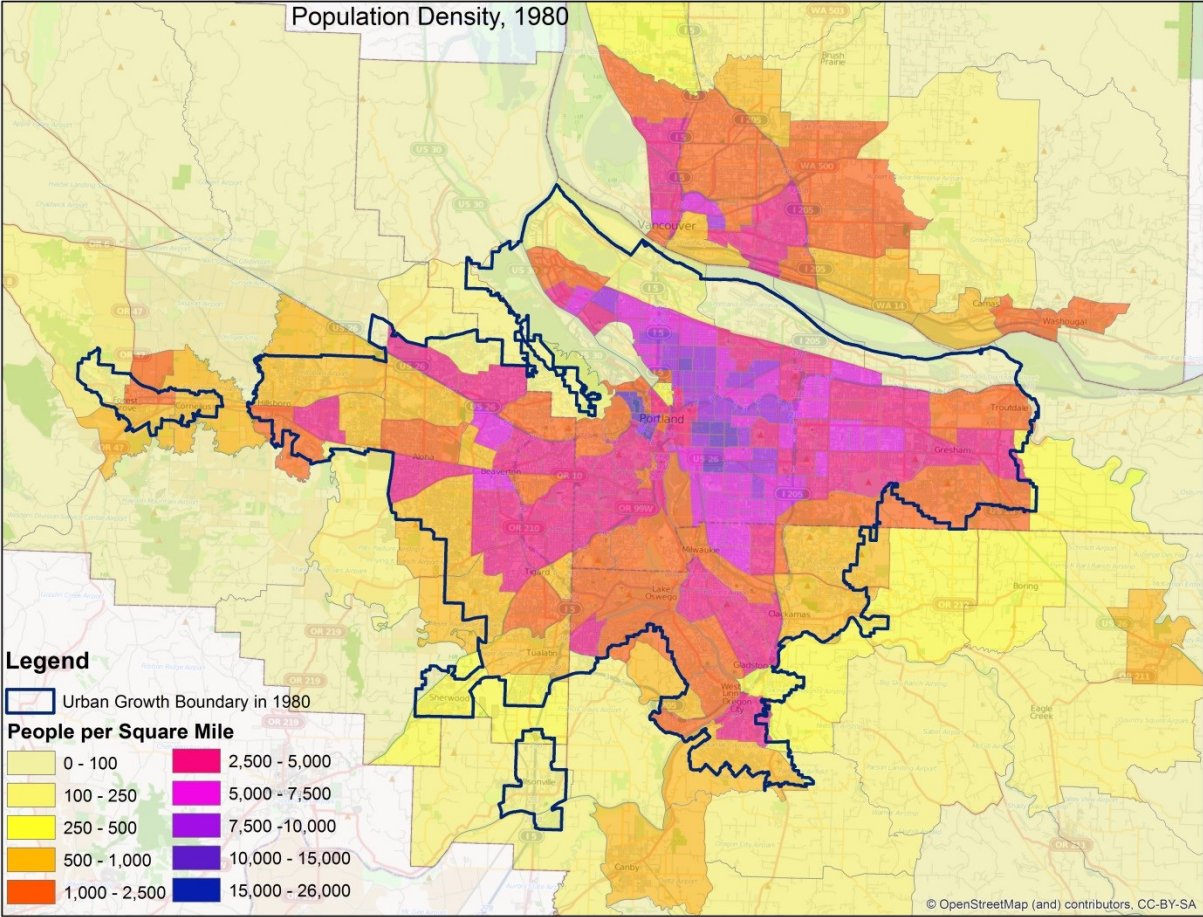
⁸⁸ Nancy Chapman and Hollie Lund, "Housing Density and Livability in Portland," in Connie Ozawa, ed., *The Portland Edge: Challenges and Success in Growing Communities* (Washington, DC: Island Press, 2004): 206-229.

Figure Six: Portland Metropolitan Area Population Density in 1970⁸⁹



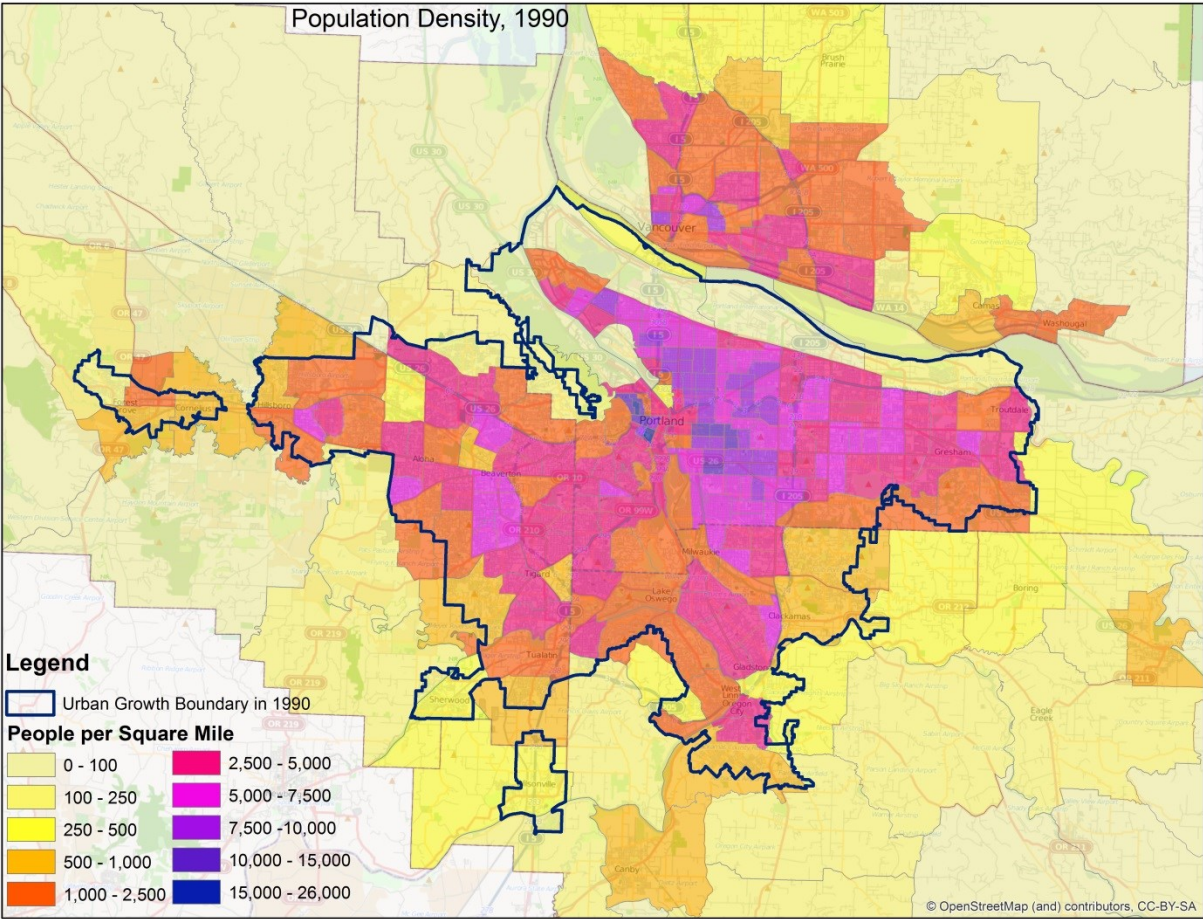
⁸⁹ Data and shapefiles from Metro, “1970 Census Tracts,” <http://rlisdiscovery.oregonmetro.gov>.

Figure Seven: Portland Metropolitan Area Urban Growth Boundary and Population Density in 1980⁹⁰



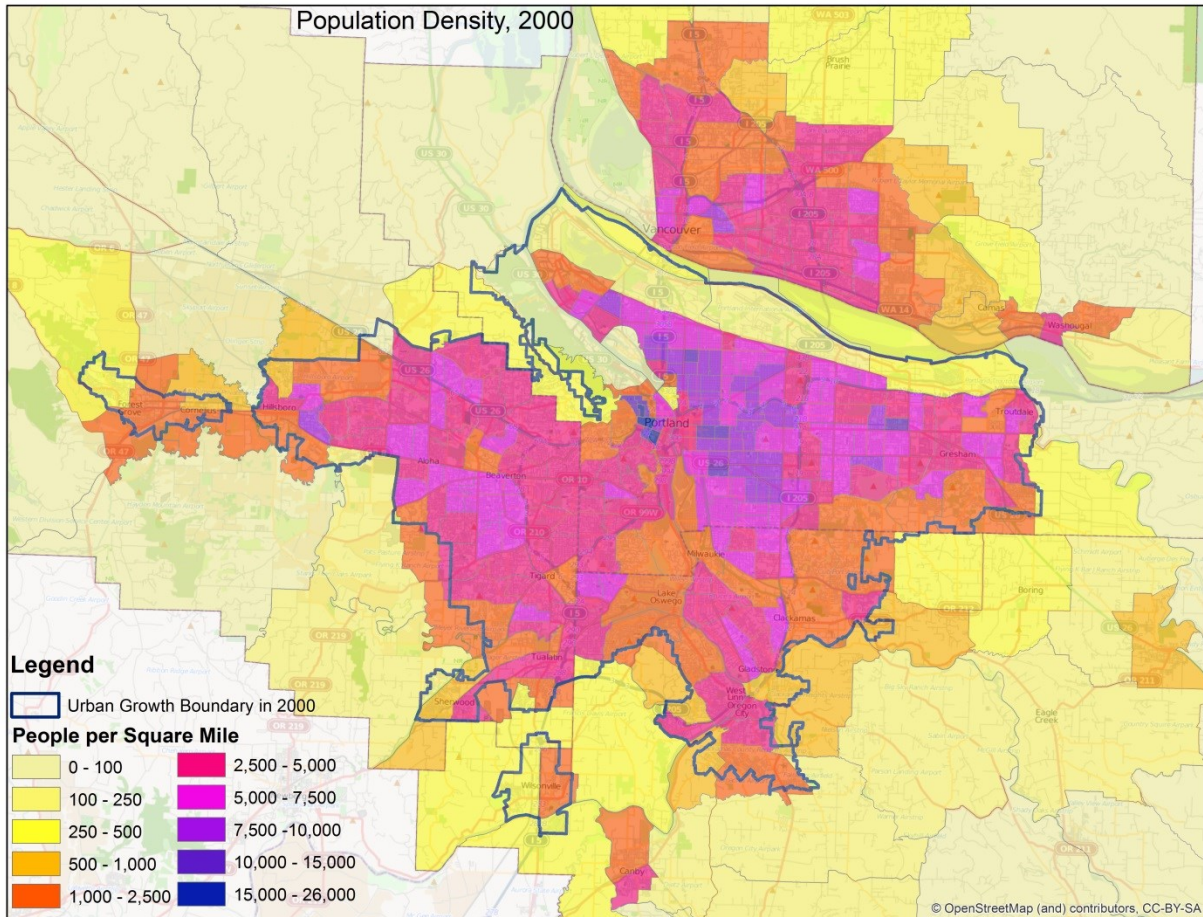
⁹⁰ Data and shapefiles from Metro, “1980 Census Tracts,” <http://rlisdiscovery.oregonmetro.gov>.

Figure Eight: Portland Metropolitan Area Urban Growth Boundary and Population Density in 1990⁹¹



⁹¹ Data and shapefiles from Metro, “1990 Census Tracts,” <http://rlisdiscovery.oregonmetro.gov/>.

Figure Nine: Portland Metropolitan Area Urban Growth Boundary and Population Density in 2000⁹²



⁹² Data and shapefiles from Metro, “2000 Census Tracts,” <http://rlisdiscovery.oregonmetro.gov>.

Oregonians in Action recognized suburban discontent, and tailored its message to appeal to suburbanites. The group contended that planning denied homeowners property rights that it also denied farmers and owners of timberland. Like 1000 Friends of Oregon, the anti-planning group influenced the state by proposing changes to the planning system and by funding legal challenges to planning decisions. It won prominence after convincing the United States Supreme Court in 1994 that the City of Tigard could not compel property owners to give up a part of their land as a condition of receiving a building permit. Oregonians in Action did more than appeal to the property rights crowd. It also spoke of livability. Some notes were discordant with liberals' images of themselves, as when Frank Nims made the anti-urban statement that "many Oregon families would prefer to raise their children in a rural atmosphere, away from the high crime, drugs, pollution, and grid lock of the cities."⁹³ At other times, though, Nims and his group harmonized with the better angels of Oregon's livability liberals. Nims wrote in Oregonians in Action's summer 1991 newsletter that "mandated higher densities have converted playgrounds, trees and open space into row after row of townhouses."⁹⁴

Oregonians in Action put on the November 2000 ballot an initiative that would require state and local governments to compensate landowners when regulations changed the market value of their land. Proponents of the measure touted property rights, reminding voters that "if the government takes your land, they should pay for it."⁹⁵ They also captured arguments 1000 Friends of Oregon had traditionally wielded, contending that scrapping the system of farmland

⁹³ Frank Nims, "In My Opinion," *Looking Forward*, November/December 1991, 2.

⁹⁴ Frank Nims, "The View from Sherwood," *Looking Forward*, July/August 1991, 3; see also Leonard Kunzman, "Rural Lands Policy Off Course," *Looking Forward*, July/August 1991, 2; Frank Nims, "The View from Sherwood," *Looking Forward*, September/October 1991, 3; Dale Johnson, "Let's Make the Dream Come True," *Looking Forward*, November/December 1991, 1; Bonnie Smith, "An Answer to Henry Richmond and 1000 Friends of Oregon," *Looking Forward*, May/June, 1993, 7; Frank Setniker, "Land Use Regulatory System in Need of an Overhaul," *Looking Forward*, July/August, 1993, 2. The court decision is *Dolan v. City of Tigard* 512 U.S. 374 (1994).

⁹⁵ Bill Moshofsky, "Argument in Favor," in Secretary of State, *Official 2000 General Election Voters' Pamphlet—Statewide Measures* (Salem: State of Oregon, 2000), 311.

preservation would actually help farmers run their farms. The Oregon Family Farm PAC argued that the measure would protect the agriculture and lumber industries from the few “Oregonians who want to stop all land uses on rural lands, and make Oregon one giant public park.”⁹⁶ In this new formulation, opponents of planning seemed to stand for traditional economic production and against thirty years of economic changes that increased the amenity value of trees and fields at the expense of their productive values. Arguments had turned on their heads.

Some supporters of land use planning refused to concede the economic argument. A group of farmers, including some involved in the campaign against the 1982 measure, revived the old language of production. They reminded voters that planning laws “have been essential to maintaining the basic livelihood of thousands of families who earn their living in agriculture.” To require the state to compensate landowners for zoning changes would “force taxpayers to pay hundreds of millions of dollars to developers and speculators.”⁹⁷

Most of the arguments supporters used to defend planning added to the fears of rural Oregonians. They attested to the importance of land use planning to the state’s quality of life. Most planning activists no longer cast the program as a defense of the natural resources economy. It became, instead, a vague guarantee of amenities that attracted business to the state. Two former governors argued that doing away with farm and forest protections would “threaten the natural beauty that makes Oregon a great place to live and do business.”⁹⁸ Other planning activists worried that gutting the state planning system would threaten wildlife habitat and sightseeing in the Columbia River Gorge. In short, planning supporters surrendered their claim to working with rural Oregon and staged their defense of the system on its successes in making

⁹⁶ Lawrence George, “Argument in Favor,” in Secretary of State, *Official 2000 General Election Voters’ Pamphlet—Statewide Measures* (Salem: State of Oregon, 2000), 312.

⁹⁷ Diana Parsons, “Argument in Opposition,” in Secretary of State, *Official 2000 General Election Voters’ Pamphlet—Statewide Measures* (Salem: State of Oregon, 2000), 323.

⁹⁸ Mark Hatfield and Neil Goldschmidt, “Argument in Opposition,” in *Secretary of State, Official 2000 General Election Voters’ Pamphlet—Statewide Measures* (Salem: State of Oregon, 2000), 319.

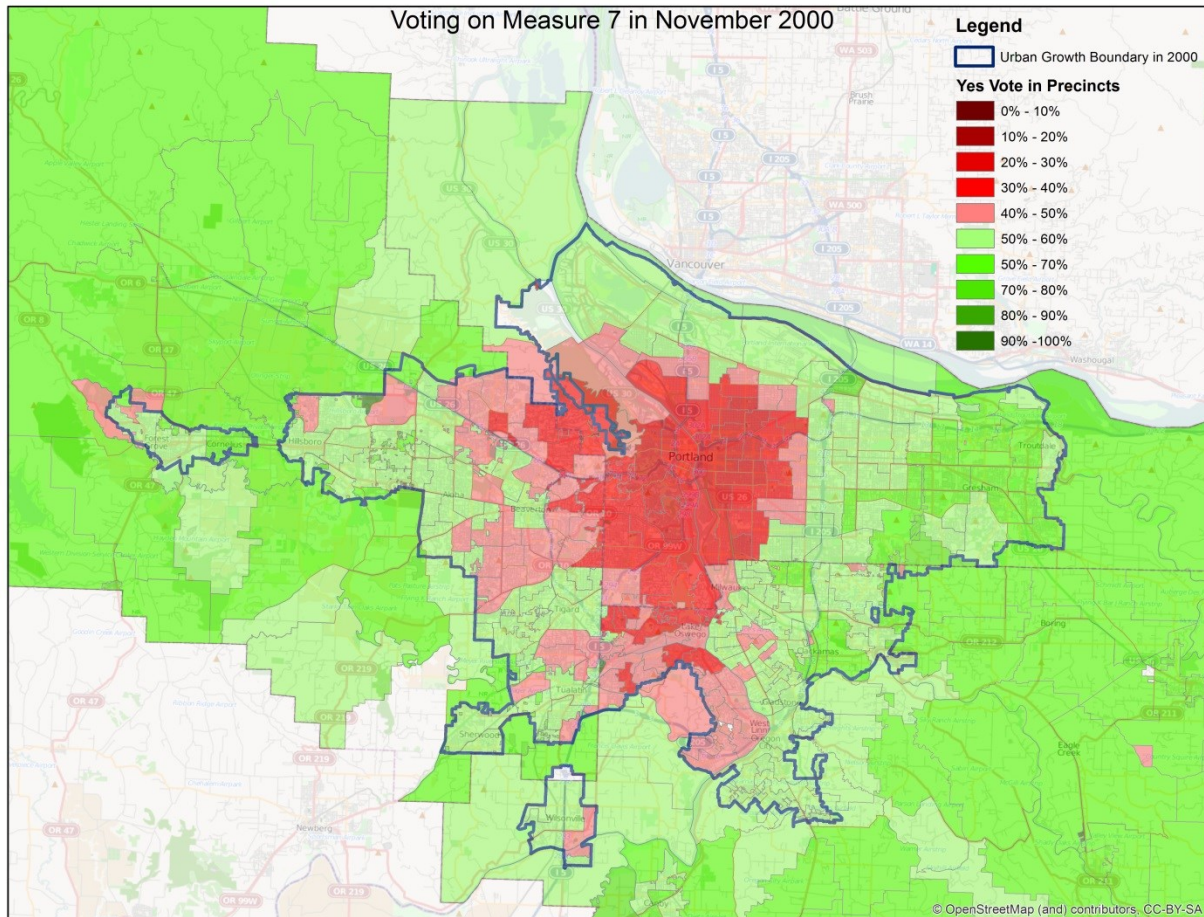
Oregon famous for livability. Planning activists recognized that Oregonians in Action posed a threat to the land use planning system, but they failed to recognize that it was a threat posed by a new alliance between rural residents and suburbanites worried about planning's impact on their quality of life.⁹⁹

Livability was a fluid concept, and as activists made this case it fell flat with many voters, particularly those who had seen neighborhood density increase under comprehensive plans. For the first time, suburban counties voted against planning. Figure Ten shows support for gutting the planning system was high in areas of Portland that saw density increase during the 1990s. Buoyed by rural and suburban disaffection, opponents of planning won the election with fifty-three percent of the state vote. Oregon and its local governments stood to lose \$5 billion per year by continuing to enforce planning regulations, but the law never went into effect. The Oregon Supreme Court upheld in 2002 a lower court decision from 2000 that invalidated the initiative because it amended more than one section of the state constitution.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁹ Michael Lang, "Argument in Opposition," in Secretary of State, *Official 2000 General Election Voters' Pamphlet—Statewide Measures* (Salem: State of Oregon, 2000), 320; Russell Hoeflich, "Argument in Opposition," in Secretary of State, *Official 2000 General Election Voters' Pamphlet—Statewide Measures* (Salem: State of Oregon, 2000), 322.

¹⁰⁰ *League of Oregon Cities v. State* 56 P.3d 892, Oregon Supreme Court (2002).

Figure 10: Voting on Measure 7 in the Portland Metropolitan Area¹⁰¹



¹⁰¹ Data comes from Washington County, “Official Statement of the General Election on November 7, 2000,” Washington County Elections, Beaverton, OR; Multnomah County, “November 7, 2000 General Election,” <http://web.multco.us/elections>; Clackamas County, “Statement of Vote—Clackamas County General Election—Nov. 7, 2000,” in Steve Kindred to author, 26 September 2011. Shape files are from Linda Martin, Metro Data Resource Center, to author, 22 September 2011.

Granted a reprieve, planning activists took stock of the system's precarious position. They mistakenly understood the problem to be one of perceptions. Too many Oregonians were too young or too new to the state to understand the planning system. As one activist put it, the bulk of the state's current residents "may not recognize the name 'Tom McCall.' They may not make the connections between the great life we live here and the farsighted decisions that have made that life possible."¹⁰² In this thinking, planning rested on livability more than economics. Neither could provide stable foundations. The system required sacrifices from suburbanites living in denser neighborhoods and from rural Oregonians hoping to cash in on land's development potential. Oregon voters did not let the program stand for long. They passed a new compensation mandate in 2004, explicitly giving local government the option to dole out variances rather than cash. This time, even residents of Multnomah County voted for the measure. Only Benton County, home to Oregon State University, voted to preserve the planning system. There were compromises ahead to salvage some of the system. In a 2007 ballot measure, Oregonians made compensation available only to landowners contemplating relatively small projects. Still, planners now consider the costs of compensation when they think about restricting land use.¹⁰³

Those who looked to Portland and Oregon as places that embraced change cannily failed to recognize a key irony. The system that seemed to encourage the state's economic growth in the 1990s and the new century grew out of the state's conservatism. Its architects opposed the very changes in the structure of the broader economy that fueled the growth of the new economy. To succeed, the system needed to hold both economic change and population growth at bay. It

¹⁰² Randy Tucker to Board of Directors, 27 September 2001, 1000 Friends of Oregon Collection, Accession 08-053, University of Oregon Special Collections, Box 88, Folder Image Project.

¹⁰³ Sara Galvan, "Gone Too Far: Oregon's Measure 37 and the Perils of Over-Regulating Land Use," *Yale Law and Policy Review* 23 (2005): 596; Walker and Hurley, *Planning Paradise*, 81-84, 95-110.

could do neither, and as pundits touted its successes in making Portland a darling of the new economy, the very things they lauded in the plan helped engender opposition to it.

There was another irony. Oregon had met environmental challenges in the 1970s with ideas about production and about livability. Under favorable economic conditions, the problems inherent in producerism and the state's ethic of place had fallen away. Urbanites and rural people had worked together to respond to what they saw as the chief threats to their way of life. To the extent that they managed to do so in a way that recognized both the importance of a quality environment and an economy capable of supporting good wages, they relied on attempts to preserve an idyllic past. They achieved real success in keeping farmland in production, but activists could exert much less control over the timber economy. When the idyll proved vulnerable to changes swirling outside the state, urbanites, suburbanites, and rural people found common ground in opposition to the increased density and burgeoning regulation they associated with those changes. The success of Oregon environmentalism and its failures had roots in both sides of the state's urban-rural divide.

CONCLUSION

DATA FARMS, POWER, TAX CREDITS, AND HISTORY

The 1,100-foot pier that the Port of The Dalles built on dry land in 1935 is no longer in service. Nearly eighty years after Bonneville Dam raised a river capable of carrying ocean-going ships, the port now maintains only a marina for pleasure boats. Still, the Port of The Dalles continues to connect the rimrock and grass beyond the Cascades to the broader world. Its efforts still affect Portland. In 1985 voters in Wasco County approved a \$4.5 million bond issue to improve infrastructure on the port's property. In following years the port developed an industrial subdivision along the Columbia, situating it in an enterprise zone that promised property tax abatements to the right companies. In 2005 the port sold a thirty-seven-acre plot in the subdivision to Google. The next year the Internet company opened its first proprietary data center, two hulking buildings full of processors, a stone's throw from the Columbia River. Google's spot on the river bank has seen boats laden with wheat churn past since the 1870s and sits just two miles from the now-defunct pier where assembled dignitaries ushered in a new era of rural power in 1937. That spot on the banks of the Columbia is as close to the center of the region's history as it now is to the world's reservoirs of stored information. Upstream from Portland, it is a good place to take stock of a history that has often turned on events outside the city's control.

Google came to The Dalles seeking a site unlikely to be hit by floods and earthquakes. It also sought cheap land, cheap power, and an easy connection to high-capacity fiber optic cables. Most of all, the company needed a place where it could buy truckloads of computers without

paying sales tax and could avoid property taxes on buildings and equipment worth over \$1 billion. It found in The Dalles a stable natural environment with relatively dry desert air, cool most of the year. Bonneville transmission lines also carry bundles of fiber-optic cables, so Google could avail itself of existing Internet infrastructure. More than these things, the company found tax breaks and a below-market rate for electricity. The company's property tax break is worth \$24 million a year for fifteen years. Its savings on electricity are harder to pinpoint. Both of these rural enticements are creatures of the region's history.⁶¹²

The state's enterprise zone program was a rural project growing out of the timber recession of the early 1980s, an attempt to manage the connections between the state and the world economy. It was both a product of the unmooring of production from traditional sites and an agent of that trend. The Port of Coos Bay, serving an area hit hard by mill closures and rural unemployment, pushed the state legislature to join other states in forgiving taxes for companies that located in economically depressed areas. The legislature complied in 1985, and expanded the program over the next two decades to include sixty-three zones, located mostly in the state's rural counties. Beginning in the late 1990s the state offered income tax credits to companies building in rural enterprise zones, subsidizing rural development with foregone general revenue. The result gives local officials in places like The Dalles the power to make decisions that can have a sizeable impact on the rest of the state.⁶¹³

⁶¹² For the selection of data center sites, see Andrew Blum, *Tubes: A Journey to the Center of the Internet* (New York: Harper Collins, 2012), 227-262. Tax savings estimates come from Mike Rogoway, "Oregon Is a Great Deal for Server Farms. Is the Deal Too Good?" *Oregonian*, 19 November 2011, <http://www.oregonlive.com>.

⁶¹³ Legislative Revenue Office, "Enterprise Zones," 1 April 2009, http://www.leg.state.or.us/comm/lro/2009_session/entr_prz_zones_sb151.pdf. For the history of Oregon's enterprise zones see, Legislative Revenue Office, "Oregon's Enterprise Zone Program," 2006, http://www.leg.state.or.us/comm/lro/rr3_06_2006oregon_enterprise_zone_programs.pdf. For the role of Coos Bay, see Jill Carroll, "Enterprise Zone Hinges on State OK," *Oregonian*, 1 October 1983, D7; "Economic Development Tough for Wood-Dependent Port," *Oregonian*, 4 March 1984, E1.

The impact extends beyond revenue and the state's budget. Google buys its power from the Northern Wasco People's Utility District, a utility set up in the late 1930s by Grangers who hoped to tap power from Bonneville Dam. The utility, in turn, buys most of its power from the Bonneville Power Administration under favorable terms secured to it by Congress since the 1937 Bonneville Project Act. Other data centers have followed Google into rural Oregon. Facebook built a data center in Prineville and Apple plans one nearby (though Facebook buys its electricity from an investor-owned utility, relying only on the Bonneville Power Administration's transmission network). Microsoft and Amazon have data centers in Washington. In 2008 when the construction boom in data centers was still young, the Northwest Power and Conservation Council, the Congressionally-chartered group responsible for planning electrical generation and conservation in the Northwest, estimated that servers drew an average of 600 megawatts, enough to light all the houses in Portland with plenty of juice left over. Big and medium-sized server farms like those run by Google and local internet providers drew roughly half of that power. Company data closets made up the other half. In 2012 the council estimated that the load had grown slightly, with big and medium-sized server farms edging up above their previous levels to draw an average of between 340 and 370 megawatts. The Northwest Power and Conservation Council predicted that the load might increase to as much as 550 megawatts in 2020. It hit that amount the next year, well ahead of predictions.⁶¹⁴

Data centers have made power planning in the Northwest tricky, and not just because the Internet is a quickly growing sector. Data center managers hesitate to reveal the details of their operations, pointing to their need to preserve both the security of the information contained

⁶¹⁴ For the history of Northern Wasco PUD, see Northern Wasco PUD, "History," <http://www.nwasco.com/history.cfm>. For power use statistics, see Massoud Jourabchi to Power Committee, 12 June 2012, available at <http://www.nwcouncil.org>; Massoud Jourabchi, et. al. to Power Committee, 30 July 2013, available at <http://www.nwcouncil.org>.

within the centers and the competitive advantage that dollars invested in research earns them.

There is another reason for companies to be wary of releasing details. The data centers, with their huge power demands, belie the Internet's clean image. They affect the environment and regional power markets in ways that might threaten corporate images. Average megawatts turn Microsoft, Google, and Facebook into major industrial companies, not just hip titans of a new economy.

The secrecy leaves planners searching for answers. Power forecaster Massoud Jourabchi spoke at a recent meeting of the Northwest Power and Conservation Council's Demand Forecast Advisory Committee. Jourabchi has been tracking data center power use for years, but sounded a note of mild desperation in May 2013, saying that he could use more information. None of the power planners from regional utilities offered to provide information. Jourabchi ended that segment of the meeting by saying he and his staff would be willing to sign nondisclosure agreements to learn more. Complicating the lack of information is the sense that power loads could change abruptly. Data centers install equipment ahead of demand, as Keith Knitter, a manager at Washington's Grant County PUD, noted. Data centers currently drawing 70 megawatts of power might have installed equipment that could draw double that with the flip of a switch.⁶¹⁵

As data center loads approach those once drawn by the aluminum industry, it is unlikely that the consequences for Portland will be as dire as they were in the 1940s when power shortages caused elevators to stop and streetcars to grind to a halt. The region's electrical grid is far more connected to power supplies in other places. In the wake of energy deregulation that reduced the price for power transmitted over another company's lines, the Bonneville Power Administration has increasingly used power purchases beyond the region to provide for its

⁶¹⁵ For secrecy see, Byron Beck, "Welcome to Googleville," *Willamette Week*, 4 June 2008, <http://www.wweek.com>. For the paucity of available information, see Demand Forecast Advisory Committee, "Meeting Minutes," 23 May 2013, <http://www.nwcouncil.org>.

customers. The effects of a run-up in data center power use will be subtle, but real nonetheless. The Pacific Northwest Power Planning and Conservation Act brokered a compromise between rural interests, industry, and urban consumers in 1980. Under the terms of the compromise, the government provides cheap power to privately-owned utilities to pass along to their residential customers. Publicly-owned utilities still hold most of the cards, however, and the law preserves the older promise that the government will give them preference. Under the terms of the Pacific Northwest Power Planning and Conservation Act, the government's relatively new obligations to Portland power consumers cannot lead to an increase in the price that publicly-owned utilities pay for electricity. Industrial customers who buy power directly from the Bonneville Power Administration have traditionally borne the burdens of this compromise. The new data centers buy power through utilities, often those that benefit from the government's preference for public ownership. With the decline of the aluminum industry, there are fewer direct service industries to balance utility demands against. The future is murky, but it is likely that if there is a power crunch, urbanites who have rejected public ownership will pay more for electricity. The connections between the rural Northwest and the rest of the world continue to shape Portland in ways beyond the city's control.⁶¹⁶

The Northwest receives relatively little in exchange for its electricity and foregone public revenues. In exchange for \$24 million in lost tax revenue, Wasco County gains 155 jobs that pay an average annual salary of \$50,640. The county waives \$154,839 in taxes for each of those jobs. Without the tax abatement, Google would likely never have built in The Dalles and the land owned by the port would have generated little tax revenue. Still, the cost of each job is

⁶¹⁶ For increased reliance on power beyond the region, see Bonneville Power Administration, *Bonneville Power Administration 2000 Annual Report* (Portland, OR: BPA, 2000). On the Pacific Northwest Electric Power Planning and Conservation Act, see Michael Blumm, "The Northwest's Hydroelectric Heritage: Prologue to the Pacific Northwest Electric Power Planning and Conservation Act," *Washington Law Review* 58 (1982-1983): 230-244.

significantly higher than the \$11,200 in tax revenue that the state forgoes in an average enterprise zone deal. Google makes much of its local hires, but Facebook's data center in Prineville relies on remote work by California engineers, and employs just over fifty technicians and security guards. Rural boosters have hailed the data centers as the nucleus for a future technological industry in the rural Northwest, but the reality is likely to be more modest. Columbia Gorge Community College first thought of revamping its technology curriculum when Google came to The Dalles, but shelved its plans when it became clear how few people Google would employ.⁶¹⁷

The data centers are only the most recent challenge that Oregonians face as they seek connections to broader markets and try to manage the ways those connections affect their lives. Indeed, though accidents of geology and climate attract data center builders to Oregon, they come also to take advantage of political peculiarities growing out of the state's history. The data center at The Dalles sits at the confluence of two streams of thought in Oregon's political history. The cut-rate power that it gulps is the product of successes that rural producers had hitching a vision their predecessors developed in the 1870s to the power of the federal government in the 1930s. That electricity was supposed to make farm life more tolerable and attract industrial development to grow the region's rural population. The enterprise zone Google sits in grew out of an attempt in the late twentieth century to shape the state as a place attractive to business. Its tenants were supposed to replace jobs lost as timber disinvested in the Northwest. Enterprise zones were as much about the failure of the late twentieth century's ethic of place as about its successes. The program's offer of tax credits and abatements is a tacit admission that Tom McCall's skepticism of belching factories, and environmentalists' efforts to preserve the state's quality of life, were not always enough to attract economic development. Especially in

⁶¹⁷ Mike Rogoway, "Data Centers in Oregon: High Tech Meets High Desert," *Oregonian*, 19 November 2011, <http://www.oregonlive.com>; Mike Rogoway, "Google Searches for Privacy, Finds a Community," *Oregonian*, 19 November 2011, <http://www.oregonlive.com>; Rogoway, "Oregon is a Great Deal for Server Farms."

rural Oregon, there are limits to the landscape's ability to draw companies seeking a high quality of life for their employees.

Nobody who inscribed either of these ideologies in Oregon politics could have predicted this outcome. The producers of the 1870s would have blanched at the cozy relationship between business and government evinced in enterprise zone agreements. When Oregonians in the 1870s sought government aid for business, they assumed that business would be the junior partner in any cooperative arraignment. The Grangers of the 1930s would likely have questioned the dedication of so much electricity to a single industrial plant. And place-based activists in the 1930s would have seen the buildings as unnecessary clutter in the Columbia River Gorge. Activists in the state's more recent past might be relieved that the data center does not produce the effluent and air pollution that the aluminum smelters it replaced did, but they might also question the use of so much electricity for such a singular purpose.

That the ethic of place and the language of producerism produced such unintended and worrisome consequences does not mean that they are valueless as guides to organize the state's economic relationships. Both, in their own ways, called for economic development qualified by human concerns. The producerists sought justice, contending that development should continue to reward labor. The urbanites and suburbanites who articulated an ethic of place sought to limit industry's impact on environments they cared about, even when it meant questioning the very industries that employed them. Both goals need to be loosed from the problems that have also attended them, exclusionary definitions of community and place, and in the late twentieth century, nostalgic resistance to change. Economic justice and environmental quality are good goals. If they can be advanced with a full understanding that they grow out of a history full of

shortcomings and contradictions, they might help Oregonians create a world richer, more sustainable, and more just than the one they have now.

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