Becoming Native:

Family Labor and Belonging in the Sugar Beet Fields of Northern Colorado, 1900-1969

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

Doctor of Philosophy

(History)

at the

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON 2020

Date of final oral examination: 05/06/2019

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For Nathan, Oliver, and Opal

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Acknowledgements

Though producing a dissertation can often feel like a solitary endeavor, I have had much help along the way. Mentors, friends, family, and colleagues have made this project possible. I would like to take a moment to thank a few of them.

I would like to thank the Department of History at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Deciding to pursue my Ph.D. at UW-Madison was one of the most important decisions of my life. It was here that I honed my voice as a scholar, discovered the exhilaration of intellectual rigor, and became a part of a truly wonderful academic community. I would like to thank Leslie Abadie, the Department of History's Graduate program coordinator, for finding me funding, helping divert catastrophes, and providing friendly, kind, and down-to-earth advice every step of the way. Completing a Ph.D. program is an arduous, lonely, and, at times, frightening process. Having someone like Leslie to help light the way makes the long journey much more bearable. Cindy I-Fen Cheng and Judy Houck provided unwavering support, thoughtful feedback, and careful guidance on what it means to be a scholar, mentor, and teacher. In Madison I also found lifelong friends in Brendon George, Elena McGrath, Jen Holland, Laura Jones-Katz, Greg Jones-Katz, Martha Fischhoff. These remarkable people were always willing to read drafts, offer their honest feedback, and share a beer or a meal whenever I was in need of a friendly face or a shoulder to cry on. I would like to thank Susan Johnson, who has encouraged, pushed, and inspired me for nearly a decade. Thank you, Susan, for everything.

I have been awarded several prizes and grants, all of which provided the resources that made this project possible. In particular, I would like to thank the Western History Association,

the Coalition for Western Women's History, and the UW-Madison Center for Research on Gender and Women. I would also like to thank the UW-Madison Department of History Program in Gender and Women's History.

While I have had a strong academic community to enrich my mind, it has been my family that has sustained me throughout this process. I would like to thank my mom and step-father, Linda and Larry Johnson, and my dad and stepmother, John and Michele Woodbury, for believing in me all these years. My sister, Erin Andrews, has cheered me on and made me laugh like no one else in this world ever could.

My journey in graduate school has been bookended by babies. My son, Oliver, was just ten months old when I began my Master's program and two and a half when we moved to Madison for my Ph.D. Though he hasn't always liked sharing his mom with a dissertation, he has endured it with grace, good humor, and curiosity. My daughter, Opal, came along when I was at the end of my graduate career and made finishing so much harder and so much more rewarding. I hope one day my effort makes my children proud.

Finally, this dissertation would likely never have been written had it not been for Nathan Bilotte. Nathan has encouraged me to shoot for the stars, sat beside me as I followed my dreams, and has never once stopped believing in me. My world is so much brighter with him in it.

Introduction

In early 1841, the Canadian-born American fur trapper Carlos Beaubien and his Mexican business partner Guadalupe Miranda decided they wanted to grow sugar beets. On January 8, they appealed to New Mexico Governor Manuel Armijo for a massive segment of property in the northeast corner of New Mexico. In their petition, Beaubien and Miranda expressed dismay that the land was going to waste, declaring New Mexico among "the most backward in intelligence, industry, and manufactories" of Mexican territories. Miranda and Beaubien asked for "a tract of land for the purpose of improving it...[to raise] sugar beets, which we believe will grow well and produce an abundant crop."[1]

Unfortunately for Beaubien and Miranda, they did not find success with sugar beet farming, In fact, sugar beets would not become a viable commercial crop for another sixty years at least. But their sentiments about the land, its usage, and the people native to it tapped into a belief popular amongst nineteenth-century North American expansionists. The promise to "improve" land through capitalism and the removal of people with ancestral ties to it was central to the U.S. ideology of Manifest Destiny and a common justification for settler-colonial projects of the United States.[2] Though it is unclear why their venture failed, their endeavor highlights the close connections between commercial agriculture and the "settling" of the North American

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[1] U.S. Congress, *Reports of Committees of the House of Representatives*, 35th Congress., 1st Sess., 1858, 245-256. For more on the Beaubien-Miranda land tract, also known as the Maxwell land grant, as well as the contestation over property rights and land ownership in New Mexico and Colorado, see María E. Montoya, *Translating Property: The Maxwell Land Grant and the Conflict over Land in the American West, 1840-1900* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002).

[2] See, for example, Hannah Holleman, *Dust Bowls of Empire: Imperialism, Environmental Politics, and the Injustice of "Green" Capitalism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018), pp. 55-73.

West by people who were not ancestrally native to the land. Agricultural pursuits—sugar beet farming, in particular—sustained and expanded the U.S. settler-colonial state in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century northern Colorado.

The U.S. West was created through the deliberate displacement of Native peoples and the implantation of non-indigenous settlers, a process otherwise known as settler colonization. Building on the work of theorist Patrick Wolfe, historian Janne Lahti explains settler colonialism as a distinct form of colonialism that involves "conquest, long-range migration, permanent settlement (or at least intent of such), elimination of Natives, and the reproduction of one's own society on what used to be other people's lands."[3] Unlike so-called exploitative colonization, wherein an imperial nation exploits the labor, people, and resources of a colonized hinterland to generate wealth for the metropole, the ultimate objective of settler colonialism is the acquisition of land. Settler colonial nations seek to seize land from indigenous inhabitants and repopulate it with non-native settlers. To expand its empire, then, a settler-colonial state forcibly removes—and attempts to erase—Native populations. The empire then sends families to "settle" the land. Settlers become, and remain, the politically dominant demographic, eventually claiming the land as their own ancestral home. Through imperialism and progenation, settlers and their descendants begin to believe that they have *become native.*[4]

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[3] Janne Lahti "What is Settler Colonialism and What It Has to Do with the American West?," *Journal of the West* 56, no. 4 (2017); Patrick Wolfe, *Settler Colonialism and the Transformation of Anthropology: The Politics and Poetics of an Ethnographic Event* (London: Cassell, 1999).

[4] Historian Kathleen DuVal makes a similar argument in *Native Ground: Indians and Colonists in the Heart of the* Continent (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006). In her study on the Arkansas River Valley, DuVal demonstrates that the heart of North America was a "Native ground" controlled by indigenous peoples, specifically the Quapaws and the Osages, through the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In the early nineteenth century, however, war with Cherokee migrants and American encroachment this power began to wane. Until this point, newcomers had to adhere to native authority. As the U.S. gained more power in the region, the Americans claimed the native ground, taking it as their own.

Although some non-Native settlers had already moved to western territories, by the late 19th century the U.S. empire began attempts to claim these lands in earnest, importing white and other non-indigenous groups to colonize the land. The first large-scale attempt to foster settlement in the west, the Homestead Act of 1862, offered 160 acres of public land to any citizen or intended citizen, heads of households who had never taken up arms against the United States. Homestead Act claimants then agreed to "improve" their plots within five years by building a dwelling of some sort and cultivating the land. The act intended to populate the West with family farms, effectively transforming homesteaders into agents of the nation-state. Under the Homestead Act, the creation of home, farm, and family emerged as a crucial step in the erasure of Native land and the legitimization of U.S. claim to it, though, as historian Lisi Krall notes, the stated purpose and the eventual outcome of land policy often diverged. Specifically, Krall argues that while the United States maintained a cultural adherence to the agrarian ideal it embraced the "unfolding of agrarian capitalism as it encountered arid land."[5] The emergence of western agricultural capitalism gave rise to what historian George Luna Peña has referred to as "settler capitalism."[6] Settler capitalism, Luna Peña argues, "reconceptualizes and reconfigures land in the name of economic profit."[7] Settler capitalism and industrial agriculture brought newcomers to work the fields and make the western plains bloom.

While owners of industrialized farms worked the land to some extent, their role was less as worker and more as manager over their hired workforce. Like business owners in other areas

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[5] Lisi Krall, "US Land Policy and the Commodification of Arid Land (1862-1920)" *Journal of Economic Issues* 35, no. 3 (2001): 657-674, quote on p. 658.

[6] George Luna-Peña, "'Little More Than Desert Wasteland': Race, Development, and Settler Colonialism in the Mexicali Valley," *Critical Ethnic Studies* 1, no. 2 (Fall 2015): 81-101, quote on p. 88.

[7] Ibid.

of the industrializing economy, farmers relied on immigrants and migrants to fill their labor needs. In northern Colorado, eastern European, ethnic German immigrants and ethnic Mexican migrants from southern Colorado and northern New Mexico made up the sugar beet workforce.

Despite a general acceptance of the settler-colonial framework, scholars have been mostly silent on the role non-whites have played in the colonization of the U.S. West. Most frequently, the focus is on the role of native-born whites. Margaret Jacobs, for example, documents the role of white women in crafting and implementing indigenous child-removal policies.[8] White settlers brought the power of the federal government with them and greatly influenced the development and implementation of structural violence, racism, and inequity. Thus, a focus on native-born whites is a crucial component in understanding the settling of the North American West. The trouble arises, however, when scholars emphasize the role of white settlement to the exclusion of other settler colonists. In a more recent article, Jacobs argues that non-white workers "were only welcome within settler societies for their labor, not for their permanent settlement."[9] Though there were myriad ways that local and federal laws prevented or restricted the settlement of non-whites, my research demonstrates that there were also important efforts to settle non-citizen and non-white workers.

My work explores how immigrant and non-white newcomers also contributed to the settler-colonial project. Though these groups were often racialized, othered, and subject to structural inequities, they nevertheless contributed to the continued displacement of indigenous peoples. As Andrea Smith argues, the "capitalist conception of land forces all people who

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[8] Margaret D. Jacobs, *White Mother to a Dark Race: Settler Colonialism, Maternalism, and the Removal of Indigenous Children in the American West and Australia, 1880-1940* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009).

[9] Margaret D. Jacobs, "Seeing Like a Settler Colonial State" *Modern American History* 1, no. 2 (2018): 257-270, quote on p. 259.

migrate (whether it be through enslavement, migration, or relocation) to become 'settlers,'" and all settlers are in some way complicit in the settler-colonial project.[10] Smith invites scholars to examine the ways settler colonialism and white supremacy intersect, arguing that "we may wish to rearticulate our understanding of white supremacy by not assuming that it is enacted in a single fashion." Instead, she explains, "white supremacy is constituted by separate and distinct, but still interrelated, logics."[11] Racialized targets of white supremacy, in other words, can also be enlisted in the creation of a white supremacist society.

"Becoming Native" takes up Smith's call to examine the ways non-citizens and non-whites became integral, though overlooked, players in the creation of a settler-colonial society. Through an examination of gender, race, and the differing mobilizations of belonging in the rural West, I ask how the erasure of Native peoples and the solidification of the U.S. nation-state was facilitated through industrial farming and the immigrants, migrants, women, and children who sustained it. I examine the particular ways that race, gender, labor, migration, immigration, and agricultural capitalism intersected to further the settler-colonial project into the twentieth century. Locating my project in the sugar beet districts of northern Colorado, I argue that industrial agriculture was integral to the settling of the interior West. Additionally, I posit that the success of the settler-colonial project in northern Colorado was ensured by the labor and settlement of Eastern European immigrants and ethnic Mexican workers. My work complicates narratives of native-born white settlement of the U.S. West to demonstrate that industrial agriculture and the immigrants and ethnic Mexicans that supported it were crucial to the settler-

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[10] Andrea Smith, "Indigeneity, Settler Colonialism, White Supremacy," in *Racial Formation in the Twenty-First Century*, ed. Daniel Martinez HoSang, Onkea LaBennett, and Laura Pulido (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), pp. 66-90, quote on p. 83.

[11] Ibid., 63.

colonial project. I look at three groups in twentieth-century northern Colorado sugar beet communities—Anglo Americans, German Russian immigrants, and ethnic Mexicans—and show how their agricultural, gendered, and domestic labor shaped the region's identity. Their need for one another connected all three groups as employers and workers, a dynamic that continued long after the height of the sugar beet industry. Through their contact with one another, they created, challenged, and negotiated belonging, all while strengthening the U.S. nation-state.

This dissertation focuses on the interplay among gender, race, and labor in the creation of power and belonging in the twentieth-century North American West. It argues in particular that the agricultural, domestic, and reproductive labor of Eastern European immigrant, Chicanx and Latinx migrant, and Anglo-American women and children shaped the physical, social, cultural, and racial landscapes of northern Colorado between 1900 and 1969. I contend that sugar companies exploited women's reproductive capabilities in the first two decades of the twentieth century to create a vast workforce of children, which ensured the initial success of the young sugar beet industry. Further, I argue that family labor was essential to the construction of racial and class hierarchies among beet workers during those early years. Over time, Eastern European farmworkers capitalized on high wages, the availability of farmland, and their large families to transform themselves into influential members of the white agrarian middle class. Their ascent into American whiteness and out of the sugar beet labor pool by the 1920s was only possible through the exploitation of ethnic Mexican families. In need of new workers, sugar beet companies recruited ethnic Mexicans to work in the sugar beet fields and encouraged them to settle in order to cultivate a reliable workforce. As ethnic Mexican workers worked at making new lives for themselves in Colorado, white-led ministries and public health campaigns frequently targeted them with Americanization projects well beyond the post-World War II

period. Finally, I argue that although most Spanish-speaking sugar beet workers remained locked into underpaid migratory farm labor throughout the 1960s, ethnic Mexican families consistently created community and contested exploitation.

Focusing on the intimate ways that belonging is constructed, "Becoming Native" makes four important contributions. First, it draws attention to the ways gender has shaped social hierarchies and influenced the racialization of ethnic minorities in agricultural communities of the interior West. Second, it demonstrates how a relatively unknown group of eastern European immigrants, German Russians, were central to the rise of a twentieth-century agrarian class system, itself part of the industrial agricultural landscape that relied on ethnic Mexican labor. Third, it documents the resistance and rebellion of ethnic Mexican sugar beet farmworkers and the importance of the sugar beet industry to the history of the U.S. Chicano movement. Fourth, my work on family labor in sugar beet communities complicates narratives of white settlement of the West by demonstrating how ethnic Mexican migrant workers, colonized subjects themselves, nevertheless played a crucial, if unintentional, role in the twentieth-century U.S. settler-colonial project. My research gives visibility and rootedness to migrant communities—people all too often defined by impermanence—and explores how twentieth-century inhabitants of the North American West have claimed both literal and symbolic belonging to the land in a region where no resident group was historically native.

"Nativeness," the idea around which this study circles, has multiple meanings in Colorado. To many Utes, Arapahos, and Cheyennes, as well as some Apaches, Lakotas, Pueblo peoples, Shoshones, Comanches, Navajos, and Kiowas, it refers to indigenous, ancestral ties to the land included in present-day Colorado. In the twenty-first century, however, "native" has another meaning, which one encounters in Colorado's cities and ski towns—symbolized in the

form of, of all things, a common bumper sticker. The sticker features the word "Native" on what is designed to look like a Colorado license plate. It is meant to signal that the car's occupant is "from" Colorado, a "Colorado native." Initially created in the 1970s, the bumper sticker continues to reflect the fact that non-Indigenous Coloradoans have claimed the land as their own. Anyone with a few dollars to spend on a sticker and a car on which to display it can "become native" and stake a symbolic claim to a place where belonging has been contested for generations.

Contest over land has been a central theme not only in Colorado history but also in the history of the North American West in general. Land—living on the land, working the land, migrations into and out of land, controlling the land or its inhabitants, laying claim to the land itself—is woven in stories of the West. In *The Color of the Land: Race, Nation, and the Politics of Landownership in Oklahoma, 1832-1929,* historian David Chang notes that "the struggle over land has given shape to the way Americans—indigenous, black, and white—created and gave meaning to races and nations."[12] Race and nation have come together repeatedly in the contest to decide who may inhabit the land, who will lay claims to its riches, and who can call it their own. The intersection of land, race, class, and gender is crucial to understanding the history of the West because it is the cornerstone on which people have built legitimacy and created belonging in western lands.

The year 1848 marked the end of the U.S.-Mexico War and the United States' acquisition of 1.2 million square miles of Mexican territory and its inhabitants with the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. The treaty increased the size of the United States by two-thirds and legally turned

[12] David A. Chang, *The Color of the Land: Race, Nation, and the Politics of Landownership*, *1832-1929* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 1.

Mexicans living in the region into Americans.[13] National identities in what came to be border regions were in flux even before the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, however. The portions of the Southwest we now refer to as the borderlands were, during the nineteenth century, frontier zones for both the U.S. and Mexican national state-building projects. These frontier zones were not homogenous spaces, but instead were populated by people claiming multiple, and changing, identities.[14]

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[13] Historians have long demonstrated that, though they received legal citizenship, many ethnic Mexicans were rendered as foreigners in their own land. See, for example, Deena J. González, *Refusing the Favor: The Spanish-Mexican Women of Santa Fe, 1820-1880* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999); María Montoya, *Translating Property: The Maxwell Land Grant and the Conflict of Land in the American West, 1840-1900* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002); Pablo Mitchel, *Coyote Nation: Sexuality, Race, and Conquest in Modernizing New Mexico, 1800-1920* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005); John M. Nieto Philips, *The Language of Blood: The Making of Spanish-American Identity in New Mexico, 1800s-1930s* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2004); Adrea Lawrence, *Lessons from an Indian Day School: Negotiating Colonization in Northern New Mexico, 1902-1907* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2011); Laura E. Gómez, *Manifest Destinies: The Making of the Mexican American Race* (New York: New York University Press, 2007); Ramón Gutiérrez, *When Jesus Came, the Corn Mothers Went Away: Marriage, Sexuality, and Power in New Mexico, 1500-1846* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991).

[14] For more on the strategic adoption of identities of borderlands residents, see Andrés Reséndez, *Changing National Identities at the Frontier: Texas and New Mexico, 1800-1850* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005). The literature on borderlands is vast. For a selective representation, see James Brooks, *Captives & Cousins: Slavery, Kinship, and Community in the Southwest Borderlands* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002); Pekka Hämäläinen, *The Comanche Empire* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008); Brian DeLay, *War of a Thousand Deserts: Indian Raids and the U.S. Mexican War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008); Karl Jacoby, *Shadows at Dawn: A Borderlands Massacre and the Violence of History* (New York: Penguin Press, 2008); Katherine Benton-Cohen, *Borderline Americans: Racial Divison and Labor Wars in the Arizona Borderlands* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009); Jeremy Adelman and Stephen Aron, "From Borderlands to Borders: Empires, Nation-States, and the Peoples in Between in North American History," *American Historical Review* 104, no. 3 (June 1999): 814-841; Tomás Almaguer, *Racial Fault Lines: The Historical Origins of White Supremacy in California* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994); Armando Alonzo, *Tejano Legacy: Rancheros and Settlers in South Texas, 1734-1900* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1998); William Deverell, *Whitewashed Adobe: The Rise of Los Angeles and the Remaking of its Mexican Past* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005); Ross Frank, *From Settler to Citizen: New Mexican Economic Development and the Creation of Vecino Society* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007); Deena González, *Refusing the Favor;* Ramón Gutíerrez, *When Jesus Came the Corn Mothers Went Away: Marriage, Sexuality, and Power in New Mexico, 1500-1846* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991) and *Contested Eden: California Before the Gold Rush* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998); David Montejano, *Anglos and Mexicans in the Making of Texas, 1836-1986* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1987).

Identities were far less static on the frontier periphery than at the national core because there were so many competing claims to the land. Frontier people fashioned their identities based on need and opportunity. As historian Andrés Reséndez notes, a frontier person "was not a mission Indian *or* a Mexican, a black slave in Mexico *or* an American, a foreign-born colonist *or* at Texan, but could be either depending on who was asking."[15] For frontier residents living at the edges of the Spanish-empire-turned-Mexican-nation-state and the U.S. empires, the period before the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo was a time of expanding national projects and increased economic opportunities. Just as the Mexican state was trying desperately to hold on to these frontier zones, white Americans began flooding the area as settlers and bearers of new markets. For frontier residents, loyalties to nation-states were secondary to local identities.[16] National identities began to change, however, as well as take on harder racialized meanings with the mass arrival of American settlers in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Indigenous peoples once occupied the plains of northeastern Colorado, land that would become home to the sugar beet industry. Nomadic Cheyennes, Arapahos, and Lakotas criss-crossed the plains in search of buffalo and were at the peak of their power when Anglos began arriving in the 1850s. In order to make way for white settlers, the U.S. government set out to remove Indians and dissolve indigenous claims to the land. After a series of violent campaigns in the 1850s and 1860s, including the 1864 massacre of nearly two hundred peaceful Arapaho and

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[15] Andrés Reséndez, *Changing National Identities at the Frontier: Texas and New Mexico, 1800-1850* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 3.

[16] See, for example, Andrés Reséndez, *Changing National Identities at the Frontier*; Omar Valerio-Jimenez, *River of Hope: Forging Identity and Nation in the Rio Grande Borderlands* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2013); and Raúl Ramos, *Beyond the Alamo: Forging Mexican Ethnicity in San Antonia, 1821-1861* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008); and Erlinda Gonzales-Berry and David R. Maciel, eds., *The Contested Homeland: A Chicano History of New Mexico* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2000)

Cheyenne men, women, and children at Sand Creek, armed Indian resistance to Anglo encroachment ended.[17] The U.S. government forced Plains peoples onto Indian reservations in present-day Oklahoma and the western half of the Dakotas.[18]

Native peoples did not simply disappear from Colorado, however. Sugar and other industries grappled with finding labor for their fields and factories, and Colorado companies recruited men and women from the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota during the 1950s and 1960s.[19] These individuals, much like other seasonal workers, migrated to the fields and either traveled home at the end of the season or settled in one of the growing towns or cities. Though they did not make up a majority of workers, they were part of the migrant workforce that remade the West. As historian Philip Deloria notes, "a significant cohort of Native people engaged the same forces of modernization that were making non-Indians reevaluate their own expectations of themselves and their society."[20] Native workers, like workers throughout the West, engaged in a changing agricultural system that drew them to northern Colorado. The irony of this, of course, was that while all other workers were newcomers, Native peoples of the Great

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[17] See Elliott West, *The Contested Plains: Indians, Goldseekers, and the Rush to Colorado* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1998), pp. 271-316.

[18] For more on Plains peoples and U.S. colonization of Native lands, see Richard White, *It's Your Misfortune and None of My Own: A New History of the American West* (Normon: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991); Elliott West, *Contested Plains*; Jeffrey Ostler, *The Plains Sioux and U.S. Colonialism From Lewis and Clark to Wounded Knee* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); Pekka Hämäläinen, *The Comanche Empire*.

[19] Sol Markoff, *Colorado Tale* (New York: National Child Labor Committee, 1951), p. 3; Fundraising pamphlet, "Your Church Can Help the Migrant Families," Box SC055, Folder 4, Migrant Education Collection, Archival Services, James A. Michener Library, University of Northern Colorado, Greeley; photograph of "Reverend and Mrs. Cempter," captioned "with a group of Sioux fr. [sic] Pine Ridge, S.D., who were recruited by the Ft. Lupton Canning Company to work in the fields in 1950s and 1960s," Box 2004.36.0007, Permanent Collection, Hazel E. Johnson Research Center, City of Greeley Museums, Greeley, Colorado.

[20] Philip Deloria, *Indians in Unexpected Places* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2004), 6.

Plains had ancestral ties to sugar beet land.

Though agricultural historians have overlooked its importance, Colorado was a key player in the development of early twentieth-century commercial farming in the North American West. In *American Agriculture: A Brief History*, for example, agricultural historian R. Douglas Hurt devotes only a sentence to the crop in a discussion of farming on the Great Plains, arguing that farmers turned to sugar beets during the Great Depression as prices for wheat and feed grain plummeted.[21] Douglas glosses over the rise of industrialized agriculture in the Great Plains, however, seeing California as the "epitome" of twentieth-century, large-scale, single-crop farming.[22] The rise of industrial agriculture is well studied, but scholars have largely disregarded Colorado.[23] Like Douglas, historians who have examined the agricultural history of the interior West generally focus on the Wheat Belt of the Great Plains, of which the northeastern portion of Colorado is part.[24]

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[21] R. Douglass Hurt, *American Agriculture: A Brief History* (West Lafayette, Ind.: Perdue University Press, 2002), 306.

[22] Ibid.

[23] For histories of the rise of industrial agriculture, see David Danbom, *The Resisted Revolution: Urban America and the Industrialization of Agriculture*, *1900-1930* (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1979); Sanford J. Rikoon, *Threshing the Midwest, 1820-1949: A Study of Traditional Culture and Technological Change* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988); Donald Pisani, *From the Family Farm to Agribusiness: The Irrigation Crusade in the West, 1850-1931* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984); Ellen Liebman, *California Farmland: A History of Large Agricultural Holdings* (Totowa, N.J.: Rowman and Allenheld, 1983). While not an agricultural history *per se*, William Cronon's *Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1991) offers important insights into the changes in modern agriculture, particularly in the interconnections between city and country that transformed agricultural products such as wheat, meat, and corn into commodities. See, especially pp. 97-147, 207-262.

[24] See Gilbert C. Fite, "Great Plains Farming: A Century of Change and Adjustment," *Agricultural History* 51, no. 1 (January 1977): 244-256; Greg Hall, *Harvest Wobblies: The Industrial Workers of the World and the Agricultural Laborers in the American West, 1905-1930* (Corvallis: Oregon State University Press, 2001); Geoff Cunfer, *On the Great Plains: Agriculture and Environment* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2005); Thomas R. Wessel, ed., *Agriculture in the Great Plains, 1876-1936* (Washington: Agricultural History Society, 1977); J.C. Malin, *Winter Wheat in the Golden Belt of Kansas* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1944).

Despite this relative omission from the historiography, the growth and processing of sugar beets made Colorado a dominant contributor to the U.S. economy, and thus a crucial actor in linking the West to the eastern metropole. By 1920, Colorado was the leading source of beet sugar in the nation, producing nearly 2 million tons of beets in the 1916 growing season alone. The state with the second largest tonnage, California, produced just short of 1.5 million tons that year.[25] Sugar City, the first sugar beet community in the state of Colorado, grew from a population of 2,000 people in the early 1900s to 20,000 by 1928.[26] Speaking in 1928 on behalf of the beet sugar industry to the U.S. Senate Finance Committee, the president of the National Sugar Manufacturing Company, located in Sugar City, opined, "From absolutely wilderness conditions the construction of our plant built up the bright little town of Sugar City...with a snappy newspaper, a sound little bank, two hotels, a little theater, five churches and pubic school buildings."[27] Sugar beets brought in money through the production of refined sugar, and companies sold sugar beet byproducts to the livestock industry, brought workers into the region, and supplied necessary sugar-based ingredients to the military during both World Wars. By the end of World War II, the United States was the world's greatest consumer of sugar and the average American consumed nearly one hundred pounds of sugar per year.[28] Sugar beets transformed Colorado into what one historian calls an "agricultural gold-mine" for both the state

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[25] Charles Orrin Townsend, *The Beet-Sugar Industry in the United States* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1921), 34.

[26] Harry A. Austin, *History and Development of the Beet Sugar Industry* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1928), 24.

[27] Ibid.

[28] Harold A. Hoffmeister, "In Defense of the Sugar Beet Industry of the Western United States," *Yearbook of the Association of Pacific Coast Geographers* 10 (1948): 3-9; 8.

and nation.[29]

Supporters of domestic sugar production in the U.S. saw the emerging sugar beet industry as tightly connected to U.S. westward migration. Some, such as Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints President Wilford Woodruff, even believed that the industry had divine approval. In 1890, the church-controlled Utah Sugar Company completed its first refining factory. At the cornerstone-laying ceremony, Woodruff declared that the ability to produce sugar in the arid West could only have been possible through divine approval.[30] Even those who were less explicit in their hosannas believed sugar in the West was a part of the pioneering spirit of the United States. Many thought, as explained in Fred G. Taylor's 1944 history of beet sugar in the Mountain West, *A Saga of Sugar: Being a Story of the Romance and Development of Beet Sugar in the Rocky Mountain West,* that the production of sugar was linked with the "destiny of the great American West."[31] When the Utah Sugar Company produced its first 20,000 pounds of sugar, the company debuted it to much fanfare. Workers sacked the sugar and sent it via the Union Pacific Railroad to Salt Lake City. Once there, workers transferred the sugar to wagons led by a yoke of oxen "to dramatize the pioneering nature of the enterprise" and delivered it to various retailers. The *Salt Lake Herald*, there to cover the event, noted, "the excitement and interest caused by the arrival of the first shipment cannot be detailed in words….While moneyed men of neighboring states and territories are talking sugar, Utah men are making it." When the

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[29] Barbara Smith, *The First Hundred Years: Greeley, Colorado, 1870-1970* (Greeley: Greater Greeley Centennial Commission, 1970), 85.

[30] Leonard Arrington, *Beet Sugar in the West: A History of the Utah-Idaho Sugar Company, 1881-1966* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1966), 10.

[31] Fred G. Taylor, *Saga of Sugar: Being a Story of the Romance and Development of Beet Sugar in the Rocky Mountain West* (Salt Lake City: Utah-Idaho Sugar Company, 1944), *ii*.

procession arrived at one shop, "the entire shipment was unloaded on the sidewalk, stacked in the shape of a pyramid and surmounted with the stars and stripes." Confectioners began advertising "First Candy Made from Utah Sugar" that very same day.[32] Western sugar supporters viewed its production as part of a great social and, for Mormon sugar producers, religious movement. Sugar's destiny, it appeared to its supporters, was manifest.[33]

One of the concerns of early beet sugar operations was whether they would produce the bright white sugar that consumers preferred, or if it would remain rough, dark, and bitter. Early attempts at production from sugar beets had produced a syrup so unpalatable "it would take the end of your tongue off."[34] Concerns about the purity of the sugar mirrored the anxieties of white settlement in a multiethnic land.[35] Fred G. Taylor tells the story of Fred Trane, the "doubting Thomas" present on the first night of sugar production at the Utah Sugar Factory's Lehi factory, the first of its beet sugar processing outfits. Trane was skeptical that "white sugar could be made from that black syrup," and would not believe it until the pure white crystals were before his very eyes and in his hands. Taylor narrates what happened next:

> It was after midnight when the strike was dropped but they all waited for that important event. Then everyone rushed to the centrifugal and when the first machine had spun off the molasses, Mr. Dyer could hardly get room enough to perform the washing. However, he soon passed out the clear white sugar, giving each one of his audience some of it.

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[32] *Salt Lake Herald*, October 16, 18, 1891.

[33] For more on the role of Mormonism in Utah sugar production, see Taylor, A *Saga of Sugar*; and Leonard Arrington, *Beet Sugar in the West*.

[34] *Deseret Evening News*, December 16, 1893.

[35] For a thoughtful discussion of the purity and whiteness of sugar within the context of discourses of race and civilization, see April Merleaux, *Sugar and Civilization: Race, Empire, and the Cultural Politics of Sweetness in the United States, 1898-1939* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015), pp. 55-80.

A convert, Fred Trane exclaimed, "I'm now convinced that sugar can be made from beets!"[36]

Once sugar companies discovered how to transform the lowly sugar beet into "white gold," or granulated sugar, they faced another challenge. Sugar beet refinement was the product of technological advancements in horticulture and chemistry. It had required experimentation, machinery, and chemists to transform sugar beets into beet sugar. Though sugar extraction appeared to be a modern alchemy, its success as an industry relied on an ingredient as old as agriculture itself: human hands tending, toiling, and willing plants to thrive into maturity. Sugar companies in the early twentieth-century western plains may have discovered how to create white gold, but finding a reliable workforce for the labor-intensive crop proved more difficult.

It was ethnic minorities who ended up laboring in the beet fields. The first of these workers were ethnic Germans who came to the U.S. from colonies along the Russia Steppes. In the eighteenth century, many Germans sought refuge from their war-torn homeland in the Holy Roman Empire. In 1763, the Russian Tsarina Catherine the Great made them an attractive offer. Aspiring to populate Russia's newly acquired territory in the Volga River and Black Sea region, the Tsarina invited ethnic Germans to colonize the desolate Russian frontier. The Germans lived and thrived there for over a hundred years. But in 1871, Alexander II of Russia implemented a series of reforms that sought to mold them into modernized Russian citizens. Facing taxes, military conscription, and mandatory Russian language requirements, many of the colonists fled to the United States.[37] By 1900, some of these immigrants had made their way to northern Colorado, searching for work and an opportunity to recreate their old ways of life. Men, women,

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[36] Taylor, *A Saga of Sugar*, 91.

[37] Hattie Plum Williams, *The Czar's Germans: With Particular Reference to the Volga Germans* (Lincoln, NE: American Historical Society of Germans from Russia, 1975), pp. 31-42.

and children who had led agricultural lives in Russia ended up in the sugar beet fields, proving to be skilled cultivators of the land. The success of ethnic German Russians as sugar beet workers created a model of family labor on which the industry would rely for many years to come.

The family model of sugar beet farming would endure, but German Russians made up the majority of sugar beet workers for only a few short decades. By 1930, ethnic Mexicans from southern Colorado and northern New Mexico were the predominant laborers in northern Colorado sugar beet farming. The encroachment of Anglo settlers in the U.S. Southwest and the rise of a capitalist economy pushed ethnic Mexican villagers to travel ever farther from home seeking seasonal wage labor.[38] In the early years of the beet sugar industry, it was primarily men from these villages who migrated for work. By the 1920s, however, the sugar beet industry relied on the labor of men, women, and children and recruited ethnic Mexican families to come to, and eventually settle in, the sugar beet districts of northern Colorado. The neighborhoods that sugar companies designated for ethnic Mexican settlement were often referred to as Spanish Colonies.

The use of the word "colony" to refer to the neighborhoods where ethnic Mexican sugar beet workers lived was full of irony. Though sugar companies and white Coloradoans likely used the word to signify the subordination and physical separation of ethnic Mexican sugar beet workers from the white population, the very land on which these neighborhoods stood—as well as the land on which all northern Colorado sugar beet communities were built—had been colonized by Anglo Americans only a few decades earlier. As the U.S. government pursued its violent Indian removal policies in the nineteenth century, it displaced Cheyenne, Arapaho, and

[38] See Sarah Deutsch, *No Separate Refuge: Culture, Class, and Gender on an Anglo-Hispanic Frontier in the American Southwest, 1880-1940* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987).

Lakota peoples, colonizing the West by dispatching Anglo families to "settle" the land.[39] When industrial agriculture began to thrive on the western plains, there were few indigenous people to rely on for local labor. Anglos did not see indigenous people as an ideal workforce anyway. The U.S. and its citizens wanted Native land, not Native labor. Thus, on appropriated land, the beet sugar industry imported an ethnic Mexican workforce with which it then constructed a colonial relationship in the cultivation of a valuable commodity.

The creation of sugar colonies by the sugar beet industry at the turn of the twentieth century was part of what historian April Merleaux calls "the U.S. Sugar Empire."[40] Both the Tariff Act of 1890, also known as the McKinley Tariff, and the Dingly Tariff in 1897 dramatically raised the average duty on imported sugar and eliminated tariffs on domestic raw sugar, with the intention of boosting domestic sugar enterprises. With the conclusion of the Spanish American War in 1898, the United States acquired Hawaii, Puerto Rico, Cuba, and the Philippines, all of which were sugar-producing nations or colonies. At the same time, agricultural technology had improved the profitability of sugar beet cultivation and domestic sugar operations began growing and processing primarily in the U.S. Midwest and West. For the first time, beet sugar boomed in the United States even as duty-free cane sugar from sugar-producing territories saturated the U.S. market, ensuring a dramatic increase in affordable sugar for

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[39] For more on U.S. settler colonialism, see Margaret Jacobs, *White Mother to a Dark Race: Settler Colonialism, Maternalism, and the Removal of Indigenous Children in the American West and Australia, 1880-1940* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009); Kelly Lytle Hernandez, *City of Inmates: Conquest, Rebellion, and the Rise of Human Caging in Los Angeles, 1771-1965* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017); Andrea Smith, "Indigeneity, Settler Colonialism, White Supremacy," in *Racial Formation in the Twenty-First Century*, ed. Daniel Martinez HoSang, Oneka LaBennett, Laura Pulido, 66-90 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012.)

[40] Merleaux, *Sugar and Civilization,* 6.

consumers.[41]

The United States had indeed grown a sweet tooth, but the emergence of the U.S. Sugar Empire also occurred at a moment of significant capitalist transformation.[42] The turn of the twentieth century saw the confluence of massive labor migrations, improvements in sugar refining technologies, the emergence of agricultural corporations and agribusiness, and increased sugar consumption and consumerism in the United States. Sugar was mixed into some of the most important social, cultural, and financial transformations in American history. In the newly acquired sugar-producing territories, sugar cane cultivation left deep, colonial scars on both land and inhabitants. Meanwhile, domestically, the sugar beet industry played a central role in the rise of the irrigated West.[43]

Because of its aridity, the U.S. West was not initially an ideal location for sugar beet cultivation. But technological advancements that allowed for the successful production of granular sugar from sugar beets, as well as government-backed irrigation programs, meant that Colorado produced 37 percent of the nation's beet sugar by 1929.[44] The Colorado sugar industry included three major corporations: Great Western Sugar, Holly, and American Beet Sugar. Great Western was the biggest of the outfits, but all three operated in a similar fashion. Sugar companies contracted with local growers for a specified amount of sugar beets per year and the growers in turn hired contract laborers to tend and harvest the beets. Because sugar beets spoiled

[41] Ibid., 1-27.

[42] Ibid., 14.

[43] Ibid., 16.

[44] U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Fifteenth Census of the United States: 1920: Agriculture* vol. 2, part 3 (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1930), 91.

quickly, sugar extraction had to commence shortly after harvest. Sugar beets did not travel well either, so sugar companies built their processing factories near the beet fields so as to maximize sugar extraction and minimize spoilage.

One of the biggest problems the sugar industry faced was recruiting and retaining contract laborers to work the fields. Sugar beet cultivation was arduous, backbreaking work. When sugar companies first emerged in northern Colorado, they bought large tracts of land that they rented out to tenant farmers. Tenant farmers could not do all the work themselves, so they labored alongside hired workers. Because the area was so sparsely populated, sugar companies had to recruit workers to the region. In luring farm laborers to the western plains of northeastern Colorado to work the sugar beet fields, the sugar industry transformed the human geography of the region, creating, as historian Dennis Nodín Valdés argues, three distinct waves and corresponding classes of labor—settlers, sojourners, and proletariats.[45] According to Valdés, German Russians made up the first group of workers and ethnic Mexicans comprised the latter two.

Sugar beet workers have been relatively underrepresented in the historiography of the West, but Sarah Deutsch's *No Separate Refuge: Culture, Class, and Gender on an Anglo-Hispanic Frontier in the American Southwest, 1880-1940* serves as a notable exception. Deutsch's examination of ethnic Mexican sugar beet workers highlights the creation of a Chicanx "regional community" that linked village life in northern New Mexico to life in northern Colorado. Deutsch argues that ethnic Mexican migrant workers were able to adapt to cultural and economic transformations occurring around them, providing a pivotal counter-narrative to

[45] Dennis Nodín Valdés, "Settlers, Sojourners, and Proletarians: Social Formation in the Great Plains Sugar Beet Industry, 1890-1940" *Great Plains Quarterly* 10, no. 2 (Spring 1990): 110-123, esp. 111.

previous histories that portrayed ethnic Mexicans as passive and unchanging.[46] Seasonal workers, Deutsch argues, maintained extended kinship networks, which allowed them to sustain a sense of community while traveling ever farther afield. Deutsch's work is invaluable because it highlights strategies that ethnic Mexican sugar beet workers used in order to navigate life on what she calls an Anglo-Hispanic frontier.[47]

Deutsch's analysis provides insight into one strategy workers used to find community in the face of the rapid economic, social, and political changes brought by U.S. settlement. It demonstrates their ability to adapt and resist exploitation. Deutsch also shows how the regional community facilitated ethnic Mexican migration to and eventual settlement in northern Colorado, as word-of-mouth information networks brought news of new opportunities up north. Deutsch casts this movement as one that eventually destroyed the regional community, leaving *hispanos* vulnerable to exploitation. Building on Deutsch, I argue that the *hispanos* who moved north to settle in the sugar beet districts permanently faced racism, discrimination, and exploitation, but they also unwittingly contributed to the continued repopulation of what was once native land.

My work builds on Deutsch's analysis in another way, as I present a slightly different perspective on identity and community building in sugar beet communities of northern Colorado. While Deutsch argues that *hispano* workers created community in the first decades of the twentieth century through the preservation of their cultural identity within a regional community, I contend that ethnic Mexican residents of northern Colorado sugar beet communities formed new, local identities in response to their surroundings. They actively engaged with local ideas of modernity, democracy, whiteness, and respectability, creating space for themselves within a

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[46] Sarah Deutsch, *No Separate Refuge*, pp. 3-12.

[47] Ibid., 35.

white supremacist society that worked to keep them marginalized. Ethnic Mexican sugar beet workers were, to borrow again from Andrea Smith, "not only victims of white supremacy but [were] complicit in it as well." What keeps a community trapped within its "particular pillars of white supremacy" is the seduction of "the prospect of participating in the other pillars."[48] Sugar beet workers were forced to live in segregated housing, neighborhoods that came to be known as "Spanish colonies" or "Mexican colonies" to emphasize their otherness in a white supremacist society. Ironically, these colonies, while products of discrimination themselves, also contributed to the U.S. imperial project by settling the area with non-native peoples.

At the very moment that the sugar beet industry began, the United States was expanding its economic empire, and adaptability was a necessary component of sugar beet culture writ large.[49] It was not until the 1930s that ethnic Mexicans made up the majority of Colorado farmworkers, so life in a sugar beet community meant some element of interethnic encounter. Historian Dennis Nodín Valdés argues, "beet workers came to work, not to replicate the culture of the New Mexican homelands, which would have been impossible in any case because the beet communities were part of the recently formed rural industrial world whose residents came from several homelands."[50] Valdés posits that it was not the transmission of culture that created worker identity, but rather class struggle, suggesting that the contest between the industry and its

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[48] Smith, p. 70.

[49] In *Sweet Tyranny: Migrant Labor, Industrial Agriculture, and Imperial Politics* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2009), historian Kathleen Mapes puts the sugar beet industry into a global context, arguing that it became entangled in the larger politics of U.S. colonialism. Domestic sugar beet production came into its own at precisely the moment when the U.S. asserted control over several sugar-producing colonies, such as Puerto Rico, Cuba, and the Philippines. Thus, Mapes argues that the sugar beet industry must be understood as part of U.S. imperialism.

[50] Valdés, 121.

workers resulted in "a distinct Chicano working-class culture, different from either New Mexico or Mexico."[51] Drawing from both Deutsch and Valdés, this study demonstrates that sugar beet workers were active agents in the creation of a new, northern Colorado Chicanx identity.

Both the success of the sugar beet industry in northern Colorado and the cultivation of belonging among the workers who settled there relied on women, and thus this study builds on work that centers women within agricultural history. Scholars have shown that women conducted crucial labor within farm communities and agricultural economies. In his influential early study of nineteenth-century life on the Illinois prairie, historian John Mack Faragher included women in his analysis of rural communities. Though Faragher sometimes rendered farm women as "helpers" rather than full-fledged partners to their husbands in fieldwork, he demonstrated that life on a farm was only possible through family labor—women, children, and men alike.[52] Joan Jensen's work on farm women in the mid-Atlantic, *Loosening the Bonds: Mid-Atlantic Farm Women, 1750-1850*, played on Nancy Cott's early use of the phrase "bonds of

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[51] Ibid., 115.

[52] John Mack Faragher, *Sugar Creek: Life on the Illinois Prairie* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986). Other histories that demonstrated the centrality of women to both home and community economies, see Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, *A Midwife's Tale: The Life of Martha Ballard, Based on Her Diary, 1785-1812* (New York: Knopf, 1990); see Deborah Fink, *Open Country Iowa: Rural Women, Tradition, and* Change (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1986), and *Agrarian Women: Wives and Mothers in Rural Nebraska, 1800-1940* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992); Nancy Grey Osterud, *Bonds of Community: The Lives of Farm Women in Nineteenth-Century New York* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991); Jane Adams, *The Transformation of Rural Life: Southern Illinois, 1890-1900* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994); Mary Neth, *Preserving the Family Farm: Women, Community, and the Foundations of Business in the Midwest, 1900-1940* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995); Kathleen R. Babbit, "The Productive Farm Woman and the Extension Home Economist in New York State, 1920-1940," *Agricultural History* 67 (Spring 1993): 83-101; Rachel Rosenfeld, *Farm Women: Work, Farm, and Family in the United States* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985); Jenny Baker Devine, *On Behalf of the Family Farm: Iowa Farm Women's Activism Since 1945* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2013); Katherine Jellison, *Entitled to Power: Farm Women and Technology, 1913-1963* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992); and Lu Ann Jones, *Mama Learned Us to Work: Farm Women in the New South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002).

womanhood" to emphasize the dual condition of women—in this case farm women—as they navigated patriarchal subordination and personal agency.[53] Jensen argues that early American farm life demanded hard work from women but it also offered an opportunity for "adventurous exploration of new roles as ministers, teachers, and reformers."[54] Jensen's study focuses on "crossing the barriers of public and private and connecting structures of gender and class formation."[55] Similarly, historians such as Jane Adams and Nancy Grey Osterud argue that work was central to farm women's identities.[56]

While agricultural history has come a long way in acknowledging the importance of women, "farm woman" has too often meant "white woman." In her article, "'Women Who Work in the Field: The Changing Role of the Farm and Nonfarm Women on the Farm," historian Stephanie A. Carpenter declares that "by 1940, female field labor had in many areas become obsolete. Removing women from field work downplayed their importance in field production and placed greater emphasis on their part in dairy, garden, and poultry operations."[57] Her claim that women in the post-World War II era period embraced the "the feminine ideal" that advocated women "give up helping so much with the field work" suggests she is referring to

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[53] Joan Jensen, *Loosening the Bonds: Mid-Atlantic Farm Women, 1750-1850* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), xiii; Nancy F. Cott, *The Bonds of Womanhood: "Woman's Sphere" In New England, 1780-1835* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977).

[54] Jensen, *Loosening the Bonds*, p. xiii.

[55] Mary Neth, "Gender and the Family Labor System: Defining Work in the Rural Midwest," *Journal of Social History* 27 (Spring 1994): 562-77; 563-4.

[56] Osterud, *Bonds of Community,* and *Putting the Barn Before the House: Women and Family Farming in Early-Twentieth-Century New York* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2012); Adams, *The Transformation of Rural Life.*

[57] Stephanie A. Carpenter, "'Women Who Work in the Field': The Changing Role of the Farm and Nonfarm Women on the Farm," *Agricultural History* 74, no. 2 (Spring 2000): 465-474; 465.

white farm women who embraced a white, middle-class construction of femininity.[58] Important work has been done to deconstruct farmwomen's creative responses to gender norms, such as Katherine Jellison's *Entitled to Power: Farm Women and Technology, 1913-1963*, which argues that farm women resisted the pressure to become full-time homemakers by referring to their labor as "helping on the farm" in order to "deny that they actually performed farm work and "thus claim that they were living up to the postwar domestic ideal...[and allow men to demonstrate they] were living up to their responsibilities as farm men." But this work, too, focuses solely on white farm women.[59]

In order to help bring stories of non-white farmworker women to light, I draw from the abundant scholarship of white farm women and build on the much smaller literature on ethnic Mexican women and agriculture in the North American West. It is difficult to find the voices of women farmworkers in dominant agricultural historiographies. As historian Devra Anne Weber notes, "Mexicana field workers, as agricultural laborers, have been remarkable for their absence in written agricultural history."[60] When agricultural histories have included ethnic Mexican women, Weber argues, "the wretchedness of conditions became confused with the social worlds of the workers."[61] Additionally, the most influential works that do focus on ethnic Mexican women in agricultural histories often center on the canning industry and women's influence in

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[58] Ibid., 469.

[59] Jellison, *Entitled to Power*, 164-79.

[60] Devra Anne Weber, "Raiz Fuerte: Oral History and Mexicana Farmworkers," *The Oral History Review* 17, no. 2 (Autumn 1989): 47-62, quote on 47. One important exception to this critique is Sarah Deutsch, *No Separate Refuge*, which devotes considerable analysis to the work of ethnic Mexican women farm laborers.

[61] Weber, 47.

labor organizing and unionizing.[62] While cannery histories are crucial, it is also essential to bring the stories of women farmworkers to light.[63]

In order to examine the making of belonging in northern Colorado sugar beet communities, I utilize a variety of sources. Finding archives for farmworkers is often difficult, as few left any written records. As historian Robert P. Swierenga notes, "few rural Americans kept diaries, letters, or personal memorabilia...[and] the records that do exist are the work of outsiders—bureaucrats, parish priests, local police, teachers—who recorded what they observed as directed by law for civil administrative purposes."[64] This study suffers from the same challenge—a reliance on official documents—though I contend, as others do, that it is possible to mine these records for valuable insight into both the lives of farmworkers and the minds of those who sought to control, exploit, or reform them. I have also utilized two oral history projects. The first is the Sidney Heitman Germans from Russian in Colorado Study Project at Colorado State University in Fort Collins, which, in the 1970s and 1980s, collected dozens of oral histories from people with German Russian ancestry. All of the interviewees had worked sugar beets as children or young adults. I also used the Greeley Spanish Colony oral histories archived in the

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[62] See Vicki L. Ruiz, *Cannery Women, Cannery Lives: Mexican Women, Unionization, and the California Food Processing Industry, 1930-1950* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1987); Patricia Zavella, *Women's Work and Chicano Families: Cannery Workers of the Santa Clara Valley* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987). See also Joan M. Jensen, "Canning Comes to New Mexico: Women and Agricultural Extension, 1914-1919," *New Mexico Historical Review* 57 (October 1982): 351-86.

[63] Other agricultural histories centering ethnic Mexican include Devra Anne Weber, "Mexican Women on Strike: Memory, History and Oral Narratives," in *Between Borders: Essays on Mexicana/Chicana History*, ed. Adelaida R. Del Castillo, 175-200 (Mountain View, CA: Floricanto Press, 2005); Margaret Eleanor Rose, "Women in the United Farm Workers: A Study of Chicana and Mexicana Participation in a Labor Union, 1950-1980" (PhD diss., University of California, Los Angeles, 1988); Sharon Bays, "Women of the Valley of the Sun: Women and Family Work Culture in Woodlake, California" (M.A. thesis, University of California, Los Angeles, 1988).

[64] Robert P. Swierenga, "The New Rural History: Defining the Parameters," *Great Plains Quarterly* 1, no. 4 (Fall 1981): 211-223, quote on 212.

Hazel E. Johnson Research Center at the Greeley History Museum in Greeley, Colorado. These interviewees also had direct experience working in the sugar beet fields.

This dissertation is divided into four chapters. The first chapter traces the rise of the sugar beet industry at the turn of the twentieth century through the experiences of ethnic German Russians. It demonstrates that German Russian workers were essential in the early success of the industry and that they contributed to the development of the family labor model on which the industry came to rely. It argues that the reproductive labor of German Russian women, particularly their role in birthing children, was crucial in the making of the sugar beet workforce. German Russian families provided the labor necessary for the sugar beet industry to thrive and for industrial agriculture to further U.S. imperialist settlement in the West.

The second chapter continues the story of German Russians and documents their transformation from wage laborers to landowners. The chapter examines the making of rural whiteness in Colorado and demonstrates how a racialized white ethnic minority became part of what I call the "white agrarian middle class." Because of the sparse population of the western plains of northeastern Colorado, class and race in the early twentieth century were in flux. German Russians capitalized on family labor and the availability of land, ultimately changing their race and class status through landownership, their response to pressure from anti-German nativists, and their ability to position themselves against ethnic Mexican workers.

The third chapter examines the creation of the Great Western Sugar Company's worker housing, the Greeley Spanish Colony. Founded in the 1920s, the Greeley Spanish Colony was one among several such experiments in sugar beet worker housing. The chapter looks at the ways Great Western Sugar recruited ethnic Mexicans through promises of homeownership, a better life, and a piece of the American Dream. Great Western Sugar sought out and brought in

heteronormative nuclear families in an attempt to cultivate a reliable local workforce. While Great Western Sugar and local whites saw ethnic Mexicans as docile and malleable, colony residents negotiated boundaries to shape their identity as modern, respectable *Americans*. In so doing, residents of the Greeley Spanish Colony claimed permanence and belonging in a place where they had been cast as literal and figurative outsiders. Ethnic Mexican workers were crucial in the continued agricultural success of the northern Colorado sugar beet industry and, though they faced racism, discrimination, and exploitation, their labor and capital helped to continue the historical amnesia that rendered indigenous people of the Great Plains invisible.

Finally, the fourth chapter examines attempts by white aid workers, particularly white women, to civilize residents of a seasonal labor camp in Fort Lupton, Colorado, and bring them into the "imagined community" of the white, American middle class through home-centered Americanization instruction and public health initiatives. To these aid workers, migrants were citizens-in-training who required education to become Americans. By the 1960s, however, camp residents had had enough of the doublespeak that promised American belonging but offered only second-class citizenship. Emboldened by the momentum and tactics of the Chicano movement, Fort Lupton Labor Camp residents organized Migrants in Action (M.I.A.) to reject the identity that had been created on their behalf by whites. M.I.A.'s primary focus was unsuitable living conditions. Unlike farmworker activism elsewhere, the M.I.A. movement was not a traditional "bread and butter" protest for better wages. Their demands for mattresses, refrigerators, insect control, and other basic necessities of modern living initiated what might be called a "bed and icebox" protest. Though the movement had unforeseen consequences, it demonstrated yet another way that sugar beet workers shaped a local identity for themselves and claimed the right to the land on which they lived. The story of M.I.A. and other sugar beet farmworkers from

1900 to 1969 demonstrates the ways that family labor, gender, and domesticity were central in the continuation of non-Native claims to northern Colorado lands.

At the turn of the twentieth century, the sugar beet industry initiated a wave of development in the West. An influx Anglo Americans, capital, scientific agriculture, modern irrigation, and corporate farming forever changed the physical and social landscape of northern Colorado. As the area became one of the most agriculturally productive areas in the West, it also became the site of one of the most heavily traveled migrant streams in the United States. The flat, level prairieland with its rich, loamy soil—soil that is able to retain water in the otherwise semi-arid environment—became a prime agricultural landscape for the cultivation of sugar beets. Americans' insatiable taste for sugar meant that thousands of farmworkers moved through northern Colorado every growing season. Although areas like California's San Joaquin Valley, the Texas Rio Grande Valley, and the citrus groves of Florida often first come to mind when considering migrant farm labor, northern Colorado was heavily traveled. Many of these workers ultimately decided to settle permanently, creating strong community ties and rich local histories. Their stories demonstrate the complexity of settler colonialism and the everyday ways it unfolded as historical actors contributed to U.S. imperialism in uneven and sometimes ambiguous ways.

Chapter One

Fertile Ground:
Reproductive Labor and the Birth of a Workforce, 1900-1930

The women of the German Russian settlement in Greeley, Colorado, had finally had enough. In December of 1908, they gathered their shovels and their children, and set to work with "feverish energy" digging trenches. There was an urgent need for water. The city of Greeley had previously declined to provide water to the women's neighborhood, so it was not connected to city facilities. Residents tried to overcome this challenge by digging wells, but when they returned to their homes from a summer and fall of beet work, they discovered that the wells did not comply with city ordinances. Their water was illegal. When they asked what was to be done, officials informed them they must first petition the city and then receive permission for water utilities. They petitioned and the city of Greeley approved their request, but by then the women had grown increasingly impatient. After a long season in the beet fields, there was washing to be done, food to be preserved, and children to be bathed. When Water Superintendent Jesse Nolin finally made his way to survey the settlement, he found "the entire population willing to get in on the job," though it was the women who led the charge. In some cases "women alone handled the heavy tools." Residents dug late into the night, first carving out the main ditch and then moving on to the individual trenches necessary to make connections with their homes. A local newspaper reported, "According to the city authorities the east side has made a new record in getting water in the homes...[and these women] are the first in any city in Colorado to dig trenches for city water mains." When the city failed to meet their basic need for water in a timely fashion, these

settlement women took matters into their own hands.[1]

Although the story of German Russian women digging trenches was unusual, any German Russian woman living in a northern Colorado sugar beet community in the early twentieth century was likely accustomed to a life of labor. As beet workers, men, women, and children alike spent long hours in the fields, sometimes more than fourteen hours a day. There was no formal gender division in the work, so women undertook the same tasks as men. At the end of the workday, workers gathered their children and trudged back to the dilapidated shacks where beet families lived, and German Russian women switched from field laborers to wives and mothers. Unlike men, who generally spent the evenings reading the Bible or resting at home, women began a grueling shift of domestic responsibilities. As one German Russian beet worker explained, "I have to work in the field from 4 o'clock in the morning until 7 at night [at which point I] come home and cook and bake until 12 and 1 o'clock [in the morning.]" This woman arose at 3 a.m. each morning to bathe the children and prepare the food they would take to the fields that day. She then explained, "at night I must bake and clean house, so that there are many nights when I do not get more than 3 hours sleep."[2] Her story was a typical one for German Russian women who labored in sugar beet fields. While men worked long days from dawn until

[1] Women Dig Trench For Water Main" newspaper clipping, December 8, 1910, Subject Documentary Files, Ethnic-German/Russian-Misc., Greeley Museums, Greeley, Colorado.
[2] U.S. Children's Bureau, *Child Labor and the Work of Mothers in the Beet Fields of Colorado and Michigan*, Bureau Publication No. 115 (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1923), p. 108.

dusk, the labor of women sugar beet workers had no end.[3]

Feminist scholars have long defined the domestic, and often unpaid, work historically done by women as reproductive labor. Also referred to as social reproduction, reproductive labor includes activities such as "purchasing household goods, preparing and serving food, laundering and repairing clothing, maintaining furnishings and appliances, socializing children, providing care and emotional support for adults, and maintaining kin and community ties."[4] Bringing the historically overlooked and devalued labors of childrearing, food production, and home maintenance into the discourse of Marxist economics, feminist scholars have argued that "the work of reproductive labor was indispensable to the ongoing reproduction and maintenance of the productive labor force."[5] While this interpretation of reproductive labor demonstrates how the "invisible" labor of domestic duties contributes to the growth of a capitalist economy, it rarely examines the role of biological reproduction—the very act of *producing children*—in the

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[3] In this regard, the experience of German Russian women was typical of many early twentieth-century women. Working-class women from many different national and ethnic backgrounds shouldered unpaid domestic duties whether or not they worked for wages. Women's household labor has long been defined by the socially and culturally constructed "needs" of their families. For more on the intersections of gender, domesticity, and labor see Carol Groneman and Mary Beth Norton, ed., *To Toil the Livelong Day: American's Women At Work, 1780-1980* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987); Jean Boydston, *Home and Work: Housework, Wages, and the Ideology of Labor in the Early Republic* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990); Ruth Schwartz Cowan, *More Work for Mother: The Ironies of Household Technology from the Open Hearth to the Microwave* (New York: Basic Books, 1983); Annegret Ogden, *The Great American Housewife: From Helpmate to Wage Earner, 1776-1986* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1986); Molly Ladd-Taylor, *Motherwork: Women, Child Welfare, and the State, 1890-1930* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994); Phyllis M. Palmer, *Domesticity and Dirt: Housewives and Domestic Servants in the United States, 1920-1945* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1989).

[4] Evelyn Nakano Glenn, "From Servitude to Service Work: Historical Continuities in the Racial Division of Paid Reproductive Labor," *Signs* 18, no. 1 (Autumn 1992): 1-43, quote on p. 1.

[5] Mignon Duffy, "Doing the Dirty Work: Gender, Race, and Reproductive Labor in Historical Perspective," *Gender and Society* 21, no. 3 (June 2007): 313-336, quote on p. 315. See also Jeanne Boydston, *Home and Work: Housework, Wages, and the Ideology of Labor in the Early Republic* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990); Heidi Hartmann, "Capitalism, Patriarchy, and Job Segregation by Sex," *Signs: Journal of Women and Culture in Society* 1, no. 3 (1976): 137-169.

making of twentieth-century market economies.[6]

In northern Colorado sugar beet communities, where children made up a significant portion of field workers, German Russian women were valued not only prospective workers but as reproductive bodies who supplied the industry with child labor. German Russian families were large and sugar beet company recruiters throughout the West sought to capitalize on the fertility of these women. One manager of a Nebraska sugar beet company, for example, disclosed, "We make so strong a point of getting [German Russian] men with large families that we refuse employment, as a rule, to those with small families."[7] Though this manager attributed the large families to men, it was generally the women who gestated, birthed, and cared for their children. Centering focus on the biological aspect of women's reproductive labor shows how it, along with

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[6] My analysis of the biological reproductive labor of German Russian women sugar beet workers is informed by scholarship on the intersections of gender, colonization, and imperialism. Historian Ruth Perry argues that in nineteenth-century England, "the production of children for the nation and for the empire [constructed] childbearing women as a national resource," in "Colonizing the Breast: Sexuality and Maternity in Eighteenth-Century England," *Journal of the History of* Sexuality 2 (1991): 204-234, quote on pp. 204-205. For more on the relationships between colonization, imperialism, and childbearing as a national resource, see Anna Davin, "Imperialism and Motherhood," in *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World*, ed. Frederick Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler 87-151 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997); Kathleen M. Brown, *Good Wives, Nasty Wenches, and Anxious Patriarchs: Gender, Race, and Power in Colonial Virginia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996); Kirsten Fischer, *Suspect Relations: Sex, Race, and Resistance in Colonial North Carolina* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002); Jennifer L. Morgan, "Some Could Suckle Over Their Shoulder: Male Travelers, Female Bodies, and the Gendering of Racial Ideology, 1500-1770," *William and Mary Quarterly* 3rd ser. 54 (January): 167-192. I have also drawn on scholarship on the trans-Atlantic slave trade, wherein scholars have demonstrated that the institution of slavery depended upon and exploited African and African American women as reproductive bodies. As historian Jennifer L. Morgan puts it, "Women were enslaved in large numbers, they performed critical hard labor, and they served an essential ideological function. Slaveowners appropriated their reproductive lives by claiming children as property, by rewriting centuries-old European laws of descent, and by defining a biologically driven perpetual racial slavery through the real and imaginary reproductive potential of women." Jennifer L. Morgan, *Laboring Women: Reproduction and Gender in New World Slavery* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), p. 1. See also Dorothy Roberts, *Killing the Black Body: Race, Reproduction, and the Meaning of Liberty* (New York: Vintage Books, 1999), esp. pp. 22-55.

[7] Helen L. Johnson, *Health for the Nation's Harvesters: A History of the Migrant Health Program in its Economic and Social Setting* (Farmington Hills, Mich: National Migrant Worker Council, 1985), p. 25.

their unpaid domestic labor, was essential to the development of a capitalist agricultural economy in northern Colorado sugar beet communities. It was this labor that brought these children into the world and out to the fields. Due to both the domestic and biological reproductive labor of German Russian, a workforce was born.

As the story about women digging ditches reveals, sugar beet families generally occupied at least two living spaces in the span of a year and the labor of women was essential in both spaces. As family-based wage earners, women entered the fields alongside their husbands and children to hoe, thin, and harvest the seemingly endless rows of sugar beets. Both husbands and employers alike relied on the ability of women, as reproductive bodies, to produce more workers and increase profits. Though their physical, domestic, and reproductive labor, like that of many turn-of-the-twentieth century women, went largely unrecognized and was dictated by the constraints of marriage, family, and industry, it had a profound, if forgotten, influence on the success of the sugar beet industry.

The story of German Russian women's reproductive labor is somewhat incongruent with conventional accounts of U.S. immigration history. As historians have shown, control over sexuality, particularly that of poor or gender non-conforming women, was a key element in shaping border policies.[8] Women deemed prostitutes, lesbians, or of "undesirable" ancestry were barred from entering the country. While these policies generally favored heterosexual relations within the bonds of marriage, they also discouraged fertility among poor women. Once Asian women, as well as eastern and southern European women, began to arrive in increasing numbers, "exclusionists constructed their childbearing within marriage—which is supposedly the

[8] Eithne Luibhéd, *Entry Denied: Controlling Sexuality at the Border* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002), see esp. pp. 55-76.

most respectable end to which female sexuality can be directed within a heteropatriarchal order—as a racial and economic threat to the nation."[9] Immigrants of "bad" European stock were increasingly restricted as potential burdens to society. German Russians were poor, eastern European, and extremely fertile. The threat of such immigrant women's reproduction "became a clarion call to those seeking to shore up the nation's defenses against the unassimilable and the unwanted."[10] German Russian women, however, fit awkwardly within such interpretations. They benefitted from their adherence to heteropatriarchal norms but also evaded punishment for their fertility. Rather than serving as evidence of their undesirability, German Russian fecundity became a sought-after asset.

This chapter examines the emergence of the sugar beet industry and the birth of a white ethnic workforce in early twentieth-century northern Colorado. Although sugar beets would eventually be associated with a primarily ethnic Mexican labor force, it was German Russian immigrants who worked the fields and sustained settler capitalism in the early twentieth century. I argue that it was German Russian women, in particular, who nursed the industry during its infancy through their physical toil and their labor as reproductive bodies, which gave rise to an army of children. Children, as it happened, were just the right size for sugar beet cultivation. The story of Germans from Russia, or, German Russians as I refer to them here, is not well known,

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[9] Ibid., p. 56.

[10] Quote from Martha Mabie Gardener, *The Qualities of a Citizen: Women, Immigration, and Citizenship, 1870-1965* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2005), p. 157. For more on the push to build "better" babies, see Wendy Kline, *Building a Better Race: Gender, Sexuality, and Eugenics from the Turn of the Century to the Baby Boom* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001; Rima Apple, *Perfect Motherhood: Science and Childrearing in America* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2006); Rayna Rapp and Faye Ginsburg, eds., *Conceiving the New World Order: The Global Politics of Reproduction* (Berkeley: University of California press, 1995); Rebecca Kluchin, *Fit to Be Tied: Sterilization and Reproductive Rights in America, 1850-1980* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2009).

primarily because their experience as a raced and classed populace occupied only a brief historical moment. In the span of thirty years, their identity within the community would change dramatically. However, their initial presence was crucial to the success of the sugar beet industry, and the part they played is essential in understanding the ways in which ethnic minority newcomers settled the northern Colorado sugar beet communities. Furthermore, by exploring the connections between the reproductive labor of white ethnic women and the rise of industrial agriculture in the West we get a better understanding of the making of the twentieth century American empire.

Paydirt on the Eastern Plains: Sugar Beets and the Colorado "White Gold" Rush

By the 1920s, Colorado was well on its way to becoming a beet sugar powerhouse. Between 1901 and 1926, budding sugar companies constructed thirteen factories in the South Platte River Valley. In 1905, the Great Western Sugar Company purchased the thirteen factories, consolidating as the hub of the Colorado sugar industry. In 1909, farmers planted 79,000 acres of sugar beets in the South Platte valley.[11] That year also saw Colorado become the leading beet sugar producing state in the United States.[12] By 1920, the U.S. Department of Agriculture reported that Colorado's beet sugar production had topped out at nearly 300,000 tons of refined sugar per year. [13] The next highest producing state, California, came in at 168,000 tons.[14]

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[11] Kenneth W. Rock, "'Unsere Leute': The Germans from Russia in Colorado," *Colorado Magazine* 54, no. 2 (Spring 1977): 154-183, quote on p. 165.

[12] Ibid.

[13] United States Department of Agriculture, *Monthly Crop Reporter* (Washington: G.P.O., 1921.)

[14] Ibid.

Colorado sugar beets, and the families who worked the fields to produce them, had proven worth their salt.

Irrigation projects and new innovations in agriculture and industry facilitated the development of large-scale farming throughout the West. Irrigation and technology together offered freedom from the limits of nature: rivers could be drained or diverted to create farmland and reallocate water; plants could be scientifically altered to increase crop yields; railroads could allow people, animals, and food to transcend the bounds of time and space.[15] Western agriculturalists believed themselves finally free from fear of drought and, as historian David Igler notes, agricultural industries "drew upon nature's wealth as they organized efficient business systems."[16] At the same time that irrigation and rail travel were reconfiguring the West, investment capitalists discovered that northeastern Colorado was a prime location for the cultivation of the sugar beet, a recently imported crop from Europe.[17] The promise of a source for domestic sugar initiated a scramble to construct factories capable of processing the beets, farmers to grow them, and a workforce tend the fields. The development began a sugar rush that far exceeded anyone's expectations.

In 1901, *The Lamar Register* in southern Colorado reported that the new beet sugar factories in Loveland, Rocky Ford, Sugar City, and Grand Junction had been a wild success for

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[15] William Cronon*, Natures Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1992); Mark Fiege, *Irrigated Eden: The Making of an Agricultural Landscape in the American West* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1999).

[16] David Igler, *Industrial Cowboys: Miller & Lux and the Transformation of the Far West, 1850-1920* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), p. 4.

[17] Harry A. Austin, *History and Development of the Beet Sugar Industry* (Washington D.C.: National Press Club, 1928), p. 11.

local farmers and businessmen. Sugar companies, the newspaper said, had paid out over $400,000 to local sugar beet farmers that year. What was more, the paper predicted, this sum was "only one of the six or eight payments for beets that will compromise the sum total…of the exceedingly youthful, but wonderfully lusty, industry."[18] Advocates believed sugar beets would be good for farmers, Colorado, and America. They noted, "every cent of this godly sum of money will be spent in Colorado" and the refined sugar "will be marketed from the West and the cash returns will go to the western men" who farmed it.[19] Sugar beets, they hoped, would be a boon to the western economy and, if the young industry was as "lusty" as they hoped, the men poised to profit were eager to see her bear fruit.

Although the Colorado beet sugar industry began with anticipation for its success, a problem soon arose. Investors and farmers realized that there was a shortage of people willing to undertake the backbreaking labor necessary to cultivate the sugar beets. Farmers prepared the soil and the planted seeds, but were generally unwilling to undertake the cultivation work.[20] This was in part because of the strenuous nature of beet cultivation, which required tenders to spend much of the growing and harvesting period stooped over the short plants. But there was a social component as well. As a 1923 U.S. Children's Bureau report on child labor and the work of mothers indicated, "For farm owners…there is a certain social stigma attached to 'working in the beets,' and [farmers] are likely to hire contract labor for the work as soon as they are able to do so."[21] Farm owners and sugar companies looked to immigrants and people of color, whom they

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[18] "Millions in Sugar Beets This Year," *The Lamar Register* (Colorado), November 27, 1901.

[19] Ibid.

[20] Rock, p. 163.

[21] U.S. Children's Bureau, *Child Labor and the Work of Mothers,* p. 13.

believed were better suited to beet work, to fill the labor void.

Sugar beet farming in Colorado resembled other western industrial farming in many ways, especially the composition of its labor force. The predominant features of industrial agriculture in the U.S. West included "the central role of investment capital; vertical chains of production and marketing; a large ethnically segmented labor force; and a distinct managerial structure."[22] The Colorado sugar beet industry had all of these elements, though the need for labor would remain a constant, vexing issue for sugar companies. At first, the industry experimented with Native American, Mexican, and Japanese workers. The *Yuma Pioneer* reported that a man named Harry Hokosono would be bringing 200 Japanese laborers from California to work the sugar beet fields near Greeley for the 1903 growing season. The newspaper emphasized that "no labor will be imported," and that Hokosona himself was "anxious to have it understood that his plan in no wise [sic] interferes with American labor and that it does not contemplate importing contract labor from Japan." The paper opined that the Japanese were "clever little people," claiming "that as laborers they are far superior to Mexicans or Indians."[23] Japanese labor in the beet fields for a time appeared a desirable solution to the industries labor needs, but growing anti-Japanese sentiment, prevented Japanese workers from becoming a reliable labor source in Colorado.[24] The search for workers continued.

Each year, at the start of beet season, sugar companies sent agents to Denver and the larger cities of Nebraska and Kansas in the search of workers for the beet fields. It was there that

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[22] Igler, p. 9.

[23] "Japanese Coming to Raise Sugar Beets in Colorado," *Yuma Pioneer* March 20, 1903.

[24] For more on Japanese sugar beet workers in the West see R. Todd Welker, "Sweet Dreams in Sugar Land: Japanese Farmers, Mexican Farm Workers, and Northern Utah Beet Production" (PhD diss., Utah State University, 2002).

they first encountered German Russian immigrant communities. On May 3, 1906, a northern Colorado newspaper reported that eight train carloads of German Russians had arrived from Nebraska to work the beet fields, about 600 persons in all. The newspaper noted that eleven carloads of household goods and belongings followed close behind.[25] One immigrant described such mass arrivals. Former sugar beet worker Fred Ostwald, was born 1899 in the German colony Makritzer-Chutor, a village on the Volga River. He came with his family to Berthoud, Colorado, in 1905 and remembered what the arrival of German Russians at the start of beet season felt like:

> A special day would arrive when a train, a whole train load of people from Lincoln and Hastings and other places along the way, the families would get on to this train and come west into the beet field. That was a sort of holiday, at which time the farmers would all come to town with their trucks or wagons and get to haul their beet labor home. I saw families meeting there that it looked like a family reunion. They would embrace and kiss each other and so happy to have each other back again, or come together again.[26]

As Ostwald's account and the newspaper report revealed, the migrants had come to work as families. Unlike other seasonal workers who returned home after the harvest, German Russian families began to relocate to Colorado together. Sometimes, entire villages of people who had lived together in Russia settled in the same sugar beet districts, hoping to recreate as best they could life as it had been in Russia.[27]

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[25] "Beet Workers Arrive," newspaper clipping, unnamed paper, May 3, 1906, Subject Documentary Files, Ethnic-German/Russian-Misc., Greeley Museums, Greeley, Colorado.

[26] Fred Ostwald, interviewed by Timothy Kloberdanz, May 14, 1976, Oral histories, Records of the Sidney Heitman Germans from Russia in Colorado Study Project, Box 13, Folder 7, Archives and Special Collections, Colorado State University, Fort Collins, Colorado.

[27] Candy Hamilton, *Footprints in the Sugar: A History of the Great Western Sugar Company* (Ontario, OR: Hamilton Bates, Caxton Printers, 2009), p. 230.

Great Western Sugar Company managers eventually realized that if they encouraged families to settle near the beet fields during the off-season, they could cut transportation costs and also ensure the labor of women and children. While sugar companies like Great Western recruited families and paid for their transportation, farmers generally negotiated contracts with their workers at the start of each season. These agreements ensured a commitment from workers as well as guaranteed the price paid for each acre of beets worked. In 1916, for example, the pay per acre ranged from eighteen to forty dollars and, on average, and laborers were expected to cultivate between fifty and sixty acres per season.[28] Although they rarely referred to the work of women or children, contracts assumed the labor of all able family members. This arrangement was especially lucrative once the industry began to rely on German Russian immigrants.

Over the Volga: Germans from Russia

Germans from Russia who eventually found their way to the Colorado sugar beet fields had in fact been part of an earlier, double migration. Originally from the Rhinelands, those who would come to be known as the Germans from Russia were part of an eighteenth-century peasant and artisan emigration from the war-ravaged Holy Roman Empire. Seeking refuge, many traveled eastward to Russia upon the invitation of the Catherine II, or Catherine the Great, who sought colonists to populate the Russian empire's newly acquired Volga River and Black Sea territories. On July 22, 1763, Catherine II signed a manifesto permitting "all foreigners to come into Our Empire, in order to settle in all the governments, just as each one may desire."[29] While

[28] Edward N. Clopper and Lewis W. Hine, "Child Labor in the Sugar-Beet Fields of Colorado," *The Child Labor Bulletin* (February 1916), pp. 14-15.

[29] Hattie Plum Williams, *The Czar's Germans: With Particular Reference to the Volga Germans* (Lincoln, NE: American Historical Society of Germans from Russia, 1975), pp. 31-42.

the decree included all foreigners, Catherine II, who was of German origin, had the Germanic people specifically in mind. She wanted the hearty and hardworking people to colonize Russia's new frontier. The offer included land grants, tax exemption, religious freedom, and immunity from forced military conscription and civil service.[30] The first decade after Catherine II's proclamation brought twenty-three thousand settlers to the Volga River and Black Sea region. Referred to by Russian authorities as *nemetskie kolonisty* (German colonists), the newcomers established over one hundred villages along the Volga River and north of the Black sea in Russia's Steppe frontier. There they prospered and grew in "closed, denominational, agricultural communities" for over a hundred years.[31]

In 1871, on the orders of the Russian Tsar Alexander II, the Germans living in Russia lost their protected status, setting in motion another wave of migration. Alexander II believed that to modernize Russia, colonists in the far reaches of the empire must no longer be permitted to continue their isolated existence. He commenced a Russification project and decreed that all residents of Russian territories be fully assimilated into Russian society and culture. In 1874 the Russian military began conscripting young German Russian men, and in 1880 the government mandated that the Russian language be taught in all schools, including the parochial schools in the German colonies. These changes, as well as falling grain prices, drought, and famine, set in motion a migration of ethnic Germans out of the Russian Empire. Some immigrated to Canada and South America, while others sought refuge in the United States.[32]

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[30] Ibid.

[31] Rock, p. 158.

[32] For more on the history of Germans in Russia, see Timothy J. Kloberdanz and Rosalinda Kloberdanz, *Thunder on the Steppe: Volga German Folklife in a Changing Russia* (Lincoln, NE: American Historical Society of Germans from Russia, 1993).

Russian German immigrants arrived in northeastern U.S. ports at the turn of the twentieth century, but unlike many other European immigrants, they did not settle in significant numbers in eastern cities. As farmers, they were ill at ease in urban spaces. White Americans saw them as peculiar and, as an article in the *New York Herald* reported, newly arrived German Russian immigrants "were dressed in their primitive, homespun garments, which were usually of course wools and of the most primitive style."[33] The women and children "had funny old handkerchiefs tied around their heads."[34] Once in the United States, German Russians sought to escape the gaze of outsiders and resume farming life. They travelled ever westward, settling in areas resembling the harsh landscape of their homes along the Volga. In the Great Plains, they found a chance to begin anew.

Once in the United States, German Russian migration again took place in phases. The first phase, from 1870 to 1900, saw German Russians taking advantage of land available through the Homestead Act and railroad land sales. These migrants often brought with them a small amount of wealth, allowing them to purchase land fairly quickly. The first German Russian settlements in Colorado, one near Globeville and another near Pueblo, emerged in the 1880s. Others quickly followed. The settlers picked up as before, forming close-knit, agricultural communities and retaining their religious beliefs, native dialects, and ethnic customs. Their experience on the Steppe frontier helped prepare them to farm the harsh landscapes of the Great Plains and they built homes from readily available materials.[35]

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[33] Norman E. Saul, "The Migration of the Russian-Germans to Kansas," *Kansas Historical Quarterly* 40, no. 1 (Spring 1974), pp. 38-62.

[34] Ibid.

[35] Hamilton, p. 232.

The second major wave of German Russian migration to the United States occurred from 1900 to 1930. These immigrants had endured years of an oppressive tsarist regime and arrived, destitute and exhausted, to join settlements in Kansas, Nebraska, the Dakotas, and Colorado.[36] The post-1900 German Russian immigrants were too late to acquire land under the Homestead Act and were poorer than the German Russian immigrants who had come before them. As one descendent later remembered, "They came without money and they went where there were jobs."[37] These immigrants were desperate for work and the sugar beet industry was desperate for their labor.

Between 1870 and 1920, more than one hundred thousand ethnic Germans from the Volga River region of Russia immigrated to the United States.[38] These immigrants arrived in Colorado expecting to recreate the religious, agricultural communities they had lived in for generations in Russia. Once recruited to the sugar beet fields, they intended to work hard, save as much of their earnings as possible, purchase farms of their own, and live in relative peace and in isolation from the rest of U.S. society.

Early on, due to the sudden, almost bonanza-like, success of the industry, beet sugar came to be known as "white gold," a name that conjured multiple meanings. The "whiteness" of beet sugar provoked images of sophisticated consumption. But it also gestured toward the skin color of those who produced it. The imagery of beet sugar as snow white, pure, and refined existed in stark contrast to the images long used to describe Black cane sugar laborers, whose association with "darkness" and "savagery" U.S. sugar beet boosters used to advocate for the

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[36] Hamilton, p. 234.

[37] Rock, p. 169.

[38] Hamilton, p. 230.

industry.[39] In 1928 the secretary of the U.S. Sugar Beet Association described the cane sugar industry, and its "tropical" workers, as "improvident, lethargic, going along in its drowsy way from year to year without materially increasing in magnitude and without particular thought being given to improving methods of culture or manufacture."[40] Industrious white American workers, the boosters argued, would produce beet sugar at home and provide a civilized alternative for the nation's sweet tooth.[41]

Behind the saccharine vision of domestic beet sugar was the reality that the industry needed cheap labor, and that labor did not come in the form of the prototypical white American yeoman farmer. Historically, designating specific groups as sources of cheap labor has been a calculus based on race, class, and gender, and has zeroed in on those least valued by society.[42] German Russian immigrants spoke an old, hybridized form of German, dressed in felt boots and head kerchiefs, and willingly sent wives, mothers, and children to labor long days in the beet fields. In short, German Russian immigrants fit uneasily within the ranks of white, Anglo-Saxon Protestant Americans. They were outsiders, but they were also prepared to work.

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[39] April Merleaux, *Sugar and Civilization: American Empire and the Cultural Politics of Sweetness* (Chapel Hill: University of North Caroline Press, 2015).

[40] Austin, p. 11.

[41] Merleaux, 28-54.

[42] For examples of the ways race, class, gender intersect in the creation of exploitable labor, see, Jefferson Cowie, *Capital Moves: RCA's Seventy-Year Quest for Cheap Labor* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1999); Mae Ngai, *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2004); David Gutierrez, *Walls and Mirrors: Mexican Americans, Mexican Immigrants, and the Politics of Ethnicity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995); Nayan Shah, *Stranger Intimacy: Contesting Race, Sexuality, and the Law in the North American West* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011); Vicki L. Ruiz, *Cannery Women, Cannery Lives: Mexican Women, Unionization, and the California Food Processing Industry, 1930-1950* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1987.)

Sugar Volk: German Russians Arrive to the Colorado Beet Fields

When considering a prospective contract, a sugar beet farmer counted the number of workers who would be included in the deal. In other words, when contemplating a contract, a farmer sized up a family as well. How many children would be able to scrabble on hands and knees at thinning time? Were the children strong enough to wield the hooked, machete-like beet knife during topping in the fall? Was the wife willing, if necessary, to bring her newborn baby to the fields? A 1916 report on child labor in Colorado sugar beet fields noted, "A man and his wife and five or six children able to work, are expected to cultivate from 50 to 60 acres of beets each season." One family interviewed reported that their family of nine—a husband, wife, and seven children—had worked 83 acres in the season of 1915.[43] The number of acres contract workers received depended on the number of workers in the family. Each able beet worker, then, regardless of age or gender, was a potential asset both to farmers and the heads of household with whom they contracted.

In German Russian culture, as in much of the U.S. and Europe, the family patriarch, or *hausvater*, made most major family decisions. When a *hausvater* entered into a sugar beet contract, he agreed not only to a set number of acres per year, but also to the labor of the women and children under his authority. The U.S. Department of Labor, in a collaborative study with the U.S. Children's Bureau, noted, "The laborer contracts to do the handwork on as many acres as he thinks he and his family group can take care of. The sugar company, or the farmer—if the agreement is made directly with the latter—contracts to pay the laborer a fixed rate per acre, part

[43] Clopper and Hine, p. 15.

of the amount to be paid after each operation."[44] Contracts were the domain of men, but the success of these men depended on the labor of women and children.

In Russia, German Russian women were accustomed to lives of hard work and patriarchy. Fred Ostwald remembered, "Women took their place in the fields, the same as men. Women, more or less, were taken for granted. Having married, they had become the property of the men.[45] Men of that period, he recalled, "took a terrible advantage of their womenfolk." According to Ostwald, men loafed about drinking and singing all winter, gathering around stoves in their "little fur coats" telling tall tales "of how strong they were, how rich they were, what great hunters they were," while women had an endless list of domestic duties to get the family through the winter and beyond. They gathered straw and manure to feed fires strong enough to hold through the night. They milked the cows, slopped the pigs, and looked after the chickens. Women's work in the Russian Steppes ensured survival.

Once in the United States, women's labor was again essential to survival. Sugar beet families, one report noted, "were supported largely, if not entirely, by their beet-contract earnings." The report indicated that German Russian fathers did no regular work outside of beet season, "partly, no doubt, because winter work was scarce, but also because the earnings of women and children from their work in the beet fields relieved the father in some cases of the necessity of working throughout the year to support his family."[46] As sugar beet workers, German Russian men relied the labor of women and children.

In order to survive the winter, almost no family member was spared the long, grueling

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[44] U.S. Children's Bureau, *Child Labor and the Work of Mothers,* p. 3.

[45] Fred Ostwald interview.

[46] U.S. Children's Bureau, *Child Labor and the Work of Mothers,* p. 9.

hours in the beet fields. Children as young as five and six years old worked beets. Women—old, young, pregnant, or with newborn babes in arms—worked alongside their husbands and children. Children too young to work accompanied their mothers to the fields, waiting at the end of the rows, or stayed at home either alone or with a sibling or neighbor to supervise them. One family reported that "the dog [took] care of the children" while the rest of the family worked.[47]

The hands of women and children helped get families through the winter, but their labor also built the sugar beet industry. German Russian immigrants arrived to Colorado with loads of children and generations of agricultural experience, which appeared to be an answer to the sugar industry's needs. German Russian families tended to be large, the average family having eight or more children whom they were more than willing to put to work.[48] The National Child Labor Committee declared, "Financial considerations and not the welfare of the child lie at the center of vision in the narrow perspective which characterizes the lives of these families."[49] The sugar companies noted both the large family sizes and the immigrants' work ethic. Family labor—child labor in particular—was the linchpin of the sugar beet industry's success.

In bringing German Russians to work the beet fields, sugar companies signaled a significant shift in agricultural labor practices. Though child labor was a well-established practice in the United States by the twentieth century, beet work was the first time recruiters actively sought out children to work in industrial agriculture.[50] By some estimates, families with

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[47] Ibid., p. 59.

[48] Sara A. Brown, Robie O. Sargent, and Clara B. Armentrout, *Children Working in the Sugar Beet Fields of Certain Districts of the South Platte Valley Colorado* (New York: National Child Labor Committee, 1925), p. 20.

[49] Clopper and Hine, p. 16.

[50] Mark Feige, *Irrigated Eden: The Making of an Agricultural Landscape in the American West* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1999), p. 137.

child workers under sixteen years of age cultivated 64 percent of the total northern Colorado beet acreage.[51] Children were recruited as part of the family unit, but their labor was just as desired as, if not more than, that of their parents.

Sugar Babies: Child Labor and the Making of an "Other"

Children were essential to Colorado sugar beet farming. The *Denver Times* noted in April 1902, "As the [sugar beet] industry is one requiring a great deal of child labor, [German Russian] families are peculiarly adapted to work, several of them having from five to nine children ranging from babies in arms and doddling youngsters to youths of 18."[52] As if to punctuate their fitness for work, the paper concluded, "They were all healthy vigorous specimens of humanity."[53] It was "common knowledge…that children do hand work on beets in northeastern Colorado."[54] Sugar beet cultivation required extensive labor close to the earth, work ideally suited for robust little bodies with nimble hands.

Although child labor was integral to the beet sugar industry, child labor reformers began to investigate the practice in the 1910s. So it was, then, that on a sunny day in October of 1915, the students of Knearl Elementary in Morgan County lined up outside their school for a class photo. The school was a "new and attractive" brick building, designed to entice children and

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[51] Brown et al., p. 9.

[52] Rock, p. 167.

[53] Ibid.

[54] Brown et al., p. 23.

"encourage attendance."[55] Boys in trousers and girls in white dresses, the children and their teacher squinted into the sun while National Child Labor Committee staff photographer Lewis H. Hine snapped the photo. That day, however, only 5 pupils at Knearl Elementary were in attendance. The other children, about 90 of them, were, as the caption later read, "in the beets." The school enrolled 52 students when it opened for the year on September 6, 1915, and the average daily attendance for September was 37. After the harvest, the average daily attendance had risen to 33, with a total enrollment of 79 students. In October, however, enrollment had sunk to 34 and the average daily attendance was but 5 pupils. Knearl Elementary's missing children were beet workers and this was harvest time.[56]

Knearl Elementary was only one of many schools in the northern Colorado beet districts that struggled with harvest-related truancy. Larimer County, for example, reported 10,466 absences among 500 students in the 1915-16 school year. Of those enrolled, 214 students were beet workers. Of the total absences, children who worked beets made up 7,950, or 76 percent, of the absences. Logan County also saw 76 percent of absences attributed to beet workers that year. Weld County schools reported 9,059, or 74 percent, of absences due to beet work during the 1915-16 school year.[57] By 1923, in Weld County alone, there were an estimated 2,500 children working in the beet fields each year.[58]

Although child welfare advocates were baffled by the apparent disregard for formal education, German Russian families relied on the labor of every member of the family. One

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[55] Clopper and Hine, p. 23.

[56] Ibid.

[57] Ibid., p. 22.

[58] U.S. Children's Bureau, *Child Labor and the Work of Mothers*, p. 2.

father declared to a school principal that his boy was "worth $1,000 for work during the beet season but if we went to school he was nothing but an expense."[59] Whether they worked the fields or went to school, children needed to be fed and clothed. Helping the family earn money offset those costs and most German Russian parents were not concerned with education.[60] What German Russian families saw as a logical use of a family wage earner, child labor reformers saw as a willingness to putting the family ahead of the needs of the child.

Some schools implemented strategies to tailor to the needs of children who missed school when they worked beets. The Lincoln School District in Larimer County, for example, divided students into what they called "beeters," children who left school during the harvest, and "non-beeters," those who did not leave. The two groups received separate instruction in different classrooms and the school closed the "beeters" room during October and November. Instruction for the child beet workers opened back up on November 29. These children, then, were a full two months behind the other pupils.[61] Another school, located in the Garfield School District, tailored its school year to accommodate beet workers exclusively. It opened after the harvest in late November and closed May 1, after planting. This meant that the beet workers received about half the instruction as non-beet worker children.[62]

As child labor reformers began to study the effects of child labor in agriculture, they also contributed to the subtle ways that German Russians were viewed as outsiders. Reformers

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[59] Ibid., p. 15.

[60] Lila Schilling, interviewed by Timothy J. Kloberdanz, October 10, 1980, Oral histories, Records of the Sidney Heitman Germans from Russia in Colorado Study Project, Box 13, Archives and Special Collections, Colorado State University, Fort Collins, Colorado.

[61] Clopper and Hine, p. 25.

[62] Ibid., p. 23-24.

believed that German Russians inherently disregarded the safety and well-being of their children, noting that it was "the tendency among the families in which it is customary for children to work." In German Russian families, "children's labor count(s) as soon as possible." Reformers were horrified by the way German Russian families worked their children. One proud mother proclaimed, "Asa's worked ever since he could lift a beet."[63] A father informed agents that his children would "scream and cry" from fatigue and another said, "the children get so tired that they don't want to eat, and go right to bed."[64] Outsiders to the sugar beet industry saw immigrants who worked their children nearly to death.

Child labor reformers noted that the work was strenuous and dangerous. Sugar beets are a fibrous plant and farm labor practices in the early twentieth century called for a "sharp blow" with a long, hooked knife when beets were "topped" after harvest. It was common for children to hook themselves, especially in whichever leg they used to support the beet while they chopped off the top leaves. Reformers believed that the work was unsuitable for children, some of whom were as young as six years old, and declared that "common sense protests that the effect upon them cannot be other than harmful."[65] Beet parents, it seemed, lacked the sense or concern necessary to prevent children from falling into harm's way.

The apparent neglect of German Russian children especially alarmed reformers. It was common for mothers to bring their babies to the field and leave them in a box or basket within sight at the end of a row. Sometimes parents had a little covered wagon or put up a small tent to shelter babies from the blazing Colorado sun. Toddlers also accompanied parents to the fields,

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[63] U.S. Children's Bureau, *Child Labor and the Work of Mothers*, p. 19.

[64] Ibid., p. 26.

[65] Clopper and Hine, p. 12.

and many mothers lived in constant fear of their children drowning, as irrigation ditches offered "a special source of danger."[66] When parents opted to leave their children at home, they often left them in the care of siblings or neighbor children. If there was nobody available to watch them, children were simply left at home alone.

Tragedy was a part of daily life. Children died from exposure, fire, or other household accidents. One memorable story documented by a Children's Bureau investigator illuminated not only the potential dangers of leaving children home alone but the novel caregiving strategies they devised in the absence of adults:

> One mother who because of cold weather had left her 3 little girls aged 5, 3, and 2 years at home in the afternoon instead of taking them with her to the beet field as usual returned to the house with the Children's Bureau agent about half past 4 in the afternoon to find that the fire had gone out and that the 2 older children had taken all the clothes off the baby and were feeding her an ear of corn.[67]

Stories like these provided a glimpse into how German Russians were both needed and cast as ignorant outsiders.

German Russians arrived in Colorado with little more than their children and their capacity for labor, and their cultural differences and class status left them open to discrimination. Like many farm families in the United States at this time, German Russians expected their children to work alongside them in the fields even as Progressive Era reformers were advocating an end to child labor.[68] Child labor investigators saw the willingness of German Russian to leave

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[66] U.S. Children's Bureau, *Child Labor and the Work of Mothers*, p. 60.

[67] Ibid., p. 59.

[68] Walter I. Trattner, *Crusade for the Children: A History of the National Child Labor Committee and Child Labor Reform in* America (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1970); Viviana A. Zelizer, *Pricing the Priceless Child: The Changing Social Value of Children* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994); James D. Schmidt, *Industrial Violence and the Legal Origins of Child Labor* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

their children unsupervised or send their children into the fields instead of into the classroom as an indication of ignorance bordering on willfulness. This refusal to adopt to "American" ways marked German Russians. These assumptions ignored the poverty in which these families lived, destitution that also lead to inferior living conditions in segregated neighborhoods.

The areas that German Russians lived defined and reinforced a social hierarchy that placed white ethnic workers as subordinate to Anglo Americans. As social geographers have demonstrated, race and place are inextricably linked.[69] Unlike many other ethnic geographies, German Russian settlements, as isolated and segregated entities, existed only for a short amount of time. Their historical impermanence, however, does not negate their importance as a site that contributed to the cultivation of a racialized white ethnic identity. During their tenure as the predominant sugar beet work force, German Russians lived in what came to be known as "the Jungles," a name that hinted at the outsider status of those who lived within it as well as the imagined chaos and danger that awaited the unsuspecting passerby.

The Jungles: Race and Place in Sugar Beet Communities

On August 31, 1905, the *Greeley Tribune* proclaimed, "A real Little Russia will soon be established on the east side near the sugar factory."[70] When beet workers were not living in or near the fields during the growing and harvest seasons, they either migrated to larger cities like

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[69] See, for example, David Delaney, *Race, Place, and the Law, 1836-1948* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1998); Steven Hoelscher, "Making Place, Making Race: Performances of Whiteness in the Jim Crow South" *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, vol. 93, no. 3 (September 2003), pp. 657-686; Jamie Winders, "Changing Politics of Race and Region: Latino Migration to the US South," *Progress in Human Geography* vol. 29, no. 6, (2005) pp. 683-699.

[70] *Greeley Tribune* (Colorado), August 31, 1905.

Denver and Greeley or settled into ethnic enclaves near the beet fields. The neighborhoods had official names—Andersonville and Buckingham in Fort Collins, for example—though the neighborhoods were more generally referred to as "Little Russias" or "Little Moscows." Most commonly, however, locals and immigrants alike knew these settlements simply as the Jungles.[71]

The Jungles had a reputation as vice districts, and local newspapers frequently featured tidbits of Jungles scandals to titillate readers, most often featuring stories of gambling and bootlegging. Entries, such as one that appeared in the July 28, 1916 issue of the Fort Collins newspaper, *The Weekly Courier*, which reported on the arrest of men "charged with shooting dice in the jungles yesterday," were typical.[72] In 1913, the *Courier* reported on police arrests at an illegal beer outfit, where "denizens of the jungles" were caught with bootlegged booze "iced and ready for consumption."[73] The paper continued that the police had caught the bootleggers by surprise during a raid that was at "such an hour as most respectable people are pressed up against the supper table."[74] Local papers delighted not only in the scandalous details of life in the Jungles, but also the danger it held for the outsiders who dared to enter.

In *Cultures of United States Imperialism*, scholar Amy Kaplan discusses the "racially inflected" intentions of the American use of the word "jungle." She notes that it served as a metaphor for the "opposition between Old and New Worlds." Unlike the American "wilderness," which was depicted at the turn of the twentieth century as a symbol of white vitality and

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[71] Mark Spier, "Roots of the Fort Collins German Russian Community" (Undergraduate paper, Colorado State University, 1978), Sidney Heitman Germans from Russia Collection, Box 15, Folder 10, Archives and Special Collections, Colorado State University, Fort Collins, p. 5.

[72] *The Weekly Courier*, July 28, 1916.

[73] "Bluffs from the Jungles Don't Go," *The Weekly Courier* (Fort Collins, Colorado), August, 29, 1913.

[74] Ibid.

achievement, "jungle" represented the "enervated 'barbaric tropic,' marked by its unspoken connotations of blackness."[75] Jungles, in the early twentieth-century American imaginary, were sites of social decay.[76] They were dark, chaotic, and primitive places that upstanding citizens should avoid. It is unclear how and why the German Russian neighborhoods got the name, but it may have derived from the bestselling 1906 Upton Sinclair novel, *The Jungle*, with its depictions of working-class poverty. Whatever the origin, the name served to mark inhabitants as foreign, barbaric, and strange.

Newspapers often featured stories declaring the misadventures and calamities of outsiders (mostly men) who entered the Jungles. One such article in *The Weekly Courier* featured two men, James Richards of Cheyenne, Wyoming, and Oscar S. Moore, of Fort Collins. The paper specified that Moore was not from the Jungles. The *Courier* did not make clear whether Richards and Moore entered the Jungles looking for trouble one Saturday afternoon, but after obtaining three bottles of beer, the men went to the railroad tracks to imbibe. Once they had finished all the three bottles, "the men wanted to further quench their thirst and returned to the jungles" to purchase more. There, they were mistaken for police informants and "were attacked by several men" wielding knives and bricks. Richards "received a bad gash on his right forearm which caused two of his fingers to lose their use," and Moore "received a gash on the nose and...it was feared his skull had been fractured." Just as the two men were about to be overtaken by the mob, C.F. Bailer, "the oil man," came along in his oil wagon "and told the bleeding men to climb on

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[75] Amy Kaplan, "Left Alone With America: The Absence of Empire in the Study of American Culture," in *Cultures of United States Imperialism*, eds. Amy Kaplan and Donald E. Pease pp. 3-21 (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993), p. 3.

[76] The most famous use of the word "jungle" to convey Old World decay and exhaustion in the New World was Upton Sinclair's Progressive-Era novel, *The Jungle* (1906; New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2003).

board." The men boarded the wagon, "and the horses were driven at a gallop to escape the angry crowd."[77] The newspaper reported that Richards and Moore had been "damaged in [the] jungles."[78] Though the men were clearly in the Jungles for a good time, the newspaper framed Richards and Moore as victims. The description of the attack as having "damaged" the men subtly feminized them; they had been violated.

The story of "damaged" men hinted at the cultural changes in masculinity occurring in United States in the early twentieth century. That is, white men attempted to assert their masculinity through overt displays of physical power. Activities like boxing came to be newly valued, even among white middle-class men who sought to distinguish themselves from what many saw as a feminized Victorian manhood. Fighting took on even greater importance when it occurred between a white man and man of color, as in the case of the 1910 "Fight of the Century" between the reigning heavyweight champion, Jack Johnson, who was black, and Jim Jeffries, who was white. Publicity for the fight situated it as a battle between civilization and savagery, as Jefferies was referred to as "the Great White Hope" who would best the African American champion. [79] Thus, had the men who entered the Jungles neighborhood come out of their brawl as the victors, it may have worked to reinforce their masculinity. Since they were bested by people of the Jungles, however, they emerged as "damaged" defenders of whiteness.

American whiteness was, and remains, a shifting and historically contingent phenomenon. Matthew Frye Jacobson highlights the malleability of race in U.S. history, arguing

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[77] "Two Men Damaged in Jungles," *The Weekly Courier*, September 12, 1913.

[78] Ibid.

[79] See Gail Bederman, *Manliness & Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996).

for a "fashioning and refashioning" of whiteness. The period from the 1840s to the 1920s, for example, saw the influx of peasants and laborers from southern and eastern European countries, and because earlier European immigrants came from the north and the west, the influx instigated a crisis in whiteness.[80] This period, with its new doubts about white racial homogeneity, saw the racialization of ethnic white immigrants from southern and eastern Europe. The Germans from Russia entered the United States at the moment when notions of whiteness were changing and no longer guaranteed racial privilege to ethnic whites.[81]

They arrived to the United States at a time when whiteness was being contested and they experienced discrimination born out of this contestation, though they did not face the level of race-based violence characteristic of so many other racialized groups.[82] They were disrespected

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[80] Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), pp. 1-12.

[81] In contrast to Matthew Frye Jacobson, historian Thomas Guglielmo argues that eastern and southern European immigrants did not experience a process of "becoming white," that is, though these immigrants experienced racial discrimination, they also benefitted from privileges denied to most immigrants of color. Eastern and southern European immigrants, Guglielmo argues, were "white on arrival," and naturalization laws and courts, the U.S. census, and an otherwise wide variety of people and institutions recognized their whiteness. However, Guglielmo also acknowledges that, though ethnic white immigrants benefitted in innumerable ways due to their whiteness, they also experienced racial discrimination. Guglielmo explains, that "between the mid-nineteenth and mid-twentieth centuries there were primarily two ways of categorizing people based on supposedly inborn physical, mental, moral, and cultural traits. The first is color...[which] is a social category and not a physical description...Second is race, which could mean many things: large groups like Nordics and Mediterraneans, medium-sized ones like the Celts and Hebrews, or smaller and ones like the North or South Italians." See Thomas Guglielmo, *White on Arrival: Italians, Race, Color, and Power in Chicago, 1890-1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), esp. 3-13, quote on p. 8.

[82] Race-based violence has deep significance in the history of the United States. Violence against African Americans, indigenous peoples, Asian Americans, and other people of color are all central to understanding the founding and development of the nation. See Kidada E. Williams, *They Left Great Marks on Me: African American Testimonies of Racial Violence from Emancipation to World War I* (New York: New York University Press, 2012); Ned Blackhawk, *Violence over the Land: Indians and Empires in the Early American West* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006); Scott Zesch, *The Chinatown War: Chinese Los Angeles and the Massacre of 1871* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012). See also Elliot West, "Reconstructing Race," *Western Historical Quarterly* 34, no. 1 (Spring 2003): 6-26; Scott Ellsworth, *Death in a Promised Land: The Tulsa Riot of 1921* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1982).

and disregarded, but also generally left alone to live and work in peace. Violence, while often present in the stories of racialized groups, was not a necessary factor of racialization. Though less well documented, there was a gray area between a hated minority and those who were believed to be inferior but were seen as relatively non-threatening.[83] German Russian immigrants who worked in Colorado sugar beets in the first decades of the twentieth century existed in this racialized gray area.[84]

Perhaps the best reflection of this racialized gray area German Russians was the name outsiders gave their neighborhoods. The the flat, dry, and treeless Plains, and the unincorporated districts and tar paper shanties where German Russian workers lived, were as far from the jungles as one could get. The implication of this name, then, was that these neighborhoods were dangerous, primitive, and foreign. Their literal darkness reflected the perceived racial darkness of their inhabitants.

"Dirty Russians": The Racialization of German Russian Sugar Beet Workers

Since sugar companies paid the costs of recruiting and transporting workers to the beet fields, farmers agreed to provide housing for these laborers. Interpretations of what constituted

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[83] I am drawing here on the scholarship done on Asian Americans as a "model minority" in the post-WWII period. See Madeline Y. Hsu, *The Good Immigrants: How the Yellow Peril Became the Model Minority* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2015); Ellen D. Gerstle, Ellen Wu, Julian Zelizer ed., *The Color of Success: Asian Americans and the Origins of the Model Minority* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014).

[84] This racialized gray area is also discussed in James R. Barrett and David Roediger, "Inbetween Peoples: Race, Nationality and the 'New Immigrant' Working Class," *Journal of American Ethnic History* 16, no. 3 (Spring, 1997): 3-44.

suitable living quarters differed wildly among farmers, however, and it was not uncommon to find beet families living in single room shacks, discarded railroad cars, and tents. Employers often offered chicken coops as acceptable housing for beet workers. Women would clean the coops with lye but the foul odor of poultry could linger indefinitely.[85] According to the U.S. Children's Bureau, laborers "were entirely dependent on the goodwill of the farmer for the comfort and even the cleanliness of their quarters."[86] Families often shared their accommodations with bedbugs, flies, mice, and other vermin that were either left behind by the previous tenants or entered freely through "leaking roofs, broken windows, and general dilapidation" of the beet shacks.[87] The poverty and filth of beet worker housing came to shape the ways local whites constructed German Russian identity.

The poor housing of beet workers, and the chaotic neighborhoods where they lived during the off season often served as "proof" to white community members of the inferiority of German Russian "race," but their work in the earth also served this function. Beet work was hard, dirty work. It required cultivators to crouch down close to the earth, and sometimes even crawl on hands and knees, when thinning and weeding the plants. Poor living conditions, limited access to water and sanitation, and stereotypes of Eastern Europeans fostered a disdain for German Russians among white community members. Historian Kathleen Mapes argues that early twentieth-century German Russian beet workers in Michigan found themselves as class and racial outcasts soon after their arrival.[88] Referred to as "weeders," "beet hunkies," and

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[85] Mary Lyons-Barrett, "Child Labor in the Early Sugar Beet Industry in the Great Plains, 1890-1920," *Great Plains Quarterly* 25, no. 4 (Winter 2005): 29-38; citation from p. 35.

[86] U.S. Children's Bureau, *Child Labor and the Work of Mothers,* p. 66.

[87] Ibid.

[88] Kathleen Mapes, *Sweet Tyranny: Migrant Labor, Industrial Agriculture, and Imperial Politics* (Urbana:

"bohunks," Michegan German Russian immigrants, like those in Colorado, lived in ghettoized ethnic enclaves removed from sight of white communities and cut off from public utilities. Housing, then, served as more than shelter, or lack thereof.

Defining race, and therefore the process by which racialization takes place, is challenging. People unfamiliar with race theories often conflate race with ethnicity, and see race as a matter of biology and therefore a matter of fact, rather than a constructed social phenomenon with shifting meanings and consequences. Historian Matthew Frye Jacobson refers argues that the unstable logic of race operates as "public fictions."[89] In this view, race is a constructed, and contested, series of stories created to produce, reinforce, and maintain systems of power. Communities of color have been the primary and most relentless targets of American race-making since before the creation of the United States, even as the processes and contours of race stories have shifted across time and space. But the construction of whiteness in the United States has also evolved changed over time, with direct consequences for the German Russian immigrants.

When asked, most German Russian immigrants claimed their nationality to be "German," even long after their arrival to the United States. Some—like Solomon Schneider, whose parents left Russia in 1909—claimed to be German even if they had been born in the United States.[90] German was both a self-proclaimed ethnic and national identity. Historian of German Russians

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University of Illinois Press, 2009), p. 2.

[89] Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), pp. 2-3.

[90] Soloman Schneider, interviewed by Timothy Kloberdanz, September 9, 1981, Oral histories, Records of the Sidney Heitman Germans from Russia in Colorado Study Project, Box 13, Folder 13, Archives and Special Collections, Colorado State University, Fort Collins, Colorado.

Richard Sallet notes that these immigrants had little desire to melt into mainstream American society. Instead, their "intensely religious" and "clannish" culture encouraged them to remain isolated once settled in the United States. Sallet notes that when they lived in their colonies along the Volga River and the Black Sea, they "considered themselves culturally, socially, and even racially superior to their Russian or Tatar neighbors."[91] Ironically, this commitment to separation contributed to their misidentification once in the United States, as Americans tended to disregard their complex identity and refer to them as "Russian."

In 1908, on his first day of elementary school after moving to Berthoud, Colorado, Fred Ostwald learned what it meant to be mistaken for Russian in his new hometown. On that day, "a little kid kicked me in the rump and said, 'Rooshun.'" Ostwald, and his rump, had been on the literal receiving end of racial discrimination. The taunt would burn in his memory long after the sting of blow had subsided. Fred was eight or nine years old at the time of the incident, and he was clearly surprised that a "little kid" had assaulted him. It was the first but hardly the last time he would be called "Russian" derogatorily. He noted later in life that being called "the dirty Rooshun" was something he and members of his community encountered frequently.

Ostwald, like many other German Russians, carried the memory of such incidents well into adulthood. He recalled that "When we first came to this country there was a form of discrimination, you see, because we had well these people had to work right down here at the most menial of all jobs, you couldn't get any more."[92] He elaborated, "you were made to feel that you was only the beet worker and somewhat lower than the farmers on the economic and social

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[91] Sallet, *Russian-German Settlements in the United States* (Fargo: North Dakota Institute for Regional Studies, 1974), p. 6.

[92] Fred Ostwald interview.

rung of the ladder."[93] Another former child sugar beet worker, Solomon Schneider, echoed Ostwald when he said, "No one really liked the Russians. Of our particular group…they just…was nothing fond about them."[94] The ultimate insult was to be called "a dirty Russian."[95]

During the beet season, German Russians lived on or near the beet fields in accommodations provided by the farmers who employed them and who relied on the labor of men, women, and children. In the off-season, beet worker families often settled in communities on the outskirts of small northern Colorado cities such as Greeley, Fort Collins, and Windsor. City authorities let German Russian settlements persist in relative isolation. Although there was no law confining them to these areas, language and cultural barriers, as well as their shared history as former German colonists on the Volga River, meant that they tended to settle together. Their otherness combined with their poverty caused white community members to disregard their circumstances and often refused city services to their neighborhoods. As historian Kathleen Mapes puts it, their isolation was "not merely a matter of accommodations or geography," but rather it "symbolized and helped codify the status of migrant families within the larger community."[96] The physical distance that separated beet workers from other northern Coloradoans reflected their social marginalization.[97]

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[93] Ibid.

[94] Solomon Schneider interview.

[95] Lila Schilling interview.

[96] Mapes, p. 81.

[97] At the turn of the twentieth century, cities around the United States adopted *de jure* and *de facto* policies of segregation in order to contain and isolate Asian, Mexican, and Eastern and Southern European immigrants. See Kay J. Anderson, "The Idea of Chinatown: The Power of Place and Institutional Practice in the Making of a Racial Category," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 77, no. 4 (1987): 580-98; Alan Kraut, *Silent Travelers: Germs, Genes, and the "Immigrant Menace"* (New York: Basic Books, 1994); Nayan Shah, *Contagious Divides: Epidemics and Race in San Francisco's Chinatown* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001).

Conclusion

When discussing his experience as a child sugar beet worker, Fred Ostwald remembered:

> Beet work...was an entirely new experience for us when we came to this country…The fact that our people were people from the land, I'm sure had something to do with us going to the farm working beets. Here again our economic condition was such that we couldn't start at the top, we had to start at the bottom and thinning beets was about as low as one could get. Father and mother worked as a team. The first year they had a beet contract of 20 acres. I was 7, sister was 5, another brother was 4, and baby now was 2. When we went to the field, we all went to the field."

As this memory illustrated, sugar beet labor in northern Colorado was a family affair. Men, women, and children worked the same tasks and the same long hours. Under a blazing hot sun or in the bitter cold, passersby could see them in the fields, men in their sheepskin coats, women in their *valenki,* the boots made of felted wool, and children somewhere beneath the plants or at the ends of the rows. Together, they grew an industry.

When German Russian immigrants came to the beet fields of northern Colorado, they arrived a poor white ethnic minority. Their families were large and their labor was cheap, a combination that made them appealing to sugar companies and beet farmers. These families worked hard, sacrificed much, and saved every penny they could. They seemed like outsiders: foreign, strange, dirty, and poor. Where in another region of the United States they might have languished in economic precarity, however, in Colorado their story took a dramatic turn. One by one, German Russian families began buying farms of their own. By 1926, almost four thousand German Russian immigrants who had entered the Weld County sugar beet industry through field labor had become farm owners themselves.[98] Over time, German Russians became the dominant

[98] Alton D. Hill Jr., "Volga German Occupancy in the Windsor Area, Colorado" (M.A. thesis, University of Colorado, 1959).

population in northern Colorado beet communities. In Windsor, Colorado, for example, an estimated 85 percent of residents were of German Russian heritage by 1930.[99] As they grew in numbers, they also grew in influence, remaking their social and class status, as well as their racial status. Unlike future beet workers, German Russians, through population increase, land ownership, and the reconfiguration of American whiteness, were able to remake their ethnic identity.

[99] Rock, 177.

Chapter Two
"Work Renders Life Sweet":
German Russians and the Apotheosis of Whiteness in Rural Colorado, 1917-1945

Hope Williams Sykes's 1935 novel, *Second Hoeing*, brought instant notoriety to the German Russian community of Colorado, which was relatively unknown to most Americans outside of the sugar beet fields. Sykes was a teacher at Plummer School in Fort Collins District 26, located near a Great Western Sugar Company factory. Over the years, Sykes worked with children of sugar beet families and observed German Russian beet workers out in the fields across from her home. *Second Hoeing* was a tragic tale that served as an allegory for the clash between Old World values and the promise of a better, American, way of life. The story featured an oppressive father who worked his wife and children like animals, often with disastrous results, and a spirited young protagonist named Hannah who dreamed of a better life far from the beet fields and family ties that kept her tethered to them. The family, like their friends and neighbors, lived in ramshackle housing, worked children rather than sending them to school, and moved from one tragedy to the next.[1]

Reviewers praised the book for its portrayal of the hardscrabble life of immigrant beet workers suffering from poverty, ignorance, and the growing pains of Americanization. The story shocked readers with its depiction of children living in squalor, working endless hours in the beet fields.[2] A reviewer for the *New York Times* argued that the book took on "a stature of a powerful

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[1] Hope Williams Sykes, *Second Hoeing* (1935; repr., Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1982).

[2] Sykes belonged to a cohort of women novelists and journalists committed to portraying the lives of working women during the Great Depression. While authors like John Steinbeck and Erskine Caldwell put women on the sidelines of their stories, Sykes and other lesser-known authors sought to center women's experiences. See Laura Hapke, *Daughters of the Great Depression: Women, Work, and Fiction in the American 1930s* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1995).

proletarian drama…with children the main protagonists upon whom the bitter impact of economic struggle is spent."[3] *Second Hoeing* exhibited the intersecting anxieties of gender, family, immigration, and Americanization in Depression-era rural America.

The book was not universally praised, however, and the backlash shed light not only on the dire circumstances of sugar beet workers, but also the changing racial status of the Colorado German Russians. The local German Russian community, most members of which had been in Colorado for several decades by the time of the book's publication, was horrified by the way Sykes, not of German Russian ancestry herself, depicted their people. One former beet worker, Alice Herman Miller, was so disturbed by the story that she decided to write her own corrective counter-narrative.[4] For Miller, at issue was the way Sykes portrayed the German Russians as an ignorant, impoverished, and cruel people who overworked their children and cared for little else than money. About Sykes and *Second Hoeing*, Miller explained, "I read her book, and didn't think it was at all true of our German people. [Y]ou never found the Germans whose house looked like a shack, they moved into a clean house. Nice house. That was one thing I didn't like about her book."[5]

Alice Herman Miller and others like her did not dispute that the children of German

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[3] Review quoted in Sykes, p. ix.

[4] Alice Herman Miller, interview with Kenneth Rock, February 9, 1977, Oral Histories, Records of the Sidney Heitman Germans from Russia in Colorado Study Project, Box 13, Folder 4, Archives and Special Collections, Colorado State University, Fort Collins, Colorado. In her oral history, Miller discusses her frustration with Sykes's interpretation of the German Russian community, telling the interviewer, Kenneth Rock, that she was working on a book of her own. When Rock asked if he could take a look at it, Miller declined. It is unclear what happened to the manuscript, but it does not currently appear to have been published and is not included in the Records of the Sidney Heitman Germans from Russia in Colorado Study Project.

[5] Alice Herman Miller, interview with Kenneth Rock, February 9, 1977, Oral Histories, Records of the Sidney Heitman Germans from Russia in Colorado Study Project, Box 13, Folder 4, Archives and Special Collections, Colorado State University, Fort Collins, Colorado

Russian families worked beets. After all, most would affirm that German Russian youngsters lived in a world where the proverb "*Arbeit macht das Leben süss,*" or "Work renders life sweet," echoed in their ears and defined their childhood, as it had for previous generations. A life of hard work applied equally to children and adults, especially the lives of women and girls, who participated in agricultural work and provided domestic and reproductive labor as well. It wasn't *Second Hoeing*'s recognition of their hard work that members of the contemporary German Russians found objectionable, but rather its depiction of them as dirty, ignorant immigrants. Miller, like most of the Germans from Russia who came to Colorado, was recruited to labor in the sugar beet fields.[6] They worked hard, they bought land, and, often in less than one generation, they transformed their destinies as Americans. Miller, for example, arrived in northern Colorado with her family to work beets 1903. In 1915, she and her husband, also of German Russian ancestry, purchased a farm, which they ran for sixty years.[7] Her story was triumphant, and it was the rule rather than the exception. By 1930, German Russians were the predominant ethnic group in northern Colorado and they eventually dominated the sugar beet farming industry there too.

By the time of *Second Hoeing*'s publication, Alice Herman Miller, like many of her compatriots, had become an upstanding, prosperous member of the northern Colorado community. Miller found the book distasteful not because it acknowledged the difficult nature of beet work and the presence of women and children in the fields, but because she was no longer the "dirty Russian" of her Anglo-American neighbors' imaginations. The majority of German

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[6] Kathleen Mapes, *Sweet Tyranny: Migrant Labor, Industrial Agriculture, and Imperial Politics* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2009).

[7] Alice Herman Miller interview.

Russians who came to northern Colorado to work beets also worked their way from laborers to landowners. In becoming the owners and operators of sugar beet farms, German Russians transformed not only their economic status, but their ethnic identity as well. Miller, like her German Russian family, friends, and neighbors, had contributed to the cultivation of a white middle class of American industrial farmers.[8]

Although there is a rich and veritable history of class formation in early twentieth-century U.S. cities, far less is known about its creation in rural and agricultural contexts.[9] As historians Cindy Hahamovitch and Rick Halpern note, labor and working-class historians "have tended to use models of class and class formation that privilege urban industrial workers," and despite "an awareness of the intertwined and overlapping nature of rural and urban economies,"

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[8] German Russians were not the first or only immigrant community to recast their ethnic identity from a racialized minority to part of the white majority. See David R. Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class* (London; New York: Verso, 1991) and *Working Toward Whiteness: How America's Immigrants Became White: The Strange Journey from Ellis Island to the Suburbs* (New York: Basic Books, 2005); Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998); and Lizabeth Cohen, *Making a New Deal: Industrial Workers in Chicago, 1919-1939* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991). For examples specific to the U.S. West, see Neil Foley, *The White Scourge: Mexicans, Blacks, and Poor Whites in Texas Cotton Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 19997); Gunther Peck, *Reinventing Free Labor: Padrones and Immigrant Workers in the North American West, 1880-1930* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000); and Mae Ngai, *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004). For a revisionist analysis of whiteness, see Thomas Guglielmo, *White on Arrival: Italians, Race, and Power in Chicago, 1890-1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004).

[9] For a few notable examples of the large historiography of urban labor history, see Hertbert Gutman, *Work, Culture, and Society in Industrializing America: Essays in Working-Class and Social History* (New York: Knopf: Distributed by Random House, 1976); Leon Fink, *Workingmen's Democracy: The Knights of Labor and American Politics* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1983); David Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class* (London: Verso, 1991); Lawrence B. Glickman, *A Living Wage: American Workers and the Making of Consumer Society* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1997); Lizabeth Cohen, *Making a New Deal: Industrial Workers in Chicago, 1919-1939* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); Robin D.G. Kelly, *Race Rebels: Culture, Politics, and the Black Working Class* (New York: Free Press: Distributed by Simon and Schuster, 1996); Gary Gerstle, *Working-Class Americanism: The Politics of Labor in a Textile City, 1914-1960* (Cabridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

these historians "have treated rural workers as either peasants or slaves, and therefore fitting subjects for separate fields of historical inquiry."[10] Farmers in particular fit uneasily within conventional ideas of class formation, as they are often both landowners and workers. A closer look at rural worksites, however, particularly those that emerged during the shift to industrial agriculture, reveals many of the concerns that have captivated labor historians since the field's inception."[11] Things like "the work process, immigration and the adaptation of cultures, state power, technological change, capital consolidation and the rise of management, movements for social justice, [and] the gendered division of labor," are just as present in the history of industrial agriculture as they are in urban industrial centers.[12] Despite labor historians' relative inattention to it, rural history is ripe for an examination of the ways in which class has been made and unmade.[13]

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[10] Cindy Hahamovitch and Rick Halpern, "'Not a 'Sack of Potatoes': Why Labor Historians Need to Take Agriculture Seriously," *International Labor and Working-Class History* 65 (Spring 2004): 3-10; quote on p. 3.

[11] Ibid.

[12] Ibid., 4.

[13] There are some notable exceptions to the urban class formation model. For an example specific to northern Colorado sugar beet communities, see Dennis Nodín Valdés, "Settlers, Sojourners, and Proletarians: Social Formation in the Great Plains Sugar Beet Industry, 1890-1940" *Great Plains Quarterly* 10, no. 2 (Spring 1990): 110-123. I use the term "white agrarian middle class" to refer to people who owned their own land and made their livelihood by engaging in industrial agriculture. I also use it to distinguish between the family farms of northern Colorado and the large plantation estates of the rural South, a difference that has as much to do with property size as it does with the historical contingencies of race and class. Tenant farming and sharecropping existed in sugar beet communities, but for German Russians, these farming practices served primarily as a means towards independent farm ownership rather than an obstacle preventing it. For debt peonage in the agricultural South, see Pete Daniel, *The Shadow of Slavery: Peonage in the South, 1901-1969* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1972). For a nuanced discussion of the intersections of class and race in the making of whiteness in Texas, see Neil Foley, *The White Scourge: Mexicans, Blacks, and Poor Whites in Texas Cotton Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997). Other historians have suggested that the development of cities, particularly as industrial centers, in the nineteenth century influenced the countryside in new and important ways, arguing that rural communities occupied a "satellite" relationship to nearby urban centers. See, for example, Paul Faler, *Mechanics and Manufacturers in the Early Industrial Revolution: Lynn, Massachusetts, 1780-1860* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1981). Still other scholars

It is within the context of filling this historical gap that this chapter explores the emergence of German Russian sugar beet farmers and their race, class, and gender transformations. Intense and violent anti-German sentiment during World War I set the stage for German Russians to abandon ties to the Old World lest they be branded German spies, though it was not the only reason German Russians shed their ethnic identity. They also became landowners, which provided access to wealth accumulation and upward movement in the social hierarchy. German Russians no longer "worked beets" and with that transition they positioned themselves over those who did. Assimilationist violence; landownership; the adoption of white, middle-class, American gender norms; and the opportunity to contrast themselves to ethnic Mexican farm workers together culminated in German Russians achieving the highest status of northern Colorado sugar beet communities—the white agrarian middle class.

"American Through and Through": German Russians and the White, Agrarian Middle Class

In northern Colorado sugar beet communities an elite class was largely absent. There were wealthy capitalists and entrepreneurs to be sure. However, in the case of early twentieth century northern Colorado a distinct upper class did not emerge. There were the sugar company men and there were the farmers. Sugar company officials were white-collar workers, and farmers were not. But, as owners of their own businesses who hired labor and sold cash crops to producers, farmers did not fit within the working class either. German Russian sugar beet farmers did hard, physical labor, but their profits allowed them to expand their farms, acquire

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find the relationship to be more interdependent, with city and hinterland depending on one another for their existence. See especially William Cronon, *Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1992).

more wealth, invest in new technology, and become powerful members of the community. They formed the agrarian middle class.

The transformation of German Russian collective ethnic and class identity was completed by 1930, but unlike many white ethnic immigrant communities in urban and industrial areas, the shift occurred relatively quickly and completely.[14] While immigrant workers in places like Chicago "underwent a gradual shift in attitudes and behavior," German Russians retained their ethnic identity only until the emergence of anti-German hostility at the outset of World War I forced them to abandon this identity completely.[15] After that, according to historian Gary Gerstle, Germans could "no longer be American in politics and German in culture; they had to be American through and through."[16]

The years during and just after the war were difficult, even though German Russians faced racialized discrimination as white ethnics, they also maintained a level of privilege due to the perceived whiteness of their skin.[17] As a result, German Russians faced war-related anti-

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[14] Several historians have noted that the transition of immigrant communities to "white" or "American" was a relatively slow process. As James R. Barrett notes, "I use the phrase ethnocultural class formation to underscore the fact that some immigrant workers did indeed create viable working-class cultures with distinct institutions, political ideas, forms of socialization, organizations, and strategies. But they tended to do this *within* their own ethnic communities, often developing such cultures partly on the basis of Old World experiences and then adapting them to the conditions of the New." James R. Barrett, "Americanization from the Bottom Up: Immigration and the Remaking of the Working Class in the United States, 1880-1930," *Journal of American History* 79, no. 3 (December, 1993): 996-1020; quote on p. 999.

[15] Lizabeth Cohen, *Making a New Deal: Industrial Workers in Chicago, 1919-1939* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 6.

[16] Gary Gerstle, "Liberty, Coercion, and the Making of Americans," *Journal of American History* 84, no. 2 (September 1997): 570-7; quote on p. 541.

[17] For more on the simultaneous racial undesirability and access to privilege experienced by white ethnics, see Thomas Guglielmo, *White on Arrival: Italians, Race, Color, and Power in Chicago, 1890-1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), pp. 3-13.

German violence and KKK terror campaigns, but they also were allowed to purchase land, acquire credit, become naturalized, marry non-German Russians, and evolve into accepted members of their communities. Becoming farm owners gave German Russians wealth, social standing, and the opportunity to perform middle class American whiteness. When they were field workers, and when they clung to their Old World traditions, white Americans saw German Russians as an ethnic "other." Casting these traits aside, German Russians facilitated their transformation from the "wrong" type of white into the "correct" kind.[18]

Along with landownership, German Russians gained entrance into the white, agrarian middle class of northern Colorado by adopting activities associated with the white American middle class. Specifically, German Russians pulled their women and children out of the fields and filled the void with *other* women and children. German Russian women retreated to the home to focus on their roles as mothers and housewives, and their children went to school, where they learned to be all-American kids. The very reproductive and agricultural labor of women and children that drove the success of the sugar beet industry set the conditions that allowed for the transformation of German Russians from Eastern European wage workers into white American farmers. With every birth, German Russian families added to the labor force. As their families grew, they accumulated more wealth, purchased farms, repopulated the region, and eventually came to be the dominant group among sugar beet farmers.

Though the acceptance of German Russians as white American citizens hinged on their increased population and status as landholders, their change in ethnic status was also the result of

[18] I draw here from Matthew Frye Jacobson, who argues that Italian immigrants in New Orleans were stigmatized in the post-Civil War period "because they accepted economic niches (farm labor and small tenancy, for instance) marked as 'black' by local custom, and because they lived and worked comfortably among blacks." Mathew Frye Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race*, p. 57.

assimilationist pressures. The pressure to assimilate came first from children. As farmers became successful, their children spent more time at school and less time in the beet fields. At school, German Russian children faced pressure to fit in. Schools required children to speak English, for example, and many German Russian children remembered being compelled to say the Pledge of Allegiance each day. These early lessons in Americanization and patriotism became especially important with the U.S. entrance into the First World War.

By the 1930s, the German Russians had become influential in the sugar beet communities of northern Colorado. Through their explosive population growth, land ownership, and embrace of Americanization efforts, German Russians entered the agrarian middle class of northern Colorado. By the time the United States entered World War II, they had solidified their identity as uncontested white Americans, demonstrating that identity in the region was flexible and could be employed strategically by ethnic whites.[19] This change was a culmination of many factors, but

[19] Most of the work done on the construction of whiteness in the West has focused on the presence of ethnic Mexicans, and the ways that class and gender have intersected in the making of race. Because northern Colorado did not have established ethnic Mexican communities at the time of the rise of the sugar beet industry, the calculus in making German Russians white did not include the presence of wealthy or socially influential ethnic Mexicans. The presence of ethnic Mexicans would have great importance after, but that is the subject of another chapter in this history. For more on the constructions and contestations of whiteness in the North American West, see Tomás Almaguer, *Racial Fault Lines: The Historical Origins of White Supremacy in California* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994); George J. Sanchez, *Becoming Mexican American: Ethnicity, Culture, and Identity in Chicano Los Angeles, 1900-1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993); Katherine Benton-Cohen, *Borderline Americans: Racial Division and Labor War in the Arizona Borderlands* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009); Sheila McManus, "Mapping the Alberta-Montana Borderlands: Race, Ethnicity, and Gender in Late Nineteenth Century," *Journal of American Ethnic History* 20, no. 3 (Spring 2001): 71-88; Alden T. Vaughn, "From White Man to Redskin: Changing Anglo-American Perceptions of the American Indian," *American Historical Review* 87, no. 4 (October 1982): 917-53; Mai Ngai, *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004); Jason Pierce, *Making the White Man's West: Whiteness and the Creation of the West* (Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 2016); Gary Clayton Anderson, *The Conquest of Texas: Ethnic Cleansing in the Promised Land, 1820-1875* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2005); Elliot West, "Reconstructing Race," in *The Essential West: Collected Essays* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2012); Arnoldo De León, *Racial Frontiers: Africans, Chinese, and Mexicans in Western America, 1848-1890* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2002); Mark M. Carroll, *Homesteads Ungovernable: Families, Sex, Race, and the Law in Frontier Texas, 1823-1860* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2001); David M. Emmons, *Beyond the American Pale: The Irish in the West, 1845-1910*

it was facilitated largely by the actions of women and children.

German Russians had been accustomed to hard agricultural work in their Russian colonies, but becoming sugar beet workers was something else. Working beets was, as one former child beet worker recalled, "about as low as one could get."[20] The work was incredibly hard, the days unbearably long, and, for their troubles, they lived in dilapidated beet shacks and neighborhoods notorious for filth and crime. One woman remembered her mother staring in disbelief at the beet shack that would be their new home and declaring, "Much better in Russia."[21] Many felt that upon their arrival in northern Colorado, they "had to start at the bottom."[22] Seeing few alternatives, families set to work and did the best they could to survive the long, hot days in the fields and longer, leaner, winter nights between harvest and planting.

By the 1920s, the fate of German Russian beet workers had begun to change. After

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(Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2010); Pablo Mitchel, *Coyote Nation: Sexuality, Race, and Conquest in Modernizing New Mexico, 1880-1920* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005); Richard White, "*It's Your Misfortune and None of My Own": A New History of the American West* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991); Elliot West, *The Contested Plains: Indians, Goldseekers, and the Rush to Colorado* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1998); William Deverell, *Whitewashed Adobe: The Rise of Los Angeles and the Remaking of its Mexican Past* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004); Neil Foley, *The White Scourge: Mexicans, Blacks, and Poor Whites in Texas Cotton Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997); Maria Raquél Casas, *Married to a Daughter of the Land: Spanish-Mexican Women and Interethnic Marriage in California, 1820-1880* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 2007); David Gutiérrez, *Walls and Mirrors: Mexican Americans, Mexican Immigrants, and the Politics of Ethnicity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995). For more on the creation of a regional, rather than local, ethnic Mexican community in northern Colorado, see Sarah Deutsch, *No Separate Refuge: Culture, Class, and Gender on an Anglo-Hispanic Frontier in the American Southwest, 1880-1940* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987.)

[20] Fred Ostwald, interview with Timothy J. Kloberdanz, May 14, 1976, Oral Histories, Records of the Sidney Heitman Germans from Russia in Colorado Study Project, Box 13, Folder 8, Archives and Special Collections, Colorado State University, Fort Collins, Colorado.

[21] Lila Schilling, interviewer unknown, October 30, 1981, Oral Histories, Records of the Sidney Heitman Germans from Russia in Colorado Study Project, Box 13, Folder 12, Archives and Special Collections, Colorado State University, Fort Collins, Colorado.

[22] Fred Ostwald interview

working in the fields for a few years, many had saved enough money to purchase farms. When Alice Herman Miller, the woman who wrote a novel in response to *Second Hoeing*, first arrived in Colorado to work beets, she and her family lived in the Jungles neighborhood of Fort Collins, in a shanty "full of mud…and water."[23] After a few years, the family was able to leave the Jungles and settle first as renters into a "new" shack on another farmer's land, and then onto a farm of their own. Once settled on their own land, the family grew beets, but they also had cattle and horses.[24] Farm ownership meant escape from the notorious Jungles and signaled entrance into the northern Colorado farming class. The Miller family's physical movement out of the Jungles represented a corresponding shift in social standing as well.

Americans have long revered the promise of farming. In the eighteenth century, in *Notes on the State of Virginia*, for example, Thomas Jefferson wrote, "Those who labor in the earth are the chosen people of God, if ever he had chosen a people."[25] His was the articulation of a belief that farming led to economic independence and, in turn, political equality. The archetypal yeoman farmer was a cornerstone of Jeffersonian democracy and remained a feature of U.S. politics into the twentieth century. Nearly a century later, the American newspaperman and political reformer Horace Greeley (namesake of Greeley, Colorado), wrote an essay entitled "The Farmer's Calling," arguing that farming "is the vocation which conduces most directly to a reverence for Honesty and Truth."[26] The farmer, he continued, "aspire[s] to success and

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[23] Alice Herman Miller interview.

[24] Ibid.

[25] Thomas Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia* (London: Printed for John Stockdale, 1787), p. 226.

[26] Horace Greeley, "A Farmer's Calling" in *What I Know of Farming: A Series of Brief and Plain Expositions of Critical Agriculture as an Art Based Upon Science* (New York: G.W. Carleton & Co., Publishers, 1870), p.185.

consideration, without sacrificing self-respect, compromising integrity, or ceasing to be essentially and thoroughly a gentleman.[27]" As German Russians became landowners, they stepped into a role already charged with meaning. Historian Neil Foley notes that farming was both "the symbol of and passport to full citizenship in the democracy of rural America."[28] Landownership meant freedom, control of one's destiny, and, for men, an escape from the emasculation of wage labor. It meant cultural entrance into a gendered division of labor that framed farmers' success through "manliness of character," an ethos that obscured the labor of women and children while also relying heavily upon it.[29] This labor, which had been crucial in affording German Russians the means to purchase land, was also important in solidifying their presence in sheer numbers. The reproductive labor of German Russian women had created a northern Colorado sugar beet workforce. By the 1930s, that labor had solidified demographic dominance in the region.

From the Jungles to "Little Moscow": Place and Population in the Making of Whiteness

In the 1920s, white northern Coloradoans had begun to take note of the rapidly expanding German Russian population. As early as 1915, the city of Greeley reported that the German

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[27] Ibid., p.188.

[28] Neil Foley, *The White Scourge: Mexicans, Blacks, and Poor Whites in Texas Cotton Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 10.

[29] Horace Greeley, 186. For more on agricultural gender divisions of labor, see Nancy Grey Osterud, *Bonds of Community: The Loves of Farm Women in Nineteenth-century New York* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991), pp. 139-158; Corlann Gee Bush, "He Isn't Half So Cranky as He Used to Be": Agricultural Mechanization, Comparable Worth, and the Changing Farm Family," in *To Toil the Livelong Day: America's Women at Work, 1780-1980*, ed. Carol Groneman and Mary Beth Norton (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1987), pp. 213-229.

Russian population in the area had increased nearly one hundred percent since 1910.[30] The United States Census indicated that by 1920, there were 21,067 German Russian adults in Colorado, the majority of which lived in the northeastern portion of the state.[31] The average family had eight children, though having eleven or twelve children was not uncommon.[32] Lila Schilling, who was born in Windsor in 1929, recalled that "there were so many of us." At school in Windsor, Schilling estimated that more than half of the kids in school were German Russian.[33] One historian estimates that by the 1930s approximately nine hundred German Russian families lived in Windsor, "a community that appeared predominately German in speech and culture."[34] Given these numbers, the German Russian presence was increasingly visible.

Many northern Colorado communities gained a reputation as German Russian towns. Non-German Russians referred to the town of Windsor, for example, as "Little Moscow," signaling both the presence of German Russians and the lingering view of them as Russians and outsiders. The town boasted three German-language Lutheran churches that catered to German Russian residents as well as wide streets lined with modest, hip-roofed frame houses. The homes' yellow-painted front stoops suggesting "a Volga village translated to the Colorado plains."[35] Though not all towns took on an exclusively German Russian identity, the towns of

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[30] Kenneth Rock, "'Unsere Leute': The Germans from Russia in Colorado," *The Colorado Magazine* 54 (Spring 1977): 154-83; quote on 170.

[31] Candy Hamilton, *Footprints in the Sugar: A History of the Great Western Sugar Company* (Ontario, OR: Hamilton Bates, Caxton Printers, 2009), p. 248.

[32] Sara A. Brown, Robie O. Sargent, and Clara B. Armentrout, *Children Working in the Sugar Beet Fields of Certain Districts of the South Platte Valley Colorado* (New York: National Child Labor Committee, 1925), p.20.

[33] Lila Schilling interview.

[34] Rock, 172-3.

[35] Ibid.

Loveland, Kelim, Johnstown, Milliken, Platteville, Greeley, Fort Collins, Longmont, and Eaton all saw growth of German Russian neighborhoods.[36] As the German Russian population grew, so too did their ownership of sugar beet farms.

For the vast majority of northern Colorado German Russians, purchasing a farm represented a watershed moment. Fred Ostwald, whose family worked beets for three years upon their arrival to Colorado, remembered moving from a single-room shack, where they lived during the years they worked beets as field laborers, to a "nice five-room house" on their new fourteen-acre farm. After that move, Ostwald recalled, things "started looking up" for his family. The Ostwalds quit working beets as hired labor and started their new life as beet farmers.[37] In 1918, the Ostwalds purchased another farm in Fort Morgan. Shortly thereafter, Ostwald married a local woman and they started married life on land given them by his father. Ostwald recalled, "From that point on, we had no want."[38] Stories like Ostwald's were common and farm purchase featured prominantly the narratives of former German Russian beet workers.

German Russians especially relished the memories of moving from the Jungles onto their own farms. After a difficult first year living in a granary and a tent, and another year in a "nice little beet house" in the Jungles, Alice Herman Miller's family wanted to improve their living situation. Her father began looking before winter set in and found forty acres for sale. When he inquired about the land, he found that his family had saved enough money for the $1900 down payment. Miller reminisced, "And that was home. Home, sweet home."[39] A few years later, she

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[36] Ibid.

[37] Fred Ostwald interview.

[38] Ibid.

[39] Alice Herman Miller interview.

married her husband and together they moved to a farm of their own. Explaining the common trajectory for German Russian beet workers, Miller noted that "they started working [beets] and it wasn't too long after that…they were owning [farms] because they knew how to work, and knew how to save…and how to manage things. How to get along on a shoestring. They did. On what they had." Miller's family, along with numerous other German Russian families, had come a long way from the dilapidated beet shacks and rough neighborhoods of the Jungles.

With farm ownership, German Russian families began to climb what some historians call "the agricultural ladder." The "ladder" implied that an individual, generally a young white man, could begin agricultural life as a hired hand. Through hard work, frugality, and grit, he could work his way from field laborer to farm owner, with intermediate rungs progressing from wage laborer, to sharecropper, to tenant farmer, and finally to landowner. Historian Neil Foley notes that the idea of a ladder "was a fundamental tenet of American agriculture from the Civil War to the New Deal."[40] While rising along an agricultural ladder remained illusory for many agricultural workers, northern Colorado German Russian families made the climb.[41] As they became owners of the fields they once worked, they also began to participate in business and local affairs.[42] By 1930, more than 50 percent of Colorado's German Russian population owned

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[40] Neil Foley, *The White Scourge: Mexicans, Blacks, and Poor Whites in Texas Cotton Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), p. 10.

[41] For many groups, the "agricultural ladder" was not accessible. African Americans in the post-Civil War South, for example, faced widespread racial discrimination and largely remained trapped in a cycle of meager earnings and debt that kept them impoverished sharecroppers. As agriculture became increasingly industrialized, the majority of the laborers were migrant workers who made poor wages and faced systemic racism that barred them from purchasing farmland. This topic is explored more extensively in Chapter 3 in the case of northern Colorado sugar beet communities. For more on the promise and illusion of the agricultural ladder, see Lee J. Alston and Kyle D. Kauffman, "Up, Down, and Off the Agricultural Ladder: New Evidence and Implications of Agricultural Mobility for Blacks in the Postbellum South," *Agricultural History* 72, no. 2 (Spring 1998): 263-279.

[42] Rock, p.170.

land and grew sugar beets.[43]

In the 1920s and 1930s, German Russians purchased farms at rapid a rapid pace. At the height of the industry, they represented about 75 percent of all sugar beet farm owners between Sterling and Denver.[44] In 1924, twenty-two years after the first Russian Germans sugar beet workers arrived in Windsor, Colorado, a study of beet farms concluded that German Russians constituted only 53.5 percent of the beet workers in the area, but made up 73.9 percent of the beet farm renters, and 72.7 percent of the beet farm owners.[45] In 1930, German Russians represented 15 to 25 percent of the beet field laborers and accounted for 85 percent of beet farmers in northern Colorado.[46] Although the 1930s saw the ruin of countless American farmers, German Russians, who had generally avoided banks, capitalized on the availability of cheap land. While rural communities throughout the country were shrinking as people fled in search of work, northern Colorado German Russian communities continued to grow during the Depression years. They knew how to live on a shoestring and had always paid in cash. For German Russian sugar beet farmers, the 1930s were simply "another decade of frugality."[47]

As more families worked their way from field laborers to tenant farmers and landowners, they found that they had access to credit. Some German Russian farmers felt that "you really did owe your soul to the company store."[48] But unlike the credit system that kept African American

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[43] Ibid., p.176.

[44] Ibid.

[45] Richard Sallet, *Russian-German Settlements in the United States* (Fargo: North Dakota State University Press, 1974), p. 80.

[46] Ibid.

[47] Rock, p. 181.

[48] Lila Schilling interview.

tenant farmers impoverished in the South, the situation was different for German Russians. Rather than becoming caught in a cycle of systemic racism, debt, and impoverishment, German Russians were able to use credit to better their lot. As more became farmers, they gained an element of legitimacy that meant merchants and banks would lend to them.[49] This flexibility meant that German Russian farmers began to prosper and, eventually, accumulate wealth. While money often went toward expanding landholdings, women also used it to modernize their homes.

"Women Had to Be Tough": Gender, Labor, and White, Middle-Class American Womanhood

Women had always been essential to the success of the family. In order to get by, German Russian women developed skills for stretching the family dollars. "Our people," John Ostwald declared, "were a hard-working, thrifty group of people [who] looked down the road and figured the only way to get somewhere is if they would hang on to some of their earnings."[50] He added that "people seemingly knew how to prepare food without going to a lot of expense," and went on to explain how his mother was the one who made do with what they had so that they could save. Ostwald noted that his mother, and the mothers of other German Russian immigrants, "learned to make…ten different or more kinds of food, using nothing but a potato and flour and milk, and an egg now and then." "We always had enough to eat," Alice Herman Miller explained. Her mother, like those of most of the German Russians they knew, worked beets with the family and on Saturdays baked the bread for the week to come.[51] Women worked

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[49] Ostwald interview.

[50] Fred Ostwald interview.

[51] Alice Herman Miller interview.

beets by day and did mother work by night and weekend. Mothers "came in and did all the other hard stuff that had to be done," Lila Schilling noted. Baking had to be done, laundry had to be washed on the washboard, food for the winter had to be preserved. Mothers also gathered wild asparagus and raised chickens to supplement both their diets and their incomes.[52] According to Schilling, "Women had to be tough."[53] This "toughness," however, started to become a liability. As they began moving to their own farms and improving their social status, it became clear that women and children no longer belonged in the beets. Throughout the country, Americanization reformers cast women who worked "outside" the home as incompatible with the ideals of white, middle-class, American womanhood. Since reformers believed these ideals to be well-suited for all women, they set out to turn working women into homemakers and citizens.[54]

Gender figured prominently in the construction of citizenship.[55] Middle-class white women carved a public space for themselves as experts and reformers and their goals generally revolved around teaching poor, immigrant women and women of color how to become "American" housewives and mothers. Social reformers and Progressives were increasingly

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[52] Lila Schilling interview.

[53] Ibid.

[54] For a discussion on agricultural labor and American womanhood during the early twentieth century, see Yuko Matsumoto, "Gender and American Citizenship—The Construction of 'Our Nation' in the Early Twentieth Century" *Japanese Journal of American Studies* 17 (2006): 143-163.

[55] Robyn Muncy, *Creating a Female Dominion in American Reform, 1890-1935* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994); Molly Ladd-Taylor, *Raising a Baby the Government Way, Mothers' Letters to the Children's Bureau, 1915-1932* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1986), and *Mother-Work: Women, Child Welfare, and the State, 1890-1930* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994); Richard A. Meckel, *Saving the Babies: American Public Health Reform and the Prevention of Infant Mortality, 1850-1929* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989); Kriste Lindenmeyer, *"A Right to Childhood": The U.S. Children's Bureau and Child Welfare, 1912-46* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997).

concerned by the apparent lack of attention poor, immigrant, and ethnic minority women paid to home and children and they saw it as their duty to remake these women, and their children. Through this activism, domesticity moved into the public sphere as a national issue linked with the construction of American citizenship.[56] Reformers considered it a top priority to Americanize immigrant women. As the "home" was the place where citizens were made—both in a reproductive and a civic sense—homemaking took on national importance.[57]

Though there is little evidence of the existence of wholesale reform movements directed at German Russians in general, or German Russian women in particular, it is clear that they began to adopt the ideal of the American wife and homemaker. They actively sought ways to achieve "modern" domesticity by purchasing new home technologies. It gave many German Russian families satisfaction to be able to buy new and "modern" items. One child of a beet farmer remembered that his was the first family in town, "other than the bankers," to purchase a Garland gas stove. Most cookstoves at that time used a mixture of coal, wood, and cow dung as fuel. The older stoves got the job done, but they were dirty, temperamental, and left a smell that lingered in the air. The new gas stoves, by contrast, used bottled gas and "you could turn a knob and there was your gas; no soot, no nothing."[58] The German Russian family purchased the new stove on credit and paid five dollars a month until it was paid off. To many German Russians,

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[56] John F. McClymer, "Gender and the 'American Way of Life': Women in the Americanization Movement," *Journal of American Ethnic History* 10, no. 3 (Spring 1991): 3-20.

[57] George Sanchez, "'Go After the Women': Americanization and the Mexican Immigrant Woman, 1915-1929" (1984), reprinted in Rima D. Apple et. al. eds., *Mothers & Motherhood: Readings in American History* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1997): 475-495.

[58] Solomon Schneider, interviewer unknown, September 9, 1981, Oral Histories, Records of the Sidney Heitman Germans from Russia in Colorado Study Project, Box 13, Folder 13, Archives and Special Collections, Colorado State University, Fort Collins, Colorado.

acquiring items like stoves, indoor plumbing, and telephones made them like the elite families. Consumption became a symbol of the entrance into a new life as middle-class Americans. As historian Yuko Matsumoto notes, the "Americanization movement and home economics movement along with the developing consumer market made both Americans and immigrants notice that sharing the American dream of the modern American home was one of the requisites for membership in [cultural citizenship.]"[59] German Russian women participated in the growing consumer culture to better their lives and their ability to do so reflected their changing social status.

Historians have long studied the link between consumerism and citizenship in working-class immigrant communities. In urban and industrial regions, mass culture in the 1920s and 1930s kept ethnic communities, as Lizabeth Cohen puts it, "tied to, rather than unmoor[ed] from" their ethnic and working-class communities.[60] Cohen's study of working-class Chicago takes aim at the idea that participation in mass culture led simply to assimilation of immigrant and ethnic communities. Instead, it united them and allowed for the construction of powerful labor unions. Consumerism and mass culture were important in the lives of German Russians, too, but instead of solidifying an ethnic and working-class identity, it allowed them to melt into the white majority of northern Colorado. Unlike immigrant communities in industrial Chicago, in the case of northern Colorado German Russians, consumer culture did contribute to the abandonment of an oppositional ethnic- or class-based identity.[61] As their farms prospered, their

[59] Matsumoto, p. 153.

[60] Lizabeth Cohen's *Making a New Deal: Industrial Workers in Chicago, 1919-1939* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. xxv.

[61] For other examples of agricultural labor and identity formation, see Gunther Peck, *Reinventing Free Labor: Padrone and Immigrant Workers in the North American West, 1880-1930* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Nayan Shah, *Stranger Intimacy: Contesting Race, Sexuality,*

social status improved and they began experiencing the benefits of citizenship. As they continued to assert cultural citizenship through consumerism, their claims to an ethnic identity began to fade.[62]

"I Didn't Think of Myself as Different": Americanization of German Russian Children

A different form of consumption, landownership, and the prosperity that came with it, was crucial in the transition of German Russians from an ethnic minority to the white majority. Still, another important element was the influence that school children had on their community. The children of German Russian immigrants were key drivers in transforming German Russians into middle-class, white Americans because most of them desired assimilation. In places like Chicago, young people became "more American," but ethnic and class identity did not suddenly fall away.[63] In northern Colorado, however, children began to push against their parents and grandparents' desires to speak, dress, and behave like German Russians.

Before World War I, most German Russian children navigated between two worlds: home life and school. Although she was born in Windsor, Colorado, and therefore a U.S. citizen,

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and the Law in the North American West (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011); William Bauer, *We Were All Like Migrant Workers Here: Work, Community, and Memory on California's Round Valley Reservation, 1850-1941* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009).

[62] For more on the influence of U.S. consumer culture on European immigrants, see Elizabeth Ewen, *Immigrant Women in the Land of Dollars* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1985); Andrew Heinze, *Adapting to Abundance* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990); Susan A. Glenn, *Daughters of the Shtetl* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990); Kathy Peiss, *Cheap Amusements: Working Women and Leisure in Turn-of-the-Century New York* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986); Nan Enstad, *Ladies of Labor, Girls of Adventure: Working Women, Popular Culture, and Labor Politics at the Turn of the Twentieth Century* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999).

[63] Lizabeth Cohen, *Making a New Deal.*

Lila Schilling still recalled viewing herself and her peers as "immigrant kids." She knew she was regarded as different in some way, but she also noted, "I didn't think of myself as being different."[64] Many German Russian children felt this duality. Their parents' sugar beet farms were prospering, which allowed them to spend more time at school. German Russian children were no longer beet workers. They were becoming middle-class American kids and their desire to assimilate influenced the entire community.

In the past, German Russian children had been expected to work hard for the good of the family. They were, as one German Russian immigrant called it, "a people of the land," and children generally spent more time working the family farm than they did in school.[65] Most children in the German Russian colonies received educational training, but it was usually parochial, and often secondary to farm work. Only the wealthiest families sent their children away for an education outside of the village. Once in Colorado, family labor remained the norm and children worked beets along with their parents. Beet worker children missed up to two-thirds of the school year. Work absences combined with language barriers meant that many of these children dropped out before they graduated from high school.[66] As time went on, however, German Russian ideas about putting children to work in the beet fields began to change.

German Russian parents who arrived to work beets tended to view education as secondary to ensuring the financial stability of the family, but their children, especially those born in the United States, began to push back against that idea. Lila Shilling, who was born to

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[64] Lila Schilling interview.

[65] Fred Ostwald interview.

[66] Magdalena Schichenmayer, interview with Timothy J. Kloberdanz, May 21, 1976, Oral Histories, Records of the Sidney Heitman Germans from Russia in Colorado Study Project, Box 13, Folder 11, Archives and Special Collections, Colorado State University, Fort Collins, Colorado.

German Russian parents in 1929, highlighted the tension between the older generation and the new, noting,

> I don't think [education] particularly entered [parents'] minds. I think that they were so concerned about just making a living when they first got here I think that was their preliminary concern—to improve their lot and one of the ways to do that was to have everyone cooperating and working, and if that meant pulling you out of school that's what happened.[67]

Children were essential to the success of the family. In the eyes of parents, their children's wage labor ensured survival; it was, therefore, more valuable than an education.

Children felt compelled at home to work beets, but they also felt pressure at school. Schilling recalled a moment when a teacher advised her to drop her algebra class because of falling grades due to work-related absences:

> When I was taken out of school to work in the beet harvest I remember my algebra teacher when I came back. I had gotten my first report card and then I'd gotten a C in algebra…I remember my teacher Miss Wolf saying, "I recommend that you give this up, because you just can't get those grades up and you've missed so much school, and there is no one that can really help you."

Hurt and humiliated, Schilling committed to getting her grades up. She remembered "sitting out in the kitchen and big old country farm table, at night working on my algebra and I mean there wasn't anyone could help me with that. I really was kind of on an island so to speak. It was really, it was sink or swim for me." The late nights paid off, because she brought her C up to an A. She was proud of her efforts, recalling it "was such an accomplishment for me…a real challenge. And I loved it. I loved school. It was someplace where you might excel."[68] Schilling also recalled a subtle shift in the way her parents approached education.

As German Russian families expanded, their take on child labor began to change. With

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[67] Lila Schilling interview.

[68] Ibid.

their first children, there were "lots of other things to overcome before they could think about education."[69] However, with each child, Lila Schilling's parents became a little more aware "that education could be very important," that it could "further the livelihood of your child and improve their lot in life." German Russian parents and children began to adopt a more twentieth-century, middle-class, white American view of education.

Schools became a place where immigrant children learned dominant American values, particularly American gender norms. Teaching girls middle-class femininity was especially prominent. Lila Shilling, for example, spoke of taking an etiquette class in school where she and the other girls in the class learned how to set up tables with "cute little dishes," how to place the flatware, and where and when to use a salad fork. "I just thought it was so neat," she remembered, adding that she simply "loved that class."[70] Alice Herman Miller described learning how to sew when she began school in Fort Collins, freeing herself from the felt boots and kerchiefs that she felt enrobed her in ethnic otherness. She remembered deciding to sew her own clothes after being singled out for her clothing and being called "Roosian."[71] In Fort Collins, she felt she learned not only about being American but also about being an American girl. Girls, they learned, should be ladies and homemakers—not workers.

Early twentieth-century Americanization projects had long been focused on the role of women and girls in assimilation. Since the late nineteenth century, upper middle-class Anglo American women had believed that it was their moral and civic duty to teach immigrants and

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[69] Ibid.

[70] Ibid.

[71] Alice Herman Miller interview.

women and children of color the importance of "American" gender norms.[72] These activists' actions were rooted in their "culturally specific ideas about proper family life and children's needs," but also sometimes emerged out of a genuine concern for the welfare of women and children.[73] Reformers believed that the plight of immigrant and racial ethnic women stemmed from patriarchal power in immigrant communities, and they hoped to limit that power with "the seemingly more benign—and maternal—authority of the state."[74] Reformers believed that Americanizing immigrant women would be an effective way to instill loyalty to the United States.

World War I and the End of German Russian Identity

When the U.S. entered the Great War in 1917, German Russian parents and their children would be forced to join their children in pledging their allegiance to the U.S. flag. The moment Germany became a U.S. enemy abroad, German Americans—German immigrants, American citizens with German ancestry, and Germans from Russia alike—saw intimidation and violence

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[72] See Robyn Muncy, *Creating a Female Dominion in American Reform, 1890-1935*; Gwendolyn Mink, *The Wages of Motherhood: Inequality in the Welfare State, 1917-1942* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1995). For examples in the North American West, see Peggy Pascoe, *Relations of Rescue: The Search for Female Moral Authority in the American West, 1874-1939* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991); Jane E. Simonsen, *Making Home Work: Domesticity and Native American Assimilation in the American West, 1860-1919* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006); George Sanchez, "'Go After the Women': Americanization and the Mexican Immigrant Woman, 1915-1929," 475-495; Lisa E. Emmerich, "Save the Babies!: American Indian Women, Assimilation Policy, and Scientific Motherhood, 1912-1918" in Elizabeth Jameson and Susan Armitage, *Writing the Range: Race, Class, and Culture in the Women's West* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1997); Vicki Ruiz, *From Out of the Shadows: Mexican Women in Twentieth-Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008).

[73] Ladd-Taylor, p.5.

[74] Ibid.

on the home front. When the U.S. formally entered the First World War, any association with German heritage became dangerous.

Before the war, German Americans were a highly visible and generally well-regarded minority community in the United States. Millions of Germans had immigrated to the U.S. during the nineteenth century, and by 1910, the U.S. Census determined that 9 percent of the American population was of German ancestry.[75] Before World World I, most Americans considered Germans well suited for assimilation.[76] Germans in America remained bound by a love of German language and culture, but, until the war, this was not widely considered a sign of disloyalty to the U.S. Immensely proud of their heritage, Germans formed innumerable social clubs and organizations and held considerable economic and cultural power in many of the larger cities where they had settled. In short, from the time they had arrived in the U.S., Germans in America were able to claim a German identity without facing much in the way of collective discrimination. That all changed with the sinking of the passenger ship *RMS Lusitania* on May 7, 1915. The German government's decision to torpedo a civilian ocean liner convinced many Americans that Germans were inherently barbaric. It did not take long before paranoia set in and the assault on public Germanness in the U.S. began.

After the U.S. entered the war, the federal government began to advocate hostility towards both Germany *and* German Americans. Many Americans still favored neutrality and were critical of President Woodrow Wilson's decision to become a belligerent in the war. In order to drum up support, the U.S. began disseminating anti-German propaganda that depicted

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[75] U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Thirteenth Census of the United States Taken in the Year 1910* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1913), 194.

[76] John Higham, *Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism, 1860-1925*, 2nd ed. (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2002), pp.194-233.

Germans as animal-like and spread fear that German spies and sabotage were afoot. Congress passed the Espionage Act and the Trading with the Enemy Act in 1917 and the Sedition Act of 1918, which criminalized criticism of the U.S., its flag, or its armed forces. Anyone found in violation of these laws could be fined and imprisoned. For their part, German Americans were expected to prove their loyalty by making public oaths of allegiance to the United States, denouncing the Fatherland, purchasing Liberty Bonds, and demonstrating a "patriotic animosity toward everything German."[77] Taking a cue from the government, ordinary citizens formed vigilante mobs intent on forcing German Americans to "prove" their patriotism by kissing the American flag or reciting the pledge of allegiance. Others received more violent tests of loyalty.[78]

Stories of German Americans being beaten, run out of town, or even tarred and feathered circulated around the country, though perhaps the most tragic incidence of anti-German vigilantism was the lynching of Robert Prager. Born in Dresden, Germany, in 1888, Prager immigrated to the United States in 1905 at the age of nineteen. He drifted from place to place and finally settled in St. Louis, Missouri, in 1914. Prager registered for the draft and attempted to join the Navy after the U.S. declared war against Germany in 1917, but he was blind in one eye and dismissed for medical reasons. Prager eventually found employment in a coal mine near Collinsville, Illinois. Almost immediately, he gained a reputation as "stubbornly argumentative, given to Socialist doctrines," and he "looked like a spy" to the other coal miners.[79] He was

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[77] See Russell A. Kazal, *Becoming Old Stock: The Paradox of German-American Identity* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004), p. 171-194; Christopher Capozzola, *Uncle Same Wants You: World War I and the Making of the Modern American Citizen* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008).

[78] For more on state-based coercion and the ways in which local mobs and community groups were used to exert it, see Capozzola, *Uncle Sam Wants You.*

[79] Frederick C. Luke, *Bonds of Loyalty: German Americans and World War I* (Dekalb: Northern Illinois

denied membership in the United Mine Workers union for being a "spy and a liar," which prompted him to post handbills denying the allegations and declaring his loyalty to the U.S. Some of his fellow miners grew enraged by the handbills and on April 4, 1918, a group of twelve seized Prager from his home, stripped him, and forced him "to march through the streets of Collinsville barefoot and draped in the American flag."[80] The police took Prager into custody for protection, but the mob stormed the jail and resumed their death march, leading Prager to the outskirts of town, where they summarily hanged him from an elm tree.

Prager's death signaled that it was violence, not patriotism, that the bloodthirsty mobs desired. Before his grisly hanging, Prager was reported to have declared, "All right boys, go ahead and kill me, but wrap me in the flag when you bury me."[81] Word of the lynching spread, as newspapers circulated the story throughout the country. Prager's murder came to serve as an example of the perils of public Germanness in wartime America. Germans across the U.S. became targets, and the Colorado German Russian community was no exception.

Though they had immigrated from Russia, many German Russians felt superior to the Russian people and resented an association with them. Some German Russians thought that Russians were undesirable people from a detestable nation who were unintelligent, lazy, and crooked.[82] Like the Americans who taunted them for being "Rooshians," many German Russians

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Press, 1974), p.4.

[80] Donald R. Hickey, "The Prager Affair: A Study in Wartime Hysteria," *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society* 62, no. 2 (Summer 1969): 117-134, quote on 119.

[81] Ibid., 122.

[82] Amalie Klein, interview with Timothy J. Kloberdanz, September 24, 1985, Oral Histories, Records of the Sidney Heitman Germans from Russia in Colorado Study Project, Box 12, Folder 14, Archives and Special Collections, Colorado State University, Fort Collins, Colorado.

believed Russian to be a dirty word. German Russians had German names, spoke German dialects, ate German food, and recognized German traditions. Culturally, German Russians identified as German. If asked of their nationality, many would reply that they were German.[83] It was perhaps unsurprising, then, that when war broke out in 1914, many German Russians would sympathize, at least to some degree, with Germany.[84] As anti-German fervor swept through the U.S., the German Russian community faced suspicion, threats, and violence.

Anti-German rhetoric was in some ways an extension of the nativist critique of so-called "hyphenated Americanism." Since the 1880s, prominent national and local politicians had been advocating a homogenized American identity. In 1915, former president Theodore Roosevelt, for example, decried the acceptance of "dual nationality" of "hyphenated Americanism," arguing that there was "no room in this country" for it. He added, "The only man who is a good American is the man who is an American and nothing else"[85] To vote "as a German-American, an Irish-American, or an English-American is to be a traitor to American institutions."[86] Local politicians followed the lead of those on the national stage to disseminate anti-German rhetoric and actions.

In 1917, the governor of Colorado, Julius Caldeen Gunter, instituted a State Council of Defense as part of a national program to oversee the state's contributions to the war effort. Within the council was a committee dedicated to the assimilation and Americanization of immigrants and "hyphenated Americans" in the state. According to historian Lyle Dorsett, the

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[83] Solomon Schneider interview.

[84] Sallet, p. 40.

[85] "Roosevelt Bars the Hyphenated" *New York Times*, October 13, 1915.

[86] Ibid.

mission of the group was to ensure that every person in Colorado could "speak English, have a basic knowledge of American history and government, and be an active supporter of the war effort."[87] This hyper-nationalism fanned the flames of fear, and individuals with German surnames lived in terror of government surveillance, arrest, and mob violence. Although most German Russians had no ties to the German government, their cultural similarities, desire to remain outside mainstream American culture, and apparent loyalties to Germany meant that they became suspect as potential collaborators and spies.

Beginning as early as May of 1917, the *Denver Post* and other Colorado newspapers started reporting on alleged plots of pro-German conspirators. The anxiety regarding an attack on food and water supply was so great, for example, that the governor deployed the Colorado National Guard to patrol the Denver Union Water Company reservoir and the Colorado Power Company. The *Denver Post* told of a "Hun plot" uncovered by the Denver police that purportedly meant to attack a local creamery. There were warnings to avoid sausages, frequently German made, because of the threat that they might contain glass. The *Boulder Daily Camera* declared that "there are mines laid and the power of one individual to touch off [an]...explosion is terrible." It was even rumored that agents were recruiting Mexican migrant workers in Weld County in a plot to join the Germans in an attack against the U.S.[88] Most of the claims made by Colorado newspapers were without merit, yet this did little to assuage the fears of German Americans in the face of mounting anti-German rhetoric and violence.

Early on, Colorado German Americans attempted to thwart depictions of them as traitors

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[87] Lyle Dorsett, "The Ordeal of Colorado's Germans During World War I," *Colorado Magazine* 51 (Fall 1974): 277-293; p. 292.

[88] An analysis of these examples of anti-German rhetoric is found in Lyle W. Dorsett, "The Ordeal of Colorado's Germans during World War 1," *The Colorado Magazine* 51 (Fall 1974): 276-335, quote on 281.

and spies, publicly declaring their loyalty and patriotism. Godfrey Schirmer, the German-born president of the German American Trust Company, took out a full-page advertisement in the *Denver Post* declaring the bank free of any foreign investments. It reassured readers that the bank was founded and patronized by American citizens with "unswerving loyalty to American policies, American institutions and American patriotism." German Americans hoped to reassure the American public that their hearts "vibrate[d] with the true spirit of Americanism."[89] Other Colorado German Americans attempted to proclaim their loyalty in myriad ways. They made speeches, formed patriotism clubs, and, like Schirmer, penned advertisements and editorials in local newspapers. In April of 1917, Schirmer managed to get Colorado's U.S.Senator John Shafroth to read a statement on the patriotism of German Americans in the U.S. West so that it would be entered into the *Congressional Record*.[90] Although they tried to stem the tide of anti-German sentiment by proving their love of the U.S., many German Americans, and German Russians, also remained committed their heritage. This proved a dangerous and costly decision.

German Russians in northern Colorado, like other people of German descent around the country, found that any association with the German language could be perilous. German Russians spoke an older form of German than that spoken in contemporary Germany, but it was close enough to associate them with the enemy. Many German Americans, including German Russians, circulated German-language newspapers. After the start of the war, the U.S. government banned several German-language newspapers and those sent via post were heavily monitored. Even the newspapers that were not censored, however, were suspect. John Shulz, a young man at the time of the first World War, remembered a time when neighbors saw him

[89] Dorsett, p. 279.

[90] Ibid., p. 279-80.

reading a German-language newspaper. They confronted him, telling him he had "better quit reading that German paper if [he] knew what was good" for him. Shulz pushed back, saying "As long as this paper is allowed to go through the U.S. Mail, I'm going to read it," adding, "which I did."[91] Newspapers were not the only written material that drew the attention of anti-German activists. Books were also a popular target, and Fred Ostwald of Fort Morgan, Colorado, remembered at least once incidence of book burning.[92] The preparatory school for the University of Colorado in Boulder also documented a book burning rally in which members of the community were encouraged to throw into the flames any books written in German or expressing pro-German sentiments.[93]

If the written language was seen as subversive, the spoken language became outright treasonous. German speakers around the country began to fear using their native language in public. In Colorado, Mary Lind recalled that at the local grocery store, the owner indicated to her that she and her children were not to "talk with anybody." He then told her to get her groceries and leave.[94] Newer German Russian immigrants who could not yet speak any English were "chase[d] out of town."[95] Though new immigrants may have been easy targets, the paranoia spread, and pitted neighbor against neighbor.

During this chaotic time men were threatened and beaten, often by people they had

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[91] John Schulz, interview with Dennis Means, October 7, 1975, Oral Histories, Records of the Sidney Heitman Germans from Russia in Colorado Study Project, Box 13, Folder 15, Archives and Special Collections, Colorado State University, Fort Collins, Colorado.

[92] Fred Ostwald interview.

[93] Dorsett, p. 287.

[94] Mary Lind, interviewer unknown, January 19, 1982, Oral Histories, Records of the Sidney Heitman Germans from Russia in Colorado Study Project, Box 13, Folder 3, Archives and Special Collections, Colorado State University, Fort Collins, Colorado.

[95] Ibid.

otherwise known without incident. People began to suspect their German Russian neighbors of being German spies. It seemed to fit the narrative—these were people whom many already viewed as odd. Their Old World customs and Germanic language took on a sinister note as people began to wonder if perhaps these quiet, frugal people were actually agents of the Kaiser. Farmers often helped one another with big jobs like threshing, sharing machinery and spreading the workload at the end of the harvest. These routine interactions were suddenly freighted with fear and suspicion.

One northern Colorado farmer found himself in a situation like this. John Schulz was born in Nebraska to German Russian parents in 1899 and moved to Holyoke, Colorado, to farm in 1902. Schulz was helping his neighbors thresh one day in 1917 when he came up against the rising anti-German sentiment. Schulz later recounted the story:

> The fella that we was threshing for, he was a neighbor and I neighbored with him quite a bit, and usually, the thresher stayed for supper. Just before suppertime he come around and he says, "John, if I were you I'd go on home. Not that I don't want you to eat supper here but they're talking about working you over tonight." He says, "I'd advise you to go home for supper."

John finished his job, thinking the situation would pass. He continued:

> Well, I got to thinking about that and it just works me up so that I made up my mind that I was going to stay for supper. Before I went in to eat I tied my team up and fed them a little bit. I had a pocketknife that had a pretty good-sized blade on it. I opened that up and stuck it in my pocket open. I went in and sit down at the table. I made up my mind that if they were going to start in on me I was going to get one or two before they got me.[96]

He concluded, "We had been pretty good neighbors until the war started, and then they wasn't too good a neighbor." The war heightened the precarious situation rural Colorado German Russians found themselves in as a white ethnic minority. Rampant anti-German hysteria reconfigured the boundaries of neighborly interaction.

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[96] John Schulz interview.

Violence directed toward German Russians was intended to uphold community norms in support of the war. In one instance, a group of men from Sutton, Colorado, planned to "work over" one immigrant for not adhering to the wartime practice of purchasing livestock in order to donate to the Red Cross. One farmer would donate a calf or a pig to a fundraiser, another farmer would purchase it, and the proceeds, as well as the animal, would be donated to the Red Cross. The Red Cross would then donate the animal back to be auctioned and the process would start all over until each farmer had "won" the auction and donated livestock. This time, however, a man named Bill Meisburn chose not to participate, a decision that angered some of the other men present. The men began talking about their plans to pay Meisburn a visit that evening to "take care of him" and "teach him how to refuse to buy that calf." A fellow German Russian overheard the scheme, however, and warned Meisburn. Fortunately, the schemers never followed through on their threat and Meisburn escaped unscathed.[97] The incident was a reminder, however, that any appearance of nonconformity could be used as proof of pro-German sentiments and declared treasonous by self-appointed patriots. As a matter of self-preservation, then, northern Colorado's German Russian population began to cast aside their Germanness and live as white Americans. The path to whiteness was not entirely complete after the war, however. In the 1920s, German Russians became the target of the Ku Klux Klan (KKK), which was gaining influence in Colorado.

In the Shadow of the Klan: German Russians and the KKK

The KKK gained prominence in Colorado during the 1920s and, for a short period, had a

[97] Ibid.

significant hold on local politics. Under the leadership of Grand Dragon John Galen Lock, the Klan set out to establish political and economic control over several Colorado cities.[98] A number of prominent politicians in the 1920s were Klansmen or openly endorsed Klan activities. Clarence Morley, governor of Colorado from 1925 to 1927, for example, belonged to the KKK, as did Denver mayor Benjamin Stapleton. The Colorado Klan maintained a presence in several of the larger cities and towns, including Denver, Colorado Springs, Cañon City, and Pueblo. It pursued a largely anti-Catholic platform. Historian Rubén Donato notes, however, that the agricultural areas of northern Colorado also had a significant Klan presence, arguing that sugar beet towns, which hosted some of the state's largest Klan rallies, parades, and membership drives, constituted one of the key areas of Colorado Klan activity.[99] The 1920s were a period of transition for German Russians. Many still labored in beet fields and though their social status was changing, they lived and worked in a gray area between ethnic minority and white American. The Klan used this gray area to terrorize German Russians and ethnic Mexicans alike.

Much of Colorado's Ku Klux Klan activity manifested itself as anti-Catholicism, but its roots were planted deep in the state's labor unrest of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Radical labor movements and Populist activism had rippled through Colorado during the 1880s and 1890s, and it continued into the new century. The most notorious of the labor wars was the Ludlow Massacre, during which, on April 19, 1914, members of the National Guard, who had been paid by Colorado Fuel & Iron, shot at and set fire to a tent colony of striking coal

[98] Robert Alan Goldberg, *Hooded Empire: The Ku Klux Klan in Colorado* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1981).

[99] Rubén Donato, *Mexicans and Hispanos in Colorado Schools and Communities, 1920-1960* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2007), p. 49.

miners and their families.[100] The incident killed women and children as well as men and it sparked a massive wave of public outrage. Though it was the most deadly, it was but one of the many labor battles that took place in the early twentieth century.[101] As the state, like the nation, worked to deal with the unrest, a new wave of immigrants from eastern and southern Europe fueled the nativism of anxious and paranoid whites. The Klan stepped in to exploit the cynicism and hopelessness of the white working class.[102] During the 1920s, the Klan directed its terror mostly towards Catholics, Jews, and Mexicans. It also, briefly, targeted German Russians.

The Colorado Klan was intertwined with Progressive social initiatives and took issue with the rates at which child sugar beet workers missed school. Klansmen took up the cause of compulsory education, though their position had little to do with child welfare. The KKK

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[100] See Thomas Andres, *Killing for Coal: America's Deadliest Labor War* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008); Scott Martelle, *Blood Passion: The Ludlow Massacre and Class War in the American West* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2007); Karin Larkin and Randall H. McGuire, eds., *The Archeology of Class War: The Colorado Coalfield Strike of 1913-1914* (Boulder: University of Colorado Press, 2009).

[101] Howard Zinn, Dana Frank, Robin D.G. Kelly, eds., *Three Strikes: Miners, Musicians, Salesgirls, and the Fighting Spirit of Labor's Last Century* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2001); Joseph A. McCartin, *Labor's Great War: The Struggle for Industrial Democracy and the Origins of Modern American Labor Relations, 1912-1921* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997); Zaragosa Vargas, *Labor Rights are Civil Rights: Mexican American Workers in Twentieth Century America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005); Bruce Watson, *Bread and Roses: Mills, Migrants, and the Struggle for the American Dream* (New York: Viking Press, 2005); Kimberley Phillips, *AlabamaNorth: African-American Migrants, Community, and Working-Class Activism in Cleveland, 1915-1945* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1999); Paul Buhle, *Taking Care of Business: Samuel Gompers, George Meany, Lane Kirkland, and the Tragedy of American Labor* (New York: Monthy: Monthly Review Press, 1999). For more on labor conflict in the North American West, see Elizabeth Jameson, *All that Glitters: Class, Conflict, and Community in Cripple Creek* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1998); Katherine Benton-Cohen, *Borderline Americans: Racial Division and Labor War in the Arizona Borderlands* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011); Victoria Johnson, *How Many Machine Guns Does It Take To Cook One Meal?: The Seattle and San Francisco General Strikes* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2008).

[102] Phil Goldstein, *In the Shadow of the Klan: When the KKK Ruled Denver, 1920-1926* (Denver: New Social Publications, 2006), p. 4.

advocated instilling "Americanism" in immigrant, Catholic, and Jewish children.[103] In practice, the compulsory education laws the Klan supported ended the parochial school system and involved as much intimidation as it did indoctrination.[104]

Several immigrants remembered anti-German Russian Klan activity in their northern Colorado communities. Anna Miller, who lived in Sterling, recalled an incident when "thousands of hooded Klansmen" paraded through town, marching on foot or riding four abreast on horseback. They carried torches and all except one were dressed in the signature white robes. They were lead by an individual in red satin. One German Russian family spotted their landlord not by his face, which was covered in the tall white hood, but by the horse he was riding.[105] Fred Ostwald recalled the "clandestine affair" of the Klan, stating that he knew many of the members—when they were meeting and where they held their secret events. Both Ostwald's memory of the Klan's anti-German Russian tactics and his intimate knowledge of their activities sheds light on the changing position of his ethnic community.

Ostwald remembered the KKK harassing German Russians, but he noted that Klansmen eventually left his community alone. He thought that over time they "became aware there was no risk involved with our people."[106] Although the Klan first saw the German Russians as outsiders, members slowly came to embrace them as "loyal Americans." Ostwald contended that the people he had known in the Klan "were fine upstanding people [who] were caught up in the emotions of

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[103] Ibid., p. 255.

[104] Ibid.

[105] Anna Miller, interviewer unknown, January 25, 1976, Oral Histories, Records of the Sidney Heitman Germans from Russia in Colorado Study Project, Box 13, Folder 4, Archives and Special Collections, Colorado State University, Fort Collins, Colorado.

[106] Fred Ostwald interview

the moment when they were concerned about this country."[107] The Klan's gradual acceptance offers a glimpse into the changing ethnic and social status of Colorado German Russians.

Not only were they no longer viewed as outsiders, but they also actively abandoned an ethnic identity in order to secure belonging in the white agrarian middle class. According to Lila Schilling, "when you feel that kind of discrimination or that kind of resentment...well, you're going to try very hard since you don't really look that different you're going to try really hard to kind of put that in your…background."[108] Schilling, like other German Russians in her community, recognized the whiteness of their skin allowed them to abandon the identity that had once marked them as outsiders.

"When You're Discriminated Against": The Racialization of Ethnic Mexican Beet Workers

In the face of anti-German sentiment, many German Russians, like other Germans and German Americans in the United States, traded their ethnic identity in exchange for a life as, simply, white Americans. The literal whiteness of their skin made this metamorphosis possible. But they also constructed a racial and class difference between themselves and ethnic Mexicans, who were increasingly the majority of sugar beet farm workers. Like ethnic whites throughout the country, German Russians solidified their whiteness in part by emphasizing their difference from other racialized communities.[109] By the time German Russians had become the dominant

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[107] Ibid.

[108] Lila Schilling interview.

[109] For examples of how Irish and Italian communities constructed whiteness by contributing to the racialization of African Americans see David R. Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class* (London; New York: Verso, 1991), pp. 93-162, and *Working Towards Whiteness: How America's Immigrants Became White: The Strange Journey from Ellis Island to*

group of sugar beet farmers in northern Colorado, they were in need of a workforce. The laborers who stepped in to fill this need were ethnic Mexicans who migrated from southern Colorado, New Mexico, and Texas. Lila Schilling noted, "When you're discriminated against I think you sometimes turn around and do that very same thing to other groups." Just so did German Russians distinguish themselves from ethnic Mexican sugar beet workers.[110]

In some ways, German Russian sugar beet farmers saw clear links between themselves and the ethnic Mexican workers they employed. By the 1920s, ethnic Mexican beet workers migrated and worked in family groups, just as the German Russians once had, because that was "the way that worked."[111] German Russians knew what it was like to live in dreary beet shacks on the outskirts of town and what it was like to feel like outsiders. The comparisons stopped there, however, as German Russians believed they had worked themselves out of their dire situation. They could not understand why ethnic Mexican workers did not follow in their boot steps. As Fred Ostwald professed,

> This idea of discrimination is being overplayed. Because we've come through the identical situation as the Mexican people....When we first come to this country there was a form of discrimination, you see, because we had...to work right down here at the most menial of jobs. You couldn't get [anything else.] But there's a certain something. We were not tied to our past as much as our Spanish people were. We have Spanish people living in the United States earlier than our white settlers, you see? But they're hanging on to the Mexican-Spanish traditions, customs, language. There's no thought, seemingly, on the part of the majority of those people to ever fully become integrated into our society. They want to retain their society within the American society. And in this sense, you see, they are placing themselves into a position where they cannot be integrated like they should be. There must be a willingness on the part of the people to become integrated. Sure, I pride myself on the fact that I speak German, and quite fluently. Never

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the Suburbs (New York: Basic Books, 2005); Caroline Waldron Merithew, "Making the Italian Other: Blacks, Whites, and the Inbetween in the 1895 Spring Valley, Illinois, Race Riot" in *Are Italians White? How Race is Made in America*, ed. Jennifer Guglielmo and Salvatore Salerno (New York: Routledge, 2003), pp. 79-97.

[110] Lila Schilling interview.

[111] Ibid.

> forget it. But I don't hang on to the German and neglect the English. I was proud when I came home at the age of nine and I'd passed from the first grade into the second. Before very long...[I] wanted to become [American], [I] wanted to become integrated, and with this, don't you see, along with a little spark of ambition, feeling that with the acquisition of property, we would be more acceptable. To be accepted within the integrated society. Now apparently this little thing is missing on the part of the Spanish-American people.

What was notable about Ostwald's words was that, though he was a farm owner himself, he spoke about the hardship ethnic Mexican beet workers faced as part of a natural progression to American citizenship and belonging. Even if ethnic Mexicans had ancestral claim to North American land as people who had occupied the region long before Euro-American settlers, letting go of cultural and ethnic heritage was essential to move up and out of the beets. With this statement, Ostwald demonstrated the belief that as long as they refused to "integrate" themselves, ethnic Mexicans would remain racialized others. In the meantime, German Russians would declare themselves the rightful heirs to the land.

By the time of the Second World War, the image of German Russians as a distinct ethnic group in northern Colorado sugar beet communities was but a distant memory. Magdalena Scheichenmayer, of Bethune, Colorado, recalled that by the 1940s, there was "not anything German anymore."[112] The churches had stopped offering services in German. There was no German school for the children, or German clubs or social groups for the adults. Children refused to speak German at home.[113] Soloman Schneider, born to German Russian parents in 1922, remembers learning English and "accept[ing] that [it] was the language I lived in and I never considered myself a foreigner." Schneider emphasized that he was a "little American kid," who "just happened...to [speak] German first."[114] By the end of World War II, many

[112] Magdalena Scheichenmayer interview.

[113] Alice Herman Miller interview.

[114] Soloman Schneider interview.

Coloradoans of German Russians ancestry felt "on top of the world."[115] They had climbed the agricultural ladder and become white, middle-class Americans in the process.

German Russians were not alone in abandoning German identity. Ethnic Germans who had relatively recently immigrated from Germany or were descended from German immigrants had also remade their ethnic identity. Part of this was due to the anti-German activities of the First World War. But German Americans throughout the country also re-fashioned themselves as "old stock" Americans—that is, those whose European ancestors had immigrated to America during the nineteenth century or earlier and had racial, religious, and class similarities to middle-class white Anglo Saxon Protestant Americans.[116]

Although Colorado's German Russians experienced similar pressures during World War I to abandon their German identity, their arrival as eastern European immigrants during the early twentieth century largely disqualified them from the "old stock" category. As they walked a line between their Germanic and Russian roots, they had a more tenuous tie to American whiteness and therefore even greater incentive to abandon their ethnic identity altogether, which they largely did. Their commitment to reshaping their ethnic identity went so far that it was not uncommon by the mid-twentieth century for people of German Russian descent to meet and not realize they shared a common ancestry. When Lila Schilling was courting her future husband in the 1940s, for instance, she noted, "It's a funny thing though, we didn't really realize that [we were both German Russian] when we were going with one another. You know, that was not

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[115] Amalie Kelin, interview with Timothy J. Kloberdanz, September 21, 1925, Oral Histories, Records of the Sidney Heitman Germans from Russia in Colorado Study Project, Box 12, Folder 14, Archives and Special Collections, Colorado State University, Fort Collins, Colorado.

[116] See Russell A. Kazal, *Becoming Old Stock: The Paradox of German-American Identity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004).

something that came up in conversation."[117] German Russian identity had been all but erased.

Conclusion

In the early twentieth-century sugar beet farming industry, not all seeds were allowed to grow. Because crowded plants produced less sugar, the crops were thinned early in the season. All but the biggest and strongest beets were dug out of the ground with a short-handled hoe and discarded. In Hope Williams Sykes's novel, *Second Hoeing*, the protagonist, Hannah, contemplates this process:

> All this work, Hannah thought, in order that just one beet, the strongest and largest, might be left to grow and flourish....Every thought, every effort, was put forth so that this one select plant should attain its greatest promise. All the plowing, the rolling, the preparation in the cold spring...all the careful thinning—all in order that the strongest plant would be left. And now a second hoeing to be sure that nothing hindered this one plant.[118]

This passage, with its emphasis on hard work and perseverance, served as an allegory for Depression-era struggle and the values of American individualism, but it also mirrored how many German Russians saw themselves. They had worked tirelessly, with every thought and every effort put forth in order to attain America's greatest promise—belonging. In search of a better, sweeter, life, they cleared away their ethnic identity and grew as members of the white, agrarian middle class.

The erasure of German Russian ethnic identity did not mean that racial differences no longer mattered in the region, however. Even as German Russians collectively claimed belonging in the land that they once tilled as wage laborers, sugar beet farming continued to rely

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[117] Lila Schilling interview.

[118] Sykes, p. 177.

on low-wage family labor performed primarily by an ethnic minority. The reproductive and productive labor of women and the labor of the child workers they birthed remained hallmarks of northern Colorado sugar beet communities. When Alice Herman Miller, the woman who had protested Hope Sykes's representation of German Russians in *Second Hoeing*, was asked if her sons had worked beets, she replied, "They didn't want to be in that." She added, "We always had Spanish people to work the beets."[119]

Though ethnic Mexicans had worked sugar beets in northern Colorado before, it was not until German Russians became large-scale landowners that they became the dominant labor force for the industry. Like the German Russians before them, ethnic Mexicans labored in the fields in family groups in the pursuit of better lives. Unlike the ethnic whites, Spanish-speaking sugar beet workers would not be able to translate family labor into landownership, whiteness, or entry into the agrarian middle class. They did, however, cultivate permanence, identity, and belonging in a place where they were cast as perpetual foreigners. This tension meant that, for many ethnic Mexican sugar beet workers, life in northern Colorado sugar beet communities was bittersweet.

[119] Alice Herman Miller interview.

Chapter Three
"South of the Border on the North Side of Town": Building Houses, Making Homes, and Constructing Identity in the Greeley Spanish Colony, 1920-1940

Josie Garcia's first memory of school was not a happy one. Garcia and her family lived in the Great Western Sugar *Española* Subdivision in the 1930s, a housing development in Greeley, Colorado, intended for sugar beet worker families. The subdivision was more commonly known as the Spanish Colony. Josie Garcia remembered that Anglo nurses would visit the colony's school, Gibson Elementary, to inspect the children for lice. Word had spread quickly among Josie Garcia's classmates that the treatment for lice included a mixture of scalding hot vinegar poured over the head of any unfortunate child harboring the parasites.[1] As her turn for inspection neared, Garcia became increasingly anxious and made a bold decision. She slipped out of school, ran home, and hid—only to be discovered and taken back to school for the dreaded inspection. The whole ordeal was, as she later recalled, "quite a trauma." Over time, Josie Garcia's teacher, Mrs. Woods, worked out a solution. Mrs. Woods got to know Josie's mother and arranged for the lice inspection to take place at the Garcia home. Afterwards, the nurse and Josie would walk back to school together. Luckily for Josie Garcia, the hot vinegar was never necessary.[2]

The interaction between Mrs. Woods and the public health nurse was one of the many

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[1] Vinegar solutions, sometimes also mixed with kerosene and administered as baths, were common treatments for lice during this period and were, understandably, almost universally loathed. Kerosene-vinegar baths were common at the U.S.-Mexico border and border crossers were frequently made to sit in them merely to enter the United States or bathe in them daily as part of the conditions of their workplace. For more on kerosene-vinegar baths, and the construction of a medical border between the United States and Mexico, see John McKiernan-González, *Fevered Measures: Public Health and Race at the Texas-Mexico Border, 1848-1942* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012), pp. 176-180.

[2] Garcia, Josie, interviewed by Peggy Ford, Greeley, Colorado, January 29, 2004, Box 2017.32.0001A-B, Permanent Collection, Hazel E. Johnson Research Center, City of Greeley Museums, Greeley, Colorado.

instances in which Spanish Colony residents and white community members were forced to negotiate new boundaries of authority and control. By the 1920s, the sugar beet industry was once again in dire need of workers. Ethnic Mexicans filled the void, but they faced racism and stereotypes. Many whites in northern Colorado sugar beet communities regarded ethnic Mexicans as outsider "birds of passage" who could not, and should not, settle in Anglo towns. The lack of people to work the sugar beet fields, however, forced Great Western Sugar to start a relocation program that actively recruited ethnic Mexicans from throughout the U.S. Southwest that not only enlisted them to work, but also enticed them to stay. One such settlement, where Josie Garcia experienced the trauma of lice inspection in elementary school, was located on the northern outskirts of the town of Greeley, Colorado. Though the neighborhood's official name was the *Española* Subdivision, Great Western Sugar agents and Greeley whites generally referred to it as, simply, the Spanish Colony.

Central to the creation of the Spanish Colony was gender. The industry had always relied on family labor, but even if it did not seek the labor of women and children, recruiters recognized that persuading workers to settle in northern Colorado would only be successful if they allowed workers to bring their families. As this chapter demonstrates, Great Western Sugar tailored their recruitment strategies to appeal to men, women, and children. Gender was also essential in the making of a colonial relationship between white Coloradoans and ethnic Mexican sugar beet workers. Just as white women had claimed a role in "transforming indigenous homes and bodies" throughout the North American West, white women in Colorado also tried to reshape ethnic Mexican sugar beet workers.[3] The white women of Weld County made it their mission to "Americanize" residents of the Spanish Colony. In their efforts, they also emphasized

[3] Ibid.,11.

the legal citizenship of Colony residents and provided push-back to the intense anti-Mexican sentiments of the late 1920s and 1930s. Many whites, then, supported and encouraged ethnic Mexicans to settle in the area.

Although white Coloradoans would regard ethnic Mexican sugar beet workers, or *betabeleros*, as they were known in Spanish, as a racialized body of cheap labor, Spanish Colony settlers navigated social, cultural, and economic challenges, they made the colony their own. This chapter examines the ways that the sugar industry and sugar beet workers families negotiated the boundaries of belonging and considers how residents of the Greeley Spanish Colony constructed new, local identities and how, as a colonized people themselves, their engagement with American ideas of modernity, democracy, whiteness, reflected and reinforced the U.S. settler colonial project.

Sweet Dreams: Great Western Sugar and Promises of the American Dream

By 1930, Spanish Colony residents, along with other ethnic Mexican farm workers, provided the "sinew and muscle" of agricultural labor in the West.[4] In the first two decades of the twentieth century, the sugar beet industry was the lifeblood of northern Colorado and as large-scale industrial farming grew, ever more workers were needed to sustain it. Ethnic Mexicans from throughout the Southwest migrated north to find work when changing labor markets rendered the customary and local sources of livelihood obsolete.[5] Mexican nationals,

[4] Vicki L. Ruiz, *From Out of the Shadows: Mexican Women in Twentieth-Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 9.

[5] For ethnic Mexican migration from southern Colorado and northern New Mexico, see Sarah Deutsch, *No Separate Refuge: Culture, Class, and Gender on an Anglo-Hispanic Frontier in the American Southwest* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), pp. 13-40.

too, migrated to the United States to escape the ravages of the Mexican Revolution, which had left an estimated two million people dead between 1910 and 1920.[6] The war was neither the only, nor even the biggest, reason Mexican nationals migrated to *el norte*. More than a result of individual decision-making or a search for opportunity, the massive migration across the U.S.-Mexico border in the early twentieth century began, according to George Sanchez, "as a highly organized movement to provide the American Southwest with substantial labor from Mexico's populous central plateau area."[7] Between 1910 and 1930, over one million *Mexicanos* migrated to the United States. Half of those who arrived settled in Southwestern cities and many of them worked in seasonal agriculture.[8]

Up to this time, German Russian men, women, and children had helped grow the sugar beet industry from the ground up. They provided a model that had proven successful, and sugar beet farmers and processors wished it to continue. Farmers and processors knew that family labor brought bigger profits. Indeed, they used the nuclear family to make money. When companies realized that a settled workforce reduced recruiting and transportation costs, the idea of settling families became more appealing than the relocation of single men. Companies used the perception of the nuclear family as "natural" and "normal" to legitimize a settled work force, all while maximizing profits. Spanish Colony families fit the ideal of the nuclear American family, but they remained a colonized people; it was not for nothing that the housing subdivision planned for them was called a colony. First, however, they would have to attract families to

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[6] Ruiz, *From Out of the Shadows*, 8.

[7] George Sanchez, *Becoming Mexican American: Ethnicity, Culture, and Identity in Chicano Los Angeles, 1900-1946* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 39.

[8] Ruiz, *From Out of the Shadows*, 6.

move there.

In the opening years of the 1920s, the Great Western Sugar Company began advocating what was, at that time, a radical new strategy for ensuring a labor supply. A newspaper from Haswell, Colorado, reported on these plans when, on October 28, 1920, it notified readers that "at least one big sugar company in Colorado is already planning a nucleus of Mexican beet workers for next spring."[9] The paper went on to explain the justification for such an action, noting that inviting beet laborers to winter in the region would prevent them from "drift[ing] to other districts," which would "force the sugar company to bring in inexperienced beet workers again next spring." The paper concluded by declaring, "Many of these have become valuable beet workers and the company intends to do all it can to keep them in this locality."[10] Sugar companies did not contract directly with farm laborers. Individual farmers did. But the companies were deeply invested in procuring labor. Fields stocked with good workers meant more and better sugar beets. That, in turn, lead to increased profits. When Great Western Sugar sought a new plan to cut recruitment and transportation costs and ensure a reliable source of seasoned beet workers, they turned to the idea of family settlement.

Family labor had long been essential to the growth of the sugar beet industry, and German Russian families had been permanently relocating to northern Colorado beet districts since at least the 1910s. From the outset of the industry, sugar companies routinely paid for the recruitment and transportation of migrant families. Upon their arrival to the beet districts, migrant men contracted their labor, along with that of their wives and children, with individual farmers. Industry-sponsored migration of families was central to the sugar beet business model.

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[9] "To Keep Experienced Help," *Haswell Herald*, October 28, 1920.

[10] Ibid.

Once German Russian families began permanently relocating to northern Colorado, the need for transportation diminished. By the 1920s, however, the landscape of sugar beet labor began to change.

As more German Russians bought land and became farmers themselves, sugar companies looked for workers to fill the void. In 1919, the Great Western Sugar Company's periodical, *Through The Leaves*, suggested that the answer to their labor problem was right in front of them. In April of 1919, it ran an article declaring that although "the supply of Russian help is limited…there is [sic] plenty of Mexicans."[11] By the end of the decade, ethnic Mexican workers from southern Colorado, New Mexico, and Texas would undertake the majority of sugar beet fieldwork. Sugar companies recruited them, paid for their transport north, and, at the end of the season, arranged for them to travel home.

The migration of ethnic Mexican workers to the beet fields of northern Colorado was part of a larger pattern of migration that began in the late nineteenth century due to the arrival of the railroad and Anglo settlement. As historian Sarah Deutsch has shown in her work on intercultural relations in southern Colorado and northern New Mexico during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, migration had long played an integral role in the lives of ethnic Mexicans in the region.[12] Living in predominantly communal villages, New Mexican men had migrated to herd and to trade, while women remained in the villages to provide essential domestic and reproductive labor, such as spinning wool, growing gardens, and raising children. Villagers pooled resources in a non-monetary economy and though work broke down along

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[11] *Trough The Leaves*, April 1919, Records of the Great Western Sugar Company, Colorado Agricultural Archive, Colorado State University, Fort Collins, Colorado.

[12] Deutsch, 3-12.

gender lines, there was some flexibility in the sexual division of labor, particularly in the cultivating of produce and raising livestock. As Anglos continued to arrive, they changed the local economy from communally-based to market-driven, forcing men to venture away from home for work. When the men were away seasonally, women assumed authority within the communities, undertaking a wide range of work that had customarily belonged to men. The domestic, agricultural, and community labor of women made men's movement into and out of seasonal wage work possible.

The arrival of Anglo Americans in the late nineteenth century brought a colonial mission and capitalist economy, both of which disrupted local economies. In the1880s, the railroad rolled into New Mexico and, riding along with it, a massive wave of Anglos settlers. With their increasing numbers, Anglos gained control of lands that had been ancestral homelands to *nuevomexicanos*.[13] By using a legal system unfamiliar to those who were native to the land,

[13] The literature on contestation over land in New Mexico is immense. For a general overview of the Spanish land grant system and its legacies, see Malcolm Ebright, *Land Grants and Lawsuits in Northern New Mexico* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1994); William deBuys, "Fractions of Justice: A Legal and Social History of the Las Trampas Land Grant, New Mexico," *New Mexico Historical Review* 56 (January 1981): 71-97; Emlen Hall, *Four Leagues of Pecos: A Legal History of the Pecos Land Grant, 1800-1933* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1984); Charles L. Briggs and John R. Van Ness, eds., *Land, Water, and Culture: New Perspectives on Hispanic Land Grants* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1987); Victor Westphall, *Mercedes Reales: Hispanic Land Grants of the Upper Rio Grande Region* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1983); Joseph Sánchez, *Between Two Rivers: The Atrisco Land Grant in Albuquerque History, 1692-1968* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2008); David Caffey, *Chasing the Santa Fe Ring: Power and Privilege in Territorial New Mexico* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2014); David Correia, *Properties of Violence: Law and Land Grant Struggle in Northern New Mexico* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2013). Central to discussions of land in New Mexico are the many strategies of resistance *nuevomexicanos* employed to resist Anglo encroachment in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. One of the most famous resistance movements was that of *Las Gorras Blancas*, or The White Caps, a secret society of fence cutters in San Miguel County. Scholars have argued that the actions of the *Gorras Blancas* were one way *nuevomexicanos* resisted Anglo encroachment, sometimes violently. See, for example, Robert J. Rosenbaum, *Mexicano Resistance in the Southwest* (Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press, 1998); Mary Romero, "Las Gorras Blancas: A Class Struggle Against the Transformation of Land Ownership and Usage in Northern New Mexico," in *Chicano Social and Political History in the Nineteenth Century*, ed. Richard Griswold del Castillo and Manuel Hidalgo (Encino, CA: Floricanto Press, 1990): 135-54; Anselmo Arellano, "The People's Movement: Las Gorras Blancas," in *The Contested Homeland: A Chicano History of New Mexico*, ed. Erlinda Gonzales-Berry

Anglos accumulated massive tracts of property.[14] They imposed laws intent on disadvantaging ethnic Mexican villagers. They shut them out of the trade that was essential to their survival and brought with them a new cash-based economy. In order to adapt, men began traveling farther distances for longer periods of time for seasonal work. As whites populated northern New Mexico, many New Mexicans found their way to the beet fields of northern Colorado.

Though the early sugar beet industry relied primarily on the family labor of German Russians, some ethnic Mexicans had worked in the beet fields since the beginning of the industry. Indeed, before turning to the family labor of German Russians, sugar company executives initially thought that Spanish-speaking workers recruited from the U.S. Southwest could be the answer to their labor needs. But this strategy proved problematic because of strong anti-Mexican sentiment in Anglo communities. In May 1900, for instance, a sugar company attempted to bring in a group of Spanish-speaking beet laborers to Rocky Ford, Colorado, but white American residents drove them away.[15] The sugar beet industry persisted, however, and, by 1909, ethnic Mexicans made up nearly a quarter of Colorado beet workers.[16] These migrant workers were comprised of two distinct groups, those from the U.S. Southwest—southern

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and David R. Maciel (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2000): 59-82; David Correia, "'Retribution Will Be Their Reward: New Mexico's Las Gorras Blancas and the Fight for the Las Vegas Land Grant Commons," *Radical History Review* 108 (Fall 2010): 49-72. Other forms of resistance included using the courts to contest competing claims to the land. See, for example, Maria E. Montoya, *Translating Property: The Maxwell Land Grant and the Conflict over Land in the American West, 1840-1900* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002); Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz, *Roots of Resistance: A History of Land Tenure in New Mexico* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2007), pp. 119-138; Deena J. Gonzales, *Refusing the Favor: Spanish-Mexican Women of Santa Fe, 1820-1880* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 17-38.

[14] Maria E. Montoya, *Translating Property.*

[15] Deutsch, 33.

[16] Ibid., 34.

Colorado, northern New Mexico, Nevada, Arizona, and Texas—and Mexican nationals. In the eyes of many white Coloradoans, however, all were merely "Mexican." These early migrants were also mostly men, or *solos*, who typically left the beet communities and travelled to their home villages once the beet season ended.[17]

The system of recruiting "Mexican" men was not unique to the sugar beet industry. Railroad, mining, and agricultural industries had been recruiting laborers from the U.S. Southwest and Mexico since at least the 1880s.[18] Industrialists saw in ethnic Mexicans a wellspring of cheap labor, many of whom had developed a pattern of migration, leaving their villages for work and then returning home again. Employers thus imagined them as "birds of passage."[19] Ethnic Mexicans, employers thought, would arrive when needed and leave when the work was done, creating a perfect labor system for those who opposed ethnic Mexican settlement. Sugar companies brought in ethnic Mexican workers to supplement German Russian family labor throughout the 1910s.

By the 1920s, however, the sugar beet industry faced yet another shortage of workers. The industry, and the farmers and processors who relied on it, faced several labor crises almost simultaneously. First, German Russians were quickly exiting the field workforce, buying farms and becoming farmers, a move that brought with it the expectation that hired labor would work the fields. The movement of German Russians from farm workers to farmers coincided with two

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[17] Sierra Standish, "Beet Borderland: Hispanic Workers, The Sugar Beet, and the Making of a Northern Colorado Landscape" (MA Thesis, Colorado State University, 2002), 36.

[18] See, for example, Sarah Deutsch, *No Separate Refuge;* Camille Guerin-Gonzales, *Mexican Workers and American Dreams*; Gunther Peck, *Reinventing Free Labor*: *Padrones and Immigrant Workers in the North American West, 1880-1930* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); José Alamillo, *Making Lemonade Out of Lemons: Mexican American Labor and Leisure in a California Town, 1880-1960* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2006).

[19] See Camille Guerin-Gonzales, *Mexican Workers and American Dreams,* pp. 25-50.

other developments that dramatically affected the industry's labor woes. First, sugar companies were rapidly expanding production and thus needed ever more workers. But higher wages in competing industries—such as mines, railroads, and manufacturers—were luring workers away. Second, the United States' entrance into World War I put further strain on the labor pool as the American-born adult sons of German Russian immigrants traded the sugar beet fields for the battlefield.[20]

As German Russians moved from beet workers to beet farmers, sugar prices began to slip. In 1913 the U.S. Congress passed the Revenue Act, also known as the Underwood-Simmons Act, which reduced tariffs, including those on foreign sugar, by 25 percent. At the same time that it opened the domestic sugar market up to foreign competition, the Revenue Act of 1913 dealt another crushing blow to the sugar industry by lifting quota restrictions on cane sugar imported from the Philippines and Cuba.[21] As prices continued to plummet, Colorado beet sugar companies, which had traditionally paid for the recruitment and transport of labor, began to worry about the high costs of transportation. In a 1920 notice in the *Greeley Tribune-Republican,* the Great Western Sugar Company declared that the "soliciting and transportation expenses in engaging [beet workers] are relatively high."[22] Added to this, the notice continued, was "the cost of soliciting, including extensive advertising." Great Western Sugar wanted to remind farmers of the "many instances" of "cash investment" the company made to procure labor. The high costs of

[20] Dennis Nodín Valdés, "Settlers, Sojourners, and Proletarians: Social Formation in the Great Plains Sugar Beet Industry, 1890-1940," *Great Plains Quarterly* 10, no. 2 (Spring 1990): 110-123, quote on 113.

[21] For an excellent discussion of the trade policies and consumer culture of sugar in the United States, see April Merleaux, *Sugar and Civilization: American Empire and the Cultural Politics of Sweetness* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015); for a discussion of the tariffs and the U.S. domestic sugar economy see pp. 28-54.

[22] "Field Help For Beet Growers," *Greeley Tribune-Republican* (Colorado), May 6, 1920.

recruiting and bringing in labor as sugar prices fell increased the value of beet workers. Although this value did not translate into higher wages, sugar companies were keen to protect their investments. In an attempt to maintain workers without raising wages, sugar companies turned to housing conditions, which were generally the responsibility of farmers.

During the growing and harvest season, most sugar beet workers lived in housing provided and maintained by the individual farmers who employed them. Worker lodging was usually located in or near the beet fields and was notoriously inadequate. Since the beginning of the industry, it was common to find sugar beet workers living in shacks, tents, converted livestock pens, and chicken coops. In a 1923 report, the U.S. Department of Labor in conjunction with the Children's Bureau indicated that beet shacks were typically constructed of tarpaper or corrugated iron, or were roughly boarded shanties with a single window and one door. Another might simply be "a caravan wagon, which, hung from end to end with pots, pans, washtubs, and clothes, was moved about from field to field as the work required." The report determined that "well over a third of the 143 shacks…were found to be in bad condition and not weatherproof."[23] To make matters worse, many families complained of "bedbugs and other vermin" left behind by previous tenants.[24] Workers, then, were at the mercy of farmers, who could decide whether they would provide decent living accommodations or not. Unfortunately, many farmers chose the latter. When the sugar beet industry started to experience its second labor shortage around the First World War, Great Western Sugar began a campaign to convince farmers to take better care of workers by providing better housing.

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[23] U.S. Children's Bureau, *Child Labor and the Work of Mothers in the Beet Fields of Colorado and Michigan,* Bureau Publication No. 115 (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1923), 66.

[24] Ibid.

In the same *Greeley Tribune-Republican* notice where the Great Western Sugar Company boasted of its large investment in beet labor, it also implored farmers and community members to treat beet workers well. The company chided, "it should be evident to everyone that care should be taken to assure that [beet] labor will be well received and handled throughout the season." In particular, it continued, "all necessary repairs to houses should be made before they arrive; replacing such little things as broken lights, patching roofs, fixing cisterns, etc." Making these repairs, the company concluded, would give beet workers "a much better impression, keep them better satisfied, and make them feel that the promises of the company have been kept."[25] Furthermore, workers "correspond with their families and upon their first impression will depend very largely what report they make." Happy workers who were well cared for would spread the word, thus ensuring further effective recruitment. In this way, worker housing had a direct link to the success of the beet sugar industry. Housing was so important, in fact, that two years after its impassioned plea in the *Greeley Tribune-Republican*, the Great Western Sugar Company initiated a housing program of its own. In 1922, the company purchased land in Fort Morgan, Colorado, for its first worker colony for ethnic Mexican beet workers.

The strategy of relocating and housing ethnic Mexican beet workers was not entirely new. Sugar companies in southern Colorado began experimenting with permanently relocating ethnic Mexican beet worker families much earlier than in northern Colorado. As early as 1908, beet companies in southern Colorado erected "adobe colonies" in order to "hold the Mexicans as permanent settlers."[26] These facilities were intended only as temporary housing, however. It was not until the Great Western Sugar Company designed their "Spanish Colonies" in the 1920s that

[25] "Field Help For Beet Growers," *Greeley Tribune-Republican*, May 6, 1920.

[26] Deutsch, 34.

permanent relocation of workers became a strategy.

Enticing workers to move to Colorado made fiscal sense, but sugar companies discovered that local communities would take some convincing. Hostility towards Mexicans and Mexican Americans was increasing nationally. In 1921, for example, the journal *Annals of Political and Social Science* examined the rising anti-Mexican rhetoric creeping into white American discourse in an article on Mexican immigration. The article argued that "Racially speaking, the Mexican immigrant [carries] an element of danger." Though the author was referring specifically to Mexican nationals, many white Americans saw Mexican Americans and Mexican nationals as one and the same. [27] Signs reminiscent of the Jim Crow South declaring "No Mexicans Allowed" and "White Trade Only" were turning up on white-owned businesses. Ethnic Mexican beet workers were prohibited from entering restaurants and stores.[28] Finding "Mexicans" in movie theaters, swimming pools, and even parks—spaces that were once places of white leisure and recreation—provoked a visceral reaction. Whites wanted Mexican labor in the sugar beet fields. What they did not want was to live among them as equals.

If Great Western Sugar could not appeal to the farmers' humanity, as it tried to do with notices in the *Greeley Tribune-Republican*, the company would try to entice farmers with another effective motivator: money. The most common strategy to overcome the resistance of white farmers was to promise dramatically improved beet crops and, in turn, better profits. In November 1928, Great Western's labor commissioner, C.V. Maddux, proclaimed in the company newsletter, "With the help of Great Western growers a remarkable betterment has taken

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[27] James L. Slayden, "Some Observations on Mexican Immigration," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 93 (January 1921): 121-126, quote on 125.

[28] Valdés, 118.

place in the quality of hand work on the beet crop."[29] This success, he argued, was due in part to "the fact that…four times as many Spanish-speaking laborers remained over winter on the farm last season than did six years ago." Maddux continued:

> The grower profits by keeping proven labor. He gets his beet work done timely and well. His labor can be deported upon fair weather or foul. Maybe you noticed last spring during the rainy spell how the proven labor went through with the thinning under discomforts while "pick-up" workers in many fields let plants get too large for best thinning….Growers often find that their beet labor kept on the farm over winter, make good farm hands and are a ready source of help when needed during winter or early spring.[30]

Maddux finished by reminding farmers that the very landscape of the sugar beet industry was expanding, writing that "a big beet acreage is being planned for next year," and "experienced beet tenders will be in demand." The beet industry was growing quickly, and farmers might be forced to bring in inexperienced "green" laborers. Maddux concluded, "It's good insurance to retain known labor rather than take a chance on the unproven kind." Great Western Sugar emphasized that a local, seasoned workforce would save time training green labor, guide the uninitiated, and ensure a bigger, better beet crop. While profit margins might convince farmers to support labor settlement, Great Western Sugar had another group to persuade: the workers themselves.

Great Western Sugar labor recruiters recognized that attracting families was the key to resettling ethnic Mexican workers. When asked, workers routinely noted that the use of family labor in the beet fields made the work more attractive.[31] Although it seems logical that workers

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[29] C.V. Maddux, "With Your Help," *Through the Leaves,* November 1928, p. 476. Permanent Collection, Item #AI-4869, Agriculture (Crops), Farming, Sugar Beets-Great Western, Pamphlets, Item #AI-4869, City of Greeley Museums, Greeley, Colorado.

[30] Ibid.

[31] U.S. Children's Bureau, *Child Labor and the Work of Mothers in the Beet Fields of Colorado and Michigan*, 82.

would want to relocate with partners and children, some Great Western Sugar agents believed this was not due to a basic human desire for family but rather was a character trait unique to Mexicans that displayed weakness. In 1920, an article in *Through the Leaves* acknowledged the strength of ethnic Mexican kinship ties in order to underscore the need for settlement, but it did so through derogatory depictions of ethnic Mexican families. A Mexican man, it sneered, would never come to the beet fields "without his 'old woman.'"[32] In its attempt to emasculate ethnic Mexican men, the article overlooked that Mexican men had been travelling to the beet fields on their own since the beginning of the industry. The author continued the screed by declaring that Mexican women seldom had "any claim to good looks," were constantly "surrounded by a numerous brood of offspring," and were "either corpulent as a medieval friar or stringy and lean." Either way, the author remarked, a Mexican wife's "man would not dream of moving without her." The article concluded that this desire of husbands and wives to remain together was due to "the fact that she can be counted on to find food for him when all his own efforts fail."[33] The ugly racism of the article erased the crucial work of women and children in the beet fields, but it also underscored that family was an important factor when arranging a permanent workforce. For the first time in its history, the Great Western Sugar Company set out to attract

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[32] John Carrington, "Mexican Invaders Relieving Our Farm Labor," *Through The Leaves* September 1920, 522.

[33] Ibid.

workers by offering them homeownership and a slice of the American Dream.[34]

In order to convince potential workers to permanently move to the Greeley Spanish Colony, the Great Western Sugar Company aggressively tailored its recruiting efforts to the domestic and family benefits of such a relocation. In particular, labor agents used the latest technology, moving pictures, to paint a wholesome, almost pastoral, picture of life in northern Colorado sugar beet districts. Along with images of workers—men, women, and children—happily toiling away at various tasks, it also showcased clean, well-dressed beet workers celebrating Mexican Independence Day, driving automobiles, picnicking, and playing carnival games at a harvest fair.[35] The films also implied that a move to the beet districts would offer the opportunity for children to lead safe, wholesome, all-American lives in which they would be encumbered only by schoolwork and baseball. In one scene, a smartly-dressed white man, presumably a representative of the Great Western Sugar Company, talks to three little boys in a friendly yet authoritative manner foreshadowing, a harmonious future between labor and management. The films had a profound influence in the recruiting effort and were responsible for bringing in "hundreds and thousands of Mexican and Hispano workers to Colorado's sugar beet districts."[36] The promise of domestic tranquility, reliable work, and community proved to be a

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[34] Historian Camille Guérin-Gonzales discusses the role of the illusory "American Dream" in recruiting ethnic Mexicans for agricultural industries in the United States. Guerin-Gonzales notes "Although Mexican immigrants encountered and believed in a variety of ideas about America, the language of the American Dream in particular shaped their expectations and behavior. The American Dream promised economic opportunity and security—which would free people to realize their intellectual, physical, and spiritual potential—as the foundation for basic rights of individual citizens." See Guérin-Gonzales, *Mexican Workers and American Dreams: Immigration, Repatriation, and California Farm Labor, 1900-1930*, 2.

[35] Beet labor film. records of the Great Western Sugar Company, Series IV: Motion picture films, Colorado Agricultural Archive, Colorado State University, Fort Collins, Colorado.

[36] Rubén Donato, *Mexicans and Hispanos in Colorado Schools and Communities, 1920-1960* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2007), 6.

successful motivator for sugar beet workers, as it had for many other workers of the period.

The growth of industrial capitalism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries lead to the emergence of company towns, particularly in the mining and refining industries, and issues of gender, home, and family were central in the making, and unmaking, of working-class identity. Historian Laurie Mercier, for example, demonstrates that a male-breadwinner ideology helped create union solidarity in the early twentieth century. The breadwinner ideology posited that, as husbands and fathers, men should be able to make enough money to support a family and women should support the family by managing the home and raising children. Although the breadwinner ideal was common in many company towns, Great Western Sugar carefully avoided invoking it in its recruitment for the Greeley Spanish Colony, where the field labor of women and children was as important as that of the men.[37] Domesticity was an essential recruiting strategy for the Spanish Colony, but instead of images of breadwinners and housewives, Great Western Sugar offered another aspect of the American Dream—homeownership.

Homeownership was central to the Great Western Sugar Company's vision of the Spanish Colony; company officials believed that a settled class of workers would bring many benefits to beet communities. In 1924, *Through the Leaves* noted that workers who "build a home of their own and persist until they have completed it and paid for it" led to the creation of

[37] For discussions of gender and domesticity in the making of working-class identity in company towns, particularly the role of women in cultivating community, see Laurie Mercier, *Anaconda: Labor, Community, and Culture in Montana's Smelter City* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2001) and Monica Perales, *Smeltertown: Making and Remembering a Southwest Border Community* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010); José M. Alamillo, *Making Lemonade out of Lemons: Mexican American Labor and Leisure in a California Town, 1880-1960* (Urbana: University of Chicago Press, 2006. For more on the history of company towns see Oliver J. Dinius and Angela Vergara, eds., *Company Towns in the Americas: Landscape, Power, and Working-Class Communities* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2011); Margaret Crawford, *Building the Workingman's Paradise: The Design of American Company Towns* (New York: Verso, 1995); Gilbert G. Gonzáles, *Labor and Community: Mexican Citrus Worker Villages in a Southern California County, 1900-1950* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994).

"a preferred class of workers." It reported that there was "appreciation" for these workers in the larger communities where such colonies had already been built. In addition to the "added assurance that the community will have a number of experienced beet workers from year to year," beet workers would also be available to "do more and better general farm work, such as harvesting hay and grain, irrigating and cultivating." Finally, a settled labor force of beet workers would keep "the district money earned there," leading to a financial reinvestment in the community.[38] So, in 1924, the Great Western Sugar Company purchased land northwest of Greeley, and began contracting with beet workers invited to take part in the construction of the Spanish Colony.

Constructing the Colony

Before officially occupying the Greeley Spanish Colony, Great Western Sugar required potential residents to agree to several conditions. First, colonists had to build their homes according to the company's planned design. Each resident was given an identical floor plan for a "two room adobe" house. One issue of *Through the Leaves* described the plan as "simple and inexpensive" and recommended it as a model for any farmers considering providing such housing to their own laborers.[39] Once they had their floor plans, workers would "build, construct, and complete, in a good and workmanlike manner...a dwelling house of 2 rooms."[40] Since most

[38]Jody L. Lopez and Gabriel A. Lopez, *White Gold Laborers: The Spanish Colony of Greeley, Colorado* (Bloomington: AuthorHouse, 2007), 14.
[39] Ibid., 17.

[40] Great Western Sugar Company Spanish Colony Lease, Subject Documentary Files, Ethnic Cultures, Hispanics/Greeley Weld, Spanish Colony/History, City of Greeley Museums Hazel E. Johnson Research Center, Greeley, Colorado.

workers did not possess enough cash up front, Great Western Sugar would provide all straw, lime, and gravel necessary for construction, as well as advance residents up to $268.42 to purchase lumber, doors, windows, and cement. To achieve "a uniform appearance, the houses were built 10' from the front of the property line in north-south rows. The front doors faced east or west, and all exterior walls were painted white."[41] Residents then agreed to repay the Great Western Sugar Company in three yearly installments. Once the homes were built, residents agreed to live in them during the entire time of the contract, as well as promise to keep the premises "in a clean and sanitary condition, to the satisfaction" of the manager of the Great Western Sugar Company factory in Greeley.[42] It was clear from the beginning, then, that the Great Western Sugar Company sought to maintain authority over the subdivision. Residents understood this, but they almost immediately began to exert their own power and construct a version of ownership over the Spanish Colony not dictated by the company.

The location of the Spanish Colony, which was five miles northwest of the town of Greeley, served both to construct and maintain a racial hierarchy between white Greeley residents and Spanish-speaking sugar beet workers. One descendent of one of the original Greeley Spanish Colony residents noted, "The rest of the people of [Greeley] did not want [Colony residents] within the town….[Spanish Colony] families were treated like the lowest because its district was located outside of the town."[43] Many whites saw the presence of ethnic

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[41] Lopez and Lopez, 18.

[42] Great Western Sugar Company Spanish Colony Lease, Subject Documentary Files, Ethnic Cultures, Hispanics/Greeley Weld, Spanish Colony/History, City of Greeley Museums Hazel E. Johnson Research Center, Greeley, Colorado.

[43] "La Colonia," *Greeley Tribune: La Tribuna La Vox Latinoamericana en el Norte de Colorado*, January 26, 2006.

Mexicans as a necessity, but the need for their labor was not enough to erase old stereotypes. The location of ethnic Mexican sugar beet workers on the outskirts of town, then, maintained a social hierarchy that cast ethnic Mexicans as both literal and figurative outsiders. By concentrating workers outside of towns, Great Western Sugar reproduced and reinforced racial tensions in sugar beet communities.[44] Greeley residents had a long history of racializing ethnic Mexicans and despite Great Western Sugar's promotion of a "better class of worker," Spanish-speaking beet workers faced a legacy of racism that had its roots in another type of worker neighborhood: the Jungles.

Spanish-speaking migrants had made up an important minority of beet labor from the beginning. A report conducted in 1920, for example, declared that the majority of northern Colorado sugar beet workers were German Russian, but also noted that one-tenth of field laborers were ethnic Mexican.[45] Unlike the German Russians, however, ethnic Mexicans working sugar beets during the early days of the industry tended not to relocate to the area. Instead, many migrated north for agricultural or other industrial work and then travelled home when the work was done. This seasonal migration cast ethnic Mexican laborers as "birds of passage," implying innate character traits rather than rational decisions made in responses to changing capitalist economies.[46] The 1920 report concluded that the reason ethnic Mexicans did

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[44] Important scholarship on the relationship between race and place has demonstrated that both *de facto* and *de jure* segregation has played a crucial role in maintaining racial hierarchies. Most of this scholarship focuses on the post World War II urban landscape, white flight, and suburbanization. See, for example, Eric Avila, *Popular Culture in the Age of White Flight: Fear and Fantasy in Suburban Los Angeles* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006). For more on the geography of racism in northern Colorado sugar beet communities, see Gregory T. Chase, "Hispanic Migration to Northeastern Colorado During the Nineteen Twenties: Influences of Sugar Beet Agriculture" (M.A. thesis, University of Denver, 2011).

[45] U.S. Children's Bureau, *Child Labor and the Work of Mothers in the Beet Fields of Colorado and Michigan*, 4.

[46] For a thorough discussion of the "bird of passage" representation of ethnic Mexicans, see Guérin-Gonzales, *Mexican Workers And American Dream,* pp. 25-50.

not settle was that they lacked "the thrift of the Russian-Germans [and] rarely saved enough from summer to last through the winter."[47] What the report ignored, however, was that, until the early 1920s, Spanish-speaking workers had little incentive to relocate. Most of these early workers were men, *solos*, who traveled home at the end of the season to return to kith and kin. A few, however, stayed behind and took up residence in the Jungles.

The Greeley Jungles

Like the German Russians, most early ethnic Mexican beet workers lived in farmer-provided accommodations during the growing and harvest seasons. Like their coworkers, those ethnic Mexicans who stayed in the area during the off season relocated to Jungles neighborhoods. Local newspapers delighted in regaling readers with tales of violence and vice in the Jungles, stories that revolved around the comings and goings of seemingly nefarious Mexican residents. On August 1, 1913, for example, the Fort Collins newspaper, the *Weekly Courier* issued an update to a story it had reported days earlier on a shooting between two Jungles residents, Joe Sanchez and Martinez Hernandez. The article proclaimed that a man named Sanchez, "the Mexican who was shot in the leg during a row with Martinez Hernandez a few days ago in the jungles, has been located. [Sanchez] is now at the county hospital suffering from a bad case of blood poisoning."[48] The *Courier* continued that U.S. Marshal Bert Pindell of Wellington, Colorado, "located the Mexican…nine miles from this city this morning." After being shot, Sanchez went to work in the beet fields but his leg got so inflamed that he became

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[47] Ibid., 64.
[48] "Mexican Shot In Leg Found in Dugout Today," *Weekly Courier*, August 1, 1913.

unable to use it. While Sanchez was still in hiding, Marshal Pindell discovered him and took him to the county hospital.[49] Articles like this entertained readers by portraying the Anglo-American officers as competent and the ethnic minority residents as dangerous.

Newspapers also delighted in highlighting the ways in which Jungles residents failed to conform to dominant gender norms. Mexican women and children could be found in the sugar beet fields in the first twenty years of the twentieth century, but ethnic Mexicans would not travel in family groups *en masse* until the 1920s. Some of the small number of Spanish-speaking women who lived in the Jungles were unmarried, operated their own businesses, and, according to the local newspapers, at least, frequently ran afoul of the law. One such woman, Petra Anaya, featured in the same issue of the Forth Collins *Weekly Courier* as Joe Sanchez and Martinez Hernandez, was arrested for "keeping a disorderly house." The *Weekly Courier* reported that Anaya's arrest "came about in a peculiar manner" as the result of the arrest of a local man, Dave Webster, who had been found, drunk as a skunk, in a wagon full of sugar beet pulp. Pulp, a byproduct of processing beet sugar into granular sugar, was commonly sold to as an additive to livestock feed. For reasons known only to him, Webster climbed into the wagon after an evening of heavy drinking and, in his drunken stupor, was unable to find his way back out again. Eventually, a local sheriff and his deputy rescued the man. While Webster was "being thawed out and sobered up" at the local jail, he ratted Anaya out as the person who had sold him the alcohol. After paying her a visit at her home in the Jungles, the sheriff arrested Anaya and charged her with operating a disorderly house.[50] The editor implied that Anaya had provided the booze that so incapacitated Webster and she emerged as the real villain in the story. The incident,

[49] Ibid.
[50] "Petra Anaya is in Jail," *Fort Collins Weekly Courier*, August 1, 1913.

though intended to be a comical tale of bungling lawbreakers, also tapped into the construction of race and gender in northern Colorado sugar beet communities. Webster was detained for public intoxication, but his arrest appeared to be less a punishment and more an opportunity for him to warm up and dry out. Webster may have been dimwitted, but he was also sympathetic. More important, he helped in the apprehension of the true criminal—Petra Anaya. Identifying her by name in the title, the article described Anaya as a more notorious figure than Webster, placing her at odds with norms of American womanhood. The paper declared that Anaya was "the leading woman of the Mexican colony in the Jungles," noting that she was "well known throughout the city." Though the article failed to elaborate on why she was "well known," the arrest cast Anaya as a disreputable woman.

"Disorderly house" laws, as well as laws on public drunkenness, frequently targeted people of color because of racialized notions that their communities were inherently immoral. These laws reflected anxiety about a changing society that altered gender norms, fostered interracial mixing, and created new geographies of immorality in "vice" districts.[51] This was why Webster, with his Anglo surname, came out of the story relatively unscathed while Anaya's capture read like a victorious takedown of a criminal mastermind. Anaya's offense, that of operating a "disorderly house," meant that she had used her home for an "immoral" purpose,

[51] In "Sexual Geographies and Gender Economy: The Furnished Room Districts of Chicago, 1890-1930," *Gender and History* 2, no. 3 (1990): 274-96, Joanne Meyerowitz argues that "furnished room districts" allowed for the development of a gendered economy of working-class women entrepreneurs who effectively traded on "sexually unconventional subcultures," including extramarital heterosexual and same-sex relationships, interracial relationships, and prostitution. See also David Bell and Gill Valentine, eds., *Mapping Desire: Geographies of Sexualities* (New York: Routledge, 1995); Cynthia M. Blair, *I've Got to Make My Livin': Black Women's Sex Work in Turn-of-the-Century Chicago* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010).

which included "catering to vagrants, prostitutes, drunkards, and gamblers."[52] Such laws criminalized and racialized working-class communities, upholding a system of white and middle-class supremacy in a time of increasing interethnic contact brought about by industrialization and urbanization.[53] As an ethnic Mexican woman, a business owner, and a liquor-seller, Anaya subverted twentieth-century ideals of femininity.[54] As a resident of the Jungles, she was cast as a "bad" woman.[55]

Making Home and Identity in the Spanish Colony

After the Spanish Colony was constructed in 1924, those families who moved there were proud of their homes and they worked with Great Western Sugar to establish themselves as

[52] Thomas Mackey, *Red Lights Out: A Legal History of Prostitution, Disorderly Houses, and Vice Districts* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1986), 68.

[53] See, for example, Brian Donovan, *White Slave Crusades: Race, Gender, and Anti-Vice Activism, 1887-1917* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2006).

[54] For more on the making of "disorderly" laws as a reaction to urbanization, industrialization, and the influx of immigrants and people of color, see Stephen Robertson, Shane White, Stephanie Garton, and Graham White, "Disorderly Houses: Residences, Privacy, and the Surveillance of Sexuality in 1920s Harlem," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 21, no. 3 (September 2012): 443-466; Marcia Carlisle, "Disorderly City, Disorderly Women: Prostitution in Ante-Bellum Philadelphia," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 110, no. 4 (October 1986): 549-568; Eric H. Monkkonen, "A Disorderly People? Urban Order in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries," *Journal of American History* 68, no. 3 (December 1981): 539-559; Meyerowitz, "Sexual Geographies and Gender Economy."

[55] For an insightful discussion of the heightened surveillance, policing, and punishment of women, and the racial and class biases that constructed "good" and "bad" femininity, see Mary E. Odem, *Delinquent Daughters: Protecting and Policing Adolescent Female Sexuality in the United States* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995). For more on gender and prohibition, particularly the opportunities it afforded to women to participate in an underground economy, see Mary Murphy, "Bootlegging Mothers and Drinking Daughters: Gender and Prohibition in Butte, Montana," *American Quarterly* 46, no. 2 (June 1994): 174-194.

respectable members of the Greeley community.[56] Their work to maintain an image of cleanliness and orderliness created a stark contrast to the perceived depravity of those who lived in the Jungles. Women planted gardens and flowers that gave the colony a wholesome appearance. Residents also wrote a *Constitution and Rules of the Spanish Colony Neighbors of Greeley, Colorado* that gave them a sense of ownership not only over their own homes but of their belonging as well. The Great Western Sugar Company had stated that it wanted to create a "higher class of workers." Colonists worked to prove, on their own terms, that they were just that.

In order to build an identity that contrasted with notoriety of Jungles residents, colonists would have to contest racist misperceptions of them as dirty, lazy liars. Stereotypes of ethnic Mexicans had long existed in white American discourse and they shaped interethnic interactions in the beet communities of northern Colorado. Whites frequently cast Spanish-speaking peoples as lazy and dishonest. One German Russian beet farmer, Amalie Klein, when discussing ethnic

[56] Creating "respectability" was a common strategy for marginalized communities to push back against racist discourses that cast them as ignorant or dirty. The use of politics of respectability to "uplift" people of color is often linked to the early writings of African American activists such as W.E.B. DuBois and Booker T. Washington. Historian Stephen Tuck argues that calls for self-respect wove a common thread through African American protests. See Stephen Tuck, *We Ain't What We Ought to Be: The Black Freedom Struggle from Emancipation to Obama* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010), pp. 3-4. Historians have shown that black women in particular found respectability rhetoric useful. See Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent: The Women's Movement in the Black Baptist Church, 1800-1920* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993); Deborah Gray White, *Too Heavy a Load: Black Women in Defense of Themselves, 1894-1994* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1998); E. Frances White, *Dark Continent of Our Bodies: Black Feminism and the Politics of Respectability* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2001). For a discussion of Black respectability politics in Denver, Colorado, see Modupe Labode, "'Defend Your Manhood and Womanhood Rights': *The Birth of a Nation*, Race, and the Politics of Respectability in Early Twentieth-Century Denver, Colorado," *Pacific Historical Review* 84, no. 2 (May 2015): 163-194. Although it is most commonly associated with African American activism, some ethnic Mexican communities also utilized a strategy of respectability in the first half of the twentieth century. See, for example, Gabriela González, *Redeeming La Raza: Transborder Modernity, Race, Respectability, and Rights* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), pp. 111-189 and Cynthia Orozco, *No Mexicans, Women, or Dogs Allowed: The Rise of the Mexican American Civil Rights Movement* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2009).

Mexican labor, expressed this belief. When asked about the typical relationship between "the Mexicans and the Germans," Klein began her tale by saying that "the relationship was alright, but you couldn't trust them."[57] She continued with a story of stolen goods. First, she claimed, her chickens had begun to disappear. Initially, she did not think much of it. Chickens, after all, were easy prey for coyotes, foxes, and hawks. After the harvest, however, she discovered piles of feathers hidden amongst the newly-cut stalks. The workers, she concluded, had been secretly feasting on her chickens only to hide the evidence in the grain. Mexicans, she concluded, had "sticky fingers." Stories like these justified the ill regard for ethnic Mexican sugar beet workers by casting them as people with low moral character. Their poverty resulted from bad choices rather than poor wages.[58]

Both the Great Western Sugar Company and the residents of the Spanish Colony themselves worked to construct a new identity for ethnic Mexicans. The colony was the vision of the company. Since Great Western owned the land on which the subdivision would be built, the company selected which families moved there. To ensure a trained and reliable labor force, Great Western planned to fill the neighborhood with a "higher class of worker."[59] Though the company officials did not state explicitly what they meant by this, and the determination was left up to the discretion of field foremen familiar with individual families, of the 355 colony residents, the majority came from southern Colorado and northern New Mexico. [60] The 1930 federal census

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[57] Amalie Klein, interview with Timothy J. Kloberdanz, September 24, 1985, Oral Histories, Records of the Sidney Heitman Germans from Russia in Colorado Study Project, Box 12, Folder 14, Archives and Special Collections, Colorado State University, Fort Collins, Colorado.

[58] Ibid.

[59] Lopez and Lopez, 13.

[60] Ibid., 113.

indicated that most of the Colony residents spoke English.[61] The ability to speak English may have been one of the ways Great Western Sugar determined who to recruit to live in the colony, seeing mastery of the English language as a quality necessary of "higher class" workers, an association full of race and class assumptions. English, as noted by George J. Sanchez, was a "potent weapon used to imbue the foreigner with American values."[62] Although white society did not distinguish between Mexican Americans and Mexican nationals, those who spoke English appeared more Americanized than those who did not.

Residents, for their part, worked hard to imbue the Spanish Colony with an air of respectability. From the very start, residents took great strides to maintain cleanliness and decorum. Though race relations between ethnic Mexicans and white Greeley residents were strained, the colony endeavored to demonstrate residents' sense of civic responsibility. In September of 1935, for example, the *Greeley Daily Tribune* reported that the colony's very first phone had been installed. The reason for this technological advance was to "facilitate quick calls to Sheriff Gus Anderson when there is trouble."[63] The article also noted Sheriff Anderson's assurance that there had "been no particular trouble at the colony lately."[64] Phone access connected the colony to the greater Greeley community.

The desire to live in a clean and orderly neighborhood was by no means unique to the Greeley Spanish Colony, but such a neighborhood contrasted them with the perceived chaos of the Jungles. Residents understood that they had been selected as "a better class of workers" to

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[61] Ibid.

[62] Sanchez, 100.

[63] "Phone Is Installed at Greeley Spanish Colony," *Greeley Daily Tribune*, September 30, 1935.

[64] Ibid.

live in the community, and they endeavored to live up to that ideal. It is possible that Great Western Sugar's emphasis on "better" residents was one way it manipulated workers into accepting low wages and subpar living conditions.[65] The desire to distance themselves from other "classes" of beet workers echoed what was happening in other ethnic Mexican communities, where Mexican Americans were articulating an American identity partially by contrasting themselves to Mexican immigrants.[66] A respectable neighborhood would distance them from the bootlegging and vice among ostensibly lower class Mexicans featured so scandalously in the newspapers.

Colonists further established their legitimacy as law-abiding citizens when, on April 10, 1927, the people of the Greeley Spanish Colony drafted, voted on, and implemented a set of regulations for themselves a colony constitution. Great Western Sugar played a part in the creation of the document, as the company appointed the first colony trustees. These trustees, however, were colony residents and they drafted the original colony constitution. Residents were proud of the constitution and considered it to hold "the same level of legality as the Constitution of the United States."[67] Unlike the U.S. Constitution, however, ethnic Mexican farm workers had drafted the colony constitution. Most colonists believed the document reflected their common values.[68]

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[65] Although workers could own their own homes, the subdivision remained unincorporated for decades, leaving residents without running water or sanitation facilities.

[66] See Sanchez, *Becoming Mexican American*, pp. 253-269. For examples of work that links the changing of a national identity from Mexican to American see Mario T. García, *Mexican Americans: Leadership, Ideology, and Identity, 1930-1960* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989).

[67] Lopez and Lopez, 29.

[68] Ibid.

The *Constitution and Rules of the Spanish Colony Neighbors of Greeley, Colorado* addressed the social, moral, and physical upkeep of the colony.[69] It specified the "social improvement of [Colony] inhabitants...under the rules of civil law." In pursuit of this goal, the constitution prescribed the election of a "commission of five members to rule as civil law to habitants of the colony." The constitution elaborated that the commission would serve no less than one and no more than two years.[70] Residents would elect a President, a Secretary, and Treasurer, and two Trustees. With its hybrid system that was one part democracy and one part corporate structure, the colony established a right of and duty to self-rule. The remainder of the colony constitution was devoted to outlining two tasks--physical upkeep of the community and suitable behavior of residents.

The maintenance and cleanliness of the Spanish Colony was of utmost importance. In a section referred to as the "duties of all property owners and every one of the inhabitants of [the] town," the document specified how residents, whether they were property owners or renters, should keep their properties clean and free of rubbish. All residents would pay an annual due of one dollar, which would pay for neighborhood upkeep. This, it specified, would "save the honor of the town."[71] The constitution further specified that the town "will always be on the right way to justice." The Spanish Colony residents turned what were neighborhood ordinances into moral commitments.

The colony constitution also made clear that children would be under near constant scrutiny. Underage boys were required to adhere to a curfew, 8:00 p.m. in the winter and 9:00

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[69] Ibid., Appendix B.

[70] Ibid.

[71] Ibid.

p.m. in the summer, and any boy found violating the curfew would be "prosecuted."[72] Boys who played "ball games" in town, or brought "trouble to them[selves] and the parents," would also be prosecuted. Though the constitution refrained from specifying the method or extent of punishment offenders would receive, it was clear that the children the colony worried most about were *boys*. Girls and young women were most likely to be supervised and chaperoned in order to protect family honor. A family's standing "depended in part on women's purity," and a loss of virginity "not only tainted the reputation of an individual, but of her kin as well."[73] Unmarried men and women became accustomed to being watched. However, the young people of the Spanish Colony found ways to evade spying eyes by meeting up in secret through the everyday act of getting water.

Since colony homes did not connect to the city of Greeley's main water utilities, residents drilled two wells, one on the west side and one on the east, where colonists went to get their daily water. Children were often tasked with the job of fetching the family's water and these outings, one resident recalled, had a "double function," providing opportunity for both procuring water and finding romance.[74] The pumps "were the points of contact where the young people, with the pretext to get water, socialized...until they obtained their fiancées." It is unclear whether the pumps were the colony's "lovers lane," or whether they were merely a place of initial meeting and flirtation. What is clear, however, is that young people saw the pumps as a place to

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[72] Ibid.

[73] Ruiz, 52.; see also Ramón Gutiérrez, "Honor, Ideology, and Class Gender Domination in New Mexico, 1690-1846," *Latin American Perspectives* 12 (Winter 1985), and Ramón Gutiérrez, *When Jesus Came, the Corn Mothers Went Away: Power and Sexuality in New Mexico, 1500-1846* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991).

[74] "La Colonia," *Greeley Tribune: La Tribuna La Vox Latinoamericana*, January 26, 2006.

evade the watchful gaze of their elders and explore their burgeoning sexualities. As with U.S. culture more generally, sexual mores among ethnic Mexican Americans were changing.[75] Young Spanish Colony women and men began pushing against restrictive family rules. Girls and young women may have been omitted from the colony's constitution's warnings, but the search for love at the water pumps indicated that young people were pushing back against these strictures. One former resident of the colony remarked that the pumps were where young people went to "find marriage partners."[76]

Another important factor in maintaining a good image of the colony was women's work in maintaining and beautifying their homes. Along with their work in the sugar beet fields, women's gardens sustained both the nutritional needs of residents and the colony's identity as well. In their gardens, women grew pumpkin, zucchini, corn, peas, and other vegetables. They raised goats and chickens, and maintained their individual properties.[77] Because of the lack of water, most plots could not grow grass, so women would sprinkle water on the ground and hard-pack the dirt. The women, according to one resident, "kept the Colony going." Greeley Spanish Colony homes, noted a white student from the local teachers college who toured the colony for her thesis research, were clean and furnished "as well as an average American home" complete with tables and chairs, and "attractive spotless linoleum covered the floor."[78] Though women

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[75] Several historians have explored changing attitudes towards sexuality, especially among working-class women, during the first half of the twentieth century. See, for example, Kathy Peiss, *Cheap Amusements: Working Women and Leisure in Turn-of-the-Century New York* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986), pp. 110-113; Ruiz, *From Out of the Shadows*, pp. 51-71; Florencemae Waldron, "'I've Never Dreamed It Was Necessary to Marry!': Women and Work in New England in French Canadian Communities, 1890-1930," *Journal of American Ethnic History* 24, no. 2 (Winter 2005): 34-64; Mary E. Odem, *Delinquent Daughters*.

[76] "La Colonia," *Greeley Tribune: La Tribuna La Vox Latinoamericana,* January 26, 2006.

[77] Lopez and Lopez, 67.

[78] Ibid., 64.

sugar beet workers transgressed mainstream gender norms through their status as wageworkers, they worked hard to keep clean, modern homes which, to Spanish Colony outsiders, gave their community an air of respectability and all-Americanness.

Residents of the Greeley Spanish Colony understood that the white community saw them as inferior and they actively worked to create an identity that overcame the structural inequalities that plagued their community. In the 1930s, colony resident Alvin Garcia addressed the neighborhood's lack of easy access to fresh food and household staples when he opened Garcia's Store, the neighborhood's only grocery store. A leader in the community, Garcia "knew everything that had to do with the colony."[79] He was active in neighborhood governance and was a part of the effort to bring electricity and running water to the colony. Garcia made plain that after its initial construction, it was the residents who built the Spanish Colony. In a 2006 interview, 93-year-old Garcia explained that the city of Greeley largely ignored the colony and so every improvement made was due to the efforts of the colonists. "It was our own money and our work," Garcia recalled, "that we made reality many things in that colony."[80] By the time the Great Depression began, residents of the Greeley Spanish Colony had made a home and created a place for themselves in the northern Colorado sugar beet communities.

No "Deportable Aliens": The Great Depression and Mexican Repatriation

Though residents had worked hard to maintain a respectable neighborhood, their efforts

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[79] "La Colonia," *Greeley Tribune: La Tribuna La Vox Latinoamericana*, January 26, 2006.

[80] Ibid.

would not protect the Spanish Colony from the ravages of the Great Depression. As money began to run out, the conditions of the neighborhood started to decline. Even in the best of times, finding work during the off-season was difficult. Some families were able to stretch their beet earnings through the winter, but many others found it necessary to bring in additional money during the off-season. A few men were able to work in the sugar processing factories, but the positions went primarily to white men. Men and women often traveled to work other agricultural jobs away from the colony and women frequently went into domestic service.[81] The unpredictability of off-season work meant that sugar beet families eked out a precarious living. As the Depression hit and jobs became scarcer, sugar beet families began to lose what little economic security they had previously enjoyed. Residents of the Greeley Spanish Colony were no exception. Though their community had felt insulated from the hardships many other beet workers faced, they could not escape the devastation of a failing economic system. In the 1930s, their vulnerability combined with a rising wave of anti-Mexican sentiment from native-born and out-of-work whites. Residents of the Spanish Colony, like ethnic Mexicans throughout the United States, were cast, or recast, as foreigners.

By the mid-1930s, anti-Mexican hysteria was at a fevered pitch. Many white Coloradoans believed that federal aid was being given to out-of-work "aliens," and there was a push to expel them from the state. In May of 1935, the *Greeley Daily Tribune* reported that there was a total of 448 "aliens" on relief in Weld County.[82] The paper informed its readers that the Weld County federal relief office was completing a list of all "deportable aliens." And yet, relief officers had

[81]U.S. Children's Bureau, *Child Labor and the Work of Mothers in the Beet Fields of Colorado and Michigan*, 82.

[82] "Federal Relief Listing Aliens for Deporting," *Greeley Daily Tribune*, May 9, 1935.

discovered that, of the local ethnic Mexicans on relief, most were American citizens and therefore only a few were legally deportable.[83] As time went on, the legality of deportation took a back seat to the racist rhetoric being ramped up by nativists and politicians. In 1935, Colorado Governor Edwin C. Johnson led the movement to rid the state of "aliens"—even though most were U.S. citizens—and began shipping sugar beet workers out of the state.[84] The governor's actions enraged the governor of New Mexico, as that was Johnson's preferred deportation destination, but he also received pushback from Mexican Americans who felt their rights were being disregarded.

The Mexican Americans of the Spanish Colony, who often referred to themselves as Spanish Americans, resented being confused with Mexican nationals. In northern Colorado, as in areas with ethnic Mexican populations throughout the Southwest, the word "Mexican" had a pejorative meaning, loaded with cruel and racist stereotypes that conjured an image of a people lacking in intelligence, work ethic, and civility. Taking on the name "Spanish American," then served both to distinguish them from "bad" Mexicans who lived in Jungles neighborhoods and to emphasize their creation of an American identity. Rejecting a "Mexican" identity, then, was a creative response to racist attacks. Historian John Nieto-Philips calls it "a rhetorical tool for resistance," designed to challenge economic and political marginalization.[85] With this rhetorical

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[83] Ibid.

[84] "Governor Asks No More Beet Labor Be Sent [sic] Colorado," *Greeley Daily Tribune*, May 12, 1934; "Johnson Orders Aliens Escorted Over Colo. Border," *Greeley Daily Tribune*, May 9, 1935; "Beet Laborers Shoved Back Over Oklahoma Border," *Greeley Daily Tribune*, April 22, 1936; "Party of Mexicans Bound Here Ejected by Johnson's Order," *Greeley Daily Tribune*, May 9, 1935.

[85] John M. Nieto-Phillips, *Language of Blood: The Making of Spanish-American Identity in New Mexico, 1880s-1930s* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2004), pp. 1-12. See also Neil Foley, "Becoming Hispanic: Mexican Americans and the Faustian Pact with Whiteness," *Reflexions 1997: New Directions in Mexican American Studies*, ed. Neil Foley, 55-66 (Austin: Center for American Studies, 1998): 53-70; Doris Meyer, *Speaking for Themselves: Neomexicano Cultural Identity and the Spanish-Language Press, 1880-1920* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1996); Charles

tool in hand, a delegation of local Mexican Americans appeared before the Greeley city council in 1938 "seeking to make it clear that there is a difference between 'Spanish Americans' and Mexicans."[86] The delegation's spokesperson, Herman De Herrera, complained that Mayor E.M. Colpitts had erroneously referred to persons who had recently appeared in police court as "Spanish Americans" when in fact they were Mexicans. De Herrera "admitted that it is sometimes hard to tell the difference," but agreed that "there is a problem here" and argued that the true "Spanish Americans" should "help control the situation."[87] This exchange between De Herrera and Colpitts demonstrated both the threat of anti-Mexican racism and a strategy the targets of that racism and violence used to try to overcome it.[88]

While residents of the Spanish Colony pushed to maintain their identity as Americans, local white women began contributing to the conversation as well. In 1933, a representative of the House of Neighborly Service (HNS), a relief organization that worked with the Greeley Spanish Colony, noted, "with the exception of two or three individuals, every person in the

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Montgomery, "Becoming 'Spanish-American': Race, and Rhetoric in New Mexico Politics, 1880-1928," *Journal of American Ethnic History* 20, no. 4 (Summer 2001): 59-84; and Chris Wilson, *The Myth of Santa Fe: Creating a Modern Regional Tradition* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1997), pp. 146-68.

[86] "Spanish Americans in Protest to City Council on Confusing Them with Socalled [sic] Mexicans," *Greeley Daily Tribune*, October 5, 1938.

[87] Ibid.

[88] Articulating a "Spanish American" identity as a means of asserting citizenship was a strategy used by other ethnic Mexican Americans in the United States during the 1920s and 1930s. The League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) and the Order of the Sons of America (OSA), for example, claimed "a Mexican American identity and...their U.S. citizenship by arguing that they possessed the rights accorded them by the U.S. Constitution." This claim to American citizenship also "reflected the aspirations of a nascent Mexican American male middle-class commitment to combating racism as an obstacle to community empowerment." See Cynthia Orozco, *No Mexicans, Women, or Dogs Allowed*, pp. 1-14, quotes on 2.

colony is American born."[89] "They do not belong to old Mexico," she continued, "and Mexico would not keep them if we sent them back, as many Weld [County] citizens urge." The representative reminded readers that it was "generally understood that the beet laborer (Mexican and Spanish-speaking alike) are indispensible to the beet industry of Weld County." In advocating aid for the colony, the HNS agent declared that colony residents were American, but not yet Americanized. "What chance do they have," she wondered, "in the way of American culture?" The HNS representative, like many white, middle-class reformers, thought that colony residents, particularly women, could be taught white, middle-class American values. Though reformers recognized colonists' legal citizenship, they believed impressing cultural citizenship was key to improving colonists' lives.[90]

White Women of Weld County: Americanizing the Spanish Colony During the Great Depression

The urge to Americanize residents of the Greeley Spanish Colony did not emerge in a vacuum, but was rather part of a larger movement in the U.S. West. As Mexican Americans and Mexican immigrants began to transform the face of the American agricultural workforce, native-

[89] "$300 Sought for Neighborly Service" *Greeley Daily Tribune*, October 12, 1933.

[90] Numerous scholars have highlighted the tension between legal and cultural citizenship. Since no legal definition of U.S. citizenship existed until the passage of the Fourteenth Amendment in 1868, white Anglo Saxon Protestants imagined and reimagined its contours based on race, ethnicity, gender, and class in order construct, legitimize, and maintain racial hierarchies. See, for example, Carrie Hyde, *Civic Longing: The Speculative Origins of U.S. Citizenship* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2018). Contestation over citizenship did not end after the Fourteenth Amendment, and in the twentieth century white Americans debated whether communities of color, regardless of legal citizenship, qualified as Americans. See Mae Ngai, *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004); John S.W. Park, *Elusive Citizenship: Immigration, Asian Americans, and the Paradox of Civil Rights* (New York: New York University Press, 2004); Natalia Molina, *How Race is Made in America: Immigration, Citizenship, and the Historical Power of Racial Scripts* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014).

born white Americans expressed alarm over the "Mexican Invasion" in the urban centers they hoped to keep white. Most of those who worked in agriculture migrated from place to place during the growing and harvest seasons and made their homes in rapidly expanding southwestern cities. Failure of these cities to update housing and infrastructure to accommodate the influx of people left the ethnic Mexican *barrios* overcrowded and unsanitary, contributing to white stereotypes of "dirty Mexicans" who procreate "with the reckless prodigality of rabbits."[91] Nativists began calling for the restriction of Mexican immigration and, because racist discourses lumped all Spanish-speaking peoples into the same outsider status regardless of legal citizenship, rhetorical and physical attacks on all ethnic Mexican communities were on the rise. Whether through violence, immigration restriction, or assimilationist pressures, white America believed something had to be done about its "Mexican Problem."[92]

One of the approaches urban whites deployed to deal with the increased presence of ethnic Mexicans in cities was Americanization. Assimilation by another name, Americanization promised to mold ethnic Mexicans into model Americans. Americanizers assumed all ethnic Mexicans were poor, wage laborers at best, and lazy troublemakers at worst, and set out to teach men, women, and children in urban *barrio*s how to achieve and maintain the lifestyle of the white, American middle class. Americanization efforts, however well intentioned, neglected to address any of the systemic, institutionalized, racial and classed barriers that kept poor *barrio*

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[91] For a discussion on stereotypes of ethnic Mexicans, see Neil Betten and Raymond Mohl, "From Discrimination to Repatriation: Mexican Life in Gary, Indiana, During the Great Depression," in *The Chicano: Essays*, ed. Norris Hundley (Santa Barbara: ABC Clio Books, 1975): 124-42. For more on the "dirty Mexican" stereotype, particularly the ways in which it shaped public health policy, see Natalia Molina, *Fit to Be Citizens: Public Health and Race in Los Angeles, 1879-1939* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006); and John McKiernan-Gonzáles, *Fevered Measures*.

[92] See Gilbert Gonzales, "'The Mexican Problem": Empire, Public Policy, and the Education of Mexican Immigrants, 1880-1930," *Aztlan: A Journal of Chicano Studies* 26, no. 2 (Fall 2001): 199-207.

dwellers in poverty. Although Americanization offered the promise of the American Dream, what it often delivered was second-class citizenship.

Americanizers thought that the success of their mission hinged on ethnic Mexican women. Seeing wives and mothers as the moral gatekeepers of the home, social reformers set out to "go after the women."[93] The strategy tied in well with American ideas about of the importance of motherhood to political identity. Motherhood "became the juncture at which the Mexican immigrant woman's potential role in Americanization was most highly valued."[94] In order to ensure the construction of "proper" American children, immigrant women, as well as poor white women and poor women of color, received instruction in health, hygiene, nutrition, and domestic arts. For many, particularly those in urban areas like Los Angeles, Americanizers' emphasis on domestic skills also intended to prepare ethnic Mexican women to participate in the domestic wage labor market. Teaching women to be proper wives and mothers, the thinking went, would also teach them how to be suitable maids and housekeepers.[95] In pre-World War II rural Colorado, however, reformers were primarily concerned with Americanizing the sugar beet workforce rather than grooming women to leave it.

Although Americanization efforts were primarily focused on cities, they were present in rural communities, too. Reformers saw "scientific motherhood" as especially important in the countryside, as reformers attempted to improve the health of rural women and children through

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[93] George Sanchez pulled the now-infamous quote by Alfred White was pulled from George, "'Go After the Women.'"

[94] Sanchez, "Go After the Women," 481.

[95] Ibid., pp. 486-488. Sanchez argues, compellingly, that the instruction of domestic skills had these two motivations. The motivation to prepare ethnic Mexican women for domestic service was less of a factor in Americanization efforts in rural northern Colorado, as they were needed as field laborers.

guidance from physicians and other experts.[96] Rural women, particularly rural women of color, were under increasing pressure to "modernize" in order to improve the lives of their children.[97] The monthly magazine *The Farmer's Wife,* which had an estimated readership of 750,000 women, reported with alarm that pre-school aged children in rural Illinois had an average of 2.13 "significant defects," while their urban peers averaged just 1.64. An official from the Illinois Department of Public Health even declared that "for several years it has been increasingly apparent...that the large cities are coming to be more healthful than the small communities and farming districts."[98] The idea that rural communities were less healthy than noisy, polluted urban centers was a shock to many readers of *The Farmer's Wife*, since Americans tended to view the countryside as more wholesome and superior to cities in this era. As rural areas experienced demographic change due to the influx of agricultural labor, reformers set out to Americanize ethnic Mexican women through modern principles of American health and hygiene. Officials in both urban and rural areas considered ethnic Mexican women malleable, and their young children even more so.[99]

Though most histories of Americanization—both rural and urban—stop in the 1920s, an examination of the House of Neighborly Service's work with the Spanish Colony shows that

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[96] For more on scientific motherhood, see Rima D. Apple, "Constructing Mothers: Scientific Motherhood in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries," *Social History of Medicine* 8, no. 2 (August 1995): 161-178.

[97] For a discussion on the intersections of "modern" mothering and assimilation, see Lisa Emmerich, "'Save the Babies!': American Indian Women, Assimilation Policy, and Scientific Motherhood, 1912-1918," in *Writing the Range: Race, Class, and Culture in the Women's West*, ed. Elizabeth Jameson and Susan Armitage, 393-409 (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1997).

[98] Quote from *The Farmer's Wife* and the Illinois Department of Public Health from Lynne Curry, "Modernizing the Rural Mother: Gender, Class, and Health Reform in Illinois, 1910-1930," in *Mothers & Motherhood: Readings in American History*, eds. Rima Apple and Janet Golden (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1997): 495-516; quotes on 495.

[99] Molina, *Fit to Be Citizens*, pp. 9-10, 77-78, 112.

Americanization projects endured.[100] The women of the House of Neighborly Service were acting both out of a contemporary movement of white, middle-class women "reforming" poor women and women of color, movements that were well meaning but also deeply racist. [101] The work done by the House of Neighborly Service and other women reformers in Colorado was no exception, but it also emphasized, in a time of rampant nativism and indiscriminate repatriation, that the residents of the Greeley Spanish Colony had claims to citizenship and belonging in the community.

As part of their efforts to legitimate the presence of inhabitants of the Spanish Colony, Weld County reform women emphasized that colony homes, children, and neighborhood were clean. A delegation from the Spanish Colony's school, Gibson Elementary, for example, noted in their report that they "were delighted" at the condition of "tiny houses" of the colony.[102] The teachers claimed that most of the homes had clean walls, windows, and floors, as well as

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[100] Historian John McClymer argues that Americanization lost its urgency after 1924 and the movement "virtually [died]" after the passage of immigration restriction." John McClymer, "Gender and the 'American Way of Life': Women in the Americanization Movement," *Journal of American Ethnic History* 10, no. 3 (Spring 1991): 3-20; quote on 4. See also James R. Barrett, "Americanization from the Bottom Up: Immigration and the Remaking of the Working Class in the States, 1880-1930," *Journal of American History* 79, no. 3 (December, 1993): 996-1020; and Gary Gerstle, "Liberty, Coercion, and the Making of Americans," *The Journal of American History* 84, no. 2 (September 1997): 524-558.

[101] The literature on this is vast. See, for example, Margaret Jacobs, *White Mother to a Dark Race: Settler Colonialism, Maternalism, and the Removal of Indigenous Children in the American West and Austraila, 1880-1940* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009); Peggy Pascoe, *Relations of Rescue: The Search for Female Moral Authority in the American West, 1879-1939* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990); Robyn Muncy, *Creating a Female Dominion in American Reform, 1890-1935*(New York: Oxford University Press, 1994); Angela Firkus, "Agricultural Extension and the Campaign to Assimilate the Native Americans of Wisconsin, 1914-1932," *Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era* 9, no. 4 (October 2010): 473-502; Vicki Ruiz, "Dead Ends or Gold Mines?: Using Missionary Records in Mexican-American Women's History," *Frontiers: A Journal of Women's Studies* 12, no. 1 (1991): 33-56; George Sanchez, "'Go After the Women.'"

[102] "Teachers Report on Their Work At Gipson Near Spanish Colony," *Greeley Daily Tribune*, November 10, 1937.

"homemade rugs and chair seats, with many treasures the children have made at school [which] make lovely spots of color in their otherwise bare homes."[103] The delegation also documented an incident in which the "little girls" of one family, who had been left alone while the parents were working in the beet fields, "had mopped the floor, piled the clean laundry on a well made bed and gotten enough seats for five visitors."[104] The emphasis on cleanliness of Spanish Colony people and homes was informed by the discourse that ethnic Mexicans were naturally dirty but it also reflected white assumptions about farmworkers. Spanish Colony residents were sugar beet farmers and they spent their days working the soil. During the workday, they were, quite literally, dirty. The common usage of "dirty Mexican" referred to hygiene but it also "fused race and class and discredited the notion that Mexican Americans could become contributing members of civil society."[105] By noting colonists' cleanliness, reformers both accepted the prevailing stereotype and pushed back on it.

Despite a rising anti-Mexican movement both locally and nationally, the larger Greeley community appeared supportive of Weld Vounty reform women's work. In 1937, the *Greeley Daily Tribune* declared, "No one would seriously deny that the entire community benefits indirectly by assisting [Spanish Colony residents] to help themselves." It continued, "From a health, social, and moral standpoint, the House of Neighborly Service is a more dense mechanism established by the people of Greeley for their own good.[106] Later that year, the paper

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[103] Ibid.

[104] Ibid.

[105] Clare Sheridan, "Contested Citizenship: National Identity and the Mexican Immigration Debates of the 1920s," *Journal of American Ethnic History* 21, no. 3 (Spring 2002): 3-35, quote on 7.

[106] "Local Defense," *Greeley Daily Tribune*, September 13, 1937.

reported that the House of Neighborly Service had raised two thousand dollars to continue the "fine and worthwhile work being done in the Spanish Colony."[107] The newspaper's reportage reflected a view that, as the "driving force" in the welfare of the Spanish Colony, the House of Neighborly Service was serving a community need.[108] In a time when whites around the country were protesting the very presence of ethnic Mexicans, the reform women of Weld County worked to solidify Spanish Colony as rightful residents of northern Colorado.

"South of the Boarder on the North Side of Town":

In November of 1982, the University of Northern Colorado's student newspaper, *The Mirror*, ran an article on Greeley's Spanish Colony. In the article, reporter Jack Turner urged his readers to "leave the protection of the university. Go north on 11th Avenue. Cross a set of railroad tracks." There, he marveled, one would find oneself transported to another time and place. Bean tacos and cold beer, beautiful women who wore roses in their hair, and weathered old men with faces as brown and leathery as their old cowboy hats all flourished "south of the border on the north side of town."[109] Old Mexico remained, it seemed, in the Greeley Spanish Colony.

Turner's article encapsulated the way that white residents fetishized ethnic Mexican residents of the Greeley Spanish Colony, but it also hinted at how colony residents had maintained an identity of their own. The years had been unkind to the colony, but the lack of

[107] "H.N.S. $2,000 Goal Reached," *Greeley Daily Tribune*, November 9, 1937.

[108] "Women Driving Force in Welfare Organizations of Community," *Greeley Tribune Republican*, February 17, 1931.

[109] Jack Turner, "South of the Border on the North Side of Town," *UNC The Mirror*, November 12, 1982.

financial support from the city had been even meaner. Even as late as the 1980s, the Spanish Colony remained physically isolated. And unlike German Russians before them, the ethnic Mexican residents of the colony were mostly unable to ascend to the agrarian middle class.

And yet, colony residents did cultivate an identity for themselves. When ethnic Mexicans moved into the Spanish Colony, they were proud of their community and they worked to keep it clean and orderly. They tried for a time to construct an image of themselves based on respectability. Americanization programs in northern Colorado sugar beet communities generally and those focused on the Spanish Colony specifically, were designed to "go after the women." White public health nurses, teachers, and club women carried out reform programs, making it their mission to enlighten ethnic Mexican women and "save" ethnic Mexican children through improved health, hygiene, and domestic practices. As the story of Josie Garcia, who evaded lice inspection makes clear, however, reform women discovered that in order to conduct their work, they would have to adjust their approaches and negotiate their demands.

Chapter Four
"Neighbors in Our Midst": Domesticity and Community in the Fort Lupton Labor Camp, 1942-1969

When Gloria Delgado thought back to her childhood in the Fort Lupton Farm Labor Camp, she remembered the feeling of community among the residents. "For me," she explained, "the camp was like a *barrio*. It was people who had the same culture, the same way of life. They were there to make life better for their children."[1] Delgado and her family lived in a three-bedroom bungalow, one of over a hundred such homes erected specially for seasonal workers who lived in the camp year-round. Smaller structures and tents housed the migrants, primarily Mexican *braceros*, but also Jamaican, Navajo, and Lakota workers who lived in the camp during the growing and harvest seasons. Another resident, Joe Martínez, remembered that the camp "felt like a little village," adding that "if a kid got out [of] line the neighbor could straighten him out in a hurry."[2] Together, the permanent residents and those who moved through the camp seasonally built a community and a sense of belonging. Their lives, like the lives of residents in other U.S. *barrios*, were marked by physical and social distance from their white neighbors. [3] Although *barrios* have come to refer to ghettoized and impoverished neighborhoods of Spanish-

[1] Leo Wolfson, "Residents have fond memories of farm labor camp," *Fort Lupton Press*, September 27, 2017.

[2] Ibid.

[3] For more on *barrios*, particularly regional transformations that resulted from land loss, industrialization, urbanization, and the rise of wage labor, see Albert Camarillo, *Chicanos in a Changing Society: From Mexican Pueblos to American Barrios in Santa Barbara and Southern California, 1848-1930* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979); Richard Griswold del Castillo, *The Los Angeles Barrio, 1850-1890: A Social History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979); David Montejano, *Anglos and Mexicans in the Making of Texas, 1836-1986* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1987); Mario T. Garcia, *Desert Immigrants: The Mexicans of El Paso, 1880-1920* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981); Thomas Sheridan, *Los Tucsonenses: The Mexican Community in Tucson, 1854-1941* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1986); Ricardo Romo, *East Los Angeles: A History of a Barrio* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1983).

speaking peoples, Chicanx and Latinx scholars have demonstrated that barrios were also sites of community building and resistance to a system built on racial hierarchy.[4] The *barrio*, then, is a "fraught material and ideological space that can both sustain and marginalize those associated with it."[5] As in *barrios* around the country, residents of the Fort Lupton Labor Camp forged ties that enabled them to claim the camp as their own. The camp was a place of solidarity, family, and pride. It was also a battleground on which camp residents, farmers, government officials, church groups, and public health workers contested the meaning of community and citizenship. But to Gloria Delgado, Joe Martínez, and the thousands of others who lived there between 1942 and 1969, the Fort Lupton Farm Labor Camp was, simply, home.

While the Fort Lupton Farm Labor camp was home to farmworker families, white aid workers throughout Weld County viewed camp residents as something between legal citizen and authentic American. In this, reformers diverged from the anti-Mexican fervor that cast Mexican Americans as perpetual foreigners. Reformers endeavored to include residents of the Fort Lupton Labor Camp into the national community. Reformers' actions, however, were informed by the racialized belief that any adherence to Mexican culture disqualified one from cultural citizenship, so they set out to instruct camp residents in the behaviors they believed belonged to true Americans. This reflects the phenomenon analyzed by historian Benedict Anderson, who argues in *Imagined Communities* that nationalism relies on the construction of mutually agreed upon

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[4] See for example, Justin Akers Chacón, *Radicals in the Barrio: Magonistas, Socialists, Wobblies, and Communists in the Mexican-American Working Class* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2018); Michael Innis-Jiménez, *Steel Barrio: The Great Mexican Migration to South Chicago, 1915-1940* (New York: New York University Press, 2013); Miguel Montiel, *Resolana: Emerging Chicano Dialogues on Community and Globalization* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2009); Arnoldo De León, *The Tejano Community, 1836-1900* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico, 1982).

[5] Gina M. Pérez, Frank A. Guridy, and Adrian Burgos, Jr., eds. *Beyond el Barrio: Everyday Life in Latina/o America* (New York: New York University Press, 2010), 3.

fictions. As a "cultural artifact" itself, the nation is created through visual, textual, and discursive representations that are adopted as fundamental to political subjectivity. Readers of mass-circulated publications, exposed to repeated images and messages, are "continually reassured that the imagined world is visibly rooted in everyday life." These messages "[seep] quietly and continuously into reality, creating that remarkable confidence of community in anonymity which is the hallmark of modern nations."[6] Imagined communities revolve around cultural systems that inform ideas about citizenship and belonging. In the Fort Lupton Labor Camp, messages of citizenship were ensconced in matters of the home. In trying to bring camp residents into the imagined community of postwar American citizenship, white migrant aid reformers relied on postwar domesticity to make migrants Americans.

But residents of the Fort Lupton Labor Camp fit uneasily within the post-World War II American imagined community. Although the seasonal sugar beet workforce was made up of both year-round residents and laborers who came into the area only for the summer and fall, most of the people who investigated, wrote about, and brought aid to these workers during the 1940s and 1950s referred to all farm laborers as migrants.[7] In a period defined by a retreat to the home and the rise of a renewed ideology of domesticity, the association with domestic impermanence marked people who lived in labor camps, even those who lived there year round.[8]

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[6] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983), pp.35-6.

[7] In northern Colorado sugar beet communities, the term "migrant worker" became shorthand for any ethnic Mexican who worked in the sugar beet fields. The reasons for the tendency to homogenize this workforce traced to whites' general inability to distinguish between distinct communities of ethnic Mexicans and the common belief that ethnic Mexican farmworkers were "naturally" migratory. The so-called "birds of passage" theory held that "[T]he migrant is a migrant by nature....The migrant tries not to think of the future. He lives for today and lets tomorrow take care of itself." See "Solution of Migrant Problems Vital for Several Reasons," *Greeley Daily Tribune*, July 8, 1964.

[8] See Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era* (New York: Basic Books, 1988).

Permanent residents seemed transgressive in another way, too, as they appeared to reject the modern American suburban household willingly. A retreat to domesticity in the suburbs was a centerpiece of middle-class conformity, and communal life in a labor camp stood in stark contrast to newly emerging ideas of white, middle-class American identity.[9]

Historians of the post-World War II period postwar period have noted that the years after the war brought about a cultural shift towards domesticity in the United States. This movement emphasized a retreat into the home and included intense pressure to conform to heterosexual marriage, parenthood, and delineated gender boundaries—men were to become family breadwinners, and women would manage homes and children. Any deviation from this norm was cast as unnatural, suspect, and a threat to national security.[10] Historian Elaine Taylor May argues that the retreat to the home was linked to Cold War anxieties. A "weak" nation that included

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[9] For more on suburbanization in the United States see Kenneth T. Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985); J. John Palen, *The Suburbs* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1995); Robert Lewis, ed., *Manufacturing Suburbs: Building Work and Home on the Metropolitan Fringe* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2004); Eric Avila, *Popular Culture n the Age of White Flight: Fear and Fantasy in Suburban Los Angeles* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004); Lisa McGirr, *Suburban Warriors: The Origins of the New American Right* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001); Matthew D. Lassiter, *The Silent Majority: Suburban Politics in the Sunbelt South* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006).

[10] For more on the retreat to domesticity and construction of the compulsory heteronormative nuclear family, see May, *Homeward Bound*; Joanne Meyerowitz, *Not June Cleaver: Women and Gender in Postwar America, 1946-1969* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994); Ruth Schwartz Cowan, *More Work For Mother: The Ironies of Household Technology From the Open Hearth to the Microwave* (New York: Basic Books, 1983). The 1950s cult of domesticity linked heteronormativity to patriotism. Those who deviated from these norms faced increased scrutiny, persecution, and criminalization. It was an especially perilous time for political dissidents and LGBTQ Americans. See David K. Johnson, *The Lavender Scare: The Cold War Persecution of Gays and Lesbians in the Federal Government* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004); Robert J. Corber, *Homosexuality in Cold War America: Resistance and the Crisis of Masculinity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997); Carolyn Herbst Lewis, *Prescription for Heterosexuality: Sexual Citizenship in the Cold War Era* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010); Margo Canaday, *The Straight State: Sexuality and Citizenship in Twentieth-Century America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009); John D'Emilio, *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities: The Making of a Homosexual Minority in the United States, 1940-1970, 2nd ed.* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998).

"deviations from the norms of appropriate sexual and familial behavior might lead to social disorder and national vulnerability."[11] Nurturing the nuclear family, then, was for the good of the country.

Northern Colorado reformers also advocated the nuclear family, but the model fit awkwardly when applied to farmworkers in sugar beet communities. May argues that postwar domesticity "blurred class lines while sharpening racial divisions," and among women sugar beet workers, May's analysis rings true.[12] Reformers tried hard to get women to conform to post-war ideals of gender and domesticity, but women's inability to leave farm work enhanced their racialized difference from middle-class white women. The nuclear family dictated that women's place was in the home, but the labor of women—and children—was necessary for the family to make ends meet. Their labor was also sustained the local economy, so a mass exodus of women from the sugar beet fields could have disastrous repercussions. Reformers thus created an alternative ideal, one that pushed Cold War domesticity and reinforced gender norms while not advocating that women and children leave the labor stream.

Even though farmworkers fit awkwardly within the American imagined community, in the 1950s a significant contingent of white Americans began to argue for the right of some seasonal workers to be included. Government officials, migrant ministries, and public health workers emphasized their responsibility to some, though not all, ethnic Mexican farm workers. The growing concern for farmworker families appeared alongside another, larger, debate regarding Mexican nationals who were brought to the United States to work and then sent back home at the end of the season. Mexican guest workers, called *braceros* in reference to the strong

[11] May, 12.

[12] Ibid., 9.

arms required for manual labor, were primarily single Mexican men. As postwar prosperity began to wane, farm wages started to drop, and white Americans blamed the cheap labor of *braceros*. The need for cheap labor continued, however, and a rising chorus of voices argued that the answer was to end *bracero* migration and instead to employ Mexican American farmworker families. A letter from the reform-minded Citizens Committee on Migrant and Child Labor, for example, asked the federal Farm Placement Service to "justify and explain why 10,000 *braceros* are brought from Mexico when only 6,000 are used in the peak of the season in the spring and fall?" The committee stressed that "continued pressure on the Farm Placement Service in Colorado would help reduce the number of *braceros* brought in and would help provide a more rational use of domestic workers who would face less days of unemployment and under employment."[13] Those "domestic" workers were Mexican Americans, referred to in Colorado as Spanish Americans, and they appeared to be the perfect solution to the labor problem. Since they were American citizens, there was a patriotic angle to the argument. What was more, these workers generally traveled, worked, and settled in heterosexual family groups. In this regard, Mexican American farmworkers appeared to adhere to Anglo-American-middle-class heteronormative conceptions of the nuclear family.

This chapter examines the various attempts by community aid organizations to construct an American identity on behalf of ethnic Mexican American sugar beet workers during the 1950s, and then the subsequent shift of the citizenship narrative to farm workers themselves in the 1960s. Government agencies, the Colorado Council of Migrant Ministries, and public health

[13] "Administrative Actions Possible at the State Level to Improve Conditions of Migratory Labor," Citizens Committee on Migrant Child Labor letter to Committee to Oppose Discrimination, Box SC055, Folder 13, Migrant Education Collection, Archival Services, James A. Michener Library, University of Northern Colorado, Greeley.

workers saw farmworkers' poverty and attempted to address it by emphasizing that adherence to mainstream, middle-class, and mostly white constructions of American citizenship would lead to an escape both from poverty and the migrant stream. This aid did little to improve the lives of those in the Fort Lupton Labor Camp and, by the 1960s, camp residents turned to activism in order to craft their own American subjectivity based on what they saw as their rights to safe, healthy homes for themselves and their children. The movement would last only until harvest season, and then they would have to leave the labor camp forever. But their movement demonstrated they would no longer accept second-class citizenship. They belonged.

A "Unique" Solution to Housing: The Fort Lupton Farm Labor Camp

There was little question that the Fort Lupton Labor Camp was essential to the local sugar beet economy. It provided housing for the thousands of workers required in the fields each season. Since the beginning of the sugar beet industry, beet workers had always lived in less than ideal conditions. However, by the 1950s, the extreme poverty of sugar beet workers alarmed many government and charity organizations. Reluctant to blame farmers, government investigators and policymakers, migrant ministry groups, and public health officials attempted to solve the "migrant problem" themselves, and their efforts began with the construction of a labor camp.

Because no other labor camp for seasonal workers had been erected previously in northern Colorado, observers saw the one built at Fort Lupton as a "unique" solution to the labor-housing problem that had plagued sugar beet communities.[14] Built in 1942 by the U.S.

[14] "Migrant Labor Camp Unique," *Greeley Daily Tribune*, February 26, 1959.

Department of Agriculture, and then transferred to Weld County Housing in 1951, the camp had permanent structures for year-round occupancy as well as one-bedroom "sleeping units" and tents for seasonal migrants.[15] The camp featured several amenities—an auditorium, library, clinic, classrooms, nursery school, playground, offices, and warehouses—and housed around 300 people in winter. It could accommodate more than five times that number, 1700 individuals, during the planting, growing, and harvest seasons.[16] With the construction of the camp, stewardship of labor housing shifted to the state (first federal and then local government), leaving sugar beet farmers and sugar processing companies free from the responsibility of housing workers.

The mostly white residents of the town of Fort Lupton saw the camp as a necessary element of life in a sugar beet community. In the 1940s, Fort Lupton residents agreed there was a housing need and expressed interest in hosting a labor camp for field workers.[17] As a representative of the Farm Security Administration noted, the length of the harvest season and the strong demand for labor in the area rendered a more "permanent and adequate" type of camp necessary.[18]

Controversy arose briefly during the planning stages when a few town residents expressed concern that camp children would attend the nearby schools. However, the federal

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[15] Quit Claim Deed to the Fort Lupton Farm Labor Camp, Box 2004.36.0015, Permanent Collection, Hazel E. Johnson Research Center, City of Greeley Museums, Greeley, Colorado.

[16] "Migrant Labor Camp Unique," *Greeley Daily Tribune*, February 26, 1959.

[17] "Water Supply May Eliminate Camp of Labor, Fort Lupton Said To Be Interested In Getting Project," *Greeley Daily Tribune*, March 7, 1941.

[18] "Phoenix Firm Submits Low Bid of $312,404 for Fort Lupton Camp of Itinerant Farm Help," *Greeley Daily Tribune*, November 22, 1941.

Farm Security Administration (FSA) assuaged their fears by informing them the FSA planned to build a schoolhouse that could accommodate between 100 and 125 pupils in order to meet "the education problem for children in the camp."[19] An FSA representative attempted to calm town residents further by assuring them that camp construction "would not encourage the influx of additional migratory workers and would not result in discrimination against resident workers."[20] Relieved that they would now have the labor they needed without having to share their schools, the residents of Fort Lupton offered no further objections, and erection of the Fort Lupton Labor Camp commenced.

Residents of the camp lived in relative security during the 1940s. The camp operated efficiently under the Farm Security Administration through the war years and the rest of the 1940s. The camp was made possible by the Emergency Appropriations Act of 1935, a piece of New Deal legislation under the auspices of the U.S. Department of Agriculture which ensured the camp ran under government supervision. The camp was part of the Depression-era development of a federal migrant labor camp system. Camps were required to offer adequate housing, sanitary facilities, and healthcare to farmworkers. Historian Camille Guérin-Gonzales notes that New Deal farm labor camps were largely the result of the "whitening" of agricultural labor during the Great Depression and the ensuing investigations and federal programs designated to address the needs of farmworkers.[21] The system allowed for some autonomy to inhabitants, who, due to government oversight and the need for farm labor, were being treated

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[19] Ibid.

[20] Ibid.

[21] Camille Guérin-Gonzales, *Mexican Workers & American Dreams: Immigration, Repatriation, and California Farm Labor, 1900-1939* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1996), pp. 111-138.

with a degree of dignity and humanity not seen before. What was more, the emergency wartime agricultural labor program, which continued through 1947, only contracted with private employers that agreed to provide maintenance, healthcare, and transportation for hired farm laborers.[22]

In addition to the New Deal infrastructure, residents of the camp benefitted to some degree from the presence of Mexican guest workers who had been brought into the United States through an agreement with Mexico initiated in 1942 called the Mexican Farm Labor Agreement, also known as the *bracero* program. Faced with a shortage of farm labor, the U.S. turned to Mexico to supply temporary guest workers to harvest the nation's crops between 1942 and 1964. This managed migration sent millions of men to work primarily in agriculture. Suitable living conditions, with regular access to food and sanitary facilities, were all stipulations of the agreement. Though living conditions were far from ideal, the wartime camp was preferable to most alternatives available to domestic ethnic Mexican farmworkers. [23]

For all it did to create suitable housing for migrant farmworkers during the war years, the

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[22] Although New Deal policies and infrastructure benefitted residents of the Fort Lupton Labor Camp, it largely failed farmworkers overall. Historian Devra Weber, for example, notes that growers and lobbyists in California's cotton industry managed to convince legislators to exclude agricultural workers from New Deal legislation. See Devra Weber, *Dark Sweat, White Gold: California Farm Workers, Cotton, and the New Deal* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994). For more on New Deal programs for farm labor, see Theodore Saloutos, *The American Farmer and the New Deal* (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1982), pp. 150-178.

[23] Though the agreement between the two countries stipulated a basic level of care and wages, what braceros experienced often fell far short of what was promised. *Braceros*, like Mexican American farm workers, faced discrimination and exploitation. The labor camps, including the one at Fort Lupton, were crowded and often lacked adequate sanitation to accommodate such large numbers of people. Still, Mexican nationals were afforded some level of protection, and the effects of the program were complex, leaving many of the men who participated in it translating their experience and wages into a modest improvement in their economic standing. For more, see Deborah Cohen, *Braceros: Migrant Citizens and Transnational Subjects in the Postwar United States and Mexico* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011.)

New Deal infrastructure failed to provide a clear plan for post-war farm labor. Lobbyists for farm employer organizations had pressured Congress while the legislation was being drafted and effectively prevented farmworkers from gaining inclusion in the primary labor legislation of the New Deal.[24] What was more, control over the camps often fell to agencies that were generally sympathetic to employers.[25] Over time the federal government began transferring authority over the labor camps to the states. In 1951, the Weld County Housing Authority assumed control of Fort Lupton Labor Camp.

As time went on, the population of the Fort Lupton Labor Camp swelled. Nearly 13,000 workers were processed through the camp during the 1949 growing and harvest seasons. Not all of those processed remained at the camp, but consistently remaining at capacity strained the infrastructure and facilities. Representatives of the Great Western Sugar Company "distributed" others to beet communities in Colorado, Nebraska, Wyoming, and Montana.[26] Actual camp occupancy in 1949 rose to 1,600 people, and as more people moved into the camp, conditions deteriorated. At the same time, both federal and local government agencies were looking at the treatment of farmworkers with increasing scrutiny.

Children of Misfortune...From the Cradle to the Grave

[24] Unlike industrial workers, farm workers were mostly left out of the New Deal protective labor legislation. For more, see Cletus Daniel, *Bitter Harvest: A History of California Farmworkers, 1870-1941* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1981).

[25] Anne B. W. Effland, "The Emergence of Federal Assistance Programs for Migrant and Seasonal Farmworkers in Post-World War II America" (PhD dissertation, University of Iowa, 1991), 11.

[26] *1951 Report of Governor's Survey Committee on Migrant Labor*, Western History Collection, Denver Public Library, 67.

In 1950, President Harry Truman initiated the Presidential Commission on Migratory Labor, which promised to "investigate the whole range of problems associated with the use of migratory labor to meet agricultural labor needs."[27] The commission's report the following year made plain the dire situation facing the nation's farmworkers as well as the rising public "uneasiness" regarding the problem. Referring to migrant farmworkers as the "children of misfortune," the report charged that the United States "depend[s] upon misfortune to build up [its] force of migrant workers."[28] Migrant and seasonal laborers had the lowest standard of living of any group in the United States, most farmworkers earning between one and two hundred dollars a month in 1950, falling well below the national average family income of $3,300 per year.[29] The commission called for an end to reliance on the system of poverty that supported the agricultural industry, stressing the need to "build toward an agriculture that will yield a decent American income for those who provide labor."[30] In his official statement on the commission's report, Truman indicated a change in the national discourse regarding the plight of seasonal farm

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[27] "Report of the President's Commission on Migratory Labor" Problems of Migratory Farm Labor in the United States, 1948-1953 Research File, Harry S. Truman Presidential Library online collection, available at <https://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/migratorylabor/documents/pdfs/6-2.pdf. > (accessed June 3, 2016).

[28] Ibid.

[29] For farm wage labor statistics for the year 1950, see Department of Agriculture, *Farm Labor,* prepared by the Bureau of Agricultural Economics (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1950) available at https://downloads.usda.library.cornell.edu/usda-esmis/files/x920fw89s/b5644t34b/fn1070533/FarmLabo-07-11-1950.pdf. For U.S. average family income for 1950, see U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Current Population Reports: Consumer Income* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1952).

[30] "Report of the President's Commission on Migratory Labor," Problems of Migratory Farm Labor in the United States, 1948-1953 Research File, Harry S. Truman Presidential Library online collection, available at <https://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/migratorylabor/documents/pdfs/6-2.pdf. > (accessed June 3, 2016).

workers not seen since the Great Depression.[31]

The same year that the Truman commission's report appeared, the State of Colorado also began to grapple with the migrant problem. In 1951, Governor Walter Johnson authorized a Survey Committee on Migrant Labor composed of employers, farmers, lawyers, educators, social workers, and labor leaders from around the state to collect and analyze information relating to the problems of migratory agricultural workers. The committee focused on issues such as determining "the amount of seasonal farm labor needed in the state" and "the number of domestic or resident farm laborers [that are] available in the state [and] the extent to which such labor is [being] fully utilized." What appeared to most vex investigators were the intertwining issues of housing, educational opportunities for migrant children, and access to health care practitioners and facilities. They called on Colorado to discover "to what extent the health needs of farm workers are supplied by existing agencies and what effect their health conditions have on the community at large."[32] Seasonal workers not only lived in substandard environments, but their presence could also pose a threat to surrounding communities.

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[31] Migrant farm labor was also a national issue during the Depression, though the discourse primarily emphasized the plight of white workers, particularly farmers who, after losing their farms, ventured westward to find work in the agricultural fields of California. The tide of Depression-era migrants flowing west consisted, according to historian James N. Gregory, primarily of poor whites from the Oklahoma-north Texas cotton belt, the Ozark Mountain area of northern Arkansas, and southern Missouri. Gregory estimates that 95 percent of Dust Bowl migrants who found their way to California were white. As Gregory shows, this movement had a profound effect on both California culture and the broader U.S. culture as well. These Dust Bowl migrants helped to cloak the memory of Depression-era migration in whiteness. See James N. Gregory, *American Exodus: The Dust Bowl Migration and Okie Culture in California* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989). A notable exception to the focus on the whiteness of Depression-Era migrant farm workers was Carey McWilliams, *Factories in the Field: The Story of Migratory Farm Labor in California* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Co., 1939). McWilliams's book, widely heralded as a masterpiece, examined the experiences of Chinese, Japanese, Mexican, Filipino, and Armenian farm workers in California and condemned the politics of agricultural industry and urged farmworkers to organize collectively.

[32] *1951 Report of Governor's Survey Committee on Migrant Labor*, Western History Collection, Denver Public Library, 3.

The threat of contamination was part of the concern over the migrant question. The committee wrote that it received "reports—but no documentation—of migrant-borne disease transmitted to cattle in northern Colorado. The Committee also received reports and opinions that migrant health conditions constitute a potentially severe menace to the health of the community at large as well as to livestock."[33] Although the committee worried that migrants would spread disease, it was "unable to secure current or general information…of migrants and their effect upon the communities in which they live and work." The information they did receive, forwarded from the Fort Lupton migrant camp, reported the presence of only twelve cases (out of approximately 12,500 migrants) of communicable disease.[34]

The governor's survey failed to find evidence that migrants were carriers of infectious disease, but it did demonstrate that accommodations for migrant farmworkers in Colorado were inadequate at best. Part of the problem was that Colorado did not have a housing code for agricultural laborers, and the provisions of the Federal Housing Act were limited by the Colorado Enabling Act, which only permitted cities with populations over 5,000 to apply for

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[33] Ibid.

[34] The fear of migrant contamination was part of a larger discourse that had cast certain immigrants as threats to public health since the late nineteenth century. Bolstered by medical discoveries in bacteriology, public health officials cast so-called undesirable immigrants as carriers of infectious disease. As many historians have demonstrated, this fear was highly racialized and led to the rise of multiple strategies for controlling and containing the threat of contamination. See, for example, Alan M. Kraut, *Silent Travelers: Germs, Genes, and the "Immigrant Menace"* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994); Howard Markel, *Quarantine! East European Jewish Immigrants and the New York City Epidemics of 1892* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997); Susan Craddock, *City of Plagues: Disease, Poverty, and Deviance in San Francisco* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000); Nayan Shah, *Contagious Divides: Epidemics and Race in San Francisco's Chinatown* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001); Howard Markel, *When Germs Travel: Six Major Epidemics That Have Invaded America Since 1900 and the Fears They Have Unleashed (*New York: Pantheon Books, 2004); Natalia Molina, *Fit to be Citizens? Public Health and Race in Los Angeles, 1879 – 1939 (*Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006); Emily K. Abel, *Tuberculosis and the Politics of Exclusion: A History of Public Health and Migration to Los Angeles* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2007).

federal loans to assist in the construction of low-cost public housing.[35] Growers, who in 1950 provided 50 percent of migrant housing during the growing season, failed to provide adequate living accommodations for their workers. According to a report on behalf of the National Child Labor Committee, the average amount of living space for migrant families was 1.76 rooms shared by 3.3 persons. [36] To put it another way, at least half of the families studied lived in a single room. Only 17 percent of those interviewed had any rooms used solely for sleeping. That migrant workers in Colorado, and sugar beet workers in general, lived in terrible conditions was well known to residents of sugar beet communities, but this was the first concerted effort to address the problem.

Rising concern over the migrant problem was not limited to government. National and local media also began to focus on the plight of migrant workers. Journalists of leading newspapers and magazines began to expose the dire conditions in which migrant workers lived and worked. In 1953, for example, *Harper's Magazine* published an article on migrant workers, emphasizing their story as one of "an unregarded army of people who [toil] from the cradle to the grave." In her article, journalist Mary Heaton Vorse asked how "a nation which prides itself on its enlightened labor legislation, its generally good labor conditions, and its outlawing of child labor" could continually disregard farmworkers' dire circumstances.[37] Through articles like these, news of the poverty and misery of migrant workers could be found in homes around the country.

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[35] Ibid., 16.

[36] Howard E. Thomas and Florence Taylor, *Migrant Farm Labor in Colorado, A Study of Migratory Families* (New York: National Child Labor Committee 1951), pp. 35, 41, 37-41.

[37] Mary Heaton Vorse, "America's Submerged Class: the Migrants," *Harper's Bazaar*, February 1953, pp. 86-93.

The living conditions of ethnic Mexican farmworkers entered the national discourse on a large scale, and white-middle-class Americans attempted to grapple with the dark underbelly of industrial agriculture. It was "hardly accurate," The Colorado Council of Churches wrote, "to say, in 1960, that migrants were the 'forgotten people,' for not only at state and local levels, but nationally, governments and agencies and churches were considering what changes must be made to improve the lot of these comparatively few people whose problems loom so large."[38] It was growing more evident to white Coloradoans that there was a problem. Many would spend the 1950s and much of the 1960s attempting to find a solution.

"Neighbors in Our Midst"

Though awareness of the condition of seasonal workers was developing, the issue looked more complicated at the local level. It was one thing for a committee of impartial onlookers to recommend changes that would improve the lives of farmworkers, but deciding who would pay for it was another thing entirely. As one Denver radio show panelist put in 1946, "in this country of free enterprise, to lean on ourselves, particularly since farmers are very independent, they want to do the job themselves. They don't want to be held down or infringed upon by a lot of rules and regulations."[39] When the discussion turned to farmers' responsibilities, there was local outcry that farmers were barely making ends meet as it was.

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[38] Colorado Council of Churches Annual Report for 1960, Box SC055, Folder 13, Migrant Education Collection, Archival Services, James A. Michener Library, University of Northern Colorado, Greeley.

[39] Northwestern University on the Air, "The Social Consequences of Migratory Labor: A Radio Discussion from Mutual's Denver Studios" September 22, 1946, Box 93.44.54, Permanent Collection, Hazel E. Johnson Research Center, City of Greeley Museums, Greeley, Colorado.

Though it was unclear who should shoulder financial responsibility for lifting farmworkers out of poverty, most agreed that there was one major problem: migrants who settled. As long as farmworkers were "birds of passage," their presence was tolerated, albeit begrudgingly. When community members discussed workers who "settled down" permanently, as farmworkers often did, it rose alarm among some residents. Greeley resident Jim Hitch decried the "thousands of nomadic workers [who] invade Weld County" and who found themselves subjected to miserable living conditions."[40] Editorials like Hitch's referred to settlements of farm workers as "fringe communities" and slums. Residents wanted nothing to do with them. Farmers generally preferred Mexican guest workers because they traveled alone and were more likely to leave at the end of the season. In defending the use of Mexican nationals, Hitch argued in his editorial that "if those 9,000 Nationals are replaced, they must be replaced by migrants from Texas, who will bring their families. So instead of 9,000 braceros, there would be at least 18,000 additional migrants."[41] The fear was that if Mexican Americans came, they might also stay.

Unlike farmers and opponents to a sustained presence of ethnic Mexicans, researchers and reformers consistently emphasized a need for migrants to be included as members of the communities in which they worked. And yet, although the majority of migrant workers traveling into northern Colorado were Spanish-speaking Mexican-American citizens, their access to public welfare was limited because many state and federal laws did not apply to agricultural migrants. According to the governor's committee, this was because of "the uniqueness of their

[40] Untitled Editorial, *Greeley Daily Tribune*, July 1, 1964.

[41] Ibid.

problems."[42] To qualify for many state and federal benefits, an applicant had to demonstrate "rootedness" in the community. The laws often required that applicants remain under the supervision of a single employer continuously for a specified period, which meant workers had to stay in one place or at one job and establish legal residence.[43] All of these requirements were problematic when applied to migrant workers—whose labor was, by definition, temporary, mobile, and unpredictable. Migrants might be employed at a job for only a few days or weeks at a time before moving on to the next and, in the case of migrants in northern Colorado, they worked in a state other than the one where they maintained residence. Weather and crop conditions could mean that the migrants suddenly did not work at all. As for the host community, the governor's committee noted, "the migrants' ability to earn, and their very usefulness to the community depends in large measure upon their mobility, upon their not being rooted in any one place."[44] Even when migrants managed to overcome the many hurdles to apply for welfare assistance, they were routinely denied. Reformers reasoned that if farmworkers could settle and make themselves a part of the communities in which they worked, their lot would improve.[45]

Although they were increasingly encouraged to enmesh themselves in sugar beet communities, many migrants had an uneasy sense of belonging there. The reason for their unease

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[42] *1951 Report of Governor's Survey Committee on Migrant Labor*, Western History Collection, Denver Public Library, 17.

[43] Ibid., 18.

[44] Ibid.

[45] Agricultural laborers have long been excluded from federal welfare and labor legislation. See Austin P. Morris, "Agricultural Labor and National Labor Legislation," *Agricultural History* 54, no. 5 (December, 1996): 1939-1989; Lee J. Alston and Joseph P. Ferrie, *Southern Paternalism and the American Welfare State* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); James C. Cobb, "'Somebody Done Nailed Us on the Cross': Federal Farm and Welfare Policy and the Civil Rights Movement in the Mississippi Delta," *Journal of American History* 77 (1990): 912-36.

was simple—they faced resentment from local whites if they remained after the growing season. Agricultural communities acknowledged their need for migrant labor during the growing and harvest season, but the welcome usually expired after the need for their labor was finished. Once migrants overstayed that welcome, white community perceptions of them often shifted from necessary guest workers to outsider interlopers. Researcher Ruth Boring Howard highlighted this transformation, noting that "though the migrants are an asset at the times when work is plentiful, they may become dependent on the community in slack seasons [which] colors the attitude of the community toward them, creating a tendency to regard them as aliens."[46] Seasonal workers were in a precarious position—to many local whites, farmworkers were welcome only in their capacity as laborers.

Still, government officials and aid workers continued to advocate for their inclusion in local communities. Programs, they argued, should "be developed in terms of [migrants'] needs as human beings—not just to meet an emergency."[47] Reformers stressed the need not only to provide health services but to welcome migrants locally and encourage them to stay beyond the growing seasons. The eventual goal "should be to give as many migrants as possible roots in a local community where they can make their own place, gain community acceptance, and become eligible for the rights and benefits available to other citizens."[48] Services for migrants "should be developed in such a way that will integrate them into rather than separate them from the rest of

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[46] Ruth Boring Howard, "Better Health for Colorado Migrant Children," *Children: An Interdisciplinary Journal for the Professions Serving Children* 3, no. 2 (March-April 1956): 43-48, quote on 44.

[47] Lucile Petry Leone and Helen L. Johnston, "Agricultural Migrants and Public Health," *Public Health Reports* 69, no. 1 (January 1954): 1-8, quote on.7.

[48] Ibid.

the population."[49] The message seemed clear: though farmworkers were physically separated from the rest of the community, they should be accepted as a part of it. Workers, reformers argued, should be welcomed and integrated into mainstream American culture.

Migrant aid organizations at local, state, and federal levels all grappled with how to make migrants a part of sugar beet communities. A 1954 U.S. Public Health Service (USPHS) report charged white communities with accommodating migrant needs. The report argued that services needed to be adapted "with recognition of [migrants'] differences from local community residents in background, attitude, and behavior."[50] The USPHS demonstrated a commitment to protecting migrants, stating "existing housing, health, and other standards, and laws and regulations applicable to migrants need to be applied to their situation; if necessary, they should be modified to assure the migrant the same protection and benefits available to other citizens."[51] The position of the USPHS was that migrants were citizens who should be afforded the same rights and protections as other members of the community.

Although this USPHS report argued that communities should adapt to the needs of their seasonal workers, most aid groups thought farm workers should adopt white-middle-class American practices. The *Greeley Tribune* summed up that the goal of these campaigns was "to give the migrants a feeling of personal worth, belonging and responsibility so that they may help themselves to a better way of life."[52] What the *Tribune* and others failed to realize was that workers had been creating these things all along. They had been creating homes, having children,

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[49] Ibid.

[50] Ibid., 7.

[51] Ibid., 8.

[52] *Greeley Daily Tribune*, March 23, 1960.

and making community. Most reform groups and government agencies blamed a backward culture when they saw the plight of seasonal workers. All through the 1950s, these groups talked amongst themselves, too, as a Migrant Ministry memo proclaimed, to "get at the causes of these problems, and to work out solutions for them."[53] Growers, government officials, sugar company executives, and charities believed that instructing farmworkers in how to "become" Americans—through the acceptance and performance of specific behaviors attributed to white-middle-class American culture—would help bring them into the imagined community and drastically improve the lives of workers.

While reformers wanted to bring ethnic Mexican sugar beet workers into the communities, they often simultaneously argued against the presence of *braceros.* Many farmers pushed for the continuation of the Mexican guest worker program, but other groups saw the *braceros* as the root of the problem. Anti-*bracero* campaigns acknowledged that farmers were drawn to *bracero* labor because their labor was cheap and they arrived without families. The Christian Science Publishing Society saw them a "docile" workforce.[54] Thus, reformers argued, the labor of imported Mexican men was bad for society as a whole. Many of the national and local groups that campaigned against the renewal of the *bracero* program were religiously affiliated. The most active in Colorado was the Colorado Migrant Ministry, which was part of the Colorado division of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A. This

[53] Migrant Ministry report on "Christian Education," Box SC055, Folder 10, Migrant Education Collection, Archival Services, James A. Michener Library, University of Northern Colorado, Greeley, Colorado.

[54] "Braceros, Surpluses, and Jobs," *Christian Science Monitor*, undated, Box SC055, Folder 15, Migrant Education Collection, Archival Services, James A. Michener Library, University of Northern Colorado, Greeley.

organization emphasized the "injurious effects on the family and community" that *braceros* posed.[55] As single men—in the literal rather than the marital sense—descending on communities, *braceros* operated outside the ideals of the heteronormative nuclear family, which rendered them suspect.[56]

The Colorado Migrant Ministry, a division of the Colorado Council of Churches (CCC), frequently emphasized the citizenship distinction between *braceros* and domestic farmworkers. An informational pamphlet published in 1951 by the Colorado Migrant Ministry, for example, asked, “Who are the migrant farm laborers?” To which it answered, “They are U.S. citizen families.”[57] The families who labored in Colorado fields, explained fundraising material prepared by the CCC, were “Spanish Americans.” The group stressed that farmworker families in the Fort Lupton Labor Camp were neither vagrants nor *braceros*. The CCC also noted that camp residents were not “wetbacks,” employing the commonly used ethnic slur that referred to undocumented immigrants who had illegally crossed into the United States from Mexico. These workers, the CCC argued, were “Neighbors in our Midst,” and, as Christians, it was the duty church members to help those most in need.[58] By calling camp residents their “neighbors,”

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[55] Memo of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A., “Resolution Regarding the Future of the Mexican Agricultural Worker Importation Program (Public Law 78—82nd Congress),” Box SC055, Folder 14, Migrant Education Collection, Archival Services, James A. Michener Library, University of Northern Colorado, Greeley.

[56] In the 1950s, the transgression of gender norms had potentially severe consequences. Just as men and women were expected to marry and reproduce for the good of the nation, individuals who existed outside of this arrangement faced increased scrutiny as the myth that gay Americans threatened national security took hold. See David K. Johnson, *The Lavender Scare: The Cold War Persecution of Gays and Lesbians in the Federal Government* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004).

[57] Fundraising pamphlet, “Your Church Can Help the Migrant Families,” Box SC055, Folder 4, Migrant Education Collection, Archival Services, James A. Michener Library, University of Northern Colorado, Greeley.

[58] Fundraising notecard, “Neighbors in Our Midst,” undated, Box SC055, Folder 4, Migrant Education Collection, Archival Services, James A. Michener Library, University of Northern Colorado, Greeley.

religious groups built a foundation of activism predicated on the notion that they and the farmworkers shared a common humanity and national citizenship.

Emphasizing migrants' humanity was a common strategy when reformers advocated on their behalf. Fort Lupton School District superintendent Leo Butler, for example, noted in his report of the 1959 summer term that migrant children "are human individuals in every sense of the word. These little folks have a heart, soul, body, mental ability and feeling just like you or me or our children." Teaching these individuals, he continued, "should be no different than the teaching of any child in any school....We [must] always keep foremost in our mind that they are all humans and must be treated as such, not some group set aside from the rest of the world."[59] The migrants' "needs as human beings," as the Surgeon General's Inter-Bureau Committee on Migrants reported in 1952, "should be the basic consideration."[60] This rhetoric offered a counter-narrative to the one crafted by the sugar beet industry, which regarded seasonal laborers mere beasts of burden.

Though the CCC did not outline them explicitly, there were several possible reasons why the group stressed workers' humanity and the distinction between Mexican American migrant workers and Mexican nationals. The most apparent motivation was that it seemed a better strategy for gaining community support. It was against this backdrop that religious aid groups had to design fundraising campaigns. An emphasis on those whose legal citizenship was not in

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[59] Report, "Fort Lupton Special Term School for Migrant Children 1959," Box SC055, Folder 12, Migrant Education Collection, Archival Services, James A. Michener Library, University of Northern Colorado, Greeley.

[60] Helen L. Johnson, *Health for the Nation's Harvesters: A History of the Migrant Health Program in its Economic and Social Setting* (Farmington Hills, MI: National Migrant Worker Council. Inc., 1985), p. 124; and Lucile Petry Leone, "Agricultural Migrants and Public Health," *Public Health Reports* 69, no. 1 (1954), 1-8.

question was more palatable. Dominant U.S. cultural discourses often did not distinguish between Mexican Americans and Mexican nationals—a distinction that Mexican American groups in the 1950s tried hard to emphasize—so religious groups likely thought it would be easier to gain financial support if their work focused on people who had a legal right to be in the U.S.[61] What the religious groups emphasized, then, was that, the people they worked with were citizens, even of they still needed to be taught how to be *Americans*.

Teaching migrant and seasonal workers how to perform citizenship was a top priority of the CCC because members believed it was the only way to a better life. Church leaders and other reformers thought the problems that seasonal workers faced were ones of ignorance and inferior culture. After their year-long study, researchers for the National Child Labor Committee asked, "How much should be expected of a group, half of whose members speak a different language and one-third of whose family heads are illiterate?" They concluded:

> If people are to live up to what society expects of them and to benefit from programs to improve their status, somewhere along the process of maturing, education, which includes teaching of the common language, must be made available and its use assured. Incontrovertibly, this had not been done for the Spanish American migrants studied in Colorado. Since the children were worse off than their parents in their knowledge of English, no sign of progress in improvement of educational opportunities for the younger generation was visible....For as long a time as the media of communication are as weak as those found in Colorado in the summer of 1950, the Spanish American migrant will be a problem. He will be an enigma to the community despite his own and the State's best efforts to make him an acceptable citizen. What he does, he does largely in ignorance, in frustration or in desperation. Until society has assured him the opportunity to learn what, how, and when to do [better for themselves], the blame

[61] Mexican American groups had utilized strategies that stressed their distinction from, and superiority to, Mexican nationals since at least the 1920s. See Cynthia Orozco, *No Mexicans, Women, or Dogs Allowed: The Rise of the Mexican American Civil Rights Movement* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2009); David Gutiérrez, *Walls and Mirrors: Mexican Americans, Mexican Immigrants, and the Politics of Ethnicity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995); Craig Allan Kaplowitz, *LULAC, Mexican Americans, and National Policy* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2005); Michael A. Olivas, ed., *In Defense of My People: Alonso S. Perales and the Development of Mexican-American Public Intellectuals* (Houston: Arte Publico Press, 2013).

lies with the society and not with the migrant.[62]

The "what, how, and when," researchers and church leaders agreed, revolved around adopting the qualities of white, middle-class American heteronormativity. These traits, they believed, would "help each individual gain a sense of achievement and personal worth." [63] Their programs would lead to “joy and opportunity for richer living and, above all, the knowledge of God to those who harvest.”[64] The Colorado Council of Churches Migrant Ministries promoted the belief that Christ's salvation paved the way towards spiritual riches, while adopting the characteristics of proper citizenship could enrich migrants’ material world as well.

Remarkably, community activists often paid little attention to the part that growers, who employed migrants, played in creating and maintaining the poor conditions farmworkers faced. Reformers were careful not to implicate farmers, even when they attempted to gain their compliance. For example, a local newspaper advocated a "two-pronged attack" to improve migrant housing, a strategy that involved improving sanitation facilities where migrant families lived and educating "the migrant how to use them" (as if they would not understand). The article stated, "the [Colorado] Health Department does not intend to impose hardships on growers, many of whom are caught in an agricultural cost-price squeeze." Instead, the paper explained, farm employers would receive a letter outlining the deficiencies and suggesting corrective

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[62] Howard Elsworth Thomas, *Migrant Farm Labor in Colorado: A Study of Migratory Families* (New York: National Child Labor Committee, 1951), 11.

[63] Fundraising pamphlet from the Colorado Migrant Ministries, “Your Church Can Help the Migrant Families,” Box SC055, Folder 4, Migrant Education Collection, Archival Services, James A. Michener Library, University of Northern Colorado, Greeley.

[64] Poem, “The Harvester Speaks,” Box SC055, Folder 9, Migrant Education Collection, Archival Services, James A. Michener Library, University of Northern Colorado, Greeley.

measures.[65] Both the Health Department and the CCC avoided placing blame on farmers, preferring instead to focus on teaching farmworkers the gender norms, childcare, and health practices that would solidify their cultural citizenship.

Gender was essential to the aid workers' construction of citizenship. From the very beginning, the sugar beet industry relied on the field labor of women and children. As researchers and aid workers began taking an interest in seasonal workers' low quality of life, they focused on teaching what they saw as proper gender norms as an essential component to finding the solution to the "migrant problem." Classes for men and boys centered on "handicrafts" and mechanics, with additional emphasis on the idea that men, tired from working, should receive opportunities for rest and leisure. The CCC argued that discovery of hobbies "lifts the vision beyond the long row of beans."[66] Men and boys made use of community rooms stocked with games, record players, and areas designated "just for resting."[67] Men, particularly those who had traveled a long way, aid workers argued, needed a place to relax.[68] When CCC workers noticed men opting out of more rigorous games and activities like volleyball, they noted that the men were often "disabled in some way and couldn't participate."[69] In a moment of

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[65] "Two-Pronged Attack Needed to Improve Migrant Housing," undated news clipping, Box SC055, Folder 2, Migrant Education Collection, Archival Services, James A. Michener Library, University of Northern Colorado, Greeley.

[66] Undated Colorado Council of Churches newsletter penned by Louise A. Bashford, Box SC055, Folder 2, Migrant Education Collection, Archival Services, James A. Michener Library, University of Northern Colorado, Greeley.

[67] Colorado Council of Churches 1954 Annual Report of Migrant Ministry, Box SC055, Folder 7, Migrant Education Collection, Archival Services, James A. Michener Library, University of Northern Colorado, Greeley.

[68] Ibid.

[69] "Migrant Kiddies Learn a Lot In Ft. Lupton Vocational Class," *Rocky Mountain Churchman*, October 1960, Box SC055, Folder 13, Migrant Education Collection, Archival Services, James A. Michener Library, University of Northern Colorado, Greeley.

apparent oblivion to the racial hierarchy that kept workers trapped in seasonal work, one volunteer wondered if "perhaps disability is one reason why [these men] became migrants [in the first place.]"[70] Committed to finding activities the men preferred, the CCC routinely offered magazines, checkers, dominoes, view-masters, ping pong tables, boxing gloves, and balls to "these men who spoke little English." Aid workers also coordinated with the Great Western Sugar Company, who arranged for full-length Spanish-language films and cartoons to be screened in the evenings. By encouraging men and boys to partake in hobbies and leisure, the CCC emphasized that men should be allowed to relax after a hard day's work.

While men and boys learned the fine art of relaxation, women and girls received lessons in becoming middle-class American homemakers. The CCC stressed the importance of women and girls as the creators of domestic bliss. Ministry volunteers set up a "home-makers" room in the camp, which contained sewing machines, and provided an opportunity for women to talk with ministry leaders about "problems of the home, the children, sanitation and balanced meals."[71] Teenage girls, too, were encouraged to make use of the room as a place to visit, read, and sew.[72] A class on "cleanliness, grooming, and personal hygiene" instructed teenage girls on the importance of appearance.[73] Though the enthusiasm with which many of these women and girls accepted their instruction left CCC workers with the feeling that they were making a real

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[70] Ibid.

[71] Colorado Council of Churches 1952 Annual Report of Migrant Ministry, Box SC055, Folder 5, Migrant Education Collection, Archival Services, James A. Michener Library, University of Northern Colorado, Greeley, Colorado.

[72] Ibid.

[73] Colorado Council of Churches 1954 Annual Report of Migrant Ministry, Box SC055, Folder 7, Migrant Education Collection, Archival Services, James A. Michener Library, University of Northern Colorado, Greeley, Colorado.

difference, they were often ultimately left discouraged when "the bean crop took [women] to the fields."[74]

Women and girls also received lessons in food preparation. Classes taught budgeting, planning, shopping for, and preparing meals that corresponded with white, middle-class dietary ideals. Nutritional science standards of the day focused heavily on meat, dairy, eggs, and fresh fruits and vegetables, but these staples presented a problem for residents of the camp since they generally required refrigeration, which camp housing lacked.[75] The meals young girls and women learned to prepare could use only the equipment available to them.[76] The *Rocky Mountain Churchman* reported, "girls learned to cook with the equipment they have at home [and] they learned how to be better housewives if they remain in the migrant stream of if they settle down to a more stable life."[77] Women and girls learned that whether they remained field workers or retreated to a "more stable life," their primary duties should remain in running a home.

Many of the researchers and ministry volunteers who worked with camp residents expressed dismay at their diets. Keeping fresh food was difficult due to the lack of refrigeration.

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[74] Colorado Council of Churches 1952 Annual Report of Migrant Ministry, Colorado Council of Churches 1954 Annual Report of Migrant Ministry, Box SC055, Folder 5, Migrant Education Collection, Archival Services, James A. Michener Library, University of Northern Colorado, Greeley, Colorado.

[75] Fort Lupton "Project Plan," 1956, Box 2004.36.00182, Permanent Collection, Hazel E. Johnson Research Center, City of Greeley Museums, Greeley, Colorado.

[76] Colorado Council of Churches 1960 Annual Report of Migrant Ministry, Box SC055, Folder 13, Migrant Education Collection, Archival Services, James A. Michener Library, University of Northern Colorado, Greeley, Colorado.

[77] "Migrant Kiddies Learn a Lot In Ft. Lupton Vocational Class," *Rocky Mountain Churchman*, October 1960, Colorado Council of Churches 1954 Annual Report of Migrant Ministry, Box SC055, Folder 13, Migrant Education Collection, Archival Services, James A. Michener Library, University of Northern Colorado, Greeley.

Public health officials were especially horrified with the conditions found in camp kitchens, where food was often left out all day long, inviting flies and spoilage. One researcher "shudder[ed] at the many possibilities for both bacterial and parasitic infestation." It was not so amazing that so many of them fell ill, the researcher continued, but that "so many of them are not ill or that more of them do not die [from foodborne sicknesses.]"[78] Weld County Housing echoed this sentiment after assuming authority over the camp in 1951. Although the agency "discussed and sought ways and means of providing food refrigeration for each family housed in the camp," the plan was never realized.[79] Camp authorities accepted that many residents would come down with intestinal diseases each year, concluding it was the inevitable result of poorly stored and contaminated food.[80] Researchers and ministry workers believed that camp residents' "poverty diet" was a mixture of circumstance, ignorance, and culture. Health authorities were particularly disturbed by the lack of milk for children, with one public health nurse remarking that she "would be surprised if [Spanish-speaking farm workers] have a word for it."[81] Daycares, preschools, and day schools routinely emphasized serving milk to children as a way to ensure they received at least one nutritious food a day.

Persuading parents to raise children in the "American" way was a large part of the CCC mission. Aid workers frequently saw children as conduits between white American aid workers and Mexican Americans. The CCC's 1952 annual report, for example, explained, "the children

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[78] Howard E. Thomas and Florence Taylor, *Migrant Farm Labor in Colorado, A Study of Migratory Families* (New York: National Child Labor Committee, 1951), p. 49.

[79] Fort Lupton Project Plan, 1956, Box 2004.36.00182, Permanent Collection, Hazel E. Johnson Research Center, City of Greeley Museums, Greeley, Colorado.

[80] Ibid.

[81] Thomas and Taylor, p. 49.

who attend the friendship school break down any barriers which might be between parents and teachers."[82] Children, aid workers believed, would help persuade parents of the "vital" role of education.[83] Thus, children received lessons on health and hygiene and were encouraged to demonstrate manners and cooperation.[84]

In 1951, the CCC partnered with the Girl Scouts of the United States of America to help the daughters of farmworkers find acceptance and construct an American identity. In a bid to improve the lives of migrant girls in agricultural areas, the Girl Scouts decided to help find the solution to one of the most challenging aspects of migrant life, which was isolation from local communities.[85] A great handicap migrant children faced when they went into new areas, proponents of the program believed, was "lack of acceptance by the local citizens."[86] Migrant children, especially, they believed, "were robbed of normal home and community life [and] universally handicapped by too early employment and by lack of educational opportunities." The Girl Scouts did not want merely to launch a service project; they wanted to enroll migrant girls as members, thereby helping to solidify their acceptance into local communities. Scout leadership noted that there was also a "real opportunity for the Girl Scout program to enrich the

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[82] Colorado Council of Churches 1952 Annual Report of Migrant Ministry, Box SC055, Folder 5, Migrant Education Collection, Archival Services, James A. Michener Library, University of Northern Colorado, Greeley.

[83] Colorado Council of Churches 1954 Annual Report of Migrant Ministry, Box SC055, Folder 7, Migrant Education Collection, Archival Services, James A. Michener Library, University of Northern Colorado, Greeley.

[84] Report, "Fort Lupton Special Term School for Migrant Children, 1959," Colorado Council of Churches, Box SC055, Folder 12, Migrant Education Collection, Archival Services, James A. Michener Library, University of Northern Colorado, Greeley.

[85] Grace Maxwell, "Opening New Doors for Children of Migrants Through A Girl Scout Program," *Social Service Review* 29, no. 2 (June 1955): 148-152.

[86] Ibid., p. 148.

lives of these children."[87] From there, the Scouts set to work on recruiting.

The findings of their study lead the Girl Scouts of America to set up two pilot programs in 1954, one in California's San Joaquin Valley and the other in Weld County, Colorado. The organizers relied on the advice and cooperation of the National Council of Churches, the Roman Catholic Church, the National Child Labor Committee, the Children's Bureau, local schools, the National Council on Agricultural Life, and local and state migrant aid groups.[88] Although programs in both locations dealt primarily with Spanish-speaking migrants, the nature of migration to California and Colorado differed significantly and posed unique challenges to programming. Migrants in California remained primarily in the San Joaquin valley, following the crops in a predictable pattern, and Girl Scouts chapters could place the girls with specific troops as they migrated. Girl Scouts in the Colorado program were more difficult to place, however, because migrants remained in one location for only a short period—anywhere from one day to one month—and migration patterns were less certain. Unlike in California, where chapters could pre-arrange to accept migrant girls, in Colorado, it could be difficult to place them under short notice. Still, the Weld County program commenced and thirty-five girls from the Fort Lupton Farm Labor Camp, from ages 6 to 12, joined Girl Scouts of America.

The stated mission of the project was to "instill a sense of security, adjustment, and preparation for citizenship."[89] The Girl Scouts leaders knew that most of the girls were U.S. citizens, but believed they could teach them what their parents had not—how to claim belonging in the community through civic duty. The women who ran the Weld County project understood

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[87] Ibid.

[88] Ibid., 150.

[89] Ibid., 149.

that whites in sugar beet communities generally saw Spanish-speaking migrants as "impossible subjects" of American society—citizens of color who, despite legal citizenship, remained perpetual foreigners in the eyes of their white neighbors—so they devised Scout-specific strategies for overcoming the challenges of being accepted.[90] All members, for example, received membership cards, but Fort Lupton Girl Scouts received an additional bit of proof of that they belonged to the organization—a record card to carry from place to place. The card featured an illustration of a covered wagon, which, organizers believed, gave "a note of adventure to the life the girls lead." Scout leadership did not appear to see the irony of using a symbol associated with Anglo American colonization of the West. Space was provided for the girls to enter the names of places they had seen, "with the hope that this will give the migrant girl an idea of something that she can contribute to any local troops she meets." The insignia on this special card reaffirmed that she "belonged" to the Girl Scouts of the U.S.A. and was "part of a world movement of Scouting and Guiding."[91] This card, then, served as identification and a passport if they moved from place to place.

Scout leaders hoped that, just as the card represented a commitment to the Girl Scouts, it also represented a commitment to the United States. "It is obvious," a Girl Scouts leader wrote, "that the lives of many migrant girls have already been enriched through their brief experience in Girl Scouting."[92] She concluded that "for many migrant children this has been their first contact

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[90] I am borrowing the term "impossible subject" from historian Mae M. Ngai, who uses it to describe the way changes in immigration policy affected discourses on race in the United States. These changes left Asians and Asian Americans, as well as Chicanx and Latinx peoples, as perpetual outsiders, regardless of legal citizenship status. See Mae M. Ngai, *Impossible Subjects : Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004).

[91] Maxwell, "Opening New Doors for Children of Migrants Through A Girl Scout Program," pp. 151-52.

[92] Ibid., 149.

with other children of a different cultural background." One 13-year-old girl "of Spanish-American background" reportedly exclaimed that the “pinning ceremony” that solidified her membership as a Girl Scout was "the happiest moment" of her life.[93] The Scout leader interpreted this statement to be more than the joyful outburst of a young girl, noting, “perhaps for the first time in her life she could feel she ‘belonged’ to some group besides her own family.”[94] If the goal was to help migrant girls feel a sense of belonging within the white community, Scout leaders concluded they had achieved success.

Scout leaders believed that the challenges Fort Lupton girls faced in gaining acceptance in sugar beet communities came from both the inside and outside the camp. When the girls were out among the community, they faced "discrimination and prejudice" from whites, but when they went home, they were constrained by oppressive fathers and a rigid patriarchal structure.[95] In her report on the pilot programs, Grace N. Maxwell recounted an instance in which migrant parents would not let their daughter participate in a Scout meeting for fear that she would be accepted into the troop. Maxwell surmised this was due to rigid gender norms within ethnic Mexican culture.[96] Scout leaders grappled with what they saw as an overly patriarchal social structure among migrant families. They thought there were clear contrasts between Spanish-speaking and white families, believing, for example, that absolute familial authority lay with ethnic Mexican husbands and fathers. They had difficulty understanding a man who might "object to having his

[93] Ibid.

[94] Ibid., 150.

[95] Ibid., 149.

[96] Although there is often cultural overlap between Chicanx and Latinx communities, there is no homogenous “Mexican” culture. Most whites, however, operated under the assumption that all Spanish-speaking peoples shared the same cultural norms and practices.

wife or daughter leave home without him, even to attend a meeting of women."[97]

While training children in citizenship was important, reformers also put considerable effort into teaching conventional medical technologies and practices, particularly as they related to children. The Weld County Department of Health distributed soap, toothbrushes, and other toiletries to children and emphasized the importance of hand washing after using the lavatory and before eating. One book routinely provided was *The Girl Next Door*, a health textbook for children that featured a family of attractive, blond siblings demonstrating proper hygiene habits such as avoiding shared eating utensils and not taking food into the bathroom.[98] The Weld County department of public health also offered pre-natal and well-baby clinics.[99] Health officials thought they were reaching residents when a poll revealed that residents indicated interest in lessons on pregnancy and child welfare.[100]

The CCC worked closely with the Department of Health to promote vaccinations, particularly for children. Most of the *braceros* who traveled the migrant circuit were required to receive screenings and vaccinations for communicable diseases, but vaccinations were still uncommon among domestic laborers. The CCC implemented day programs for migrant children to address this problem. A primary goal of these schools was to teach children how to become "good citizens" through good health and care of the body. The schools distributed literature to

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[97] Maxwell, 149.

[98] Dorothy Baruch and Elizabeth Montgomery, *The Girl Next Door* (Glenview, IL: Scott Foresman and Company, 1948), 46.

[99] Colorado Council of Churches Annual Report for 1952, Box SC055, Folder 5, Migrant Education, Collection Archival Services, James A. Michener Library, University of Northern Colorado, Greeley.

[100] "Fort Lupton Labor Camp Results Questionnaire," 1959, Box SC055, Folder 12, Migrant Education Collection, Archival Services, James A. Michener Library, University of Northern Colorado, Greeley.

migrant parents of children notifying them of the importance of vaccinations. One flyer urged parents to heed the warnings of American physicians, noting in Spanish, "URGENT: What the Doctor Says About the POLIO VACCINE and Your Children."[101] The flyer continued,

> IF YOU HAVE CHILDREN WHO
> ARE NOT IN SCHOOL AND HAVE NOT RECEIVED THE
> POLIO VACCINE THIS MESSAGE FROM AMERICAN PHYSICIANS
> IS ESPECIALLY FOR YOU:
> AMERICAN DOCTORS SAY:
> THE POLIO VACCINE IS SAFE FOR CHILDREN. [102]

CCC leaders believed that, with the proper instruction, seasonal workers would "utilize facilities to their full advantage" which would also "teach them health principals on which to plan and conduct their lives."[103] Acceptance of modern health practices, they thought, brought camp residents one step closer to becoming Americans.

The approaches to crafting an American identity for residents of the Fort Lupton Labor Camp relied on an implicit message of self-help. Reformers saw their role as giving residents the knowledge to help themselves. It was up to residents, then, to pull themselves up by their bootstraps. By the end of the 1960s, residents of the Fort Lupton Labor Camp would use those boots for marching into combat.

M.I.A.: Migrants in Action

At the dawning of a new decade, aid groups in northern Colorado sugar beet communities

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[101] Polio vaccination flyer, 1958, Migrant Ed. 1958, Box SC055, Folder 11, Migrant Education Collection, Archival Services, James A. Michener Library, University of Northern Colorado, Greeley.

[102] Ibid.

[103] Howard, 44.

continued to study, and be troubled by, the problems of seasonal farmworkers. The "migrant problem" gained urgency in 1960 when the Edward R. Murrow documentary *Harvest of Shame* aired on American television. Its depiction of the intense poverty in which migrant farm workers lived shocked the nation, including the people of Colorado.[104] The film showed the day-to-day experiences of migrant farm workers as they worked their way up the Eastern seaboard, into the Midwest, and out to California. Coloradoans were distressed when they realized that they had their very own harvest of shame. Migrant advocacy groups like the Citizens Committee on Migrant and Child Labor capitalized on this horror and began to screen the film throughout the state, with an estimated three thousand people viewing it in March and April of 1961 alone.[105] That same year, Colorado lawmakers introduced four relevant pieces of legislation—the Migrant Children Education Act, the Migrant Agricultural Workers Health and Sanitation Act, the Migrant Agricultural Labor Contractors Act, and the Migrant Agricultural Workers Transportation Act. Coloradoans appeared united in an energized effort to address the plight of farmworkers.

Against the backdrop of this heightened awareness, Fort Lupton Labor Camp authorities and others responsible for housing migrant and sugar beet workers in Colorado came under increasing pressure to provide better living accommodations to their field laborers. People wondered about the "social costs" of the sugar beet industry and began asking how worker housing contributed to the problem.[106] Farmers, when approached by sanitarians or county

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[104]CBS Productions, CBS Reports, *Harvest of Shame*, United States, CBS Television, 1960.

[105] Migrant Ministry Annual Report for 1961, Box SC055, Folder 14, Migrant Education Collection, Archival Services, James A. Michener Library, University of Northern Colorado, Greeley.

[106] "Total Cost of Beet Sugar Must Take Into Account Social Costs," *Greeley Daily Tribune*, November 1, 1969.

commissioners, often appeared willing to cooperate with officials to implement changes and repairs. William R. Taylor, a public health official in charge of one sanitation program, noted, "A good many farmers have told us that they knew improvements were long overdue. A lot of voluntary repairs have been made, and there's been a substantial reduction in health and safety hazards."[107] If the public believed that farmers had been shirking their responsibility to their workers, public health officials were at least giving them the opportunity to make things right.

Although farmers appeared to go along with reforms when pressed, they refused to shoulder complete responsibility for the poor conditions at places like the Fort Lupton Labor Camp. Many believed that the farmworkers were at least partly to blame. One newspaper argued that even when improvements were made, residents made poor decisions. Installing a screen door, for example, was of little use if the inhabitants "prop it open [allowing] children, dogs, and flies to come and go at will."[108] Farmers needed to be convinced to improve facilities, but the migrants, the thinking went, must be taught to use them. Workers, farmers argued, caused damage, vandalized property, and ruined much of what they were given.[109] Bunks in the housing units, for example, lacked mattresses, authorities said, because children wet the beds and ruined them. They coupled the belief that migrants could not be trusted not to damage property with the well-worn "dirty Mexican" argument. Lee Rice, director of the Weld County Housing Authority, the division responsible for the Fort Lupton Camp, believed migrants would leave the camp

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[107] Undated newspaper clipping, Box SC055, Folder 2, Migrant Education Collection, Archival Services, James A. Michener Library, University of Northern Colorado, Greeley.

[108] "Two-Pronged Attack Needed to Improve Migrant Housing," undated, Box SC055, Folder 2, Migrant Education Collection, Archival Services, James A. Michener Library, University of Northern Colorado, Greeley.

[109] "Skeleton in Colorado's Closet: Group Airs Migrant Workers' Plight," *The Denver Post*, March 13, 1966.

"unlivable within a few weeks" if it were not for the regular maintenance his department provided.[110]

Despite assurances from farmers and county officials that they were doing all they could to improve the living conditions for seasonal workers, conditions in the Fort Lupton Labor Camp continued to deteriorate. The camp was showing its age and, by some accounts, had "outlived [its] usefulness."[111] The costs to clean and repair the units relied on the income provided by year-round occupants, but it was not enough. In 1962, the Weld County Housing Authority applied for help under the Migrant Health Act, a federal program passed that year designed primarily for the construction of clinics, for the improvements. Their application noted that the yearlong occupants were the camp's only source of income and rents had to be consistent with worker earnings.[112] When they did not receive the funds from the Migrant Health Act, the Housing Authority was left scrambling to cover the costs to continue running the camp. They then did the only thing they thought could save the camp from closure: they raised rents. The year was 1969.

Camp residents, fed up from years of neglect and exploitation, decided to fight. In June of 1969, residents of the Fort Lupton Labor Camp formed Migrants In Action, M.I.A, to protest conditions in the camp. The demands of M.I.A. were clear: they wanted better living conditions. Among their demands were refrigerators, mattresses, closets, tables, chairs, and insect control—that is, the necessities of modern American life.[113] Refrigerators, they argued, were no longer a

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[110] "Farm Camp is Home for Migrant Hands," *The Denver Post*, August 9, 1966.

[111] Ibid.

[112] Letter to the U.S. Public Health Service, 1962, Box 2004.36.0018, Permanent Collection, Hazel E. Johnson Research Center, City of Greeley Museums, Greeley, Colorado.

[113] "$24,000 Is Price to Keep Migrant Camp Operating," *Greeley Daily Tribune,* June 25, 1969.

luxury. Residents demanded to be treated with the dignity afforded to other Americans. They also saw the need for representation and pushed for Jess Baros, a farmworker advocate, to be installed on the board of the Housing Authority. They argued that "the appointment of Jess Baros would make it possible for a large segment of those affected by the decisions of the board to be adequately represented." They further requested "that all future compositions of the Weld County Housing Authority be made in accordance with the composition of the people thereby served."[114] Camp residents wanted a seat at the table.

The late 1960s was an important time for civil rights activism in the United States. By 1969, the country appeared to be on fire as the anger at centuries of white supremacy, colonization, and inequality finally reached a boiling point. Historian David G. Gutiérrez notes that the 1950s and 1960s saw a "significant shift" in political activism as strategies and tactics became more militant.[115] Gutiérrez argues that the emergence of the Chicano movement in the mid-1960s "probably did more than any other series of events to transform Mexican Americans' opinions." It led to the politicization of an unprecedented number of Mexican Americans throughout the country.[116]

The strategies of late 1960s activists differed dramatically from those of earlier movements. Chicano activists were uninterested in placating a white racist society, so they rejected assimilation, Americanization, and the respectability politics of organizations like the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC). LULAC outlined its goal as "develop[ing]

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[114] "Migrants Seek Seat For Baros on Board," *Greeley Daily Tribune*, June 28, 1969.

[115] David G. Gutiérrez, *Walls and Mirrors: Mexican Americans, Mexican Immigrants, and the Politics of Ethnicity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 181.

[116] Ibid., 183.

within the members of our race the best, purest, and most perfect type of a true and loyal citizen of the United States," and to "eradicate from our body politic all intents and tendencies to establish discrimination among our fellow citizens on account of race, religion, or social position as being contrary to the true spirit of Democracy, our Constitution, and Laws."[117] Instead of being accepted as "Americans," Chicano activists wanted to create an alternative identity altogether.[118]

The identity Chicano activists constructed focused on building belonging through ties to an indigenous past. Drawing from Mexican nationalist movements of the 1920s, Chicano activists reclaimed a *mestizo* past that had historically cast people of mixed Native American and Spanish ancestry as inferior. The Chicano movement called attention to the underprivileged status of the *mestizaje* and "proudly embraced its Indian origins."[119] This hybridized indigeneity was present in the work of one of the most influential activists within the Chicano movement, Rodolfo "Corky" Gonzáles, a Denver native who had labored in the northern Colorado sugar beet fields as a child. Gonzáles penned the poem *I am Joaquin*, which became a rallying cry for the Chicano movement, laying out as it did his vision of Chicano identity as distinct—neither Mexican nor American. He also organized the First National Chicano Liberation Youth conference in March 1969, a meeting out of which emerged the *Plan Espiritual de Aztlán* and a

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[117] Cynthia Orozco, *No Mexicans, Women, or Dogs Allowed: The Rise of the Mexican American Civil Rights Movement* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2009), 2.

[118] Historian Cynthia Orozco argues that Chicano activists and scholars have judged LULAC by the standards of the Chicano Movement and that this is an incorrect lens through which to analyze pre-Chicano Movement activism. Orozco argues that, within the context of the 1920s, LULAC a legitimate Mexican American civil rights movement in its own right. See Orozco, *No Mexicans, Women, or Dogs*, pp. 1-14.

[119] Chris Wilson, *The Myth of Santa Fe: Creating a Modern Regional Tradition* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1997), 159.

call for Mexican American self-determination. Chicano identity claimed the "cultural capital of a model of indigeneity."[120] It was against this backdrop of national and regional activism and reclaimed identity that M.I.A. emerged.[121]

Like Chicano activists throughout the country, M.I.A. used aggressive strategies to implicate local whites for racist behavior and claim a right to belonging in Fort Lupton. Rosalie Martínez, who lived in the camp during the protests, remembered going to a meeting where the anger from Anglos in attendance "was so great you could just feel the hatred."[122] M.I.A. representatives walked to the stage while white Coloradoans "boo[ed] and hiss[ed] and stamp[ed] their feet." Like the national Chicano movement, M.I.A. engaged in protests, organized meetings and rent strikes, and collaborated with local college students.[123] They agitated for representation on the Housing Authority board. They wanted the camp to be run by the residents, and demanded to see camp records.[124] In short, the residents of the Fort Lupton Labor camp wanted representation and autonomy.

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[120] B.V. Olguín, "*Caballeros* and Indians: Mexican American Whiteness, Hegemonic Mestizaje, and Ambivalent Indigeneity in Proto-Chicana/o Autobiographical Discourse, 1858-2008," *MELUS* 38, no. 1 (Spring 2013): 30-49, quote on 31.

[121] For more on Corky Gonzales and the Chicano Movement more broadly, see Francisco A. Rosales *Chicano!: The History of the Mexican American Civil Rights Movement* (Houston: Arte Público Press, 1997), pp. 209-226; Juan Gómez-Quiñones, *Making Aztlán: Ideology and Culture of the Chicano Movement, 1966-1977* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2014), pp. 72, 115-16, 192-270; George Mariscal, *Brown-Eyed Children of the Sun: Lessons from the Chicano Movement, 1965-1975* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2005); Ernesto Vigil, *The Crusade for Justice: Chicano Militancy and the Government's War on Dissent* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1999).

[122] City of Fort Lupton, Weld County, Colorado Historic Preservation Board, *Crossroads in Eden: Development of Fort Lupton, 1835-2000*, State Historical Fund Project 02-02-075 (October 2003). Available at <https://www.fortlupton.org/DocumentCenter/View/398/Crossroads-to-Eden?bidId=> (accessed September 28, 2017), 55.

[123] "County Courthouse is Picketed Here," *Greeley Daily Tribune, October 21, 1969*;

[124] "Commissioners Will Try to Arrange Migrant Meet," *Greeley Daily Tribune*, September 24, 1969.

One of the tactics M.I.A. used was to engage children in the protests. Young children carried signs saying things like, “Chicanos won’t live under conditions that the racists want.” They attended meetings and demonstrations.[125] Bringing children to the protests served two purposes. First, it gave their rallies respectability, signaling this was not a movement of radicals, but of families. Real children, they argued, were affected by a racist, negligent system. Second, it utilized the one camp demographic that all in the community seemed to support: children. In making children a part of the movement, M.I.A. reminded onlookers of their responsibility to migrant children. Camp residents had become part of the community and laid claim to an American identity by exercising one of the foundational tenets of American citizenship: dissent.

Conclusion

Despite their efforts, M.I.A. did not achieve its goals for improved living conditions or representation in the running of the camp. In November of 1969, the Housing Authority acquired a court order to evict the remaining residents and, lest any of the farmworkers try to pick the movement back up again, the camp was razed to the ground shortly thereafter. In June of that year, at the peak of M.I.A's tactics, the camp superintendent, J.L. Rice foretold of the camp's closing in a letter to board members. He wrote “it is suggested that the actual work of clearing the site be carried out as quickly as possible. It is probable that almost as soon as the work is started, it will be reported to one of the agitators in Boulder or Greeley who may go into court and try to get an injunction in time to prevent us from completing the work. Therefore, we must plan very carefully and be fully prepared to finish the work of demolition within a couple

[125] “A Proud Family,” *Greeley Daily Tribune*, June 25, 1969.

of days. Removal of the rubble can be accomplished at a more leisurely pace."[126] Given the camp uprising, he wrote, "it is almost certain that if the existing migrant houses in this camp are demolished, they will never be replaced."[127] His words proved accurate. Large-scale efforts to house migrant workers was never again initiated.

From the time it was constructed in 1941 through the 1950s, the Fort Lupton Labor Camp caused consternation among whites in nearby communities. The camp was essential to the local sugar beet economy because it provided housing for the thousands of workers required to work the fields each season. However, the extreme poverty of these workers alarmed government agencies and charity organizations. Reluctant to blame farmers, investigators, church groups, and sanitarians wondered publicly why "these people" would choose to live in such dire conditions. For two decades, humanitarian efforts of well-intentioned white Coloradoans attempted to solve the "migrant problem."

Government researchers, public health workers, and charity workers urged seasonal workers and migrants to adopt mainstream, middle-class values regarding gender, children, and health. These workers, however, always maintained an element of autonomy. They willingly participated in many of the programs, attended cooking classes, cooperated with public health nurses, and sent their daughters to become Girl Scouts. The system worked for local whites as long as they believed that the camp residents were tragic victims of their own ignorance. Researchers, public health officials, and charity workers took on the mantle of heroic rescuers bent on saving a wretched people from themselves.

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[126] Letter from J.L. Rice to Fort Lupton Housing Authority Board Members, June 29, 2969, Box 2004.36.0021, Permanent Collection, Hazel E. Johnson Research Center, City of Greeley Museums, Greeley, Colorado.

[127] Ibid.

Camp residents ultimately crafted their own narrative, one in which they were still victims, but of racism and oppression rather than backward culture or ignorance. Energized by the farmworker protests in California, student movements, and a burgeoning Chicano movement in Denver, residents of the Fort Lupton Labor Camp took action. Unlike other farmworker movements, the Fort Lupton camp protests were not organized around wages or labor conditions. Instead, residents of the camp demanded household items necessary for modern American living. They also demanded representation in the Housing Authority. The private realm of family and domesticity took center stage in these farmworkers' fight for social justice.

The demands of M.I.A. would never be fulfilled. In November of 1969, a district judge, after a legal battle between camp residents and the Housing Authority, ordered the closure of the Fort Lupton Labor Camp. Some residents defied the order, living in the camp while M.I.A. attempted to gain an injunction.[128] After several more weeks of protest and legal maneuvering, however, the last of the residents were forced to leave. The camp was immediately demolished and reduced to an empty lot by the end of the year. Although the M.I.A. movement was short-lived, its influence continued to be felt, and some who had been involved in the group went on to have long careers in local politics. Joe Martínez, for example, who remembered that neighbors would "straighten out" wayward camp children, as active in M.I.A. and went on to serve on the Fort Lupton city council from 1974 to 1976, was elected the town's mayor from 1976 to 1980, and ran for the state House of Representatives in 1980.[129] There were also darker consequences.

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[128] Undated newspaper article, "Migrant Camp Ordered Closed, But Many Remain Until Housing Located," in City of Fort Lupton, Weld County, Colorado Historic Preservation Board, *Crossroads in Eden: Development of Fort Lupton, 1835-2000*, State Historical Fund Project 02-02-075 (October 2003). Available at <https://www.fortlupton.org/DocumentCenter/View/398/Crossroads-to-Eden?bidId=> (accessed September 28, 2017), 55.

[129] Ibid.

As J.L. Rice's letter to the Housing Authority board members suggested, housing for migrant workers would continue to be a problem. Worker housing would move back into the private sector, where laborers were at the mercy of farmers and landlords. However, for a moment farmworkers had a movement. Moreover, in that movement, they claimed belonging and fought for their rights as citizens not only of northern Colorado sugar beet communities but of the United States as well.

Conclusion

On a sunny day in June 2017, the Windsor-Severance Historical Society unveiled a statue of a 1940s family, installed to great fanfare in the town of Windsor's Boardwalk Park. The piece was described by artist Austin Weischel as an "over life-size monument for the town of Windsor, Colorado." It features a man with a weathered face and coveralls operating an old-timey hand-pumped water well, while his young son holds a pail under the spigot to catch the water. Nearby, a small girl stands barefooted, grinning and clasping an enormous sugar beet.[1] According to an inscription on the plaque, the statue depicts a German Russian sugar beet farmer and his two children. Such farmers, along with scientific water management, had made the arid high plains bloom. Marjorie Straube of the historical society described the statue as a monument to the "town's history of irrigation and sugar beets that led to its agricultural success."[2] She called it "a great bit of history...for generations to see." But the careful observer might notice something amiss.[3] Although whole families built the sugar beet industry, the statue memorialized men and children and omitted women. The labor of mothers who toiled in the fields, cooked, cleaned, and birthed a workforce was erased.[4]

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[1] The Windsor-Severance Historical Society, "Projects: Historic Society Monument," http://www.thewshs.org/projects/.

[2] Emily Wenger, "Windsor-Severance Historical Society statue ready for Thursday's unveiling," *Greeley Tribune*, June 27, 2017.

[3] Ibid.

[4] A year after the statue was unveiled, the Windsor-Severance Historical Society, which had raised the money to pay for the man and two children, announced that a mother figure *would* be added to the monument after the Windsor Town Board voted to pay for its construction and installation. See Emily Wenger, "Mother to be added to bronze statue in Windsor's Boardwalk Park," *Greeley Tribune*, July 23, 2018. At the time of this writing, the statue remains motherless.

The invisibility of women's labor in the popular history of the sugar beet industry is rooted in the idea that women occupied a different sphere than men and that women's work of childrearing and homemaking was not real labor. There was little room in this belief system for women's wage work because the ideology assumed that adult women were married to men, were financially dependent on husbands and fathers, and only contributed supplemental income to the household, if they contributed financially at all. In the case of German Russian sugar beet workers, women not only worked shoulder to shoulder with their husbands and fathers but their ability to produce large families was in great demand among labor recruiters. These women did not contract their own labor; their menfolk negotiated the contracts. But growers counted on women's labor, both productive and reproductive. Though agriculture has often been constructed in cultural consciousness as the domain of men, women's physical, domestic, and reproductive labor was crucial in the transformation of the agricultural and social landscape of twentieth-century northern Colorado.

The early days of the sugar beet industry were difficult for German Russian sugar beet workers. They had come to the United States in the early twentieth century as poor immigrants who had only their labor to sell in a capitalist economy. They were at the mercy of the farmers who employed them and they often lived in dilapidated shacks, tents, or converted livestock stalls. They endured backbreaking labor in the fields and, at the end of the workday, German Russian women's toil continued as they prepared food, washed up, mended clothing, and tended children. As an agricultural people, they were familiar with long days and hard work and they were willing to put all able-bodied men, women, and children to work for the betterment of their families.

Their hard work paid off and, eventually, German Russians amassed enough wealth to

become farmers themselves. By the 1930s, German Russians had become the dominant landholding group in northern Colorado and the success of the sugar beet industry catapulted them into the white, agrarian middle class. Their change in class status also influenced their racial status; their identity as a racialized ethnic minority was washed away by the power and influence of becoming landholders. They also abandoned their ethnic identity in order to avoid persecution during the First World War.

As German Russians purchased farms and joined the white agrarian middle class, they entered into the social and racial hierarchy as white Americans. As they adopted the language of citizenship, they also accepted the racialization of other farmworkers. Although the memory of being harassed and discriminated against as "dirty" and "ignorant" remained seared in the minds of many German Russians, they applied these same stereotypes to the ethnic Mexican workers whom they employed without any apparent sense of irony. Historian Dennis Nodín Valdés posits that employers stereotyped ethnic Mexican workers in order to justify the ways they treated all workers as well as their continued use of child labor.[5] White farmers adopted the belief that ethnic Mexicans did work "that the white labor will not perform."[6]

Still, the need for labor persisted and the beet sugar industry set out to bring ever more families to the fields. In an attempt to save money, recruiters devised a strategy to settle ethnic Mexican sugar beet workers in northern Colorado for good. The Great Western Sugar Company appealed to ethnic Mexican families with promises of homeownership and a better life. Claims made by Great Western Sugar, however, proved mostly too good to be true, as workers were

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[5] Dennis Nodín Valdés, "Settlers, Sojourners, and Proletarians: Social Formation on the Great Plains Sugar Beet Industry," *Great Plains Quarterly* 10, no. 2 (Spring 1990): 110-123; 116.

[6] Ibid.

settled in the outskirts of town in what was called the Spanish Colony. White Coloradoans regarded them with distrust and cast them as perpetual outsiders. While colony residents faced racism from white Greeley residents and pressure from well-intentioned local reformers to assimilate, however, they actively participated in creating a new identity for themselves as modern, respectable Americans. In constructing this identity, Greeley Spanish Colony residents claimed their community and belonging within it.

In both the Greeley Spanish Colony and the labor camp in Fort Lupton, Colorado, middle-class white women reformers attempted to shape ethnic Mexicans, particularly women and children, in their own image. Reformers believed that, as American citizens, ethnic Mexican sugar beet workers had a right to belong. But reformers also believed that these workers needed to be taught the skills necessary to claim that belonging. Their motivations were informed by racist stereotypes of ethnic Mexicans as simple and child-like. Nonetheless, reformers worked doggedly to improve the lives of ethnic Mexicans. The actions of these reformers were informed by equal parts altruism and racism, but they stood in stark contrast to the anti-Mexican rhetoric and actions of the late 1920s and early 1930s. In a time when many white Coloradoans were calling for the mass deportation of ethnic Mexicans, reformers argued that these workers had a right to stay. In acknowledging ethnic Mexican sugar beet workers as U.S. citizens, white reformers constructed belonging for them.

Reformers at the Fort Lupton Labor Camp continued their work into the 1950s and 1960s, but camp residents began to claim belonging in a very different way. After decades of being targeted, primarily by white women reformers, to Americanize, residents came to believe that it was their human, American right to live in clean, modern, and comfortable housing. In the 1960s this belief combined with momentum from social movements of the period, notably the

Chicano Movement, which gave ethnic Mexicans in Colorado a new language of defiance. In 1969, residents of the camp organized Migrants In Action to demand better living conditions and representation in how the camp was run. By the time of the beet harvest in November of 1969, however, the Weld County Housing Authority had effectively put the movement down and forced all camp residents, those who had protested as well as those who had not, out of the camp. Within days of the final evacuation, the Fort Lupton Labor Camp was closed and bulldozed to the ground. Although it was the only place in the area where migrant workers could reliably find housing during the growing season, it was never rebuilt. The costs were high, but residents of the Fort Lupton Labor Camp challenged white meanings of belonging and what it meant to be a native-born American. By claiming the camp as their own, they constructed their own version of belonging, demonstrating yet another way that northern Colorado residents became native.

Between 1900 and 1960, German Russian and ethnic Mexican men, women, and children sugar beet workers negotiated and shaped new identities, ultimately becoming "native" to northern Colorado. Though the stories of the two groups took very different turns—and had very different outcomes—the imprint of both groups on the historical memory of the region is undeniable. German Russian surnames, for example, are still common. The smell of roasted green *chiles* being sold in farmer's markets and roadside stands fills the late-summer air in the sugar rush towns of Loveland, Fort Lupton, Windsor, and Greeley. But when you ask the people of northern Colorado which indigenous nations are truly native to the area, many will take a moment to contemplate—attempting to retrieve some long-ago history lesson or museum visit—before sheepishly admitting they do not have an answer. And so, the historical amnesia wrought through settler colonialism soldiers on.

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